

An Argument for Analogue: How Can an Indie Magazine Structure Its Digital
Framework to Increase Print Viability?

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Abstract

Digital media consumption of magazines is becoming increasingly ubiquitous, yet print remains significant in this genre. The purpose of this study is to determine a model of publishing in which an independent magazine's printed form can be made more viable *because* of its digital components, not despite them. Using a strengths-based approach, the study is based in semi-structured interviews with the publishers of eight independent magazines that have used both print and digital media in their publishing practices, exploring themes like motivation, creative freedom, creative control, and career development. Then, the data was sorted through the lens of McLuhan's "laws of media" tetrad model, allowing for analysis of what is enhanced, obsolesced, retrieved, and reversed in this hybrid publishing model, with the aim of showing what each component can effectively bring in order to support the print edition and to integrate the digital components. The results inform the design and framework of a magazine publishing model in which the print issue is the focus, with support from the digital components. Any independent magazine can apply the results to its current practices or use them to launch a new hybrid offering.

Keywords: magazine publishing, laws of media tetrad, independent publishing, material culture

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An Argument for Analogue:

How Can an Indie Magazine Structure Its Digital Framework to Increase Print Viability?

The Canadian media landscape is experiencing a resurgence of physical, non-digital media while concurrently questioning and challenging the consumption of digital amidst the increasing deluge. In 2017, sales of vinyl records in Canada increased for the seventh year in a row, up from 660,000 in 2016 to 804,000 in 2017 (Nielsen, 2017). In 2018, sales exceeded \$1 billion for the first time since 1985 (Lawrence, 2019) largely due to unique and rare versions of vinyl in limited editions brought by Record Store Day, an annual event inaugurated by brick-and-mortar record stores to celebrate the culture of all things physical, vinyl, and independent about music. Instant film cameras such as the Fujifilm-owned Instax, which provide a tactile, unique visual experience with their photos and memories when compared to digital photography, recently predicted that film sales would surpass its own digital camera sales by almost four times (Fujikawa, 2016). Craine and McGrew (2017), two print marketing industry experts, recently found enough lively debate to question through 19 podcast episodes the economic viability of print, covering topics from mail marketing to *Glamour* magazine's cessation of print, to a 2017 merger of Fujifilm and Xerox (Craine & McGrew, 2018). Increasingly, consumers wade through a digital deluge of information, but the presence, utility, and desire for physical media persist, while the social value of both digital and material media formats continues to be debated.

Now, print—a form of physical media that requires paper as a medium for mechanically printed text and images (Barber, Fitzgerald, Howell & Pontisso, 2006)—is certainly not dead, but the consumption and purpose of print media has changed enough that many past forms no longer exist, and its utility and value in today's culture is unfamiliar. For example, news information is available more efficiently online, where it is free, fast, and ubiquitous, and print

sources do not hold value or purpose in that form as they used to (Innis, Buxton, Cheney, & Heyer, 2015). Indeed, nearly every purpose that the traditional model of a newspaper had is now easily accessible and often free on the Internet: coupons, classifieds, finance, obituaries, real estate, and even the journalism that once defined them (Taras, 2015). However, it is in contrast to the crumbling media monoliths, and because of convergence culture and transmedia (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008), that an independent print magazine—a publication in which the editorial direction is inherently niche, audience-specific, and topically focused—could indeed thrive *because of* the digital deluge.

For the purpose of this study, the viability of print will be defined as having economic justification by the editors because of demand for the magazine in print form in niche markets. It is true that studies of the publishing industry have addressed print's continued viability in a digital age (e.g., Abrahamson, 2015; Le Masurier, 2012; Moylan & Stiles, 1996), and have argued that print is suffering in some cultural niches (Debies-Carl, 2015). However, I contend that the strengths, and concurrently the viability, of print publishing today lies in how it has adapted to the shifting media environment and moved away from timely, newsworthy content to that which holds tangible, tactile value, and longevity.

This puzzle of designing an indie magazine publishing model that leverages the strengths of both print and digital formats is what this research seeks to understand. Print still holds value in the independent magazine form, but for different reasons than it did in the past. Current research in magazine publishing does not question whether a magazine *should* use print or digital; rather, as this study proposes, the question ought to be *how* to use print *and* digital.

My work experience as editor-in-chief (EIC) of an independent magazine and my interests in exploring the harmonization of the print and digital components of any indie

magazine motivate this study. My role as EIC of *Discorder*, leading a small team of dedicated creatives and taking responsibility for a 40-page music and culture monthly, was equal parts exciting and stressful. Every month we met deadline and shipped the issue to the printer, and a mere 36 hours later, we would hold this beautiful thing for the first time, the physical manifestation of our efforts. I would rifle through the pages, smell the ink, scrutinize over missed typos, swoon at the vibrancy of the glossy cover, and feel an overwhelming sense of accomplishment, gratitude, sincere connection, and immediate desire to do it again. I also saw the lack of integration between the magazine in print and its accompanying multimedia components, including its website, radio show, and social media presence, which frustrated me because I saw how each component had potential to invigorate the other instead of operating as silos. Why didn't *Discorder Radio* provide consistent reason to pick up the print copy? Why didn't the website publish time-sensitive articles more frequently that would be stale-dated after a week in print? This research will help me answer these questions and more and help make strategic design choices both for the magazine I envision creating and for existing independent magazine editors.

