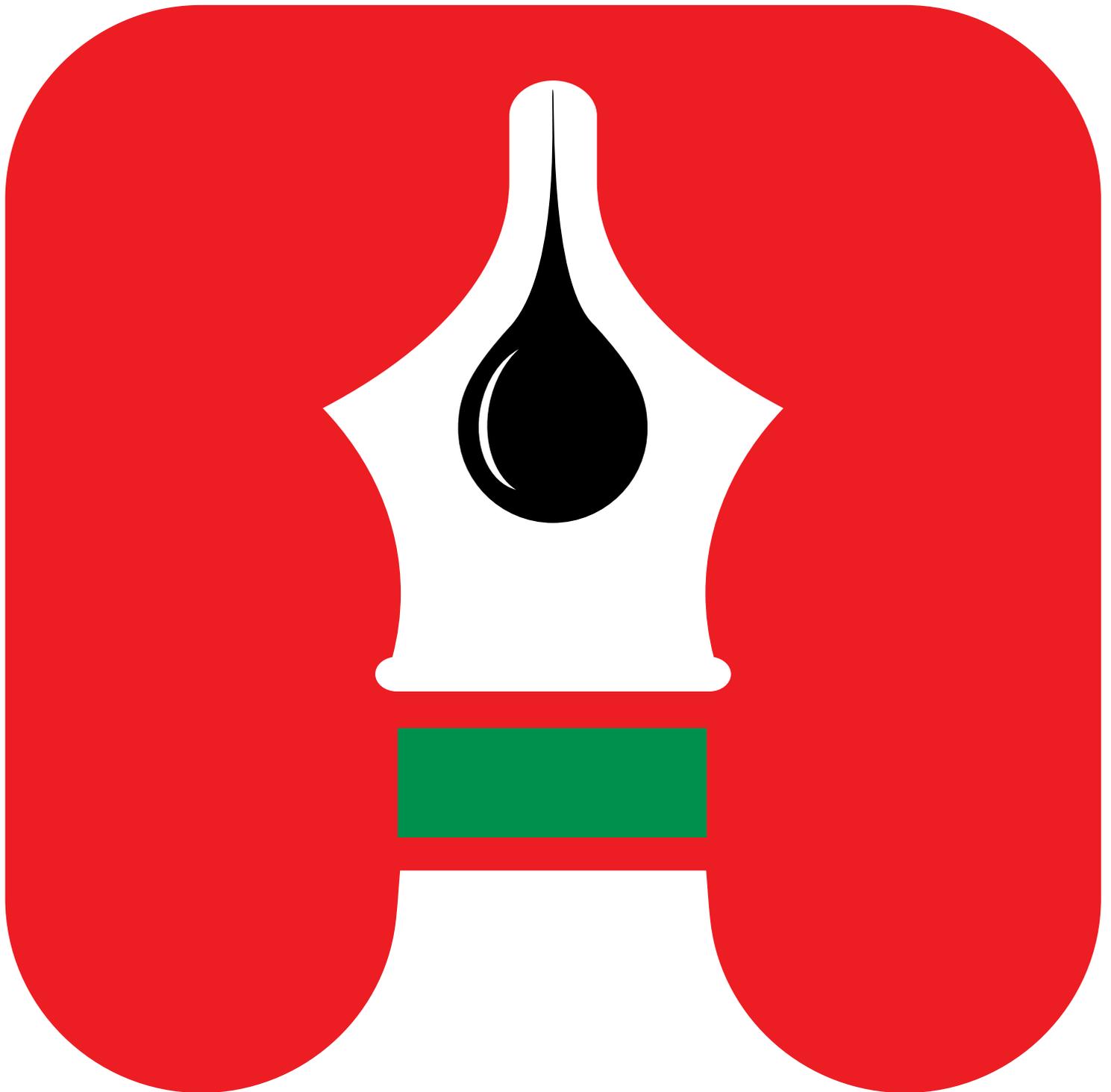




**Debates**

**Traditional Media is Dead  
– Agree or Disagree?**





DEBATE

# Traditional Media is Dead – Agree or Disagree?

**FOR THE MOTION:**

Dale Hudson, Faculty Fellow and Associate Teaching Professor of Film and New Media, New York University Abu Dhabi  
Reem Abdellatif, Editor in Chief, Argam Plus

