

LUXURY MEMO SPECIAL REPORTS

Magazines and ad buying – Luxury Memo special report

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Magazines face an uncertain future and brands must know the risks. Image credit: Harper's Bazaar

By DANNY PARISI

Magazines have always played a central role in how luxury brands advertise.

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From the front ad pages of *Vogue* to a feature story in *Harper's Bazaar*, print magazines have helped establish the exclusivity and prestige of luxury brands from across sectors, giving them the pedigree needed to maintain their luxurious air.

Times are changing, however, and magazines have changed with them. Print is less popular and less ubiquitous than it was in the past and the rise of digital has changed the way consumers engage with and consume media.

In light of those changes, luxury brands and advertisers need to understand how print advertising and magazines have changed and what are the best strategies for using those tools now in today's world. Print magazines may not have the esteem they once held, but they can still offer valuable use to brands of all kinds in reaching their preferred customer.

"Print continues to suffer from slow audience accumulation by being weekly or monthly, an issue only exacerbated in today's instant gratification world," said Erin Elliott, vice president of media at [Walton Isaacson](#), Culver City, CA. "Attribution is also an issue for print. There are so many variables it is hard to get information on who is actually reading hard copies and track their path to purchase.

"Last but not least, readership shifts from hard copy to digital and mobile have been pretty devastating for many publications."

Top 5 trends in magazines

- Digital versus print

Digital has been the biggest disruptor to the world of print advertising and magazine ad buying for brands. The shift from print media to digital media has completely upended the way consumers engage with advertising. Where once ads were placed individually and with the attention of a human mind, digital channels allow ads

to be placed programmatically, drastically changing the way advertising works. Print may still have a place in luxury advertising, but it now has to compete with digital.

- Print problems

Print has faced a number of issues in recent years. For one, print advertising revenue is down. This can also be attributed to digital as well as declining readerships for print publications. Those magazines have had to reorient their priorities to provide something more valuable to stand out against the convenience of digital media. For luxury brands, this means high-end magazines have suffered less than more mass-oriented ones.

- Making creative that stands out

In the world of magazine advertising today, it is more important than ever that brands are able to come up with creative ad content that stands out. Stark, striking imagery, unique partnerships and more have given the most successful magazine advertisers the tools to stand out from the crowd.

- Brand magazines

To solve the problem of navigating the complicated media world, some brands have decided to cut out the middleman and create their own magazines. This has a number of benefits including having a publication dedicated solely to the brand with no other brand messaging to interfere, having complete control over editorial and advertising decisions and attracting loyal customers who are more likely to make purchases and be receptive to advertising.

- Ad placement

Finally, ad placement has become a major issue for brands looking to market in magazines. As print ad revenue dwindles, space in a premium print magazines becomes tight. The coveted positions in the early few pages of a magazine such as *Vogue* are more hotly contested than ever before.

Print problems

It is no secret in the media world that print has been facing some serious challenges over the last several years.

The vast majority of media consumption today is digital. This holds true for both the mass market and luxury brands.

While high-end brands have been slower than mass players at adopting digital advertising, luxury marketers are allocating more of their budgets towards online media.

According to Zenith's fourth annual "Luxury Advertising Expenditure Forecasts" report, a third of luxury brands' advertising spend this year will be put into digital channels. Luxury brands' total ad expenditures are poised to grow slightly this year, driven primarily by digital spend ([see story](#)).

Some brands have even taken to creating their own digital content hubs to fully capitalize on this trend.



A third of luxury advertising budgets go to digital media. Photo credit: Boucheron

For instance, private aviation company Sentient Jet is looking to elevate its online presence through the launch of a digital content hub called Atmosphere.

Sentient aims to make Atmosphere a one-stop digital hub for its customers to learn everything they need to know about various destinations or behind-the-scenes looks at VIP events. Sentient Jet is hoping that this new host of content will supplement the other services offered to members.

Atmosphere is focused on the life of a high-end traveler and will feature guides to a major city's art scene one day and interviews with notable people the next. The platform also caters to the affluent consumer by recommending fine dining and other activities and sights in some of the world's most desired destinations ([see story](#)).

However, not everyone tuned in to the prospects of print media's future for luxury advertising is pessimistic.

While many experts believe print is dying, a panel at Luxury Interactive explained that in the luxury world, the medium will only become more precious.

Print is becoming less prominent and common in terms of marketing and media today, but panelists during the Luxury Interactive session "The Creative Combination: Experiential, Innovative and Disciplined" on Oct. 16, 2017, stressed that it is never going away. Luxury brands have a stronger need to remain true to themselves to stay on top in such a cutthroat industry.

An executive from John Varvatos explained how the brand was able to create a special experience with consumers in stores and at home through a print campaign.

The print campaign became special and more luxurious because consumers could feel the quality in their hands. Print has become a commodity.



Print will always be an important part of NYTimes. Image credit: New York Times

Consumers are comfortable with their screens because they spend all day with their computers and mobile devices. However, print is becoming rare and more of a commodity, making it a special experience ([see story](#)).

