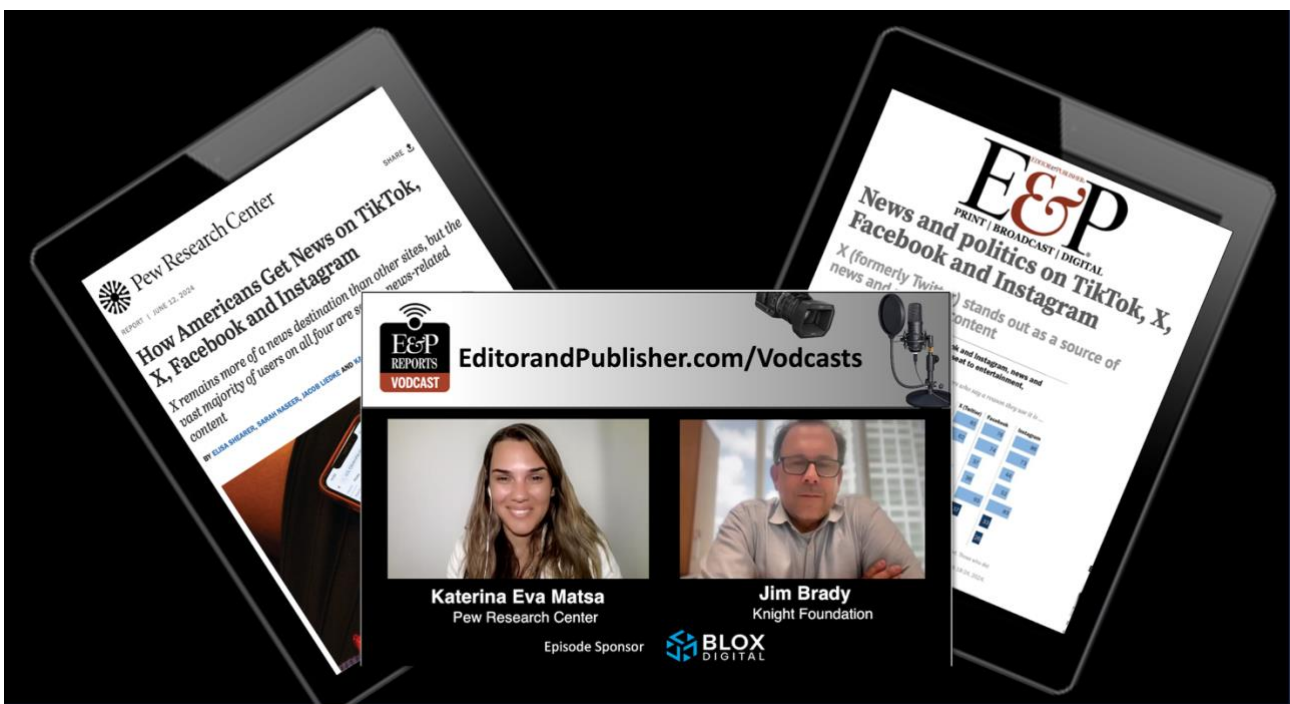


**Audio Transcript**  
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with *Mike Blinder*  
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**[From platforms to practice: Key findings from Pew’s Social Media Study](#)**

In the ever-evolving media landscape, understanding how news is consumed across different social platforms is crucial for adapting to changing audience behaviors. In this episode of “E&P Reports,” we interview Katerina Eva Matsa, director of news and information research at [Pew Research Center](#), and Jim Brady, vice president of journalism at [Knight Foundation](#), to delve into the Pew study: “[How Americans Get News on TikTok, X, Facebook and Instagram](#).” The insights gleaned from our conversation provide a roadmap for news publishers navigating this dynamic environment.



0:00:03.9 Announcer: This is E&P Reports, a vodcast from Editor & Publisher magazine, the authoritative voice of news media since 1884, serving newspapers, broadcast, digital and all forms of news publishing.

0:00:20.6 Mike Blinder: And greetings once again, Mike Blinder, publisher of E&P Magazine. If you're listening to us on a podcast platform, please follow. Watching on YouTube, we urge you to please hit the subscribe button below. Ring the bell to the right. You'll get an update each and every time we upload this weekly vodcast series dedicated to news publishing We call E&P Reports. Jim Brady, I've known you for years, but this is the first time you've been on the program. Welcome. We officially have your title. Tell me if I'm wrong. VP of Journalism at Knight Foundation. Do I have that correct?

