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## Editorial Email Newsletters The Medium Is Not the Only Message

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## **Table of Contents**

Executive summary & About the Author

1. The False Sunset
2. Email Benefits and Limitations
3. Editorial Email Types
4. Measuring Impact
5. Factors for Success
6. Conclusion: Beyond Email

Appendix 1: Email newsletter examples and key facts

Appendix 2: List of key interviewees

Acknowledgements

## Executive Summary

Email newsletters offer news organisations a chance to maintain a strong direct relationship with readers, a high degree of targeting, better showcasing of existing content and original analysis and commentary.

There has been a sharp increase in their production in recent years, both by “legacy” print and newer digital media publishers. The trend mirrors the continued strength of emails in daily life, and their widespread use in marketing, despite the advent of more sophisticated and proprietary digital tools.

The development of other platforms and services including shared drives, apps and social media has helped liberate email newsletters for what they do best: provide short, simple, primarily text-based content “pushed” to readers in a way that is easily retrievable and quick to skim.

Emails are a halfway house between print and digital. If read online, they permit a smooth “call to action” – triggering high response rates via a simple click to purchase, subscribe, read more or provide extra information.

As with newsprint (and apps), emails are generally self-contained, offering a way to read offline on receipt without the need for a phone signal or wifi. That can help provide users with greater, easier and more affordable access when they are roaming, with no connection or in regions with poor bandwidth.

One challenge today for email – like so many other aspects of the digital newsroom – is monetisation. Interviews and industry data suggest that targeted emails requested by readers are widely opened, read and often the article links they contain are clicked. Editorial emails can help inform, educate and entertain readers, while boosting brand awareness and readership on and offsite, encouraging subscriptions, maintaining loyalty of existing readers and providing a platform for advertising.

The degree of focus on, and the ability to deliver, revenue through the medium varies widely. That raises questions over sustainability, the resources invested and the capacity to sustain momentum given so many competing priorities at a time of increasing commercial pressures.

Other significant concerns are falling use by younger people, the risk of user fatigue over time, and the surge in the use of editorial emails which makes it more difficult to remain visible and competitive.

While the specific format of email newsletters may go out of fashion, the characteristics that have bolstered the success of the best ones are finding parallels in other forms of journalistic output and will be increasingly valuable: discovery, curation, serendipity and “finishability” in an ever-growing universe of digital content beyond the capacity of any individual to identify or absorb.

Publication	Flagship newsletter	Recipients	Metrics (1)	Editorial staff	Primary business model
Blendle	Daily Digest	700,000	30-40% OR	12	Micropayment
Brief.me	Brief.me	26,000	60% OR	3	Subscription
Buzzfeed	Buzzfeed News	n/a	30% OR	2	Adverts, affiliate links
Economist	Espresso (2)	50,000	50% OR	2	Subscription, adverts
Financial Times	FirstFT	160,000	25-50% OR (3)	5	Engagement, adverts, conversion
New York Times	Morning brief	700,000	50-60% gross OR	12	Conversion
Ozy	Presidential daily brief	1.5m	25-40% OR	3	Adverts
Quartz	Daily Brief	200,000	40% OR	4	Adverts
The Browser	The Browser	9,000	45% OR; 12% CTR	1	Subscription
The Times	Red Box	35,000	48% OR; 8-10% CTR	2	Conversion, adverts
Washington Post	The Daily 202	n/a	n/a		Conversion

Notes:

(1) OR: open rate; CTR: click through rate

(2) Espresso is primarily distributed by app. The separate Economist Daily Dispatch email goes to 700,000 recipients.

(3) Figures are across 15 editorial email newsletters

## About the Author

Andrew Jack has been a journalist at the *Financial Times* since 1990. This report reflects both personal perspectives in his current job since 2014 as head of curated content in charge of editorial newsletters, and research conducted during his Reuters Institute Visiting Fellowship in 2016 based on more than a dozen interviews and observations of similar work in other media organisations.

## 1. The False Sunset

*“Email is dead”* – [2015 Dublin web summit](#) presentation with Slack

More than four decades since the [first prototype emails were sent](#), there is no shortage of [predictions about their demise](#). There is little doubt that the technology is old fashioned, low-tech and under-invested. Many users have embraced newer and more innovative forms of digital communication which offer better visual content. Some say that email creates stress, distraction and [reduces productivity](#) – although arguably no more than social media. Other critics are more self-serving, including those developing commercial alternatives such as Slack and Asana. They pitch rival “collaboration tools” that provide better structured communication between teams in place of inefficient, poorly targeted mass email chains. Free from the ownership of any one company and integrated begrudgingly into others’ systems, email certainly does not benefit from the investment and promotion of proprietary platforms.

Yet the medium continues to offer very substantial appeal, and its use is growing for many organisations. Business email volumes and accounts continue to rise even if their share of [total communication time](#) may be declining. [One industry estimate](#) says there will be over 2.6bn email users in 2016, rising to 3bn by 2020, with total traffic sent *every day* increasing over the next four years from 215bn to 258bn. Email service providers are thriving, with companies ranging from platforms such as Campaign Monitor, Sparkpost, Sailthru and Exact Target to specialists offering add-ons to make emails more effective, like Movable Ink and Liveclicker. Email remains one of the main tools of business communication, with Gmail, Outlook and Apple Mail widely integrated into corporate software packages.

Email is widely viewed in marketing as [one of the most efficient and effective techniques](#) to generate leads and sales, with a very high proportion of recipients [opening and clicking](#) on links. Some surveys suggest it not only offers a [substantial return on investment](#), but multiple times the success of social media in generating customers and accumulating average sales per transaction. In [one poll](#), US marketing executives said they believed email alone generated as much revenue as social media, website and display ads combined.

In many ways, email has been able to thrive as a result of broader online advances which have removed some of its past drawbacks. The journalist Alex Madrigal dubs it “[the cockroach of the internet](#)” which has proved impossible to kill. Data-heavy attachments such as PDFs which previously clogged inboxes can now be sent more effectively instead through tools such as Google Drive and Dropbox. Image-dense photos and video can be shared in many different ways such as Pinterest and Instagram. Spam and junk email have been largely purged thanks to more effective automated filters operated by providers such as Google, which now even seek to

categorise and prioritise messages automatically. The simple format of email is adapted to the multiplicity of current systems.

The result has been to liberate emails for what they do best: providing short, simple, primarily text-based content “pushed” to readers in a way that is easily retrievable and quick to skim. They can be read offline but if read online, they permit a smooth “call to action” – triggering high response rates via a simple click to purchase, subscribe, read more or provide extra information.

In journalism, email is experiencing a similar [renaissance](#), dubbed by one recent report [“back to the future”](#). Many individual journalists – notably foreign correspondents and those covering some specialist sectors (including tech writers) – were early adopters from the 1990s. They used “Listserves” or the equivalent to share their own articles, often targeted to specialist readers or to those in countries where print versions of their publications were not easily available or affordable. Third parties also aggregated different media reports and sent them by email, such as [Johnson’s Russia List](#) on the Former Soviet Union or [ProMed](#) for infectious disease specialists.

