

## Digital Media: Is Print Dead?

Delivering material in innovative ways.

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As technology continues to advance, digital media and the way we communicate have also evolved. Content makers continue to scramble to find new and innovative ways to deliver material in a non-invasive yet efficient format.

Gone are the days where we could watch unlimited YouTube videos without waiting for an advertisement to run or click on an article without a banner or pop-up. And with technological advances, an old question keeps popping up too: where is the consumer in all this? Some even wonder whether traditional media, such as print media, remains a useful and effective tool for companies to spend money on.

### The Good Old Days Are Gone

Early digital media efforts focused on what websites the consumer was visiting, and utilizing such information to generate target marketing. But the advent of smartphones has taken the information gathered to a whole new level. While not necessarily available for each user, information such as gender, age, location, spending habits, and even time spent on a specific website, among other very specific details, are potentially accessible. So while years ago, a click on a webpage may have generated target marketing, today's information may indicate that the consumer barely visits that website, or does so for such a short period of time that certain marketing efforts would be futile.

And with such comprehensive data at an advertising agency's fingertips, one has to consider whether any money spent to target a general audience via traditional media is effective. For instance, would dollars be better spent to generate a commercial in which a company has very limited knowledge of who will see it or a commercial in which a Company knew that 85% of the audience was males from the age of 25 to 35, who had purchased something from a sporting goods



store in the past 12 months? It seems the latter would allow for very specific target marketing, which would probably generate a better return on investment. At least as long as the consumer noticed the ad.

### Print Has a Beat It Seems

Yet, certain statistics indicate the continued need for traditional marketing such as print. While newspaper circulation is down, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times boast approximately 4.1 million, 2.3 million and 2.1 million paid weekday subscribers (as of October 2014) respectively, per the Alliance for Audited Media. Additionally, a look at the age of smartphone users (via Nielsen) shows that 30% of Americans age 45-54, 40% of Americans age 55-64 and 54% of Americans age 65 and up still don't have smartphones. While those percentages increase in relation to computers and

internet, there are still large consumer pools in the U.S. who still receive information via traditional media outlets such as newspapers. And there remains large circulations of various magazines throughout the U.S. Further, it's also worth noting that digital media generates vastly lower revenue per reader than print newspaper does because in the digital space there is no "subscription" revenue to go along with it.

So despite the prevalence of smart phones and the general nature of traditional media, print media remains a viable marketing option for reaching certain audiences. For instance, with many companies moving to digital, newspaper pages are no longer littered with ads like they once were, allowing for placement to be more noticeable and relevant. Traditional marketing also results in something tangible (say in the form of the aforementioned newspaper advertisement) and in the consumer's face, whereas a digital ad can be easily sent away via a click of the computer mouse to close a browser.

Not too long ago Blackberries controlled the smartphone world, and the thought of playing a video, let alone an advertisement, in one's handheld device wasn't on the radar. Now, whether it be a video or an application, smartphone users are peppered with advertisements (both pop up and video). As for the Apple watch, it may only be a matter of time before it too plays videos.

All the while, newspapers (the so-called dying industry) will continue to print, and companies will debate how to allocate their dollars between print and digital media. ■

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