



PROMOTE LOCAL NEWS STORIES

The Local Community Stories are at a Decline

Abstract

This project explains the importance of local news stories to the people of a local community. The paper describes the research methods and methodology adopted, and the proposed solution to promote local news stories. The awareness about the topic was done through an audio podcast, a narrative visual story, and an exhibition setup for public awareness. The industry-specific terms have been explained.

Akshansh Chaudhary
Akshansh.net

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Introduction

Journalism is at a critical stage right now. Local news stories are at a decline due to the financial challenges faced by local news media companies. This decline is limiting the platforms on which the community can voice their opinions and is thus reducing community stories. Several platforms and industries including the advertisement, internet, mobile devices, information technology, and social media have contributed to changing the creation and sharing of news.

This paper aims to give a historical rundown of the events which led to the decline of local journalism. It is intended to be read by the people who have been influential in digitizing advertisements and news, people from journalism, and the readers of local and global news.

The research questions for this project include: what is news? How is news created and shared? What is local news? Why are local stories important? Is local news an endangered species? Why is local news important for community building? How have digital advertisements impacted the business model of news organizations? What led to the decline of print news? How has social media changed the way news is received and shared? What are the funding models of news organizations? This paper unpacks and answers most of these questions.

As a case study, the paper covers the personal story and business challenges of Krystal Knapp, the founding editor of Planet Princeton, a local news media company in Princeton, New Jersey.

Context

A person's trust in a news story depends on their trust of the news reporter covering the story and the news media organization sharing it. People living in a small geographical area are closely connected to their news outlets and reporters. Thus, any news story generated locally tends to get fact-checked automatically.

Additionally, a considerable portion of news comes from the neighborhood. A decline in local journalism will reduce coverage of such stories by locals and skew the origin of news stories. Thus, it is important to have organizations covering news at a regional level.

Background

In the early days of print, news companies relied on the advertisements by local businesses to cover the cost of journalism: finding, writing, editing, and sharing stories. But, with the rise of the internet and digital devices, the advertising model shifted to online, diverting the money away from the print media. The rise of tech giants like Amazon made local businesses compete for their place in the digital world, all contributing to reduced investment in print advertising.

In the period of radical transformation, several news organizations closed their operations, some proliferated, and many barely survived. The news media companies who sustained the wave of technological change had to invest in updating their content sharing platforms to keep up with the market demand, in addition to creating content.

Today, most of the content is written and shared online. The national news companies are adapting to the change with creating content not only digitally but also using the latest trends like interactive data visualizations, AR/VR, and other tools. With the increasing requirement for new stories and decreasing revenue, local news companies are finding it hard to adapt to this change and are thus shutting down.

If this state of shutdown, mergers, and acquisition continues, the world would soon have news stories on limited topics with similar perspectives.

Motivation

About 3 years ago, I was watching the 9 pm news with my mom and dad. It was a time in the Indian political system when AAP (Aam Aadmi

Party) used to be on the news every day. While Dad was flipping through the news channels, I found two media channels giving contrasting opinions about a topic. Both the news agencies were among our top choices for getting information. I was unsure which one to trust, and so were my parents. Then, it hit me that we cannot be sure which information to trust unless we dig deeper. Although this incident took place a few years ago, I still have the memories of being indecisive about the world view.

Last year, I was talking to my friend (who works in Singapore) who told me about Baidu, the most used search engine in China. While most of the world relies on Google for information (primarily), China relies on Baidu. He told me that Baidu had customized its search results to favor China and its culture. I was taken aback when I searched on Baidu to find that the first few search results on India depicted it an impoverished nation with people dying of hunger. I found such a generalization to be skewed and biased.

In one of our class discussions at Parsons School of Design, we talked about news trust, Fake News and its influence on people. Inspired by my curiosity to understand news sources, I asked “which one do we trust? How do we know?”. I was told that you should get to the root of the sources.

So, I intend to do that by sharing stories of local journalism and uncomplicating the complex web of news media.

Scope

News is created and shared on several platforms. Some of them are text-based and are shared in print (newspapers, magazines, tabloids, etc.) and

others are audio and video based and are shared in digital (radio, television, blogs, etc.).

This paper is limited to news media companies creating news for the print. Audio and video-based news is out of the scope of this research. However, the line between text and visual gets blurry at times. So, there may be some overlap in the research.

And, the research is limited to the target population of the United States, particularly the US Adults.

Literature Review

Understanding the present state of journalism requires an understanding of the different industries which contributed to the change in journalistic practices. This literature review follows a thematic approach, covering key terms from each of the themes/ industries which influenced journalism.

Local Journalism

What is local journalism?

Prof. William Bevington from Parsons School of Design defines local news as “*The story from an area delivered primarily to that area.*”¹ A local news organization is a news organization covering stories primarily from that area. The geographical area for a local news organization is usually a small town or county, but the definition of local varies. For instance, Harlem can be considered a local area in New York City, and if the news organization covers news about Harlem, it would be viewed as local news.

¹ William Bevington (professor, Typography and Visual Design, Parsons School of Design), conversation with the author, April 29, 2019.

What is the local community?

The people living in the local area form a local community. As Krystal Knapp, a local reporter in Princeton NJ puts it, “A local community is a group of people in a town, who stay connected and help each other at the time of crisis.”²

What does a local newsroom look like?

Krystal Knapp, the founding editor of Planet Princeton – a local news organization in Princeton NJ, says that most of the local newsrooms in the US are run by 1-2 people, which usually are husband and wife, or along with their kids. Due to the limited earning of the news organization and a small geographical area, they do not hire additional reporters to cover the news.