To that end, the intent of this thesis is to determine a model of publishing in which an independent magazine's printed form can be made more viable *because* of its digital components, not despite them. To discover how to replicate and build on these successful magazine initiatives, this study asks the following research question: *How can an indie magazine structure its digital framework to increase print viability?* Sub-questions include the following:

- What are print's strengths now, and why are they important?
- What are digital's strengths in the context of an independent print magazine, and why are they necessary?

This interpretive, qualitative research aimed to answer these questions by conducting interviews with eight independent magazine editors who have successfully used both print and digital media in their publishing practices. On the basis of the findings, my research sought to create a model of design principles for production of transmedia magazines that use the digital platform to drive sales and distribution of the print platform. Semi-structured interviews with the editors of each magazine allowed me to form a discussion around attitudes and values from industry professionals and were augmented with analysis of factual data from the interviews using the “laws of media” tetrad, a framework proposed by Marshall McLuhan that can be used to analyze the effects of media on society. My goal was to understand the elements required for an independent print magazine and its digital components to publish content in tandem, with emphasis on the print part of the product, and create that magazine. Situated in the interpretivist paradigm, along with using a theoretical framework grounded in medium theory and media ecology, phenomenology, and transmedia theory, this study was designed to inform a publishing model that the editor or producer of any independent magazine can integrate or implement into its current practices—to adjust to or survive the rapidly changing landscape of publishing, or to use as a foundation, framework, and set of recommendations and best practices on which to plan and launch. An independent print magazine can be made more viable because of its digital components when those components complement each other and push the audience to each component, when both digital and print components hold motivational value for its producers and contributors, and when the publication embodies a well-defined niche and genre.

I hope to make the results of this research available to any magazine editor (who, in the indie realm, typically is the primary individual responsible for decisions on content, style, artistic direction, publishing, and distribution of the magazine) who is struggling to succeed in a digital

culture and who still loves analogue media. This research is a response to my passion for magazine editing, production, and publishing, my desire to share that passion, and a strategic way to help create something to serve as a stamp in time and touchstone for and of a niche community.

Literature Review

This literature review examines scholarship in three areas: first, it introduces the magazine as a medium for communication and reviews recent studies on the state of the Canadian publishing industry to aid understanding of why the industry is valuable and useful to a healthy creative economy. Second, it reviews studies on medium theory and media ecology theory, providing a theoretical framework to show how media structures influence and shape culture, and how specific aspects of media structures retain value and use. A discussion of transmedia takes this understanding further by explaining how and why a hybrid model of magazine publishing can be beneficial. Finally, it discusses phenomenology, exploring how and why personal experience and the materiality of culture is significant to the resurgence of print media and therefore relevant to determining the ideal hybrid model. Together, these areas of scholarship contribute to this study's purpose of determining how an independent magazine can structure its digital framework to improve the viability of its print component.

The Place of Independent Magazines in the Canadian Publishing Industry: Print and Digital

This section introduces, defines, and outlines a short history of magazines, then provides a brief sketch of the magazine industry in general, and then more specifically looks at the state of the industry in Canada and British Columbia. Two forms of independent magazines will be defined and compared: print and digital. It then concludes by identifying gaps in the literature

and economic motivators for launching a new magazine or for changing the structure of an existing one in the midst of a rapidly evolving landscape for publishing in print and digital. The section begins with the introduction of the magazine in early modern Europe.

Emerging in England and Germany in the 1600s, the magazine marked a departure from the essay-focused content of the periodicals that preceded it and expanded to include columns, lists, biographies, and more on topics from literature to politics to entertainment (Johnson & Prijatel, 2007). Three centuries later, magazines began to experiment with web companionship in the 1990s, which brought variation to the physical format (Abrahamson, 2015), but many of these original components of the original print format are retained. *Rolling Stone* in 2019, for example, still has columns (letters to the editor, concert reviews), lists (album charts, best-ofs), and biographies (long-form interviews with musicians and essays), similar to *The Gentleman's Magazine* in the 1700s, one of the first major magazines to be published.

By identifying genres of magazines such as zines, independent magazines, and consumer magazines, both print and digital, a greater understanding can be gained of the intent and focus of this study. Stephen Duncombe (1997), a zines and zine subculture authority and scholar for over 20 years, defines a zine as a “non-commercial, nonprofessional, small circulation magazine which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves” (p. 6). In contrast to zines are consumer magazines, which are essentially print for profit. They are sold with financial gain in mind and marketed as any consumer good would be, with advertisements and articles targeting a specific consumer audience (Johnson & Prijatel, 2007). Somewhere in the middle are the “indies,” publications produced without support from an established publisher (Currie Sivek & Townsend, 2014), one where the editorial focus is curated and guided by the vision of the editor, in collaboration with a small like-minded team who are often more skilled in their

profession of graphic designer or editor than their amateur zine-making counterparts (Le Masurier, 2012). Currie Sivek and Townsend's (2014) scholarly research on independent digital magazines defines the digital indies as those operated without support from a traditional publisher, exist solely as digital (no print edition), and publish at least annually. This research will focus on the print and digital indies.

