

# Undertake Research & Analysis

Assessment 3

Foreign Correspondents, Information Retrieval, Public Perception &  
The Role Social Media Plays

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# Executive Summary

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Foreign correspondents, information retrieval conducted by foreign correspondents, the public perception of foreign correspondents and the role social media plays is the main theme and overall research topic for this report.

Technology is driving the media industry now more than ever, and it is imperative for professionals within the field to be aware of changes in dynamic and expert opinions on the developing industry, this report was written to undermine a topical issue which is affecting only one of many fields within the media industry, foreign correspondents.

Secondary and primary research was conducted to generate the analysis for this report, a literature review with an interview and survey were conducted and coincided to conclusively determine themes that fragment the vast effects the media industry has experienced due to technological advances, and the effect these advances have had on the general public.

The key findings in this report are that the foreign correspondent professional now must adapt and utilise a model by John Hamilton to position themselves recognisably within the media industry, this helps determine specific details the industry may have such as number of journalists retrieving information online and number of journalists positioned on the ground in a foreign space.

Technology has been perceived as impeding foreign affairs, however this article finds that many news media broadcasting organisations are now utilising technology and social media to help grow their business and increase audience reach.

A recommendation concluded from this report is that there needs to be a full data analysis of consumers staying informed by social media and online on foreign affairs, some literature reviewed in this report was quite vague and exact figures of news reach online was numerous.

By doing an analysis of the broad influence the Internet has had on traditional press; a thorough conclusion can be summarised by how much the online stratosphere will be able to help innovate and lead the foreign correspondents field.

The initial hypothesis was that foreign affairs would always be a necessity to society and cultures, however the findings from this report suggest that globalization and new technologies have helped integrate foreign affairs into the daily use and activities by consumers and the general public, suggesting a more native approach to foreign news broadcasting has nuanced its way into modern media.

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# Introduction & Background

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## **Introduction:**

Demand in foreign correspondents has since declined at the turn of the century, according to Media Standard Trusts director Martin Moore international news dropped from 20% to 11% from 1979 to 2009 (P.g. 5, Shrinking World, the Decline of International Reporting in the British Press, 2010), claims that financial costs, technological advances, government legislation and other impeding factors are some of the reasons for the decline, this report analyses literature and investigates qualitative and quantitative measures to determine what has affected the landscape and implications of Foreign Correspondents, Information Retrieval, Public Perception & the Role Social Media Plays.

The topic of Foreign Correspondents, Information Retrieval, Public Perception & the Role Social Media Plays relates to the idea or movement of information being at our fingertips with the likes of social media and the Internet being readily available, Malcolm Turnbull at the Lowy Institute Media Awards 2014 stated many journalists, particularly senior, stress younger journalists are opting to reference their resources from online in lieu of building relationships and contacts that are of a more authentic reliability.

This leads to less prioritisation of funding for international newsrooms because of the economic implications, the ABC produced figures demonstrating a yearly profit decline of 8% for the newsprint newspaper market, and staggeringly over the last 10 years sales of newspapers on a Sunday have dropped by 47.5%, highlighting the recurring theme of the general public preferring the convenience of digital media sources, and also highlighting the assumption that the general public's perception of digital media sources is growing evermore trusting.

What interests me most about this topic is how this will influence the media industry, one of the most profitable, in the foreseeable future.

The growing trend of reducing the number of international news rooms and an emphasis on sales profitability by media organisations to combat the decline of traditional media means less credibility and reliability of factual information being shared, the line between what is news and what is advertising may become even more blurred, with the implications affecting society as a whole as important global issues may become less of a priority as it does not create profitability.

## **Research Questions:**

Research questions posed to critique and objectively analyse information throughout the report were; what makes a foreign correspondent succeed in the current environment, using case studies to further demonstrate the point; how are foreign correspondents maintaining demand for their content in the shifted landscape; what are the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the industry at present; and at what point in time did the impeding factors such as social media start having an influence on foreign affairs, are we able to determine any foreseeable changes or opportunities based on this.

## **Background:**

According to the research conducted by Martin Moore in 'Shrinking World, the Decline of International Reporting in the British Press', the background of declining international news stories being printed in newspapers began around 1979.

Interestingly, this was around the time the Internet was invented, in 1983.