One of the ways print magazines have sought to retain advertisers and distinguish itself from digital is through making its print editions collector's items.

Cond Nast-owned *W Magazine* introduced readers to its remodeled format with an unlikely actor pair and advertisers such as Chanel adorning the February 2018 issue's pages.

As the print world becomes less of a needed commodity due to digital, *W Magazine* is focusing on what makes a tangible publication valuable. The February 2018 issue marked *W Magazine's* inaugural dive into creating installments that feel more akin to collectibles by embracing the notion that Hollywood figures should support one another.

W Magazine recently announced plans to scale back circulation of its printed property in an effort to make print more luxurious.



Tom Hanks and Mary J. Blige, featured on one edition of W Magazine's February 2018 issue, celebrate love in Hollywood. Image credit: W Magazine

In the past, *W Magazine*, lead by editor in chief Stefano Tonchi, had produced 11 monthly print editions, but since February 2018 onward, the title only publishes eight times per year. *W Magazine's* decision is backed by an ideology that print can be more luxurious and a collectible, rather than something discarded quickly after it has been read ([see story](#)).

The idea of print being more luxurious has been echoed by other brands and publications.

Print media still holds a place in the luxury marketing mix, but its role is evolving as content marketing extends across more platforms, according to panelists at a Fordham Graduate Business School event.

Rather than being the primary place for brands to tell their stories, print serves as a special occasion, while digital content serves the purpose of engaging on a more consistent basis. Brands therefore need to find ways to reach consumers in both short-form and long-form content, making a three-second impression on a phone or telling a more extensive story in editorial ([see story](#)).

Digital versus print

While digital has clearly taken up much of the space that was once occupied by print advertising, it is not necessary that the two be in conflict.

For advertisers looking to make the most of their media ad buying, a combination of print and digital is still an effective strategy.

This sentiment is shared by many publishers. Media group Hearst is preparing for further changes to the media landscape in the coming years, looking at the upheaval in 2017 as just the beginning.

In his annual New Year's letter addressing employees, former Hearst Magazines president David Carey said that from his perspective, the winners going forward will view disruption as an opportunity. From embracing digital media distribution to acquisitions, Hearst has looked to expand and further diversify its business with a focus on the motto "print proud and digitally smart" ([see story](#)).

Some media brands are even feeling confident enough in their combination of print and digital strategies that they have launched new publications taking advantage of both simultaneously.

For example, Cond Nast is putting additional stock in digital content hubs with the launch of title offshoots meant to accompany primary print publications.

Cond Nast has recently ramped up its digital properties to cull millennial readership and to attract advertisers that appeal to the next generation of readers. The media group's millennial-centric developments includes the "Next Gen" campaign and digital companions for titles such as *Architectural Digest*, *Golf Digest* and *Bon Appetit* magazines ([see story](#)).



Hearst Tower in New York. Image credit: Hearst

Both print and digital come with their own unique positives and negatives.

For digital, its reach and ease of use has made it the advertising model of choice for many.

As millennials grow into the dominant consumer base in the global market, their proclivity for digital platforms is

changing the way luxury brands market to their demographic.

According to data from the Shullman Research Center, digital platforms are the most preferred ad channels for luxury buyers, and they are significantly more popular among the affluent than the wealthy. The Shullman Research Center attributes this to the presence of millennials in the affluent market segment.

Among affluents, who tend to be younger and therefore have accrued less wealth, digital platforms are dominant in a way that they are not for the wealthy, which tends to have more older members.

As millennials have grown up with Facebook and digital, they are more comfortable with those platforms as vehicles for engaging with luxury brands ([see story](#)).

However, in the age of digital advertising, print placements may seem like a thing of the past, but for luxury they can still play a large role.

A new report from MNI took a look at travel brands and how they advertise for shoppers today. One of the most notable case studies from the report saw publisher Meredith making strong use of print ads to drive traffic for a Hawaiian luxury travel brand.



A case study from MNI used print ads to drive engagement. Image credit: Travel + Leisure

MNI took a look at a print campaign from Meredith for Kukui'ula, a luxury community in Hawaii that was looking to attract more affluent travelers. To do this, Meredith and MNI worked together for a cover wrap campaign for *Travel + Leisure*, putting Kukui'ula front and center on the magazine, combining editorial and advertising in an engaging way.

After the campaign, MNI reported that Kukui'ula saw an 11 percent increase in traffic to its Web site. In addition, 16 percent more people requested information about the brand and 35 percent of customers said they were far more likely to stay at Kukui'ula in the future after seeing the print ad ([see story](#)).

Making creative stand out

In the old days of print ad buying, brands could hope for little more than a front of the issue placement or a back cover.

While prestigious, even this level of advertising leaves something to be desired in the digital era. For that reason, many luxury brands have taken on a new strategy: partnering directly with magazines and publications for collaborative efforts that go beyond a simple display ad.

