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Broadcasting Live Events Transforms Journalistic Inquiry Irrevocably

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When it comes to journalism, the future is already here. Broadcast news on the Internet has changed the global picture so irrevocably that there is no longer a news industry. In fact, the people have taken the keys to the press and are deciding its fate. The audience and so-called users and receivers of broadcast news also have become its producers and creators on virtually every social media platform (Anderson, Bell, and Shirky, 2015).

The implication of this article is that the tools for interactivity between the public and the news media are relatively new but they are more dynamic on the Internet, instant or immediate, less industry-driven and top-heavy, more participatory and democratic. Regardless of technology, the discourse always returns to the value of journalism and the importance of journalistic inquiry.

There need to be journalists making sense of the noise that now threatens to swallow us all so that an order is put to the madness that is the exchange of ideas on social media. Ordinary people just do not have the time, training or inclination to do so.

The time-consuming job of ordering and making sense of the world has essentially been abandoned. The problem is not that journalists are failing to do their jobs, but that they have accepted the fact that no one can. The acceptance is either described as giving up or mere technological transition. It is clear they are not up to the challenge because no one is. Journalists are often maligned by President Trump as an “enemy of the people,” one of many examples of the schism between political involvement and the news media.

The truth is that, at a time when real journalism has never been more crucial to the public sphere, it is interview segments – the easiest type for reporters to prepare and broadcast – that are consuming most of broadcasters’ time and efforts. This trend was seen in 2013 when Pew Research Center reported that at at least three cable channels, coverage of live events fell 30% from 2007 to 2012 while interview segments, which require fewer resources and can be scheduled ahead of time, were up 31%. It all adds up to a lazier news industry that is sparser, understaffed and less prepared to investigate hard stories, provide coverage of political or social trends, or question authorities.

As early as the fall of 2013, Global Media Journal reported that nearly one-third of the respondents (31%) had deserted a news outlet because it no longer provided the news and information they expected (<http://stateofthedia.org>, 2013).

So, while the landscape for news becomes more complex and unwieldy, journalists and journalistic education also have failed to keep up with it. This is really an added dilemma that encapsulates the whole problem because untrained operators mean very thin guidance is available to support the public as it tries to understand itself.

Just a few years after the aforementioned Global Media Journal study, a survey in the UK showed people check their phones within 15 minutes of waking up. At the same time, the public's demand for clearheaded journalism is the cause for the explosion of real-time informational exchanges on social media globally which has meant that news is becoming increasingly difficult for broadcast journalists to define and disseminate. For the most part, what counts as live video news is still the same, yet there is just much more of it to evaluate, order and investigate.

Just because teenagers are tossing gallons of milk down supermarket aisles does not mean this is important news. This is to say that events on social media are less about civics and more about odd behavior and horseplay.

The use of digital devices for live news coverage often does not occur to students even though they are carrying a veritable journalist's toolkit in their back pockets with the capacity to produce high-quality video reports (Berkey-Gerard and Garyantes, 2015). The disparity of reporting quality shows that journalism is a state of mind and it is by no means automatic. Thus, while the mechanism of live broadcasting is easy and fluid with modern technology, it takes an understanding of what counts as news to be a reporter. Moreover, this understanding of reporting has very little to do with technology or any supposed digital device.

In fact, the better mobile devices become for the collection and quick distribution of news, the more training and education in journalistic ethical practices, norms and newsgathering techniques will become necessary. A quick glance at social media, even just at twitter.com and facebook.com, demonstrates that there is very little news present, particularly when one delves into personal pages, social networks and the ordinary habits of day-to-day living. The fact is that the effectiveness of live streaming may depend entirely on the strength of the receiver's system for viewing what the sender is offering and, subsequently, how digitally involved the receiver is (Ha Thi, T. T., Won, Y., & Kim, J., 2017). However, as the interactivity among users continues to improve and evolve, this is less of a dilemma or impediment. So, as previously mentioned, the issue again returns to the quality and importance of journalism. Perhaps this debate over improved journalistic standards was always evident, outlasting changes in technology and format generationally. Except now changes in journalistic standards are more obvious than in recent history because of the immersive social media platforms that present news in real-time.