### **Limitations:**

Notable limitations throughout conducting the research for this report were accessibility to raw data relevant to the specific context, such as number of foreign correspondents active and the amount of funding media organisations distribute to their international news divisions.

Other limitations include the survey responses not taking into account a larger demographic of age, race, profession and gender and the interview respondent not being particularly well versed within the field of foreign affairs.

### **Brief History:**

Since the introduction of the World Wide Web and the increasing usage by the general public, news media organisations have been criticised for being too slow to release news about current events.

The cause and effect of such is media organisations dwindling behind while the general public and citizen bloggers deliver stories more efficiently, the average speed at which the internet travels is two thirds the speed of light, a rate at which the physical processes of releasing news stories by traditional means cannot compete with.

Since the introduction of Pay Per Click in 1996, media organisations have been able to slowly merge their readers away from traditional media to their online content, and with the easy functionality and usability of social media platforms users are able to search for their preferred foreign affairs distributors, causing a shift from traditional media to online.

### **Hypothesis:**

An annual survey by the U.K regulator Ofcom showed that people thought world wide current affairs were of interest above other news.

The foreign affairs industry is sufficiently embedded in the culture of most societies; many governments and persons rely off the qualitative information provided from reliable sources about foreign issues, because of this it is highly unlikely the industry will become completely redundant.

However the demand for this is satisfied by the Internet and online tools such as social media, although the information can be sought quickly it frequently lacks depth and thorough analysis. Foreign correspondents need to adapt and have already begun to adapt by undertaking reporting with adept investigative skills.

In an article on PRWeek.com, the opportunity to use native advertising by story telling is used by an ex foreign correspondent and PR professional, the future of foreign correspondents can build off the native advertising and brand storytelling dynamic. Building on corporate responsibility and social enterprises.

# Methodology

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The goal of this report is to understand if there is a decline in foreign correspondents, the way in which foreign correspondents retrieve information, the public perception of foreign correspondents and the role social media plays.

This topic was chosen because the media industry is changing quite rapidly and the desire to understand why and how it is adapting is something of interest to me.

Presently, the issue is quite topical as technology is growing rapidly making it easier for the general public to voice their opinions and strategize ways for key messages to reach different parts of the world.

## **Project Timeframe:**

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Stage 1</b>	February 9 – February 24	Preliminary research to discover primary and secondary data for target audience, research topic and method of research
<b>Stage 2</b>	February 25 – March 24	Draft and assess research titles that capture the context of the subject 'Foreign affairs and public perception', implement plan and strategy for drafting and research
<b>Stage 3</b>	March 25 – April 28	Examine tactics used in literature that has been used, decipher between scare tactics, scepticism and education, reference sources of research, Government Websites
<b>Stage 4</b>	April 29 – May 30	Finalisation and conclusive analysis

## **Project Plan:**

April	April	April	April	May	May	May	May
Obtain ground resources and information research - Research correspondent agencies in at least three countries, cite references and investigate interviews that have been conducted with the professionals that work there - Analyse and interpret information				Elaborate and research information on individual foreign correspondent professionals who use social media as a tool to communicate			
Draft qualitative research							
	Investigate scholarly research articles by industry experts			Research qualitative data based on previous research, use articles that back up and elaborate conclusions			
Conduct survey with RMIT Public Relations students based on research findings					Compile report		
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8

## **Steps & Interviewee:**

Steps and process taken throughout this report are outlined above in the stages; preliminary searches were all conducted within the first month of the research project for benefit of the secondary research.

Primary research was obtained by a three step process, research potential, contact potential and follow up within at least one week time frame.

Unfortunately initial contacts did not respond and were not available for the interview to take place, I then contacted a public relations practitioner who I have personally met to ensure an interview would take place.

The interviewee was Caleb York; Caleb has a degree in public relations and a degree in economics, his experience in communications and working within a PR firm made him a strong contestant for the interview for this report.

## **Survey:**

The participants in the survey were sourced from RMIT University and were mainly colleagues within the course 'Advanced Diploma of Business Public relations.'

An implication of the survey responses is that 61.54% of responders were between the ages of 18 – 21, the individual experiences such as profession, stage of life and actual dependence of foreign affairs with this demographic and the foreign affairs industry may be inconsistent with the context of this report.