Institutionally, media publishers have stepped up their involvement in email. Many early practices focused on sending simple headlines and article links, or sometimes the full text of articles. The recent trend has embraced a far greater volume and diversity of approaches, including more personalised emails involving journalists handpicking articles and writing bespoke content. The *Washington Post* now sends about 75 regular newsletters by email, and the *New York Times* around 50. The *Guardian*, like the *Financial Times*, long provided automated email headlines scraping content, but has increasingly invested in human editorial input. The BBC has scaled back on the number of different email newsletters, but aims to increase the total volume sent through consolidated emails linking different themes and programmes more tailored to individuals’ interests.

The trend is not limited to “legacy” media organisations. Quartz, BuzzFeed, Vox and even Apple are among the digital groups which have invested significantly and stepped up their commitment to email alongside the web and on social media channels. Other start-up media brands have launched exclusively on email (usually with an accompanying website), such as Ozy, targeting US millennials, and The Skimm, a conversational daily briefing focused on younger women. Some even charge to showcase others’ content, such as the Browser and Blendle.

The pattern of re-embracing email is occurring in many places around the world. In France, for instance, recent launches have included Brief.me and TTSO (Time to Sign Off). The [2016 Digital News Report](#) from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism suggests the proportion of people in France who consumed news via

email was 22 per cent, up from 21 per cent in [the previous year](#). In most countries, email is a niche platform, far from dominant and beginning to wane – falling from 25 per cent to 20 per cent in the US, for example. But it remains important, especially for general, breaking and political news, and is being re-examined by many organisations for its potential.

#### STARTING POINTS FOR NEWS – ALL COUNTRIES

	USA	UK	GER	FRA	ITA	SPA	POR	IRE	NOR	SWE	FIN	DEN	BEL
Direct entry	35%	47%	27%	27%	22%	38%	37%	41%	63%	42%	62%	55%	29%
Search	30%	20%	37%	35%	54%	50%	41%	34%	25%	27%	15%	16%	33%
Social media	35%	25%	21%	26%	36%	39%	41%	31%	33%	33%	24%	35%	27%
Aggregator	9%	6%	6%	5%	9%	10%	5%	7%	9%	11%	9%	5%	5%
Email	20%	7%	15%	22%	13%	15%	29%	8%	8%	9%	6%	18%	40%
Mobile alerts	12%	9%	8%	14%	9%	11%	16%	11%	9%	16%	5%	11%	8%

	NLD	SUI	AUT	HUN	CZE	POL	GRE	TUR	KOR	JPN	AUS	CAN	BRA
Direct entry	48%	46%	29%	48%	45%	27%	44%	41%	13%	12%	31%	33%	43%
Search	24%	38%	39%	36%	52%	62%	54%	67%	60%	38%	35%	36%	49%
Social media	31%	25%	33%	51%	34%	38%	55%	48%	18%	14%	36%	35%	52%
Aggregator	4%	5%	4%	16%	36%	8%	6%	13%	38%	43%	9%	7%	18%
Email	17%	14%	18%	23%	12%	14%	21%	16%	12%	14%	16%	14%	23%
Mobile alerts	13%	15%	10%	5%	3%	7%	8%	21%	12%	9%	8%	8%	13%

Q10. Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, mobile or any device) in the last week, which were the ways in which you came across news stories? Base: Total sample in each country

Source: [2016 Digital News Report](#), Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

The reason? It works. Targeted emails requested by readers are widely opened, read and often the article links they contain are clicked. Editorial emails help inform, educate and entertain readers, while boosting brand awareness, readership on and offsite, encouraging subscriptions, maintaining loyalty of existing readers and providing a platform for advertising. There is some evidence that email also punches above its weight: a number of media groups have found it generates a higher rate of conversions to subscription than social media, for instance.

One challenge today for email – like so many other aspects of the digital newsroom – is monetisation. The degree of focus on, and the ability to deliver, through the medium varies widely. That raises questions over its sustainability, the resources invested and the capacity to sustain momentum given so many competing priorities at a time of increasing commercial pressures.

Another significant concern is the resurgence of rival editorial emails, and the difficulty of remaining visible and competitive. As Gideon Lichfield, global news

editor of the Quartz Daily Brief, puts it: “Newsletters have become a very crowded space now. The attention problem will become big.”

Over time, the medium may well be superseded and go into fresh decline. But one of the most important messages for journalism will be to more widely exploit the curation of content for which emails have proved an important platform for experimentation. Those characteristics which have bolstered their success are finding parallels in other forms of journalistic output and will be increasingly valuable: discovery, curation, serendipity and “finishability” in an ever-growing universe of digital content beyond the capacity of any individual to identify or absorb.



## 2. Email Benefits and Limitations

### *Hybrid between print and digital*

Emails function halfway between print and digital. Like articles on paper, they cannot directly be corrected, updated or easily modified once sent (the nominal exception is [“recall” on Outlook](#), but that only works in very limited circumstances and may simply bring further attention to any original gaffe). They traditionally offer a relatively constrained print-like layout which may provide some photographs and graphics alongside text, but rarely more sophisticated “dynamic content” such as video. As with newsprint (and apps), emails are generally self-contained, offering a way to read offline on receipt without the need for a phone signal or wifi. That can help provide users with greater, easier and more affordable access when they are roaming, with no connection or are located in places with poor bandwidth.

Like digital products, emails have far lower production and distribution costs than print. They offer greater interactivity, notably through hyperlinking to underlying content. They generate data of value to newsrooms, including showing the proportion of recipients who open them to read and who click through to each of the article links that they reference. Emails, when integrated with reader registration systems and article metadata to classify underlying content, can help build a broader profile of users’ browsing habits to generate detailed analysis and personalised recommendations. They are also by default (and more than many other digital products) a form of “push” notification, alerting readers as a seamless part of their daily workflow.

### *Advantages*

#### WIDE DISTRIBUTION

Email remains an important communication channel, particularly for professionals. Many people consult their inbox very frequently during the day, allowing editorial emails to be integrated into the rhythm of their office hours and their daily commute – even offline. Until recently, many professionals used the Blackberry, which was focused on email delivery and had the advantage of a physical keyboard for typing. The device, soon to be phased out, now accounts for a very modest and shrinking market share. Residual users include those in industries and public sector jobs for which employers prefer the tighter security, lower foreign roaming charges or the avoidance of the distraction of social media.

Yet the advance of smartphones as the dominant medium has in many ways helped email use by democratising it. As a result, it is now far more widely available by a broader number of readers – both for business and leisure – and over a longer period, inside and outside working hours. Younger people are far greater users of

text messages and social media channels and much less focused on email. But a 2015 Pew survey showed that [64 per cent of US teenagers](#) still used the medium with friends and 6 per cent did so daily. The 2016 Reuters *Digital News Report* showed a smaller proportion of younger people using email for news consumption – which in part may reflect their relatively higher use of smartphones. The question is whether email itself is condemned as the next generations mature, or whether they will instead adopt such longer established but durable channels as they enter the world of work – and as email itself adapts to newer platforms.

#### EFFECTIVE DISSEMINATION

Email is not only widely available, but extensively read. That is partly because it is “pushed” to readers on a widely used “default” platform, rather than requiring them to actively go looking for it on multiple websites or apps. It is “personalised”: readers have normally actively opted in to subscribe and to join a community of specialists interested in a particular publication or theme. In the same way, it establishes a very direct relationship and point of contact. That will prove ever more important as media organisations find that their interactions with readers (and the associated data) are increasingly usurped by “distributed content” intermediaries such as Facebook.

