

The background of the slide is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in detail. The flag is positioned on the right side of the frame, with the stars in the upper right and the stripes extending towards the bottom right.

Mastering Social Media Connections with Integrity & Navigating the Political Storm

**With Gabby Pogel, Founder of Crescent Moon Media
and Social Media Manager with PNA**

Training Agenda

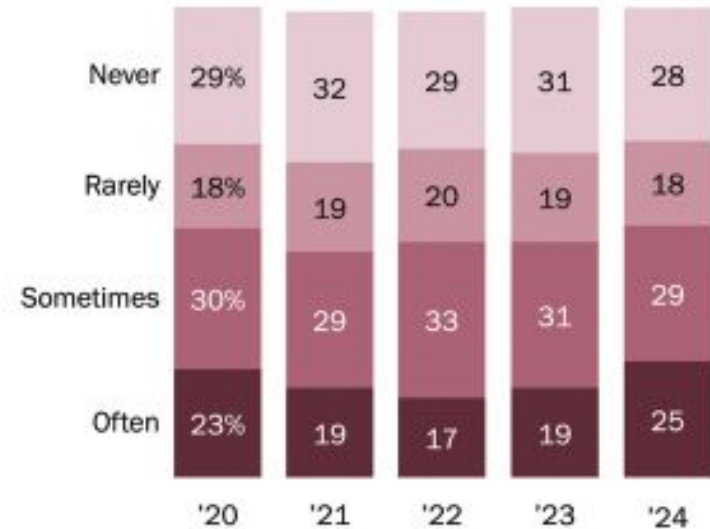
- 1. Analyze the role of social media in contemporary journalism and explore how digital readers consume news**
- 2. Discuss best practices, tools, and techniques for respectful engagement on social media**
- 3. Outline key legal considerations for publishers sharing political content on social media**
- 4. Examine case studies and real-world examples**
- 5. Share an open discussion on the insights gathered by media professionals in the lead-up to the November election**

Social Media & News Consumption

- Digital content is an essential component to the average American news diet
- Social media plays a critical role
- Data from Pew Research reveals **54% of U.S. adults** report to at least sometimes getting news from social media

News consumption on social media

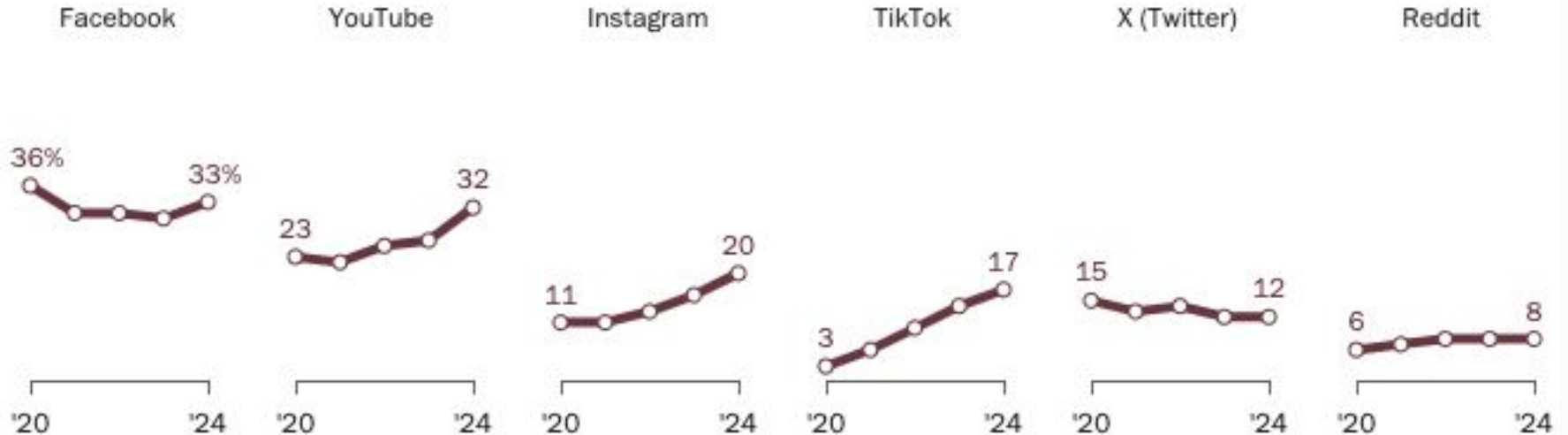
% of U.S. adults who get news from social media ...