While literature specific to the climate of indie magazines in British Columbia is limited, reports from the Magazine Association of BC (a provincial professional association), Magazines Canada (a national professional association), IBIS World (industry-specific market research), and Vividata (print media-specific readership data in Canada) can be used to infer the state of the local landscape, and how print and digital can be integrated better together. First, and of central significance to this study, is that Canadians presently read magazines, in print, and often. The *Vividata Winter 2018 Report*, which surveyed 43,325 Canadians about their magazine reading habits, found that 76% reported reading a magazine in the past six months, 69% reported reading the print editions of magazines, and 29% digital editions. The *Magazines Canada 2016 Digital Magazine Media Fact Book* found a similar cross-section of format choice, where 55% chose print only, 37% chose print and digital, and 8% chose digital only, meaning over half of magazine readers chose only the print edition. While this information is a cross-section of national readership, not provincial, and examines consumer magazines and not independents, it does highlight a significant audience that chooses to read print magazines, in tandem with digital, and more than digital.

Print is further reported as a preferred format not just from an audience perspective but from the publisher perspective. The *Magazines Canada 2016 Consumer Magazine Media Fact Book* reports that the top 25 consumer print magazines reach more people than the same number

of primetime television shows. The report found print magazines also engage their readers for an average of 40 minutes per issue. Furthermore, some research has found that memory recall of content can be greater when in print than in digital (Magee, 2013; McDonald, 2015). While these data are again based on consumer magazines and not the independent magazines on which this study focuses, it does contradict lore of print's imminent demise.

The enthusiasm for print found in the aforementioned reports is not reflected in examination of the industry's financial and economic state. A 2017 report published by IBIS World (Ozelkan, 2017) on the Magazine and Periodical Publishing Industry reveals an industry—where revenue and profit come mostly from advertising dollars—in decline. Annual growth from 2012 to 2017 dropped 5% and is projected to continue falling, albeit less, to -1.5% for the next decade (Ozelkan, 2017). This report also focuses on consumer magazines where the overall decline is mostly due to the shift of advertising revenue to digital and failure to adapt to the hybridization of the magazine media landscape. The Canadian consumer magazine publishers most affected have been those that have not adapted to the digital shift; those that have are beginning to see benefits. A case study within the report on Rogers Communications shows how large-scale investment in media diversification (for example, the launch of the digital magazine app *Texture*) demonstrates that, while adaptation comes at a financial cost, there is still a market for both print and digital when done correctly. Of particular relevance to this study, small companies with less market share (St. Joseph Communications, Quebecor Inc.) by IBIS estimates have experienced operating profit gains over the past five years, going against the national trend of decline, perhaps because of less reliance on advertising dollars.

The discussion concludes with highlighting progress made in British Columbia in multimedia models of magazine publishing. *From the Margins to the Mainstream* (Briton, 2012)

underscored the challenges faced by BC's magazine publishing sector resulting from shrinking ad revenue, increased postal costs for subscription, and inefficient integration of digital components like social media and apps. Today, hybrid models exist everywhere, including those produced locally like *Archive*, *Adbusters*, *Street Dreams*, *Discorder*, *SAD Mag*, and *Hayo*; on a global scale with companies like Airbnb, Red Bull, and even social media giant Facebook, all brands founded in digital form that now publish print magazines for their high-end clientele; and with legacy titles like *Interview* (1969), *Rolling Stone* (1967), and *The Atlantic* (1857). While not all of these examples are local to Vancouver, they are models that demonstrate the shift that has taken place in the magazine publishing industry and that regardless of genre, desire and demand remains for print and digital.

Having traced a sketch of the Canadian magazine publishing sector and localizing the discussion in BC, this literature review turns to examine medium theory, an area of scholarship that provides insight into the attributes of print and digital media that make them valuable, useful, and consumable in the ways that have just been discussed.

Medium Theory: Concepts for Navigating a Complex Media Landscape

This section provides the theoretical framework to show how media structures are both informed by and shape culture, and shows how theory can be applied to explain and predict the effects of a new medium at any time in history, with emphasis on the media structure, not the content it transmits. By charting a succinct history of significant territory of medium scholars Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, and Neil Postman, the section then explores print and digital magazines components and examines their viability in the current technological climate in comparison to each other. The innovations and theoretical lenses of these three scholars reveal how specific physical traits of media structures retain value and use, and transmedia then takes it

further to explain how and why a hybrid model of magazine publishing can be not only beneficial, but imperative for an indie print magazine. Finally, this section will weave in Henry Jenkins's work on transmedia to show how theoretical grounding applied to a hybrid model of independent magazine publishing can be synergistic between each component and place print in the centre.

The seeds of medium theory, which sits in the sociocultural tradition of communication theory and probes the effects media structures (such as books, magazines, radios, televisions, and computers) have on society and human environments (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009), were planted by Harold Innis, who saw communication and media as the central forces in the history and development of power, culture, and society (Babe, 2008). The focus here is on his unprecedented work (1950; 1951) from which the concepts of time-biased media and space-biased media emerged. To Innis, communication media—objects used between humans to enable interactions—intrinsically favour space or time in their ways of ordering and controlling the transmission of information; this bias is based on their physical form (Babe, 2008). Time-biased media (like papyrus) are light, portable, and facilitate decentralization of power and, relative to space-biased media, have shorter lifespan. Space-biased media (like clay or stone) are heavy, durable, and long-lasting, and facilitate centralization of power (such as that of the church); ideas and information are cemented into the medium and unchangeable.

