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White Paper

Decisive Leadership in an Increasingly Complex Media Landscape

February 2024

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Foreword

“This White Paper identifies a pressing need for decisive leadership - both within individual media brands but also at a cross sector level”

“I was delighted to welcome 23,924 attendees at Global Media Congress 2023 - media professionals, experts, specialists, students, and interested visitors - to our second-ever Global Media Congress in Abu Dhabi in November 2023, hosted by the ADNEC Group in strategic partnership with the Emirates News Agency (WAM). The diverse and incisive perspectives offered by such a global cross-section of the industry have formed the basis of this second Global Media Congress White Paper.

A number of crucial themes emerged across the three days of the 2023 Global Media Congress. What is the place for artificial intelligence, not least generative AI, in our industry, and how has this impacted our ongoing fight against disinformation? How are media brands understanding audiences through data, especially younger generations with fast-evolving preferences? Has sports journalism transformed beyond recognition, and for the better? And, following a successful COP28 in the UAE, how has the role of environmental journalism evolved, and what responsibility does the media have in the collective fight against climate change?

Fundamentally, in an increasingly complex and diverse global media landscape, this White Paper identifies a pressing need for

decisive leadership - both within individual media brands but also at a cross-sector level. Such leadership must be brave and ambitious, prepared to embrace new technologies and ensure the media industry keeps up with the pace of innovation. Decisive leadership also entails tackling complex issues such as the state of the environment head-on, strenuously ensuring credibility and objectivity whilst also affording audiences agency in how to tackle and understand these issues.

This White Paper explores eight perspectives on these key issues, based on the anonymised contributions and insights of hundreds of participants at last year's Global Media Congress. It also offers four expert insights from leading thinkers on these subjects, which are published here with the authors' permission in full.

I hope that you enjoy reading our White Paper and that it proves to be the basis for a stimulating and positive debate on future for the media industry. I furthermore hope to welcome you from 26 - 28 November 2024 at the third edition of the Global Media Congress in Abu Dhabi.”

His Excellency Mohammed Jalal Al Rayssi

Director-General of the Emirates News Agency (WAM) | February 2024

01

AI in the Media: A Sea-Change or Another Wave in the Tide of Innovation?



In 2024, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is both making headlines and, quite literally, making headlines. AI has swept through international media discourse, with some heralding the technology as the answer to a media industry beset by challenges. Others are quick to emphasise the potentially existential threat it poses to not just the traditional operations of newsrooms but wider society as a result. While some are already reaping its benefits, many, particularly those in established news organisations, are adopting a more cautious approach. Yet it is certain that AI is here to stay. The question therefore is what does this mean for the future of the media industry?

The role of AI in newsrooms is a subject of considerable debate – and for good reason. Much of the media's perceptions around AI centre on its risks: it is widely acknowledged that it presents existential dangers not just to newsrooms, but society more widely. And yet its opportunities are unquestionable. As one participant at the Global Media Congress put it, 'AI is a paradox: it is both the biggest risk but has unimaginable benefits'.

AI's potential to make lasting, positive and transformative change to a struggling industry cannot be ignored. AI may well play a profound role in ushering in a new and improved era in the media sector, creating streamlined operations and giving practitioners more time to focus on what one event participant termed 'the human stories that matter most'. From research, to identifying disinformation, to audience analytics and more, AI tools can strengthen the bond between writer and reader in ways never seen before.

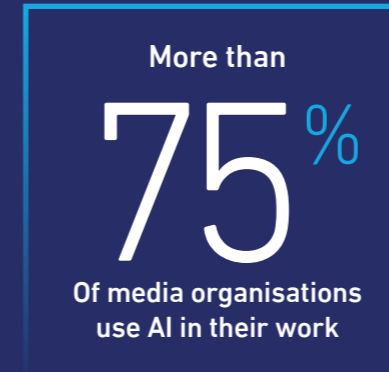
Contradictory interpretations do exist however, railing against the dehumanising aspect of AI's role in the newsroom. One viral example from last year saw The Columbus Dispatch newspaper in Ohio, USA forced to pause the use of AI for its sports writing after several articles were panned for their robotic and awkward style. This came as the newspaper's owner had, in just four years since a merger with another publisher in 2019, shed almost half its workforce whilst investing significantly in automation and AI tools.

It was generally agreed at the Global Media Congress that AI does – in one way or another – present a risk to jobs and livelihoods within the media industry. A pan-European news organisation founder cited a study which found that as many as 49 percent of media practitioners are afraid of losing their job. A study by Goldman Sachs echoed these concerns, finding that in the next 10 years as many as 300 million jobs globally are at risk of automation as a result of AI. Inevitably, no industry will be able to avoid loss in some form or another. But as many media practitioners made clear, this doomsday interpretation lacks nuance. How this change in the job market manifests is of course of paramount importance, but is not terminal: while AI will take some jobs away completely, the reality is that it will also free journalists from certain mundane tasks.

As an extension of this, there is a clear thread that runs throughout interpretations of AI's role in the news: that humans continue to have a critical role to play. Many, such as the prominent AI academic, speak to the importance of preserving

the ethical core of organisations in the face of new and emerging technologies: 'Protect what your values were before. Human added value needs to be protected'. He went on to say, 'It's not going to write an exquisite 2000-word feature, the tools you use have to be reliable and need a human touch'. Others echoed these remarks, and their role in ameliorating the practice of journalism – it has already been demonstrated that AI can be used to give greater autonomy to journalists. Indeed, a national broadcast journalist spoke to AI's role beyond generating content arguing, 'By using instant translation tools it means that journalists can focus on real journalism, real content, rather than these repetitive tasks'.

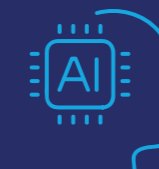
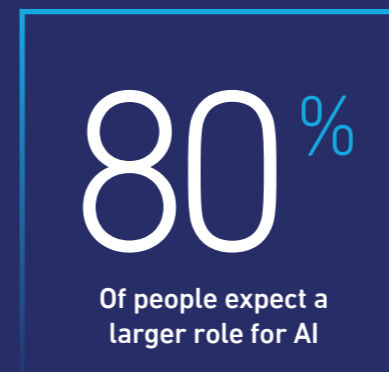
Ultimately, despite the headlines, speakers at the Global Media Congress delivered a nuanced view of the role of AI in the media sector. AI is, and will become, further entrenched in the operations of newsrooms. But what remains clear is that the human element will remain essential – and, for the moment, irreplaceable. The industry needs to move with the times and make the most of the opportunity this technology presents. As one participant concluded: 'Do what you do best, but with AI'.



More than **75%** of media organisations use AI in at least one of the areas across the value chain of news gathering, production, and distribution.



1/3 of industry figures believe their organisations are ready to deal with the challenges of AI adoption in journalism, but almost half said they were only partially ready or not ready yet.



Despite this, around **80%** of those surveyed expect a larger role for AI in their newsrooms in the future.

02

The Revival of Print Journalism?



Since the turn of the century, many media critics have suggested that 'print journalism is dead'. With the prolific spread of online news and the rapidly changing nature of news consumption, it can be hard not to argue that print journalism's days are numbered. Yet, while there is no question that major print players have fallen by the wayside, or moved to digital only, some industry figures argue that there is light at the end of the tunnel in print journalism – not only light, but real commercial opportunity.