Misconceptions on journalism

Most of the journalism is about objective reporting. However, with the increasing level of content creation on blogs and personal story sharing on social media platforms, news reporting has become more subjective and opinionated. Anyone with followership on social media is considered a trusted source for news.

Some people assume that news is biased by advertisers. Paul Steiger, the CEO of ProPublica, responds to this bias by saying:

“The culture is such that the ad salespeople believe in their journalists being independent.”³

² Krystal Knapp (founding editor, Planet Princeton, New Jersey), conversation with the author, April 14, 2019.

³ Paul Steiger (CEO, ProPublica), conversation with the author, March 19, 2019.

⁴ William Chang (HR professional, Inespera Partners), conversation with the author, March 19, 2019.

⁵ Wu, Tim. *The attention merchants: The epic scramble to get inside our heads*. Vintage, 2017.

⁶ Potter, David M. *People of plenty: Economic abundance and the American character*. University of Chicago Press, 2009.

William Chang, an independent journalist and HR professional at Inespera Partners, says that

“The problem is, I think a lot of public is sort of used to the corruption that they see outside of journalism and automatically assume that it also applies inside journalism.”⁴

Advertisement and News

Before the digital age, advertising used to be done through newspapers. It was the primary source of revenue for news media organizations. Post-2000, with the proliferation of digital marketplaces like Craig’s list and Amazon, and digital advertising platforms like Google Ads (formerly Google Adwords), the share of advertisement in the traditional forms of media have declined, leading to a reduced income for news organizations. The books *Attention Merchants* by Tim Wu⁵ and *People of Plenty* by David M. Potter⁶ cover these stories in detail.

Ads are tightly knit in the news revenue. As Aram Zucker-Scharff stated at the Digital Advertising: Broken by Design⁷ event at the Journalism+Design program at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, “*News organizations cannot get away from the ad ecosystem.*”⁸

Over the years, Columbia School of Journalism⁹ and The New York Times¹⁰ have covered these topics in detail.

⁷ Griffin, Allie. "Digital Advertising: Broken by Design." JournalismDesign.com. <https://journalismdesign.com/digital-advertising-broken-by-design/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

⁸ Aram Zucker-Scharff. “Broken by Design – Workshop 1 – The Unplanned Internet.” Online video clip. Facebook Live, accessed March 18, 2019.

⁹ Watkins, Elizabeth Anne. "Guide to Digital Advertising." CJR.org. https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/the-guide-to-advertising-technology.php (accessed March 11, 2019).

¹⁰ Chayka, Doug. "Tackling the Internet's Central Villain: The Advertising Business." NYTimes.com.

Problems in Local Journalism

Print Local News is Dying

Local journalism has been collapsing. Since 2004, 1800 local newspapers have collapsed in the US.¹¹ Even in this state, most Americans think that local news organizations thriving and thus do not find it necessary to support it through voluntary subscriptions. A recent report¹² published by Pew Research stated that 71% of Americans think that local news is doing well. Several other sources like the US Bureau of Labor Statistics¹³, Newspaper Death Watch¹⁴ and the University of North Carolina's School of Media and Journalism¹⁵ have published articles and reports to validate the decline in local journalism.

What is a News Desert?

With a declining trend in local journalism, there are several counties without local news. The areas without any local news organizations get deprived of local community stories. Such areas are called News Deserts.

The University of North Carolina's School of Media and Journalism has reported a rising trend of a New Media Baron¹⁶.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/31/technology/internet-advertising-business.html> (accessed March 14, 2019).

¹¹ Barthel, Michael. "Newspapers Fact Sheet." Pew Research Center. <https://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/> (accessed March 28, 2019).

¹² "For Local News, Americans Embrace Digital but Still Want Strong Community Connection." Pew Research Center. <https://www.journalism.org/2019/03/26/for-local-news-americans-embrace-digital-but-still-want-strong-community-connection/> (accessed March 26, 2019).

¹³ "Employment trends in newspaper publishing and other media, 1990–2016 on the Internet" Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/employment-trends-in-newspaper-publishing-and-other-media-1990-2016.htm> (accessed March 22, 2019).

Shrinking Local News Reduces Community Voice

A decline in local journalism is reducing the voice of the community. Penelope Muse Abernathy at The School of Media and Journalism has published a report¹⁷ sharing the details of that decline, stating that *"Our sense of community and our trust in democracy at all levels suffer when journalism is lost or diminished. In an age of fake news and divisive politics, the fate of communities across the country – and of grassroots democracy itself – is linked to the vitality of local journalism."*

The decline in local voices also changes the political system. On April 9, 2019, a Nieman Lab Research report stated that *"When local newspapers shrink, fewer people bother to run for mayor."*

In an episode of the podcast series Our Princeton: Community Stories, Krystal Knapp mentions that while covering local stories during her daily journalistic practice, public officials and organizations make her realize the importance of local stories:

"One former public official was giving me a hard time. He was like, come on Krystal! If you don't cover it, it would be like it never existed... The burden of that, the weight of that, really bothers me sometimes. It's a public trust; it's a responsibility... You

¹⁴ Gillin, Paul. "Newspaper Death Watch." <http://newspaperdeathwatch.com/> (accessed March 22, 2019).

¹⁵ Abernathy, Penelope Muse. "The Loss of Local News: What it Means for Communities." The Expanding News Desert, Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media. <https://www.usnewsdeserts.com/reports/expanding-news-desert/loss-of-local-news/#easy-footnote-bottom-1-2813> (accessed May 1, 2019).