These media and their biases exist dynamically, in the context of their environment, and evolve through history; the printed page in a culture without electronic communication is time-biased, but in a world with smartphones becomes space-biased, a conduit for longevity, embodying characteristics that encourage centrality. A print magazine is light and portable compared to Innis's space-biased examples of stone and clay, but when print's singular utility,

purpose, and permanence as medium is compared to the smartphone's portability and almost infinite capacity to carry and transmit information, the printed magazine extends in a way that the smartphone does not. A print magazine in the current digital culture is a preserver of information. According to Innis, stable societies are those able to balance both biases; in the present cultural environment, a magazine that integrates media favouring both space and time could be more successful than if one or the other is favoured.

Marshall McLuhan cultivated Innis's ideas and, although he was a professor of literary studies, his contributions to the field of communication remain as relevant today—arguably more so—as when his work was first published (Levinson, 1999). McLuhan's (1962) most significant work, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Makings of Typographic Man*, discusses mass media's effects on society and the individual, namely via the printing press. Along with the epoch it ushered in came societal effects both positive, like democracy and individualism, and negative, like nationalism and capitalism. In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan (1964) was concerned with the degree of intensity with which a medium engages human senses in terms of hot, highly visual data, or one-way communication that bounces off us, or cool, visually low in data, and therefore active and involving which invites engagement. The dichotomy of McLuhan's hot and cool media is harder to define today; however, just as the tetrad can be used to inform *how* the print and digital components of an independent magazine should be integrated, it can also be used to inform the number of components and degree to which each component engages a reader's senses. The printed word has been historically hot, and even though it has now cooled with its ubiquity (Levinson, 1999, p. 109), in comparison to hyperlinked words on a digital edition, I would argue that engagement with a print magazine is a solo pursuit and thus, perhaps made more of a hot pursuit again and one that engages the sense more. The digital

magazine tends toward what was historically deemed “hot,” although as Innis supported balance between time- and space-biased media to achieve societal stability, perhaps the balance of hot and cool could be significant in considering how and the degree to which print and digital components of the proposed model should be integrated.

In *Laws of Media: The New Science*, McLuhan and McLuhan (1988) dive into the tetrad of media effects, a four-pronged approach to analyze the changes and effects that any medium—the printing press, a zipper—exerted on society (McLuhan & Powers, 1989). Levinson (1999) summarizes these four laws:

What aspect of society or human life does it enhance or amplify? What aspect, in favour or high prominence before the arrival of the medium in question, does it eclipse or obsolesce? What does the medium retrieve or pull back into centre stage from the shadows of obsolescence? And what does the medium reverse or flip into when it has run its course or been developed to its full potential? (p. 189)

McLuhan reminds us that the tetrad provides answers that are debatable and invite discussion; “there is no ‘right way’ to ‘read’ a tetrad, as the parts are simultaneous” (p. 128). For this study, the laws provide a useful tool to analyze aspects of print and digital that enhance, obsolesce, retrieve, and reverse, and how those aspects can be integrated effectively into a hybrid publishing model will be revisited in this proposal’s methods section. Next, the integration of print and digital components of media will be explored through media ecology.

American scholar Neil Postman (1970) coined the term “media ecology” as a way to characterize communication media as an environment, and how humans perceive, interact, connect, and behave within it as a culture (Postman, 1970; Nystrom, 1973). Most notably for this proposal is his argument that print, because of its fixation to page, is the only medium that can

convey rational argument (1986)—and also that any given medium is suited for a specific kind of communication; for example, the act of and interaction with reading and writing is different on a computer than it is on the printed page (1993). Postman's highly critical view of mass media's effects on humans, television in particular, provides a rationale for retaining and using the printed word as a medium amidst the digital deluge. While Postman's view supports the use of print, it simultaneously denounces digital, which obsolesces media like television into content made for consumption instead of information to be learned or absorbed (McLuhan & McLuhan, 1988). While his position is somewhat dated in the current media landscape, it still provides some context and a point of reference for print's lasting authority now. Postman's argument for print media suggests both its importance as the backbone of a hybrid publishing model, discussed next, and its significance as a factor in the phenomenological experience, which will be covered in the following section.

A brief review of research on media convergence, transmedia storytelling, and the significance of medium specificity continues the discussion of a hybrid publishing model's feasibility in the current technological climate. *Convergence* is the movement of content across media platforms both old and new, cooperation between multiple media industries including the producer and consumer, and migratory behaviour of audiences ranging from corporate to grassroots (Jenkins, 2006). Convergence is also a characteristic of *media shock*, the unprecedented way and rate at which media is changing (Taras, 2015). Print newspapers have mobile apps; cable TV stations have websites with continuous video feeds; and social media is unquestionably integrated with every type of media. Media monoliths—singular, top-down multi-media corporations of publishing in the past—are no longer, and companies like Condé Nast, once solely publishers of print magazines with readers, are now often distributors of media

with consumers as an audience. Convergence enables information to be ubiquitous and consumable anywhere on multiple media types, and sometimes these complement each other, other times they compete (Jenkins, Ford, & Greene, 2013). The concept of convergence provides justification for developing a magazine publishing framework that not only includes components in print and digital, but also designs the integration of each component so that the content flowing between them is complementary, demonstrating how each is necessary, with an emphasis on print. Determining that specific design is one aim of this study.

