



## Press release

**Embargoed: 00.01 April 7, 2016**

### **Innovate or risk irrelevance, new report warns TV news providers**

Traditional television viewing is falling, and the rapid rise of online video viewing continues. If television news providers fail to respond to these profound shifts in how people use media, they risk eventually becoming irrelevant, a new report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford warns.

While television remains an important medium for news – and will remain so in years to come, according to authors Rasmus Kleis Nielsen and Richard Sambrook – failure to recognise and engage with the steep changes in the industry now could lead to losing touch with audiences as people, especially younger people, spend less and less time with traditional television.

Television viewing figures in the UK and the US have declined by 3 to 4% a year on average since 2012 – directly comparable to the decline in print readership seen by newspapers during the 2000s. The decline is particularly pronounced amongst younger people. Meanwhile, the rise of video-sharing sites, video-on-demand services and social media-integrated video means that younger audiences watch more and more online video.

“There are no reasons to believe that a generation that has grown up with and enjoys digital, on-demand, social and mobile video viewing across a range of connected devices will come to prefer live, linear, scheduled programming tied to a single device just because they grow older,” says Dr Nielsen, Director of Research at the Reuters Institute.

“This raises wider questions about how sustainable the broad public interest role broadcast news has played in many countries over the last 60 years is.”

What’s the solution? At the moment, says the report, there is no one clear way forward, but the key is to recognise the challenge now, rather than maintaining a defensive, pragmatic approach. Incremental adaptation will not be enough to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

Broadcasters must harness their creative talent, strong brands and quality content to experiment, innovate, push boundaries, risk failure, and begin to reinvent themselves for an audience which increasingly prefers digital. This requires looking beyond the formats and organisational forms developed for a twentieth-century media environment.

The report shows how news is peripheral for players like Netflix, Amazon, YouTube, and Facebook, who drive the current boom in online video, primarily around entertainment. It looks at how online video news providers including legacy broadcasters, newspapers, and digital news sites, are carving out their own space in a changing media environment, developing new formats, distribution models and editorial strategies.

“This is perhaps the biggest challenge for television news,” says Dr Nielsen. “How to reinvent its core social and political mission in a new environment and find ways of resourcing it.

“The question should not be what will *replace* traditional television news. Nothing will. The question has to be how can we move *beyond* television news as we know it.”

ENDS

### **About the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism**

The Thomson Reuters Foundation is the core funder of the RISJ, based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. The RISJ was launched in November 2006 and developed from the Reuters Fellowship Programme, established at Oxford 32 years ago. An international research centre in the comparative study of journalism, the RISJ aims to be global in its perspective and provides a leading forum for scholars from a wide range of disciplines to engage with journalists from around the world. See <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

### **About the authors**

**Rasmus Kleis Nielsen** is Director of Research at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford and editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Press/Politics*. His work focuses on changes in the news media, political communication, and the role of digital technologies in both. He has done extensive research on journalism, American politics, and various forms of activism, and a significant amount of comparative work in Western Europe and beyond. Recent books include *The Changing Business of Journalism and its Implications for Democracy* (2010, edited with David Levy), *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns* (2012), and *Political Journalism in Transition: Western Europe in a Comparative Perspective* (2014, edited with Raymond Kuhn).

**Richard Sambrook** is professor of journalism at Cardiff University and a senior research associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Previously he had a 30-year career at the BBC as a producer and programme editor in BBC News, working across national radio and TV programmes, and in senior management as head of newsgathering, director of news and finally director of global news. He has written and spoken frequently on journalism and the future of news. His publications include *Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant?* (RISJ 2010), *Delivering Trust: Impartiality and Objectivity in the Digital Age*. (RISJ 2012), and, due to be published this year, *The Future of 24-Hour News: New Directions, New Challenges*, (edited with Stephen Cushion) and *Reporting Dangerously: Journalist Killings, Intimidation and Security* (with Simon Cottle and Nick Mosdell).

### **About the Digital News Project**

The Digital News Project marks an expansion of the Digital News Report into a full-scale series of research pieces, thanks to the support of Google via the Digital News Initiative. Eight new reports will be released in 2016. The new series builds on the success of the Digital News Report as the world's largest comparative international survey of changing news habits, and will continue to track the transition of the news industry towards an increasingly digital and multi-platform future. 2016 will see an expanded team of researchers, sponsors and collaborators explore trends and developments across 26 countries. Increased support from Google, co-sponsors of the initiative since 2013, has allowed the Institute to extend the report's coverage of Europe to 20 countries in

2016. The new countries to be included are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. These will be added to the countries covered in the 2015 report; UK, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Spain, Australia, Brazil, Japan and the US. Other sponsors for the Digital News Report 2016 are: the BBC, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Edelman UK, Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, Hans-Bredow-Institut, Korea Press Foundation, Laval University, The University of Navarra, Ofcom, the University of Canberra and the Fritt Ord Foundation.

**For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Hannah Marsh, Marketing and Communications Officer: [hannah.marsh@politics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.marsh@politics.ox.ac.uk)**