¹⁶ "The Rise of a New Media Baron and the Emerging Threat of News Deserts" UNC, School of Media and Journalism. <http://mj.unc.edu/news/rise-new-media-baron-and-emerging-threat-news-deserts> (accessed May 1, 2019).

¹⁷ Abernathy, Penelope Muse. "The The Expanding News Desert: Report." UNC, Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media. <https://www.usnewsdeserts.com/reports/expanding-news-desert/download-a-pdf-of-the-report/> (accessed May 4, 2019).

*never know what you don't know. If a reporter is not there covering it (local news), it's just gone!"*¹⁸

What is parachute journalism?

Parachute Journalism is a term used in journalism, which relates to the coverage of local news by national news media organizations. Whenever there is a local story that goes big, national news reporters travel to the local area for a few days to cover the story. So, they parachute into the local town. The difference lies, however, in the depth of coverage of the news. While they may collect information, the reporting would not be as personalized as it would be in local news coverage.

Irwin Chen, a professor at the Journalism+Design program at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, says that parachute journalism is decreasing the context of local news. Adding to that, Krystal Knapp shared a story of a shooting incident in her town, which she witnessed first-hand. Later, the New York Times interviewed her, but did not include any of her stated information because it probably did not align with their story, and instead, sliced text from her Facebook post.

Supporting Local Journalism

Internet giants are supporting local news

The same day that Pew Research published the report about what Americans think about the local news, Google released the news¹⁹ of collaborating with McClatchy to establish three local news organizations to get local stories. In January 2019, Facebook committed to spending \$300 M to support local journalism²⁰. In the midst of technological revolution and driverless cars, the internet giants are investing in local stories, indicating its importance. The irony is that the

¹⁸ Krystal Knapp, interview with the author, April 14, 2019.

¹⁹ Schmidt, Christine. "Google is putting dollars straight into building local news outlets in a new experiment with McClatchy." NiemanLab.org. <https://www.niemanlab.org/2019/03/google-is-putting-dollars-straight-into-building-local-news-outlets-in-a-new-experiment-with-mcclatchy/> (accessed March 26, 2019).

companies which led to the decline of local journalism are now trying to save it.

Fake news is rare in a local community

Krystal Knapp and Aram Zucker acknowledge that unlike in digital where it is hard to trace the source of information, in a small town or neighborhood, everyone knows each other. So, the source of a story is mostly known. Hence, there are limited changes in news being fake.

Methodologies

Research Direction and Methodology

The research methodology of Grounding Theory was followed for this project, with the research type being qualitative and exploratory. It started with understanding the news ecosystem: how it originated and how it proliferated over the last 150 years. This part was done through academic secondary research – journals, articles, papers, and books.

Next, the research involved developing a hypothesis of potential problems in journalism and discussing them with the people from academia, research, and journalism: primary research.

The third part of the research involved connecting the secondary research with primary to establish a holistic understanding of the news media ecosystem.

The final part was about selecting the issue which resonates and aligns the most with the project direction and connecting with the users who are facing that issue. The concern/problem filtered was that of the

²⁰ Schmidt, Christine. "Facebook is committing \$300 million to support news, with an emphasis on local." NiemanLab.org. <https://www.niemanlab.org/2019/01/facebook-is-committing-300-million-to-support-news-with-an-emphasis-on-local/> (accessed March 26, 2019).

decline of local journalism, which was then discussed with the founding editor of a local news media company, to plan and create a potential design solution to the problem.

Research Methods

The primary methods followed for the research were Secondary Research, Interview, Content Analysis, Literature Review, Case Study, and Contextual Design.

Process

The final project to share stories of local journalism had several hiccups through the process of understanding journalism and clarifying the misconceptions about it.

Part 1: System Understanding

The first part of the process involved doing research on this history of journalism to understand the existing journalistic practice. This was followed by rigorous discussions with the people in academia and research to clarify the misunderstandings. This stage of research was then recorded and shared with every stakeholder to maintain a constant project flow.

Part 2: Cyclic Hypothesis Verification

Journalism is a complex topic. It suffers a perception of bias because it is a part of the community which gets served with biased content around it. As a result, people find it difficult to objectively understand the context of an article shared with them by an organization.

The hypothesis developed about the news had to be fact-checked by people from different backgrounds (academia, marketing, and journalism) to have a refined understanding of the system. So, this part of the project involved creating a log of all the hypothesis/misconceptions – news content is biased by advertisements,

news media organizations can sustain on subscription-only model, clickbait news is the future of news, headlines are made attractive (clickbait style) for the sake of promoting the advertiser, news content should be objective and not opinionated – and meeting people from the related fields to clarify them. To maintain an unbiased form of the project, the audience for discussion included not only people directly connected with the issue (journalists) but also people from related backgrounds (advertisers, academicians, etc.).

Part 3: Problem Hunt

After understanding the system and clarifying the hypothesis, the next step was to engage in intelligent discussions on critical topics associated with journalism. This involved participating in events and meetups organized by professionals and industry experts and doing more problem-specific research.

The process led to the issue of local journalism and its decline due to limited ability to adapt to the digital ecosystem and decline in print advertisement. The research introduced key terms like news deserts and parachute journalism, and the discussions in events clarified them.

Part 4: User Hunt

The next stage of the process was to find the target user who is the first point of contact for the problem. This involved reaching out to local news media organizations around New York City and elsewhere abroad to set up a meeting to understand their perspective on the issue.