### **Limitations & Distinct Conclusions:**

Some parts of the secondary research noted within the literature review contradicted each other, there were highlighting factors stating the benefits of technology in media and foreign correspondents, notably Jeff Hurst a times staffer of Cambridge Times who mentions Sonia Verma believing social media and citizen journalists have become an important part of news coverage.

However Dannika Lewis in 'Foreign Correspondents in a Modern World, Past, Present and Possible Future' mentions many online journalists and citizen bloggers are generally activists and only impede the transparency of the industry.

The survey responses did not fully incorporate global cultures and trends, the responders were mainly caucasian university students geographically located in Melbourne, Victoria and did not fully represent all ethnicities and cultural backgrounds or socio-economic experiences.

Specifically, the main distinct conclusions from his report are that technology is currently driving foreign correspondents, and the tools to do so being used in the correct way are actually benefiting the objective of most news media organizations, that is to raise profit.

New advertising platforms integrated into social media and online allow for organizations to gain audience reach and increase profits.

Transparency has almost become something of the recipient of the news story or the perceiver, with the increase of consumers going online there is more freedom for choice of what stories the reader actually chooses to believe and can opt for mainstream media organizations online or citizen bloggers.

# Literature Review

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The effect of social media amplifying the concept of 'the global in the local' is arguably implicating the solidity of the foreign affairs industry and industry professionals.

The competitiveness and demand to have content regarding an international story released to a news agencies demographic online can add detrimental pressure to a foreign correspondents profession, potentially jeopardizing factual information and thorough investigation.

With the concept of citizen blogging and the general public becoming more adept and connecting through means such as the Internet and social media, the dependence of foreign affairs agencies and correspondents is questionable and raises the argument of whether or not a decline in the industries profession is imminent.

The Australian Institute of International Affairs reported an article on social media perpetuating propaganda, analyzing the affect social media has on the foreign affairs industry. The report analyzed the Israeli Defense Forces use of social media in 2012, with findings suggesting 'social media dissolves the use of propaganda and public information to forward political-strategic goals'.

Ulf Hannerz reinforces this by highlighting the transparency of the industry being in jeopardy for almost a decade, in his book 'Foreign News: Exploring the World of Foreign Correspondents' (2010, pg. 8) he raises the issue that Columbia University overemphasizes reporting and writing over training political theory and economics. Questioning whether or not its graduates understand the risks and depth of violating journalistic ethics.

Pamela Constable a staff writer at the Washington Post who has reported from more than 35 countries stated in an opinion piece that between 2002 and 2006 the number of foreign correspondents dropped from 188 to 141, and highlights the cost associated with operating an office in a foreign capital being too high for bureaus to maintain.

She states that according to 'foreign editors' the cost to maintain a typical newspaper bureau overseas can be as high as \$250,000 a year, with security conscious bureaus almost needing to leverage \$1 Million.

In an effort to cut costs, the article states that Newspapers opt to replace bureaus with freelancers.

The article offers an interpersonal perspective in comparison to the former articles, Pamela Constable reflects on her younger years as a foreign correspondent, working tirelessly to offer stories that are insightful and engaging, and visit the most unique and intrinsic parts of the world.

Ms. Constable uses persuasive language in this article and is somewhat one sided on reinforcing the importance of maintaining foreign bureaus despite costs, however the legitimacy of the article can be questionable, as the stats are not referenced and corrections were made to the article at a later date.

Martin Moore, maintains Ms. Constable' opinion by stating the original source of demise may be from the cost to run an international foreign news bureau, stating the costs associated with are \$200,000 to \$300,000.

He reiterates on the decline by mentioning how the framework of foreign news reporting changed in dynamic after the Cold War, for instance the context of a war in Angola was clear and concise, one side was winning and one losing.

However to a domestic audience the context of military coups, diplomatic wrangling and complicated wars wasn't immediately recognizable for an audience.

Dr. Jeffrey Hirschberg has a different, possibly more progressive perspective on the subject, in a conference at the Broadcasting Board of Governors discussion forum analyzing the topic of 'International News Coverage in a New Media World: The Decline of the Foreign Correspondent' (2010) highlights the benefits of social media in foreign affairs, stating that only 18% of the world's population enjoys free press, with suppressive governments finding new ways to devoid traditional press and communications.

He states how new communications tools help circumvent government senses, for instance VOA (Voice of America) used an SMS streaming service to provide over 10,000 subscribers regarding information for a presidential election.

