

THE POWER OF PRINT

# The Great Magazine Comeback: Remembering the Appeal of Print

After going digital over the past decade, major publishers are turning back to print magazines in significant numbers, driven by consumer preference and, yes, ad revenue. The trend reminds us of print's accessibility, credibility and ability to motivate an audience, all of which make a strong case for print communications in general.

>50%

Average share of magazine publishers' revenue from print, 2023<sup>1</sup>

75%

Print's projected share of consumer magazine revenues, 2026<sup>1</sup>

A growing number of publishers are realizing that printed magazines can be a significant revenue driver,<sup>1</sup> including from advertisers benefiting from the longer attention duration of print.<sup>2</sup>

>5sec/1%

Average attention duration/brand choice increase, online ads<sup>2</sup>

>20sec/60%

Average attention duration/brand choice increase, print magazine ads<sup>2</sup>

Over the past year, there's been a quiet resurgence of print-format magazines among the world's best-known titles, reversing the trend toward solely digital and online formats. The chief revenue officer of *The Atlantic* magazine states one of the reasons: "It's very hard to break through if you don't have a print product."<sup>3</sup>

## THE COMEBACK OF PRINT MAGAZINES

There's a striking list of major magazines that are returning to print after going to digital-only. *Saveur*, a 30-year-old food

magazine, came back to print in 2024 after discontinuing it in 2020.<sup>4</sup> *Swimming World*, a leading magazine dedicated to the sport for more than 60 years, stopped publishing printed editions in 2022 but announced early in 2024 their return to print with a new 64-page issue.<sup>5</sup>

*Field & Stream* will relaunch in print after more than three years of digital issues.<sup>6</sup> *Ebony* published a fall issue in 2024 with five cover variations after suspending print in 2019.<sup>7</sup>

The music magazine *SPIN* launched its first print edition since 2012 in August with plans to publish print issues quarterly. "There's a different rhythm to reading a magazine," says founder and editor-in-chief, Bob Guccione, Jr. "It's the physical appeal, but also it's a nice pause in the rushed digital age."<sup>8</sup>

Also in 2024, *Life* magazine, one of the giants of the twentieth century, announced plans to return to the newsstand after closing down its print edition in 2008.<sup>9</sup>

Other magazines decided to upgrade their printed product in 2024. *Us Weekly* magazine increased its page count by 12 pages and will publish 52 issues per year, up from 48.<sup>10</sup> *Businessweek* relaunched with a premium print magazine and an enhanced digital experience.<sup>11</sup>

*Rolling Stone* overhauled the design of its iconic print magazine this year, adding visual impact through a larger format, more vibrant colors and an upgrade of its paper stock, inviting readers to "go find a copy, give it a read, sit with it or pass it around, and enjoy."<sup>12</sup> Not an invitation we'd expect from a digital magazine, to be sure.

## PEOPLE LOVE MAGAZINES

Publishers are realizing that there still appears to be a closer, more positive emotional connection between readers and print magazines than occurs in the digital world. According to a recent Magnetic Media article, 77% of adults feel positive when reading magazines, which is higher when compared with social media (59%).<sup>13</sup>

Paper and print can even have a positive effect on mental health according to Irene Smit, co-founder of *Flow* magazine. Smit says that today's young people grow up with a device in their hands and lack a tactile feeling in their lives and media interactions. She's convinced that they desire that feeling and paper delivers it, supporting increased happiness and sense of wellbeing.<sup>14</sup>

“I have zero interest in a digital version of my printed magazine. I spend all day on computers and smartphones. I enjoy reading a magazine I can physically hold. I don't want to sit at a computer to read it.”

— Excerpt, letter from a longtime *Field & Stream* subscriber to the publisher

#### PRINT MAGAZINE ADVERTISING—TRUST AND EFFECTIVENESS

There are some compelling studies indicating the effectiveness of print magazine advertising in a world where digital dominates and enables the rapid spread of misinformation.

