

# Print advertising still

New research confirms that print advertising still has the edge over of online in the B2B space.

With the explosion of web-based advertising and email, many marketers and agencies have moved away from traditional print advertising in favour of the new medium.

To validate this shift, USA Strategies conducted a research study among business decision-makers: The results were surprising in that the majority of the 600+ respondents stated that they still prefer print as the source to find out about new products and services.

This data indicated that the pendulum may have swung too far in favour of online advertising and that marketers should return to a balanced media usage in their communications with customers and prospects. Online sources are used for more detailed product and technical information, where space limitations in advertising cannot provide the depth or detailed data required for purchasing evaluation.

## INTERNET VS PRINT PUBLICATIONS

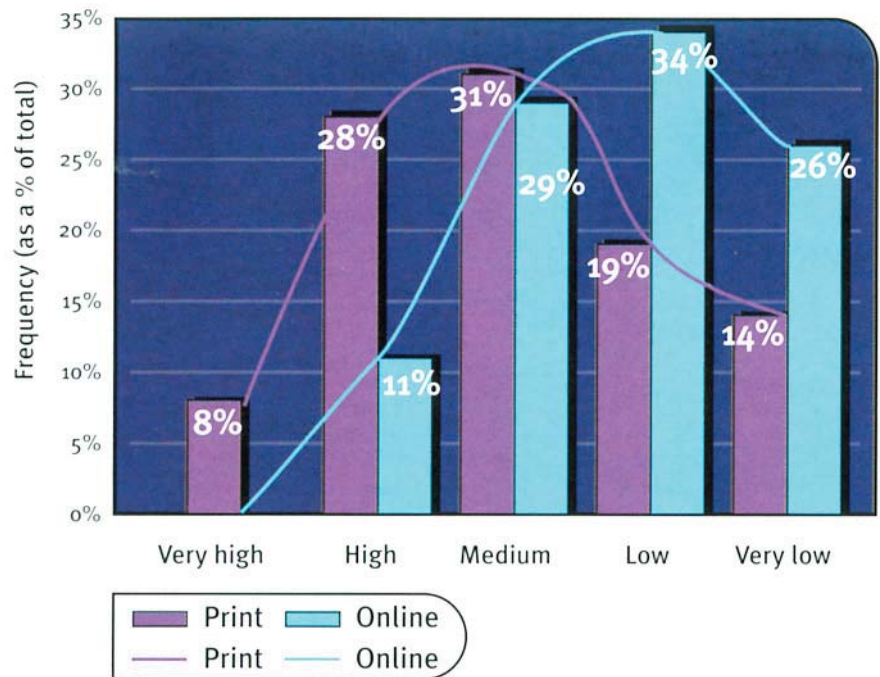
When the participants were asked which medium creates the greater awareness for a product or service, print trade publications were the vehicles of choice.

Online advertising was judged as less credible and persuasive than its traditional print counterpart. The distribution curves illustrate that print advertising leads in acceptance, and if the primary purpose of advertising is to create awareness, then print is still the king (see figure A).

Another trend the research results point out is that the influence of advertising in a purchase decision still gives the edge to print, yet the internet is growing as an area where business people seek out detailed information. The web has an advantage in its depth and richness of content, such as the ability to convey more of the technical specifications and engineering details that cannot be conveyed in a standard print ad.

But, as opposed to early alarmist reports that the web would directly replace print, that does not now seem to be the case.

Figure A  
Attention paid to advertising



Many publishers have adopted the model that web and print can work in concert with each other and actually create a more vital dynamic product.

## SPEED OF RESPONSE - "WE WANT IT NOW!"

Response times for information requests from traditional print media were measured between one to three days in the research study. When key decision-makers want information from an advertisement, they want it as fast as possible.

In the present email-driven world, decision-makers are able to respond quickly to a print ad via the web, and the traditional bingo card mail-based vehicle publishers have relied on for many years may not be able to keep up the increased expectation of a rapid response (see figure B).

## WHAT DO WE READ?

A hypothesis stating that decision-makers prefer to read content and details from a web

site, as opposed to the standard magazine format, was tested in the research.

Surprisingly, the response indicated that the print version of a trade magazine remains the preference of the respondents (see figure C).

## PRODUCT RESEARCH MOVES ONLINE

One area that the web has gained credibility and visibility in is the daily job of researching product information. A trend was noted that when making a purchasing decision, more people are gathering specific product information from web-based sources (see figure D).

## WHAT IS AHEAD?

This study and previous research support the importance and critical nature of print advertising in the current business environment among key decision-makers. But the study also queried the next generation (the under-30 age group) and how they prefer to receive information.

