



# **JOURNALISM TRENDS 2016**

A look into the world of journalism & the implications for communicators

mynewsdesk™

# Index

Foreword	3	Robots and technology, we fear not!	22
Introduction	4	Industry insights	23
Is everybody a journalist?	5	Nostalgic journalists need to look ahead	24
<b>Key takeaways for communicators and journalists</b>	<b>6</b>	The journalist becomes entrepreneur	25
The press release is alive and kicking	7	Follow the money.	26
Relationships between journalists and PR people matter	8	Methodology of survey and key questions	27
Know your journalist prior to pitch	10	Epilogue: Nobody can guarantee journalism in the future	29
Social media overtakes as a publication platform	11	Contact	30
Huge potential in Snapchat and LinkedIn	13		
<b>The state and future of journalism</b>	<b>14</b>		
Today's journalists need to be Swiss army knives	15		
Ch-ch-changes	17		
Time is of the essence for reporters	18		
The divide between publishers and journalists	19		
Strong reservation towards native advertising	20		
The future of journalism has to be good journalism	21		

# Foreword

Serving the evolving needs of journalists has always been at the heart of the Mynewsdesk business since it was founded. It is deeply connected with our mission to create a world where no story goes untold or unheard.

We believe our people, our products and the journalists that we serve have the potential to release the full power of stories to inspire and spark positive change. But to achieve these lofty goals, we need to truly understand how a journalist's reality has changed and what the future will look like for them.

Currently we serve over 65,000 journalists and other influencers on their terms, providing company news from over 30,000 brands globally. Over 2,000 journalists have taken part in this

in-depth quantitative and qualitative research piece. We are truly appreciative of their time and look forward to continuing to helping them in this exciting, sometimes daunting and rapidly changing media world.

Whether you are journalist, communicator, marketer or small business owner I hope this research will help you understand the current changes in the media landscape and empower you to do a better job. Enjoy!



Jonathan Bean, CMO Mynewsdesk



# Introduction

Are personal relationships and press releases taking a back seat? Being replaced by big data, RSS feeds and search engines? Latest research by Mynewsdesk reveals otherwise.

Mynewsdesk surveyed 2,000 journalists around the world to get their views on the profession. Findings show that journalists value foremost personal contacts and press releases, despite the abundance of new channels. Journalists are not concerned about being replaced by technology, although robots and drones are already being used in newsrooms such as the AP and Washington Post, but they do have other frustrations that PR professionals should be aware of.

The demands on journalists are increasing daily. Journalists now need to publish on numerous

platforms, master various work tools and be highly knowledgeable. Yet journalists feel they don't have the time to do quality work, and publishers are not prioritizing in-depth reporting. Moreover, native content and advertorials are gradually, despite some objections, becoming a reality that journalists will need to embrace. PR officers should understand these factors and act as a support to journalists, by providing them with relevant stories.

Aside from the changing landscape, one requirement of being a good journalist still holds: to succeed in the profession you need to be knowledgeable, versatile, skilful and creative in an increasingly fast-paced environment. In turn, communicators should listen to the frustrations and challenges of reporters and see how they can improve and build valuable relationships.

## About the author

Janne Aagaard teaches communication design and media innovation at the IT-University of Copenhagen, as well as conducting conferences and courses on digital media and media trends. She holds a Danish bachelor degree in journalism (1998) and took her Masters degree in Journalism and Communication in Australia (2005).




# Is everybody a journalist?

What makes a person a journalist? Is a blogger one? Does one need to be a member of a union? Is an education in journalism a requirement?

Across all countries, respondents agreed that a journalist is someone who: a) works with content, b) aims to be objective, c) tells a story, and d) has an audience.

A blogger can sometimes be considered a journalist, according to 58% of respondents. And one who produces content for a brand's publication can also be considered a journalist, according to 54%. In most countries respondents felt that it was not important to be part of a union, with the exception of Denmark where two-thirds of those surveyed said it was.



How do you define a journalist? What's the criteria?	Definitely true	Maybe, Sometimes	Definitely not true
A journalist works with content	90%	9%	1%
A journalist has to be officially educated in journalism	12%	47%	41%
A blogger is a journalist	4%	54%	42%
A journalist should always aim to be objective	63%	31%	6%
A journalist is someone who tells a story and has an audience	55%	25%	20%
A journalist must be a member of Journalists union/association	12%	25%	63%
A person producing content for a brand's publication is a journalist	6%	48%	46%



# KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR COMMUNICATORS AND JOURNALISTS



# The press release is alive and kicking

Although journalists are exposed to an abundance of channels, journalists still prefer personal contacts and press releases for a story or for gathering information on one. Journalists prefer to go to the original source, i.e. a personal contact. However, almost nine of ten journalists still use press releases as a relevant source of information for their news stories.