The response to convergence then is transmedia storytelling, which describes how one narrative is distributed across multiple media structures in order for the narrative to be amplified (Jenkins, 2006). In this study, I seek to show that the niche nature of the independent magazine is very much like a singular narrative. Transmedia is marked by integration and flexibility and seamless connection (Jansson & Lindell, 2015) and adopts the medium specificity of different media platforms to broaden a narrative beyond the containment of one medium, and as a result expands the audience and depth of that narrative. Jenkins and Deuze (2008) recognized the power consumers now wield because of the democratization of media and its structures: consumers want to participate in the media they consume, which destabilizes media consolidation (for example, traditional media monoliths) and puts more power in the grassroots initiatives. Further, transmedia creates demand for information being made available on multiple platforms. Medium specificity is central to this decentralization because it shows that where once the description of a medium's properties defined it, those properties "are now prescriptions for what the aesthetics of these media should look like" (Jenkins, 2010). In other words, medium specificity enables the feasibility and necessity of a transmedia model of independent magazine publishing because it insists each component of a medium plays an important role in telling a

story effectively. For the indie magazine, this means a broader and more varied audience can be reached than if only print or digital are used.

This exploration of medium theory, convergence, transmedia, and medium specificity provides grounding for integrating print and digital in today's changing media environment and suggests that the print component, when integrated properly, continues to hold value for its ability to communicate in a way that digital cannot, and vice versa. Next, the discussion will move to the topic of phenomenology and the role of experience in the importance of integrating print into a transmedia model.

Phenomenology and Material Culture: Print for Pleasure

This section explores the value of print as media for pleasure and sensory stimulation within the phenomenological tradition and the experience it facilitates through the tactile and tangible qualities of its form; indeed, its medium specificity, and in turn, an experience that cannot be replicated in digital. It will examine materiality to understand both the sensory and the ritualistic appeal associated with the experience and pastime of reading a print magazine. In summary, this section will attempt to explain the phenomenological motivation for reading and producing print magazines.

Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy that can be used to explain how meaning is made from lived, personal, and human experiences, and is a useful tool for explaining the durability of independent print magazines in the face of economic and technological upheaval. A phenomenological perspective on magazine consumption helps to address the bond a reader can form with print, beyond practicality, utility, or any promise of economic gain. The phenomenology of reading speaks to a way of learning and making sense of the world based on how one consciously examines and experiences it, and this experiential connection is often

presented by scholars as a reason for choosing print (Thomas, 2006). Journalist and academic Victor Navasky (2007) recognizes “the magazine as an art form, not a delivery method,” an aesthetic perspective echoed by magazine scholar David Abrahamson. Abrahamson (2009) noted the magazine’s unique advantage, aesthetically and physically, when compared to the more cumbersome book and the more disposable newspaper, in terms of fulfilling a desired experience. Referring to the more niche publication of art zines, Piepmeier (2008) still recognizes pleasure as an emergent trait strongly associated with the form. The printed magazine offers a physically linear cover-to-cover and uniquely authentic experience made possible because it can, quite literally, be held and experienced more deeply and meaningfully with limited distraction in a way that digital formats cannot offer (Abrahamson, 2015; Bonner & Roberts, 2017; Ytre-Arne, 2011).

Engagement with print is an experience apparently sought out by all generations, including digital natives, an age group born into a staggering variety of choice for media consumption. Bonner and Roberts (2017) identify a set of common motivations reported amongst millennials for reading print magazines, such as the ritual of using a print magazine, the escape and deep engagement it provides, and the aesthetic qualities afforded by its tangibility. Le Masurier (2012) identifies similar reasons amongst millennials to *produce* indie magazines in print form. Digital natives do not need print—they *want* it. Le Masurier’s (2012) quote from one indie magazine reader, Vaughan Blakey, illustrates this point:

Sure, having shit rammed into my brain via electronics has been entertaining at times but I find the experience spiritually flawed. When I have a photo, I want a print. When I read a book, I want the pages to get swollen and dog-eared. When I buy a magazine I want the thing to age with me. I want tactile proof that my time existed. (Le Masurier, p. 13, 2012)

This research echoes the sentiments conveyed through Blakey's quote. I am cognizant that the engagement of a young generation could increase the longevity of a publication and suggests that technological advancements will not necessarily obsolesce the print component but render it more important than ever. McLuhan's tetrad could suggest that what is retrieved and enhanced by a print magazine is tied to the phenomenological experience and a strong indicator of why millennials choose print in the face of digital.