As one experienced news anchor speaking at the Global Media Congress posited, 'we live in a world where we are overloaded with content'. 'News fatigue', or 'Media fatigue' as some have termed it, presents an existential risk to the media industry. Indeed, studies have found that particularly when it comes to morally charged topics, the more exposure an individual has to news relating to this subject, the more apathetic they can become to the subject matter. Should this trend continue unabated, the media industry as we know it may be facing a terminal diagnosis.

The challenges of print journalism are well known, with many participants at the GMC Media Future Labs remarking on the changing nature of news consumption as the levers behind this shift. As an industry, we must accept that things have changed with regard to the tidal shift towards digital news consumption: more and more people are mobile, and as such will consume news on demand and on the move. However, while it is undoubtedly the case that in many countries digital news's prominence continues to increase, this is not necessarily a global reality.

A prominent Indian journalist offered a counterargument, suggesting that in India a more nuanced picture exists: 'Print will survive for another 20 years. Print is growing in some regions, decreasing in others: people rely on print for analysis and detail'. The same journalist went on to insist that the commercial argument, that print no longer presents an economical viable model for the industry, wasn't necessarily a global trend either: 'Print still contributes to 27 percent of ad revenue in media in India'. So is India bucking a global trend? Studies have found that the print advertising market continues to decline year on year, with the global print market expected to decline from a total of \$31.84 billion in 2021 to a projected \$28.40 billion in 2026.

Perhaps the decline of print is a façade behind which an existential problem lies: the decline in audiences across all mediums. A 2022 study by the Reuters Institute of Journalism found that interest in news had fallen sharply across markets, from 63 percent in 2017 to 51 percent in 2022. A trend which, if it continues, spells a direct threat to the future of the industry. This downturn is in part due to the changing nature of modern audiences, particularly younger audiences. A former News Editor remarked at the Global Media Congress: 'Think about the audience you're trying to target: young people are the audience of the future. Most young people find the news very depressing, and they can do nothing about it. Research has shown most of them want a glimmer of hope, they want some agency'.

The event heard a broad consensus on the solution to this problem: a highly focused approach to targeting audiences. While habits are inevitably changing, the style and delivery of content remains essential, regardless of format. The industry must be careful not to patronise a new audience by making broad assumptions about their behaviour. Few would dispute that young people know what they want and deserve to be heard. This is where physical media can come in: it allows people to feel like they belong to something. The decline of print media has potentially impacted coverage of, and audience engagement in, local subjects and issues, with knock-on effects on community cohesion.

Simply put, the media industry needs audiences to actively engage in content. Stories have relevance for everyone, journalists just need to take the time to learn to draw these audiences in an authentic and appropriate way. The future of print journalism lies in this audience-centric approach. The opportunity is there and in more ways than one.

The founder of a Nigerian print magazine made a compelling case during a Media Future Labs debate for how print journalism's place in the modern media landscape lies in filling the gaps where international legacy media has failed: 'Foreign publications have a lot of credibility, but don't have the focus'. Local knowledge is the key to developing and retaining a local audience – journalists need to be more specific about paying attention to an individual country's media landscape, and what is required to grow it.

This view, that audiences are responding enthusiastically to localised stories, was echoed by

others working in this 'new era' of print journalism. This concept has an essential role to play in bridging the divide between audience and publication – the necessity to have local journalists reporting on their countries and cultures, that they know they best. Their stories must resonate with local audiences, while simultaneously appealing to their global interests.

Indeed, in an increasingly polarised global media landscape, there is a certain appeal to the 'back to basics' nature of print journalism. People have a certain affinity with tradition – much in the way that books have survived the invention and mass take-up of e-readers. Similarly, print is sensorial, you can touch it and just that is enough to provide the reader with a different and more immersive experience. Indeed, to take this a step further, print has historically been and continues to be much more than just news output: print, in its aesthetic quality and interpretation of society, for many represents an aspiration lifestyle. The simple notion of taking the best from the past, and bringing it to a modern audience, continues to resonate with people across the globe.

So, are we seeing a revival of print journalism? Modern distribution methods, especially online news, show no sign of changing course. Digital is of course increasingly dominant. And yet there is a definitive spark of optimism for traditional print news. Partially turning the received wisdom of the industry on its head, the next generation of media leaders are also looking back in order to move forward.



Total US Daily Newspaper Circulation

20.9M

In 2022

the estimated total US daily newspaper circulation was **20.9 million** for both weekday and Sunday, down **8%** and **10%** respectively from 2021.

Within this total circulation figure, weekday print circulation decreased **13%** and Sunday print circulation decreased **16%** from the previous year.

16%

Decrease of Sunday print circulation

A decline of 27% over

5 Years



Forecasts have found that global newspaper advertising (print and online) will fall from **US\$49.2bn** in 2019 to **US\$36bn** in 2024, a decline of **27%** over five years.



Expert Insight:

Disinformation in the Media & International Relations

By **Geoffrey Miller**

International Geopolitical Analyst

It is no exaggeration to say that the world is becoming a less peaceful place. Wars in Ukraine and Gaza in particular have captured global media attention over the past two years. The human cost and devastation from these two conflicts alone is bad enough. But there are many other examples of unrest from around the world that do not attract as much international media interest or do so only for shorter periods of time – think Nagorno-Karabakh, Ethiopia, Sudan and Myanmar, for example. Sadly, the list goes on.

In fact, the 2023 edition of the Global Peace Index, an annual scorecard published by Australia's Institute for Economics and Peace, showed that conflict-related deaths have reached their highest levels since the 1994 Rwandan Genocide – eclipsing the previous peak reached during the Syrian civil war. Average levels of 'global peacefulness' declined for the ninth year in a row, according to the thinktank. And more and more conflicts feature an international dimension, as opposed to being pure civil wars. In this case, the trend is not our friend. There's no doubt that we're seeing an escalation in state-to-state conflict.

Perhaps understandably, countries that are not currently at war are now preparing for worst-case scenarios. Defence spending is now soaring around the world, reaching a new record high of \$US2.24 trillion in 2022,

according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. While high-tech weaponry is important, shaping the narrative is perhaps even more central to any military campaign. As the old saying goes, the first casualty of war is the truth.

During the Cold War, newspapers and pamphlets were often used by intelligence agencies to feed disinformation campaigns. Some of these propaganda efforts only became known years or even decades later. Fast forward to 2024 and we can see some parallels with the Cold War in today's new era of geopolitical competition. But there are also key differences – starting with speed.

Social media platforms are the new frontlines in the battle over the truth. Our feeds are awash with graphic images, videos and reports from the world's battlefields. Information spreads faster than it has ever before – and on the internet, anyone can be a publisher. We probably won't realise it at the time, but some of the most authentic-looking and credible content may well turn out to be the product of carefully orchestrated, sophisticated state-driven propaganda campaigns. What are the solutions?

The first step is simply to raise awareness of the diverse range of ways in which disinformation can exist. This doesn't call for paranoia or conspiracy theories, but simply for

old-fashioned caution and common sense – in the same way that we have become more wary of online scammers. Public education campaigns may help. Of course, the main objective of disinformation is to gradually influence public opinion. That makes it quite different from the average criminal enterprise hunting for internet banking passwords via spam e-mails.

Sophisticated propaganda can be very convincing indeed, even for those who are sensitised to it. That makes reading widely and consuming news from a range of sources even more important. At the institutional level, we can also support public broadcasting – including fact-checking initiatives. News media organisations can help to combat disinformation campaigns by continuing to distribute their reporting and analysis where the audience is. That means maintaining a presence on every major social media platform, rather than withdrawing in response to perceptions of toxicity.