Magazines satisfy the consumer desire for credibility, with well-researched and vetted content.<sup>15</sup> That trust extends to advertising. One study found that when in purchase mode, 80% of consumers trust print magazine ads most.<sup>16</sup> Advertisers benefit from the brand-safe environment magazines offer with the assurance that their ads always appear next to trusted, appropriate content,<sup>17</sup> something digital advertising can't always offer.<sup>18</sup>

— Source 1: FIPP Members Survey (2023)  
 — Source 2: "Unlocking the New Currency of Attention," Dentsu, April 2024  
 — Source 3: "Media Briefing: Why Some Publishers Are Resurrecting Their Print Magazines," Digiday, May 23, 2024  
 — Source 4, 5, 7: "Print Revival: Magazines Make Surprise Comeback as a Marketing Tool," Axios, April 9, 2024  
 — Source 6: "The History of *Field & Stream*," "About Us," fieldandstream.com, 2024  
 — Source 8: "'Spin' Rolls Out: Bob Guccione, Jr. Returns With First Print Issue In 12 Years," Publishing Insider, May 28, 2024  
 — Source 9: "Beloved 'LIFE' Magazine Set to Return to Circulation," Devon Howard, Parade, March 28, 2024  
 — Source 10: "*Us Weekly* revival," Axios.com, July 16, 2024  
 — Source 11: "*Businessweek* Blooms: Brand Is Relaunched In Print And Online," MediaPost, June 30, 2024  
 — Source 12: "*Rolling Stone's* Magazine Makeover: Bigger and Bolder Than Ever," *Rolling Stone*, June 27, 2024

Consumer trust often translates into positive brand perception and action. People have been shown to respond more favorably to brands they see advertised in print magazines, with an average increase of 18% in brand favorability and a 35% increase in likelihood of buying the advertised product.<sup>19</sup> 80% of people who see a print ad in a magazine take action, such as actively seeking more information (25%) or visiting the advertiser's website (20%).<sup>20</sup>

#### LONGER ATTENTION DURATION

Attention duration in advertising is an important and significant driver of positive brand outcomes, with a direct tie between the two—the longer the dwell time, the higher level of brand choice and prompted brand recall.

For instance, attention duration for Facebook and other online display ads is less than 5 seconds, which equates to a 1% increase in brand choice and a 22% increase in prompted recall; by comparison, print magazine ads show an average dwell time of more than 20 seconds, with an 11% increase in brand choice and an almost 60% increase in prompted recall.<sup>21</sup>

#### PROOF OF THE POWER OF PRINT

With the numbers showing high consumer trust levels, longer attention duration, positive brand perception and increased likelihood of taking action, it's no surprise that so many major magazine publishers are upgrading their existing printed magazines or returning to print after going exclusively online.

With similarly positive metrics around print catalogs and direct mail, it just adds to the growing body of data that proves the power of print to engage, move and motivate important audiences.

Print belongs in the mix!

— Source 13, 16, 19: "Magazine Media and its Role in the Media Mix", Magnetic Media, July 22, 2024  
 — Source 14: "Irene Smit: Gen Z Are Realizing the Healing Power of Paper," UPM, October 9, 2024  
 — Source 15: "The Resurgence of Print: Why Magazine Advertising Still Matters," Creative Writing News, December 5, 2023  
 — Source 17: "2023 Market Report: News and Magazine Media: Providing a Trusted, Brand Safe Source for Reaching Engaged and Influential Audiences," News/Media Alliance, December 4, 2023  
 — Source 18: EMARKETER forecast, 2023  
 — Source 20: "2023 Market Report: News and Magazine Media: Providing a Trusted, Brand Safe Source for Reaching Engaged and Influential Audiences," News/Media Alliance, December 4, 2023  
 — Source 21: "Unlocking the New Currency of Attention," Dentsu, April 2024



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