

A DECADE'S WORTH OF INSIGHT INTO MEDIA PREFERENCES

Looking back at 10+ years of State of the Media

Top takeaways from 10+ years of State of the Media

Cision has been producing the State of the Media report since 2010 and more than a decade later we wanted to take a moment and reflect on the totality of these industry survey results.

What major trends have emerged over the past decade? How has the industry reacted and adapted to them? While this annual survey's focus has shifted over the years, we still found consistent trends spanning the entire past decade – from trust in news sources to how journalists prefer to be pitched.

Let's see what lessons lie in our archives...



What is the State of the Media Report?

A survey of original research, pulling together insights from journalists and influencers to capture their experience in the industry and their impressions around certain trends year-to-year.

Our survey has grown to now capture thousands of responses from over 15 countries.

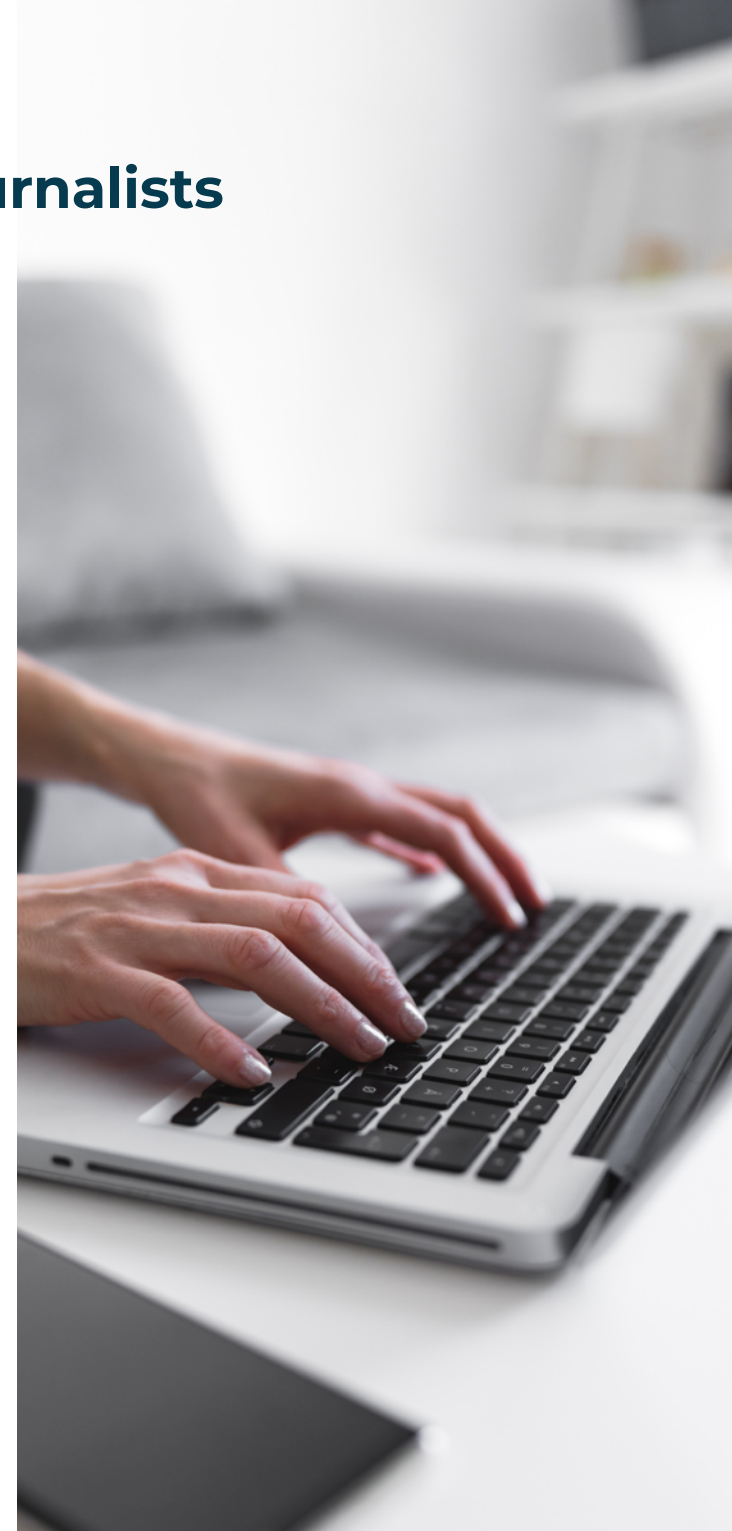
1. Email your pitch to better engage with journalists

This is one of the biggest takeaways we get every single year (and every time we put together a pitching kit): Journalists prefer to receive pitches via email. Not by phone or by DM on social media, but by email.