It is essential to remain 'in the arena' to counter and combat the spread of disinformation. Above all, we need to stay optimistic. Disinformation in international relations is nothing new. And thanks to the internet and smartphones, we now have more access to knowledge and a greater ability to verify information than ever before. The solution is quite literally within our hands.

03

A New Way of Understanding Audiences



Successful media brands have always sought to understand their audiences. But are audience characteristics now so far from being homogenous, even within distinct age or demographic groups, and changing so quickly, that it's a losing battle for the industry? There are still clear and observable trends for the sector to get its head around. We are dealing with the most socially conscious and aware audience in history, one that demands agency in the story. And even if the trend of participatory journalism has temporarily stalled, the media is more integrated into young generations' lifestyle choices than ever before.

Of much debate at the recent Global Media Congress were the fast-changing characteristics of news consumers, particularly audiences under 25. While news consumption habits have always changed over time, the pace of that change currently is unprecedented. Reuters Institute's highly valuable annual digital news report paints a stark picture of audiences' weak connection with specific news brands, a radical shift to video-based content distributed via TikTok or YouTube, and declining trust in the news.

Introducing a discussion on how to leverage a socially conscious audience, one moderator at the Global Media Congress highlighted how, in a world where we are overloaded with content, 'People just need time to think and reflect' on the news. But so much of contemporary society is based around the exact opposite: speed, mass (and contradictory) information flows, and constant distractions.

The future of news media depends on the industry's ability to keep audiences actively engaged in their

content; hence many legacy brands have recently moved into popular trends such as podcasting or video explainers on social media. It's a process that is best led at a localised level, whereby local journalists and news executives are given space to report on their countries and cultures in the way that best fits those consumers. This may seem experimental, but following audience trends is an existential issue, and must be demanded of industry leaders. Not so long ago, a digital-only approach was seen as risky, but it has paid off for many brands.

Younger news audiences are highly mobile. They will consume news on demands, when it suits them, and often on the move via a mobile device. And, moreover, they are more socially conscious than ever. Yet, according to industry insiders, there is a strong sense that young audiences are quickly turned off by distressing news. The chapter in this Paper on environmental journalism provides a pressing case study on this tendency. Younger audiences actively dislike feeling like they can do nothing about a given situation and it appears would rather switch off altogether and turn to another more positive distraction out of the millions available to them. What they're seeking are glimmers of hope, and above all a sense of having some agency to make a difference.

Of course, in some parts of the world, the primary concerns of audiences young and old can be more fundamental: food, clothing, shelter. But the demand for agency – being part of the story but also a potential part of the solution – is increasingly a constant. The future of news media will depend in large part on how the industry can help audiences not only understand societal challenges but also point the way towards a productive response. Part of this effort will entail channelling young people’s creative instincts. It is often said that ‘everyone is a creator now’, and while many people choose not to publish their thoughts, photos, and videos every day, many millions do – and they are all contributing to a bank of readily available information. Smart brands are already incorporating this content into their news offer in ways that go far beyond a simple comment section on an article.

In this way, the news in a traditional sense is becoming more than just a service but part of young people’s lifestyle choices. Reinforcing this trend may be a critical part of ensuring future survival and success for news outlets. The most recent Reuters Institute report speaks to this when it highlights how many audiences now pay much more attention to celebrities, influencers, and social media personalities rather than journalists or official sources.

As explored elsewhere in this Paper, there are distinct risks associated with the popularisation of information to a global legion of citizen journalists and content creators, amplified by highly paid social media influencers and celebrity endorsers. It may help in making reporting more relatable and more accessible, but it generates a huge challenge for

fact-checking and verification.

It is not sufficient to simply understand young audiences, or to tap into their social consciousness; the industry must also help educate them to be circumspect in the information they engage with and share to their networks. Given how much the public seems to demand immediacy – indeed how we have all gotten used to finding immediate answers via our smartphones – it is not surprising that young people are not prioritising fact-checking.

The prevalence of digital news and the raft of data available to news executives means that we, as an industry, should understand our consumers better than ever and respond to their demands. The competition for attention though – with social media channels, influencers, independent content creators, conspiracy theorists, ‘alternative facts’, whatever it may be – is vast. Nonetheless, there is a clear avenue for the media industry to thrive and that is through providing a channel for a socially conscious young generation to obtain reliable information and give them agency, lending them not just a voice in the debate but also the answers so they can do act on the issues at hand.



Only 22% of global digital news consumers start their news journey with a specific website or app, with many preferring to start with social media or news aggregators.



At the same time, **only 30%** of global digital news consumers say that having stories selected for them by an algorithm is a good way to receive news.



The proportion of news consumers across all markets who say they sometimes or often avoid the news altogether is close to an all-time high of **36%**.



22%

Use a specific app or website for news



30%

Use an algorithm for selecting news



36%

Avoid the news



04

Leveraging the Power of Women's Sports on and off the Field



Women's role within sports and sports journalism has shown significant evolution in recent years despite historic stagnation and barriers to entry. With an enormous and still-growing audience potential, women's sports are experiencing a major boom, and the world's sports media is looking to seize this moment. The business of women's sports is growing, and female sports journalists are pulling major audiences. What happens next remains an open question, but there is a clear move towards the role that technology can play in levelling the playing field and capitalising on this global momentum.

With the development of new technologies, social networks, and new communication mediums, the structure of the sports media industry is naturally changing, along with the way viewers consume content. Technological changes have allowed for audiences to have much greater access and influence on media content and its creation process. This, together with socio-political changes that many societies experienced in recent decades, has opened the sports media space for people that were previously marginalised by the industry. The transformative power of the online space, as a growing medium for dissemination of information, has unleashed unlimited possibilities for the development and evolution of sports journalism across the globe.

Examining the legacy of the sports media industry and the static nature of traditional communication channels such as television and print media, it is not difficult to understand why sports journalism stagnated for decades. In the past, sports journalists exclusively focused on the sporting event itself with little accompanying content or in-depth analysis.

Reporting was the primary role of a sports journalist, and the dissemination of content concluded at the same moment when the event itself ended, limiting direct engagement with the audience.

The barriers for women entering the sports media market were significant, even discriminatory. The sports media industry was traditionally seen as a male sphere, with desks dominated by men writing about men's sports and targeting male audiences. This setup directly prevented women sports journalists or other marginalised actors from entering the world of sports journalism. As one prominent female sports journalist from Eastern Europe argued at the Global Media Congress, 'It was difficult to get accepted on national TV as a female journalist in the 1980s and even in the early 1990s. The stigma against women in sports journalism was so persistent in the country that anonymous letters were being sent to my TV station asking why a woman was commenting on sports events.'

Today, women's sports representation on screen is still well below 10 percent in most countries, which makes it difficult for female sports athletes to gain recognition but also for female sports journalists to establish themselves in a male-dominated sports world. However, in recent years, there has been a positive upward trend when it comes to the participation of women in sports and the proportion of women journalists covering them.