He states how it is important to utilize new technologies in the media, and to find ways to work with these new technologies with the people who need the information.

Jeff Hurst a Times Staffer of Cambridge Times, reinforces the progressive perspective of social media benefiting foreign correspondents, he mentions Sonia Verma of The Globe and Mail who believes that social media and citizen journalists have become an important part of news coverage, stating that journalists can become a threat to government and are arrested, withheld and blocked from releasing stories.

Verma mentions how she can now land in a country and electronically search for a citizen who posts regularly online, specifically Twitter and Facebook. In Yemen, she could Tweet and discover a nearby protest.

This article is factual and unbiased, the author Jeff Hurst uses quotes and references well.

Dannika Lewis in 'Foreign Correspondents in a Modern World, the Past, Present and Possible Future of Global Journalism also has a progressive stance on the shift in landscape of foreign correspondents, though also highlights the decline.

She mentions that in 2004, the Pew Research Centre for People and the Press found 52% of people in the U.S follow international news most of the time, emphasizing the demand for foreign news being quite high.

Citizen bloggers or citizen journalists are also mentioned in her article as being recognized as a legitimate news source, although they are sometimes perceived as biased or activist written, their living experiences are trustworthy and credible versions of reporting.

The underlying theme of these pieces of literature highlights a juxtaposed realm of opinion, neither can be black and white when constituting the future solidity of foreign affairs and the correspondents that operate in the field being affected negatively by social media.

The positive affects of new technologies advancing foreign correspondents is instead an ideology that seems to be a theme in these articles, perhaps stating that they have helped grow foreign affairs as foreign governments have not been able to fully blockade and control these communication tools. Whereas a foreign bureau can be monitored, controlled and even legally withdrawn from the country.

From these lit reviews there are two main themes of threats to foreign correspondents, government suppression, and newspaper and media outlets budgeting by withdrawing their correspondents.

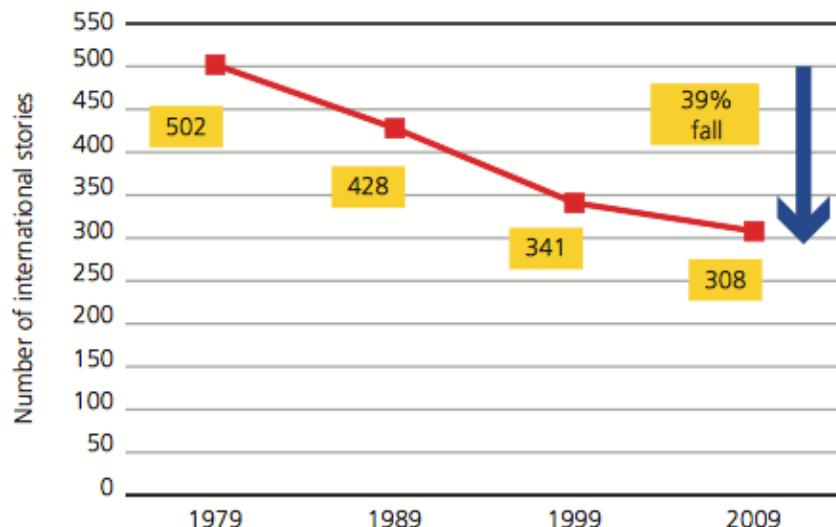
# Analysis

Throughout the analysis conducted for this report, there were notably five main themes consistent in the research.

## Theme 1:

There is strong recurring and consistent evidence there has been a decline in foreign affairs in recent decades, notably since the introduction of the World Wide Web.

As stated in the 'Background' section of this report, Martin Moore conducted research of international news stories being printed in newspapers from 1979 – 2009, concluding a decline.