**AGAINST THE MOTION:**

Ed Crooks, US Industry & Energy Editor, Financial Times  
Mustafa Alrawi, Business Editor, The National



## FOR

BY REEM ABDELLATIF, EDITOR IN CHIEF, ARGAAAM PLUS

**T**he future of media, be it business or fashion news, will be via niche websites and niche projects. The revolution in how we communicate is underway at a rapid pace. Traditional media is dying for several reasons. One key reason is because young people are changing the conversation and forcing journalists to change the way we communicate with them. They want people to talk to them and not at them. Traditional media, such as newspapers and TV, often talk at millennials and that is where the need for change lies. The flourishing of digital media does not mean it does not sometimes use traditional means to verify information. You are still a journalist, whatever the medium. The modern viewer is very sophisticated and they still want the verification of a tweet and a Facebook post that has been written by a citizen journalist. Trained journalists do not compete with citizen journalists. There were a lot of active citizen journalists covering the Egyptian Revolution, for example, and consumers would sometimes get mixed messages. Then they would always go back to digital media and traditional media. There is no doubt that traditional platforms are dying, which is why the major traditional players are shifting their strategies. The Wall Street Journal has added a live blog with real-time streaming, for example. Everyone is adjusting their focus and their budgets to accommodate digital journalism and digital media and not the traditional platforms. ●

**Young people are changing the conversation and forcing journalists to change the way we communicate with them. They want people to talk to them and not at them. Traditional media tends to do the former.”**



## FOR

BY DALE HUDSON, FACULTY FELLOW AND ASSOCIATE TEACHING PROFESSOR OF FILM AND NEW MEDIA, NYUAD

**T**he UAE is beginning to produce a lot of features. But most of the screens tend to be dominated by foreign films, typically Bollywood, Kollywood, Hollywood and Egyptian films. Emirati films tend to only be screened at festivals and cultural centers. It is a similar situation in Saudi Arabia. The key difference between Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states is that cinemas have been prohibited since the 1980s. So why do the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman not have thriving film industries and busy cinema screenings for local films? One key reason is that traditional production, distribution and exhibition models are not reaching millennial audiences. The GCC states have some of the youngest populations in the world, with this generation actively consuming screen media. There are approximately 12 million Saudi internet users that view about 90 million videos per day on YouTube, making the Kingdom one of the largest users of digital platforms in the region – if not the world. Production companies like U-Turn Productions and Telfaz11 TV reach millions of local subscribers via new media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. They are low budget, but not low quality. The episodes are short to suit the attention span of millennials, at less than ten minutes, and they use slang expressions to appear edgy and hip. The topics are sometimes controversial, but not taboo. They bring global visibility to Saudi Arabia’s youth culture, particularly the underground cultures in Jeddah and Riyadh. These web series target audiences to impart reverse cultural invasions, particularly from the US. Saudi Arabia’s comedies counter these foreign stereotypes of Gulf Arabs and other Arabs with a soft power. This has been considered more persuasive as propaganda than Alhurra TV, which is the US Network in Saudi Arabia. Media-making in the Gulf could invest in developing local talent through locally conceived formats, such as the Saudi web serials – and those have been imitated here in the Emirates. This would be instead of importing directors from Hollywood and Europe to mentor aspiring talent with antiquated media paradigms. ●