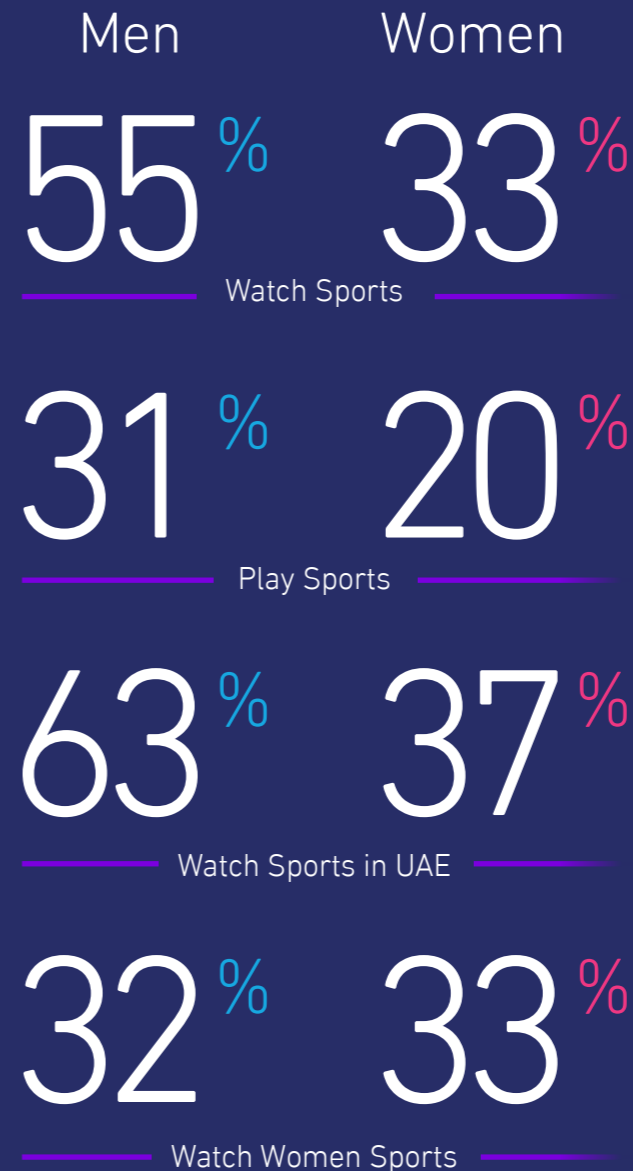
One key indicator of women's growth in mainstream sports is the revenue generated by women's elite sports. Deloitte predicts that in 2024 this revenue will surpass US\$1 billion for the first time, a 300 percent increase from their 2021 predictions. In 2023, there were record-breaking spikes in viewership and attendance at women's sports events around the world. The extraordinary experience of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup was a testament to the continuing improvement in the technical capability of the players, coaches, and referees. Many records were broken, including the record for the strongest penalty kick by England's Chloe Kelly that peaked at 111 km/h, higher than the kick speed of any player in the 2022-2023 men's England Premier League season.

According to a prominent former BBC journalist, 'In 2023, female audiences are engaging more than ever with sports content and are increasingly willing to pay to access it'. The significant potential for the expansion of the women's sports journalism space lies in the uplifting of distinct, original female voices that do not depend on the male-dominated sports environment. One prominent female sports journalist from Europe argued at the GMC that 'Female sports journalists should not try to become men sports journalists', but rather create their own voice. Consequently, the focus of women sports journalism should not be on the fact that a female athlete is participating, but on the outstanding performance each female athlete shows, on and off the court.

Nonetheless, that is not to say that female journalists should only cover female sports, but the more opportunities for female journalists in sport

the more female sports stories will be heard. It is not true that male-dominated sports audiences are not interested in female stories: Coco Gauff's victory at the US Open Final – the culmination of a personal story of resilience and fulfilling dreams in the face of adversity - was the most-watched women's Grand Slam final ever with over a million more viewers than Djokovic's win the same year. A prominent female journalist suggested at the GMC exactly this, that 'focusing on human stories and presenting them up close is something new audiences are looking for'.

This is exactly where the space lies for leveraging the power of women's sports – in creating a genuine and original connection between female athletes and audiences. Female journalists could play a remarkable role in being the catalysts of this connection, and in creating a distinct voice that will not conform to already-existing barriers in sports journalism. In doing so, they should utilise the latest available technologies which do not depend on the control of the traditional male-dominated sports departments and media. In the next chapter of this White Paper, following an expert contribution from Zsuzsa Csisztu, we explore these technologies in more detail.



According to a 2023 YouGov poll

conducted across 18 international markets, **55%** of men are likely to have watched professional men's sports compared to **33%** of women over a one-month period.

At the same time, **31%** of men globally reported taking part in any sporting activity, whether casual or organised, over a one-month period compared to **20%** of women.

Looking at the UAE market, **63%** of men are likely to watch professional men's sports compared to only **37%** of women in the country. Meanwhile, **33%** of women were inclined to watch professional women's sports compared to **32%** of men.





Expert Insight:

Sports Media – An Era of Transformations

By **Zsuzsa Csisztu,**

Journalist, TV Presenter & Former Olympian

The sports media industry has undergone the most extraordinary transformation during the digital media explosion of the past decade. This has primarily been because the best of the sports world is now connected by data, results, and analytics, meaning that data-driven information exchange is more widespread than ever.

Just think of the paradigm shift in Formula 1 television coverage, or the 2023 World Athletics Championships in Budapest. Now viewers can not only see the difference between first and second place in seconds, tenths, or hundredths of a second on the track, but thanks to chip technology built into the track numbers of competitors, we can, with great precision, understand so much more.

Digitalisation leads the potential. This cutting-edge technology can create a more enjoyable media experience for both sports journalists and consumers - however, the secret in some ways lies in the perfect, well-timed placement of the information. As with everything, proportion is important. We need to deliver a different consumer experience via television to that which is provided online, whilst offering more information and interaction on social media platforms and, at the same time, reaching content-specific consumers with podcasts and themed video content on social platforms.

Sports journalists now also have the opportunity to leverage their own social media footprint in order to expand their audiences. A sports journalist's personal branding can be built on a solid foundation if, for example, a well-known face from television sports broadcasting is personally available on their own social media platforms to interact with fans and provide additional information to, say, their most engaged audience, which may only be available to consumers if they pay a fee.

A pyramid is forming in the world of sports media consumers, with those interested in a range of mainstream sports at the bottom and the truly discerning fans who closely follow certain sports or personalities at the top; those who seek personalised, tailor-made information, those who want to be one step closer to their sporting heroes than anyone else. Digitalisation has made this sort of access and information into the world of sports a possibility.

However, there is also another transformation in the industry happening simultaneously: we are seeing a change in the opportunities for female journalists. Sports journalism is one of the last truly male-dominated professions. International Association of Sports Journalists (AIPS) states that there still is a 10-90% gender imbalance in the profession. Nonetheless, the growth in popularity of women's sports across

the world has caused the amount of coverage of women's sport to nearly triple in the last five years - this has opened many doors for women in sports journalism. Particularly in parts of the world where sport has traditionally been less accessible to women, whether that be in terms of participation in or the consumption of sport - and therefore sports media - there is now a growing recognition of the huge potential for women as audiences and consumers.

In the Middle and Far East, including in the Gulf region, it is gratifying to see more and more talented and dedicated female colleagues with a passion for sport being given opportunities in all areas of sports media. Women now do not only have a place in the sports media industry, but they are also able to find their own voice, style and content which need not be similar to their male counterparts.

In an era of unprecedented change in our industry, spearheaded by the advantages the digitalisation of sports media is bringing to both the industry and consumers, there is one thing we must never forget about - the humans behind the athletes.

05

The Role of Technology in Driving Sports Audience Engagement



Technology in sports journalism is fundamentally changing the way audiences interact with media coverage. With real-time analytics and data at the fingertips of media practitioners, sports media is enriching the audience experience. Whether it is chips on players offering live updates or leveraging the power of new technologies to offer fresh perspectives through virtual and augmented reality, sports journalism is undergoing a transformation, bringing with it holistic ways to keep disinterested audiences engaged with the sport as a medium.