Following in importance are 'public broadcast media' and 'subscription to a press release service'. Digital services such as RSS-feeds, Google alerts, chat forums and companies' websites were ranked lowest.

96% of the German journalists use press releases compared to 79% of Norwegians.

## The top 5 preferred channels



Personal connections



Press releases via email



Social Media



Search engine research



Word of mouth

“A press release may very well include real news that interest our viewers and listeners (...) but of course one has to remain critical and be aware of the sender of the press release and of the packaging of the news.”

**- Danish Reporter**

# Relationships between journalists and PR people matter

Although many journalists are happy to get an email with a press release, they still value being in contact with PR people on a regular basis. We asked them about their relationship.

Journalists from US & UK seem to value contact and cooperation with PR agencies and professionals more highly compared to journalists

in the Nordic region. Why? Because large differences in media ownership exist: many media outlets in Denmark, Norway and Sweden receive support from the government directly or indirectly.

## How is your relationship with PR communicators?

**TRUE****FALSE****69%****31%**

I only hear from them when they have a pitch.

**64%****36%**

It is important to keep a good relationship with them.

**59%****41%**

I seldom need to work with them to get my stories.

**39%****61%**

I have regular exchange with some over calls or meetings.



“

The press release has been an integral part of the PR industry since inception. Ivy Lee penned the first one 110 years ago. It's enshrined within PR's workflow. At its most basic level the press release is merely a bundle of information covering Kipling's six honest service men – the what, why, when, where, how, and who. These are the fundamental building blocks upon which influencers – such as journalists – can create a story. That's what makes the press release so compelling.

It's the distribution of this information bundle which evolves, both in term of who it's aimed at and how it gets there. And we can choose which elements to de-bundle. Which elements to include like visual content.

Journalists are integral but are only one grouping within today's cadre of influencers. If the press release is a fundamental PR workflow tool, then relationship building is a bedrock skill – there's a clue in our profession's name after all.

PR professionals need to build relationships with influencers by developing mutually rewarding relationships. In the earned space that means being useful to them. Knowing what sort of content they produce. Knowing what they've written about recently and being able to help by giving them information which furthers that conversation.

**- Scott Guthrie, Digital Director for Influencer Relations at PR agency Ketchum, UK**

# Know your journalist prior to pitch

The most influential factor when it comes to investigating a pitch further is the 'credibility of the person/company who pitched' the story.

Almost all journalists chose the credibility of the source as a key decision factor on whether to follow up on a story or not. If there were 'good quotes or an opportunity to interview an opinion leader' was the second most important influencing factor. Last

was 'availability of supporting info online (videos, images)'.

The possibility to have good quotes or an opportunity to interview an opinion leader is extremely influential in Denmark and Norway, but not so much in Germany.



# Social media overtakes as a publication platform

**Journalists publish on three different platforms on average, something that was unheard of a few years ago.**

Print media is still in a dominant position regarding news reporting. Yet online news sites, Facebook and Twitter come at 2nd, 3rd and 4th place. A mere 3% of the journalists use Snapchat and Periscope; however, LinkedIn and YouTube are used by 15%. Several UK outlets are increasing their LinkedIn usage, while Germany and Norway are not keen on that platform (7%).

Not all journalists are pleased with the increasing number of publishing platforms. “Five years ago, I