Part 5: Solution Structure

Meeting local news companies involved getting to know about local news, community journalism, content creation for local media, business challenges of local companies, and the personal motivation of the founders.

After receiving that perspective, the next step was to connect the dots between the two perspectives and create a structure of sharing these stories with the local community for that news company. This started

with collecting the preference of content and form for the storytelling. The discussion materialized with the content as a personal story and the form as a podcast and a short film.

So, in consequent meetings, the structure for the storytelling of podcast and short film was created.

Part 6: Target Launch

This was the final part of the process in which the first set of recordings for the podcast were done after the script writing was complete. The final story was then finished and shared with the corresponding local community and users.

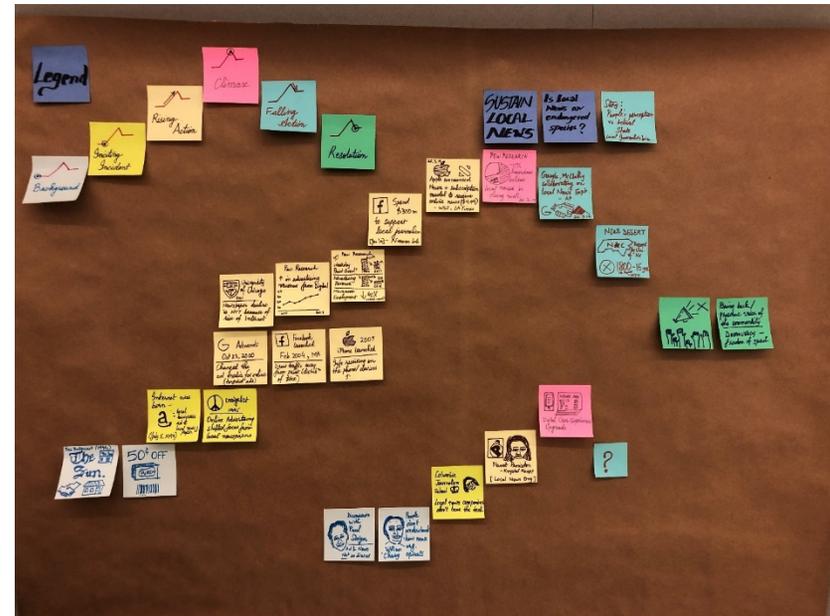
The entire research timeline and the findings were formulated as a visual data story to inform the viewers about the challenges in local journalism from the author’s perspective.

Implementation

This section contains the different forms that were given to the research findings of local journalism, and how they were shared.

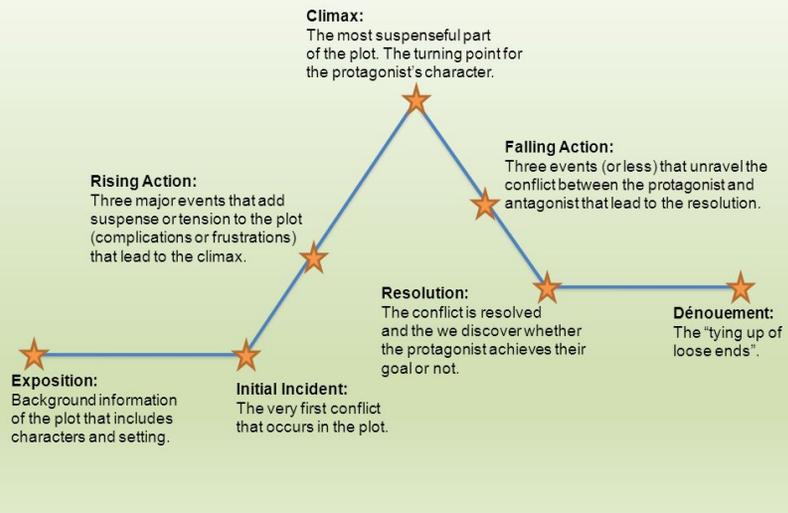
Form 1: Visual Data Story

After completing the first phase of primary and secondary research, all the findings were compiled in a storyboard, which led to the creation of a timeline for the story of local journalism, and how several factors like digital advertisements, social media, and the internet contributed to its decline.



The story followed Freytag’s narrative structure – starting with an exposition and ending with a conclusion/resolution

FREYTAG'S PYRAMID



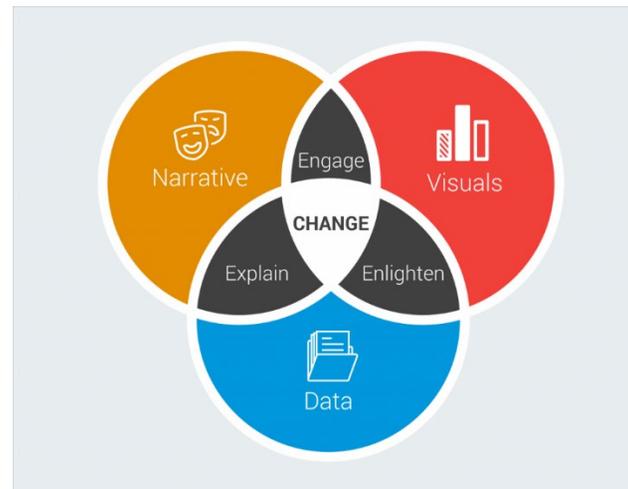
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The data from the storyboard was then given a text narrative, which took the form of audio narrative after studio recording of the script.

²¹ Landsborough, William D. "Freytag's Pyramid and the Three-Act Plot Structure" DLandsborough.com. <https://www.dlandsborough.com/blog/2017/7/11/freytags-pyramid-and-the-three-act-plot-structure> (accessed May 9, 2019).