Samir Rao, joint founder of Ozy, says: “Email is a super powerful medium. Those hailing its demise are premature. It is becoming so much more important in a world in which publishers’ distribution is increasingly disintermediated from content to have a direct channel of communication. You have to have a compelling relationship with people you can build into the routine.” Tom Standage, editor of *The Economist* in charge of digital strategy, agrees: “Newsletters and notifications are channels that publishers control; there is no third-party algorithm between them and readers.”

Email is also easy to share with others in a personal way. Dan Oshinsky, director of newsletters at BuzzFeed, says: “We have always been about telling stories people want to share, so email is such a natural place to start. It’s definitely not the flashiest, newest platform. But it reaches audiences, brings people back to the site and distributes our content. For me, email is all about giving people a specific action to take – forward to a friend, click back to the site, download an app.”

Given its use as a default inbox and a widely used form of business communication, email headlines are very frequently scanned. Some studies have signalled obsessive use, with one suggesting it had become “a tyrant”, stimulating over a third of users to check their inbox [every 15 minutes](#). Another showed that on average users consulted emails outside working hours for [more than 30 minutes](#) every day – and less than 5 per cent never looked at them during holidays.

While these statistics may raise concerns about distraction, stress and loss of productivity, they offer an advantage for newsrooms: editorial emails are likely to be rapidly and frequently checked. Even for readers who do not open, there is substantial information already available in the subject line and the “header” alone, which is visible on most devices, allowing emails to be easily and rapidly scanned to provide information. Glancing at the headline on a breaking news story can be sufficient to provide the necessary “fix” even without opening. As an “inbox”, emails can also be easily filed and retrieved for reading later.

As Marten Blankesteijn, founder and CEO of Blendle, the micropayments service which launched a Daily Digest email showcasing its selection of media partners’ articles, says: “Newsletters work well for a new brand like ours. You might sign up one day and forget about us the next. It’s pretty hard to have an audience coming back to you every day. The email remains in the heads of people.”

#### CONSTRAINT-BASED INNOVATION

A combination of the limitations that email imposes (on technical production, restricted space, difficulty of rendering of images and so on) and their relative neglect by newsrooms has permitted or triggered experimentation. Characteristics include:

- **Discovery** of articles through “surfacing” a selection from the hundreds published daily by larger media organisations. As Clifford Levy, assistant masthead editor at the *New York Times* who oversees digital platforms, puts it: “We produce 200-300 urls a day but no one can focus on it all. How do we create a more bounded, manageable experience? The biggest missed opportunity is that people don’t even know a lot of stories they want to read have even been published. Everybody’s Facebook and Twitter feed is a firehose. People want guidance.” Some publications’ newsletters source their own content; others trawl rival publications and more obscure blogs; others such as [Worldcrunch](#) based in France go still wider, translating materials from other languages.
- **Curation** by weaving a narrative that summarises, analyses and joins the dots between individual selections of articles to present a coherent “meta story”. It may reflect a more informal, conversational style of individual journalists and commentators, offering a more friendly and personal guide through the information overload. The word curation, borrowed from [the world of museums](#), is heavily overused. But structured editorial selections and narrative to put them into context reflecting journalistic judgement and deep discovery have a better justification to appropriation of the word than many, and go beyond the more mechanical idea of “aggregation”.

- **Serendipity** by including article recommendations made by editors that readers would not have consciously requested or have explicitly expressed an interest in. Such emails mark a continuation of the “home page”, “front page” or “masthead” of media groups – a function that risks being undermined with the shift towards personalisation and “streams” of reports online. “It’s incredibly important,” says Anita Zielina, editor-in-chief of new products at the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, who introduced a “serendipity button” on the mobile site of her group. “It’s like the beauty of the web: you start researching one thing and end up with others. It’s a nice feeling.” Strong editorial judgement at a time of debate around the [“filter bubble” of Facebook](#) and other social media sites seems increasingly important.
- **Finishability** because of the limited amount of space available, email acts as a way to motivate readers who risk giving up before they start because of endless articles or piles of unread print publications. *The Economist’s* Espresso contains just five short items. The *Guardian* has its “Minute” on US politics. The *New York Times* Morning Brief has a finite selection of 10 stories, each numbered. The *Washington Post* has the “Five minute fix”. The Browser and Blendle both indicate how long it will take to read underlying articles that they link to. Others provide a word length of articles they cite. “We should say what’s important and give people the feeling of getting to the end,” says Tom Standage at *The Economist*.

## Drawbacks

### TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS

The multiplicity of different mobile devices, networks, servers and operating systems can create havoc with formatting of emails, stripping out images (notably on Blackberry) and embedded video and other “dynamic” content (such as on Gmail) as well as adverts. “Responsive” design to adapt the format to the size of the multiplicity of smartphone screens is only partially effective. Some recipients’ mailbox systems may simply reject editorial emails or throw them into spam filters so they are never even viewed – especially those containing multiple images which increase their size significantly. Frequent issues occur around aggressive “black listing” by internet providers of spam and unsolicited messages, which can also trap legitimate editorial emails actively requested by recipients. Data on metrics such as open rates can be skewed by connection failures that force users to re-open emails multiple times.

Preparation and technical support for emails is also often cumbersome. The platforms which send them were designed for large, well-resourced marketing departments, for use by specialists adept at coding and able to design, write and prepare “campaigns” with a significant lead time – often over several days. Scant

such capacity exists for journalists with fewer resources or technical skills, who are working to tight deadlines around the globe. Helpdesks at some of the main platforms are also often slow to respond. Editorial emails, which tend to be sent in relatively small volumes, may not receive the same attention from the providers as large direct marketing clients sending out far larger quantities each day.

As a result, many publishers have developed their own Content Management Systems, providing a simpler “front end” to integrate into third-party platforms to send emails. That helps journalists with limited time or technical expertise to more rapidly prepare and send newsletters. For instance, the BBC has [Curation Kit](#), *The Times* [Deck](#), the *Financial Times* EmE and the *Washington Post* [Paloma](#). Successful design of email systems typically involves tight cooperation between technical and editorial teams, including work to test “responsive design” on different systems. Nick Petrie, deputy head of digital at *The Times*, says: “We have four developers in the newsroom. That’s essential. Journalists have ideas but the lack of execution is key. You need money, resources and expertise.”

#### REGULATORY CONCERNS

Editorial newsletters received in Europe risk being drawn in to the terms of the EU General Data Protection Regulation which became law in May 2016, with compliance required by 2018. The legislation requires explicit “opt in” requests by users to receive unsolicited marketing emails. Yet editorial emails risk being interpreted as a form of marketing. They can also be victims of over-aggressive “suppression” systems used by email platforms when users opt out of receiving marketing communications. The EU rules impose severe fines for abuse and cover any organisations sending emails to a European country, regardless of their country of origin. That means they will apply regardless of the UK’s Brexit vote. Similar restrictions apply with Canada’s Anti-Spam Legislation.