Phenomenological motivation for choosing print is not generationally restricted though, as it is an experience unique to the materiality that transcends age and culture. It "gets a hold of us bodily, and through every sense" (Mays & Thoburn, 2013, p. 10). Kuusela (2016) elaborates, describing the ability of material objects, and print specifically, to "signify, incorporate, facilitate, and carry meaning" (p. 2) for interactions. Print objects play a role in making meaning, which supports inclusion of a print magazine as a part of a transmedia model. Furthermore, the act of reading a print magazine as an activity is often considered a pleasurable pastime, associated with leisure (Ingham & Weedon, 2008; Ytre-Arne, 2011). This focus on personal experience demonstrates the viability of print for pleasure and in the midst of technological and economic shift, and it supports the argument that a publishing framework should include a print component.

Summary

This literature review has examined research in the Canadian magazine industry, medium theory and media ecology theoretical frameworks, transmedia, and phenomenology and materiality. Each area of research contributes to forming a rationale and a conceptual framework for my own research goal of determining how an independent magazine can structure its digital framework so that the print component's viability is increased. The industry data show the desire

to consume print magazines exists and the need for publishers to adapt to technological change. Next, medium theory and media ecology provided a theoretical framework to show how different media in different contexts affect culture. Convergence and transmedia offer a framework for explaining how and why a hybrid model of magazine publishing can be beneficial. A brief discussion of the scholarship on materiality drew out the phenomenology of media conception, providing a framework for considering how and why personal experience is significant to the resurgence of print media and relevant to determining the ideal hybrid model. The tangible experience of holding a printed object, flipping pages, and passing a book on to another are some of many reasons people still value the printed page.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to determine how an independent magazine should structure the digital and print components of its publishing framework to increase its print viability—in other words, the economic justification by the editors because of demand for the magazine in print form in niche markets—when situated in the current digital climate. Therefore, this qualitative applied research study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which acknowledges how meaning is constructed from how individuals organize and interpret information in their own unique way (Ershler & Stabile, 2015). Interpretivist epistemology considers the meanings individuals make, which, for this study, allows explanation and analysis of a print magazine's viability based on an individual's subjective experience with print.

Methodologically, this is a qualitative study that uses a strengths-based approach, which focuses on solutions and what is helping the magazine succeed versus its deficiencies (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). It is modelled after the methodology used by Currie Sivek and Townsend (2014), where semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 independent digital

magazine producers to explore the motivations and challenges that they experience. To keep in scope of a Master's degree fulfillments, this study conducted interviews with producers (e.g. editors-in-chief, art directors) of eight independent magazines, and analyzed the data to explore what digital components each magazine incorporated, how those digital components are incorporated, the frequency with which the print issue was published, and the motivations for producing a magazine that includes a print component. Two kinds of data analysis were used. First, deductive analysis of the interview data explored themes that emerged from asking the proposed interview questions, including motivation, artistic freedom, artistic expression, and career development, which were similar themes found by both Currie Sivek and Townsend (2014) and Le Masurier (2012). Second, McLuhan and Powers's (1989) laws of media tetrad was used to analyze the print and digital components each magazine used to determine what each medium enhanced, obsolesced, retrieved, and reversed, with the goal of showing what each component did to support the print edition and to integrate the digital components. The combined results of the analyses inform the design of a magazine publishing model in which the print issue is the focus.

Data and Data Gathering

Data collection was modeled after Currie Sivek and Townsend's (2014) research, where semi-structured interviews yielded data to reveal what motivates and constrains the editors of 12 independent digital magazines. The reasoning for this is that their study aimed to understand elements of independent magazine production similar to this study and with a sample set that included a variety of genres of independent magazines, as this study did. One difference in the sampling is that producers of hybrid (not digital-only) magazines were interviewed to gather in-

depth qualitative data about producing both print and digital editions under the same magazine title and what that looks like.

Sample. This study's sample of magazines was determined using the guidance of Le Masurier's (2012) work on independent print magazines, Currie Sivek and Townsend's (2014) work on independent digital magazines, and the aim of determining an independent hybrid magazine publishing model. A magazine was eligible for this project if it is "producer-owned and made" and made for sale (Currie Sivek & Townsend, p. 2) or, in the case of three magazines in this study, free; or operated under an established organization and mandate, but operated by the producer with complete creative control (for example *Discorder* and *SAD* magazines); published at least one print issue in its annual cycle; and used at least one digital component in its publishing strategy. *Archive* was the only participant not still publishing and was eligible because of its unique approach to hybrid publishing; it fit the rest of the criteria and yielded data that were uniquely valuable to the study. *Beatroute* was the only participant that was not considered independent at the time of interview. *Beatroute* was, however, a magazine that had published independently for 15 years and been purchased by an outside investor less than two months prior to interview, so the experience and situation of the founder and the data collected from that interview, along with it operating independently for so long made its contributions to the study both valuable and unique.

Editors or creative directors of magazines who fit these criteria were purposively sampled, and I contacted those who fit the criteria in the region until eight were confirmed. The sample was formed by snowball method to achieve the desired sample size, as my existing knowledge in the industry made this method more efficient. For the scope of a Master's thesis, the data yielded from these eight participants were sufficient; while Currie Sivek and Townsend

(2014) found patterns of repetition in topics emerging after interviewing 12 participants, the data yielded from such volume would be excessive and unmanageable for this project. Further, the saturation achieved by Currie Sivek and Townsend after 12 interviews was not assumed to be achieved with the eight in this study (Bryman, 2012), but common themes were immediately identified, proving eight to indeed be sufficient.