For example, The Selects Gallery and fashion photographer Kenneth Willardt recently teamed with *Harper's Bazaar* and Yves Saint Laurent for a new photo series inspired by Mr. Saint Laurent's work.

Called "That's Rich," the series is inspired by Mr. Saint Laurent's vision of the modern woman as he imagined her. The photo series was presented at The Selects Gallery and in the *Harper's Bazaar* September issue ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Cond Nast's *British GQ* celebrated the Men of the Year in style with help from German fashion group Hugo Boss.

During the ceremony on Sept. 5, a number of the presenters, guests and honorees wore Hugo Boss attire. The event allows *GQ* to bring its sophisticated, culturally minded editorial focus off the page ([see story](#)).

GQ has been one of the best publications for luxury brands looking to get advertising that is more in-depth than a

simple double-page spread. The publication has worked with many brands to give them access to *GQ's* large audience.



British GQ is hosting its annual Men of the Year Awards. Image credit: British GQ

Italian fashion label Gucci teamed with *British GQ* to highlight the stories of creative individuals.

The second installment of their collaborative series "The Performers" follows five influential men as they travel to a place that shaped them. Rather than one-off articles, today native content partnerships often revolve around ongoing campaigns or series, allowing a brand and publication to make more of an impact.

The first five episodes of Gucci and *GQ's* The Performers were released last year.

Each of the five men profiled, who have occupations such as architect, artist and actor, was asked to choose a location that inspires them anywhere in the world. The films then transports these influencers to these destinations, with Gucci's president and CEO Marco Bizzarri and *GQ's* editor in chief Dylan Jones serving as hosts ([see story](#)).

Similarly, precision-cut crystal maker Swarovski encouraged women around the world to match their jewelry to their mood through tailored content.

Swarovski's promotion for its Remix collection leveraged the local understanding of Lagardre Global Advertising's creative and production teams at 10 international editions of *Elle*. The resulting native advertising campaign aimed to cater the creative to the specific markets, taking the adaptation for each title beyond a simple translation ([see story](#)).

Brand magazines

While working directly with magazines provides more control for marketers looking for media advertising, nothing gives more control than creating their own brand-operated magazines.

A number of brands and retailers, particularly luxury department stores, have begun operating their own print and digital magazines, combining real editorial content with an advertising opportunity uncorrupted by the addition of other brands' messages.

For example, U.S. department store chain Nordstrom ventured into the world of digital publishing with the release of the first issue of its new online magazine, called simply "n."



Nordstrom's new magalog replaces its older traditional digital catalog. Image credit: Nordstrom

The digital publication is a combination of editorial and catalog aspects, bringing customers not just images and prices of new products, but also putting those goods in the context of outfits and seasons. Nordstrom joins the many upscale retailers who now publish their own digital magalogs.

N. is the name of Nordstrom's new fashion magazine, a combination of editorial content and catalog of new products. Within the digital pages of n., Nordstrom has created a space where it can debut new products, highlight specific collections and brands as well as offer buying guides for different categories of product to its customers.

The magazine has grown out of the store's digital catalogs, which, while nicely designed, had little in the way of extra content and served mostly as a simple look book of new products ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Sotheby's International Realty expanded into the world of publishing with the launch of a luxury magazine, *Reside*.



Reside is published in collaboration with Dow Jones. Image credit: Sotheby's International Realty

Reside includes features, interviews and editorial content focused on the world of luxury real estate and high-end homes. The magazine is Sotheby's International Realty's created in partnership with Dow Jones Media Group and will allow affiliate companies to create their own unique versions of the magazine specific to them ([see story](#)).

These brand magazines offer those that operate them a more nuanced and controlled way of getting their message out to audiences in print form.

Department store chain Neiman Marcus is heralding its upcoming New York debut through a city-centric spread in its fall magalog.

The September issue of *The Book* features a photo shoot that celebrates local sights and experiences. While still months away, Neiman Marcus is getting the word out and drumming up excitement for its Manhattan premiere ([see story](#)).

Future of magazine advertising

The world of magazine advertising has undergone immense change over the last few years, but that does not mean that the category has been left behind.

While digital media may be giving magazines headaches, it has not made print obsolete, and certainly not for luxury brands for whom a premium experience is always worth an investment.

From brand magazines to publisher partnerships, brands have many options for how they can create a magazine ad buying strategy that suits their specific needs and gets them in touch with the right customers.

"Advertisers should not give up on print," Walton Isaacson's Ms. Elliott said. "Given all the concern these days about brand safety with digital, print remains a very respected and trusted brand safe environment.

"Additionally, print has high engagement rates as there is less multi-tasking happening when you are physically turning pages," she said.

Best practices for magazine ad buying

- Erin Elliott, vice president of media at [Walton Isaacson](#), Culver City, CA
 - "Have a cohesive, holistic approach that doesn't have print living in a vacuum. A multi-platform approach that bridges to digital and social will be most successful."

- "Keep messaging simple with a storyline that can be easily followed across platforms."
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