Copyright issues – although not unique to email – are also become increasingly important, notably for editorial newsletters which rely on third party content rather than media groups showcasing their own original articles. While copyright exceptions permits the extraction of small amounts of original text plus hyperlinks, the [Meltwater Group litigation](#) and [GS Media](#) judgements restrict the reproduction of content without payment of licensing fees. Separately, the “Google tax” legal judgements in Germany and Spain could have a broader impact on news aggregation of all sorts. The [EU is considering wider application](#) of such so-called neighbouring or ancillary [copyright](#).

#### OBSOLESCENCE

Like any other technology, email is threatened by emerging alternatives. Given its limitations, there is no shortage of collaboration tools which are seeking to usurp its role in business communication. Social media, including Twitter and Facebook, are

ving for its influence as a rival tool for disseminating journalism. Surveys including from Pew and the Reuters Institute suggest younger users in particular are far less engaged with email.

Over a long period, engagement with email tends to drop off even among those who initially signed up. Individual organisations worry about “saturation”. If there are too many newsletters in the inbox, they risk all getting ignored or triggering an “unsubscribe” request. In a reflection of the growing email overload, there is now even a mini-industry offering curated newsletters making [picks of other curated emails](#). Differentiation and innovation will be increasingly important.

### 3. Editorial Email Types

#### *Format*

Editorial newsletters vary widely in structure and content. Some are purely aggregated collections of headlines or links, but most involve a degree of “curation” with bespoke human journalistic input in both the selection of articles and accompanying original writing. The varied approaches reflect editorial vision, resources and different objectives or business models. Some principal distinctions include:

- **Article selections:** automated vs handpicked. The most basic emails simply scrape headlines based on time of publication or topic. Yet many use editorial judgement with manual intervention to select a subset of more topical, “evergreen”, relevant, original or substantive articles even if there is little additional text provided. Tessa Muggeridge, new newsletters and alerts editor at the *Washington Post*, says: “There is human input on almost everything.”
- **Content:** summary vs full text. Most provide an element of original content, aiming to summarise, put into broader context and sometimes analyse the underlying stories referred to. Some contain full articles, such as *The Economist’s Espresso*, or the *Financial Times’* Best of Lex and Brexit Briefing emails for subscribers – given that readers may prefer to read all their content via email alone.
- **Links:** absence vs presence. Most emails include hyperlinks to underlying web-based stories, if only “view this email in browser”, which serves to overcome the limitations of the email format and encourage readers to switch to the greater functionality of a website. But some – notably those sharing full, paid-for content such as *The Economist’s Espresso* – provide none. Tom Standage says: “I have never been big on links. Our job is to give you everything you want, that’s our selling point.” Claire Moses, editor of the BuzzFeed newsletter in London, says of its daily news email: “If you don’t want to click, it doesn’t matter. It’s a completely formed product. We are actively trying to make linking extremely optional.”
- **Sources:** own content vs third-party. A number of derivative start-up and email-only publications rely on links to third-party sites. Many publications which produce their own original content emphasise showcasing that, such as BuzzFeed. Quartz and FirstFT include significant material from other publications, recognising that no single source has a monopoly of good journalism while busy readers have limited time to search. Cliff Levy at the *New York Times*, which periodically flags up other publications’ articles, says:



“We are very interested in curating third party content. We will roll it out. Our readers like it when we refer to external stories.”

- **Style:** formal vs informal. Some of the established media tend to maintain their house style in emails. Others, including many of the newer media groups, adopt a more “chatty” and personal tone. Gideon Lichfield from Quartz says: “It should feel like [the email] was coming from an intelligent, witty, worldly friend telling you what you need to know in a concise way.” Others – often without a broader news reporting connection – are still more informal and idiosyncratic, such as [The Skimm](#), [Ed’s Up](#) or [Next Draft](#). “It’s an extension of me,” says Romain Dessal, who runs the Time to Sign Off email in France. “What we do is ultra personal. It’s about selection and style.”
- **Images:** text-only vs text and images. Many emails even by digitally-savvy groups like Quartz avoid pictures and graphics, in order to reduce distraction, size and download times, the risk of spam filters and to enhance consistent ease of use across multiple devices and programmes. But there is a trend in newsletters towards more images: photos, graphics, embedded tweets, GIFs and videos.
- **Distribution:** email exclusive vs multiple platforms. The content of most emails is also hosted online. Many, like Quartz, also provide a “mirror” version on their main website. The *FT* “reverse publishes” some of the contents onto its main web pages and app, as well as extracts on social media and video. That helps with search optimisation and allows readers to access content whichever way they prefer to consume it.

### *Business models*

Varied approaches to monetisation help shape the structure and strategy of different emails.

1. **Web traffic generation/conversion.** Clicks from email can boost total web page views, supporting a publication’s broader business model to increase subscriptions and advertising revenues. They add “reach”, drawing in a wider group of prospective readers. For most organisations, email-generated traffic represents a modest single-digit percentage of total onsite pageviews. But it can be significant especially for smaller and newer organisations such as [Blendle](#), which generates a third of its traffic in this way. The company has adopted a pay-as-you go model of micropayments, with payments triggered each time a link is clicked to an article by a participating media group.



2. **Standalone subscription.** *The Economist's* Espresso (and its associated app), [The Browser](#) and [Brief.me](#) in France all charge for the email itself, providing standalone original content or discovery of articles based on strong judgement. Laurent Mauriac, founder of Brief.me, says: "The best way to build a strong relationship with the reader is to get them to pay." *The Times'* Red Box, which focused on conversion and brand awareness, is considering charging a subscription.
3. **Donations/differential contributions.** A number of newsletters are sent out for free but may periodically request contributions such as JRL and ProMed, or are distributed free to individuals and academics but sold to corporate or commercial subscribers.
4. **Add-on to subscription package.** The *FT's* Free Lunch, Brexit Briefing and other specialist newsletters are sent for free to standard or premium subscribers. They provide an alternative way for readers to consume content, aid discovery and boost "engagement" by increasing article readership which helps retain subscribers.
5. **Advertising.** Many newsletters contain advertising units and banners such as the *Times'* Red Box; and an increasing number have "native ad" or sponsored content messages, such as Quartz, Monocle and TTSO (Time to Sign Off) in France.
6. **Cross-selling.** Emails often provide a teaser, with the aim of boosting "reach" by getting to new audiences, showcasing unfamiliar content, generating loyalty and triggering clicks to a subscription paywall or directly to a subscription page. Some also take a commission on referrals to other sites, selling books or linking to Amazon. They may promote paid-for events, or build address lists allowing separating marketing emails to be sent to recipients.
7. **Brand awareness.** Newsletters may serve as a way to trigger broader interest in a news organisation or product, increasing knowledge of the organisation or raising awareness of new and different content or services it is producing.
8. **Community building.** Newsletters targeting particular interests, themes or people in specified places provide a way to develop deeper links to specialist audiences, build a more direct relationship, foster loyalty and offer membership or events.

## 4. Measuring Impact

### *Ambiguities*

Few media organisations use the same indicators, or share them publicly. One challenge with comparisons is that relevant data varies depending on the style of the newsletter and the business model adopted. Another is that they themselves may not fully be able to attribute “success”. For example, a “conversion” to a subscription – even if directly triggered by clicking on a link in an email – may be the result of multiple stimuli: a new reader signs up for and opens an editorial email, but also goes to a publication’s website, reads its social media output, and receives a marketing email before finally paying. A page view or an advert on an email may also displace that traffic or those revenues from other channels.