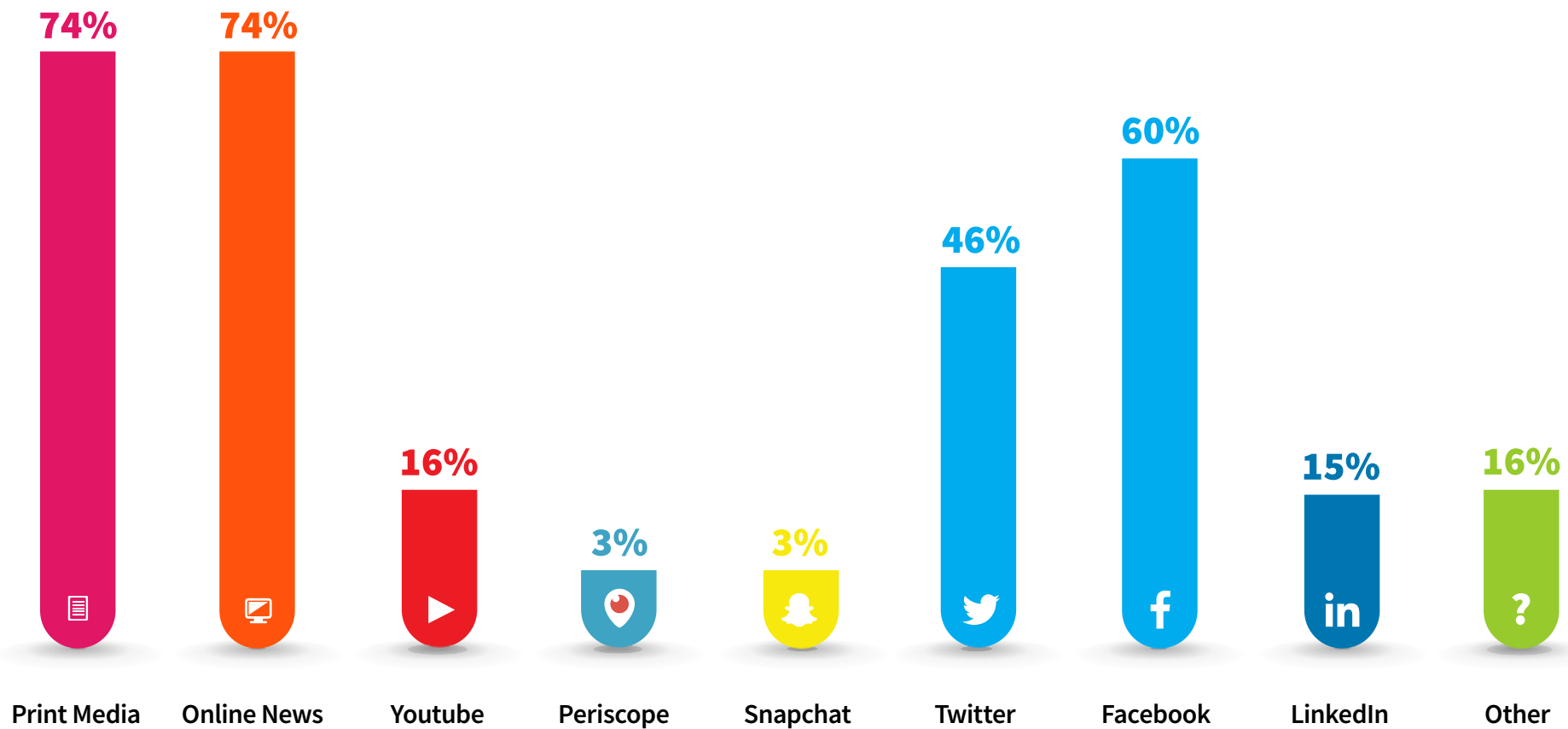
wasn’t required to Tweet twice a day, seven days a week, or post to Facebook daily, or shoot videos and photos, or keep an eye on a fever chart of real-time analytics on my stories and those of the staff,” commented a US reporter.

The national differences are major here; 66% in the UK & US uses Twitter while only 30% of the Nordic countries and Germany do so. Some 12% in Germany use Xing, a platform similar to LinkedIn.

“More and more readers are getting and consuming their daily news on platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and other social apps. Among our readers, there’s been an increase in engagement on social apps as opposed to specific news sites. I definitely think that working on multiple platforms is a necessity.”

**- Curtis M. Wong, Senior Editor, Queer Voices, The Huffington Post**

On which channels do you report your stories?



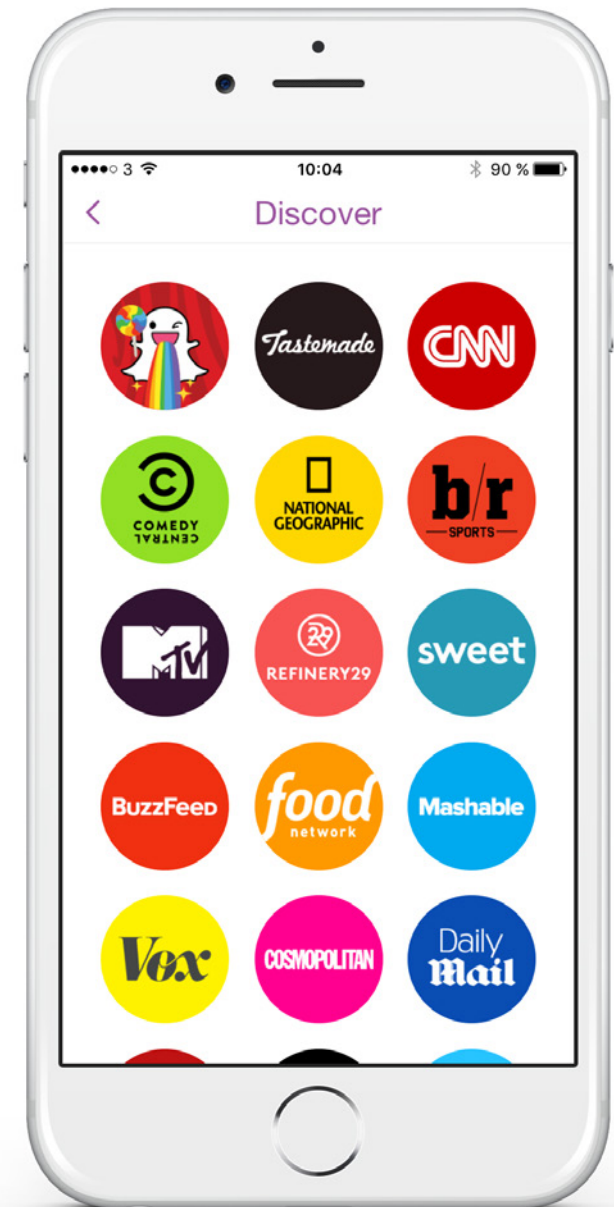
# Huge potential in Snapchat and LinkedIn