# reigns over online

Figure B

## Time to respond to print advertising

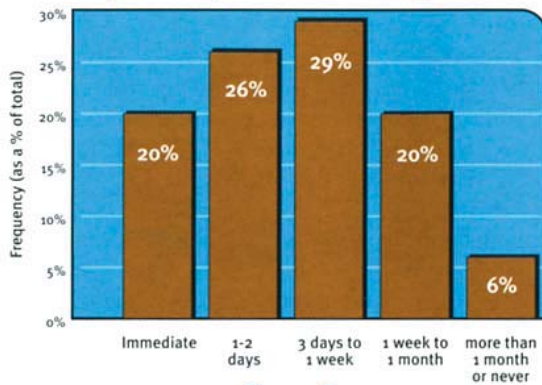


Figure D

## Influence of internet on purchasing behavior

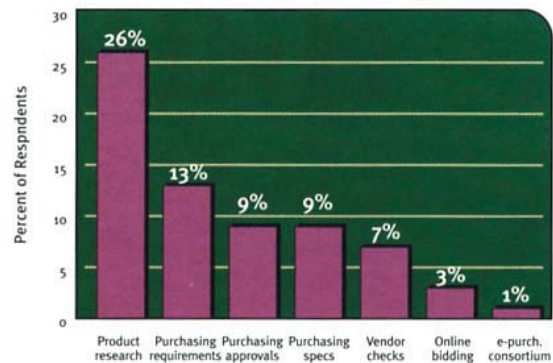


Figure C

## Reading preference

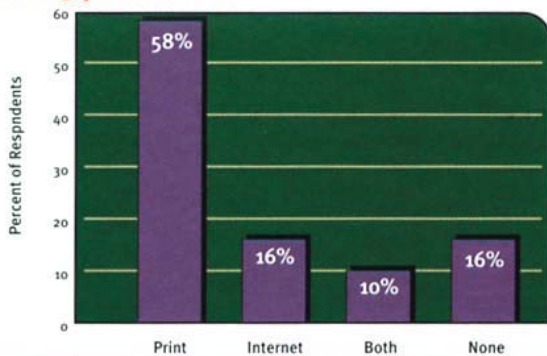
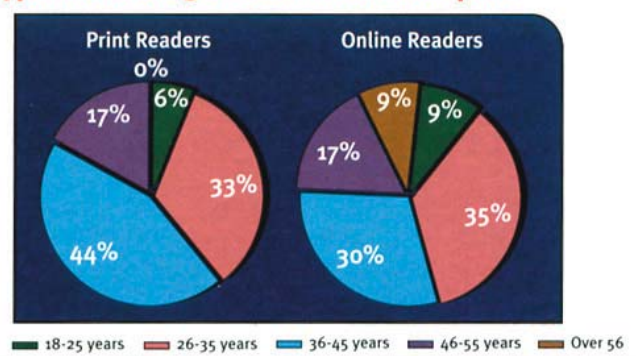


Figure E

## Hypothesis 3: age vs. online subscription



Ten years ago, when a similar study was conducted, the age of the Internet user was a significant factor in that the under 20-year-old represented the majority of internet users. Today, all age groups in the sample survey are using the web, so age is no longer a factor in print usage vs. online usage. But as this next generation moves up the business hierarchy, they will change their demands from trade publications and the trend will be toward faster response times, instant messaging and a general acceleration of the type and depth of information demanded regarding products and services (see figure E).

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PUBLISHING COMMUNITY

As with the previous research on internet and print published in 1999, this study points to some very important current and future trends. Publishers should be reassured by the fact that print advertising remains a powerful, important vehicle in making a purchasing decision. At

the same time, decision-makers have recognized the value of the internet to provide rich product information. There is an opportunity to tailor advertising to these new directions and offer marketers new ways to pinpoint where they are putting their dollars. The next generation will be using new yardsticks and measures of credibility to form their opinions and make their decisions. Research such as this must be updated periodically to help marketers and publishers allocate their marketing dollars for optimum impact.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVERTISING

In a time of economic volatility, this research proves that the world of business-to-business marketing and communications is indeed changing-but not to the exclusion of print publications. Today's marketer can be assured that decision-makers continue to rely on print trade publications.

These publications should serve as a foundation for creating awareness

of products and services as well as a way of building web site traffic. In addition, marketers should be looking at new and innovative ways to allocate marketing dollars in order to influence the next generation of business decision-makers. The time-honoured approach to advertising must also change and move to a more action-oriented, responsive, dynamic model. A print ad should no longer stand alone. There has to be an accompanying web presence sharing the same branded graphic appearance as the associated print work. The decision-maker who we need to influence has less time to find and evaluate information, which means the role of the marketer is to blanket that prospect with multiple ways to access a brand, product or service. Instead of pulling back and hesitating, a marketing executive who wants to make a difference should be aggressively pursuing today and tomorrow's decision-maker." ●

Source FIPP/USA Solutions.  
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