

MEDIA'S FUTURE IN A POST-COVID WORLD

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thriving in the post-pandemic world

The past 18 months proved that the future of media is not just about survival but thriving, if we take hard-earned lessons to heart

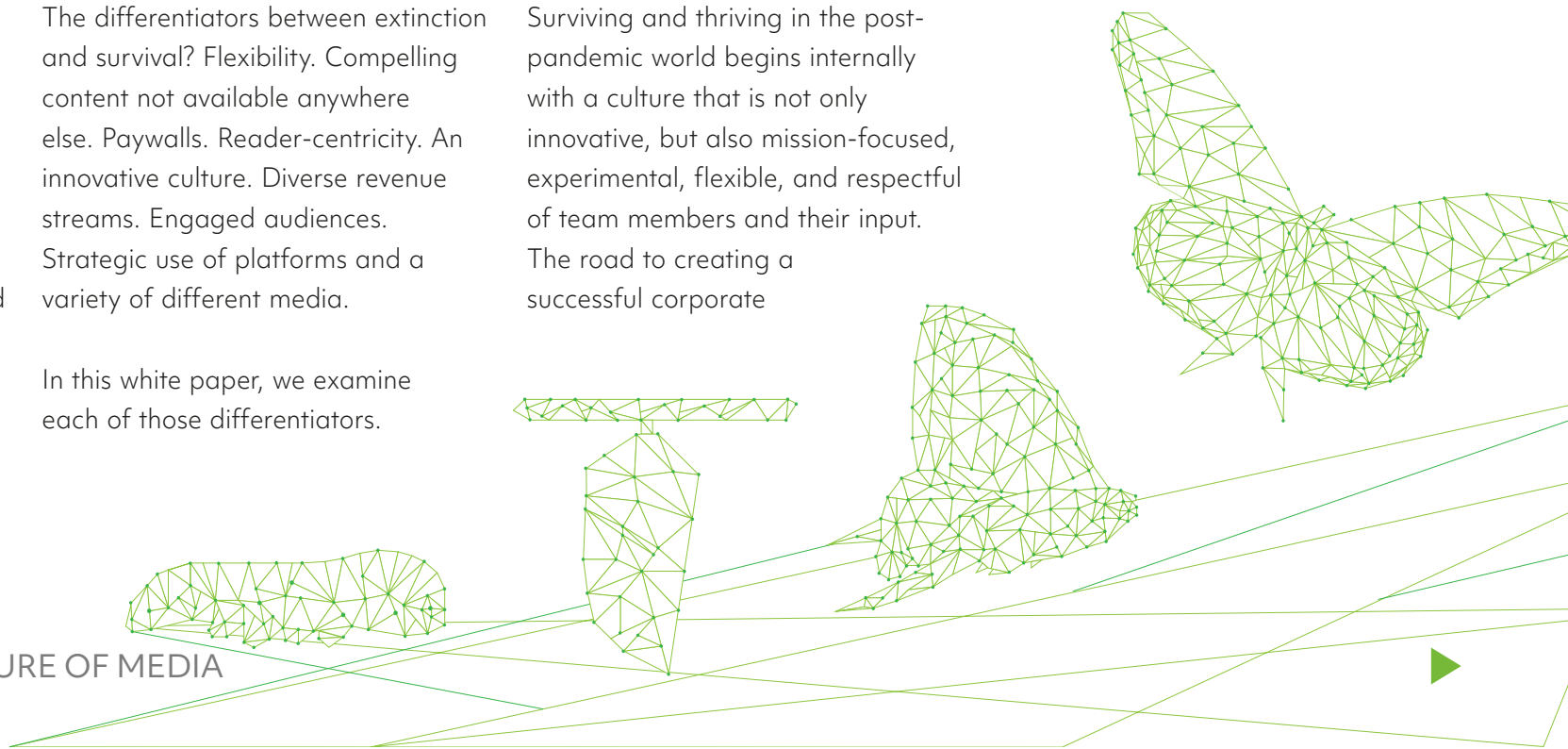
The pandemic continues to be a super-charged Darwinian event. It has accelerated change and rendered some things extinct much sooner than might have otherwise been the case.

But at the same time, it has enhanced the future of those members of the media species that adapted to the new media ecosphere.

The differentiators between extinction and survival? Flexibility. Compelling content not available anywhere else. Paywalls. Reader-centricity. An innovative culture. Diverse revenue streams. Engaged audiences. Strategic use of platforms and a variety of different media.

In this white paper, we examine each of those differentiators.

Surviving and thriving in the post-pandemic world begins internally with a culture that is not only innovative, but also mission-focused, experimental, flexible, and respectful of team members and their input. The road to creating a successful corporate



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Thriving in the post-pandemic world begins internally, with a culture that is innovative, mission-focused, experimental, flexible, and respectful of team members' input.

culture in the new hybrid work era is lined with landmines, but it is also loaded with new opportunities for more diverse, more motivated, and more talented workforces.

Financial sustainability was already a dicey challenge pre-Covid. Companies producing undifferentiated content for unengaged audiences on the back of display advertising were doomed in the long run.

That long run was shortened to a matter of months. The companies that were already diversified were

able to adapt and diversify further — bolstering streams that were working (subscription-driven newsletters), pivoting on streams that had to change (live events to virtual events), and adding new or enhancing existing streams that fit the moment (e-learning, clubs, and ecommerce).

Publishers who were already creating unique content found readers willing and eager to pay for it. Readers reacted positively to long-form journalism, while also finding utility in quick-hit, information-packed short-form pieces and graphic-only content. Video in all its glories —

searchable, animation, personalised, live, interactive, social media (TikTok), etc. — flourished.

Some print publishers, while taking the expected hit from newsstand shut-downs, pivoted to a strategy of increasing quality and price while decreasing frequency, and they found ready, hungry, and growing audiences. Other print publishers leveraged the print media's reputation as a trusted source of information to drive subscriptions and sales of one-off topical publications. In a world awash in misinformation, readers have shown a willingness to pay for

information they know they can trust.

Audiences also began to reward media companies who engaged in and promoted their sustainable activities by voting with their subscription payments and donations for corporate environmental responsibility.

All told, while recognising the tragic consequences for so many companies and their staffs, the media industry is coming out of the pandemic poised for a better future than before ... if we can embrace the lessons we've learned. ■



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Don't expect 'normal' for a long time

The whole world is rebooting the world of work,
which means no one knows the answers yet

Ono Kosuki



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Almost everyone acknowledges that there is no going back to 'normal'. "Covid-19 hasn't just changed the way we perform our jobs today — it's also kick-started a broader deep-rooted rethink of the world of work," wrote Bloomberg Asia Digital Managing Editor Alyssa McDonald.

In the wake of the pandemic, what old practices can we return to, which new practices should be dropped and which kept, and how should we physically change our offices?

As multiple studies of workforces across industries indicates, the pandemic-era change most desired and most likely to be maintained

in some form is the hybrid work schedule: a mix of remote and in-office work.

But hybrid work has its opponents

Goldman Sachs Group CEO David Solomon has made headlines with his position that remote work is "an aberration that we are going to correct as quickly as possible."

Solomon is not alone. Asked whether he sees anything positive about working remotely, Netflix co-founder and CEO Reed Hastings told The Wall Street Journal, "I don't see any positives. Not being able to get together in person, particularly internationally, is a pure negative."

Is there a price to pay for sticking to the past?

"If you slip back into old ways quickly, you will lose employees," London consulting firm Fluxx partner Jenny Burns told Bloomberg.

"Employees are unlikely to return happily to a workplace driven by the 'old deal' in which the employer sets standard rules of employment and the workforce acquiesces," Joseph Fuller, a professor of management practice and co-leader of Harvard's Managing the Future of Work initiative, told Harvard Working Knowledge, an organisation that connects the school's leading edge research and ideas on business management with practitioners, thought-leaders, and academics.

What does the workforce expect?

"They will expect not only the right to determine the adequacy of workplace safety measures, but also expect employers to consider their individual circumstances, like care-giving obligations, when designing their roles and evaluating their performance," said Fuller.

"That is a major departure from what many see as the time-honoured definition of the employer-employee relationship," he said.

Companies must figure out how to meet multiple needs: While making sure that business goals are met, executives must now also ensure that their premises are Covid-secure,



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and that their staff's needs are met and that they feel comfortable, safe, empowered, and that they are being treated fairly.

A global re-start of workplaces – but how?

For the first time in world history, the workplace is facing a simultaneous global remake, which means that no one knows what will work.

We are entering an experimentation phase, and with experimentation will come surprising successes and equally surprising failures.

Only one thing is certain: "The workplace as we used to know it, quite frankly, is dead," wrote Dina Gerdeman, a senior



writer at Harvard's Working Knowledge. "Not only is remote work considered table stakes to employees, but the pandemic has also challenged conventional thinking about work in other ways, too — perhaps permanently."

Hybrid working arrangements

Having had a taste of the benefits of remote work, staffers at companies trying to return to "normal" will start looking for a new job. A March 2021 Prudential workplace study found that 87% of workers want to continue

to work remotely at least one day per week and 55% would prefer to be remote at least three days a week. Almost half (42%) of workers surveyed also said they would not work for an employer who required full-time work on-site.

"Offering flexible working arrangements will be key in retaining employees and ensuring higher levels of satisfaction and engagement," Ashira Prossack, an internationally recognised communication coach, told Working Knowledge.

And yet, despite the clear indications that employees value flexibility and some form of hybrid working arrangement, a recent U.K. study found that just 63% of employers



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expect to implement hybrid work policies in 2021, and fewer than half (48%) plan to expand flexitime, the single most popular flexible-work option,” according to Bloomberg U.K. Business Reporter Lucy Meakin.

“A lack of true flexibility is a really valid concern,” Margarete McGrath, the global head of strategic propositions at Dell Technologies Inc., told Bloomberg.

Reactions to hybrid working are varied

Above and beyond hybrid work arrangements in general, different employees have different reactions to remote working, often depending on age groups and personal situations. During the

pandemic, executives and staff with family got to spend more time with loved ones, while young and single execs and staff experienced long periods of loneliness.

“It could be absolutely chaotic. That’s our fear, that actually they haven’t pulled together a hybrid working strategy,” McGrath said. “There are lots of organisations that are lagging behind, saying ‘we’re not going to change anything, we’re just going to get our staff back in.’

“They’re not fully grasping the extent of this paradigm shift around work.”

The challenge is that the best solution for one set of employees may not be the best solution for others.

The future may be more difficult than the past

Ironically, it may turn out that managing staff during the pandemic when everyone had to do the same thing (work remotely) may prove to be easier than what managers will face going forward.

“Perhaps managers will need to step in to impose some sort of Solomonic compromise,” wrote Harvard’s Gerdeman. “Some days of the week may become mandatory in the office for all to avoid the need to manage any possibly conflicting views.”

Other challenges facing managers include the question of mandatory vaccination proof, frequency of Zoom meetings that include remote and in-

house staff, face time with individual staffers, expectations of hours kept by remote and in-house staff, etc.

Workplace safety

As important as solving the hybrid work schedule problem is the issue of safety.

After more than a year of working in near isolation and living in fear of large groups and enclosed spaces, it’s going to take a lot of reassurances from employers that the workspace is physically safe.

Companies are spending money on capital improvements to deliver better air filtration, add ultraviolet lighting, install touch-less bathrooms and kitchens, erect plastic barriers



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between desks, increase spacing between desks, etc. Others are revising work rules about distancing, meeting capacity, interpersonal interactions, etc. And some are limiting the number of staff in the building at any one time.

What will the 'new office' be like?

In the early years of this century, many media companies trashed their cubicles and went to the open office concept, forcing hundreds of staff to sit at long tables in wide-open spaces with little or no privacy or distancing and often chaotic, noisy surroundings.

"The open office is dead," Clive Wilkinson Architects Associate Amber Wernick told Fast Company.



"We really see that being one of the biggest changes to come out of this pandemic and the way people are going to feel coming back into the workplace after working from home for over a year."

Ironically, Clive Wilkinson Architects was one of the biggest champions

and practitioners of open space offices, designing spaces for big hitters like Google and Microsoft.