This was highlighted in virtually every report going back to 2010 and especially in the years when social media first started to be a place where journalists spent their time sourcing and promoting stories.

There are always exceptions, of course, and if you have built a good relationship with a journalist and know they wouldn't mind receiving a DM from you on social media with a pitch, you could consider floating it there— but we still recommend following up via email for several reasons:

1. A DM usually can't handle the rest of the elements best practices tell us journalists want in a pitch: Any helpful multimedia attachments or links to them that don't expire (a lot of links are difficult to navigate on mobile, where social DMs are often checked).
2. A DM can easily get lost in the noise on social media and isn't searchable and savable the way emails are, making it difficult to reference later.
3. Most journalists prefer pitches via email over phone calls too; Never text or call a journalist's personal cell phone unless they have given explicit permission and have agreed to speak over the phone.



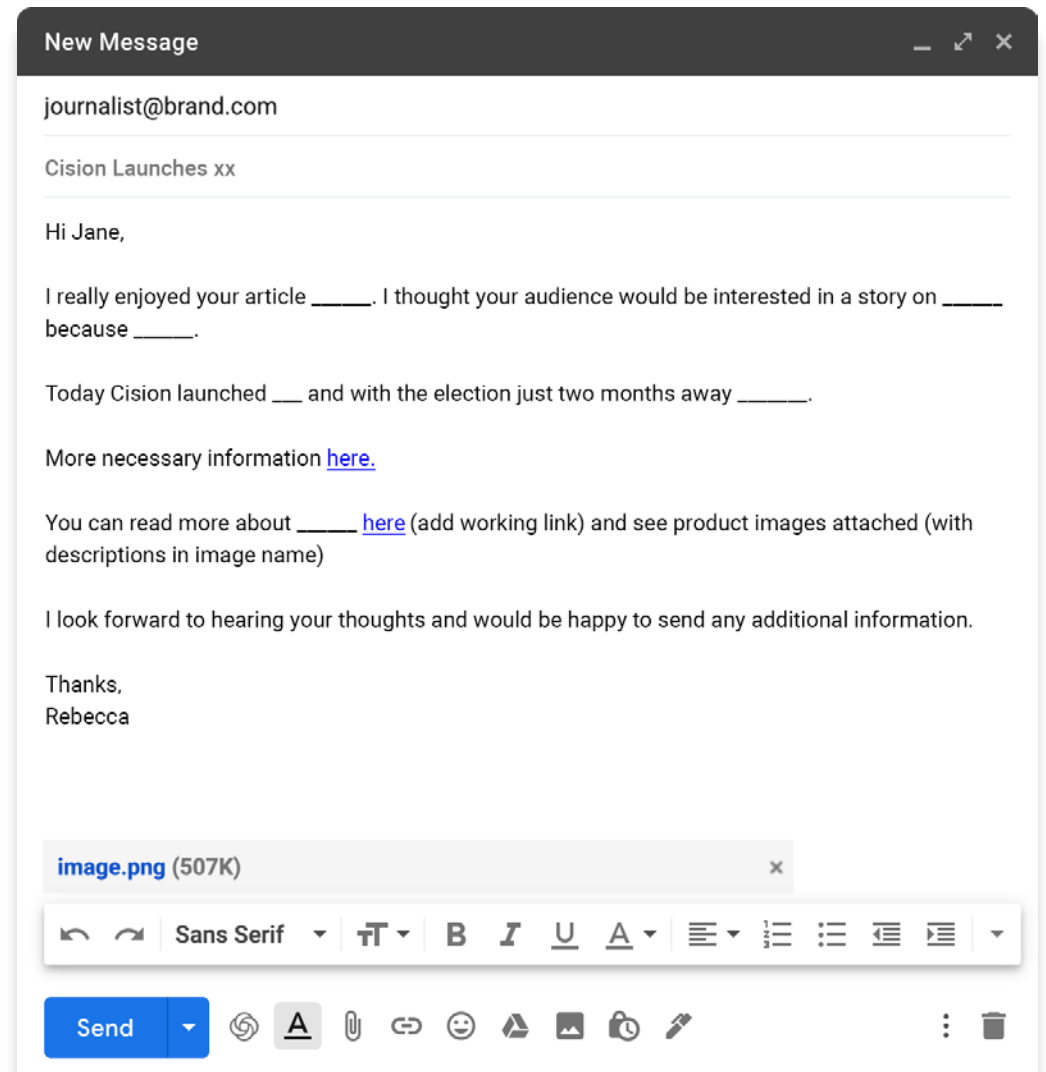
2. How to craft your outreach (via email!) the best possible way

The best practices for pitches also haven't changed over the years; journalists want pitches that are concise, that have an angle connected to what is already considered newsworthy (if appropriate), and that are relevant to their beat.