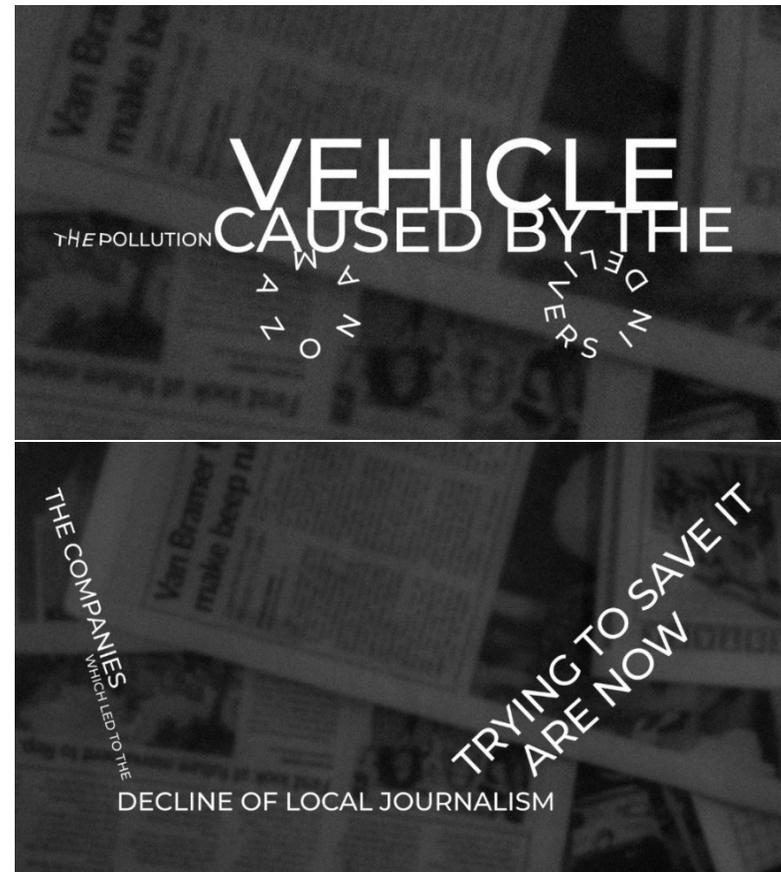
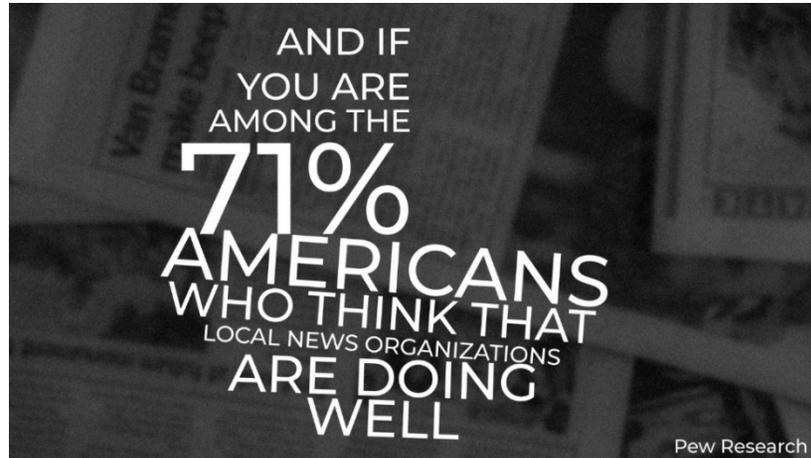
With the data and narrative in place, the visuals for the audio were created, which completed the data story.



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²² Dykes, Brent. "Data Storytelling: The Essential Data Science Skill Everyone Needs." Forbes.com. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brentdykes/2016/03/31/data-storytelling-the-essential-data-science-skill-everyone-needs/>

The presentation of the visuals was done through kinetic typography²³ because the fast-moving text could indicate a sense of urgency for the topic. This final form was screened as a short film in Major Major Exhibition at Parsons School of Design²⁴, to inform the visitors about the issue. The visual experience was combined with other forms to add to the discussion.



essential-data-science-skill-everyone-needs/#78bc517f52ad (accessed January 31, 2019).

²³ Chaudhary, Akshansh. "Local Stories Are Collapsing | Narrative Story by Akshansh Chaudhary." YouTube, Akshansh Chaudhary, 9 May 2019, youtu.be/dB2KGGH_KC4.

²⁴ "Major Major Show, Parsons School of Design." <http://majormajor.parsons.edu/> (accessed May 4, 2019)



Form 2: Interactive Data Story

To add to the visual data story, interactive data visualizations were created using the research data and were presented on Tableau to show the trend and patterns, leading to the decline of local journalism.

The interactive data story was also presented at Major Major²⁵ for an additional layer of understanding for the visitors.



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²⁵ Chaudhary, Akshansh. "Promote Local News Stories | Major Major Show Highlights | Akshansh Chaudhary." YouTube, Akshansh Chaudhary, 11 May 2019, <https://youtu.be/8qm5bbGvcdM>.

²⁶ Chaudhary, Akshansh. "Promote Local News Stories | Major Major Show Prep | Akshansh Chaudhary." YouTube, Akshansh Chaudhary, 11 May 2019, https://youtu.be/4dX9y_ur6n0.

Source: Reuters
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Local public media stations are like public libraries and local museums in that they preserve culture, educate and engage in order to build understanding on important issues that are expensive or difficult to cover.