“We experience a high engagement rate when posting articles on our LinkedIn-profile. In the future, LinkedIn will play a way bigger role in our social media publishing strategy – matching the post frequency on our Facebook Page, while presenting way different content.

Snapchat has also a huge potential regarding news distribution in the Nordic countries – first step towards spreading the Nordic news through Snapchat requires a location based ‘Discover’ and

‘Live Stories’ function that allows Scandinavian news media to get a seat in the first row. Today, news organizations such as TV 2, MetroXpress, and Danmarks Radio distribute content through regular Snapchat profiles, which makes it difficult to analyse data.”

**Anders Kongstad, Social Media Editor at Børsen, Denmark’s Financial Times.**





# THE STATE AND FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

# Today's journalists need to be Swiss army knives

The pace may have quickened and the tasks multiplied, but there is still one skill that rules them all: knowledge! To be a successful journalist, one must have experience and knowledge in a niche area. 'Versatility' and 'creativity' are next. Speed for writing & repurposing content is rated low despite the need for speed in the newsroom. At the very bottom of the list is 'self-promotion'.

'Self-promotion' might have a bad ring to it, but as many journalists are already measured on clicks and readership, it might not be a such a bad skill after all.

'Versatility' is given a high priority, because journalists have at least three or more responsibilities each: everyone is writing or editing, 60% is active on social media, over half are photographers, 38% do data analysis, one in three journalists produce videos, and 18% do graphic design. The journalist today is multifunctional like a Swiss army knife!

Albeit the toolbox of the journalist has expanded, and the tasks too, there is little sign of the reporter using their mobiles for gathering info on news stories. Almost 9 out 10 still research on their desktops whereas research on mobiles is used by only one in ten.

## What makes a successful journalist?

	Rank
Knowledge	1
Versatility	2
Creativity	3
Networking	4
Speed	5
Self-Promotion	6

## What's required of your role?



Writing / Editing

98%



Data Analysis

38%



Social Media

60%



Video

29%



Photography

51%



Graphics

18%

“

A journalist is a person who does journalism full time and for a living. The skill set to be a successful journalist is curiosity, openness, determination and a desire to give the best attainable version of the truth. Today, there is a wider range of skills needed both in understanding digital media and how to collaborate with people from different backgrounds such as programmers and data scientists in order to utilise the full potential.

**Rasmus Kleis Nielsen**

Director of Research, Reuters Institute, University of Oxford



# Ch-ch-changes

Nearly 85% of journalists stated that the demand for more visual content has grown in the last five years. **Over 75% have more deadlines and agreed that more content is required.** News has evolved because of a higher emphasis on visual aids and stories becoming shorter. The smartphone has also become a key platform for news consumption, causing an impact on the layout and length of the actual content.

The expectation of journalists to be measured by the amount of traffic and engagement generated with their content has surprisingly changed the least over the last five years. However, this varies greatly between countries. Some two-thirds of

all journalists from the UK and the US said 'yes' to increased measurement compared to 40% of German journalists.

Although individual reporters may not be directly assessed by online readership in some countries, it still matters indirectly. "I'm not directly measured on clicks and shares, but it will always matter to my superiors," confirmed a Norwegian journalist.

Fewer than half of the Norwegian journalists believe that stories have become shorter within the past five years. Media ownership in Norway is, like the other Nordic countries, publicly funded.



# Time is of the essence for reporters

A 'lack of time' is the biggest frustration facing journalists today. Exacerbating the situation is the demand on journalists, among other things, to adopt a multichannel approach. Journalists publish on three platforms on average and this multichannel strategy consumes their time.

