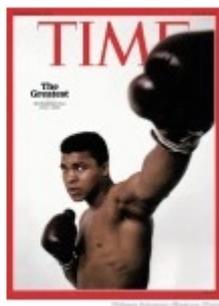


One Night Stand; Love Affair; Marriage – What is the Relationship Between a Magazine & its Print Audience?

A Mr. Magazine™ Musing...

Lately, I have been traveling all over the country and the world in general, preaching about the role of [print](#) in a digital age for two reasons: (1) I do believe in the future of print and that print is here to stay on a permanent basis, and (2) I do believe that the role of print is changing, that we cannot have the same “old” print that we had before the digital age. Everything evolves and changes, that’s a given.



However, some of the fundamentals are not going to change, whether you publish a weekly magazine, a monthly magazine, or a quarterly publication; there are some things that are inherent in the [definition of print](#) that will never cease. The

number one trait that will always remain is: if it’s not ink on paper, it is not a magazine. It can be many platforms if it isn’t ink on paper, because there are many platforms, but it cannot be a magazine. We have to be careful about what we define as a magazine.

Having said that, I want to explain what I believe the role of print is in this digital age, but to do that we need to understand the nature of magazines and their continued

relationship with their audience. We need to recognize the types of magazines that exist in the marketplace today and look at the number of new magazines that are arriving on a daily basis. And of course, we need to acknowledge the principles of creating a magazine that will also never change, among them being that the foundation of that creation, which includes content, design, curation, innovation; all of the things that have been a part of magazine making for years, is still very much alive and kicking.

The way that I classify the relationship between a magazine and its audience is really very simple. I am a firm believer that one of the most important things when it comes to building and sustaining that relationship is knowing your audience and putting them first, not the platform. Not print first, not digital first; audience first. That is paramount to the success of any publication. And that is not just lip-service or words to fill up a page on my blog. That is truth. Without our audiences, we have no reason to exist.

When it comes to magazines or print in general, we create this relationship with our audience, unlike any other entity. That relationship can be one of three types: a one night stand; a love affair; or a marriage. Print as a whole has a broad spectrum of entities, from a 700 page hard-bound book to a 36 page magazine and each one of those entities has a different relationship with their audience.

For example, my grandson developed a love affair with the "Harry Potter" brand. So, he read all of the books that were out there, from Book One all the way to the current end of the series. Once the books are completed, he may watch the movies, and once the movies are under his belt, that love affair will fade and he'll move on to something else. And so it goes with our magazine audience.

I had the pleasure of meeting Pam Didner on one of my recent trips to Hungary. Pam is the author of “Global Content Marketing: How to Create Great Content, Reach More Customers, and Build a Worldwide Marketing Strategy that Works.” She asked me about the different relationships that we form with our audiences and I believe that she captured my feelings on the subject very well. So, rather than restating the obvious, here’s what Pam wrote:



“I love how he (Mr. Magazine™) categorizes magazines; he uses love relationships as categories.

One-Night Stand

Love Affair

Marriage

The One-Night Stand Magazine

“Magazines that are published based on a milestone, key event or a person. Life Magazine usually does a great job of publishing one-night stands. They have published special editions or tributes for “Princess Diana”, “John F. Kennedy”, “Ronald Reagan”, “Queen Elizabeth II’s Golden Jubilee” and “WWII 60th Anniversary.” These types of magazines need to be timely to entice readers into a one-night stand.

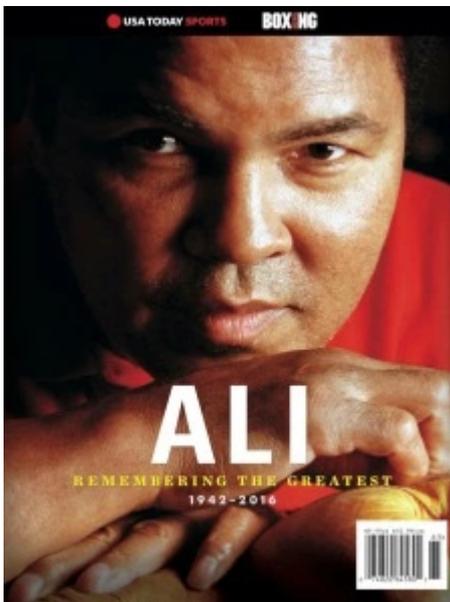
The Love Affair Magazine

“People will buy magazines for a short period of time based on key decisions in their lives. The best examples are wedding-planning, pregnancy preparation and travel. Brides-to-be will purchase bridal magazines when they start planning their wedding and shopping for a dress. Parents-to-be will purchase parenting and baby-related magazines to get ready for their first-borns. When the wedding is over, the baby is born; they

are no longer interested in the magazine as if a love affair lost its fire and passion.

The Marriage Magazine

“This is the type of magazine that becomes a ritual to the readers’ daily lives. My mother-in-law loves her New Yorker and my husband reads his monthly car plates magazine (He collects car plates and their organization has a member’s only magazine.) These types of magazines become part of their lives and they are loyal followers.”