An international study conducted in 12 languages received more than 2,700 responses from journalists and newsroom managers in 130 countries. This study found that journalists suffer from a global lack of trust that is hitting news professionals in Eurasia and North America while this lack of trust is even more pronounced in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. The importance of this result cannot be overstated because it means, while their jobs are critical to the public's negotiation of news and so-called journalistic truth, journalism and journalists are simply not embraced by large demographics of the world.

We know that greater participation by social media users in news can mean that more opinion seeps into the content of professional journalistic reports of current events. As a result, the distinction between professional journalism and blogging is continually blurred. It is from this gradual process that makes the news, even in distorted forms, more immediately accessible and directed to certain interest groups. This means that the balance between quality reporting and immediacy becomes harder to distinguish, and decisions surrounding news must be achieved at break-neck speed if they are to be a factor in reporting at all. Because members of the public are joining the ranks of journalists, whether the supposed professionals like it or not, actual news on the Internet is less defined and competes with entertainment.

The spread of undefined ethics in journalism on social media cannot be a good development. Considerate decisions take time, thought and debate; this is the lifeblood of democracy. Great haste can lead to storytelling that is entirely inaccurate, so-called fake news. In a circular fashion, this causes even more distrust of the news media as a whole and a profound lack of insight needed for public decision-making.

The fact is Facebook captured more than half of mobile digital display advertising while no other company controlled more than 10 percent of the mobile market. If you follow the money, Facebook was an advertising powerhouse in 2017 and no other firm even came close.

What this could indicate about the power dynamic of the private industry while Facebook also confronts the idea that it allowed Russians to undermine U.S. elections is mindboggling. The state of affairs could threaten the very fabric of democracy which relies on the Fourth Estate for an informed electorate.

No fact found by this author can offer any sense of renewed hope to traditional journalists looking for a return of gatekeepers or the proverbial genie of progress to be shoved unceremoniously back into the lamp. Instead, what an analysis of live streaming broadcast news sites and uses shows is that there is no turning back the clock. Digital journalists will be forced to share the live streaming space with everyone else. The importance of paying attention and sorting what news rises to the top of our consciousness as more relevant will continue to be an essential skill of good journalistic performance and practice.

Live streaming does not make journalists' jobs easier. If anything, the disorder of the practice just brings more attention to the disorder of real life and ordinary people's use of smartphones. Because real-time communication adds exponentially to the number of windows available to reporters seeking a glimpse inside American life, it just adds complexity and increased story ideas for journalists trying to outpace a highly-competitive machine algorithmically biased to encourage misinformation.

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Live Broadcasting on the Web

Compiled by Betty Kellogg -- Associate Director, Library Collections and User Experience

Articles and Reports (in alphabetical order by author)