It is no secret that new technologies have brought about significant transformations in modern sports journalism. Analytics, data analysis, and the desire to scrutinise every last detail have become integral parts of contemporary sports reporting. It is predicted that technology will play an increasingly prominent role in sports events in the future and that the lines between technology and the real-life event will begin to blur. For example, Video Assistant Referee (VAR) is already actively utilised in football: various sensors are being built into player's gear and on the field, along with cameras that measure speed and precision – all of which are progressively connecting the modern athlete and their challenges to the digital space. Modern sports journalism is adapting to these changes in order to better engage with the modern sports consumer, which has led to the emergence of a type of sports content that was simply unimaginable just a few years ago.

The development of technology in the world of sports has created a host of new communication mediums. In the past, sports journalism was static and limited to mere observation of the factual situation on the field, reporting of results, complemented by minimal analysis and commentary by athletes themselves. According to a prominent former BBC journalist:

'Technological advantages mean a drastic change and new opportunities in the way sports stories are delivered and audiences are engaged'.

Taking football as an example, with the rise of online platforms, the consumption of football content has expanded from traditional media, where people engage with content in real time, to the utilisation of augmented reality and virtual spaces where audiences are able to step into the shoes of their favourite player as well as 'Instagram live where audiences can ask direct questions to athletes.

These consumer patterns have undoubtedly altered the sports journalism industry. Gone are the days of reading long articles detailing the events of a match the night before. Today, journalists are increasingly turning to platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram to showcase their content in real-time. For example, it is not uncommon to see sports journalists broadcasting live on Instagram during a half-time break to speak directly with their audiences and hear their thoughts on the game. Instagram Stories, Reels, and YouTube Shorts have allowed sports journalists to deliver a sports story within seconds.

A prominent football journalist and podcaster noted at the Global Media Congress that the attention span of younger generations, who spend most of their days on smart handheld devices, has shortened to the extent that the content they engage with needs to be limited to minutes, or even seconds, to retain their attention.

According to research by Vizrt and conducted by OnePoll, 74 percent of Gen Z watch sports content on social media, and 80 percent watch sports on their phones while on-the-go.

However, only 58 percent of them watch a match from start to end, often opting to scroll social media and consume other content at the same time. This provides sports journalists with a very short window to capture their attention effectively.

This shift has led to a noticeable rise in short-form sports videos posted on online platforms. Whether it is match highlights or mashups of historic sports events, younger generations are increasingly gravitating toward passive sports watching and are disengaged from the traditional full-length experience. Are the days of watching an entire football match or a full Formula 1 race, at stadiums or at home, numbered?

On the other hand, new emerging technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are slowly becoming pivotal tools for online sports fan engagement and could provide a chance to rekindle interest in the full-length sports experience. The growth of AR has shown that interactivity is what audiences increasingly desire – to be able to participate and blur the line between the real event and their experience of it. For example, the US NFL has already introduced AR through its official app, which allows fans to access real-time stats, explore stadiums, and engage with bonus content.

Through AR, the sports experience is enhanced with graphs, statistics, and other digital information overlaying the audience's physical surroundings, with the audience's ability to play with different data and options. As for VR, this will likely become the new normal in sports consumption. VR allows fans to step into the shoes of their athletes, experiencing the game from a first-person perspective. Despite these technologies still being perfected

and developed, once widely accessible, they will revolutionise the way sports are covered and consumed around the world. The potential in such technology is already evident: Deloitte reports that 62 percent of Gen Z and 66 percent of millennial sports fans said they would pay to watch a sporting event in real-time from an athlete's point of view in VR.

For modern sports journalism, the future of engagement lies in the creation of unique, differentiable content that possesses its own voice in the sea of content overproduction, according to a prominent sports journalist from South America. With shortening attention spans, audiences are increasingly seeking tailored content that closely targets their preferences and are personally cherry picking what they want to consume and how they want to consume it.

However, if we observe YouTube as a medium, sophisticated algorithms repeatedly present new content to individual users without them even realising they want to consume it. Individually tailored content is already here.

Technological developments will undoubtedly change the way we consume and experience sports, and there is a growing responsibility put upon modern sports journalists who are engaging with the new audiences of tomorrow to create trust and lead the utilisation of such technologies. Catering to young audiences that are hooked on modern technologies will require sports journalists to find the right balance between technology use, ethical considerations and creativity to deliver the right content at the right time.

71%



of all fans say that live sporting events are their favourite type of sports content. However, this statistic drops to 58% for Gen Z & millennial fans.

30% of all fans have paid for a subscription to a streaming video service to watch sports over the past 12 months. For millennials, this increased to

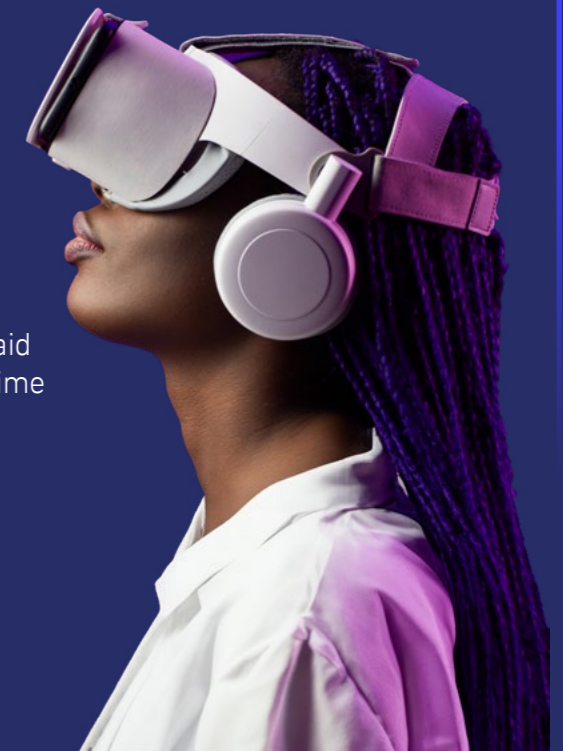
46% 

Would pay to watch sports in VR

62%
Gen Z

66%
Millennial

62% of Gen Z and 66% of millennial sports fans said they would pay to watch a sporting event in real-time from an athlete's point of view in virtual reality.



06

AI and Media Literacy: The New Frontiers of Disinformation



AI has opened up a new frontier in the media sector's fight against mis- and dis-information. In some cases, AI is already fighting itself, leaving news consumers wary of the reliability of information on all sides of a given debate. The importance of public media literacy training, as well as equipping journalists both young and old with media literacy skills, once again seems greater than ever. The challenge is not only editorial, but also related to the channels through which news is distributed – many of which are not immediately suitable to credible and reliable information.

Just over a year ago when the first Global Media Congress White Paper was published, His Excellency Mohammed Jalal Al Rayssi – Director-General of the Emirates News Agency – wrote in the foreword that mis- and dis-information had become one of the defining trends of our era. Yes, the management and manipulation of information in the pursuit of particular goals is a process that we have seen throughout history. But the amplification and in many cases weaponisation, he wrote, of false information through real-time communication channels in the 21st century had changed the game for the media industry.

It is remarkable to think that, as he wrote those words directly after the 2022 Congress, few of us had even heard of ChatGPT or OpenAI's radical plans for large language models. In the short period since its initial demo on 30 November 2022, such tools – of which ChatGPT is by no means the unchallenged market leader – have yet again changed the game. Indeed, they may have rewritten the rule book altogether.