Serving a variety of needs

"We strongly believe that the one-size-fits-all office cannot exist in the future of work, with even stronger reasons now than there were pre-pandemic," Clive Wilkinson Associate Caroline Morris said on the company website. "A homogenous solution doesn't address the variety, the wide range of needs that each employee has. You end up with an incredibly flawed workplace strategy and an incredibly flawed workplace."

"The energy of the workplace should be designed with intention and purpose," said Clive Wilkinson's

Wernick. "We often call this the acoustic landscape of the office as it maps the full spectrum of spaces from 'hot' or active to 'cool' or quiet. The 'hot' zones support louder, more energetic activities, while the 'cool' zones support more focused work. Our New Workplace Kit of Parts covers the full energy spectrum with a variety of 'hot' spaces, 'cool' spaces, and 'transition' spaces in between.

"While we believe the new workplace will prioritise collaborative and community space, it must accommodate and promote all styles of work – collective and individual, active and quiet – to enhance employee performance and ultimately improve satisfaction and retention," said Wernick.



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Different spaces for different functions

Wilkinson envisions three types of spaces: hot, transition, and cool. For the “hot” spaces, they suggest four types of areas: the Plaza, Multipurpose, Pitch, and Team rooms.

The Plaza is a highly functional and social space where employees can work, socialise, eat, grab coffee and attend events. The Multipurpose Room is a large space for a variety of all-day sessions for large groups, including remote workers. The Pitch room is a “wow factor” room for making presentations to clients or visitors. The Team room is seen as a co-creation hub for internal ideation and problem-solving with everything from sit/stand desks and ergonomic

chairs to lounge furniture, write-on walls, and monitors.

The “transition” spaces are the Reception area, the Park, the Avenue, and the Booth.

Multiple options for interactions

The Reception area has two purposes: Create a sense of safety with all the now-ubiquitous sanitizing/checking functions, and also make a great first impression. The Park, an indoor or outdoor natural oasis, is a place where employees can recharge or relieve stress in a natural environment. The Avenue takes the place of long, boring corridors by placing standing-height work surfaces, lockers,

booths, along the corridor. The Booth is an area with lots of high-back, cosy booths for individual work or small group gatherings.

The “cool” spaces are the Desk area, the Remove Pod, the Library, and the Wellness Room.

The Desk area will be made up of “neighbourhoods” for teams with common purpose of no more than 25 stand-up or sitting desks with some accommodation for privacy. The Library is a space with a long table as well as chairs and small booths and couches for concentrated, quiet work (they recommend the equivalent of a train car “quiet car” rule of no talking). The Remote Pod is a soundproof enclosure for virtual connections. And

the Wellness Room is a restorative retreat space with wrapped soft walls, a daybed, low lighting, and customised ambient music.

More collaborative, appealing offices

With an office like this, it shouldn't be hard to convince staffers to return!

The workplace of the post-Covid era has the potential to be much more rewarding, productive, collaborative, and enjoyable than any of its predecessors. But if old-school thinkers are allowed to force workers back into the old workplace model, everyone and everything will suffer: people, product, and profits. ■



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Print and digital revenue models are on the cusp of a new reality

The post-pandemic, post-cookie worlds offer unique opportunities for print and digital



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Coming out of the pandemic, both print and digital revenue models are years ahead of where they were pre-Covid. Necessity was indeed the mother of invention.

But new systems take a long time to build, new habits a long time to form, and old mindsets a long time to change. So, what is the state of print and digital revenue?

Print isn't dead, it's evolving

None of the media that followed print (radio, television, cable, etc.) died. With the arrival of each new medium, they morphed and kept finding a revised equilibrium in each successive media universe.

While the print industry was already changing before the ravages of Covid-19, the pandemic supercharged that evolution.

Covid-19 has given many magazine brands an immediate reason to focus on the future of their print businesses, according to FIPP CEO James Hewes.

"Print is finding its place in the long-term media mix," he said.

Hewes said the pandemic changed that trajectory. Pre-crisis, print was finding its place in a predominantly digital ecosystem. Post-crisis, print is finding a niche of its own.

"What we see is that print is a very important medium still," Hewes

explained. "But it is undergoing a big repositioning based on two things: one is print becoming a 'luxury' product, and the other is increased public trust."

The first trend is being driven by consumers' growing willingness to pay for better quality publications that are published less frequently, but with increased pagination, higher quality paper — and a higher price tag. "Rolling Stone Magazine in the U.S. is a great example of this," says Hewes.

On the second point, studies are showing time and again that in an era of fake news and unregulated social media, print is one of the most trusted — if not the most trusted — medium in the market. "I really think



Jason Briscoe



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“Print is undergoing a big repositioning based on two things: one is print becoming a ‘luxury’ product, and the other is increased public trust.”

James Hewes, CEO & President, FIPP

we haven’t made the most of this as an industry; we could do more to enhance our credentials,” said Hewes.

He cited a recent Edelman Trust Barometer report, which found that more than 60% of people trust traditional magazines and newspapers, versus between 30-40% for digital media — and particularly social media networks. High quality, trustworthy content has never been more in demand.

“If print publishers can focus on these two things, we’ll be in a good place as an industry,” Hewes said.

Digital advertising is evolving for a cookie-less world

While you can’t argue with the compelling advantages of digital advertising — the data it generates, the tracking it enables, the reach it achieves, the interactivity it offers — the sector does face some challenges.

These challenges include fraud, ad blocking, ad “blindness”, ad density, privacy abuse, to name just a few. There is also the soon-to-be internet-wide abolishment of third-party cookies when Google removes them from its Chrome browser in 2022.

Google’s Chrome browser owns 64% of the browser market. The Safari browser (ranked second at 19%) and Firefox (ranked third at 4%) both stopped tracking users via third-party cookies more than a year ago. Third-party cookies are tracking codes placed on a website by someone other than the owner of the website (the first party) to track users’ behaviour across the web, amassing enough data on an individual’s browsing habits to target those individuals with highly specific adverts.

“The end of third-party cookies

will be one of the greatest internet disruptions ever seen,” declared global professional services network Deloitte in a recent report. “Third-party cookies have been around for more than 25 years and are the bedrock of digital advertising.”

“Traditional digital advertising and monetisation methods will become less effective or even stop working altogether,” according to Yaroslav Kholod, director of programmatic operations at ad tech services provider Admixer.

“A recent IAB [Interactive Advertising



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Bureau] report revealed that publishers could lose up to \$10 billion in ad revenue when third-party cookies are disabled because their ad personalisation options will shrink,” said Kholod, writing on Marketing Tech News.

“According to Google’s research, most publishers could lose 50-70% of their revenue if they don’t reconfigure their approach to ad and data management by 2022.”

What strategies should publishers consider?

There are several actions publishers can take now when it comes to the challenges of digital advertising.

The first is to build or enhance your

first-party data strategy. With your editorial and advertising teams, and sponsors, determine what first-party data you need. Then build the tech stack and methods to gather that data, including content access.

Another strategy is contextual targeting. Building on your first-party data using tech tools and analytics, you can learn which contextual signals can be used to target ads. Contextual targeting plays to publishers’ strengths: Top-quality content.

It is absolutely critical to run concrete tests with partners, tests that offer actionable — and not theoretical — cookie-less monetization capabilities. Having a plan is not enough. You must test it in real time.



Martius Diesel

thus scaling your audiences and offering advertisers larger-scale buys.

The last and still evolving strategy involves identity solutions. Instead of using privacy-abusing cookies to identify users, identity solution tools use readers’ anonymised email addresses gathered when a user logs into a website or app. As of June, 2021, there were at least 80 companies offering identity solution software to publishers. This approach is so new and untested that it behoves publishers to educate themselves before making any commitments.

The proven impact of print advertising

People are 70% more likely to recall a business seen in print compared



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with digital advertisements, according to a study by the Canada Post and neuromarketing firm True Impact.

Nearly 80% of consumers act on direct printed mail advertisements compared to 45% of consumers who act on digital advertisements, according to a Penn State University study. And purchase intent of consumers who notice print ads increased to 22% in 2020 from 7% in 2009, according to a 2020 Newsworks study.

By combining print and digital ads, online campaigns are 400% more effective, according to Top Media Advertising. Print's response rate is also surprisingly high: Print and direct mail marketing deliver a 9%

customer response rate compared to 1% or less for digital marketing channels, according to a 2020 study by U.S.-based printer R.C. Brayshaw. The same study found that print ads generate a 20% higher motivation response.

Print ads 'enhance' rather than 'reduce' credibility

Then, when it comes to trust in media (a sentiment in short supply among the reading public these days), 82% of internet users in the United States trust print advertising more than digital marketing, according to the Marketing Sherpa agency.

"Just know that advertising in newspapers and magazines will tend to add credibility to your product or

service, while an online pop-up ad will reduce the credibility for your product or service," according to a Marketing Sherpa consumer attitude survey.

"Despite the [print] market's declining growth and the competition faced from the newer advertising media such as internet and mobile advertising, print advertising still accounts for a significant share in the global advertising market," according to a new report from market research company IMARC Group.

"This can be attributed to a number of factors. A large portion of the global population still subscribes to newspapers and magazines either because they are in the habit of reading

it or it is considered a symbol of respectability for educated families.

"Moreover, print ads are less intrusive and at the same time provide unlimited exposure unlike other forms of media because the print reader can study the advertisement at his leisure without any time limit or interruptions," according to the IMARC authors.

"Print media also provides position flexibility as it offers a choice to the advertisers as to where to place the ad in a publication."

Bottom line: Print advertising works where it excels

"We think that just because the entire world has moved online, print



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advertising is dead and buried,” Jennifer Willy, editor at ETIA (the European Travel Information and Authorization System), recently told brand-marketing firm Latana.

“But this is far from the truth. Advertisers who make print a part of their marketing mix can significantly increase their response rates. Why? Because of credibility. Print publications consistently offer readers high-quality, reliable content, and advertisers can easily leverage this credibility. The content is trustworthy and generates leads and sales more easily.

Willy added that an MRI ‘Survey of the American Consumer’ found that ‘influentials’ are themselves

significantly influenced by print ads: 51% by magazines and 53% by newspapers.

“Print media also benefits from not being a form of ‘interruption marketing,’ which occurs while the consumer is trying to digest information,” she said. “TV ads are a form of interruption marketing, as are banner ads on the web.”

So, how are publishers making print revenue work? Not the way their grandfathers did it.

Print revenue models evolve

In the face of the digital onslaught, print has had to adapt. One great example of the print industry adapting is



Roman Kraft

what several top publishers did to meet challenges posed by the aforementioned problem of verification of print campaign ROI versus the very measurable impact of digital advertising.

In what was considered a bold if not insane idea at the time, several

large publishers including Time Inc., Condé Nast, Meredith Corp., Hearst Magazines, and others introduced “guarantees” on media placements.

If a print campaign fails to deliver sales results, the publishers simply issue refunds or offer additional advertising space for free.



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Another adaptation has been the pairing of print and digital. Three recent strategies blending print and digital have worked for both the marketers and the media.

1. Creating augmented reality experiences with print

Marketers and media can use the ubiquity of smartphones to their advantage in developing creative print marketing campaigns.

Using augmented reality (AR), smartphones bring print messaging to life by overlaying and enhancing a static image using computer-generated enhancements to animate a shopping experience.

F Data from tech platform company

Vertebrae indicated that since the beginning of 2020, AR engagement increased 20%, and that conversion rates are 90% higher when people engage with AR.

2. Driving digital engagement through print – and vice versa

Direct mail is known for high conversion rates; and when direct mail is paired with digital ads, conversion rates are 28% higher, according to a 2018 Data & Marketing Association report.

For example, USAA Insurance used a direct mailer that highlighted positive Twitter quotes from actual customers, according to a FedEx report on integrated marketing. Like many brands, USAA Insurance offered

customer support on Twitter and often registered spikes in engagement via positive, public customer exchanges. That also helped its goal of increasing customer support engagement on social media, USAA told FedEx.

3. Integrating physical and virtual interactions with your brand

QR codes have become increasingly pervasive over the past few years after starting slowly 11 years ago. According to a 2020 MobileIron poll, 83% of respondents have scanned a QR code at least once, and 72% of people have scanned a QR code within the past month. And these numbers are currently rising, according to marketing tech company BlueBite.