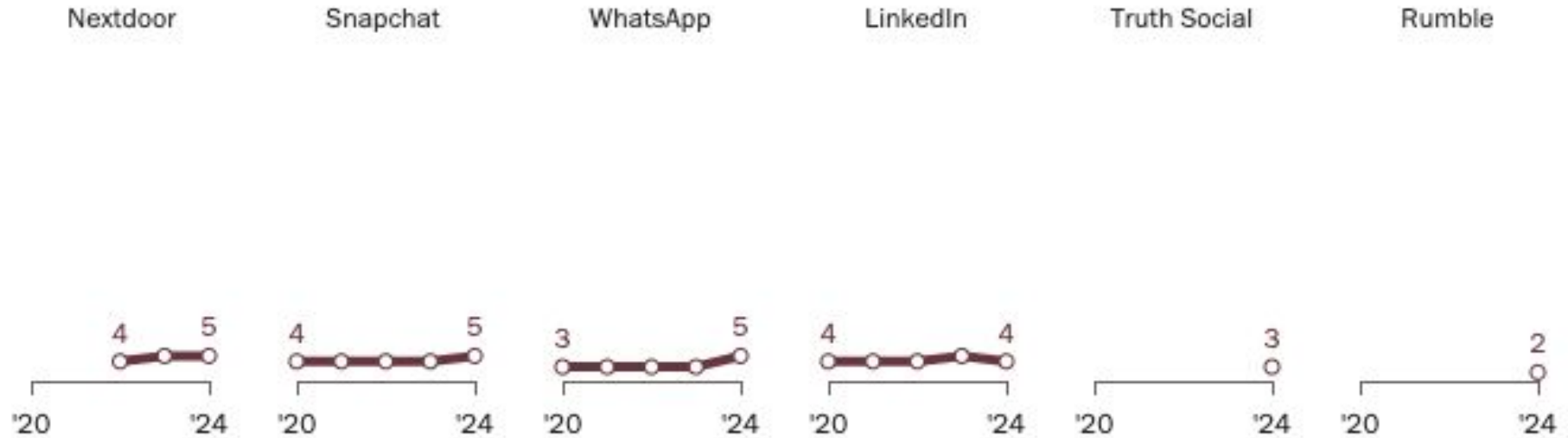
Social Media & News Consumption by Site

News consumption by social media site

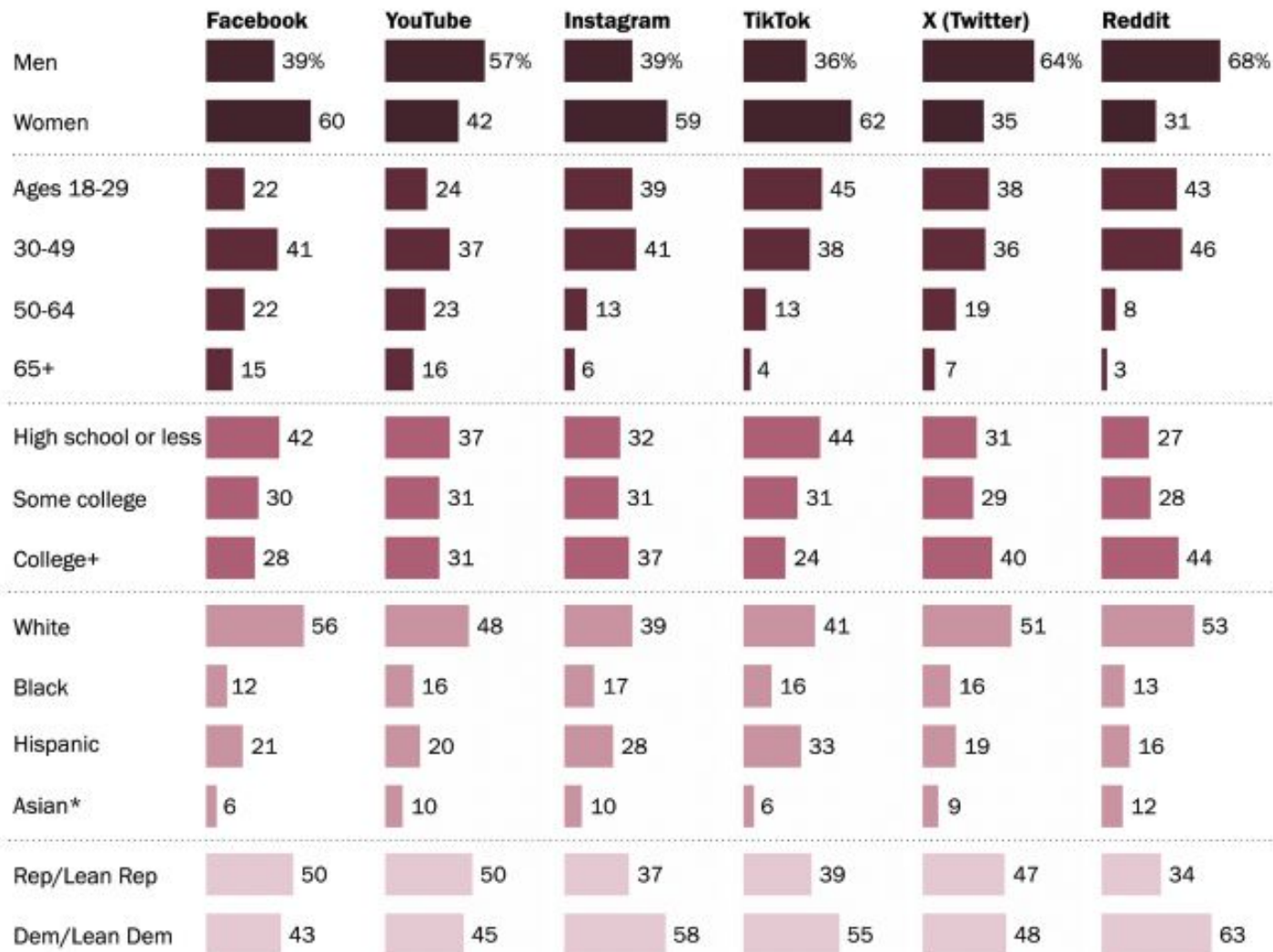
*% of U.S. adults who **regularly** get news on each social media site*



