SDGs, Media and the Network Society

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Mediatization and the New Communications Landscape
Digital shifts

**DIGITAL AROUND THE WORLD IN 2018**

- **Total Population**: 7.593 billion
- **Internet Users**: 4.021 billion
- **Active Social Media Users**: 3.196 billion
- **Unique Mobile Users**: 5.135 billion
- **Active Mobile Social Users**: 2.958 billion

**Urbanisation**: 55%

**Penetration**:
- Internet Users: 53%
- Social Media: 42%
- Mobile Users: 68%
- Mobile Social: 39%

*Sources: Population: United Nations, U.S. Census Bureau, Internet World Stats; Internet Users: ITU, Eurostat, Internet World Stats; On World Factbook; Alexa Media; Facebook; Government Officials; Regulatory Authorities; Reputable Media; Social Media and Mobile Social Media: Facebook, Tencent, WeChat, Kakao, Twitter, DING; Technical; Simba; Social; Riptide; Analysis; Mobile; Usain, Intelligence; Google, iAd; Ipsos; Analysis. Note: Penetration figures are for total population (all ages).*
The Generational Divide

Internet users by age, in the OECD

97% among 16-24 year-olds

63% among 55-74 year-olds

Mobile phone ownership, Internet use and GDP

The Gender Digital Divide

- Women are 50% less likely to use the Internet than men (World Wide Web Foundation, 2015)

- The global Internet usage Gender Gap has increased from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016.

- The Gender Gap is largest in Africa at 23% and lowest in The Americas at 1.8%.

- In low- and middle income countries, 200 million fewer women have mobile phones than men.

- There are 250 million fewer women online than men.

The Gender Digital Divide

The Gender Gap is most pronounced in Africa, the Arab States and Asia-Pacific.

| 58% | 42% |

Half have a GNI/capita of < US$ (PPP) 6,500, a large proportion of which are located in Africa and Asia-Pacific.

The elderly have much lower Internet penetration levels than the overall population across all regions.

60% live in rural areas, of which a large proportion is located in Africa and Asia-Pacific.

Individuals with low educational attainment often remain unconnected across all regions.

Information Overload and Cognitive Dissonance
Key Challenges

- Fragmentation of news and filter bubbles
- Churnalism and reliance on news agency copy and PR sources
- Journalists facing tough competition in many regions of the world and precarious employment
- Lack of adequate training
- Challenges to media independence and freedom
Key Challenges

• Clicktivism
• Scientific jargon and SDGs
• Localising stories and tapping into what motivates and inspires people to act
• Issues that are uncertain, and temporally, socially and geographically distant tend to be evaluated as less risky and generate less concern
• Viral spread of fake news and media literacy  
  (See Anderson, 2014; McCullough, 2016; Goldsmith, 2016; UNDP, 2019)
Fake News and Misinformation

- Fake news spreads more quickly on Twitter than actual news
- Strong emotional sentiment considerably increases level of media sharing
- Material on social media triggers stronger emotional outrage than when the same acts appear on legacy media
- Positive emotional valence has significant positive effect on tweets being retweeted

(see Anderson, 2014; Kopke et al., 2019; SAPEA, 2019)
Echo Chambers and the Image Culture

• Personalisation of news, echo chambers and homophily
• Images tend to generate much more traction (58% higher engagement rate)
• Celebrity endorsement plays increasingly important role in popular culture (Anderson, 2011)
Combined Environmental Stories Made up Less than 1% of Headlines in US Media in 2014

Climate Change in the News

https://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/icecaps/research/media_coverage/index.html
Beyond the Information Deficit Model

- Simply providing people with more and better information does not necessarily lead to behaviour change
- Stories need to closely resonate with audiences
- Emotional engagement is key
- Power of group identity and social norms
- Need to grasp the key motivators (carrots and sticks)
The Blue Planet Effect and the Role of Social Influencers
The Rise of Politicised Celebrities in the News

Monitoring Media Coverage and Evaluating Campaigns

SDG Resource Centre

https://sdgresources.relx.com/news
News Tracker
Opportunities

- Harness the power of social media as a tool for engagement, with young people as agents of change tapping into self-curation of image
- Use new storytelling mechanisms and involve citizen journalists/bloggers and social influencers
- Provide greater training for journalists and access to specialist information in Global South
- Increase capacity building of media professionals on data journalism and investigative reporting
- Spread special programmes on SDGs in journalism schools
- Increase awareness of the critical role media plays and put more resources into evaluating campaigns
- Develop targeted approaches for different audiences
References