

MAGNETIC

Dispelling the myths – the prevailing role of magazine media in a 24/7 connected world

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‘Print is a dying media’ – you start to switch off as you’ve heard it said too many times in the industry! My experience with The Lab has certainly dispelled some of the myths surrounding the topic, many of which I had previously bought in to, and fuelled a greater interest in the publishing industry.

Magazine media for most conjures images of the physical printed medium: monthlies, weeklies, newspaper supplements and so on. From a comms planning perspective pre The Lab, to put a print publisher on a media plan would more often than not have simply been to run creative across a page of the magazine, perhaps an advertorial if freedom allowed. However the days of print manifesting itself as one solitary medium are long gone – a bare necessity for any brands wanting to survive in the 24/7 connected world of today.

In Part 1 of The Lab we heard from a variety of guest speakers; experts from within the publishing industry including Terri White (editor-in-chief of Empire), Jane Wolfson (head of commercial operations, Hearst) and Julian Linley (editor-in-chief of Digital Spy); all of whom demonstrated a lasting fondness for traditional print media alongside an enthusiasm for embracing change in the industry. What was most surprising on hearing from the panel of speakers was how only a very small proportion of their time was spent discussing print. Where speakers became most animated was in talking about the growth of the experiential/events space, an area that acts as almost a second tangible touchpoint after printed media, injecting new life into publishing brands.

Although far from being an obvious space for magazine media to venture into there were several examples from different publisher titles that were shared with us. Terri White discussed Empire Live, an immersive experience combining film screenings, Q&A’s and workshops. We heard about Hearst’s ‘Beauty Unbound’ pop-up beauty festival at Westfield Shopping Centre and Digital Spy’s use of Facebook Live events following episodes of Game of Thrones. All events and experiential shared a common theme – they were all built upon consumer passion points and developed as a reaction to trends in the industry. Print media has always been valued as a channel that knows how to build long-standing and loyal relationships with its audience, a channel of trust. Extending that relationship in to the events space has awarded magazine media a rebirth and another opportunity to connect with

consumers. As discussed by Jon Wilkins (executive chairman of Karmarama) at The Lab, as brands are increasingly competing for consumer attention these 'connected experiences' are becoming truly invaluable.

A brilliant example of a publisher who places "connected experiences" at its very core is Time Out. Part 2 of The Lab saw me spend a day at their offices and it became clear that they too have great ambition in the events and experiential space. Discovering and sharing play a pivotal step in the Time Out consumer journey of today, a far cry from the 5p printed magazine that launched in 1968.

I have always been a fan of print and my experience of The Lab has proven that there is lots more to come from magazine media. Comms planners will now need to adapt in the same way that media has and start to think more expansively about what publishers might be able to offer their clients.