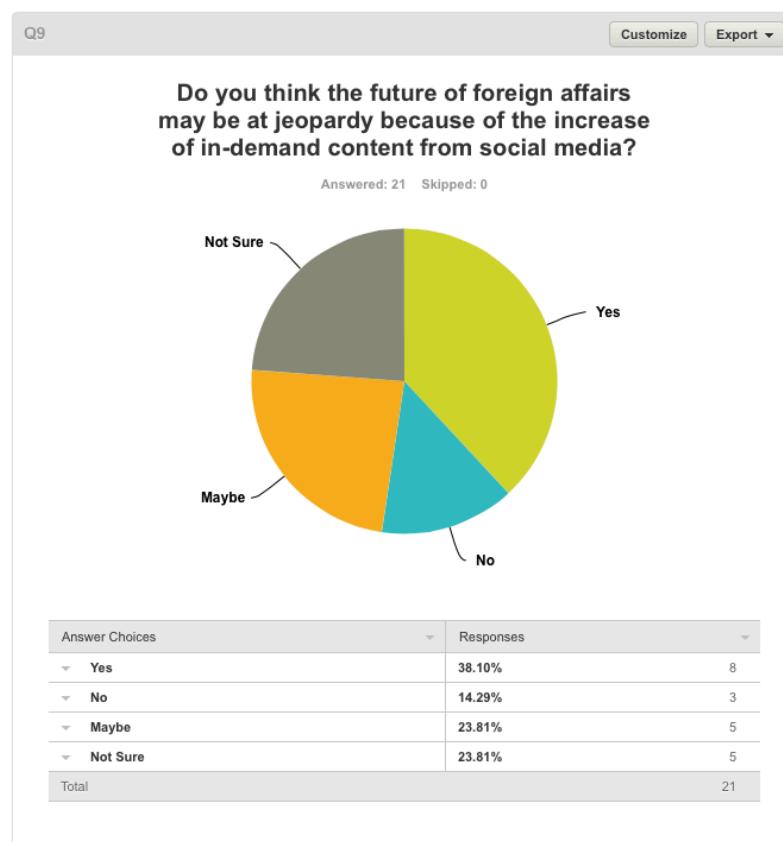
*Decline in absolute number of international news stories across the whole newspaper,  
(Shrinking World, the Decline of International Reporting in the British Press, Martin Moore,  
2010, P.g. 12)*

The participatory factors influencing the decline are the increasing use of online media which not only increases the variety for which the general public can source information but also increases competition for news organisation, affecting their profit margins and impeding the funding for international news bureaus.

## Theme 2:

Public perception of foreign correspondents has considerably shifted to a more pessimistic outlook, Dannika Lewis writes in 'Foreign Correspondents in a Modern World, the Past, Present and Possible Future of Global Journalism' about research conducted by Carroll Bogert which highlighted that the 'public continues to hold the media in low self esteem, right down there with businessmen and politicians' and instead opt for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) as they 'don't trust the information less because it doesn't come from the mainstream media'. (P.g. 122)

Evidently the negative opinion of foreign affairs was shown in my survey results conducted May 2015, with majority of respondents (38.10%) stating they do believe the future of foreign correspondents may be at jeopardy because of in-demand content on social media.



## Theme 3:

Foreign correspondent professionals are almost forcibly being made to adapt to the changing landscape of digital media, Dannika Lewis in Foreign Correspondents in a Modern World writes how John Hamilton mentioned in his essay 'In the Foothills of Change' there are now seven different classifications of foreign news correspondents, unlike their traditional grass root predecessors.

1. *Foreign* foreign correspondents; those that work from their native country for international news outlets.
2. *Local* foreign correspondents; those who cover international stories to the country they reside in.
3. *Parachute* correspondents; those who are sent around the world to disseminate news from that area.
4. *Citizen* correspondents; those who utilize technology to casually report on information first hand.
5. *Foreign local* correspondents; who report on their native country to another part of the world by reading or watching news from their native country.
6. *Premium* foreign correspondents that charge a fee for specialized reporting from around the world.
7. And lastly *In-House* foreign correspondents; those who work exclusively to obtain news for an organization or corporation.

This method of breaking down the vast field of foreign correspondents helps to decipher how the media has adaptively shaped to globalization, and recognizes there is not a singular traditional correspondent but an amass of correspondents.

I might like to add that through this research there might be an eighth foreign correspondent, that which is shaped by social media and broken down by Hamilton's fourth correspondent. In which the general public and not a single individual culminates one form of foreign news reporting, and the tool itself, i.e. Facebook becomes a foreign correspondent platform.

## Theme 4:

Increasing use of digital media as a journalistic means by foreign correspondent professionals is implicating the transparency of foreign affairs, the competitiveness to have stories released to the general public within a demanding time frame means fact checking is becoming less of a priority.

