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MASC 683 Multiplatform Storytelling
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Purcell, K., Rainie L., Mitchell A., Rosenstiel T., & Olmstead, K. (2010). Understanding the Participatory News Consumer. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, Project for Excellence in Journalism. Retrieved Feb. 5, 2011, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Online-News.aspx>

The report contains the results of a survey of Americans' use of the Internet as a news source. One of the main findings is that the majority of [connected] Americans getting news from a variety of traditional (print and broadcast) and non-traditional (Internet and social media) platforms. More than half of Americans (59 percent) get their news from a combination of Internet-based and non-Internet based platforms. Only local television (78 percent) and national television (including cable news networks; 73 percent) rank higher than the Internet (61 percent) as Americans' preferred source for news. The survey's results indicate that the brand loyalty many news outlets relied upon in the past no longer exist. While more than half of Americans (57 percent) regularly turn to two to five Web sites for news, a higher percentage (65 percent) say they have no real loyalty to any one Web site. Avid users of newer technologies, such as wireless devices and social media, are younger, or wealthier, or better educated than the average American. In the end, the survey finds that news consumer favors products that are portable, personalized, and participatory.

Some of this results contained in Purcell et al., should be encouraging: there is a voracious appetite for news today and, given the reasons people offer to describe their interest in news consumption, that appetite is unlikely to diminish any time soon. Some of the results in this article, however, are discouraging, too. The brand loyalty that many news outlets relied upon to keep circulation or viewership up—and in turn ad revenue up—is evaporating. The profusion of platforms, coupled with the profusion of distractions in today's society, have changed news consumption from a daily ritual into an opportunistic forage through the media environment. The survey does not address one of the most important questions it raises: what business model can work in such a diverse and chaotic media environment.

In addition, some of the discussion fails to address an important historical angle: are news consumers any more likely to turn to multiple platforms now than they were in the past? It may be that the only thing of note now is the multitude of technologies available to those who wish to follow the news, but ever since the development and spread of motion pictures and radio, news consumers may have routinely obtained news from multiple platforms—if not on a daily basis from newspapers and radio, on a weekly basis from newsreels in addition to newspapers and radio. Of course, historical questions are beyond the scope of the Pew Research Center survey, but an awareness that such questions exist, and that they are relevant to any discussion of current trends, would be a welcome addition to current discussion of the news media's future.