

MAGNETIC

Innovation in publishing – magazine media is evolving

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Where are all the print readers going? Are magazines relevant to Millennials? Should we be giving away content for free?

Whether or not your hand is forced by declining sales or readership numbers, innovation in print media has for a long time been confused with notions of selling a glossy page that uses different paper stock for standout, a new 4 page gatefold format or replicating the same print issue for tablet users.

Historically, magazines have been used to recap what has been happening over the last week or month in whatever field they specialise in. Print is where you then give the reader more time to think and ponder an extended walkthrough of the political climate in Syria or the science behind the blue/black dress (or was it white/gold?). And make them pay for the pleasure.

Online should be part of the, as Veruca Salt once delicately delivered, 'I want it now' mode and rightly so. Give them live blogs, social conversation and interaction and bite-sized insight.

In our connected world we have an untold amount of information at our fingertips (or a single forefinger if you use a smartphone like my Mum!) The offline and online world in publishing terms should live poles apart. Quite simply, hiring the right editorial teams who truly understand their platforms is a sign of innovation. A simple but important step.

Magazine brands are branching out; exploring what they are good at and widening the net. The broader the understanding that a magazine brand has of a reader's experience, the more dots we have to connect and the more creative we can be with the ideas that push the medium on.

Going beyond the traditional publisher touch-points, we are now provided with opportunities to experience publisher sponsored events, food festivals, science exhibitions, fashion shows and award ceremonies. The list goes on with the ways in which magazine brands now connect with consumers in the 'real' world. A great example is *Shortlist's* very own *Mr Hyde* supporting 'National Burger Day', which it has done for the last three years. It runs a successful event that caters for over 3,000 punters and has orchestrated the chance to enjoy 'money off a burger' for one very

special day of the year at over 900+ restaurant outlets across the UK. It's a win-win for consumers and brands alike.

Finally, the idea that content in context is not new. The digital end of the spectrum uses words like 'native' and 'contextual targeting' like they have reinvented the wheel. Magazines have been doing this since the dawn of time. Their evolution comes from ability to have the powers that be, put pen to paper.

The days of editorial being shrouded in mystery shielded by their commercial teams is long gone and this allows for greater collaboration and authenticity. From the briefing stage all the way through to the post-campaign analysis this alliance ensures the work we do with our clients truly is greater than the sum of all its parts. Work is needed by planners across medialand to ensure it is collaboration and not a dictation. Money certainly does talk but the editorial backbone is as important as ever - even with such commercial flexibility. Without editorial integrity, trust in magazines will certainly decline, leading to less effective partnerships and lower readership.

With the rise of free content, magazines need to work harder for your eyeballs and the same goes for advertisers paying a premium to be associated with it. This access to editorial allows for more viable investment from advertisers.

Magazine brands are highly influential and their relevancy is clear as opinion leaders but by evolving in a meaningful way they are ensuring, now more than ever, they play an important role in our thirst for content across different platforms and touchpoints. This evolution has allowed the power of magazines to extend beyond the page and they are certainly no longer just left sitting on the coffee table.