This is further emphasised in my interview with a public relations practitioner in Melbourne, Caleb York. When asked; do you trust sources of information on international news stories, he answered:

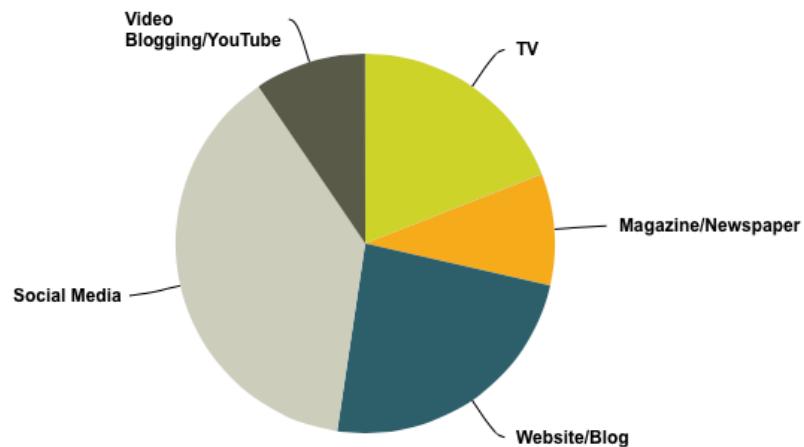
'Not always, if it is ambiguous I tend not too, but you can never be too sure, sometimes News moves too quickly for proper fact checking to occur, like that young guy whose face was put on the front of Age after the terrorist incident here in Vic.'

This relates to when the Age run by Fairfax Media posted an image of a Melbourne teenager and labelled him a terrorist incorrectly after police shot dead an 18 year old for stabbing them.

It is notable to recognise the interviewees response only considering something that is relevant to his geographic location, in considering international news from countries where fact checking may be even more sparsely conducted at news bureaus.

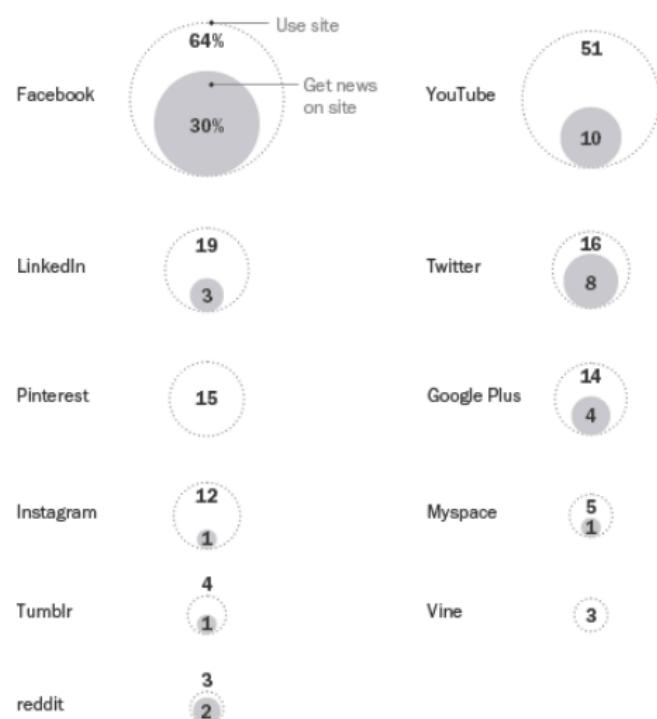
## Theme 5:

Social media is increasingly becoming more of a popular commodity for the general public to obtain information about foreign news and international affairs. According to my survey responses conducted, nearly 40% of respondents utilize social media as a tool to learn about foreign affairs.



The effect of this means news broadcasting organizations are adapting to the consumer demand of social media content, with more and more linking social media accounts to their websites, this is called 'leads' and are based on an organization's objective to increase audience reach.

*Percent of U.S. adults who use each social networking site & percent of U.S. adults who get news from each social networking site*



*'Pew Research Centre; 2013'*

The above graph demonstrates how social media and blogging websites, which were originally created for social connectivity, and entertainment purposes are now utilized for a means to stay updated and follow news stories.

This places a further emphasis on driving profitability by these social media platforms because the competition for news is becoming stronger, potentially implicating the citizen blogger from obtaining a strong audience reach because the larger organizations can afford to pay for advertising space on social media.