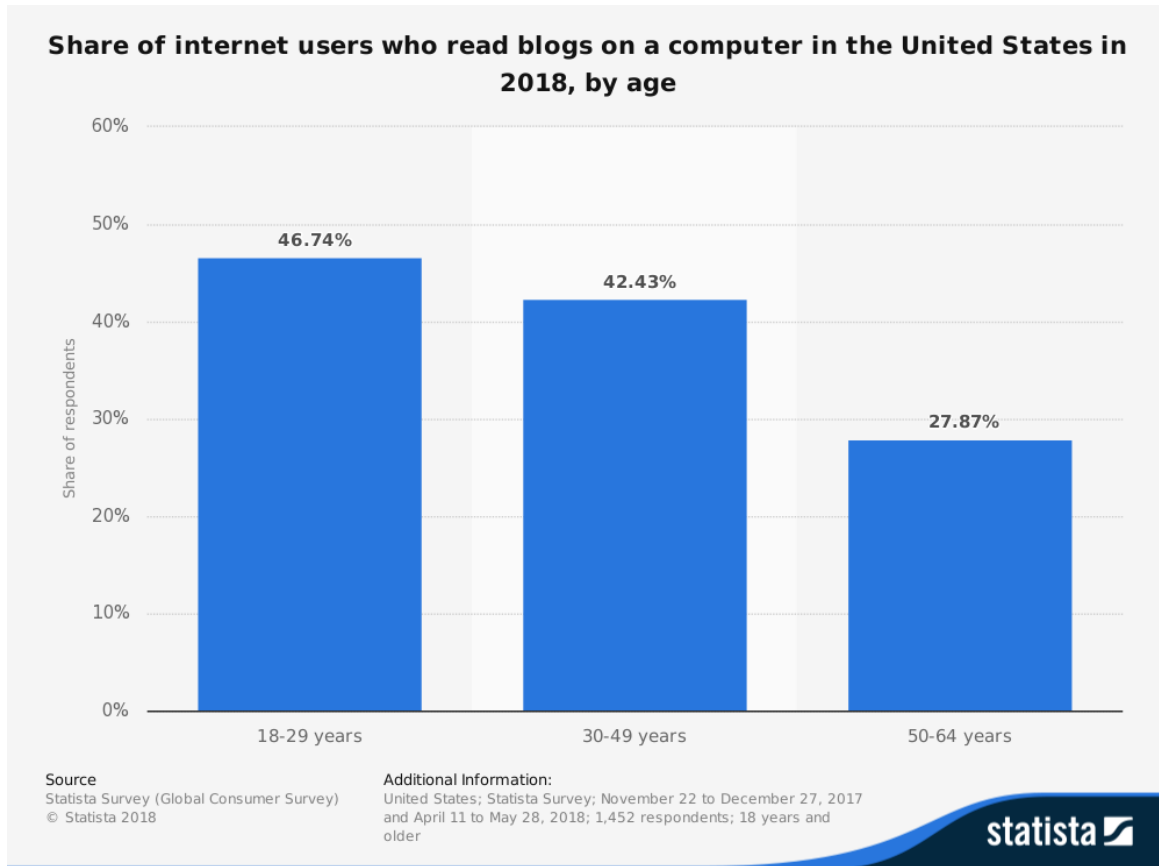
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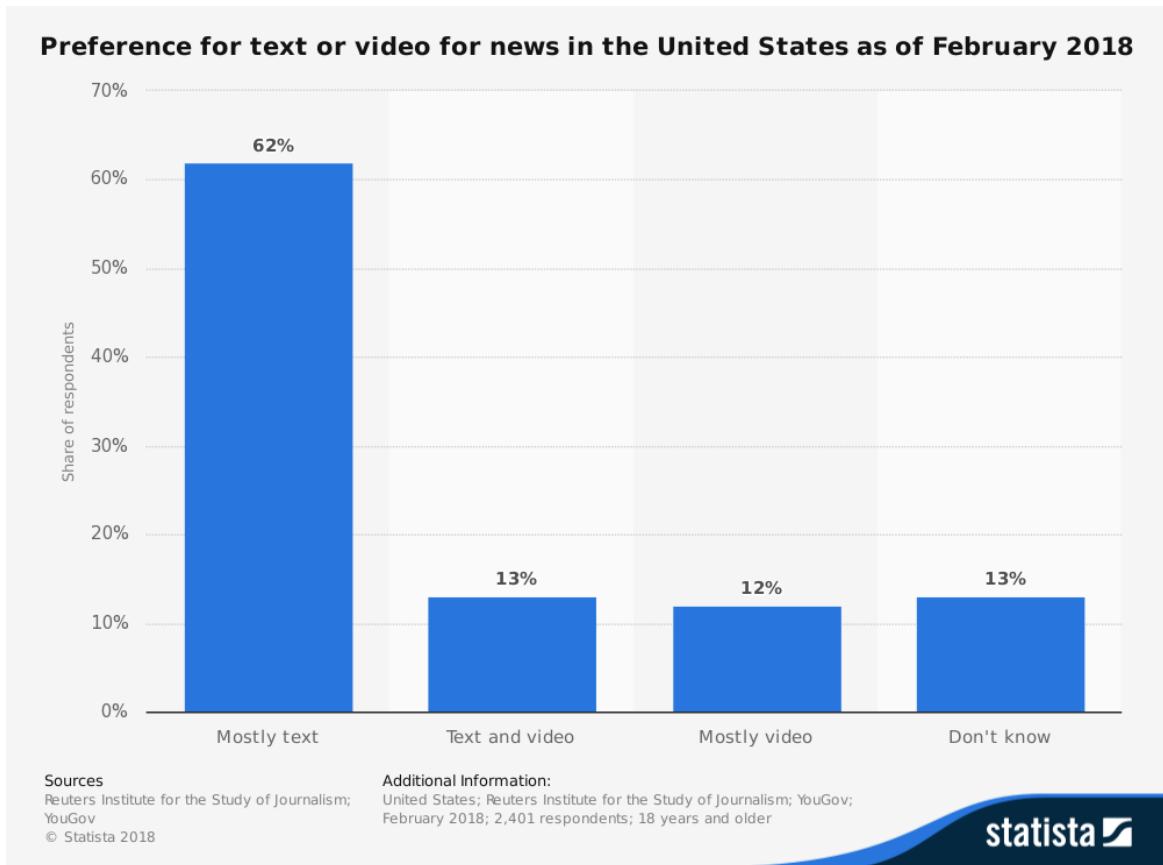