### *Email metrics*

The standard measures used by marketing departments for emails are unique open rates (one per reader per email sent) and – most important – clickthroughs to underlying links (notably payment pages for products or services). [Industry benchmarks](#) suggest typical open rates of 20-25 per cent and clickthroughs of 4-6 per cent in media and publishing.

There is some debate over the application of such metrics for editorial newsletters. In marketing, clickthroughs to drive sales are central. Yet for editorial emails, the objectives and use behaviours are far more diverse. A reader may not even need to open a newsletter, instead getting sufficient information by simply being able to glance at the headline in the subject of the email in the inbox.

### *Open rates*

Effectively targeted editorial emails tend to have higher open rates. BuzzFeed News says its open rates are about 30 per cent; while Quartz, Blendle, Espresso and *The Times* quote 40-50 per cent. The ratios can be pushed up by pruning lists to remove readers who do not regularly open – something [Time magazine](#) did with its newsletter.

The *New York Times* cites open rates as high as [70 per cent](#) – but based on “gross open rate” (total opens including multiple times by the same reader). Some criticise this measure because there could be technical reasons such as poor network coverage that leads to multiple opens in rapid succession. Yet arguably, the metric is no less reliable than online article page views, which may also be clicked on multiple times by the same user. For organisations able to track individual readers, it can be

nuanced by setting a threshold total number of repeats or considering multiple opens in a short time period as a single open.

### *Clickthroughs*

The importance of clickthroughs will depend on a publication's objectives and whether it seeks to drive users elsewhere. The *New Yorker*, which is interested in conversions, estimates that its emails trigger 30 times as many subscriptions as social media. The *New York Times* says newsletter recipients are [twice as likely](#) to become a subscriber as other "prospects". The *Washington Post* [more than doubled its site traffic](#) from emails in the 12 months to June 2016 while adding more than 1m recipients. *Les Echos*, the French business publication, recently estimated that around 7 per cent of all referrals to its website came from its emails. Blendle uses its own metric of clicks per unique open, reflecting its business model of generating income from micropayments of articles it showcases.

Dan Oshinsky from BuzzFeed cautions that use of any single metric is inadvisable because it can lead to gaming. "Open rates are not the be-all and end-all," he says. "We look at how many subscribe weekly, click rates, traffic driven back to the site, survey responses, forwarding to friends."

### *Broader indicators*

For organisations with registration or subscriber data able to track wider behaviour, other benchmarks are possible. For example, the *FT* has conducted studies showing that its FirstFT email significantly boosted the "recency, frequency and volume" measure of reader engagement with its website articles. The organisation also encourages informal qualitative feedback and launches periodic questionnaires to measure popularity.

The technological constraints of email mean other more sophisticated metrics cannot always be consistently measured across all devices. But data including scroll depth within emails, dwell time on emails and whether they have been forwarded to others all have potential. Clicks on articles towards the bottom of an email provide a proxy for whether readers scroll to the end.

## 5. Factors for Success

### *Email experimentation*

Many newsrooms are exploring A/B testing to assess the impact of modifications in emails on reader behaviour. The potential for testing includes length and style of content; design and use of dynamic content; time of day for sending; and the contents of the “from” and “subject” line. Claire Moses from BuzzFeed says: “I’m mindful of people’s time and the fact they receive other emails. I’m veering to shorter length emails, with bullet points. People are reading on their phones. They don’t need every detail, just key facts.”

### *Newsroom delegation*

To cope with time pressures and technical capacity, many point to the need for a simple editorial interface. That allows far greater uptake of emails than placing all the burden on a small central team. Tessa Muggeridge at the *Washington Post* says: “We’ve tried to distribute power, empower individual editors and journalists in different sections to build products, watch the metrics and let them run the show.”

### *Working beyond editorial*

Partnerships between editorial, developers and marketing staff are increasingly important. Anita Zielina at the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* says: “The walls between marketing, tech and editorial are still very high. You can’t handle personalisation, user clusters and recommendations algorithms if you just have a business, product, tech or editorial perspective. They all play together. You either need an organisation which never had those walls, like BuzzFeed, or you must be willing to break them down.” Nick Petrie at *The Times* says: “Having developers in the newsroom is essential. Journalists have ideas but that is useless without a lack of ability to execute.”

### *External partnerships*

A growing number of editorial organisations are joining forces with others to reach new readers. Ozy, for instance, has launched partnered emails offering selections of its own articles and those of editorial partners including *TED*, *Wired*, the *New York Times* and the *FT*. Similar links are taking place outside editorial. The *Washington Post* and BuzzFeed both have affiliations with Amazon, for example.

## 6. Conclusion: Beyond Email

After a long period of neglect, emails are resurgent in many legacy news organisations and have been adopted by digital-only and digital-first groups. The recent rise in investment points to a growing recognition of the limitations of newer, potentially faddish platforms; and the need to remain sensitive to the needs of readers struggling with limited time as they seek to find worthwhile news and analysis amid ever greater volume of content.

Like so many other editorial approaches, the connection to sustainable business models remains only partially tested, let alone proved. But alongside funding and focus for innovative alternatives which attract more attention, many organisations see merit in continued investment in emails. More fundamentally, there is a case to explore ways to preserve and enhance the type of service they provide.

### *Better discovery tools*

Internally with newsrooms, it can be difficult enough to track all articles and graphics being published in any day, let alone identifying older valuable “evergreen” archive material worth re-showcasing. Externally, such trawling is still more difficult. Many newsletter editors still rely on their own idiosyncratic and personal judgement, combined with filters such as Tweetdeck, Nuzzel and emails and blogs they read.

Some tools help trawl the web by topic and theme, but remain crude. Even Google’s search algorithms have limitations – one reason the company is supporting [the Trust Project](#), to flag up highly quality and original journalism rather than the most recent or widely linked-to content. The challenge for developers will be to identify more sophisticated and bespoke search tools to surface original and valuable articles.

### *Greater personalisation*

While human selections of articles remain the norm for newsletters, there is growing exploration of the use of algorithms to identify tailor-made picks for individual recipients. This requires the ability to analyse and classify article content using metadata; to track individual subscribers’ browsing behaviour; and to integrate them with email platforms. Reuters’ 2016 *Digital News Report* highlighted that readers ranked their own reading choices top, followed by editorial judgements and – closely behind – the recommendations of others.

Alternatives include geolocation information derived from internet providers or user data to provide articles linked to particular regions, such as recent [Washington Post](#) and *New York Times* experiments to propose articles about regions like California to

readers based there. Live updates each time an email is opened also offer potential to maintain relevance.

### *Focusing on curation*

Email is poorly suited to many of the innovations taking place in digital media, and may well wither in the future. But the practices it has helped pioneer, partly inspired by its constraints, around helping discovery, curation, serendipity and finishability are more perennial and can be usefully developed and transferred to other channels.

It is striking that even the digital-first organisations' services such as Twitter Moments, Facebook's news feed and Apple News rely on humans to help select and prioritise content. So does Blendle, even as it experiments with algorithms. Other newer channels for curated content using some of the same skills of selection include the *New York Times*' "What we're reading" online and [La Matinale](#), a dedicated app launched by *Le Monde* in France, which offers a hand-picked selection of articles from the publication each day.