"Local helps communities get to know each other better"
 National emergency response is one possible consequence of a city whose local reporters can provide a critical voice in the event of a disaster. The networks, after all, are not just for news. They're for life.

"You never know what you don't know."
 "National won't hold your city council members accountable."

"A local news outlet is part of my identity; it's part of how I see myself"
 "Local radio that speaks to people on the ground, where their lives without economic justice, can literally be life-changing and saving for individuals as for whole communities."
 "It drives conversations, serves as public record and covers the news happening in your own backyard."

COMMUNITY
 OBJECTIVE
 Local News
 CULTURE
 PERSONAL STORY

Local News is the story from an area delivered primarily to that area.

TRAGEDY
 National News
 CHANGE
 EXCEPTION

Social Media

Election Participation
 Weather Information
 School Stories
 Natural Disaster Support
 Council Meetings Updates
 Housing Prices
 Arts and Culture
 Community Activities

Socio-Economic Diversity
 School Stories
 Restaurant, Clubs, Bars
 Traffic Update
 Affordability
 Politics

DIGITAL TOOK THE SHARE OF NEWS STORIES

TREND: Increasing traffic on social media → Attracting higher ad spending → Decreased profitability of local news providers → Inability to cover local stories → OUTCOME: More vulnerable and isolated communities

DID YOU KNOW?
 In a survey of 1027 adult Americans, only 15% read newspaper every day while 26% reported to never read a newspaper.

"Our sense of community and our trust in democracy at all levels suffer when journalism is lost or diminished. In an age of fake news and divisive politics, the fate of communities across the country – and of grassroots democracy itself – is linked to the vitality of local journalism."

Decline in Circulation
 as much lower since 2004

Year	DAILY	NON-DAILY
2004	60 mil	72 mil
2018	29 mil	44 mil

Digital vs. Newspaper Ad Spend
 % of total ad spending

Year	DIGITAL	NEWSPAPERS
2004	17%	83%
2018	85%	15%

While digital ad spend increased by 340%, newspaper ads declined.

Disturbing figures
 Numbers don't lie

1800
 newspapers have shut down since 2004

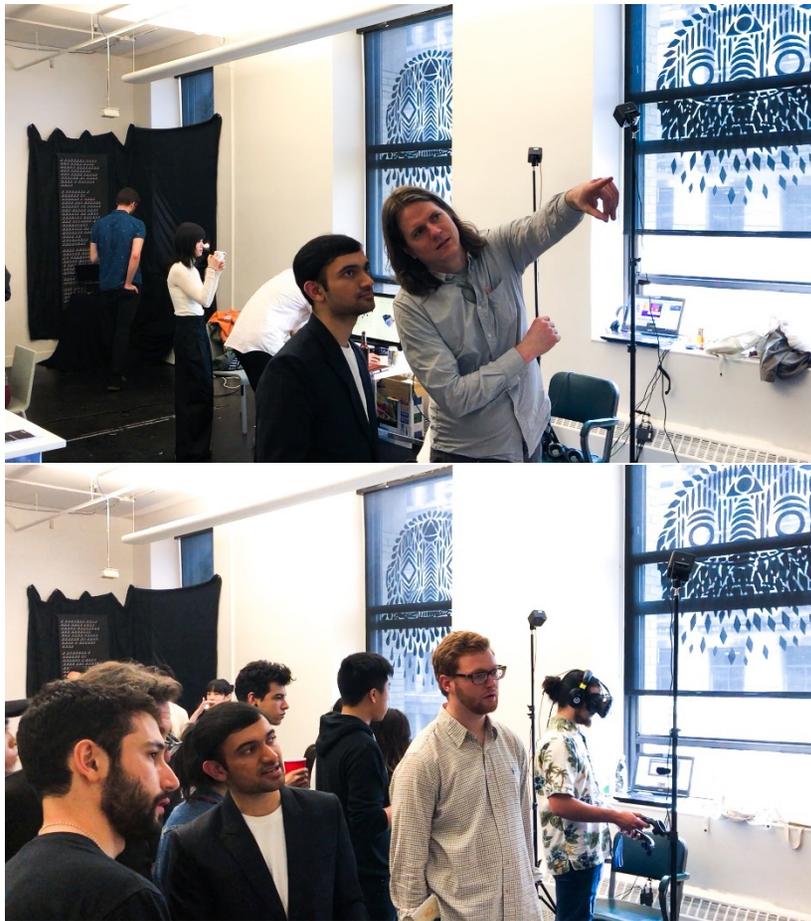
-80%
 decline in national newspaper spending over the US in the last decade

2 in 3
 dailies are owned by the top 25 companies

171
 counties in the US have NO local newspaper

Sources: USCIN Database, Pew Research Center
 Last glory of the lost stories | Newspaper Ad Spend | Decline in Newspaper Ads | US states | US states (2) | Sheet 7