According to Global Web Index, twice as many people scanned a QR code in North America in 2018 than in 2015. Statista estimates that 11 million U.S. households will have scanned a QR code in 2020, and most Fortune 500 companies have added QR codes to their marketing strategies, according to Beaconstac.

Best Buy was ahead of the curve in integrating the in-store print and digital shopping experiences by adding QR codes to in-store product tags, according to FedEx. When shoppers scan a printed QR code, they can research, review, and share product information the way they're accustomed to – on their phone.



Revenue models for post-pandemic success

We knew it before, but the pandemic reinforced the need for a diversity of revenue sources

If the pandemic taught us anything — beyond how to dress from the waist up for meetings — it's that media companies need a diversified portfolio of revenue sources.

The publishers who succeeded during the

pandemic were those who were able to be flexible and quickly boost revenue areas that were taking off (ecommerce, virtual events, memberships, digital subscriptions) while decreasing their reliance on revenue models in decline (digital advertising, in-person events, print subscriptions).



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While advertising revenue remains a significant source of income for media companies, the growth in global ad spending is not ending up in publishers' pockets.

Thanks to the pandemic, global ad spending declined 8.8%, but it is expected to rebound 5.8% in 2021. That is small consolation to media companies as the benefits of any ad growth are concentrated in five global companies.

Three of those companies — Google, Facebook, and Amazon — alone received 60% of 2020 global ad revenue, according to emarketer. Add in TenCent and Alibaba, and those five companies alone accounted for almost three-quarters (72.4%) of global ad revenue, according to emarketer.



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So publishers looking for future sources of revenue growth must concentrate elsewhere:

1. Digital subscriptions:

The first thing to do when building a subscription model is to identify not only the readers who already visit your site on a regular basis but also those who regularly open your newsletters and regularly click on your content on multiple platforms and devices — all behaviours you can identify through analytics.

“All of those actions indicate an engaged audience, which is more important than the size of the audience itself,” Matt Skibinski, reader revenue advisor at the Lenfest

Institute for Journalism, told Folio magazine.

“There are cases where smaller, niche publishers have a really high conversion rate and have enough of a digital subscription business to be meaningful,” Skibinski said. “Even though their overall audience pales in comparison to larger brands, the people who access their content use it in their everyday lives, consider it valuable, and feel a strong affinity to it.”

So how do you identify those ideal readers who are most likely to become subscribers?

The Economist, for example, created a personalised, engaging experience online by leveraging its rich customer database and

a machine-learning-driven engine called Lytics to leverage an exhaustive database of audience data. “The strategy has been responsible for an 80% decreased cost of customer acquisition, a 3x increase of digital subscriptions since 2016 by using behavioural scoring and predictive modelling, and increased dwell time on-site with recommended stories for targeted readers,” according to the Paywall Report.



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2. Ecommerce

In the U.S., ecommerce rose by 47% in the second quarter of 2020, according to GroupM. This was significantly ahead of the 15% growth rate observed during the first quarter.

Hearst U.K.'s ecommerce revenue grew 322% during the second quarter of 2020, according to Digiday.

New York Magazine's shopping site, The Strategist, saw an 85% year-over-year increase in revenue during the second quarter of 2020, and Marie Claire's ecommerce revenue in the first seven months of 2020 was equal to all the revenue it generated for the entire year in 2019, according to Digiday.

"Publishers can leverage their brand and capitalise on consumers directly where inspiration strikes."

Jonas Sjostedt,
Founder and CTO, Tipser

As publishers, "you're turning yourself into an arena for interactivity and deeper relationship with your customer who'll come back," Tipser founder and CEO Axel Wolrath told FIPP.

Because of their close, trusted, and long-term relationships with readers, publishers are in a great position to cash in on the ecommerce boom.

Readers regularly visit media sites looking for information and inspiration. "Publishers can leverage their brand and capitalise on consumers directly where inspiration strikes," said Jonas Sjostedt, Founder and CTO of Tipser, an ecommerce platform for publishers.



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3. Memberships/clubs

To build a successful membership revenue stream, the first thing publishers must do is figure out a way to identify their “whales”.

“You know your whales when you see them,” Rob Ristagno, Founder and CEO of the Sterling Woods Group, told What’s New In Publishing (WNIP). “They’re wearing a hat with your logo on it. They treat your editors like celebrities. They read and comment on everything you send them. They’re the most committed 10-15% of your audience [and] generate as much as 70 to 90% of reader revenue.”

The Guardian is a model for memberships, growing from 12,000 members in 2016 to

more than 900,000 monthly supporters in late 2020. “The Guardian has gained 268,000 new digital subscriptions and recurring contributions over the last year — that’s an increase of 43%, and a joining rate of one person every two minutes,” wrote Editor in Chief Katharine Viner in December 2020. “Total digital recurring support now stands at more than 900,000 people, up from 632,000 only a year ago.”

The Daily Beast’s membership product, Beast Inside, saw an almost 100% growth in sign-ups in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the first, and helped the publisher recoup some of their revenue losses, according to Digiday.

“The key is focus: We need to stop being everything to everyone and start honing in on our best readers,” Ristagno said. “Survey them to understand their needs and wants, followed by developing a value proposition to address them.”

“You don’t need a boatload of features to be successful [with memberships],” Ristagno added. “Rather, just two or three things on top of a subscription to your content is usually enough to drive conversions. Just make sure these offerings solve the tangible and emotional needs of your whales, including things like access to experts or editors, tools that make it easier for members to do their jobs or pursue their hobbies, and educational resources, like videos and eBooks.”



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4. E-learning

How many of your revenue models deliver 20-70% margins?

"E-learning is a very valid and high-margin business opportunity for publishers (both B2C and B2C) if they make a commitment to learning product development and the marketing of the programs ... I have seen (once a program is operational) anything from 20%-70% margins," said Barry Kelly, CEO, Thought Industries.

One really good thing about e-learning business models is that, even though you could do it yourself with internal staff, there are people out there who

can help, from a little to a lot.

Rather than let your expertise and assets go un- or under-leveraged, you can partner with academic and commercial institutions who can turn your physical and human assets into gold because online education is part or all of what they do.

"Partnering with educational institutions presents a hidden source of revenue for publications," said Rob Kingyens, founder and CEO of the online education technology firm Yellowbrick in speaking with Folio.



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5. Events

Is it trite yet to say: “Things will never be the same”? Well, trite or not, when it comes to events, it’s true: Things never will be the same. They’ll actually be better.

Once we get through this pandemic, events will become what they should have become five or even 10 years ago: Hybrid!

“I think, long term, actually we’ll have a much better business, a more diverse business, and a more sustainable business going forward,” Simone Broadhurst, MD of sustainable events company Incisive Media, said at the FIPP World Congress in the autumn of 2020.

Events were a fast-growing revenue source

before the pandemic, and when the restrictions are lifted, publishers are expected to see an explosion of interest from media folks releasing their pent-up frustration at being isolated for so long.

“When real-life events return, they will endeavour to have an online side to them if they can,” said Edie Lush, executive editor of Hub Culture, an invitation-led social network service, in the FIPP 2020 Future of Events report.

“After all, if online events have been a success, why stop now? Even as the strictest lockdown conditions ease and physical events begin to return, online events are now an established part of the ecosystem,” concluded

the authors of the FIPP report.

“We can [have] the best of both worlds,” said Orson Francescone, managing director of FT Live, the Financial Times’ events arm, speaking to Press Gazette. “No matter what happens in the future, all events are going to be hybrid ... I don’t think anyone is ever going to run a large public-facing B2B event without a digital component ever again.”

“Event businesses that can’t experiment with new models will be left behind,” Sterling Woods CEO Rob Ristagno said in his introduction to the FIPP Congress. ■



03 SUSTAINABILITY

Save the planet

(and your company)

By reducing your environmental impact, you attract customers who value sustainability, save money, and you avoid legal penalties



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Self-interest and the public good are rarely comfortable bedfellows. But in the case of sustainability, they are.

Assessing your company's environmental impact and then creating a plan to reduce it will not only save your company money, attract environmentally conscious consumers, and avoid increasing governmental pollution penalties – it also helps slow climate change, improve water security, slow deforestation, and increase biodiversity.

Good bedfellows, indeed. Better yet, the citizens of the world support you, and are pushing you to become a good environmental citizen.

60%

Percentage of consumers willing to change shopping habits to help environment

Consumers will change habits to support green companies

In a June 2020 IBM study involving more than 18,000 consumers worldwide, “nearly six in 10 respondents said they are willing to change their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact,” the report found. Eight in 10 indicated

sustainability is important for them. And for those who said it is very or extremely important, more than 70% said they would pay a premium of 35%, on average, for brands that are sustainable and environmentally responsible.

“More than seven in 10 consumers said it’s at least moderately important that brands offer ‘clean’ products (78%), are sustainable and environmentally responsible (77%), support recycling (76%), or use natural ingredients (72%),” the report found.

Environmentalism is not just for the young

“While Millennials may be leading the change in sustainability awareness,

every age group indicates that sustainability, environmental, and/or personal wellness attributes are significant considerations in selecting brands,” the report found.

“Enlightened self-interest is driving a lot of conversations [about sustainability] right now,” said Immediate Media CEO Tom Bureau speaking at the 2020 FIPP World Congress. “The thing is, if you’re not supporting green credentials you’re an investment risk.”

“A lot of it is driven by global warming and climate change, the impact of which is so immediate in many places of the world, especially in Central Europe,” said Stefanie Eichner, Senior Manager Sustainability at UPM.



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The thing is, if you're not supporting green credentials you're an investment risk.

Tom Bureau, CEO, Immediate Media

"Now with a few drought years, you actually have visible changes in the landscape, especially in the forests in Central Europe."

Climate change: in your face

"It's not just like some complicated scientific debate," she said. "It has become tangible — now you can see it in the fields and in the cities."

Not only is the impact increasingly visible, but a global youth movement including Fridays for Future (FFF) is giving the scientific debate around climate change a human face.

FFF started in 2018, when then

15-year-old Greta Thunberg skipped school to conduct a one-student school strike for climate. Her action inspired youths around the world who organised to skip Friday's classes to demonstrate and urge political leaders to take action on climate change and transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

A global strike in March 2019 gathered more than one million strikers at 2,200 sites organised in 125 countries. That was topped during the 2019 Global Week for Future in September, with four million protesters attending 4,500 strikes across over 150 countries.

Going green is becoming increasingly important to commercial success. "You need certain measures in place to be interesting to your customers and to differentiate yourself," said Eichiner. "You create a value to your customers through sustainability."

Motivation beyond saving the planet

But if global climate safety isn't enough motivation to launch a sustainability initiative at your company, self-interest is also served. Sustainability can save your company money, attract green-friendly consumers, and avoid pollution penalties.

"If you know what resources you are using, and you're monitoring them, then you can find ways to cut down on them," said Eichiner. "If you don't know, how can you cut back on it?" asked Eichiner.

Until you monitor, you can't be efficient

"I've seen companies with water pipe leaks that they never detected until they started monitoring it, and then they discovered the direct costs — you buy it, you pay for all the sewage," said Eichiner. "When you monitor, you can be more efficient."

Despite clear benefits of being a



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good environmental corporate citizen, many companies are still either resistant or inactive. If you work at a company like that, what can you do?

One argument for your management is that it enables you to get ahead of regulations and legislation.

Almost every government in the world is looking at legislation and regulations to rein in environmental abuses. If your company is at the forefront of that process, you will not only be prepared for the laws and regulations but you might also be able to influence them. Your company will be ahead of the curve. You will avoid being surprised and having to play catch-up and pay penalties.

How should a company get started?

The favourite phrase in corporate public relations lingo these days is “reducing our carbon footprints”, but it turns out that’s a misleading and incomplete measure.

The term “carbon footprint” is used as a proxy for sustainability or environmental friendliness, but using any single measure, like a carbon footprint, doesn’t give you a full picture of your company’s entire impact, from your products and your processes to your physical facility and your supply chain. Issues like biodiversity, chemicals, safety, human rights, etc. aren’t covered in your carbon footprint.

