

Print

Long Live

The global economic crisis of 2009 impacted the magazine industry severely but people still love magazines. In a world of fake news, multiple surveys reveal that people trust what they read in printed publications more than information found online.

While there are more magazine closures than launches, plenty of titles are bucking the trend and proving that a great many readers still love the printed page. It has a tactility and directness that people respond to. Would you rather be reading this on your phone right now? Of course not.

There is a modern misconception that young people don't read magazines but according to the *Magazine Media Factbook*, which MPA – The Association of Magazine Media – has been producing for over 40 years, the opposite is true. The US report shows that 95% of adults aged 18 to 29 read magazines, versus 81% who use Facebook.

The *Factbook* asserts: “Numbers support the claim that magazine brands have an undeniable connection with their consumers, resulting in a higher level of engagement. The top 25 print magazines reach more adults and teens than the top 25 primetime TV shows, and advertising in magazine media increases sales on both print and digital platforms. Whether in print or on a digital platform, magazine media boost sales and generate strong returns on advertising spend.”

The report also states that adults aged 18 to 49 trust and immerse themselves in magazine media more deeply than other media and that paper-based reading stimulates emotions, drives sensory involvement, provides more focused attention and is preferred by the majority of people.

In the UK, the landscape features both success and failure. The women's lifestyle magazine, *Glamour*, which was the tenth biggest selling magazine in the

is Dead

Print

The death knell for printed publications has been ringing for the last two decades and yet magazines are still going strong. Yes, many print titles have closed and the digital age has dented print journalism – but it isn't going to disappear. It is simply adapting.

UK as ranked by ABC closed its monthly print edition in 2017 and 66-year old music title *NME* also killed off its print product.

Meanwhile, current affairs magazines such as *Private Eye*, *The Economist* and *The Spectator* all recorded growth, with *Private Eye* achieving its biggest ever circulation in 2016. The magazine, edited by Ian Hislop, also had a circulation of 249,927 per issue in the first half of 2017, up 8.6% year-on-year.

There is a complex global array of successes and failures that precludes any definitive analysis, but what is instantly clear is that the digital age is not wiping out printed publications as was predicted in the '90s. The Facebook and Google duopoly, websites, online videos and e-books are not dispensing with our affection for the printed page.

While digital promises advertising investors data rich ROI (return on investment), the less quantifiable

benefits of print advertising are currently being reassessed. A recent study commissioned by Radiocentre and conducted by independent marketing analytics provider Ebiquity revealed a disconnect between print's marketing performance and the perceptions of its performance. The *Re-Evaluating Media* study found that print's performance outperforms marketers' perceptions of it in multiple areas. Print came second in increasing brand salience, as opposed to eighth in marketers' minds, and it's clear that this disconnect contributes to the 'print is dead' mindset.

Michael Rosenwald has followed the print debate for years as a reporter at *The Washington Post* and a contributor to magazines such as *The New Yorker* and *Esquire*. He states: "The reality is this: no app, no streamlined website, no 'vertical integration', no social network, no algorithm, no Apple, no Apple Newsstand, no paywall, no soft paywall, no targeted

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ad, no mobile-first strategy has come close to matching the success of print in revenue or readership. And the most crucial assumption publishers have made about readers, particularly millennials – that they prefer the immediacy of digital – now seems questionable, too.”