0:00:51.1 Jim Brady: You have it completely correct and nice to make my debut.

0:00:54.3 MB: There you go. Katerina Eva Matsa, we have your title as Director of News and Information Research at the Pew Research Center. Do I have that right?

0:01:06.5 Katerina Eva Matsa: Very correct.

0:01:06.6 MB: Thank you very much. Normally, in the old days, we go to LinkedIn and check your background and introduce the audience to you. Now, since AI is so top of mind in our industry, we go to ChatGPT with your permission. And Katerina, I am going to give you their version of you and you give it an A to an F. Are you ready?

0:01:28.0 KM: Yeah, I'm taking a deep breath.

0:01:28.1 MB: Okay, take a deep breath. It says here, Katerina is a prominent researcher and expert in media and journalism. She is known for her work at the Pew Research Center where she focuses on media and news industry trends, particularly in the digital age. Matsa's reach and often explores the intersection of media, technology, and society, providing valuable insights into how news consumption habits are evolving and the implications it has for the media industry. How did ChatGPT do?

0:01:57.8 KM: Wow, I sound very important. I would give it an A.

0:02:02.0 MB: There you go.

0:02:02.8 KM: I'll take it.

0:02:04.0 MB: Jim, are you ready for yours?

0:02:06.7 JB: Not sure, but let's see.

0:02:07.8 MB: Here you go. You're a well-known figure in the media industry, particularly recognized for your contributions to digital journalism. You have had several prominent roles,



including executive editor of washingtonpost.com, an editor-in-chief of Digital First Media, that's where I used to know you, where you led digital operations for one of the largest newspaper companies in the United States. You're a frequent speaker and commentator in the future of journalism, digital media strategies, and the challenges and opportunities facing the news industry today. How did I do, or it do?

0:02:38.4 JB: That's a pretty solid A-minus. It only missed the fact that I'm a diehard Jets fan. That's probably the only thing that I would think it would know from my Twitter account.

0:02:45.9 MB: It mentioned it, but since I was born and bred in Philadelphia and I'm an Eagles fan, I took it out. Today, we're going to be discussing.

0:02:53.3 JB: And that ain't easy being Green.

0:02:54.5 MB: I know. We're going to be discussing a very important topic, which we've constantly been reporting on over the decades, which is how social media is impacting news publishing, but more importantly, some really, I guess, eye-opening research that has been recently done, is that. Katerina, this is research you really had your hands in, is that correct?

0:03:16.9 KM: Yes, exactly.

0:03:19.6 MB: Before we take our break and get into our questions, I'm going to ask you to do the elevator pitch on what this study was and why you did it, Katerina?

0:03:31.4 KM: Yeah. This is one study that builds a lot of the work that we've been doing for at least 10 years on social media, right? And what we're trying to do here is understand Americans' experiences with news and politics, because we did kind of two reports, but I'm going to focus on news here, on how they experience news on four platforms, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and X, formerly known as Twitter. And the unique aspect of this report is that we didn't kind of like group everything together on social media and trying to understand how people are getting news on social media, but we really asked questions and went deep into understanding the experiences of Americans on each platform. And what that showcased was all these differences, right? That how people are basically have very different experiences with news on each of these four platforms. There are some similarities, but there is a lot of differences.

0:04:31.3 MB: Jim, what was Knight's role in all this?

0:04:35.5 JB: The Knight's been, we've been partners with Pew on this research. And obviously, what we like to do with research like this is try to embed it into our thinking in terms of what we go out and fund. And you know, when you see research like this, which I know we'll talk about after the break, I'm happy to, we can talk about how we look at this data, how we take it and how we go out into the field and say, what are the problems that this data surfaces that we're gonna need to do some experimenting to try to resolve. And so we work very closely on not just, we, consume the data happily like everybody else, but it really does drive action for us in terms of how we see our portfolio going forward.



0:05:09.8 MB: The study is called News Consumption Across Social Media Platforms. We're gonna unpack these findings on the backside of this message.