Now, not only do the media – as society's traditional gatekeepers of information and truth – have to grapple with rapidly-spreading false information, but they are also faced with a tool that can generate highly convincing information and apparent truths at ease, at speed, and at scale. Of course, this is by no means all that AI-powered technology can do. They equally represent an exciting new tool in the armoury of the technological age, potentially enabling complex analysis of large datasets or significantly streamlining labour-intensive jobs. But there can be no doubt that the threat landscape when it comes to false information has again been transformed.

In the opening chapter of this White Paper, we explored the paradox of AI – its risks and rewards for journalists and newsrooms, and whether it will enable or endanger the industry. But there is another fundamental challenge to consider, and that is what these technologies mean for this era-defining trend of disinformation. With news consumers already facing an unprecedented challenge in navigating a polluted information environment, AI has opened up a new frontier in the media sector's fight with false information. As one speaker at the 2023 Global Media Congress said, based on their experience running a pan-European news operation, 'AI is fighting AI when it comes to disinformation'.

For industry leaders, this represents another signal of the importance of media literacy, both within the media sector and more widely in the public space.

It is more vital than ever that journalists are equipped with the tools and critical thinking processes to dissect, assess, and understand mass information flows, but also the general public given the multitude of sources the average news consumer refers to each day.

The BBC are a leading light, having recently pulled together journalists from its various 'reality check' and disinformation teams into a new 60-strong operation called BBC Verify. The corporation said last year that this team will 'showcase the advanced editorial tools and techniques BBC News journalists are using to investigate, source and verify information, video, and images', using capabilities that 'go beyond conventional newsroom techniques'. This is exactly what the industry needs. It can be tempting, particularly for smaller news operations, to turn a blind eye to misinformation and leave it unchallenged. But as two geopolitical analysts sharing a stage at the Global Media Congress highlighted, it is vitally important to 'stay in the arena [and] challenge disinformation'.

When a well-funded operation such as the BBC can set an example and share tools and techniques, the industry can replicate these efforts across the globe at a lower cost than executives might initially fear. Factchecking and source verification have long been part of the journalistic process, even if the recent spike in artificially generated information has increased the burden. The same AI tools can help, if deployed correctly, to sift and verify large flows of information on behalf of journalists.

Disinformation is not only an editorial challenge. It is also closely linked to the distribution of news. The

founder of a pan-African news magazine highlighted at the Global Media Congress 2023 how younger audiences want to get their news via platforms such as TikTok which are first and foremost designed to entertain. Such media are not built to verify and disseminate reliable news. But, just as journalists must diversify their sources to corroborate stories, so too must news outlets diversify their medium of distribution.

Finally, we know that demand for real-time accurate information has provided fertile ground for the spread of mis- or dis-information. As part of their strengthened media literacy efforts, newsrooms must also beef up their capabilities in live fact-checking, particularly regarding political events. Too often false information has gone viral before it is even noted on traditional news platforms, let alone debunked.

During an on-stage debate, one academic at the Global Media Congress said, to some laughter but also audible concern, that 'it is easier [for the media] to swim in the ocean of mis- and dis-information than it is for it to swim through reality'. This is not a satisfactory endgame for anyone within the industry however, or for the vast majority of news consumers who still demand objective and reliable news rather than fact-lite infotainment.

The consensus in the industry is strong. In an era where facts too often are treated with scepticism, it becomes all the more important that media literacy proliferates, ensuring both the producers' and consumers of news content are equipped with the tools to discern reliable and unreliable information.

79%

Are exposed to AI at work

79% of the business population globally say they've had at least some exposure to generative AI at work, with 22% saying they now use it regularly.

25%

Use AI at work

Nearly 25% of C-suite executives say they are personally using generative AI tools at work.



40%

of businesses will increase their investment in AI

In 2024



Expert Insight:

Context in Data Journalism – Between Truth and Falsity

By Dr Marko Selakovic

Assistant Professor at SP Jain School of Global Management

In today's BANI world – brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible – misinformation and disinformation are frequently employed in strategic communications. With the overload of data generated by social media users and the sophisticated use of artificial intelligence, the potential to create fake content and use a data-driven approach to mislead journalists is significant. This phenomenon becomes especially relevant when the need for immediacy in spreading information is taken into consideration.

Data journalism is a straightforward process: data is used as the basis for further work by journalists. However, an important challenge arises: if the initial inputs are wrong or false, the final output will be false as well, as it is built on the wrong premises. Thus, distinguishing between truth and falsity in initial information becomes a necessary precondition for the successful development of data journalism. Understanding the context of the collected data is another crucial aspect of journalists' work: factually true data that are interpreted in the wrong context can lead to the production of false conclusions.

With numerous tools and techniques for data processing and the helping hand of advanced technologies, both journalistic research and investigation have become faster. Journalists can create impact and debunk a plethora of

lies, myths, and stereotypes. At the same time, journalists and editors need to be mindful and avoid the race for immediacy with social media and user-generated content. This race often leads to the hyperproduction of false content in mainstream media, sometimes with the subtle assistance of professional agenda-setters.

The future of data journalism brings several challenges to the table: the further evolution and intentional creation of fake news, with high spreading capacity, may require additional efforts from journalists. As fake news plays a crucial role in information warfare and agenda-setting, the early discovery of fake content and countering or debunking it may become critical. Without mechanisms for its early discovery, fake news and false contexts might become prevalent agendas in the coming years.

Another challenge is building the next generation of impact journalism: data might help debunk, but only if backed properly. To thrive in the future world of impact journalism, media professionals need to advance and upskill themselves in terms of data mining and fact-checking. Information overload characterises the BANI world: the public needs more and more sensational news to attract interest and attention.

With the commercialisation of media space and growing convergence, numerous mainstream media outlets are adopting an 'all for click' approach. Clickbait headlines, dramatic photos, and sensational texts have unfortunately become a paradigm of the media scene. This tendency needs to be halted, and the risk of future proliferation of content based on wrong data should be mitigated radically. The ungrounded or unjustified sensation should remain in the sphere of user-generated content.

Rather than chasing immediacy, both media and journalism need to transform towards creating a social impact. Data is a strong ally in this process, but only if rightly selected and interpreted.

07

Environmental Journalism: Bridging the Divide Between Readers & Issues



Environmental news is, today, simply news. Has there ever been a more fundamental and cross-cutting issue for the news media to cover, one that genuinely affects everyone on the planet? And is it the media's responsibility to not only report the facts but drive policy or even behavioural change? It is a live debate within the media industry, not least because audiences are still struggling to engage with – or rather be engaged by – stories on the climate challenge. There are a number of positive signs however, with certain news operations and certain countries leading the way in constructive, solutions-oriented, and engaging environmental journalism.

More experienced journalists recall a time when reporters who focused on the environment and climate change were considered eccentrics. It is still, taking a historical perspective, a relatively new beat. Yet the issues it covers and uncovers are cross-cutting, perhaps in a way that no other beat has been before. Climate change affects us all and affects every facet of society.

As one British speaker at last year's Global Media Congress said, 'Environmental news is, today, simply news'. But is the current practise of environmental journalism sufficient to change policy and drive a more responsible approach from governments, businesses, and individuals towards the environment? And, as in other areas of social importance, should this even be the media's responsibility? Particularly in the case of public broadcasters and news providers, the common response among media practitioners appears to be a resounding 'yes'.

The sheer quantity of reporting on environmental issues and the planet's evolving climate has

massively increased in recent years. The Media and Climate Change Observatory at the University of Colorado have been monitoring global coverage of climate change since 2007 and found that 2023 levels of coverage were 33 percent higher than in 2020 – and of course vastly higher than when the project started.