### **How the research could have been improved:**

An implication of this research was that the secondary research did not necessarily take into account the influence of social media in foreign affairs, the experts whom I retrieved information from in this report, mainly outlined in the literature review, typically only considered a vague and broad perspective of citizen blogging and online media and did not necessarily take into account the role platforms such as Facebook play.

More thorough conclusions around how many international news stories are circulated on social media, e.g. Facebook or Twitter may have benefited the conclusion and recommendation of this report and made it to a higher standard.

The primary research also had some implications, including the interviewee for this report being quite young and of little experience of foreign correspondents, and as such his opinion not constituted as expert. However the qualitative evaluation of his opinion can be beneficial in linking key themes to my survey responses and some parts of the literature.

The survey responses did little to take into account global trends and opinion, as the demographic of respondents were mainly aged 18 to 21 and were geographically located in Australia.

Had the respondents been of a different culture, ethnicity or age group, their may have been dramatically different conclusions to this report.

However the literature review provided insightful perspectives of what has impeded foreign correspondents, and showed a thorough analysis of the history and key milestones affecting the news media industry.

# Conclusions

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The research question what makes a foreign correspondent succeed in the current environment was answered to an extent, as outlined in the analysis section theme three, the landscape has shifted to have at least seven types of foreign correspondents operating within the field.

To succeed as a foreign correspondent in the modern digital era one must be highly adaptable and flexible across what tools to utilize to obtain information.

The field has become evermore beneficial in supporting foreign correspondents; it has become somewhat easier and safer for journalists to quickly obtain information, e.g. from a social media post.

How foreign correspondents are maintaining demand for their content is answered mainly by how news organizations are now operating to compete in the online stratosphere, both by pay-per-click advertising and other forms of online ads synced with social media platforms.

Independent correspondents are now operating like agencies, in which they create and mold together stories like ads and sell them to major news organizations.

What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the industry there currently are was somewhat outlined in this report. One implication to obtain sufficient data and information about this context was time; given more time more data could have been obtained and research conducted to conclude a specific statement.

The objective to understand the foreign correspondents field and the media industry was somewhat obtained, the extensive literature analysis and qualitative information from the primary research concluded that the future of foreign affairs will grow in accordance with online adaptability and innovation in content marketing.

My hypothesis that native advertising and integration between international news and online media tools benefiting foreign correspondents was sufficiently intertwined, the literature provided thorough information linking a decline of traditional delivery of foreign affairs and an increase in the general public obtaining their news from online tools and social media.

Improvements to the research would be more considerations for the primary research, i.e. geographic location, ethnicity and socio-cultural influences of survey responses.

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# Appendices

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## Interview:

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Interview with Caleb York, account manager junior at Dawn till Dusk.

What do you think globalization means to the foreign news industry?

The economy impacting what news we receive? I'm not quite sure what you mean. (Explained growing trend of Internet usage etc.) Oh right, yes well the growth would certainly affect the distribution of news, I suppose it's a good thing though, a lot of conglomerate news corporations like Fairfax and places run by Murdoch can only have one clear agenda across all of their tabloids, sometimes you're reading the same thing but in a different context, it can become blurred. The Internet allows for more people to voice their experiences, views and opinions.

Do you trust sources of information on international news stories?

Not always, if it is ambiguous I tend not too, but you can never be too sure, sometimes News moves too quickly for proper fact checking to occur, like that young guy whose face was put on the front of the Age after the terrorist incident here in Vic, it wasn't him. I actually feel sorry for that family.

What is your current perception of foreign affairs and how it is portrayed in the media?

Very violent, you rarely ever hear about anything positive happening overseas, I believe this is to do with what is more popular and what drives sales and people subscribing/buying more news, terrorism is a very topical issue.

Do you utilize social media as a tool to gain information about foreign news stories?

Yes sometimes, I don't quite seek after the information though if it pops up in my news feed I will read it. I follow pages like The Guardian and Herald Sun, so I guess because I click on those links frequently they tend to show up in my newsfeed more often.

How do you think the use of social media as a news story might influence the field of foreign news reporting?

Transparency may be affected, although the information is quick and effective, it is unlikely the information is always reliable and true.

## Surveys:

[Survey Responses, Foreign Correspondents, Perception Of.docx](#)