

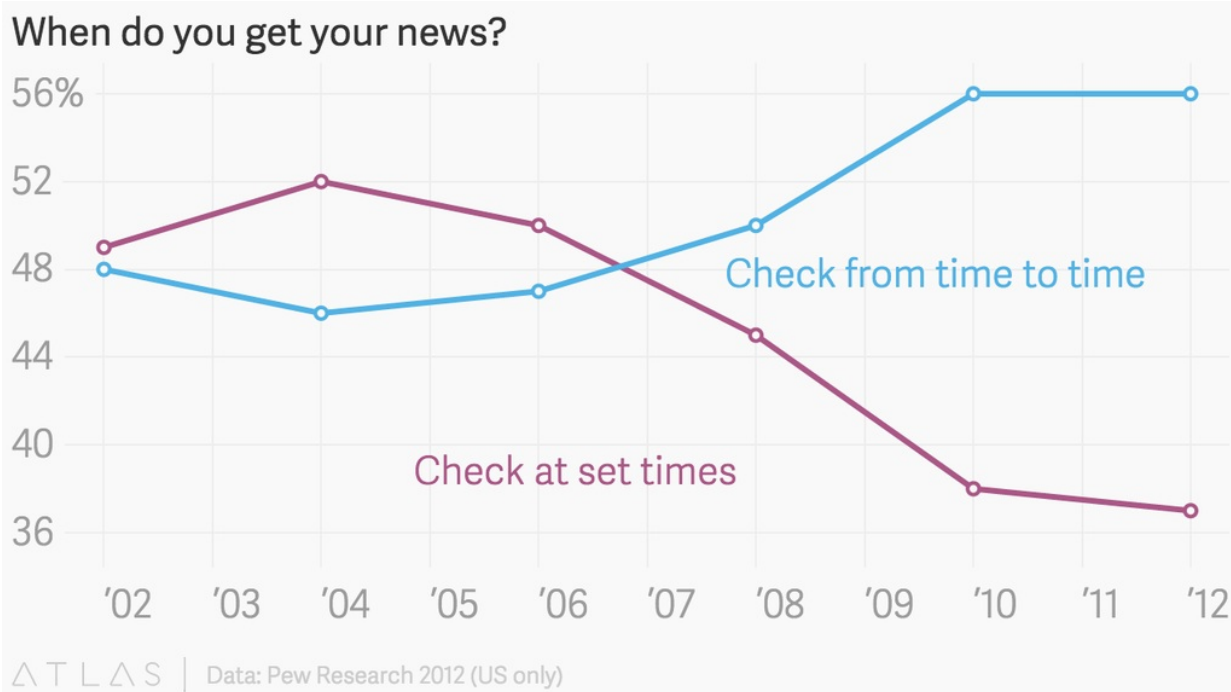
# Should editors share analytics with journalists ?

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2015/09/30/should-editors-share-analytics-with-journalists/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2015/09/30/should-editors-share-analytics-with-journalists/)

2015-9-30

*This article is by MSC student Ndeye Diobaye based on a [Quartz panel debate on the future of digital news](#)*

No one likes a bad grade. But should journalists know how their pieces perform based on the displaying of analytics ?



It is a valid question to ask at a time when newsrooms witness the trend of adopting of more data analysts, digital directors and social media editors. One must consider the concept of a journalist's ego and what poor analytics in terms of likes and shares could do to the ego. But as worrying, is the possibility that the digitization of content has created a distance between the journalist, his story and his audience.

Sarah Marshall (Social Media Editor, Wall Street Journal) argues that being given access to the data was a way for journalists to regain ownership of their stories no matter what the analytics said. Lack of engagement sets ground for questioning the story's worthiness and thereby the reporter's work. The problem with sharing analytics with the journalists she argues doesn't stem so much from what it may do to the journalists' ego rather than what today ecosystem's misuse of the data. Of course, no one likes a bad grade, but is a lack of reach or poor engagement with the audience a proof of unworthiness?

Or are numbers given the wrong power in today's news ecosystem? Aron Pilhofer (Digital Director, The Guardian) pointed out that today's digital world is more likely to share a story about Justin Bieber than an investigation piece. To understand why, we must first question what digital news disruption has caused to the very meaning of communications. What is the worthiness of being informed by the latest celebrity scandal compared to being informed of the realities of state surveillance that investigative journalism has dug up ?

Editors know which story is likely to get impressive reach : you cannot compare the quality of the results on different assignments. Whereas one article is written for public engagement, the latter is written to engage the public in a discussion. Both stories are worthy yet they do not target the same audience nor do they belong to the same

communications model.

Whether it shows a lack of engagement or a great deal of it, data on digital readership carries a value that every reporter or journalist can learn from.

Aron Pilhofer suggests that we should invest in the “unexplored territory of how data can be helpful in promoting stories.” The question, therefore, is not so much deciding whether we should share data in newsrooms with the reporters but rather what the benefits of sharing these data can bring to the newsroom ecosystem.

Data engages reporters in the promotion of their own stories. Sharing data with journalists is a matter of transparency in the newsrooms, it is a new way of including them in the editorial decision-making processes. As Aron Pihofer says “we should not replace news judgment by robots.” News judgments belong to the journalists and therefore so does the analytics on digital readership. It belongs to the editors to make a good case for data analytics and break the misconception of what a lack of engagement may show.

**@spellitndeye**

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science