New distribution mechanisms may well ultimately replace email. But they should not lose sight of the underlying role of content curation that emails have helped pioneer and champion, and which will continue to prove valuable to the readers of the future.

## APPENDIX 1: Email Newsletter Examples<sup>1</sup> and Key Facts

### Blendle

Daily Digest

600-700,000 total sends.

30-40% of total article clicks come from email.

4 editors per country, present in 3 countries: Netherlands, Germany, US

Business model: micropayments; not yet profitable.



Good morning Andrew,

It's showtime.

Tonight's the first debate between presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. We will bring you the very best stories over the next couple of days. Sports columnist Jason Gay kicks us off with a very original column.

Also below: how to juggle a growing family and a growing company, the typo that could haunt Obama in court, and Google's war against ad blocking.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Ready to rumble? A sports journalist's unique guide to tonight's debate matchup



"I know some folks prefer their sports columnists to 'stick to sports', but you try sticking to a crummy Monday Night Saints-Falcons game, buddy." This 4-minute read made us laugh. We promise it's something different. **Llamas are involved.**

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<sup>1</sup> The screenshots have been included under the guidelines of fair use



## Brief.me

Brief.me

1,300 paying subscribers; 25,000 trialists.

Open rates 70% of subscribers, 60% total.

3 journalists, a business developer, technology specialist.

Business model: subscription €4/month. Aims to break even in 2017.

# brief.me

26 septembre 2016

Votre mois de Brief.me gratuit entre dans sa dernière semaine. Il est temps de vous abonner !

Pourquoi payer ? Chaque soir, à 18h30, Brief.me vous fait gagner du temps. Brief.me vous accompagne, sélectionne et éclaire l'actualité qui a du sens. Nous vous proposons un rapport de qualité, sobre et apaisé avec l'information.

Je m'abonne dès maintenant (à partir de 3,90 euros par mois).

---

## ON REMBOBINE

• **Chômage en hausse.** Le nombre de demandeurs d'emploi inscrits à Pôle emploi a **fortement augmenté au mois d'août**, avec 50 200 personnes supplémentaires enregistrées en catégorie A (sans aucune activité). À la fin août, la France métropolitaine comptait 3 556 800 chômeurs.

• **Hollande à Calais.** Lors de la première visite à Calais de son quinquennat, François Hollande a promis que le camp de la « jungle » serait démantelé **« complètement, définitivement » avant la fin de l'année**. Il a demandé aux Britanniques de « prendre leur part dans l'effort humanitaire » de la France, faisant allusion à l'accueil des mineurs ayant de la famille en Grande-Bretagne.

• **Berges piétonnes.** Le Conseil de Paris a **approuvé la piétonnisation des berges** de la rive droite de la Seine, grâce au vote de tous les partis de gauche et des écologistes. La maire de la capitale Anne Hidalgo a salué sur Twitter une « décision historique, la fin d'une autoroute urbaine à Paris et la reconquête de la Seine ».

• **Comptes en Suisse.** Les autorités françaises ont demandé à la Suisse de lui **fournir l'identité de personnes domiciliées en France** et détentrices d'un compte au sein de la banque UBS, révèle le Parisien qui précise que cette demande a été jugée juridiquement recevable par la Suisse. Sont concernés près de 45 000 comptes ouverts en 2006 et en 2008.

• **Loi renseignement suisse.** Les électeurs suisses ont approuvé à 65,5 % hier lors d'un référendum une loi **autorisant la surveillance des communications téléphoniques** et les activités sur Internet pour déjouer les nouvelles menaces terroristes. Le Parlement avait adopté cette loi sur le renseignement il y a un an, mais plusieurs formations politiques de gauche avaient



## BuzzFeed

BuzzFeed News

Unique open rate about 30%.

2 London staff.

Business model: sponsored content, affiliate links

# BuzzFeedNEWS

MONDAY

September 26, 2016

*NBC News anchor Lester Holt has the honor (and the burden) of moderating the first 2016 US presidential debate, which will broadcast live tonight. The alleged gunman who fatally shot five people at a Washington mall on Friday is now in custody. And golf legend Arnold Palmer, aka "The King," has died at 87.*

## HERE ARE THE TOP STORIES

**It's time: The first US presidential debate of 2016 is tonight. Just how much fact-checking should a debate moderator do?**

NBC's *Nightly News* anchor Lester Holt is [moderating a historic television event](#) Monday night, between Republican nominee Donald Trump and Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. The debate, which kicks off at 9pm ET, is [expected](#) to draw tens of millions of viewers.

Fact-checking has been a persistent issue throughout this election cycle, where Trump has often lied about his past positions and given credence to conspiracy theories in the span of a single interview or speech.

Clinton's campaign says Holt should call out Trump's falsehoods, while Trump's campaign insists it's not the media's job to be virtual fact-checkers.

Retired CBS *News* anchor Bob Schieffer summed up the whole thing perfectly: "If I was moderating the first debate, I think I'd be under the bed hoping they couldn't find me."



## *The Economist*

Espresso email/app

Email 40-50,000 sent.

Open rate 50%.

App: 115,000 daily downloads, 300,000 uniques per month.

Free Daily newsletter sent to 700,000.

Business model: Espresso: sponsorship, subscription. Other emails: conversion to subscription.



### **Aliyevermore: Azerbaijan's referendum**

Today the oil-rich country in the South Caucasus holds a constitutional referendum that will further cement the already disproportionate powers of President Ilham Aliyev, whose family has ruled for more than two decades. The plebiscite proposes extending the presidential mandate from five to seven years—term limits were anyway scrapped by an iffy referendum in 2009. It has been sharply criticised by Azerbaijan's marginalised opposition, beleaguered civil society and international human-rights groups. Experts at the Council of Europe complain that the proposed new presidential powers, including the right to dissolve parliament, are “unprecedented”. Persecution and the jailing of critics, already common, could get even worse. Perhaps most noteworthy for Aliyev-watchers is the intention to abolish the minimum age of 35 for presidential candidates. This has raised speculation that the strongman is grooming his 19-year-old son, Heydar, to follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps. Whatever Mr Aliyev's thinking, no one doubts that the outcome of this referendum, like the last one, is preordained.

### **Facing off: Trump v Clinton**

The first presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton takes place tonight at Hofstra University, near New York. It will last for 90 minutes and cover three broad topics: “America's direction”, “achieving prosperity” and “securing America”. The received wisdom is that presidential debates usually do not change the course of a campaign. But this is an unusual election, and an unusually large number of voters will be paying attention. The debate is likely to be the most-watched political broadcast in the country's history. When it's over, journalists will go to the spin room to hear surrogates for Mr Trump and Mrs Clinton explain why their candidate beat expectations and won convincingly. National polls give the Democrat an edge over the Republican, but her advantage has narrowed over the past month. The race could feel very different again by tomorrow morning.