Relevance, or also known as significance, is often referred to as one of the five vital news criteria: timing, significance, proximity, prominence and human interest. The expressed frustration over the 'lack of relevance in stories' is interesting and worth investigating further.

## Top 5 frustrations of a journalist



Lack of time



Lack of relevance in stories



Lack of images and videos



Lack of leadership



Lack of training



# The divide between publishers and journalists

The challenges perceived by journalists, those with more than 8 years of experience, are evident. How do they rate their publisher's priorities and strategy though? In order of importance, journalists selected the following:

1. In-depth: It is important to provide supporting information that adds depth to the story.
2. Readership: It is important to make sure the story angle can generate as much interest as possible.
3. Objective: It is important to be careful not to add my own voice, so that the story remains objective
4. Speed: It is important to get the news out as early as possible.
5. Opinion: It is important to add opinion for content to stand out.

The need for speed, ranked at fourth place, is not a priority for publishers; however, it's a thorn in the side for many journalists who feel that the 'lack of time' is their biggest frustration.

“Though not the case for publications I am writing for, it is a general fact that as younger generations are looking for “quick news”, the demand for less text, more photos and video, is becoming a rule. People want information that can be consumed in seconds in an easy way. This comes with a huge price: no time for proper grammar, fact-checking or proper style.”

**- Celeste R. de Juarez, Editor/Writer for People en Español, El Nuevo Herald and former producer for Univision & NBC-Telemundo**

# Strong reservation towards native advertising

Sponsored content or native advertising is a potential source of income today; however, most journalists and editors show great scepticism towards this mix of editorial content and advertising.

The journalists were very much divided over the question on whether they themselves would produce sponsored content such as advertorials or native content. Some 40% said 'no', 26% opted 'maybe' and 34% said 'yes'. Journalists are divided on this issue, with quite large differences between countries.

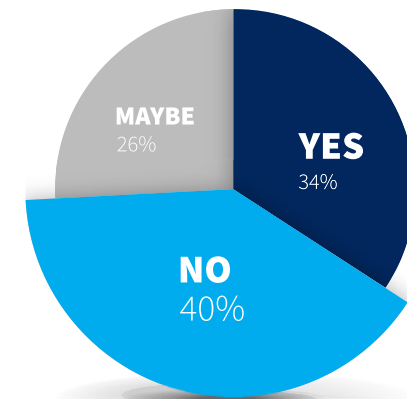
The US and the UK were more positive. Almost half of the journalists would produce native content (49%). Only 11% of the Norwegian journalists were open to native content, in between were the

German (35%), Swedish (44%) and Danish (46%) nay-sayers. Because media ownership in the UK and US is primarily private and independent of government support, journalists are more open to native content. The competition in the UK and US is also fiercer compared to Scandinavian countries, characterized by a long tradition of media support and protection of journalism from business interests.

“In order for journalists and media publishers to be able to afford journalism, there is a need for new revenues of income like native content which in return can reduce the public's trust in journalism. The lines between advertising and journalism are blurring.”

- Swedish journalist

Would you produce sponsored content?



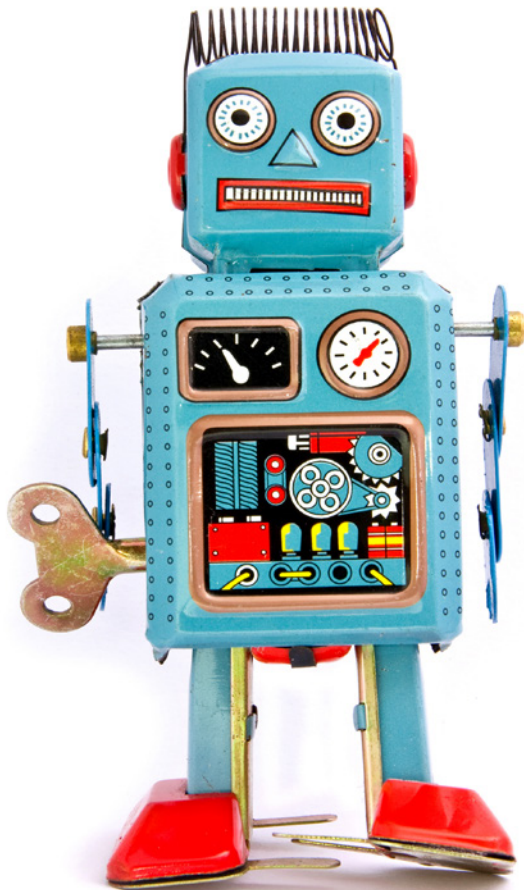


# The future of journalism has to be good journalism

I am not worried about the future of journalists, because the best of them will be making a living being their own brand. I am more concerned about the media companies that are struggling, especially the newspapers. They did not spend enough time or money on developing new ways of distribution and the digital economy is much smaller than the old one.