Don't follow-up excessively. Do keep in touch - social media is a simple way to do that - and build real relationships. **Do personalise your pitches.**

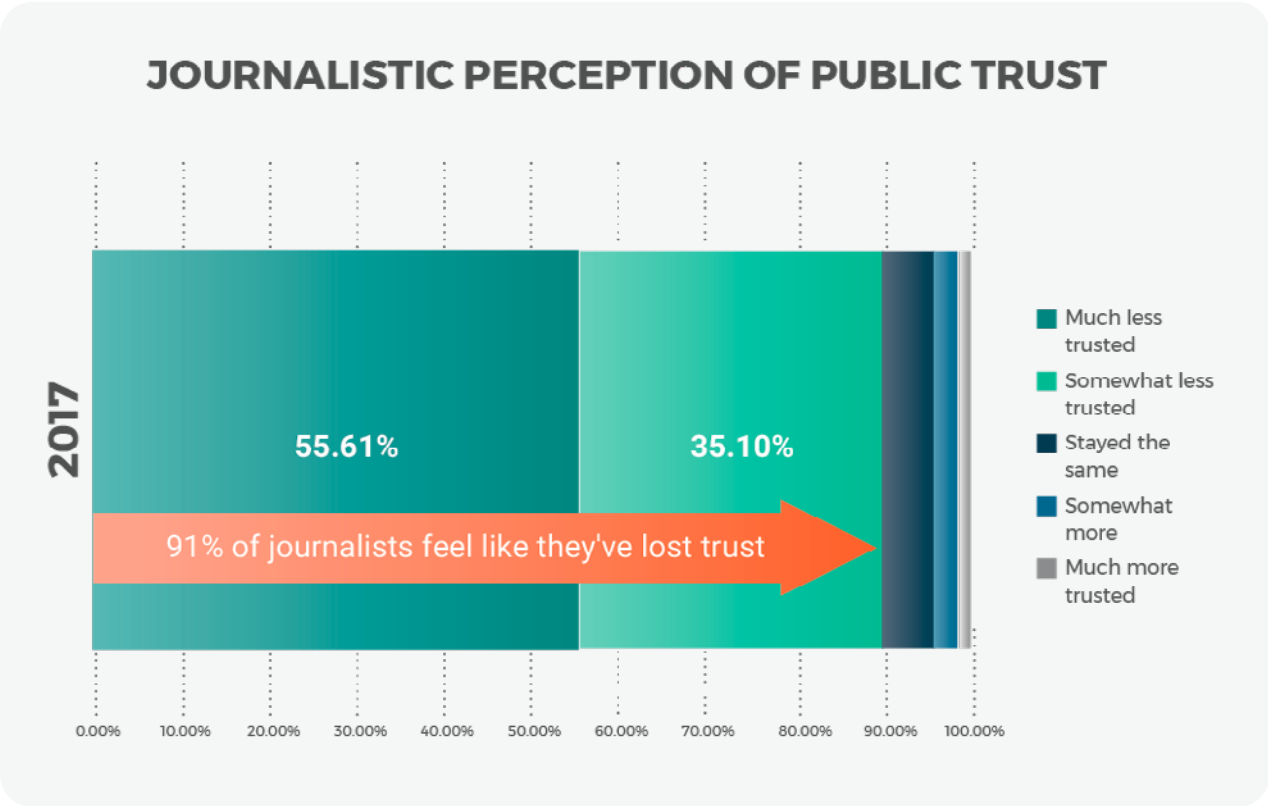
It takes longer to write individual, tailored pitches than it does to send out mass batches of emails, but you're much more likely to get your story picked up—and not get reported for spam.

- Email your pitch
- Keep it concise and get to the point
- Include helpful content like multimedia
- Make sure links don't expire (especially helpful for follow-up pieces)
- Personalise your pitch (no generic "DEAR NAME" or wrong names)
- Add a newsworthy angle, if appropriate
- Follow-up, but not excessively (once is enough)
- Don't use click-bait language or industry-specific jargon