0:05:17.9 Announcer: This episode of E&P reports is exclusively sponsored by BLOX Digital, formerly TownNews. Even though the name has changed, their commitment to the media industry is as strong as ever. BLOX Digital is now even better positioned to deliver integrated solutions like content management, audience development, advertising revenue, video management, and more. Join the over 2,000 news publishers worldwide that power their ongoing digital transformation with BLOX Digital, serving over 141 million monthly users who view over 6.5 billion pages of content each year. You can trust BLOX Digital to empower you to connect you at scale with the community you need to reach. BLOX Digital, formerly TownNews, now reimagined to help meet the news publishing challenges of tomorrow and beyond. Learn more at [BloxDigital.com](https://BloxDigital.com).

0:06:22.3 MB: All right, I guess I'll let you guys decide who this question is for. The recent study revealed that social media users see news on the platforms most often through the lens of humor or opinion. Now, perhaps that's set up by algorithms that deliver news to them in this way, but for news publishers that have invested years in developing their social presences, this is pretty much a hard pill to swallow. I mean, what do you see as the disconnect here and how are we failing to attract social audiences as a news publisher based on your findings? Katerina, do you want to try starting with that?

0:07:02.7 KM: I can start, and I'm sure Jim can add a lot of the strategies and experiences he has with publishers, but you're right. There is two elements of that finding. One is that most Americans don't go to these platforms for news. It's not the main reason they go for news. They're there for many other reasons. I'm sure people know about this, why they go there, but we asked a lot of it, mainly it's entertainment, and news is not one of them. So then for those that they are going there for news and they are getting news, which is mainly this passive experience, we wanted to look at all these different types of news. If it is news articles, if it is straight reporting, and to me at least as a researcher it was very interesting that the funny meme, funny post memes of news was what it was basically the highest. And I think if you tie everything together, that's what it speaks to. It's like that people mainly there are for entertainment. That's the main reason people are on these platforms and they take this experience to news as well. That's how they feel connected and especially if you see also why they go, who do they turn to in all of these platforms, it's mainly friends and family or influencers.

0:08:29.0 KM: Only on X we see this exception where journalists are the ones providing the news that people are exposed to.

0:08:40.0 MB: That's the difference between if I'm going to TikTok, maybe I'm printing this with a broad brush, if I go to TikTok I trip over the story 'cause it's cute, but if I go to X I may be seeking that news content. Do I have that right?

0:08:57.0 KM: Yeah, absolutely. That's where we are saying even like asking for about breaking news, right? That's where you see X really even for young people, right? That's where you see it being an exception again, right? That that is where most people are saying yes, we are using X for breaking news at higher rates than the other three platforms that we asked about.

0:09:17.0 MB: Jim, you and I go way back. I mean, I remember the days of portals. You remember those days where we just thought everybody was going to go to our sites 'cause we put up a billboard or something. Then it was search and now it's social. And that's how I kicked off this question. You've got publishers from all stripes and sizes right now who are trying to find that secret sauce to use social media to build their audience. What does this tell you? And how will you take this to our industry when you hear this?

0:09:45.0 JB: Well, I think one of the things it tells you is you have to be native to the platforms you're on too. I think one of the struggles that media has had for 20 years is we kind of just keep producing. Yes, it may be taking something that was in the newspaper and putting it on a digital platform, but the format and the text and tone and the text is often exactly the same from platform to platform. And as Kat pointed out, people use different platforms for different things. They're looking for different tonal kind of frames depending on what platform they go to. When you kind of have to match that to be successful, I think that for a long time, we'll just put everything on Facebook and everything on Twitter and everything on Instagram or whatever. We'll just kind of use basically the same photo and most of the same text. And meanwhile, you're just dealing with very different audiences. This audience wants something visual. This one wants something video. And so I think there's still a problem where, partially because of the bandwidth challenges of news organizations, they don't have the bodies necessarily to create five different versions of the same story.

0:10:40.5 JB: But where I do think we have to be smarter is saying this story will work better on this platform because it's strong visually. This one will work better on this platform because we have more information. And so the more text we can write, the better. I don't think we're making those decisions yet. I think there's still a, let's just put it on everything and just cross our fingers and see what works. And I think that's not efficient from a bandwidth perspective or for an audience development perspective.

0:11:02.1 MB: But when I took over this publication, I don't wanna be disparaging to the previous owner. They were just letting the CMS that was taking out the print content put up on the web the same way. Same on the email. Same as, we all know now you got to have different flavors for different platforms and all shapes. The picture that entices you in a magazine is not the same that's going to get you to click. We get that. But now we've got to deal with these social nuances. So let me stay with you on this one and then we'll bring back in Katerina. We got an audience now we're going after, maybe just the younger audience has the attention span of like 30 seconds. Right. So how did this apply to social media when you were looking at the metrics? Is it just the headline or can you get someone to go a little deeper into the content and, God forbid, go into the second paragraph?