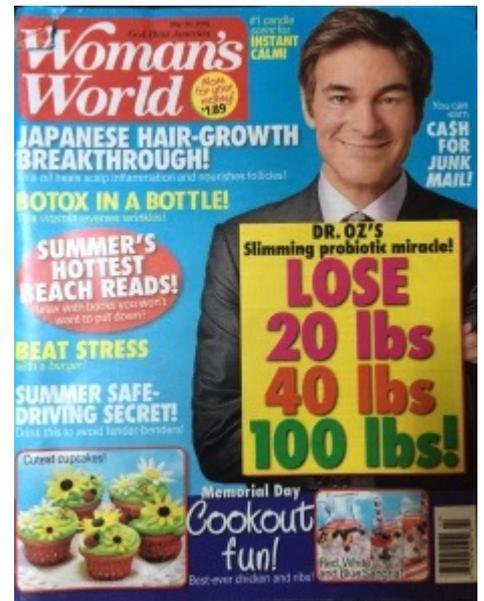
The relationship that you develop with your audience is the cornerstone of everything that we do. The moment the world lost Prince, and more recently, Muhammad Ali, one-night stands were formed. Epic specials on deceased celebrities and sports figures are synonymous with the one-night stand because they are timely at that moment and extremely important to fans of the artist.

Everything that we create today has to be built upon those three cornerstones: one-night stand, love affair, or marriage.

And the old adage: “There is nothing new under the sun” can now be sent to its final resting place, because in reality in today’s digital world, there are a lot of new things under the sun.

When it comes to new magazines, they are continuing to launch unceasingly. In fact, the total number of new magazines arriving on the marketplace is comparable to the pre-digital days that we all remember so nostalgically. And they’re still the same three categories that I’ve always said new magazines fall into:

Groundbreakers: The magazines that are singular and there is nothing else like them, such as when Woman's World was created. There was no weekly women's magazine for American women when it hit the newsstands that had the rapid change of a non-news magazine on a weekly basis. It takes creativity and determination, and it takes being a weekly to keep that link between addictiveness and disposability with your audience in every issue.



Copycats: The group of magazines that come based on the success of other magazines. These magazines are created by people who basically sniff out the prosperity of other magazines that are very similar, but feel they have a different take on the subject matter. In so many cases, the copycats can end up being better than the original publications. With all the hunting and self-defense magazines out there, here comes a magazine like Recoil that sets itself apart from everything else on the marketplace. Suddenly, you have an upscale looking and upscale feeling magazine that treats guns as a lifestyle, rather than just a special interest. And you target the lifestyle of the gun owner, instead of the gun per se, without putting the weaponry aside. So, some copycats can be even more significant and successful than the groundbreakers.

Cheap Imitators: Companies and publishers that are in the business just to ride on the coattails of the successful magazines. The Food Network magazine is flourishing; suddenly, you start seeing an influx of food and celebrity magazines, or food and travel; just any combination of the successful titles out there on the newsstand just to imitate it and be a mirror image of those magazines, hoping that the Groundbreakers and the Copycats will establish an audience big enough, that even

if you're a cheap imitation, you can cash in on the overflow.

Having said that and combining the relationship aspect with the creative aspect of a new magazine, the marketplace is showing no signs of slowing down. The numbers speak for themselves. Every month as you can see on Mr. Magazine's™ Launch Monitor, there is no shortage of regularly-published magazines, covering any topic that you can think of, such as a

Groundbreaker like Pallet Magazine – one that joins great articles with the setting of craft beer.

Frequency new launches for the past six months:

- **May – 25**
- **April – 21**
- **March – 7**
- **February – 12**
- **January – 21**
- **December – 32**

So, if you look at the numbers there is no slow down. If you look at the topics; how many times can one publish a magazine on the big, beautiful woman, yet in May, there was a brand new title called, FabUplus. These new magazines believe they may have found a new twist on a well-used subject. Over time people forget the older titles, those that came and went before one can remember, so there's always a new audience, a new churning taking place.



And if anyone doubts the future of print in this digital age? All they have to do is look at all of the digital-only entities that are discovering, and have already discovered, the power and substance of print. Entities such as Net-A-

Porter, WebMD, Sneaker News, and Posi+tive have all established a foothold in the printed word because no media company today can afford to be omni-platform in today's marketplace; they must be multiplatform. You're creating a brand, not just a new magazine. And that's very important to remember. Are you launching a brand or a singular title? Because nowadays you have to be in the branding business with the printed magazine as your cornerstone, if you're going to survive into the future.

Technology has changed everything, even printing. I just returned from a visit to Trend Offset Printing. They have introduced the first web Canon inkjet printing press. And it was amazing. The quality, personalization and the speed were unbelievable. And the quantities. Printing is making it easier to launch new magazines. No printer will throw you out of the facilities if you tell them you want 5,000 copies or 10, 000 copies because in today's world, those quantities are no problem.

And remember, magazines are much more than just content-providers. Magazines are experience makers. Excellent writing, reporting and photography are still just as important today as they were generations ago. Magazines have a great future, if executed properly. Ideas are a dime a dozen; it's the execution of the idea that counts, and will produce either a one-night stand, a love affair, or a long-lasting relationship.

So, until next time...go pick up a magazine and begin the experience...