



Why Print Advertising Still Matters in the Digital Age

*Ignore this Evolving Medium
at Your Own Risk*

In case you haven't heard, print is dead. It died sometime in the early 2000's with pagers and Palm Pilots. The funny thing is, despite being declared dead for over a decade, print is still alive. In fact, right now is the perfect time to advertise in print. Here's why.

While it can be difficult to see past the increase in online content (both free and paid), don't believe for a second that print is old news. The Internet, often accused of killing print, has actually helped create a renaissance in print advertising. QR codes, promotional codes and social media integration have all breathed new life into a marketer's printed real estate. But before we get ahead of ourselves, let's remember what makes print advertising so uniquely valuable in the first place.

Multiple Views from a Single Placement

Print carries a longer shelf life than online content, which increases the number of viewing opportunities by targeted, engaged readers. The "Quality of Reading Survey" — recently published by PPA Marketing — has shown that in just three days, a single copy of a magazine is picked up by readers an average of five or six times.

This "pick-up rate" results in each ad being viewed about two-and-a-half times. This is important to the advertiser since magazine readers have already self-selected into highly targetable groups (golfers, parents, techies). Hence, just about every advertisement in the publication should find readers who are receptive to their messaging.

Journal and trade publications fare even better, having the second-highest receptivity of any media—second only to television. And even television can't compete with print for audience engagement.

Active Audience Engagement

While television seems like the most dynamic and engaging medium, ads have a shelf life exactly as long as they're on. On the other hand, print remains ready to consume every time the reader picks up the publication. What's more, print can be accessed and absorbed at the time, place and pace that best suits the reader.

This allows marketers the opportunity to provide a more engaging experience, including a range of new-media capabilities. Brands and marketers can include QR codes in their ads, which can be scanned with a smartphone and direct readers to a custom webpage or mobile application. For retailers, print ads can include online promotional codes for instant online savings. Additionally, social media can be a powerful tool, incentivizing readers to add brands to their profile and share products with friends.

While all of these new media opportunities actively engage the reader—taking them beyond the realm of traditional advertising—it’s all born of the print ad. And when they do their job, those interactions are easily tracked and measured for effectiveness. This finally gives print the same level of accountability that internet ads have showcased for years.

A Memorable Branding Tool

There’s no question that when paired with a solid online marketing strategy, print ads keep a brand salient in readers’ minds long after they put the magazine down. This is important as brand recall is the single greatest asset in word-of-mouth marketing.

A study co-authored by Ed Keller of the Keller Fay group finds 22% of brand-related conversations are sparked directly by advertising. The study included over 3,000 participants, who were interviewed to learn about their face-to-face interactions. In addition, the study found that those 22% are far more likely to involve personal recommendations. When asked about online interactions, that number jumped even higher to 30%. And that only accounts for those who admit to being directly influenced by advertising. It’s reasonable to assume the actual number is much higher when accounting for advertising’s indirect influence.

The bottom line is that if you want an engaging, memorable ad campaign, you overlook print at your own peril. Without print in your marketing mix, you’re missing a tremendous opportunity to reach a targeted audience and be a part of the conversation, wherever, whenever it may occur.

