

Source: Printweek.com on June 29th, 2015

Independent research commissioned by paper pressure group Two Sides has **revealed consumers much prefer to read news and magazine content, complicated information and bills in print rather than on screen.**

In May 2015, independent research organization Toluna asked 500 consumers in the UK and 1,000 in the US how much they enjoyed reading on different media. Overwhelmingly, the respondents were more likely to choose 'agree' or 'strongly agree' when referring to print.

Researchers found 84% of UK respondents agreed they retained or used information better when reading printed words, 55% agreed with the statement when reading on a computer screen, 41% on an e-reader or tablet and 31% on a mobile or smartphone.

A total of 79% said they felt most relaxed when reading print, 44% said they felt most relaxed reading on a computer screen, 33% on e-reader or tablet and 23% on a phone. And 78% said that given a choice they would prefer to read on paper, 30% on a computer screen, 24% on a e-reader or tablet and 17% on a smartphone.

When asked they also agreed they were more relaxed and receptive when they read printed news (69%) and magazine content (66%), while fewer said they were relaxed and receptive when they read news (25%) or magazine content on screen (18%). And they also found paper less distracting: just 21% said they were easily distracted when reading on paper. This increased to 65% when reading on a smartphone.

When the responses are broken down by age, **there was no sign that the younger generations preferred reading from electronic media. For example, 82% of 18-24-year-olds questioned said they could understand or retain information better when reading on paper, as did 83% of 25-34-year-olds, 78% of 35-44-year-olds, 86% of 45-64-year-olds and 91% of those 65 and over.**

When saying they found print relaxing to read, the results were very close: 77% of 18-24-year-olds agreed and 87% of those aged 65 or more, with everyone else between those two figures. When asked how they would choose to read, the results were even closer, with just 5% between the 18-24 category at 72% and those 65 or over.

Younger people were more likely to agree that they found reading on a smartphone relaxing, but only half as many as agreed in the print category. The 18-24 and 25-34 age groups were on 38% and 39% respectively while only 8% of those aged 65 and over agreed.

Complex Landscape

The results suggest the landscape is more complex than the dominant ideology of a few years ago – that digital was on an ever-upward surge, print was on the way out and, eventually, only old people would be interested in print.

Peter Smith, chairman of TH Brickell Group, which includes West Country printer Blackmore, a business that has printed hyperlocal magazine Blackmore Vale for 35 years, said the results were interesting. “I think it’s a generational thing really. A newspaper is part of my normal routine. I read a book not an e-book and I like to give people books – it’s a nice thing to do. The generation that is coming through now is looking for sound bites to things. “I think the way to look at it is that print’s got its place.”

It is a view shared by Two Sides managing director Martyn Eustace: “For getting the latest news, there is no doubt that online news feeds are the way to receive information quick and fast. But there are occasions when printed media is the best option. Take for example the fact that **83% of respondents to the latest Two Sides Survey have a preference to read more complex topics on paper.** “I believe it’s all about having an informed choice and knowing how people like to receive and interact with information.”

When it came to advertising, the respondents believed that they took more notice of advertising in printed newspapers (53%) and magazines (54%) rather than ads on news and other websites (21%), surely good news for any embattled periodical printer.

“Having invested heavily in new kit over the past three years, the results of the survey are a relief and exactly what I want to read... and on paper, too,” says Buxton Press managing director Kirk Galloway. “I can confirm from the increased volumes we are printing daily that publications are far from in decline and are gently on the way up, both in increased paginations and run lengths which is a double benefit for us magazine printers – not to mention our clients.”

The percentage of Two Sides respondents who agree they took more notice of advertising in posted or door-dropped marketing was also higher than on-screen at 39%. Mike Colling at agency MC&C says the results build on similar research published earlier this year by Royal Mail in its Mailmen study. “Yet again we see that the claims that digital media will replace all other channels are far from the truth. Books, cinema, radio and television are enjoying record revenues. That’s because there is a genuine role for all of them in consumers’ lives. So it is with print. This research clearly shows the unique value print has in consumer’s lives. “And print creates unique value for advertisers too. **Customers who receive printed materials from advertisers tend to be more loyal, and generate higher net revenues over a five-year period,**” he adds.

Mark Hetem, director at Opus Trust Marketing, a transactional printer that also sends electronic communications for clients, says the results are not surprising. “The survey confirms our belief that it’s about customer choice. Not everyone is the same and not everyone responds in the same way. We believe that paper leads the way as the channel for engagement but we believe in choice. “The direct mail sector has been cleaned up a lot and the reduction of junk mail has had an impact. I think people are more willing to trust what is coming through their letterbox and engage with it again. We still produce more mail than send emails.”

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