

Why did quality media lose trust?

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Why did quality media lose peoples trust? Why is a big part of the audience listening more to lies and accusations than to well curated and fact based journalism?

By **Jacob Mollerup**, Danish editor and media consultant

At a lecture given to a visiting group of leading Danish reporters and editors at LSE professor Charlie Beckett elaborated on the ethical and emotional element of online news consumption. Journalism content now gets blended into people's personal life in new ways. At the same time people are sharing stories not only for the information but also for the emotions and to signal their own values. In that case, it's not adequate for journalists only to focus on the facts or content of the journalism. They must also rely on deep insight in the users evolving behavior and motives.

Beckett's angle seems crucial to understand the current media world – and not only in the countries of Brexit and Trump. I am from Denmark where the news media are decreasingly being read or seen in their own well defined domain. Instead they mix through social media into a much more personal space surrounded by conversations with family, peers and (usually) likeminded friends. This has a wide range of far reaching consequences. It's not only closely connected to broken business models on print as well as in digital. It's has also proven to play an important part of Western countries increasing problems with having a constructive democratic debate.



Time and time again emotions and feelings seem to fill the space leaving less room for facts and afterthought. You can question the causes but something new and important is taking place.

Maybe it's fundamentally the economy leaving a big part of Western middle classes outside their old comfort zone and instead entering a new stage of discontent and anger. But in any case, the situation seems to have been captured best by populist and often xenophobic media, new strongly partisan news sites and others promoting

attitudes and feelings at the expense of hard facts and science.

People Are Editors

The public conversation seems to be less and less curated by quality mainstream media. On social media people are their own editors and they have decided to give feelings and opinion a much stronger position. In the process, mainstream media are being disconnected from a substantial part of the audience.

Another part of the problem is the low level of brand recognition seen in many studies of news consumption via social media. Any news organization that is just being one of many providers of news will not have much chance of developing a sustainable business model. To succeed you need to combine content with close, sustained audience relationships. This demands new ways of engaging with the audience – making strong and trustful bonds while capturing the mood of those you want to connect with. While building on journalistic purpose and integrity, the audience must be in the center.

If quality media can't solve this equation they will be in deep trouble. So, will society.

But stop blaming the public. It's at best counterproductive. Concentrate on how good journalism can reconnect with a broader audience.

Jacob Mollerup, Danish editor and media consultant – www.jacobmollerup.dk

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