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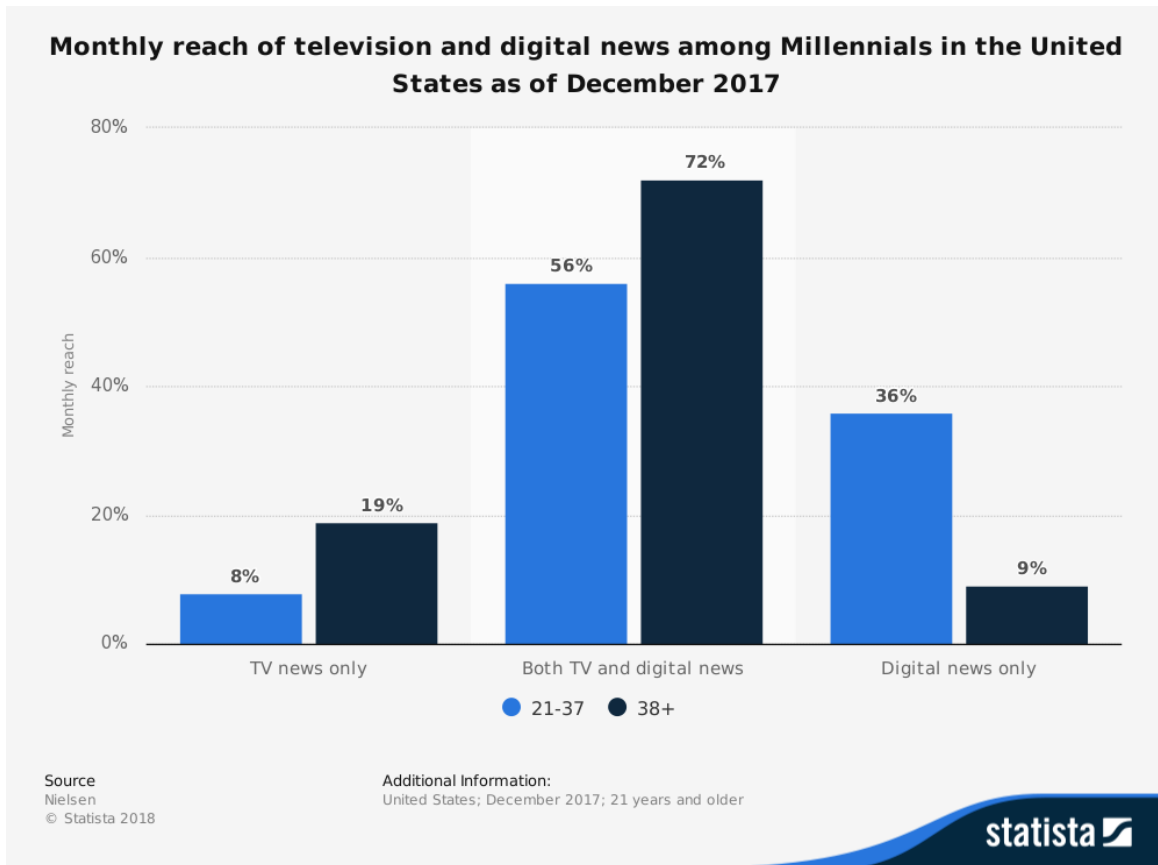