If you do not spend more time on digital development, you will die and the need to invest time and money in new business models is huge. A media organisation with five journalists can these days make a huge impact locally.

**Geir Terje Ruud is an independent editorial developer in the Nordic countries, self-made journalist and former editor of Verdens Gang in Norway and Ekstra Bladet in Denmark.**



# Robots and technology, we fear not!

All believe that journalists will need more skills than just writing. Compared to their current list of tasks, it seems highly likely. The average journalist performs three tasks or more; a recommendation for a reporter would be to expand his or her skill set.

Very few fear being replaced by robots, although we know some newsrooms use them already. Majority are also open to native advertising because of the potential to increase revenue.

“Journalists will need to be skilled in multimedia and be ever more creative. The good news is that I very much doubt it’s a job for a robot, as good content is so much more than keyword rich copy.”

**UK journalist**

# Industry insights

## Three tools that are changing the way newsrooms work

How are newsrooms of New York Times and BuzzFeed using AI and technology to help them make editorial decisions these days?

We gathered some insights from Alan Soon, who went from leading one of the largest digital news teams in the industry as Yahoo's Managing Editor for India and Southeast Asia to now transforming newsroom operations and media businesses at The Splice Newsroom.



## Slack

**Who's using it:** New York Times, Quartz, Guardian

**How will it help newsrooms:** Slack is first and foremost a communication tool - a modern chatroom that allows editorial teams to discuss, plan and collaborate. But it's also fast becoming the "operating system" of newsrooms, one that powers bots and AI to help automate key functions like discovery, content creation and amplification.



## Chartbeat

**Who's using it:** New York Times, Forbes, Financial Times

**How will it help newsrooms:** Chartbeat answers the most important questions in newsrooms - How many people are on my site right now? Where are they coming from? How many are on mobile? These numbers help inform editorial decisions in newsrooms, ensuring that the team stays focus on publishing the most engaging pieces of content.



## CrowdTangle

**Who's using it:** BuzzFeed, Mic, Vox

**How will it help newsrooms:** CrowdTangle helps editorial teams track the social web by staying on top of what's trending on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Vine. Teams can also monitor posts based on keywords. This is also essential when it comes to monitoring your rivals - if their posts are trending, you may want to do something about that story too.



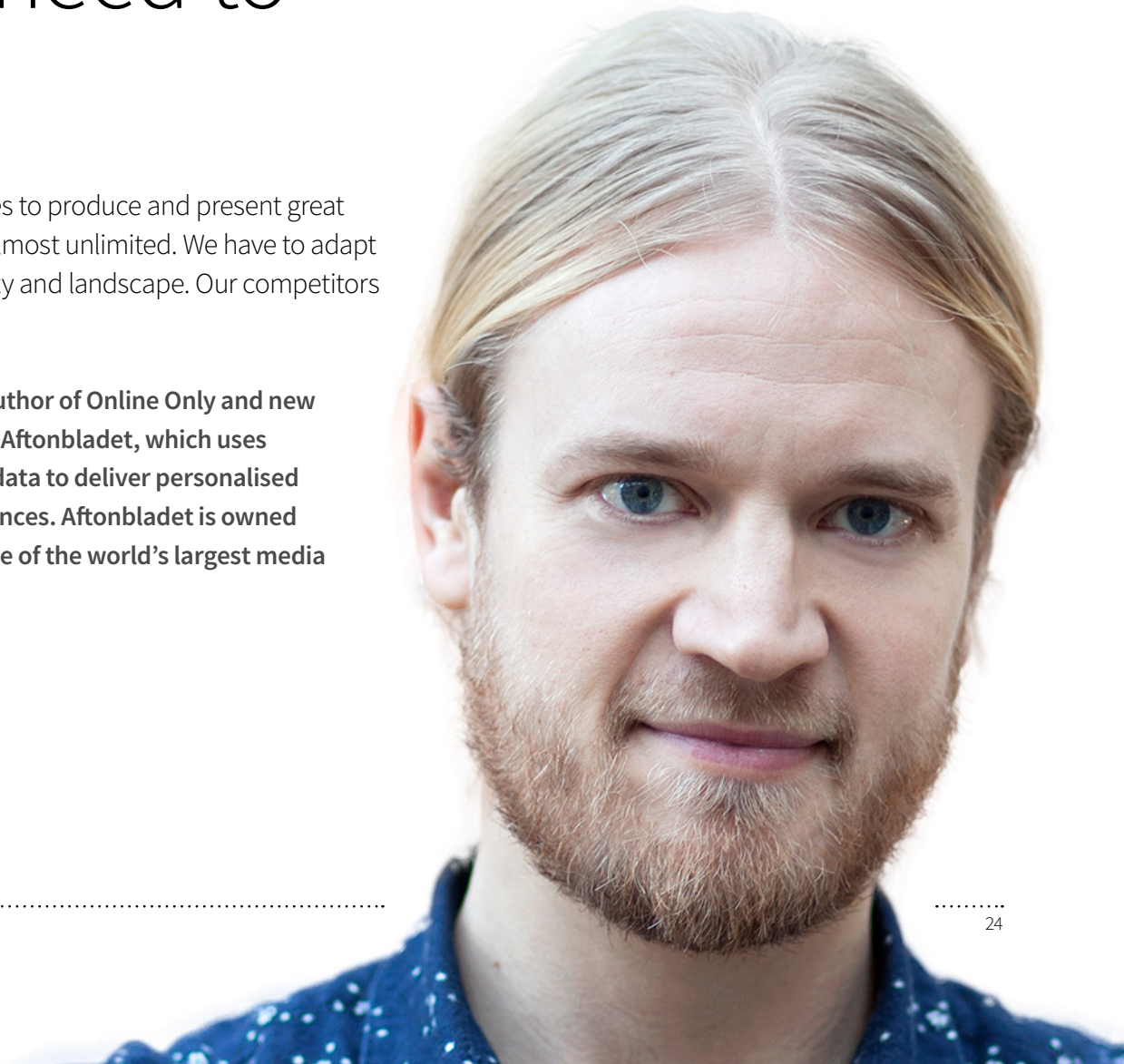
# Nostalgic journalists need to look ahead