Collect data, analyse it, create targets, build a plan

Sustainability programmes cannot be reduced to a one-size-fits-all solution. No two companies are the same in what they do, how they do it, and how they distribute their products and services. So it is impossible to say that there is one thing every media company should do.

While there is no single solution for every media company, there is a process every company should follow:

- 01 Find out what you’re doing
- 02 Measure it
- 03 Create a plan

“What that means in practice is first: You have to assess what are my biggest impacts, and then collect them and assess the status quo,” said Eichiner. “Then you will know, is it my energy? Is it my products? My supply chain? What is my impact really?”

“Second, you have to set targets, and validate those targets and the ways to achieve them,” she said. “Then you have to regularly measure your success, review it, adjust the plan, and repeat.”

A system will help you see the forest for the trees

The process can appear to be daunting, but there are systems out there to give a sustainability project some structure.



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"An environmental management system can help you assess the status quo and set meaningful targets," Eichiner said. "That is the very first thing I would recommend, not just because it sets you up to meet the international standards, but also because it forces you to review the greatest risks, the greatest impacts, and then have them prioritised and approach them systematically."

UPM has had good experiences with ISO 14001 and the European Eco-Management Scheme (EMAS). These both have continuous improvement built in. For setting climate-specific targets, a publisher can use the guidance offered by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and by the UN Global Compact industry

initiative. UPM uses both for its target-setting and making decisions on suitable actions. *(See sidebar for explanations of ISO 14001, EMAS, etc.)*

Before acquiring the software and trying to gather data and assess it, companies need to acquire the talent to guide and organise the process.

Companies can go the route of hiring talent to be in-house, or they can use a sustainability consultant.

After collecting the talent, then what?

The enormity of the task might make one high-visibility activity appealing. "Some companies might be inclined to say, 'Okay, I'll do one thing'.

But that one thing might just be a Band-Aid, and the real impact is somewhere else," said Eichiner.

There is simply no substitute for finding out and understanding your total impact, and then, based on those findings, setting yourself up in the right way, and consistently following up.

Resist the temptation of a simple PR stunt

Sustainability has become an essential part not only of doing business in the 21st century, but also an essential part of surviving on the planet.

"In the very long term, the price of not engaging in sustainability

is that you will have a degraded planet," Eichiner said. "You will have social unrest because of inequitably distributed resources. It will not be a good life, and not a good operating environment for your business.

"Very selfishly, for a company to create value, it will be incredibly easier if you have a safe, stable, engaging, happy environment rather than people having to worry about water, food and safety," she said. "So you have dual motivations: self-interest and the health of the planet."



PRACTISING WHAT THEY PREACH

UPM sets an example for measuring, assessing, and acting upon a sustainability mission



Stefanie Eichiner, Ph.D., Senior Manager Sustainability, UPM

SOMETIMES A FEW WORDS can say more than an entire book. That's the case with UPM's guiding sustainability principle: "If the oil can stay in the ground, it cannot fuel global warming."

"Overall, our mission is to move beyond fossils: We strive to replace fossil resources with renewable ones," said Stefanie Eichiner, Ph.D., Senior Manager Sustainability at UPM.

UPM has two levels of focused sustainability activities:

01 **Production**

Continuous improvement through Environmental Management

02 **Products**

Eco-design: Renewable and recyclable products. Circular economy. Substitution.

"On the production side, we

work on continuous Improvement through Environmental Management," she said.

"It's more of an efficiency innovation initiative."

With its products, UPM uses an eco-design approach planning with the end in mind. UPM aims to make products from renewable resources that are fully recyclable. This approach keeps the raw materials in the loop for as long



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as possible, contributing to the circular economy and substitutes fossil raw materials with renewable materials.

For the fifth consecutive year, UPM has been recognised as a UN Global Compact LEAD participant for its strong commitment to responsible business. It is the only forest industry representative and the only Finnish company among the 41 LEAD participants. The UN Global Compact is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative. UPM signed the initiative in 2003.

UPM has been ranked 22nd in the list of 100 most sustainable corporations by the Canadian-based media and research company Corporate Knights.



"The Global 100 Index uses determined quantitative sustainability indicators in its evaluation," said UPM Vice President, Responsibility Sami Lundgren. "The approach fits well in UPM's approach which highlights the importance of ambitious long-term

targets and transparency of performance and data."

"Sustainability is at the core of everything we do," wrote UPM President and CEO Jussi Pesonen in the company's 2020 annual report. "During the year, we committed to the UN Business Ambition for 1.5 C and science-based measures to mitigate climate change.

"We were recognised as an industry leader in several renowned sustainability listings. We also established our first Green Bond. Our syndicated revolving credit facility is also linked to biodiversity and climate targets."



NINE STEPS TO GET STARTED

A strategy that avoids wasting time and money on ineffective initiatives

Determine the right data, gather it, assess it, set goals, measure progress, adjust. Repeat.

“First, assess your biggest impact,” said Eichiner. “If you don’t know — think the UN SDGs and where you can have the most impact. Use GRI. Think of a software system like SOFI or WeSustain.”
(See explanations in next sidebar.)

Here is Eichiner’s nine-step process to get started:

- 01 Contract with a sustainability consulting firm or hire the talent in-house
- 02 Start by assessing your status quo in figures — most likely using GHG Protocol for the company, CEPI guideline for products. (See explanation of GHG Protocol and CEPI in sidebar.)

- 03 Set targets
- 04 Validate targets
- 05 Determine ways to achieve those targets, e.g., through Science Based Targets Initiative
- 06 Measure success
- 07 Review
- 08 Adjust
- 09 Repeat

“An environmental management system can help assess the status

quo and set meaningful targets,” said Eichiner.

“For setting climate-specific targets, a publisher can use the guidance offered by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and by the UN Global Compact industry initiative,” she said. “We use these both for our target setting and making decisions on suitable actions.”



QUICK: WHAT'S AN ISO 14001?

The terms and organizations you need to know

THE WORLD OF SUSTAINABILITY IS

crammed with acronyms, organisations, processes, and regulations that are not in everyone's everyday vocabulary. So, to give you a helping hand as you begin to explore sustainability initiatives, here are some of the things you need to know:

GRI (Global Reporting Initiative)

The GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) is the independent, international organisation that helps businesses and other organisations take responsibility for their impacts by providing



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them with the global common language to communicate those impacts. The GRI provides the world's most widely used standards for sustainability reporting — the GRI Standards.

CDP

CDP (formerly called the Carbon Disclosure Project until the end of 2012) is a not-for-profit charity that runs the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states and regions to manage their environmental impacts.

Over the past 20 years, the CDP has created a system that has resulted in engagement on environmental issues

worldwide. The CDP focuses investors, companies, and cities on taking urgent action to build a truly sustainable economy by measuring and understanding their environmental impact.

CDP runs the global environmental disclosure system. Each year, CDP supports thousands of companies, cities, states and regions to measure and manage their risks and opportunities on climate change, water security and deforestation.

THE UN's SDGs

The UN Global Compact's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address the global economic, social, and



environmental challenges we are facing by 2030. The SDGs consist of 17 goals, each of which has specific aims. Together, they have 169 targets.

The 17 goals:

- 01 No poverty
- 02 Zero hunger
- 03 Good health and well-being



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- 04 Quality education
- 05 Gender equality
- 06 Clean water and sanitation
- 07 Affordable and clean energy
- 08 Decent work and economic growth
- 09 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 10 Reduced inequality
- 11 Sustainable cities and communities
- 12 Responsible consumption and production
- 13 Climate action
- 14 Life below water
- 15 Life on land
- 16 Peace and justice strong institutions
- 17 Partnerships to achieve the goal

The GHG Protocol

The GHG (Green House Gas) Protocol establishes comprehensive global standardised frameworks to measure and manage greenhouse gas emissions from private and public sector operations, value chains, and mitigation actions.

Building on a 20-year partnership between World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), GHG Protocol works with governments, industry associations, NGOs, businesses, and other organisations.

The GHG offers online training on GHG

standards and tools, as well as the “Built on GHG Protocol” review service, which recognises sector guidance, product rules and tools that are in conformance with GHG Protocol standards.

In 2016, 92% of Fortune 500 companies responding to the CDP used GHG Protocol directly or indirectly through a programme based on GHG Protocol.

CEPI

The CEPI is the Confederation of European Paper Industries, the European association representing the paper industry. CEPI is a non-profit-making organisation.



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SBTi (The Science Based Targets initiative)

The Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) drives ambitious climate action in the private sector by enabling companies to set science-based emissions reduction targets.

The SBTi is a partnership between CDP, the United Nations Global Compact, World Resources Institute (WRI), and the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Science-based targets show companies how much and how quickly they need to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to prevent the worst effects of climate change.

The SBTi:

- ▶ **Defines and promotes** best practice in emissions reductions and net-zero targets in line with climate science.
- ▶ **Provides technical assistance** and expert resources to companies who set science-based targets in line with the latest climate science.
- ▶ **Brings together** a team of experts to provide companies with independent assessment and validation of targets.

EMAS

The EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a premium management

instrument developed by the European Commission for companies and other organisations to evaluate, report, and improve their environmental performance.

EMAS is open to every type of organisation eager to improve its environmental performance. It spans all economic and service sectors and is applicable worldwide.

ISO

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) represents the national standards bodies in 165 different countries and brings together experts from all over the world to develop International Standards.



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ISO 14001

In 1996, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) created the ISO 14000 family of standards. ISO 14001 underwent revision in 2004. ISO 14001 sets out the criteria for an environmental management system. It maps out a framework that a company or organization can follow to set up an effective environmental management system.

Designed for any type of organization, regardless of its activity or sector, ISO 14001 can provide assurance to company management and employees as well as external stakeholders that environmental impact is being measured and improved.

Sphera (formerly SoFi)

Sphera is a software company producing the Corporate Sustainability Software (former SoFi Software) that enables professional reporting and advanced performance management.



The software features: automated data collection, powerful reporting tools, advanced planning, and the most comprehensive source of sustainability data available globally. The Sphera sustainability management software facilitates reporting and performance management.

WeSustain

WeSustain is a company offering solutions for businesses and other organisations to enable successful and efficient sustainability, impact, ESG, and compliance management. ■



04 STORYTELLING

It's the best time ever to be a storyteller

Storytellers have never had more tools, more platforms, more reach, and more power



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Let me start the chapter on storytelling by telling a story. An old Italian gentleman sat weeping on the granite steps of the smouldering shell that hours ago had been his apartment building. “My Stradivarius, my Stradivarius! It’s gone!” he moaned as he rocked back and forth.

The Boston Herald city desk had called me at the crack of dawn on a Sunday in 1977. A fire had gutted a row house in the Italian North End of Boston. “Get over there now and get some colour,” the editor said.

The weeping man’s neighbours had gathered around, comforting him in Italian. He had been out of town for the night and only discovered the fire

moments before. Then suddenly, from up the street, we heard a man’s voice crying out: “Marco, Marco, I’ve got it! I saved your Stradivarius!”

Bursting through the crowd, the man laid the precious violin in the arms of Marco, who now was crying tears of joy. The rescuer breathlessly recounted how he’d dashed into the burning building and up the stairs to Marco’s apartment where he knew he’d find the violin.

He then invited Marco and me up to his nearby third-floor apartment, where he poured Chianti into three short, clear wine glasses, and we sat around his Formica kitchen table drinking wine and listening to Marco play his precious violin.

The story — text and a couple of photos — came out the next day. In print. One day. One city. Limited print circulation. And then it was gone.

Imagine if I could have used all the storytelling tools available to storytellers today!

Storytelling tools that could have made a difference

I could have live-streamed the whole thing. I could have had videos of Marco crying, the dramatic return of the Stradivarius, and Marco playing his kitchen concert. I could have had a slide show accompanied by Marco’s music, a live interview, an interactive map of the rescuer’s dangerous dash into the burning building.

I could have had links to the history of the Stradivarius. We could have had enticing Instagram posts and TikTok videos with Marco’s own music. And we could have had a crowd-sourced fund-raiser to help rebuild Marco’s apartment.

The story could have been shared with the world, gone viral, and lived on forever.