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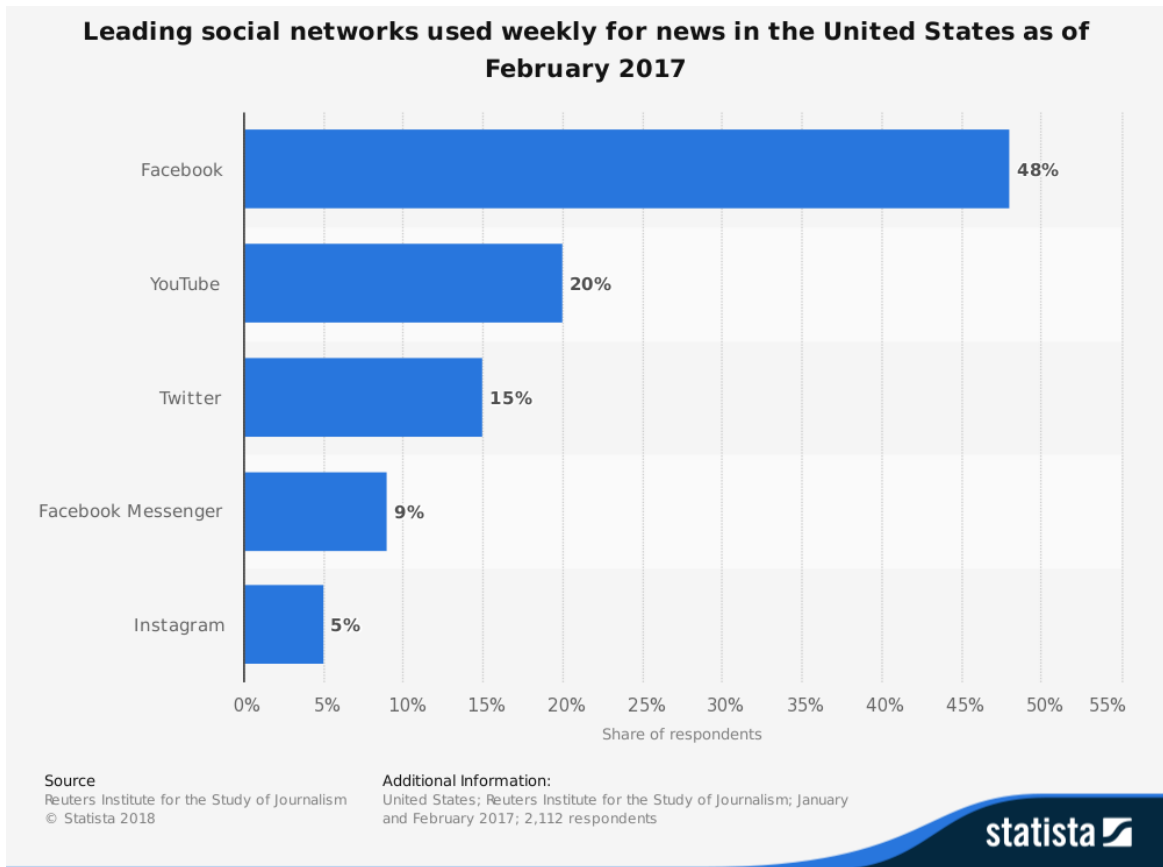
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