Table 1 provides an overview of participants including the name of the publication, the genre, when the first issue was published, and the role held by the participant who was interviewed.

Table 1

Overview of Publications and Participants

Publication	Genre	Founded	Participant	Interviewed
Adbusters	Political, environmental, social activism	1989	Founder	10-Jun
Archive	Photography, stories	2016	Editor-in-Chief	28-May
Asparagus	Sustainable living	2018	Editor-in-Chief	06-Jun
Barnacle Babes	Women's ocean conservation	2016	Editor-in-Chief	30-May
Beatroute	Music, arts, culture	2004	Founder	25-May
Discorder	Underrepresented music, arts, and culture	1983	Art Director	10-Jun
Maple	Canadian organic lifestyle	2018	Editor-in-Chief	09-Jun
SAD Mag	Stories, art, and design	2009	Publisher	24-May

My past professional involvement in magazine publishing in the region proved to be an enabling factor for achieving access to a sufficient number of magazines for the sample. Personal knowledge of a wide range of existing publications combined with existing relationships (either direct or peripheral) with editors or contributors to magazines in the region allowed easy access to the sample needed for this project.

Interview data. Qualitative data, both factual and conceptual, were collected from semi-structured interviews with the participant—editor-in-chief, art director, or publisher—of each magazine, included in the sample set discussed above. Kvale (2007) defines semi-structured interviews as ones with a structure and purpose determined by the interviewer, with the intent of interpreting a phenomenon through the interviewee’s experience with it. Collecting this type of qualitative data yielded rich, first-hand information of experience, process, values, and attitudes (Rowley, 2012). In this context, it was the best way to learn about the digital and print integration of an independent magazine’s publishing model, as well as the editors’ motivations for such an undertaking. Based on Currie Sivek and Townsend’s (2014) research questions and drawing on Kvale’s research for conducting semi-structured interviews, questions and areas of inquiry included the following issues, with the aim of answering the question of how an independent magazine can structure its publishing model in order to increase print viability:

1. What are the motivations for producing and publishing an independent magazine?
2. What is the importance and significance of the print component?
3. How are the digital component(s) chosen and integrated into the publishing framework?
4. Does a hybrid model support or negate the print component of the magazine?
5. Does a hybrid model increase the viability of the magazine as a whole?
6. What are some significant factors that contribute to the success of the magazine?

Interviews were conducted in person between May 24 and June 10, 2019, recorded with a digital voice recorder, and then transcribed. Six took place in the location in which the magazine was produced, one in a café, and one at the individual's home. I asked participants to allow up to two hours for each interview; however, between one and one and a half hours was enough to discuss all my questions and leave room for additional comments. Next, interviews were transcribed into a Word document. I then re-read each interview in full, line by line, once. In the second reading of each interview, I highlighted and copied key excerpts into a spreadsheet for analysis and coding for themes. Through this procedure, I gained a deep, broad perspective of the motivations and practices of independent print and digital magazine production and publishing across hybrid models from the perspective of the producers.

This qualitative inquiry was structured enough to guide the conversation through the intended topics, but open enough that the nuances of real-life interaction were not neglected; reflexivity was exercised in both the interview and the analysis, discussed next.

Data Analysis

Two kinds of data analysis were used to determine how an independent magazine can structure both print and digital components in order to drive print viability. While there is no set formula for qualitative data analysis (Kvale, 2007), there are methods that guided the process. First was deductive analysis of the interview data structured around the interview questions. Data were analyzed and coded for themes, or similar ideas that were reported between two or more interviewees (King & Horrocks, 2010). Second, McLuhan and Powers's (1989) tetrad of media effects was used to analyze the print and digital components each magazine uses to determine what each medium enhances, obsolesces, retrieves, and reverses, focusing on the strengths that each component can be used for in order to embody their medium specificity and to support the

print edition. The combined results of the analyses inform the design of a magazine publishing model in which the print issue is the focus.

Data were coded based on themes that emerged from the analysis, which, like the data collection by means of interviews, was not entirely pre-determined and was a reflexive process. However, because this study models itself on similar research by Currie Sivek and Townsend (2014), the themes that emerged there, combined with the literature review in this proposal and Le Masurier's (2012) findings on motivations in indie print magazine production, helped to hypothesize what could be expected. Some of these themes included: desire to creatively and independently produce; wanting to create a tactile object as an opposition and answer to information deluge; using digital media as a means of spreading the values and ideas of the print issue; and creating a publishing cycle based on when an adequate volume of quality content is gathered instead of on a fixed timeline. In addition to these themes, McLuhan and Powers's (1989) laws of media tetrad effects was used to analyze the factual data describing the uses of print and digital components in the publishing framework, and to what extent. The aim of this part of the analysis will be to show what each component enhances, obsolesces, retrieves, and reverses, and how effectively employing the strength of each medium can be synergized to create a healthy, holistic publishing model.