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## AGAINST

BY MUSTAFA ALRAWI, BUSINESS EDITOR, THE NATIONAL

When legendary media consultant, Juan Antonio Giner, has visited a media company's newsroom over the last decade, he has immediately started with a little skit. This includes him screaming at the top of his lungs at the journalists in front of him and telling them that their newspapers and jobs were dying. Why? He felt that denial and apathy were the biggest obstacles to traditional media brands and their ability to evolve and succeed in this modern environment. We must evaluate ourselves against new brands on social media and consider how consumers are changing their behaviour. We are evolving and going through a painful daily process in our newsrooms: what is the right way to present the news? And how can we continue to grow against a backdrop of an economic model that used to make more money thirty years ago? Still, Ernst & Young said the value of India's newspaper industry has grown by two thirds in the last six years. According to the PEW Research Centre, more people are consuming news than ever before. While it is true that young people are using social media, around 78% of people over the age of 30 consumed their news via their televisions during the last US election. Many of them may be using handheld devices to access these TV channels, but they are still attracted to traditional outlets of CNN and BBC. At The National, up to 70% of our readers engage with the copy via handheld devices. While advertising revenues and print sales have gone down, new metrics have arrived, such as the amount of time spent on a content platform. The New York Times averages about 19 minutes for each audience member on their platform. That is immersive. People are not there to get a snippet of news on what the latest celebrity is doing, but instead to engage in in-depth reporting. That will continue. The traditional media must work much harder to keep the current level of trust and to gain the trust of the younger audiences. But if we keep doing what we are doing as well as we have been doing it, then there is no reason why I will not be back with the same positive message a decade from now. ●

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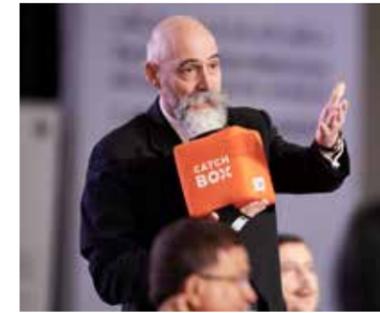


## AGAINST

BY ED CROOKS, US INDUSTRY & ENERGY EDITOR, FINANCIAL TIMES

Old media is far from dead. Allow me to use US President Donald Trump to set the scene. One of Trump's campaign managers said social media was vital to Trump winning the election. Trump wakes up in the morning and he tweets – that is how he very effectively gets his message across. And this has created a proliferation of stories, very many of which likely fell into the 'fake news' category. In that sense, you could say that old media is dying. But now Trump has stopped campaigning and is having to govern and he needs to get his agenda through. One of the first things on his list was healthcare reform, which had to pass legislation in Congress. It turned into a fiasco. One of the very early promises made by Trump was falling short of the mark. He had to get his favoured message out to the world and to spin it in a way that said to the public: "I am not as much of a disaster as I might look and everything is on track." What does he do? He calls The New York Times and the Washington Post to give thirty minute interviews to their respective reporters. Their stories emerge as the dominant narratives and go on to set the agenda for the national debate. This is a classic example of the enormous power of old media; to both set the agenda and give people reasonably trustworthy information. Comparatively, people can now make quite a good living by making up stories and distributing them on social media, regardless of their truth and value. Yes, old media must evolve, but it is certainly not dying. The Financial Times, for instance, has more paying readers than ever at more than 850,000 people. Nearly three quarters are online. The economics of it are challenging and we have yet to return to the peak profits reported in 1999 and 2000, but we are hanging on. Old media still has significant value and people still turn to us, even the President of the US. ●

**Trump has to get his message out to the public and say: "I am not as much of a disaster as I might look." What does he do? He calls The New York Times and the Washington Post."**



## Motion: Traditional Media is Dead - Agree or Disagree?

The audience voted using an electronic system before the debate began, with the results displayed at the end of the debate. The audience were asked to vote a second time following the debaters' closing statements. The winning team is the one that swayed more audience members between the two votes. At the conclusion of this event, the **'Against'** team won the debate.

**53%**  
DISAGREE



**47%**  
AGREE

**70%**  
DISAGREE



**30%**  
AGREE