Yet it can feel to those within the industry that only a few people are really engaging with these stories. One contributor at the Global Media Congress, who has edited environmental reporting at several newspapers for over 20 years, said that only a small minority of audiences think they've heard something about the climate or environment as part of their daily news consumption. Barring moments of major crisis or incidents with great visual symbolism – be it wildfires forcing holidaymakers to flee Mediterranean islands or burst rivers sweeping through historically flood-free Asian cities – such stories are all too easily swept off the front pages.

Broadly speaking, there is a consensus in journalism that doom and gloom does not sell – or at least not repeated doom and gloom on the same topic. Yet sometimes that is the nature of environmental reporting. It can be hard for climate reporters not to focus on a succession of distressing and concerning developments. It is important therefore that journalists think about how to present these stories, particularly to younger generations, in an engaging way that doesn't turn audiences off – but without distilling the gravity of the situation.

Experts at the Global Media Congress spoke repeatedly about there being room to report more positively and to highlight progress on the climate front – for example investment in clean energy sources, or innovations in energy storage.

This should not prevent journalists at the same time from being critical of governments or corporates, highlighting negative trends, or calling out greenwashing. But the overall slant of reporting in recent years may have tended too much towards the issues and dangers rather than the solutions.

Relatedly, media practitioners in the field of environmental journalism are often criticised for struggling to connect scientific perspectives and policy with individual experiences. The epic scale of the planet and the climate can put too much distance between audiences and the story. Bridging this divide is key to the future of successful environmental journalism. This means rigorous reporting that cuts through information fatigue, reaches audiences in an accessible and relatable manner, and that ultimately encourages a responsible way of living.

Yes, there is a place for solutions journalism say the majority of media industry leaders gathered at the Global Media Congress in Abu Dhabi. It is not necessarily for environmental journalists to be advocates, but scientific and fact-based reporting on this issue should only lead in one direction.

There are news outlets and solutions-focused networks out there, such as the Swedish platform We Don't Have Time, which have made significant strides to make the challenge relatable and scalable. The science may paint a concerning picture, but it also provides cause for hope. The more successful environmental news operations have harnessed social media, interactive tools, edutainment, and AI to tell this story.

There is also variation between media across geographic lines. One speaker at the GMC Media

Future Labs noted that in the UAE 'things are run differently'. There is more of a focus in UAE media on solutions to the climate crisis, and more of a balanced picture on key actors in the energy transition. As ever, news outlets have a lot to learn from each other.

The field of environmental journalism again points to the importance of good media literacy, and in particular of proper training for budding journalists. Understanding complex climate science and translating this into accessible news requires a particular skillset, particularly if the industry wants to help news consumers see how they can make a difference to the environment.

It is incumbent upon the media – particularly public service broadcasters and publicly-funded media houses – to seek to re-engage these audiences. One suggestion from South America raised at the Global Media Congress was for news executives to encourage more aggressive investigative reporting of, for example, big corporates' environmental footprint. People want to see big business and the wealthy make big environmental changes to their operations, otherwise they may not believe their own actions can have any impact. Good journalists, given time and leeway to investigate wrongdoing, can push this process along.

Ultimately, the media industry recognises there is a divide between readers and the issues being reported when it comes to the environment. For the sake of maintaining an audience for this news, but also for the long-term future of our planet, it is a divide that needs to be bridged.



▲ 33%

Increase in global news coverage of environmental issues since 2020

Global media coverage of climate change

increased by **21%** in November 2023 compared with the previous month, driven by the start of the successful COP28 negotiations in the UAE.



The top new keywords which emerged in 2023 environmental journalism reporting were

Global Boiling, Heat Dome, and Greenhushing.

80%



Of digital news consumers say they are concerned about climate change misinformation.



Expert Insight:

The Evolving Landscape of Environmental Journalism

By Gideon Sarpong

Journalist and Founder of iWatchAfrica

Environmental journalism has undergone a transformative journey, evolving from a niche field to a mainstream force driving public awareness about critical environmental issues. As the global community grapples with the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development, the role of environmental journalism has become more crucial than ever.

Over the past few decades, environmental journalism has witnessed a remarkable growth spurt, expanding its reach and influence. Traditionally relegated to specialised sections of newspapers or dedicated environmental magazines, this genre now permeates mainstream media. The urgency of climate change and environmental crises has forced news outlets to recognise the intrinsic link between environmental issues and everyday life, prompting increased coverage.

The rise of digital media has played a pivotal role in democratising environmental journalism. Online platforms, independent news websites, and social media have allowed journalists to disseminate information rapidly and reach diverse audiences. This shift has also empowered citizen journalists and grassroots organisations to contribute to the environmental discourse, fostering a more inclusive and participatory approach.

Several trends are shaping the current landscape of environmental journalism, reflecting the evolving nature of both journalism and environmental issues, such as data journalism and visualisation. As environmental

issues become more complex, data journalism has emerged as a powerful tool to communicate intricate information effectively. Journalists are increasingly using data visualisation, infographics, and interactive maps to engage audiences and convey the impact of environmental changes. This trend enhances the accessibility of information, enabling the public to grasp the magnitude of environmental challenges.

Indeed, environmental challenges transcend national borders, and journalists are recognising the importance of collaboration to provide comprehensive coverage. International collaborations, such as the Pulitzer Center's "Rainforest Journalism Fund," Oxford Climate Journalism Network, and the Pulitzer "Ocean Reporting Network" bring together reporters, newsrooms, and experts from different regions to provide a more nuanced and global perspective on environmental issues. This trend fosters a collective understanding of shared challenges and encourages collaborative solutions.

Looking ahead, environmental journalism is poised for further evolution and innovation. First, it's likely we will see increased integration of solutions journalism. Beyond highlighting problems, environmental journalism is shifting towards solutions-oriented reporting. Journalists are exploring and promoting initiatives, innovations, and success stories that contribute to environmental conservation and sustainability. This approach not only inspires positive action but also helps counter the often-overwhelming sense of doom associated with

environmental reporting.

In addition, technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are poised to revolutionise environmental storytelling. Imagine stepping into a virtual rainforest to witness deforestation or using AR to visualise the impacts of sea-level rise in your own neighbourhood. These immersive experiences have the potential to evoke empathy and drive meaningful engagement with environmental issues.

National Geographic's multi-year initiative, "Planet or Plastic?", is a prime example of environmental journalism employing a solutions-oriented approach. The campaign focuses on the global crisis of plastic pollution while also highlighting innovative solutions and inspiring individuals and businesses to reduce their plastic footprint. This initiative showcases the potential for media outlets to drive positive change through impactful storytelling.

In conclusion, environmental journalism has not only grown in scope and influence but has also adapted to the changing media landscape. The integration of technology, collaborative efforts, and a shift towards solutions-oriented reporting indicate a promising future for the field. As environmental challenges persist, the role of environmental journalism will remain pivotal in fostering awareness, accountability, and sustainable solutions for a healthier planet.

08

Data Journalism: A Powerful Tool – in the Right Hands



Data journalism presents an exciting opportunity for news organisations, but getting the right data, analysing it fairly, and contextualising it is proving a unique challenge. The power of data in enhancing storytelling is clear, but news organisations must double down on their role as a filter and translator of the stories hidden within the numbers. With an overwhelming array of information, thanks in part to open-source resources, it is imperative that journalists equip themselves with the skills to read between the lines and uncover the important stories hidden within the facts and figures.