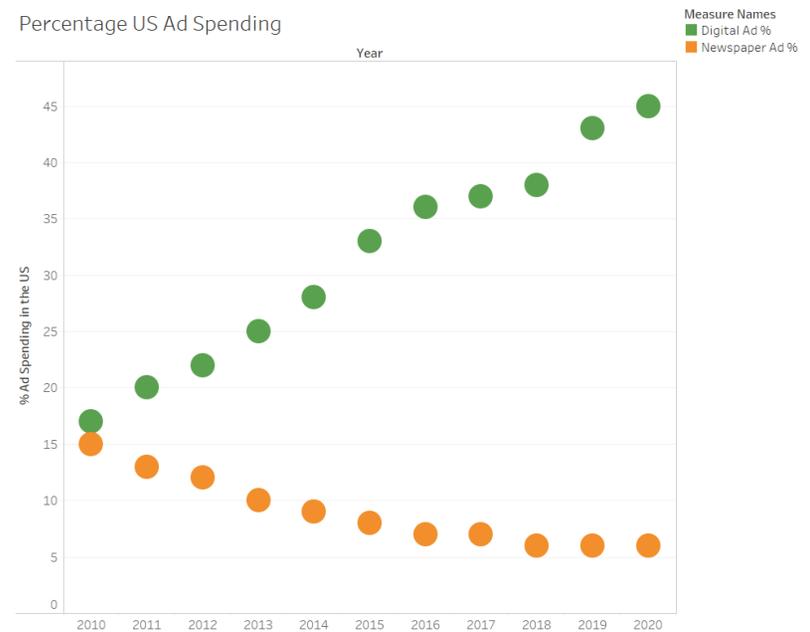


Trend 1: Ad focus shifted to digital

A trend is showing the decline in newspaper ads with an increasing share of digital and online ads.²⁷

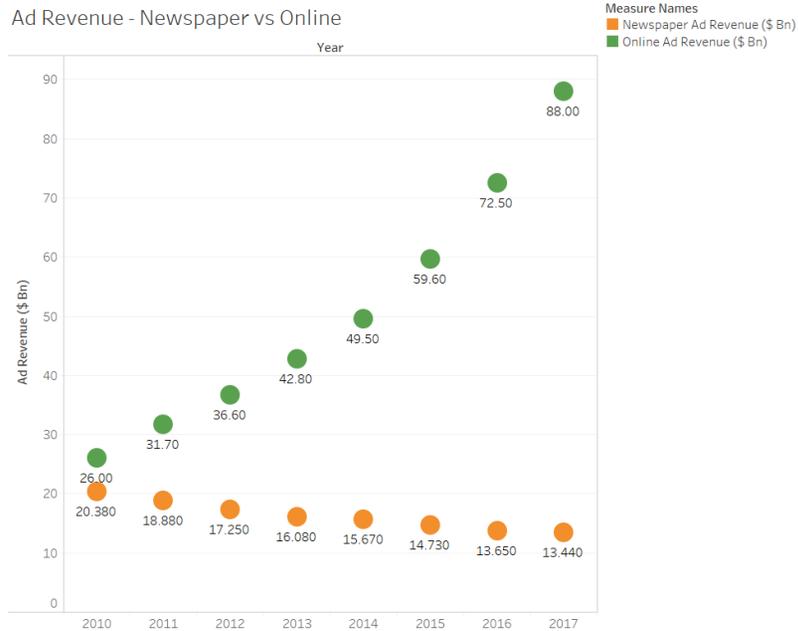
²⁷ eMarketer. Distribution of advertising spending in the United States from 2010 to 2020, by media. <https://www-statista-com.libproxy.newschool.edu/statistics/272316/advertising-spending-share-in-the-us-by-media/> (accessed 4/28/19, 5:36 PM)

Percentage US Ad Spending



US Census Bureau. Estimated revenue of newspaper publishers in the United States from 2010 to 2017, by source (in billion U.S. dollars). <https://www-statista-com.libproxy.newschool.edu/statistics/184880/revenue-sources-of-us-newspaper-publishers-since-2005/> (accessed 4/28/19, 8:50 PM).

Ad Revenue - Newspaper vs Online

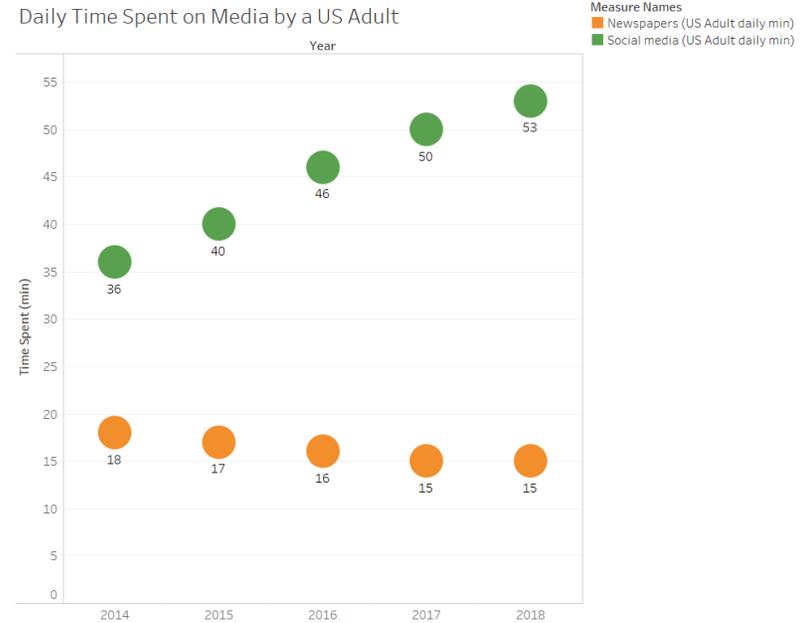


Trend 2: Content platforms divided the time

A trend is showing how the time got divided between platforms with the proliferation of social media channels. People spent more time on social media than in reading newspapers²⁸.

²⁸ eMarketer. Average daily media use in the United States from 2012 to 2018, by device (in minutes). <https://www-statista-com.libproxy.newschool.edu/statistics/270781/average-daily-media-use-in-the-us/> (accessed 4/28/19, 9:47 PM).