My point: Today’s storytellers can craft stories that come alive and have a multimedia, multi-sensory, visceral, long-lasting impact with potentially massive audiences that not that long ago was impossible to achieve.

Let’s take a look at some of those tools and storytelling trends.



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LONG-FORM JOURNALISM

Long-form journalism doesn't necessarily mean 3,000 or more words or a 10- to 20-minute video.

It can correlate to length, but it also means story packaging that uses multiple elements to make the complete story experience a richer one, well beyond just 3,000 words.

For long-form text stories, there is no widely accepted word count that defines a long-form piece. Some insist it must be longer than 700 words, while others draw the line at a minimum of 1,800 words. Who cares? It's how the story is handled, not its precise length that counts.

The qualities of long-form journalism

While long-form sceptics insist that internet readers have the attention spans of guppies, long-form advocates are attracted by the impact, engagement, depth, and quality of long-form journalism as well as the results that long-form journalism can deliver in terms of subscription conversion if the package is done right.

"We used to be sceptics, too," said Dan Shewan, then web content specialist at marketing services firm WordStream. "Our average piece of content was around 1,000 words or fewer. We focused heavily on SEO, including keyword optimization.

"The only problem with this strategy? We were getting a lot of search traffic, but not a lot of return traffic, direct traffic, or brand searches, and our user engagement metrics — stuff like bounce rate and time on site — were pretty low," Shewan wrote on the WordStream blog.

A successful switch to long-form

"So we switched up our tactics a bit and started incorporating more long-form articles into our content strategy," Shewan wrote. "The goal was to increase user engagement — and it worked extraordinarily well."

It sure did. The average time on site tripled, from 1:33 to 4:35.

"Longer, more in-depth content provided tons of value to our audience and has been a successful part of our content strategy," he wrote. "In fact, some of our longest posts have been our most successful. For example: Our most popular post of the past year, 'Find Your Old Tweets: How to See Your First (Worst?) Tweet', clocked in at more than 2,300 words. It's been viewed more than 100,000 times just in the past few months, with average time-on-page of almost eight minutes!"

Long-form impacts search-engine results

Shewan also pointed out that long-form content can also have a positive impact on a page's rank in the SERPs. The top-ranked content is around



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“Today’s storytellers can craft stories that come alive and have a multimedia, multi-sensory, visceral, long-lasting impact with potentially massive audiences that not that long ago was impossible to achieve.”

2,450 words — “definitely not light reading!” he wrote.

Over at the blog platform Medium, the most successful posts turned out to be around 1,600 words and took seven minutes to read, according to Medium’s own research.

Beyond word count, though, is the idea of long-form as a “package”. Today, few long-form stories are published without some sort of accompanying audio, video, graphics, data, photos, interactive, and social and/or newsletter component.

Print, and digital replicas of print editions, can host long-form journalism, but digital long-form story packages can also deliver a quality

long-form experience with interactive, and multimedia components.

Digital long-form packages offer much more

“While there are of course digital editions of print newspapers, there is no good reason why their digital counterparts can’t do something that offers a genuinely different experience for the reader, engaging them differently and making the most of the capabilities that online offers,” Washington Post Graphics Editor Emily Chow told Dutch digital tech publishing company SmartOcto. “Where journalists are embracing the potential, the results are often breathtaking.

“And when journalists embrace the

potential and build multi-element long-form stories, they are giving readers the option to keep reading or enrich their experience by diving into the videos, soundbites and interactive tools,” she said.

SHORT-FORM JOURNALISM

In considering the roles of long- and shot-form journalism, the Bible has some guidance: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven”.

Not every story deserves long-form treatment. Nor is every reader always in the mood or at a moment in time where they can spare 15 minutes for a story.



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Sometimes, people just want a quick update or insight. They want a “just the facts, m’am” story.

Mobile and user preferences drive short form

“A greater reliance on mobile and user preferences are driving a push for shorter content,” according to B2B marketing agency Walker Sands. “Snack-size (or snackable) content will increasingly serve as a factor in brand success.”

For example, “long-form bylines and white papers don’t belong on social media,” according to Walker Sands. “But a snackable version of the message most certainly does. Short-form content offers a storytelling medium that is bite-sized, relevant to

the platform and informative.”

Short-form journalism is born out of respect for where readers are at most moments of their day. “Newsrooms are pivoting away from large chunks of text online because the format doesn’t suit readers’ attention spans on mobile phones,” wrote Axios’ Media Trends author Sara Fischer.

Word counts falling; engagement time short

Media consumption data bear her out. The average word count for online news articles fell 15% from 449 in September of 2019 to 380 in February 2020, according Chartbeat.

Similarly, the average engaged time on individual articles is only 31.24

seconds per article, a stark contrast to the long-form range of seven to 15 minutes.

Just as long-form journalism initially was defined by word count, so, too, is short form often defined by length (generally less than 350 words).

Short-form content offers media companies storytelling options that are bite-sized, relevant to targeted platforms, appealing, entertaining and informative.

Some examples of storytelling assets and activities that are considered short form include GIFs, six- to 15-second videos, TikTok posts, Instagram posts, Tweets, Facebook posts, and sub-350-word stories.

Short attention spans make long-form a tough sell

“Today’s readers have shorter attention spans and are unlikely to commit to lengthy content unless they are convinced of its value,” according to Walker Sands. “The right piece of short-form content enables media companies to rapidly communicate key messages, improving the [story’s or editorial element’s] ability to capture the attention of target audiences.

“Short-form content is also a ready-made resource for users who consume content on mobile devices — a growing segment of most brands’ customer bases,” according to Walker Sands. “Words can tell powerful stories.



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But the use of video, animation, and graphics makes complicated messaging more digestible for a broader range of readers."

For example, short-form videos (think TikTok) are a powerful short-form asset. "For both individuals and

brands, short-form video provides the space to push traditional boundaries and enter into a fun, creative environment that is loved by a diverse range of users — essential for capturing imaginations, driving engagement, and increasing brand affinity," said TikTok Head of Product Marketing/Europe Kris Boger in a piece for the Internet Advertising Bureau/U.K..

Short form enhances story completion rates

"Done right, short-form videos can cater to increasingly short attention spans, while removing deliberation amongst viewers about whether they should keep watching or not," wrote Boger. "But, importantly, brand content needs to have creativity and

authenticity at its heart to really capture an audience's imagination and drive results.

"Platforms such as TikTok offer brands a great opportunity to achieve their marketing goals, to form new connections, and to build consumer advocacy amongst a continuously growing audience in a brand-safe environment," wrote Boger.

Short-form journalism can also service long-form journalism.

"Forward-thinking brands are creating 'snackable' videos that capture audience attention and drive traffic to higher-value content assets — content that is more likely to generate actual business results," according to Walker Sands.

GRAPHIC DATA STORYTELLING

If what they say about pictures is true ("A picture is worth a thousand words"), then a data-based "info-graphic" should be worth a few thousand words — possibly more depending on your audience.

Graphic data storytelling compresses what could be a long-form story into one or more tight, compelling, intense, illuminating charts, graphs and/or maps.

Data storytelling is the process of combining graphics and narratives to help audiences understand complex stories in which data play a starring role.



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Data stories have five advantages over all other forms of storytelling, according to online infographic and design platform Venngage. Data stories:

- 01 Provide deeper analysis into information
- 02 Promote problem-solving
- 03 Engage internal and external audiences
- 04 Improve reporting abilities
- 05 Provide wide reach

Advantages of data journalism:

► Provides deeper analysis into information

"A text post or report can do the same work as a data chart or graph, but that text story will require much more labour from the reader – increasing the chances of them leaving your page for shorter content," said Ronita Mohan, a Venngage content marketer, writing on SearchEngineWatch.com.

"A graphic, on the other hand, gives the same information in a shorter time," added Mohan. "This improves engagement and conversions. Visuals convey patterns, easily allowing the reader to analyse information quickly by connecting the dots themselves."

► Promotes problem-solving

"Data stories are succinct materials that boost the problem-solving process because readers and decision-makers don't have to consume reams of text or sift through information on their own – the graphics do the work for them and speed up problem-solving," wrote Mohan.

► Engages audiences

Great visuals grab the reader's eyes. Visual elements are more attractive than blocks of text — and well-designed data graphics even more so than others.

"This is because a data story is compelling in itself — numbers, percentages, relationships, and

connections are all reasons for a reader to stop what they're doing and look at your graphic," wrote Mohan.

"As a result, you increase traffic and views to your content and your website, all while promoting a favourable impression of your brand," she wrote.

► Improves reporting abilities

Some complex stories, especially about government and industry, are awash in data that could be mind-numbing for most readers. Stories using a lot of numbers and tables will bore their audiences and pretty quickly lose them.

That is why great data storytelling through exquisite charts and graphs



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is so important to be able to keep people interested, inform and educate them, and to tell a good story.

► Delivers wide reach

"Graphics can be repurposed in multiple ways and for a variety of channels," said Mohan. "Social media platforms like Twitter, which are chock-full of information, require a strong visual to get attention. Bite-sized visuals arrest the viewer as they're scrolling through their feed — they're also easy to absorb and more shareable.

"Visualised data makes for great content whether for social channels, newsletters, blog posts, or website landing pages," she said. "A great graphic has the potential to go viral,

widening the reach of your content and influence."

VIDEO STORYTELLING

Various sources of statistics tout the efficacy of visual storytelling over text. Some seem beyond belief:

- Visuals are processed 60,000X faster in the brain than text
- The brain can process an image in just 13 milliseconds
- And the brain can then attach meaning to that image in less than 1/10 of a second

These statistics are easier to wrap your brain around and also affect the

82%

Percentage of consumer internet traffic coming from videos, by 2022

impact of your video content:

- Cisco projects that global internet traffic from videos will make up 82% of all consumer internet traffic by 2022. (Cisco)
- Nearly three-quarters (70%) of YouTube viewers watch videos for "help with a problem" they're having in their hobby, studies, or

job. (Think With Google)

- Globally, YouTube is consumers' leading source of video content, at 83%; Facebook is second, at 67%. (HubSpot)
- In a 2018 HubSpot survey, 54% of consumers wanted to see more video content from a brand or business they support. (HubSpot)
- More video content gets uploaded in 30 days than what the major U.S. television networks have broadcast in 30 years. (Wordstream)
- More than 2 billion people use YouTube — that's one-third of all internet users (YouTube)



04 STORYTELLING

It's no surprise, then, that video storytelling should not only be a key element in your editorial packages, but also that it should be growing and evolving.

What are the video storytelling trends in 2021?

According to digital marketplace Evato, there are six trends for publishers to keep an eye on:

- 01 Social media video
- 02 Interactive video
- 03 Vertical and live video
- 04 Personalised video
- 05 Animation
- 06 Searchable video

01 Social Media Video

"Social media has totally changed the way we view and consume content online — especially video," wrote Kelsie Rimmer, editor of the Evato blog. "As a result, both the vertical and ephemeral video trends have emerged. So we predict that short, 'snackable' social media videos will continue to grow in popularity."

'Ephemeral videos' – usually available only for a 24-hour period – were initially made popular by Snapchat, followed in short order by Facebook and Instagram Stories. The quick-hit, limited-time nature of ephemeral videos makes them engaging and incredibly addictive. In fact, Instagram now has over one billion monthly active users worldwide, with

500 million accounts using Instagram Stories every day, according to Evato.

Vertical videos arrived with the smartphone but took a while to catch on. But now they're all the rage. According to mobile video ad platform MediaBrix, vertical videos have a 90% higher completion rate than horizontal videos, with less than 30% of mobile users watching videos horizontally. Once limited to our Instagram feeds, vertical videos are now everywhere — including Instagram Stories, Snapchat and, of course, TikTok.

"Adding to the explosive growth of video-based social platforms like Instagram Stories, Reels, TikTok, and Snapchat, users now expect

short, succinct and to-the-point video content," said Envato Video Specialist Mark Brodhuber. "And because we're talking about mobile consumption, the preferred orientation is trending towards vertical video."

02 Interactive Video

Interactive video is the newest video trend on the scene — and Evato expects it to spread like wildfire in 2021. As the name suggests, interactive video is a new form of video that allows viewers to directly interact with the content they're viewing, in particular, shoppable videos that will most likely change the ecommerce game, according to Evato.