### **Pitchforks in low-tax paradise: Paraguay**

Angry farmers marching from across the country should today reach the capital, Asunción. Smallholders are demanding a government bail-out for loans that soured as global prices for their crops subsided. Horácio Cartes, the country's Thatcherite president, is unlikely to yield—not just because he wants to wean Paraguay off its reliance on volatile agricultural exports. Since coming to power in 2013 his administration has tried to recast the landlocked country of 7m from a haven for smugglers and fugitive Nazis into

## Financial Times

FirstFT

Total views: 60-70,000/day

10 specialist emails; multiple automated headlines by industry sector/theme

5 staff, Typical open rates: 30-50%


Business model: reader service; conversion; engagement; sponsorship/advertising.

**First** **FT**  
Your essential daily briefing

### Russia accused of supporting 'barbarism', living without a smartphone and a rare view of imperial China

The US accused Russia on Sunday of supporting "barbarism" over the bombing of the Syrian city of Aleppo as the west [stepped up diplomatic pressure](#) on Moscow.

Accusing Russia of supporting a Syrian regime offensive that has derailed a ceasefire agreement negotiated between Washington and Moscow, Samantha Power, US ambassador to the UN, said Russian and Syrian forces were "laying waste to what is left of an iconic Middle Eastern city". (FT)



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#### In the news

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**Alarm over Brexit bluster** Leading bankers from the City of London have expressed alarm and consternation at the growing [political momentum](#) behind a so-called "hard Brexit" they fear will erode confidence and trigger corporate departures. Meanwhile, Germany is growing [increasingly exasperated with Britain's bravado](#) over Brexit, prompting a rethink over how hard to push London during negotiations on leaving the EU. (FT)

**Goldman Sachs swings the axe in Asia** The bank is making cuts as it [grapples with a regional slowdown](#) and intensifying pressure to improve returns to shareholders. The move could mean as many as 90 investment bankers across the region will be laid off over the next few months, according to people familiar with the bank's plans, with the bulk in Hong Kong and Singapore. (FT)

**Ex-Wells Fargo bankers sue over firing** In the first of what could be many cases against the bank, two employees [filed suit](#) amid intense scrutiny over alleged banking fraud. (USA Today)

**Swiss back new surveillance law** Switzerland has voted to adopt a new surveillance law that allows intelligence agencies to tap phones, snoop on email and deploy hidden cameras and bugs. The vote shows how concerned the Swiss have become about a [potential militant attack](#). (BBC)



## New York Times

### Morning Briefing

Over 700,000 recipients.

Average gross open rate 50-60%.

48 newsletters in total, including Evening Briefing.

12 person team.

Business model: audience development by driving subscriptions.

Monday, September 26, 2016

The New York Times

NYTimes.com »

### Morning Briefing

The New York Times sale has begun. [Subscribe today and get 50% off for one year. Save now.](#)



Images of Hillary Clinton and Donald J. Trump on the side of a CNN truck outside Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y. The candidates hold their first debate tonight. [San Hodgson for The New York Times](#)

## Your Monday Briefing

By SEAN ALFANO

Good morning.

Here's what you need to know:

- **Candidates face off for the first time.**

The first debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald J. Trump will take place tonight in New York, beginning at 9 p.m. Eastern. The two nominees diverge sharply over race and gender issues, which are likely to play [major roles in the discussion](#). Here's what else to [watch for](#) tonight.

Mrs. Clinton holds a slight edge over Mr. Trump, according to the [latest polls](#). And in case you missed it, [here is how](#) both nominees prepared for tonight.

- **Big night for the news media.**

The 90-minute debate could draw up to [100 million viewers](#). We'll be live-streaming the event and providing up-to-the-minute analysis. You can also watch it on most major networks, as well as on Facebook and Twitter.

And the [stakes are high](#) for news organizations, which have an opportunity "to set the record straight and to nudge the presidential discussion onto the level ground of established facts," our media columnist writes.

- **Race and police tactics.**

[New](#) footage leaves several crucial questions unanswered in the police shooting of

Ozy

The Daily Dose

Presidential daily brief.

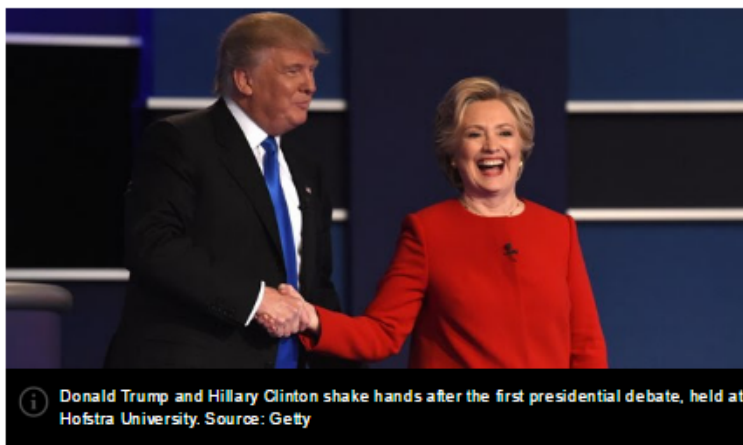
1.5m email recipients compared with 15m monthly uniques to the website.

3 staff

Business model: advertising, events.



IMPORTANT  
SEPTEMBER 27, 2016



### 1 Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton Clash in Spirited First Debate

In a deadlocked race, last night could make the difference. Interrupting and often defensive, the Republican declared he was "smart" for paying zero federal income taxes, but said he won't release his returns unless his opponent releases 30,000 deleted emails. Clinton attacked Trump for "the racist lie" of birtherism and acknowledged she "made a mistake" using a private email server while secretary of state. Early **reactions** gave the round to Clinton for hitting Trump's weak spots, but the coming days will show whether she gets a polling bounce.

SOURCES: NYT, AP, WASHINGTON POST, POLITICO, OZY

SHARE:  

### 2 FARC Rebels, Colombian Government Sign Peace Deal

It's in ink. Before a Cartagena crowd of 2,500 dressed in white, President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC leader Timoleon Jimenez signed the historic 297-page agreement to end a half-century of combat. The deal, which still must be ratified in an Oct. 2 public referendum, requires the **rebels** to hand over their weapons to the United Nations, then gives them six months to form a political party. Critics have said it's too soft on guerrilla leaders, who will be able to avoid jail time by confessing war crimes.

SOURCES: AP, BBC

SHARE:  

### 3 Charlotte Activists Call for Mayor, Police Chief to Resign

"If you can't do your job, let's find someone who can," said one speaker at yesterday's city council meeting about the police shooting of Keith Scott. Kerr Putney, who became Charlotte's second Black **police** chief 15 months ago, has spoken about bigotry in American

## Quartz

The Daily Brief

200,000 total sends.

Unique open rate about 40%.

Other newsletters: Weekly Africa, India.

3-4 people FTE.

Business model: native advertising.

# QUARTZ

qz.com

Good morning, Quartz readers!

## WHAT TO WATCH FOR TODAY

**EU defense ministers gather in Bratislava, Slovakia.** They'll consider various proposals to change the European Union's defense arrangements. One idea is to create a headquarters for commanding military forces. Britain used to veto that idea, saying such a center would duplicate NATO's role, but after Brexit it's [more likely to become a reality](#).

**Signs that big oil-producing nations plan to trim output.** There's speculation about a coordinated effort to address prices, which have fallen 60% [since mid-2014](#) (paywall), as OPEC members meet on the sidelines of an energy conference in Algiers starting today. But tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia [will likely stymie any agreement](#).

**Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump finally share a stage.** Over 100 million Americans are expected to watch the first of three presidential debates, which Clinton has been [studiously preparing](#) for and [Trump reportedly](#) plans to wing. Here's [how to watch](#) the 9pm EDT debate, an analysis of Clinton's [special winning tactic](#) in previous debates, and a look at [one way](#) Trump could walk away the winner.

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## OVER THE WEEKEND

**The Swiss voted in favor of increased government surveillance.** More than 65% of voters [were in agreement](#) with the law that gives the Federal Intelligence Service more power to tap phones, read emails, and use bugs and hidden cameras.

**China sent 40-plus fighter jets and bombers past Okinawa into the Pacific.** In an intimidating training exercise, the planes [passed between](#) Okinawa (home to US bases) and the contested Senkaku Islands. Japan recently indicated it would join US joint training cruises in the South China Sea, [ratcheting up tensions](#) with Beijing.

**Donald Trump told Benjamin Netanyahu he would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.** The US presidential candidate met the Israeli prime minister in New York on Sunday. The move would mark a [dramatic shift in US policy](#). Palestinians want East Jerusalem to be the capital of the state they aim to create.

## *The Browser*

The Browser

9,000 subscribers.

Open rate 45%, clickthrough rate 12%

1 editorial person, plus some technical support.

Business model: direct subscription \$34/year

# The Browser



Writing worth reading · 28th September 2016

## An Endless Buffet For Bald Eagles

Susan Matthews | Audubon | 19th September 2016

The chickens at White Oak Pastures roam freely. Which is fun for the chickens — and even more fun for the 75 bald eagles which have taken up residence in the trees nearby. “The slaughter here is relentless”. For the bald eagles the farm is “an all-you-can-eat buffet”. Each day, each eagle kills and eats four chickens on average — a daily loss to the farm of about \$1,000. “You’re supposed to give 10 percent to the church and we don’t really do that, but we’re giving 10 percent to nature” (3,200 words)

## Leaving His Marks

Ferdinand Mount | Times Literary Supplement | 21st September 2016

In a “remarkable” new biography of Karl Marx, Gareth Steadman Jones “performs the delicate task of disassembling the doctrine without dismissing the thinker, cutting the wires that link the two with all the delicacy of a bomb disposal expert”. Marx warmed to the possibilities of democracy in his later years; but admitting as much would have meant “junking the fiery rhetoric of his twenties and thirties”; and whereas Marx had many gifts, “climbing down was not one of them” (5,030 words)

## Tree School

Peter Wohlleben | Nautilus | 22nd September 2016

Trees learn. They learn to store water in winter, to lean against neighbouring trees for support. When they are desperately thirsty, they cry out, inaudibly to humans, at ultrasonic pitch. The sound comes from vibrations in the tree trunk when the flow of water from the roots to the leaves is interrupted. This is “a purely mechanical event”. But taken in isolation, the human voice is a purely mechanical event. What if the trees are warning one another that water is running low? (1,800 words)

## Duchamp’s Urinal

Damon Young | Aeon | 22nd September 2016

Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*, a factory-made urinal, was probably the most influential artwork of the 20th century. It was the first conceptual art, and the concept here was contradiction: A urinal was not art; yet when displayed by an artist in an art gallery it was art. So art could be anything. Duchamp was both mocking the art world and vastly extending its possibilities. “Instead of paintings and sculptures, art was suddenly Brillo boxes, an unmade bed, or a light-bulb plugged into a lemon” (2,900 words)

## Women As Complex Beings

Caroline Siegel | Boing Boing | 15th September 2016

Why we don’t warm easily to Hillary Clinton. “We don’t have cultural touchstones for flawed but sympathetic women. We recognize Sanders as a fiery activist, Biden as a truth teller, but we don’t have an archetype — fictional or otherwise — through which to understand Clinton. We don’t have female protagonists who are flawed in ways that are messily realistic, not just

## *The Times*

### Red Box

35,000 recipients. 60% subscribers, 40% not.

Open rate 48%, clickthrough rate 8-10%

1 full-time, 2 part-time reporters.

25 total newsletters.

Business model: conversion; exploring direct subscription.



LONDON *Galwick*  
OBVIOUSLY.

Brought to you with

Good morning from Liverpool,

What better way to celebrate your birthday than clutching a warm lager while Labour MPs tell you how depressed they are. I've been living the dream for a decade now. Fortunately no one from Momentum offered to give me the bumps.

There is a strange atmosphere down by the docks, with the Labour Party apparently occupying a smaller conference space than the Lib Dems did when they were here in 2010.

Far from being the hotbed of news and intrigue many of us expected, it is a strangely news-less occasion, with so little of what is said and done actually mattering.

Still, there's always the big wheel to put a smile on even the gloomiest Labour face. Or maybe even a [Red Box mug](#).

On the subject of which, thanks to [Red Box](#) reader Gary Fisher for highlighting this: [How long has Corbyn clung on?](#)

**Matt Chorley**  
**Red Box Editor**  
[@MattChorley](#)

### In today's briefing

- There's never a good time for a split
- McDonnell stands by "lynching" threat
- Thornberry vow on EU regional funds
- May is good at politics, books reveal
- Plan to cut the House of Lords
- 1pm today: *Times* fringe with Jess Phillips





*Washington Post*

75 newsletters including Evening Briefing, Morning Mix, Daily 202  
Business model: conversion to subscription.

PowerPost

# The Daily 202

Morning intelligence for leaders

Share on Twitter

Share on Facebook

## Trump wins the debate expectations game



Students representing Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton and moderator Lester Holt stand in position during a rehearsal at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, yesterday. (Andrew Gombert/EPA)



BY JAMES HOHMANN

*With Breanne Deppisch*

**THE BIG IDEA:** Many reporters have set the bar unfairly low for Donald Trump ahead of tonight's presidential debate, raising the specter that pundits will declare him "the winner" even if he makes a series of factually inaccurate statements and struggles to show depth on the issues.

### WHAT THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA IS SAYING:

— Reviewing the coverage ahead of Trump's 9 p.m. showdown with Hillary Clinton at Hofstra University makes it sound like all the GOP nominee really needs to do is *not* talk about how well-endowed he is...

"I think that Trump is buoyed by the very low expectations. This is a guy who's never

## APPENDIX 2

### List of key interviewees

Phil Barker, head of direct audience engagement, myBBC

Marten Blanckesteijn, founder and CEO, Blendle

Robert Cottrell, founder/editor, The Browser

Richard Danbury, principal lecturer, De Montfort University

Romain Dessal, founder, Time to Sign Off

Frederic Filloux, Monday Note editor, Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford

Clémence Lemaistre, digital news editor, *Les Echos*

Clifford Levy, assistant masthead editor, the *New York Times*

Gideon Lichfield, global news editor, Quartz Daily Brief

Laurent Mauriac, founder, Brief.me

Claire Moses, editor of the News newsletter in London, BuzzFeed

Tessa Muggeridge, new newsletters and alerts editor, the *Washington Post*

Dan Oshinsky, director of newsletters, BuzzFeed

Nick Petrie, deputy head of digital, *The Times*

Samir Rao, co-founder, Ozy

Tom Standage, editor in charge of digital strategy, *The Economist*

Anita Zielina, editor-in-chief of new products, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*

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