Social Media & News Consumption by Site



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 15-Aug. 4, 2024.



Social Media & News Consumption by Site

- Some social media sites are stand out destinations for news among many of their users which can lead to polarization and misinformation
 - 59% of X (formerly known as Twitter) users report to getting news from the platform
 - 57% of Truth Social (owned by former Pres. Donald Trump)
 - 52% of TikTok users
- Politically aligned platforms like Truth Social can lead to further polarization, offering one-sided content that grows increasingly extremist

Social Media & Threats of Polarization

- According to a Reuters Institute Fellow's Paper conducted by Jennifer Alejandro, the main benefit of sharing breaking news on social media is the speed of the share, as reported by publishers from across the globe
 - Brand awareness, brand presence, and increased website traffic are additional benefits of sharing news on social media
- Risks include concerns regarding accuracy and the need for verification
- As we are all aware, fair and fact based reporting is an essential tenet of American democracy

Social Media & Threats of Polarization (cont.)

- Due to this fast paced nature of social media, publishers face the difficult task of fact check all pieces of information while being the first to report on breaking news, either locally or nationally
- Once social content is shared, publishers can lose control of the content
- A combination of this lack of control and the need for immediacy can lead to the spread of misinformation, especially during politically charged and heated times
- This in turn leads to extreme partisan animosity

Extreme Partisan Animosity

- Divisiveness has reached new extremes in the U.S.
- Consequences of this polarization include:
 - Declining trust in fellow citizens and major institutions, such as long trusted local and national publications
 - The erosion of democratic norms like respect for elections
 - Loss of faith in the existence of commonly held facts
 - Political violence such as the January 6, 2021, insurrection on Capitol Hill
- To avoid this type of polarization, unbiased bi-partisan fact based reporting is essential, on social media and beyond

Engaging with Social Media Users During Politically Charged Times

- One basic tenet of democracy states that the public must be informed about public affairs so that it may fulfill its role in collective decision making
- Engaging your audience respectfully during polarized times is essential to ensure an informed public is capable of making strong collective decisions



Best Practices for Engaging Respectfully

DIGIDAY

Conducted a study on eight media organizations:

The Washington Post

The New York Times

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

GANNETT

Bloomberg

 BuzzFeed

CNN

 n p r

Best Practices for Engaging Respectfully

DO

Focus on posting fact-based reporting

Stay away from misinformation and gossip

Be careful with personal opinions that could show bias

Be ready to answer questions

Best Practices for Engaging Respectfully

DO

Be willing to face praise or criticism from members of either side of the political spectrum

Set aside time to check the replies or comments of posts

Continue the thread of discussion

Best Practices for Engaging Respectfully

DON'T

Endorse political or partisan views

Make customer service complaints

Post anything that would “undermine your credibility as an objective journalist,” as Bloomberg’s guidelines put it.

