



the whitepaper series

#7

Ink on paper... better than Search Optimisation?

“ To allow your consumer the chance to properly understand your brand, being as present in their offline lives as on their social media pages is still important. ”

60%

Print's back in fashion as retailers and brands work out that, online, consumers' lives have become too busy. The concept of lean back versus lean forward (remember that?) is now more relevant than ever as brands seek to understand how they can increase direct consumer connections, and sales, and retailers struggle to learn how they can maintain their hitherto phenomenal online sales growth.

According to Ofcom, the average Briton now spends more than £2,000 per year online. That's around 70% more than the average American. Last month's top story in the New York Times was the fact that retail giant JC Penny is bringing back its catalogue, some seven years after it ditched it in the face of growing online sales. The reason – JC Penny has discovered that people need a break in what are now such fast-paced lives. And the catalogue, or more probably, retail branded magazine (or magalogue) provides the ideal chance to influence them during their break.

The fact that catalogues work hard in driving online sales should not be a surprise to any UK marketer. A quick Google search provides you with enough evidence of their efficacy without having to conduct your own in-depth research programme.

A year ago, a survey by MarketReach found that 60% of consumers visited a retailer's online store within a week of receiving their catalogue and fully half of these people spent more than £40 on their first purchase. What's more, those same consumers looked at double the number of website pages and spent 109% more time online than people who had not received the catalogue.

The same study also showed that 70% of consumers keep their catalogues for more than a month, with a third keeping them for up to a year. During that time, the average consumer spent between 5 and 30 minutes browsing the catalogue, compared to just 11 minutes browsing the average retail website.

“ IT’S ABOUT PLANNING YOUR CONTENT CREATION AND THEN AMPLIFYING IT ACROSS ALL CHANNELS ”

So what is it about catalogues that keeps consumers engaged and why are they so effective in driving online sales?

The answer is specific, not generic. Catalogues today have little in common with the Yellow Pages style directories that used to be issued by Great Universal Stores, Littlewoods Home Shopping and the like. Other than Argos, there is hardly a retailer that relies on the now outdated “Big Book” approach to cramming at least one picture of every single product in the range inside a book printed on the cheapest of papers and distributed to everyone on a data file that was out of control.

Savvy retailers have learnt from the magazine industry. Remember when, a year or so ago, Sainsbury’s marketing director Sarah Warby declared that any retailer not acting as a publisher was missing a trick? No doubt Next would have said “Yeah, we knew that”. But few other retailers had cottoned on, despite the long term success of the Next Directory.

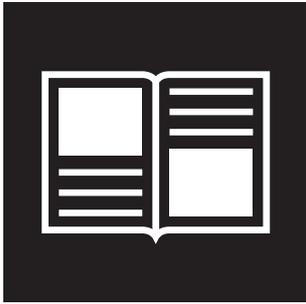
In 2014 the Top 100 print magazines had a combined circulation of more than 19 million copies, whereas the Top 100 digital editions of magazines had a paltry 514,000 subscribers. While we all know that magazine circulations are falling, the fact that 19 million people buy them every week, and very few read them online, must tell us something about how consumers want to consume certain types of information.

Think about it. If I want a catalogue experience, where I can see picture after picture of the brown leather sofa that I’ve decided I want, then online is a great place for me to do research and price comparison. But, and here’s where it gets personal and where the value is driven, if I want to be inspired about how my

lounge could look and how much better my life could be as a result, it’s far easier for me to do this in a magazine or a brand/retailer catalogue, where products are much more frequently shown in context and where I have more time to consider what I’m being presented with. What are the trends that I will respond to? Which products actually go with a brown sofa? How would that carpet look with this rug? Which curtains might complement the wallpaper I’ve seen? All these things are better explained in a place where there’s time for reflection, consideration and the absorption of advice, provided by credible experts.

Buyers can no longer be the dominant force in deciding what goes into a catalogue. Shoppers are demanding more from retailers, they want to be inspired and that means that selling space has to be sacrificed to give room for more aspirational photography and editorial content. Hangar Seven’s work on the Asda George Home catalogue is a prime example of how the catalogue’s role has evolved.

Andy Johnson, Managing Director of our Retail Marketing team, says ‘For George Home, we see the catalogue as a Content Hub, the centre of a multi-channel shopper engagement strategy. Essentially, we’re creating imagery that can be used as effectively on social media as it is in the catalogue. Our editorial teams are writing long form copy for the catalogue, which can be re-purposed to form tweets, blog posts and web updates. Whilst we’re building inspirational roomsets for stills imagery, we also create video content that uses those same roomsets. It’s about planning your content creation and then amplifying it across all channels – it’s an approach we call Connected Content – and the catalogue is at the heart of the strategy’.



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“ RENEWED CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT WITH PRINT PRODUCED BY BRANDS AND RETAILERS IS, QUITE PROBABLY, THE SAME PHENOMENON THAT’S DRIVING THEIR REAPPRAISAL OF PRINTED BOOKS ”

At last year’s Oxford Literary Festival Tim Waterstone (he of bookshop fame) proudly announced that the e-book was going into decline and that the digital revolution had lost its head of steam. Nielsen Research reports that, in the USA, just 23% of all books sold are e-books, whereas in the UK this figure falls to under 18%. The same research shows that almost one in every two books sold is a printed paperback, with hardcover printed books making up the balance.

And here’s the reason. Research by Nielsen also showed that 79% of users only scan web pages and fewer than 16% would read the page word by word. On most devices, readers don’t read, they skim content and search out key words. The same study showed that reader information absorption was almost 100% when reading a newspaper, versus less than half that when browsing a web page.

The message is clear. To allow your consumer the chance to properly understand your brand, to really know what you have to offer and to engage in a meaningful relationship, being as present in their offline lives as on their social media pages is still important.

Catalogues, magazines, flyers, magalogues ... forget the terminology and think about what you’re trying to achieve through print. Read all the magazines which serve your sector – 19 million consumers do every week – and ask yourself where you learnt more about what you wanted as opposed to simply what you could buy? JC Penny did and their catalogue is back.

Hangar Seven produce a lot of flyer, magazine and catalogue pages each year. If you want to know more about how we can deploy our skills to grow your online engagement, then please visit www.hangarseven.co.uk or email info@hangarseven.co.uk



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