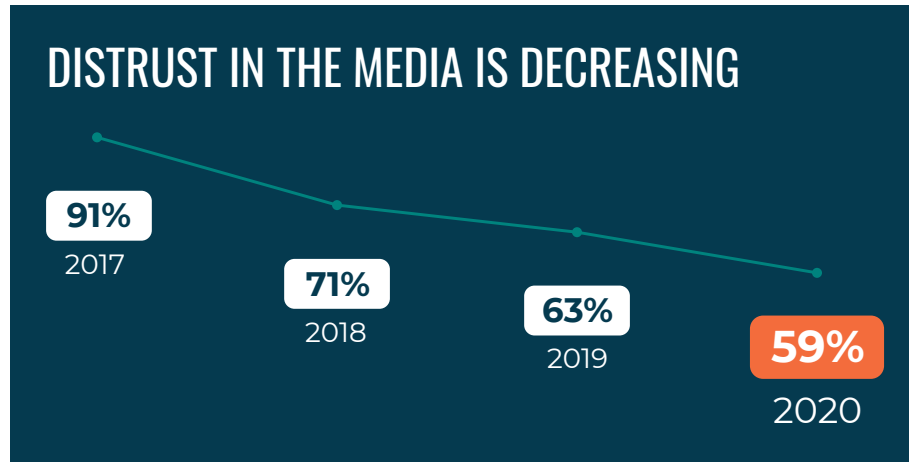


3. Media knows creating trusted content is key

Trust has been a major theme in these reports, first arising during the proliferation of social media and the question of whether or not stories found on social platforms could be trusted (which is definitely still an issue), then later with the rise of “fake news” as the general public’s trust in the media began to waiver.



The past few years have seen journalist's perception of the public's trust in the media slowly start to rise again, but work remains to be done.



The height of the concern over “fake news” was in 2017, but our 2018 report still saw a silver lining:

“There may be a bright side to the fake news phenomenon: 21% of respondents said that it’s increasing the importance of journalistic standards, while 9% said that it’s improving the popularity of trusted and established media brands.”

As the media’s view of their own “trusted brand” improved in the most recent report, Liam Power – Head of Cision Distribution – relays: *“I hope that public trust in our media has been rebuilt to a level that informed decisions will be made based on reliable resources. Our survey data tells us the media*

believes it’s improving, and it’d obviously be great to see that trend continue to improve in the years to come.”

Journalists know this is key – earning trust through accurate reporting - as our survey clearly relays year after year:

2016: 88% responded that being right is more important than being first.

2017: “92% of respondents said that being right is more important than being first, up 4% from 2016.”

2018: “Globally, 75% of media say that ensuring content is 100% accurate is the most important for their org.”

2019: What is most important to your organisation? 51%: ensuring accuracy.

2020: Which is more important for your organisation? 50.8%: ensuring content is 100% accurate.

Why the percentage drop in 2019 and 2020? Adding “revenue/traffic” as an answer choice starting in 2019 undoubtedly impacted the responses especially as many newsrooms continue to fold, merge or are forced to lay off staff; revenue and traffic that proves a journalist can drive eyeballs to pages that earn advertising dollars are more important than ever (32% listed it as most important in 2020). And while answers like ‘exclusivity’ still carry weight, accuracy is ranked higher than all others.

4. Journalists must do more with less, every year

All the way back in the first report in 2010 one of the major takeaways was that reporters were doing more with less and communications professionals needed to help them out however they could for a better chance of getting their story featured. Sound familiar?

As outlets have continued to shutter and/or merge and move to digital-first and eliminate departments like photography and videography, the pressure on individual journalists has only increased exponentially. They are expected to file more stories with fewer resources on tighter deadlines, or watch their readership move elsewhere.

A generic pitch, or a pitch that isn't tailored well to an individual journalist, is likely to be ignored. They simply don't have the time to devote days or even hours to do background legwork.

You must proactively provide the relevant news angle, excellent quote, multimedia asset, and tailored message targeting the specific journalist

– not only are you increasing your chances for engagement, but you're also building a stronger relationship with the media for future collaboration.



5. Press releases remain a staple for journalists

Year after year the State of the Media tells us one enduring industry truth: No matter how much changes, journalists still look to PR pros to provide stories. They trust press releases above other formats. (Similar to pitching best practices noted above, keep these concise and relevant; see our [2020 State of the Press Release](#) for a more current perspective.)

PR and communications pros vastly outnumber journalists - [6-to-1 according to Ragan in 2019](#) – and that is only likely to increase as the landscape continues to shift and put more responsibilities on individual journalists. If PR pros keep that in mind when crafting pitches and writing press releases, it's hard to go wrong.

The ways that we communicate will change; what won't change is that we communicate. We will continue to need one another in order to build and tell stories. We should do our best to build positive, mutually beneficial relationships as we do that work.

Did you know?

In 1954, PR Newswire became the first wire service to focus largely on commercial news. By providing a broad and reliable channel for businesses to communicate with customers and investors, PR Newswire helped to shape the future of the wire. Today, commercial news wires remain the only reliable and approved way for companies to distribute material news to their investors.



ABOUT CISION

Cision is a leading global provider of earned media software and wire distribution services to public relations and marketing communications professionals. Cision's software allows users to identify key influencers, craft and distribute strategic content, and measure meaningful impact. Cision has over 4,800 employees with offices in 24 countries throughout the Americas, EMEA, and APAC. For more information about Cision's award-winning products and services, including the Cision Communications Cloud®, visit www.cision.co.uk and follow Cision on Twitter [@CisionUK](https://twitter.com/CisionUK).