The ever-increasing importance of data in journalism and the wider media industry was summarised effectively by a news leader at the beginning of the GMC Media Future Lab on Data Journalism: 'Journalists don't just see data as numbers on a spreadsheet'. But despite a clear push towards data journalism, many media practitioners are struggling with the reality of turning numbers into news. A recent survey by DataJournalism.com found that 57 percent of journalists said that accessing quality data was the greatest hurdle they faced, demonstrating a clear frustration within the industry regarding this growing field. Yet, there is little doubt as to its importance, both now and in the future.

This mindset is consistent across the industry – journalism's future in part lies in its ability to find, translate, and interpret data for audiences. As the founder of a data-focused pan-African news organisation puts it, being able to employ these skills is no longer an option, but a necessity. 'As journalists, if we don't upskill, we won't last', he said. In a technology driven world, acquiring data is

often not enough: being able to critically analyse it is essential. Data is purposefully overcomplicated, in some cases in order to mask the truth.

However, there is no question that while data can often hold the key to unlock new and untapped stories, acquiring the right data can prove a complex challenge. Accessible and transparent data is profoundly important, particularly open-source data and especially in countries and regions where this sort of information may be private or inaccessible. While there are many such resources of a global nature, we still need more of them, particularly at a localised level. A 2017 academic study of media practitioners found that the top barriers to improved data journalism were a lack of time, knowledge, adequate resources, effective publishing infrastructure, and management support.

This argument resonated with other panellists at the Global Media Congress, including a senior media regulator from Africa who went further to point out the global imbalance not just in regard to the quality and availability of data, but of those with the skills to interpret it. He said that 'upskilling experts who can crunch data and numbers is sorely needed in many parts of the world... deciphering meaning is crucial'. These remarks were echoed by the founder of the pan-African news organisation, who argued that this skills gap risks major societal consequences: 'A lot of newsrooms don't have data expertise. In our part of the world, the biggest creators of misinformation are political actors, led by specialist social media teams'.

The reality that news organisations face, particularly those with limited technical capabilities, is that they are unable to run live and real-time fact-checking, particularly during critical moments such as political events. The consequences of this are wide reaching. There have been countless occasions – globally – where it has taken too long for misinformation to be debunked and it goes viral, causing potentially irreparable damage.

Data journalism is evidently not without its challenges. Unattributed or biased data presents a risk to journalists unless it can be properly sourced and scrutinised. What happens if the inputs are wrong? How is the output going to look? Where data has come from, who has collected it, and how it was collected all pose major challenges to the interpretation and ultimately the public dissemination of data. Data without context cannot bring proper or viable conclusions. It is essential to avoid falsity in data-driven journalism and to avoid

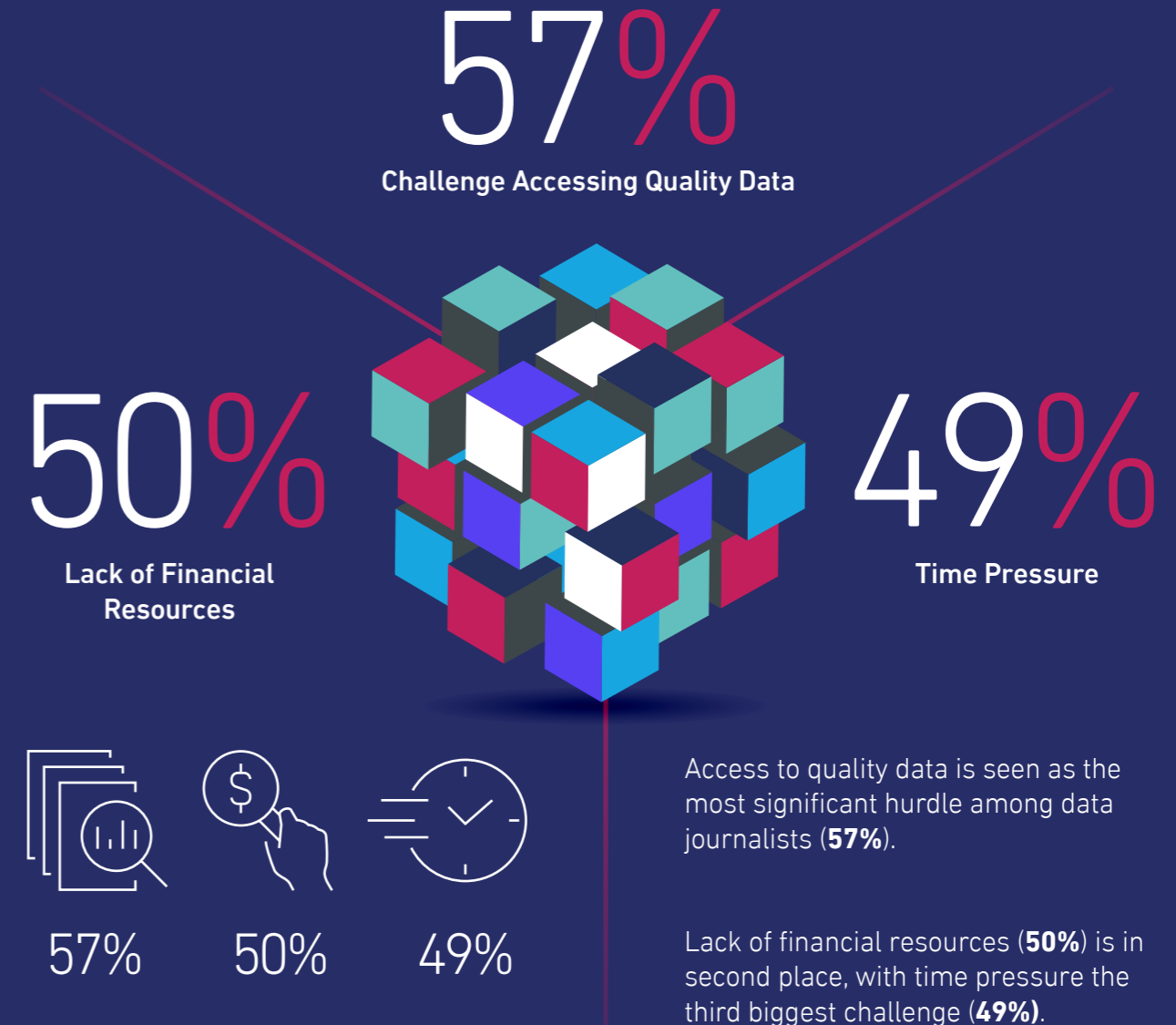
the unintentional spread of misinformation.

There is generally a consensus throughout the media with regard to the notion of data being of little use without careful human interpretation and judgement. As was argued by the media regulator, 'ethics must be placed at the centre of data journalism, in order to communicate to the masses'. There is no question that journalists have an essential role to play in bridging the gap between the numbers and their audience.

A recent study from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism backs this up: among a large sample of news leaders surveyed for their latest report, the top strategy for audience retention (67 percent) was the better explanation of complex stories. This 'translation' role was emphasised at the Global Media Congress by an East Asian contributor: 'As much as data can always give you a background, you are always going to need a person who can place it in a social and political context – do newsrooms have this person?'

Data journalism is booming but the barriers to entry – whether they be geographic, technical, or human – are perhaps still limiting the growth potential of this exciting field. How it is deployed, and how media operations choose to deploy it, will likely remain a point of contention.

Most Significant Hurdles in Data Journalism



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If you would like to find out more about any of the perspectives, questions, or recommendations outlined in this Paper, we would be pleased to hear from you.



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