Post what you wouldn’t publish

Best Practices for Engaging Respectfully

DON'T

Respond to aggressive tweets (When you respond to non-aggressive posts and engagements, be polite)

Post news stories to social media before your publication has put them out

Retweet or quote offensive comments about yourself or others, even if your intention is to show your disapproval

“Social media posts should be considered reflections of the journalist and the media outlet they work for.”

DIGIDAY

“Journalism is not dead but merely evolving and the journalists of the future need to reinvent themselves too.”

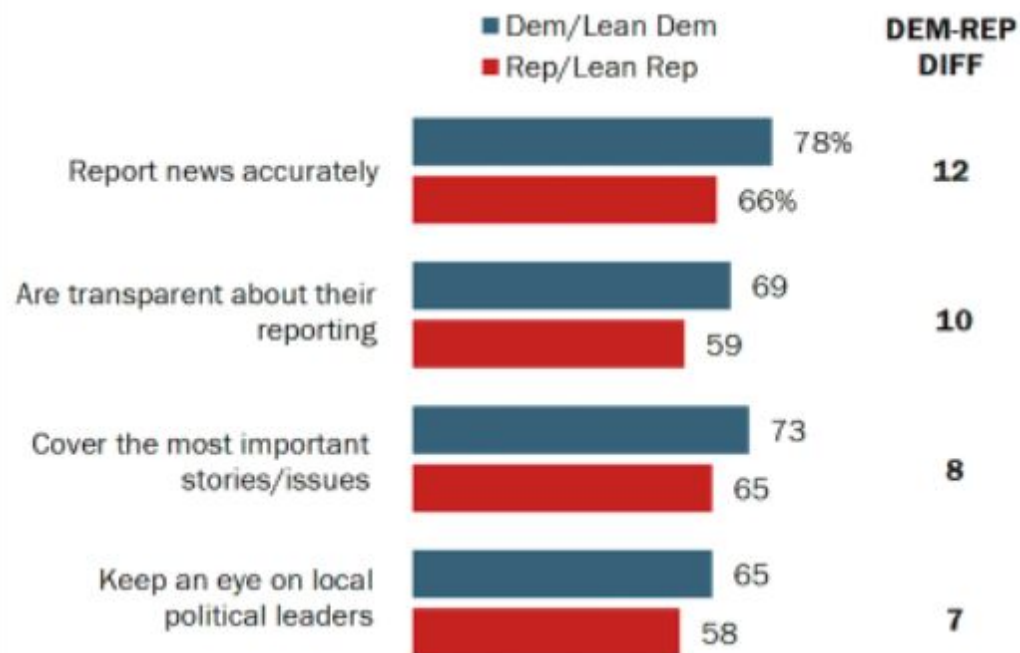
- **Jennifer Alejandro**, a Singaporean journalist of more than 15 years' experience and currently a news anchor at Channel News Asia

Social Media & Local Journalism

- As research reveals, many Americans rely on digital media for their daily news consumption, whether that be local news or national
- The majority say that local journalists should remain neutral on issues in the community and politics at large
- A substantial minority (~30%) say local journalists should take a more active role, especially Democrats and young adults
- Views toward local news are not as politically polarized as Americans' opinions about the news media overall

Majorities of both political parties believe their local news media do various aspects of their jobs well

% of U.S. adults who say their local news media do each well



Note: All differences shown are statistically significant.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 22-28, 2024.
"Americans' Changing Relationship With Local News"

Legal Considerations

For specific questions regarding legal considerations, please contact PNA Media Law Counsel
Melissa Bevan Melewsky

717-703-3048

melissam@pa-news.org



Legal Considerations: Publisher Liability

- **Examples:** Newspapers, books, magazines and advertisements
- **When using social media:** Under tort law, publishers communicate third-party content
- When resharing content, publishers can be held just as responsible as the original authors because publishers make decisions over what content goes into their products and with 'editorial control' comes increased liability
- Content moderation – such as deciding whether to withdraw, edit or promote content – is important for publishers.