"Interactive videos enable the viewer



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to purchase items directly from the video they're watching," wrote Evato blog Editor Kelsie Rimmer. "Shoppable videos typically feature a drop-down menu linking to a product and purchase options."

The Jungle Book recently released an interactive video allowing viewers to go behind the scenes of how the movie was made, and Netflix's original interactive film, Bandersnatch, took audiences by storm when it allowed viewers to choose their own ending, according to Evato.

On a smaller scale, creators can add quizzes, polls or reactions to their videos or live streams to make them more interactive.

03 Live Video

In 2019, internet users watched a whopping 1.1 billion hours of live video, according to Evato. And then, during the pandemic, live video, with its convenience and relatability, became the saviour for both consumers and industries desperate for substitutes for interaction and shopping experiences.

In 2021, Evato says the live video trend shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, a study by 99firms found that 80% of consumers would rather watch a live video than read a blog.

One in five Facebook videos are live streams and 1 million Instagram users watch live video every day, according to Evato.

75%

Percentage of YouTube viewers who watch videos for 'help with a problem' in their hobby, studies, or job

"Live video is quickly becoming the new normal due to its real and authentic nature — not to mention the fact that it offers an easier and cheaper way to hold an event, show or gig and connect to a wide audience," wrote Rimmer.

04 Personalised Video

Personalised videos incorporate the reader's personal details — such as their name, email address, age or profile picture — to create content specifically for them. "Personalised videos are often created using one base video, which is then edited with video effects that can sub in a recipient's personal information, similar to a personalised email," wrote Rimmer.

"Personalisation is generally achieved through the addition of on-screen graphics," Brodhuber said. "Companies that publish personalised video content have reported an increase in engagement and conversions by up to 20%."



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05 Animation

Animation became an essential tool during the pandemic when no one could shoot real footage. According to Evato, many experts are predicting that animated videos will gain even more momentum in 2021, as the industry continues to see a wide range of animation styles and techniques emerging.

"Animation is easy to produce remotely and, in a time where many countries still have limits on face-to-face contact, the design-based video format is set to rise, bridging the gap for businesses who are safety conscious but still want to deliver their message through video," said Envato Video Marketing Specialist Jen McKinnon. "As lockdowns lift and

studios open up, we'll begin to see a fusion of live action and animated elements take to our screens."

06 Searchable Video

"Search engines have always favoured written content because it's easier for the algorithms to understand and catalogue, but that's all changing with advanced AI," wrote Rimmer. "We're now seeing video featured in the Google SERPs and it has become imperative for content creators to optimise their videos for search in order to be found by the right audience."

Google offers lots of tips for structuring video content to make it search-engine friendly — but here are Evato's top four tips:

- 01 Include target keywords in video file names, titles and descriptions.
- 02 Add relevant tags and popular keywords related to your topic.
- 03 Add subtitles and closed captions.
- 04 Create original thumbnail images.

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The second oldest method of storytelling (after voice) is still one of the most effective.

Print can do what digital never will be able to do, and in what it does well, print has no equal.

"[Print reading] is kind of like meditation — focusing our attention on something still," Anne Mangen, a literacy professor at the University of Stavanger in Norway, told BrainFacts. "And it's a whole different kind of immersion than responding to [digital] stimuli. I think it's healthy for us as human beings to sit down with something that doesn't move, ping, or call on our attention."

The touted speed of digital is actually a pitfall

"We read digital [text] more quickly, [so] we think we must understand it better," Lauren Singer Trakhman, who studies reading comprehension at the University of Maryland, told BrainFacts. "It's one of the best parts of our digital world — everything



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is at our fingertips and we can get the headlines in a second — but it may also be one of the pitfalls. Everything's so quick and accessible that we may not be truly digesting [what we read] anymore."

In a spring 2021 New York Times review of reading differences between print to digital, an American University professor emeritus of linguistics, Naomi Baron, reported that "because we use screens for social purposes and for amusement, we all — adults and children — get used to absorbing online material, much of which was designed to be read quickly and casually, without much effort.

The digital approach to reading defeats comprehension

"And then we tend to use that same approach to on-screen reading with harder material that we need to learn from, to slow down with, to absorb more carefully," she told The Times. "A result can be that we don't give that material the right kind of attention."

Baron cited experiments with middle school and university students who were asked to read a passage and then take a test on the contents. Researchers found there was a mismatch between how the students felt they learned and how they actually performed.

"Students who think they read better

"Who do you trust to tell the truth?"

Magazines beat websites by 19 points and TV by 38 points (MPA)

— or more efficiently — on the screen will still do better on the test if they have read the passage on the page," wrote paediatrician and published author Dr. Perri Klass in the Times. "And college students who print out articles tend to have higher grades and better test scores. There is also research to suggest that university students who used authentic books, magazines or newspapers to write

an essay wrote more sophisticated essays than those just given printouts."

Print storytelling boosts trust, ad engagement

Beyond the comprehension benefits, print storytelling delivers on a number of other fronts.

"Year after year, magazines consistently score higher than



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television and the Internet on key engagement attributes," according to the 2020 Magazine Fact Book from the Association of Magazine Media (MPA). "Compared to users of those other two mediums, not only are magazine readers more likely to find magazine content trustworthy, inspiring, and life-enhancing, but their engagement with ads is also significantly stronger."

As a result of this, magazine media maintain an ability to persuade readers to take action on ads and help them make purchase decisions, according to the report. Additionally, magazine ads are effective and drive consumer actions regardless of placement in the book.

What neuroscience tells us about print reading

A white paper commissioned by the MPA entitled "What Can Neuroscience Tell Us About Why Print Magazine Advertising Works", concluded that print media has the following attributes:

- Preferred by a majority of readers (even Millennials!)
- More focused attention, less distraction
- Stimulates emotions and desires
- Slower reading speeds
- Drives sensory involvement, which contributes to reader impact

- Higher comprehension and recall

Getting down to impact on readers and their impression of print versus the internet and television, magazines come out ahead, in some cases far ahead, of the other two media, according to the white paper.

When the white paper researchers asked readers about the impact of each media in their lives, respondents rated print magazines ahead of websites and ad-supported television on eight major measures, including trust, inspiration, accuracy, and happiness:

- 01 Inspires me in my own life:** Magazines beat websites by 33 points and TV by 45 points

- 02 Touches me deep down:** Magazines beat websites and TV by 37 points

- 03 Trust to tell the truth:** Magazines beat websites by 19 points and TV by 38 points

- 04 Is a treat for me:** Magazines beat websites by 35 points and TV by 13 points

- 05 Don't worry about accuracy:** Magazines beat websites by 21 points and TV by 32 points

- 06 Improves my mood, makes me happier:** Magazines beat websites by 35 points and TV by 8 points



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07 Affects me emotionally:

Magazines beat websites by 20 points and TV by 16 points

08 Is one of my favourites:

Magazines beat websites by 20 points and TV by 11 points

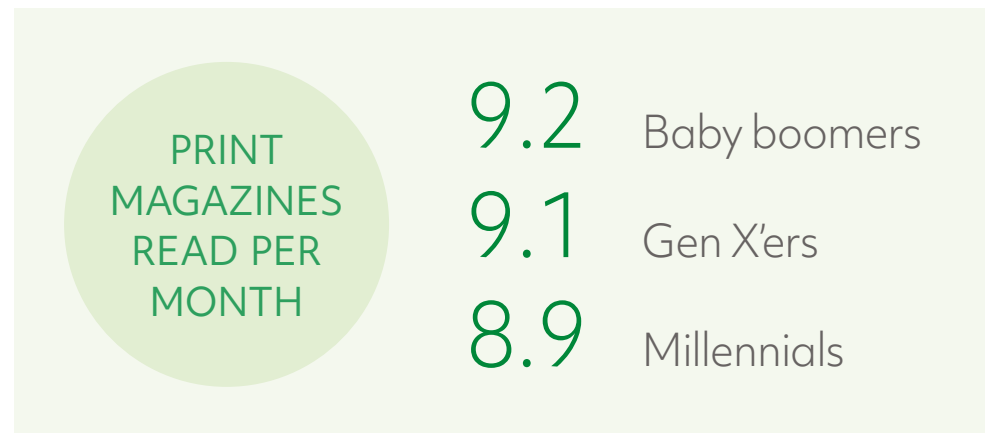
"Magazine readership is diverse and wide-reaching," the MPA Fact Sheet reported. "Magazines enjoy strong readership across every age, income level, ethnicity and sexual orientation."

Readers love the print magazine experience

The average age of readers tracks with that of the total U.S. adult population, with valuable demographic segments reading at least seven different magazines a

month, putting them at or above the average. The survey added: "A clear majority of readers still love the experience of the printed magazine, no matter their age or income.

Magazines reach more adults than television, proving that the medium continues to maintain relevance for advertiser media plans."



The majority of readers of all ages said that even in this digital age, they still loved the feel of print, including 63% of 18-34 year-olds.

In a review of studies of print media, Sappi Papers was able to show that:

► Digital isn't the only place for reader engagement

Print has its own engagement metrics, such as the fact that one in two people share advertisements they read in magazines with friends and family. Eight out of 10 people have bought an item or visited a place after reading about it in a magazine.

► Everyone, from digital natives to Boomers, makes time for print

According to MNI Targeted Media, Baby Boomers read 9.2 printed magazines per month, Gen Xers read 9.1 magazines, and Millennials 8.9.

► Even Gen Z wants to disconnect

The 16-24 age group spends, on average, three hours and 23 minutes per day on their smartphones. But



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this hard-to-shake habit is something Gen Z-ers are acutely aware of, with many wanting to find ways to switch off. Almost two-thirds (61%) believe they and their peers would benefit from unplugging more.

► Digital can't compete with print on trust

According to a Kantar poll of 8,000 in the U.S., France, Brazil and the U.K., printed news magazines are the most trusted resource for news, followed by 24/7 TV news, radio bulletins and national newspapers.

► Print holds the attention

Consumers make time for print media — 60% of newspaper readers do not consume any other media at the same time as reading their newspaper.

The coronavirus pandemic, meanwhile, has seen people find even more time for print – with time spent reading magazines up from 44 to 56 minutes a day.

► Print offers consumers a unique experience

Almost half of magazine and newspaper readers agree that these channels offer them something that they can't get elsewhere.

► Print is a sustainable option

Today, brands and consumers alike are rightly conscious of the environmental impact of their choices. Printed media in Europe is produced responsibly from well-managed forests — making a crucial and increasing contribution

to carbon capture. According to the UN, in the 10 years up to 2015, the total area of forestry in Europe grew by 58,390 km² — an area greater than that of Switzerland.

► Messages in print stay in your head

As a media company, one of your objectives is to create brand awareness and recognition. To build a lasting impression with customers — so that they retain your messages — you should give them something they can explore by touch. By almost 25%, people value something they can both touch and see more highly than something they can only see. Physical material literally seems more real to the brain — leading to greater engagement with the right content.



How to go viral on TikTok

LAST SEPTEMBER, TikTok newbie Lauren Meeker launched her TikTok account. In November 2020, she was getting more than 14 million video views a month.

“So you’re wondering how to go viral on TikTok? I don’t blame you!” she wrote on the blog of her marketing agency, Altitude Social Media in late 2020. “It’s the social media platform everyone can’t stop talking about, and the app has experienced tremendous growth. It’s no longer a place where pre-teens do silly dances and lip

sync, but a community where people of all ages share a variety of content on anything from goofy dog vid’s, to life as an astronaut, or how to trade a bobby pin for a house. Any type of content can succeed – it’s what makes it so much fun.

“TikTok is a meritocracy that gives every video a chance by showing it to a small audience on the For You Page (FYP). Yes, even if you have just a few followers, if your video performs well with your small group, TikTok will



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continue to push it to people they think will like it. Typically you can tell in the first hour or two if you have a viral video on your hands.”

18 rules for Going Viral on TikTok

Meeker offers 20 rules for going viral on TikTok (*reprinted here with permission*):

01 Kick your video off with a bang

Set the tone and topic of the video within the first few seconds.