0:11:51.6 JB: Well, I mean, I think that that always has been the key, look, I mean, We spend so much time talking about how digital journalism changed everything and everybody loved to talk about how, oh, we all had to write these special headlines because we were trying to get SEO. We were trying to attract eyeballs like that's a new thing. It's like, is it? Then we throw newspapers on the newsstand in New York City to try to get the New York Post in the New York. Like they were competing with that headline just the same way we were in digital. So a lot of these things are not



that new, but what's different is now you have a bunch of different formats and a bunch of different ways you can go with the audience. And I think it's not just about the headline anymore. Sometimes it is about the meme image. Sometimes it's about the text on a meme. And we don't really do memes very much. A lot of our journalism has actually turned into a meme by somebody who does memes really well, but we're usually not the one doing the meme. We're usually the one that generated the piece of journalism that led to the meme. But like somewhere in all of that...

0:12:40.9 MB: Exactly. And someone else does the meme, right.

0:12:43.4 JB: We get lost in that right along the way. We just get wiped out of that equation where somebody can reference a New York Times story and a meme, but they're not going to credit it. They're just gonna make a... And so I think like we've got to figure out how to just make some of those things ourselves. And I think that's where it gets to be a struggle for news organizations, which find themselves either afraid of being that kind of edgy or like feeling like it is not what they're supposed to do even. And I think that's where we run into these problems right now. You know, one of the I've said this a bunch of times before, so I'm happy to always repeat it. But I feel like most of the time when new things, when the media is presented with new opportunities, we tend to look at it as a threat first and an opportunity second. And I feel like if we're going to survive in this industry, we've got to start looking at things as an opportunity first and a threat second. There are a lot of things we could do if we just would loosen up a little bit about publishing in these kind of formats that obviously appeal to audiences that are not our core constituency.

0:13:38.6 MB: Thank you for giving me the pull quote. We already know what it's gonna be when we when you write this up. Katerina, are we chasing windmills here? I mean, is this even worth it? Can we get an engaged audience through social media? Is it all just a quick hit and go?

0:13:53.9 KM: That's a good question. I mean, what we're seeing in the research is that people are there. Like that's and I'm saying it as simplistic as that, but it is a pretty big thing. I mean, we have documented and Knight has partnered with us for many years. We have documented the increasing role of social media and the increasing shares of Americans being on all of these platforms. And of course, there are platforms that people got on and they engage with and then they're gone. Right. Like it's not that every social media site that has come along, right, has sustained and has stayed with it. But the notion of social media and what it has been offering to people is here and it's staying for now, at least the 10 years that we've been seeing and more, frankly, but for news, mainly those 10 years. And people, as I said, people are there. So then it's up to producers of news and providers, basically, of how they wanna do that. But we have asked in the past, not in this study, but we have asked in the past, like, what do you like on social media when it comes to news? Right. And of course, what do you dislike?

0:15:09.3 KM: But when it comes to like, it's this convenience, the speed, the easiness, the connection, like the structure of news has changed. That's what we have to think about. And I agree with Jim in some of the things that he's pointing out in a way that from our studies, we've seen that it's not this controlled structure, right? This kind of like top down way. We are participants, right? We are in our work, we've seen in our data show that people post, they engage with news, they're exposed to news where they wouldn't have been exposed other times. And also there is a uniqueness to this news. Like we've, And it's not just social media, but even podcasting, which is very relevant

to hear. And we've started podcasting as well. And what we are seeing there is that people say again and again how they're getting unique news and unique aspects of news that they wouldn't be able to find elsewhere. So from what I've seen in our work and our research and our data, definitely it showcases that this is important spaces. This is where people are. And what do you do with this? I'm sure, you know, people, producers will have to figure it out.

0:16:22.0 MB: It is what it is. Let me stay with you on this one. I'm gonna shift gears a little. Obviously, we're in a very divided society. Partisan is just part of the practice today, if you don't mind the alliteration. How do partisan perceptions affect the way news consumers are getting their news on social media and what can publishers do about that?