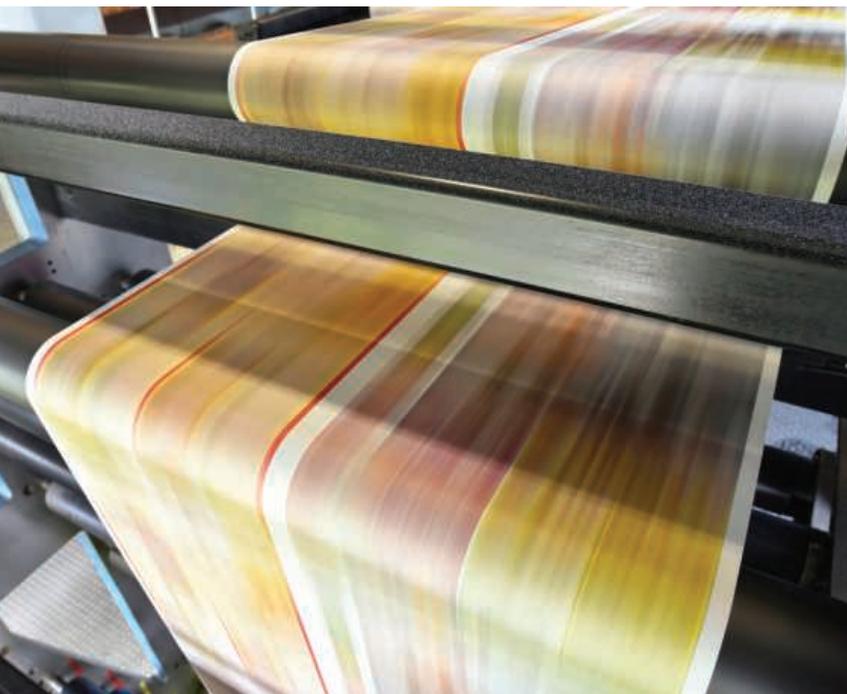
The print sector has suffered, of that there is no doubt. But the traditional model is adjusting, cutting down on sprawling staff numbers and big real estate HQs in favour of more manageable operations. Independent titles covering many niche areas are finding an audience. In a world that is constantly downloading and buffering, the uncomplicated yet sensory-rich experience delivered by traditional print publications remain a welcome antidote to our ubiquitous screens. People want paper.

Notable changes seen in the print sector include the use of uncoated, matt/heavy paper and experimentation with publishing frequency. Jeremy Leslie has over 30 years experience making magazines and has written numerous books on the publishing industry. He is the founder of online journal and design studio *magCulture*, and the physical shop of the same name in London, which stocks over 400 curated global magazines.

“The new generation of indies often use a biannual/quarterly schedule and heavier, often matt, paper stock. And often a mix of several stocks. This was a direct reaction against the cheap, thin stocks used by the mainstream and it saw indie mags become bookish collectible items that celebrated their physical presence,” said Leslie. “The amount of ink required to soak onto the often-uncoated stock meant the reader got a wave of inkiness as they flicked their pages.”

The sensory attributes that make print such an enjoyable medium rely on paper to deliver something that rectangular pieces of glass just can’t. The vital role played by the choice of stock in the flourishing indie scene is underscored by Wolfgang Lübbert, Executive Vice President Marketing & Strategy, at one of the leading manufacturers of high-quality graphical fine paper in Europe, Arctic Paper.

“Print is not dead but in a huge transformation process,” claimed Lübbert. “Paper is adding an extra dimension to every communication. You can play with different shades, surfaces and thickness. General information is more and more taken over by electronic media. But print is real. And it gives magazines and brand owners the chance to send more



Above: Print on uncoated grades has reached a superb quality level and it adds an emotional, sensitive and natural dimension

Below: Adults aged 18 to 49 trust and immerse themselves in magazine media more deeply than other media

specific, more consistent messages. Paper is helping turning ideas to experiences.”

Technological progress plays a major part in the development of any industry, and it is the same with publishing. Today, the greatly improved ability to print images on uncoated heavy paper is another reason for its prevalence in today’s magazines. Lübbert explained: “Today, the print on uncoated grades has reached a superb quality level and it adds an emotional, sensitive and natural dimension. You might even say a human dimension.”



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JEREMY LESLIE,
Founder of *magCulture*

Reflecting on why advertisers still value print titles in their media mix Lübbert added: “Print is real. Ads are real in print. Messages are real. The digital world is fast, but messages also less sustainable. Therefore, print is essential for publishers and brand owners.”

While presently print is flourishing and continuing to defy the assertions that the industry is doomed, what does the future hold? Lübbert predicts: “Print will be more specific. General print will decline; specific and more sophisticated print will increase. Brand owners will use more print to spread their messages.”

After two decades of the ‘print is dead’ claim resurfacing every few years, can it be now viewed as an old trope that is, effectively, just lazy thinking? Leslie thinks so. “I’ve heard it since the ’90s but print’s still here and it’s not going to disappear. The printed magazine is changing – it always has changed – but it’s not dying.”

Every time the debate about the death of print plays out there are two factors that emerge above all the noise. Firstly, is that the viability and sensory appeal of the printed product is underestimated. Secondly, print and digital both have pros and cons. They are not mutually exclusive and both should be embraced. The smart way of seeing the future is print and digital – not print or digital. †