I can definitely see robots playing a larger role in news journalism in the near future. And I do not think it is bad for journalists (or our audience). In a dream world, robots and algorithms will take care of reporting simple news such as weather, stock markets and (petty) crimes, the latter based on information provided by the police. It can also help us edit front pages. And journalists can focus on, well, doing journalism that robots cannot do.

Journalists are slow to accept change. And so are media owners. They have let nostalgia stand in the way of developing new business models and formats. Many journalists say they fear the death of print, but I can't understand why. Online,

the opportunities to produce and present great journalism are almost unlimited. We have to adapt to this new reality and landscape. Our competitors sure have.

**Martin Schori, author of *Online Only* and new foreign editor of Aftonbladet, which uses algorithms and data to deliver personalised content to audiences. Aftonbladet is owned by Schibsted, one of the world's largest media houses.**



# The journalist becomes entrepreneur

Some nine of ten respondents said media companies will hire more freelancers than full-time journalists. The cost cutting is necessary due to decreasing advertising revenues and a higher demand for more content. Many media publishers see reducing personnel as the only way out. Consequently, many journalists see a decline in the quality of journalism. Lastly, 75% believe that a journalist, as a person, will become his or her own media.

What would be different in 5 years time?	Definitely true	To a certain extent	Definitely not true	I don't know
A journalist will need to have more than just writing skills	78%	19%	2%	1%
Media companies would hire more freelancers	43%	46%	6%	5%
Quality of journalism will decline	22%	52%	20%	6%
Journalists, as a person, will become their own media	23%	53%	11%	13%
Native content would be more widely accepted	23%	49%	9%	19%
Native content will drive the media revenue	19%	46%	13%	22%
Native content will replace advertising	5%	34%	36%	25%
Journalists will be replaced by robots	2%	27%	63%	8%

“All journalists working today need to know something about the freelance business because it’s such a large part of the business.”

- Deborah Blum, Director, MIT’s Knight Science Journalism program

# Follow the money

The journalists have a great deal of faith in the current business models. Nearly 70% believe that publishers and media companies will hold the fort and continue to be their employer. There is a big confidence in the status quo despite digital disruptions shaking well-known business models, including the media's.

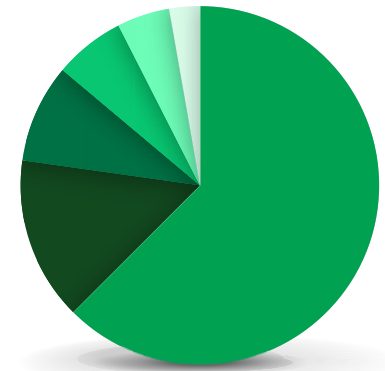
The growing fear of freelancers replacing full-term employees could be insubstantial. Different business models are entering the market, albeit

the numbers are still fairly small: crowd funding and micro-payments are considered options, and almost one tenth consider having their own subscription audience.