02 When deciding on video length, keep it as short as possible

TikTok looks at the average length of watch time compared to the length of the video to evaluate quality. You’re more likely to have people watch eight seconds of a 10-second video than 48

seconds of a minute-long one.

03 Record your own audio

By using a voiceover on your video, you’re giving TikTok significantly more keywords and information on what your video is about for them to be able to show your content to the right audience.

04 Use trending music or sounds

Use current songs. Layer them quietly in the background with a voiceover, too – but be mindful of copyright issues.

05 Tell a story

You’re more likely to go viral by telling an interesting and compelling story than dancing. Tell a story, and keep the plot flowing quickly.

“It’s no longer a place where pre-teens do silly dances and lip sync, but a community where people of all ages share a variety of content.”

Lauren Meeker,
Altitude Social Media



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06 Share tips, advice, favourite things

People love learning on TikTok. Create informational videos to help them learn about your topic of expertise. Quick bullet point videos work great. Likewise, people love shopping on TikTok, so sharing favourite products is also a surprisingly easy way to gain traction (and monetise).

07 Have a strong call to action

This is crucial: it helps make a video go viral and you grow your following. When TikTok sees lots of people engaging with a video, they will push it out to more people. Adding a strong CTA on a video can make the difference between 2M views with 2K new followers and 9M views with 40k new followers. Have your

CTA be at least a few seconds long so that people have time to follow you before moving on to the next video.

08 Include random details for people to comment on

People love commenting on random things in the video. People love spotting little details that aren't the main focus of the video, and commenting on them. The more comments you can get, the more likely you are to go viral. So the more random details you can give people to comment on, the more likely you are to get comments.

09 Leave some questions unanswered

Comments help you go viral. If your video prompts an obvious question, Do Not Answer It. This will lead to a ton of comments and help your video perform well.

10 Do something slightly controversial

Because commenting drives virality, having something controversial will help.

11 Be relatable, aspirational... hateable

If your video is one of these, you will inevitably get a rush of comments.

12 Enable some parts of the video to be rewatched

For example, if the text is too fast to read, someone will likely



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rewatch it. They spend more time on your video and signal to the algorithm that it's a better video, which will in turn get TikTok to show it to more people.

13 Have text on the opening video frame

Viewers in the FYP will then likely spend a few seconds reading it and stay on the video for a few seconds longer than normal. This is good for average watch time – and you might retain some of them.

14 Don't use generic hashtags

Wildly generic hashtags such as #FYP, #foryou add nothing. Use niche tags, or none at all. If you have a super niche video, niche hashtags might help TikTok serve your video to the right crowd.

15 Reply to all your comments

The more comments on a video, the more likely it is to go viral. This works well if you engage with commenters and get them to continue commenting on your video. However, if your video is going viral, don't reply to comments too fast or you'll be blocked.

16 Post frequently

Going viral is a numbers game. The more often you post, the more likely you are to have a video go viral. Don't skimp on quality, but push yourself to consistently create videos — your videos probably get better and your chances of going viral go up.

17 Spend at least 15-30 mins a day watching videos on the FYP

It might be tempting to only go on TikTok to post your video. It's important to spend time each day watching FYP videos. You will get new ideas and keep up with the current trends.

18 KEEP AT IT!

It takes most people at least a month to figure out their style and how to make videos work well, so if you don't go viral right away, don't give up and keep trying! ■



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Strong grip

Despite the pandemic's widespread disruption, print has emerged with an even better sense of its place in the media universe and its relationship with readers



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Nothing is forever, but some things seem to have a tenacious hold on life. Like print. Print wasn't killed by radio or television. Nor will it be killed by the internet – although it has taken a healthy beating from it.

No new major medium has killed the media that existed before the newcomer arrived on the scene. But every medium is constantly having to discover its new equilibrium in each new media universe.

As publishers search for the next equilibrium, several trends have appeared that may indicate what print's future purpose will be.

The latest of these trends, especially

in the aftermath of the pandemic, is a mix of the best of print's eternal powers and a discovery of new attributes driving new roles for it.

We're seeing readers buying more print subscriptions and spending more time with print. We're seeing certain niches, especially those focusing on crafts and hobbies, tie the tangible attributes of their niche to the tangible nature of their print product.

Another trend is the increasing consumer attraction to print because of its performance in terms of sustainability compared to digital media. Consumers are only just beginning to understand the negative impact of digital media on the environment.

And finally, we are seeing a trend of consumer appreciation of print for all the things it does NOT share with digital media: spam, privacy violations, obnoxious ads, data theft, tracking, etc. Let's take a look at some of these print media trends:

TREND 01

Certain print media subscriptions are increasing

Media reports at the beginning of the pandemic tended to focus on Covid-19's negative impact on print advertising and newsstand sales. But those reports missed the story about the pandemic's opposite effect on many niche magazine print sales.

According to Samir Husni, a professor

at the University of Mississippi's School of Journalism and self-titled "Mr. Magazine", print subscriptions have increased between 25% and 30% during the pandemic.

Husni is not alone in his assessment. "Print subscriptions have been proving more popular than digital," said Carola York, VP/Publishing at digital marketing company Jellyfish, writing on What's New in Publishing. "Although uptake in digital magazine subscriptions has risen, interest in print subscriptions has risen by at least twice as much as digital since the start of lockdown."

That is exactly the experience of one of the largest magazine publishers in the world: the U.S.-



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based Meredith Corp. “Over the course of the pandemic, print subscriptions have gone up 40%,” said Meredith National Media Group President Catherine Levene at FIPP’s D2C June 2021 Summit.

On a smaller scale, in February 2021, ITP Media Group launched print editions of two of its most prized brands, Harper’s Bazaar and Esquire, in Saudi Arabia.

While Harper’s Bazaar and Esquire Saudi have only been in the market for a few months, the titles have already raked in readers — an encouraging sign for print publications during a time when, globally, publishers are increasingly moving content online.

Over the course of the pandemic, print subscriptions have gone up 40%.

Catherine Levene,
President, Meredith National
Media Group

“I believe premium print titles will be desirable in this market for a number of years to come,” said ITP Managing Director Sue Holt. “We’ve been inundated already with subscription requests for both editions, plus luxury fashion is still arguably a magazine sector where its readers enjoy the physical copies to pour over the visuals.”

The print circulation uptick has also been noticed by paper producers.

“Certain publishers have been incredibly successful,” said UPM Communication Papers Area Sales Director Thomas Waltasaari. “Those publishers are building their brand and seeing circulation and the print runs clearly going up. For them, the overall publishing business, including print, is also expanding. They’re purchasing titles from other magazine publishers, which don’t deem these titles to be profitable anymore, and they are refocusing the journalism to make it work and then expanding again.

“Niche publishing definitely gives us hope that there’s going to be a

continuation of good print journalism moving forward in magazine publishing,” Waltasaari said. “We get very, very happy when there are publishers who look at print magazines as a part of the solution for their business, not being a drain.”

TREND 02

Time spent and engagement with print is increasing

During and after the height of the worst lockdowns, we started seeing more readers actually increasing their time with print products. And that trend seems to be continuing.

“There is some evidence to suggest that the Covid’s digital bump may be on the wane,” declared University of



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Oregon journalism professor Damien Ratcliffe writing for What's New In Publishing in October 2020.

Throughout the pandemic, media intelligence firm Kantar regularly conducted surveys of 150,000 consumers in 60 markets to come up with the "Kantar Covid-19 Barometer". The Kantar researchers discovered a trend toward print and away from digital.

"Surprisingly, our digital existence has lost some of its charm lately with media consumption, including social media, having fallen considerably despite having enjoyed a surge at the beginning of the pandemic," Kantar reported. "Perhaps the sensory deprivations



of an increasingly digital lifestyle will find future counterbalance in an uber-analogue to come."

When it comes to engagement, print more than holds its own.

"These days everyone's favourite metric is engagement, and yet there's nothing more engaging than a well-made magazine," said Men's Health U.K. Editor-in-Chief Toby Wiseman. "In many ways

print is still the most flexible and interactive medium out there: It can be consumed anywhere, pages can be saved, content can be shared, and the battery life is unbeatable" — an argument backed by the 59% year-on-year increase in Men's Health U.K. print subscriptions last year.

TREND 03

The value of print media tangibility is rising

After more than a year of virtual experiences, consumers are craving something tangible.

Print magazines proved to be one of those haptic outlets, and it turned into a trend that looks like it will continue post-pandemic.



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One great example is Burda Style. “As the Covid-19 pandemic hit and lockdowns became part of everyday life, Burda Style found itself at the forefront of helping people cope with the crisis, with sewing not only boosting the environment, but also mental health,” said Henning Röper, CEO of Burda Create!, a unit at Hubert Burda Media.

“Our magazines are utilised for hours of sewing and knitting, and collected by our readers.

“Readers love the inspiration of a composed magazine and appreciate the pattern sheets coming with these magazines,” said Röper. “Moreover, about 30 patterns in a Burda Style issue for €7.90 is a striking deal.”

Everyone’s favourite metric is engagement, and yet there’s nothing more engaging than a well-made magazine.

Toby Wiseman, Editor-in-Chief, Men’s Health U.K.

That physical activity and psychological benefit of the tangible properties of Burda Style led to unprecedented engagement.

“This is a much higher engagement level than other magazine types have,” said Röper. “Our subscriber numbers for Burda Style, Burda Easy, and Burda Knitting are rising. This is why we have a continued belief in the power of print magazines. Crafting magazines are here to stay.”

Another example of a magazine benefitting from reader attraction to a tactile reading experience is BBC Gardeners’ World.

As scores turned their thumbs green during the Covid outbreak, BBC Gardeners’ World raked in new readers — the magazine’s circulation increasing by 33% year-on-year to 227,000 in the second half of 2020.

Subscriptions have increased by 37%

year-on-year, reaching 162,000, which is 71% of total circulation.

Hall believes the striking figures show the close connection that exists between gardening and print, with both offering something tactile in an increasingly digital world.

“As a brand we have a strong focus on print because we have a visceral connection with the reader when they’re holding something in their hands,” said Editor Lucy Hall.

“Gardening is the ultimate connection with nature. Part of that process is connecting with the tactile nature of gardening and holding items — so there’s been a huge increase in people buying tools. Similarly, there



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is something really pleasurable about sitting back and holding a magazine in your hands."

A third example is Iceberg Press. "There's nothing quite like a brand new magazine coming through your letterbox and landing on your doormat. It's wonderful to have something tangible to enjoy," said Lisa Sykes, Iceberg Press co-founder.

Sykes and her two partners put their faith in quality physical product. They significantly upped the number of pages and paper quality of their publication, The Simple Things, taking the approach that if they made the magazine look and feel good people would be prepared to pay £5 (later raised to £6).

It would take about six months for readers to catch on and for sales to start growing. But catch on they did.

TREND 04

Readers are voting with their money for sustainable practices

In June 2020, an IBM study involving more than 18,000 consumers worldwide found that "while Millennials may be leading the charge in sustainability awareness, every age group indicates that sustainability, environmental, and/or personal wellness attributes are significant considerations in selecting brands."

Publishers are not deaf to that drumbeat. "Consumer attitude is now a significant driver for

climate action within the publishing industry," said Tom Reynolds, Production Director at TI Media, speaking with FIPP in June 2020.

"Publishers' climate change and sustainability efforts are no longer a 'tick-box' exercise," Reynolds said. "Finding more ways to be more sustainable is now a strategic part of the business. And that is definitely being driven in part by our readers' desire to buy from companies that are sustainable. We saw that first-hand in our own business when we were asked to replace poly wrap with paper wrap. It came directly from requests from the consumer."

One example of a media company going full-bore on sustainability

is Burda Style. "We use recycled newspaper for our magazine's instruction part and the pattern sheets, and our 100% recycled tracing paper has a vegan plant-based wax layer," said Burda's Röper.

"Furthermore, all our products are packaged in either cardboard or recycled foil and are produced in Europe," Röper said. "Burda Style is committed to support the overall shift towards sustainable consumerism."

For paper manufacturers, and increasingly for publishers, sustainability is priority number one.