0:16:47.0 KM: Yeah, that's a very good question, especially because I have been in this field now for over 15 years and polarization is the main story for anything that has to do with news. And of course, other things in society, but since I'm here to speak about news, I'm gonna focus on that. It is the main story, the main finding, right? It's the partisan divide, which has been increasing and it has been exacerbated and continues to do so as years are passing. Like, I haven't seen anything in our data that suggests a decline of that trend. Side note, before I get to the social media, just to make sure I'm very accurate, there is an exception to this, to polarization with news and that has to do with local news. I know we're not talking about this, but I just wanted to mention it because it is important. We don't see the polarization that we're talking about here in local news. It's a very different environment.

0:17:49.0 MB: Different ball game.

0:17:49.1 KM: Yes.

0:17:51.0 MB: It definitely is.

0:17:51.1 KM: So putting that aside, when it comes to social media, in this study, we didn't see a lot of partisan divides when it comes to the reasons why people are going to these platforms or how much they're... How many the shares of Americans that they're getting news. Overall, we saw Democrats and Republicans getting news on social media on these platforms and all of that at same rates, where we did see some difference, which actually confirms a lot of the previous work that we have done, has to do with accuracy and the perceptions that Americans have in terms of what these platforms, how much influence these platforms have. And there we are seeing differences between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to specific platforms. So for instance, Democrats are more likely to be cautious and pessimistic when it comes to X compared with Republicans. Like they have a more negative view of X versus Republicans and the reverse is true for Facebook, for instance. Republicans are more likely to be negative towards Facebook than Democrats. So we are seeing these differences, right, where it comes to platforms.

0:19:05.2 KM: And I like to pinpoint this in terms of accuracy and even influence and all this because it matters of where people are and when we're looking at demographics of these different platforms, and we are saying that the makeup of news consumers on X, Facebook, TikTok and Instagram is different. So, for instance, on X, news consumers are more likely to be Republican at this point. And that's a shift, right, from a couple of years ago than demos, right? So the makeup...

0:19:40.0 MB: That is surprising.

0:19:41.6 KM: Yes, of each platform, who are these news consumers is very different.

0:19:49.1 MB: I don't know if we have time for this, but my editorial team, once we knew we were gonna have Jim on the program, wants me to ask this question. It's about philanthropy, Jim. Funding that's become a huge part of the world, obviously, press forward is huge, but we're starting to see some philanthropic dollars dwindle. Meta pulled, Google News Initiative may pull all their units. We don't know, but if we take these guys to court or we get them to start paying in states, we may lose that funds as well. What do you see in the future of the donor money that's coming into our industry? And can publishers feel good about the future of that? Or do you feel like it may be shifting in a different sector?

0:20:33.7 JB: No, I mean, I'm feeling pretty positive about it at the moment. I think there's some cautions in it, though. I think like this surge of funding that's come with press forward is not going to be the permanent state. So I think what we see this money coming in is an opportunity to seed a bunch of things that will help grow the overall pie like Knight funds a lot of things that are built on growing the business sustainability of local journalism. So we're not the money goes into things that we hope will generate ideas that will drive revenue. And so eventually down the road, the amount of philanthropic dollars is not required that is here today. So this has to be catalytic. It can't, this is not we're giving everybody a bunch of money to do whatever they want. We just hope it'll continue on like this.

0:21:10.2 JB: We don't have the time or the benefit of that philosophy. So I do think you're gonna, you see a lot of the Press Forward funds going to try and help people catalyze their business to another level. The second thing I do think will happen is I do think there's been a movement toward journalism being viewed as an important part of democracy and a philanthropic context that I think is gonna get money in the door from places that have not traditionally put money into journalism. If you look at the Press Forward funders, pressforward.news you'll see a lot of people who have not funded journalism before and I think that's because they see this now as a something more than funding news. They're funding something that they view as a critical component to democracy, and so I do think you're gonna see corporate donors. I think you're gonna see more high net worth individuals giving to journalism and many of them will do it in their backyards, in the communities they know and care about. That's great, but I do think we're gonna, I think we're seeing a shift in how journalism is handled philanthropically and Press Forward is a good opportunity to leverage that and kind of open that aperture a bit.

0:22:06.6 MB: Jim Brady, Knight Foundation's VP of Journalism. Katerina Eva Matsa, Pew Research Center's Director of News and Information Research. I wanna thank both of you for your valuable time and I sure as heck hope that both of you can come back on this program and continue the dialogue with us. Thanks.