**“If it’s done right, journalists will become their own media. People want to follow people they know and trust.”**

*Comment from the survey*

**Who will be paying for your services in 5 years time?**



**69%**

**Media / Publishers**

- Brands
- Subscription Audience
- Micro-payments
- Philanthropy
- Crowdfunding



# Methodology of survey and key questions

Mynewsdesk conducts a large quantitative survey annually to examine trends in PR and journalism. We wanted to know this year journalists' expectations about the future.

Led by Julia Tan, International Partnerships & Content Manager at Mynewsdesk, the project commenced in late February. A quantitative survey was conducted amongst journalists from US, UK, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Australia, Canada and Singapore. The data was then compiled and analysed. We went through more than a hundred pages of comments and then interviewed experts from the field to discuss and interpret the results. Their opinions are based on

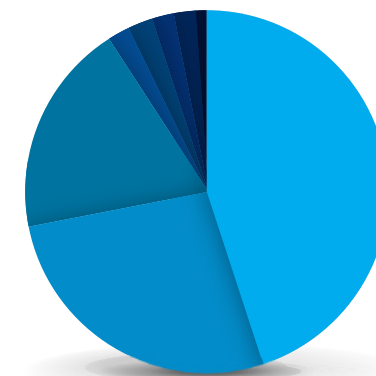
many years of experience – the majority had more than 13 years of experience – and are included in this report.

Although the journalists were spread around the world, the replies showed many common denominators; a journalist is no longer only a writer, most journalists also handled social media accounts (60%) and photography (51%).

## Experienced editors participated

Almost half were editors and they were truly knowledgeable and experienced, with 67% having more than 13 years of experience and 17% having more than 8 years.

## What's your work title?



- Editor, Editor-in-chief
- Reporter
- Other
- Columnist
- Blogger
- Presenter / Anchor / DJ / VJ
- Sub Editor
- Producer

## Where do they work?

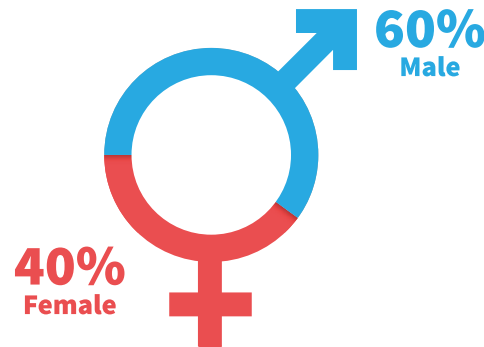
The majority of respondents (63%) work within print media. Only 15% work with online media, and 8% with TV and radio. Bloggers have typically been shunned by the journalism profession for years, yet it is surprising to see that they are present, even if only by 2%.

The male – female ratio is similar across the countries surveyed: approximately 60% male and 40% female. The exception was Germany where 68% of the journalists were male and 32% female. Sweden had the most even ratio of journalists, 53% were male and 47% were female.

## Education is important, but not essential

Half of the journalists surveyed have a formal education in journalism, while 40% hold an education in another field. Only the remaining 10% said they were ‘self-made’ journalists. The only country that differed greatly was Germany: only 3% confessed to being ‘self-made’ journalists with no formal education.

## Gender Distribution



## Length of experience:

Less than 3 years	3%
3 - 8 years	13%
8 - 13 years	17%
13 - 18 years	15%
More than 18 years	52%

## Background

Formal Education	50%
Other Education	39%
Self made	11%

## What kind of media do you primarily work for:

Magazines & Trade Press	38%
Daily Publications	38%
Online Media	38%
Other	38%
Radio / Podcast	38%
TV	38%
Blog	38%



# Nobody can guarantee journalism in the future

## Journalism today

You can do great journalism with fewer journalists today than you could do in the past. But most news corporations will make less money than in the past with fewer journalists than before.

However, there is no guarantee, no law of nature that ensures journalism. We cannot take for granted that we will have a business model or a political mandate to do journalism in the future. On top of that, the business model for journalism is under pressure due to the digitalisation.

## The future of journalism

If the profession takes its responsibility seriously, I think there is a bright future ahead. If journalists leave it to the business and technology side to deal

with things, the future looks less bright. Journalists assumed much more responsibility in the 19th and early 20th century of their own destiny.

The separation between commercial and editorial content is collapsing, and it may be a painful and troubling transition but it could also be an advantage in the respect that people that make their own living is also captain of their own destiny and have a large influence on their work and the direction of journalism.

**Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Director of Research,  
Reuters Institute, University of Oxford.**



# What are your views on the future of journalism?

**Join the conversation at #journotrends16**

Mynewsdesk makes it easier for brands to tell their stories and helps journalists, bloggers and other influencers to find the stories that are most relevant to them.

To learn more, email Julia Tan, International Partnerships & Content Manager at [julia.tan@mynewsdesk.com](mailto:julia.tan@mynewsdesk.com).



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