"We are a company that plants a hundred trees a minute, 50 million a year, and that's something that's



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The physical activity and psychological benefit of the tangible properties of Burda Style led to unprecedented engagement.

going to become more important to publishers and to individual consumers as well moving forward," UPM's Waltasaari said.

"We and the publishers need to make sure that the stories about sustainable practices are out there," he said. "Our story is very positive."

TREND 05

Print: the antidote to digital overload

Since the pandemic hit more than a year ago, everyone has been tethered to their digital screens for many, many hours every day. And they're exhausted with digital. "Print allows

people the chance to disconnect from technology," according to Ashley House Printing Company.

Print is more than an alternative to digital, it's an antidote. "At this unique time, print can create calming experiences and an escape from the pressures associated with the constant stream of digital material directly into people's brains," said John Blyth, Marketing & Communications Manager at Ricoh Printing group, writing on LinkedIn.

Print is also fear-free. Print readers do not have to worry about invasions of privacy, data theft, pop-up screens, spam, power outages, trust issues, obnoxious interruptions, and too much screen time. Readers

can relax when they're reading something in print without having to worry about being tracked and targeted and interrupted.

The print experience is driving sales

"Nobody buys something for \$8–10 as an impulse item," said Professor Husni, talking to The New York Post. "They are buying it because they want an experience. People are bombarded by bad news and they are looking for diversions."

That demand drove new magazine launches in 2020 – despite the pandemic. Sixty new regularly published print magazines launched in the U.S. in 2020 (down from 139 in 2019), and there were already 34



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launches and relaunches in the first three months of 2021.

While the number of magazine launches in the U.K. decreased by almost 60% in 2020 to 113 regular frequency titles, the figures look better when weighed against the structural trends in the industry and the effects of Covid.

Magazines born during Covid offer in-demand content plus high production values. With paper quality improving, the new titles felt like luxury items – an indulgence many are happy to pay a bit more for.

The average price of the titles launched in the U.S. in 2020 was around \$8 – up from \$5 – a pricetag

that's helping to pay for a "premium aura" around the titles, says Husni.

In the U.K., new magazine launches also tended to be a bit more pricey. According to a study carried out by Wesseden, the average cover price of all 2020 launches jumped by 11% year-on-year to a record £4.52. This is in comparison to the £2.23 price seen in the whole magazine market.

"The print product is becoming lower frequency, lower volume, higher priced and — usually — better quality in terms of pages and paper," said Jim Bilton, Managing Director at Wessenden Marketing.

It's not just the premium-priced print magazines making progress.

"There is a huge variety of successful print magazines on the market," said Camille Farrow, VP of Strategy & Business Development at UPM Communication Papers. "And there's also geographical differences."

"Given the horrendous trading conditions, to see 113 new U.K. products come on to the newsstands shows that the magazine business is still very much alive," Bilton said. "Yet it continues to change rapidly. True digital-only magazine launches are rare. The vast majority have a print companion alongside digital platforms."

The launches are a beacon of hope for the print industry. "From legacy publishers like Meredith and Dennis

Publishing to the brave entrepreneurs who dared to make their dreams come true... the magazines born during a pandemic proved once again that print is something people want and need in their lives," said Husni on his website.



Which is more ecological? Print or digital? No contest



Brian Gorrity

OVER MY HALF A CENTURY working in media, I have been regularly attacked by people convinced I was part of an industry denuding the world's forests and contributing to great waste and pollution.

When the internet came along, it got worse. "How can you continue to use print when you could be publishing on an environmentally friendly platform as digital?" my friends would ask.

Their impression was, and still is, a common misconception.

Every one of our digital actions is made possible by a physical infrastructure to support each action. Our digital world has real physical, environmental impacts.

According to a study published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector is expected to account for 3–3.6% of global



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greenhouse gas emissions in 2020. That's more than the fuel emissions for all air travel in 2019, which clocked in at 2.5%.

Let's break it down with the help of an in-depth 2019 Bristol University study of the environmental impact of ICT as reported by digital magazine Parametric Press.

Emissions of websites

The Parametric Press authors opened their article by telling readers that each of them produced 51 milligrams of CO₂ by opening the article. "The same amount of CO₂ would be produced by driving a car 0.20 meters (based on the fuel economy of an average car, according to the EPA)," the authors wrote. "These emissions are a result of loading data

ICT: 3.3% Air travel 2.5%

Percent of global greenhouse gas emissions (2020)

1,900

Gigawatt-hrs electricity used on YouTube videos in west U.S. – enough to power 170,000 homes in the U.S. for a year (2016)

for the text, graphics, and visualizations that are then rendered on your device." Think about how many times you open a page every day and then multiply it by the 4.72 billion active internet users around the world.

Emissions of audio

When you listen to audio files (songs, podcasts, etc.) on your mobile device, your computer, or your smart speaker, you are loading an original audio file that has been compressed. Parametric Press looked at an NPR podcast and a song on Spotify as examples.

The NPR podcast was compressed to a bitrate of 128 kilobits per second while the song was compressed to 256 kilobits per



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second. That difference translates into the song loading roughly twice as much data as the podcast, which led to the song having about twice as large of a carbon footprint.

Video

Videos are a very heavy digital medium. Everyone likes to watch videos at the highest quality, but that decision translates into the need to load more pixels. As a result, videos produced far more CO₂ than audio over a similar time span. Parametric Press compared the impact of the audio of a song and the song's music video. "Not only does a video require loading both audio and visual data, but also the visual data which is particularly heavy in information," the authors wrote.

The internet

The internet transmits packets of data as electrical impulses. Those packets are routed from a source computer, through cables and intermediary computers, before arriving at their destinations. The Bristol University study estimated that the infrastructure in just the western U.S. alone consumed approximately 1,900 Gigawatt-hours of electricity to serve YouTube videos in 2016, enough to power 170,000 homes in the U.S. for a year, according to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Then, of course, those data packets zipping through the internet's "pipes" need "off-ramps" to reach your device's screen. Those "off-ramps" are either "fixed line" residential

networks (wired connections from homes to the internet) or cellular networks (wireless connections from cell phones to the internet). "An estimated 88% of YouTube's traffic went through fixed-line networks (from your residential Cable, DSL, or fibre-optic providers), and this accounted for approximately 4,400 Gigawatt-hours of electricity usage — enough to power over 400,000 U.S. homes," wrote the Parametric Press authors.

Sticking with the YouTube example, the researchers found that an estimated 88% of YouTube's traffic went through fixed-line networks (residential cable, DSL, or fibre-optic providers), which accounted for roughly 4,400 Gigawatt-hours of



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IN 2016, YOUTUBE AND AUCKLAND EMITTED SIMILAR AMOUNTS OF CO₂



electricity usage — enough to power over 400,000 U.S. homes for a year.

In comparison, only 12% of YouTube's traffic went through cellular networks, but they were by far the most expensive part of YouTube's content delivery pipeline, accounting for approximately 8,500 Gigawatt-hours of electricity usage — enough to power more than 750,000 U.S. homes, according to the study. At more than 10 times the electricity usage per unit of traffic, the relative inefficiency of cellular transmission is clear.

Your device

Finally, the data packet's odyssey ends up in your device. The cost of moving those pixels accounted for an estimated 6,100 Gigawatt-hours of electricity usage or more than half a million U.S. homes worth of electricity for a year. And that's just YouTube.

The total

Because the researchers could not possibly access every internet site to measure the entire global digital environmental impact, they had to settle for YouTube's impact.

"YouTube alone emitted nearly as much CO₂ as a metropolitan area like Auckland, New Zealand did in 2016," according to the study.

"Put in other words, 10.2 MtCO₂ is equivalent to the yearly footprint of approximately 2.2 million cars in the United States." Then consider that YouTube's monthly active user count has since increased by a minimum of 33% since 2016.



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The eternal attractions of print

OK, maybe not 'eternal', but print has appealing attributes that have lasted hundreds of years and still appeal in the 21st century

Print media's inherent attributes have proven resilient and continue to command a powerful attraction for readers and advertisers alike:

Tangibility

Print is a physical thing. "The haptic

qualities — the feel of it — cannot be underestimated at the end of the day," said UPM Communication Papers Area Sales Director Thomas Waltasaari. "That's what people see as well. It's tangible — you end up having something in your hand,



Marten Bjork



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something that's your own, something that you engage with."

Longevity

Magazines have serious shelf life — they can stay in houses and offices for months or years. On the other hand, internet stories and ads disappear into cyber space almost instantaneously.

Credibility

In the minds of the reading public, print is more credible and trustworthy than digital media. In a survey of 10,762 adults in 10 countries by paid survey community Toluna, respondents said they trust the stories they read in printed newspapers (51%) more than stories found on social media (24%). "A recent

Edelman Trust Barometer report found that more than 60% of people trust traditional magazines and newspapers versus between 30-40% who trust digital media," said FIPP CEO James Hewes.

Safety and privacy

The aforementioned Toluna study also found that 71% of consumers have privacy concerns about personal information being held electronically. Print consumers don't have to worry about their behaviour being monitored or their personal data being stolen or abused. With print, they have no fear of spam or viruses.

Duration of engagement

"The industry standard for a good average

[digital] session duration is two to three minutes," according to web design and digital marketing agency SpinUTech. "The unofficial industry standard is two pages per online session." By contrast, print holds readers' attention for ten times the digital average. "Print readers usually spend 20 minutes or more with their publication in hand, and they read far more stories and engage with a greater volume of content," according to local marketing agency LocalIQ.

"People spend more time with a print product compared to the internet," said UPM Communication Papers' VP of Strategy & Business Development, Camille Farrow. "Their pace on the phone or on the computer is much quicker, and people also jump and



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cross-read online in a not very focused manner, which results in a butterfly effect experience. Print readers pay more attention.”

Depth of engagement

Many more consumers believe they gain a deeper understanding of the story when they read it in print (65%) than when they read it online (49%), according to the Toluna survey.

North Dakota University professor of education Virginia Clinton compiled results from 33 high-quality studies that tested students’ comprehension after they were randomly assigned to read on a screen or on paper. She found that 29 of the 33 laboratory studies found that readers learned more from text on paper than from text online.

“The haptic qualities — the feel of it — cannot be underestimated at the end of the day.”

Thomas Waltasaari, Area Sales Director,
UPM Communication Papers

“So many young people talk about the smell of books, talk about reading print as being ‘real’ reading,” American University professor emeritus of linguistics Naomi Baron told The New York Times. “There’s a physicality,” Professor Baron said.

No obnoxious ads / pop-ups

The saturation of digital media popups and offensive, intrusive banner ads on the web can be overwhelming. An InsightsOne survey found that 70% of Americans say they get annoyed by irrelevant pop-up ads. SurveyMonkey found that the No. 1 reason users (68%) would block a website from their search results was when a website contained too many ads.



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Advertising appeal

In a 2016 survey by Marketing Sherpa, 82% of U.S. internet users said they trusted print ads when making a purchase decision, a rate much higher than any other medium. By contrast, only 25% trusted digital pop-ups. The previously mentioned Toluna study found that many consumers do not even pay attention to online advertisements (68%) and they actually do their best to avoid them (57%). A majority (60%) agreed they can't remember the last time they willingly clicked an online advertisement.

QR Codes

In an ironic twist, one of the advantages of print is that it can link directly to digital enhancements whereas the



reverse isn't true. Placing QR codes on printed pieces bridges the gap between print and web and can add depth and multimedia experiences to print stories.

Sustainability

The paper industry today is one of the most environmentally conscious in the world. "It's worth noting that paper is a very sustainable product at the end of the day," said UPM's Waltasaari. "It's something that's becoming ever more understandable once someone sees the environmental impact that is being generated by the digital world."

As an industry still reliant on print, "it is our challenge to make sure that paper production is done in a sustainable manner, and that we sell that reality and teach publishers and consumers about the benefits of utilising paper as a sustainable activity," Waltasaari said. ■





UPM Communication Papers is the world's leading producer of graphic papers, offering an extensive product range for advertising and publishing as well as home and office uses. The high performing papers and service concepts of UPM add value to our customers' businesses, while actively fulfilling demanding environmental and social responsibility criteria. With headquarters in Germany, UPM Communication Papers employs approximately 7,000 people.



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