FEC (Federal Election Commission) Special Rules for Internet Public Communications

- Disclaimer requirements for internet public communications (e.g. political advertising) are similar to those for print and broadcast media
- They also take into account the ways in which internet public communications differ from print and broadcast media
- Although the internet disclaimer provisions do not impose the stand-by-your-ad requirements applicable to radio and television advertisements, they do require similar audio or visual disclaimers
- **FEC guidelines would not apply to a social media post by a journalist working for a news organization and reporting on the election**

CASE STUDY

Facebook & The Spread of Misinformation

- A peer-reviewed study by researchers at New York University (Tandon School of Engineering) and the Université Grenoble Alpes in France found that from August 2020 to January 2021, news publishers known for putting out misinformation got **six times the amount of likes, shares, and interactions on the platform as did trustworthy news sources**, such as CNN or the World Health Organization
- The study also states Facebook amplifies misinformation because it does well with users, and the sites that happen to have more misinformation are on the right

CASE STUDY

Facebook & The Spread of Misinformation

- After January 6, Mark Zuckerberg announced that Facebook would make permanent a provisional decision to stop recommending to users that they join politically oriented Groups
- The platform's recommendation algorithm had been steering some people toward pockets of hyper-partisan antagonism, including Groups promoting QAnon and Stop the Steal
- Zuckerberg called the move "a continuation of work we've been doing for a while to turn down the temperature and discourage divisive conversations and communities."

CASE STUDY

YouTube & The Spread of Misinformation

- More than 400,000 people subscribe to the YouTube channel of Dr. Joseph Mercola, whom researchers have labeled a leading source of coronavirus misinformation
- In a video advertising his 2021 book, “The Truth About Covid-19,” he warns that “the technocratic overlords” are using the pandemic to “eliminate your privacy and personal liberties.”
- Mercola, who also has large followings on Facebook and Twitter, has accused his critics of trying to censor his efforts to publicize alternative health products, which he sells online

CASE STUDY

YouTube & The Spread of Misinformation

- In response, YouTube banned Mercola and other popular anti-vax content creators who were willfully spreading misinformation
- In July 2021, President Biden said social media companies were partially responsible for spreading misinformation about the vaccines, and need to do more to address the issue
- As newspaper publishers, it is vital to report fact-checked information and stay away from misinformation
- It is important to note the **difference** between the freedom of skepticism and the right to free speech vs. the spread of objective misinformation

Open Discussion

What challenges have you faced on social media regarding politically motivated posts?

Does your publication note an increase in engagement in politically motivated posts?



Q&A

Concluding Thoughts

Today, we've discussed:

- Social media in contemporary local and national journalism
- The do's and don'ts of engaging
- Legal considerations
- Case studies

Next steps: Review the media ethics guidebooks of reputable media organizations:

- The Washington Post's Policies and Standards
- The New York Times' Social Media Guidelines for the Newsroom
- NPR's Ethics Handbook

ANY QUESTIONS?

Advertising and Disclaimers

Federal Election Commission

<https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/advertising-and-disclaimers/>

Americans' Changing Relationship With Local News

Pew Research Center

<https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2024/05/07/americans-changing-relationship-with-local-news/>

Fueling The Fire: How Social Media Intensifies U.S. Political Polarization – And What Can Be Done About It, Paul M. Barrett

NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights

<https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/publication/fueling-the-fire-how-social-media-intensifies-u-s-political-polarization-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/>

Journalism in the Age of Social Media

Reuters Institute / University of Oxford Journalist Fellows' Papers, Jennifer Alejandro

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/journalism-age-social-media>

Misinformation on Facebook got six times more clicks than factual news during the 2020 election, study says

NYU Tandon School of Engineering

<https://engineering.nyu.edu/news/misinformation-facebook-got-six-times-more-clicks-factual-news-during-2020-election-study-says>

Section 230- Are Online Platforms Publishers, Distributors, or Neither?

Bipartisan Policy Center

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/section-230-online-platforms/>

Social Media and News Fact Sheet

Pew Research Center

<https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/social-media-and-news-fact-sheet/>

The Digiday guide to news organizations' social media policies

Digiday

<https://digiday.com/media/the-digiday-guide-to-news-organizations-social-media-policies/>

Understanding news engagement on social media: A media repertoire approach

National Library of Medicine / PubMed Central

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9315192/>

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Thank you for your time.

Please contact me with any questions.

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