Daily Time Spent on Media by a US Adult



Form 3: Audio Storytelling

The third form was an audio recording with Krystal Knapp, the founding editor of Planet Princeton²⁹, which was created as a podcast interview. After developing an outline and structure for the podcast’s first episode, the discussion was recorded in a studio.

The audio was later edited and compiled with background audio to create a final version, which was shared with the local Princeton community. The podcast was titled, *Our Princeton: Community Stories*.³⁰

²⁹ PlanetPrinceton.com. <https://planetprinceton.com/> (accessed May 10, 2019).

³⁰ Knapp, Krystal. Interview with Akshansh Chaudhary. *Our Princeton: Community Stories*. Podcast audio. May 2019. http://bit.ly/OurPrinceton_Episode1.

Selected audio clips from the episode were used as background audio for the Major Major exhibition.

Discussion

Analysis

Stories are everywhere, but true stories have much more impact. The research and implementation done for this project made it clear that journalism had a lot going on inside it which was not apparent from the first glance.

In the era of fake news, people find biases around them every day and assume the same for news content. As William Chang, an independent reporter put it,

“People associate the biases they see outside of journalism and assume that it must be happening inside journalism.”³¹

To avoid such biases to exist, journalists must share their stories with their viewers to make them understand the perspective from which news is being written. William explained the perspective of a news media organization through a GM story:

“The other thing is that most people are not sophisticated in understanding how various news organization operates and what their audiences are.

For example, the Associated Press... GM is having a lot of operational problems, and there's going to be layoffs... Coming... In Ohio and what not... So, AP story might be along the lines of 3000 people are going to be laid off from General Motors in Ohio this month due to closures of plants in Cleveland... Reuters and even Bloomberg's lead on the story probably won't be that. It might be GM stock shot up 30 points... on the news that GM was closing several plants that were unproductive. Because by the business community standards, the story is... Hey! GM is getting rid of the workers that aren't producing profitable items. And, so, stockholders will go...

Yay! Because then GM can shift all of their excess cost and focus on the profitable ones that are being produced.

And so, you know... People are gonna say... You know. Some people will say, the Bloomberg thing is biased towards business owners. And, others are gonna say, you know, the AP report is biased towards the workers, because it describes what's gonna happen to them.

And so, you know people don't necessarily understand that none of them are necessarily biased. It's just a different angle of the story that's being presented. And so, it's not saying that any of these perspectives is wrong, it's just... These are different perspectives depending on what type of information you need to glean from this particular story.

A lot of people don't read through the entire story. They'll read just a few paragraphs, and they'll think... Hey! I've read enough of it. I know what's going on... But the thing is that the people that are reading the AP story... They're not looking at... Hey! My GM portfolio just shot up 30 points per share. And so, you know, they won't link that together.

It's up to the reader to get to the end of the story in order to absorb all of the information.

When a story is written, different readers aren't necessarily gonna go through that. They're gonna get the first impression, and that's what they're gonna walk away with. And so, is that biased? You know... It's focusing on a particular aspect of that story. It's gonna depend on the audience and what the audience is trying to get out of a story... Because, if I'm an investor, I'm not looking at how many people got laid off, I'm looking at how GM is gonna make money. If I'm a person that works at GM, I will look at how many of me and my brothers... GM workers are going to get laid off, as a result of...

So, it depends on who you are. Truth is not necessarily the best way to describe what goes and what is placed in the news.

³¹ William Chang, conversation with the author, March 19, 2019.

What very often it is, are... You know... And this is what most journalists use is the term story... It's factual. It maybe based somewhat on opinion. But for the most part what's cited are facts. And so, if you look at facts a certain way, it's good news for GM stockholders... It's bad news for GM employees."

The discussion with news reporters also made it clear that while people may believe that advertisement is biasing news content, news organizations take special care to avoid such bias, by keeping advertisers separate from reporters. Paul Steiger, the CEO of ProPublica, responds to this bias by sharing a story from his experience at the Wall Street Journal:

"They (someone in the Detroit bureau) said that if the Journal (WSJ) ran these pictures, they would cancel all their advertising... And they were big advertising. And the person-in-charge of the journal said that we hope you change your mind, but we are not going to change ours. They (GM) yanked their advertising, the Journal ran the story, and then ultimately General Motors came back to advertise. In the meantime, they got advertising from other people. So, that's the way you have to operate. You have to be strict about the value with independence.

*When I was at the Journal, ...we ran a story about them (Mobil Oil) that they didn't like, they canceled all their advertising. They wouldn't talk to us."*³²

People must be prudent in their story selection and should understand the perspective from which each story was written. While it requires effort to dig deep in every story a person reads, the result is valuable, as the reader learns about the process through which a story was created, and hence gets to appreciate the intensity of the topic.

Conclusion

Local stories are essential and often undervalued because people don't know what they are missing out on. As Krystal Knapp eloquently put in her podcast episode, "You won't know what you don't know."³³ There are several stories of community building that create a bond in the

society, and if such stories are suppressed and not given enough light, they will soon fade out without much notice.

People in their respective communities must ensure that their local stories are shared, and the reporters and local news media organizations covering those stories survive. The news landscape is full of high tides, wiping away the tiny sand castles of local news. The community should understand that and support the organizations who share those stories in their neighborhood.

³² Paul Steiger, conversation with the author, March 19, 2019.

³³ Krystal Knapp, interview with the author, April 14, 2019.