

WHAT'S NEW



The Newspaper as an Advertising Medium: Survival and Strategic Progress

[By Roshan Tolani]

"The most truthful part of a newspaper is the advertisements." —Thomas Jefferson

Despite being both respected and hated in various eras, newspapers have survived and thrived, daring to become powerful influences on society. Recognizing the newspaper's tremendous power early on, marketers began using it as a medium to promote their products and services. Marketing in this manner was so effective that the newspaper became the most reliable instrument in the hands of advertisers.

However, the emergence of the Internet and other electronic media seems to have dethroned the newspaper from its monopolistic position as the medium of advertising. In this decade, media analysts have sounded the death knell for newspapers several times. In the last few years, the chorus has grown louder and louder, and now everyone seems to be predicting doom and gloom for the industry.

Decline in circulation is a fact.

In the last six months, weekday circulation of U.S. daily newspapers has fallen by 2.1%, and that of Sunday papers has fallen by 3.1%, according to the 2007 NAA circulation report. Other findings in the report also point toward the downfall of the newspaper as a medium. Six of the 10 highest-selling dailies and 555 of the surveyed newspapers registered declines. The *Los Angeles Times* has lost 4.25% of its market, *The Washington Post's* circulation is down by 3.5%, and the *Chicago Tribune's* circulation has declined by 2.1%.

Many readers have cancelled their newspaper subscriptions in favor of obtaining news and information on the Internet, severely crippling the medium's revenue from circulation and advertising potential

All is not lost.

When sizing up the strength of a medium like the newspaper, it would be a mistake to base our analysis only on circulation figures. An examination of the reading experiences of consumers will reveal additional useful data for advertisers.

The following findings of a recent shopping study conducted by MRI can help us assess the strength of the newspaper as an advertising medium:

- 52% of consumers said they read advertisements in newspapers—more than in any other medium.
- 46% said newspapers were their "preferred" medium through which to get information from ads; this figure was 10% for TV.
- 52% considered newspaper ads "valuable" for planning shopping; this figure was 13% for the Internet.

We should also look at the findings of a 2006 study conducted by Scarborough Research:

- 72% of readers surveyed enjoyed reading newspapers.
- Only 19% of newspaper readers found ads intrusive; this figure was 38% for TV viewers.
- 40% of readers trusted newspaper ads; this figure was 23% for TV and 18% for radio.
- About 80% of newspaper readers visited a store or showroom after seeing an ad and bought something that was advertised.

Online growth

To offset the reduction in circulation and associated revenue, newspapers have strategically invested in digital innovation. The audience for U.S. newspaper websites has grown at nearly twice the rate of the overall online audience, suggesting that newspapers continue to play an important role in American society.

It would not be out of place to predict that as the online audience becomes more sophisticated, it will turn to more trustworthy



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sources of news and information. If it does, online newspapers will have a significant advantage over many other media outlets.

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