Ethics

This research involves human subjects and thus required ethical implications to be considered. Prior to the commencement of research, ethical approval was obtained from the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board. Once approval was obtained, potential research subjects were contacted by one of two ways, depending on my existing relationship. If I did not know the potential subject, they were contacted using the information on the masthead of the

magazine. If I did know the potential subject or have a mutual contact with them that I found through word of mouth or social media, I asked to be connected via the mutual contact or for their permission for me to contact them directly. If they refused or did not respond within one week, I moved on to the next candidate. Participants' names are kept anonymous and all gave their permission for the name of the magazine to be used. No conflict of interest arose. Even considering past involvement in the industry, I am no longer employed by any magazines in the region nor do I have close personal relationships with any that would compromise this study. Interview data were stored on a password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected hard drive, for which I am the sole keeper of the passwords. Internet cloud storage was not used for data storage. Data gathered from participants will be kept secured until after this thesis has been completed and the full requirements of this Master's program fulfilled. Thereafter, data collected will be deleted from both locations it has been stored. Participants could decide to end participation after consenting to participation and can still redact any information provided. However, all eight participants did not appear to present any hesitations even after the interviews, and all signed consent forms and were not just willing but quite eager to participate. As an applied, strengths-based qualitative study, there are no foreseeable harms this research could cause.

Findings

The interviews demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses, benefits and struggles experienced by the participants who operated as a publication in a media landscape where hybridization is not an option, it is a requirement. The question for these hybrid magazine producers was not *if* hybrid components should be integrated, the question was *how* and to what degree should those components be integrated? This section describes the findings reported by

the producers that reflect their personal experience with and connection to print versus digital, their motivations for producing a magazine, the benefits of print, and how digital components were being used versus how they envisioned that use in an ideal world.

Of the key themes that emerged from the interviews, some were similar to those reported by both Currie Sivek and Townsend (2017) and Le Masurier (2012) insofar as they revealed motivations and experiences of the producers of existing hybrid magazines that can inform how a magazine can incorporate digital and print elements. These themes centered on personal, intellectual, and emotional connection to print (phenomenological motivation), creative freedom and control, strategy for use of digital media, and diversification of funding as enabling factors in the viability of the magazine. Another key theme that emerged indirectly—one related to the publishing framework, but imperative to the print magazine’s viability—was community connection and involvement in activities like launch parties, fundraisers, and other community events. Next, I will present each of these themes in turn.

Phenomenological Motivation

The magazine in its printed form was the central component of the publishing frameworks of the producers interviewed, and so, unsurprisingly, the print magazine was the central source of motivation for the producers. Anxiety, fear, and nervousness were all reported by participants when asked how they felt when seeing and holding their first or latest issue of the magazine; but after working on it on screen for the production cycle of between one and six months, the sensory satisfaction and gratification of flipping through pages and smelling the ink in real life was unparalleled. *Archive* reported this spectrum of emotions particular to the print issue, starting with the anxiety:

The problem is it's so final. With print, you're always going to notice the mistakes. So if there's stuff in there that you fucked up on, that's the first thing... But it's hard to not focus on the screwups that you find.

These feelings were followed closely by the reward once the issue was in hand:

But then after that it's like, this is great. I'm really excited to go give this to people.

The editor of *Barnacle Babes* expressed the agony and ecstasy evoked by the print edition as well:

I don't even like giving that issue out because there are so many typos. I just [cringing].... But to see these in print. Like look at these beautiful photos! Like cooooooooool [flipping through magazine].

These positive and negative emotions described by the participants made it clear that the phenomenological motivation specific to the print issue was a key driver of their practice.

The *Barnacle Babes* editor described the scent of the vegetable ink the magazine was printed with—also a conscious environmental decision in their publishing practices—when she picked it up from the printers: “Sometimes it smells like beets, sometimes like onions.” The *Beatroute* editor described the first touch with an issue as “the best feeling in the world,” a common sentiment that for most was not eclipsed by the everlasting typo. The ability of print's permanence to evoke strong feelings fed both ends of this emotional spectrum: on one hand, the misspelling of an author's name is forever, but so is that physical publication as a whole, from cover to cover, a “flowy snapshot of the global moment” (*Adbusters*), “Sometime the type's not set properly, and the kerning is off. [The goal is] to have that flow” (*Maple*), and a permanent product and appealing object that “you can put on your coffee table and leave for years” (*SAD*).

Maple elaborated on its mentality and approach to the magazine's physicality, specifically to the wellness and lifestyle genre:

The magazine is the centre. *Maple* is a *magazine*... It's so beautifully printed and so much of the experience is being able to hold it... digital just doesn't have that... it's specific to our niche, that natural health and wellness pairs so well with it because you have all this stuff with [how] blue light [can negatively affect your health] and how [print] is healthy to read. The whole health component, it's much healthier to read magazines... print cuts through the noise.

Regardless of genre though, whether the lifestyle and wellness of *Maple*, sensory stimulation and satisfaction were a commonality amongst participants that afforded something special and unique to print.

The print magazine is also a permanent piece of work that the producers are literally signing their name to, providing credibility and authority in their positions, but also holding them accountable to the facts, opinions, subject matter, and errors, putting them in a potentially vulnerable position as well. As *Beatroute* noted, readers are not typically vocal about the positives, but are quick to point out when "alcohol is misspelled on page 32." Regardless of whether the feedback the producer received from its audience is positive or negative, it would appear that each of their personal connections to the production process provides plenty of motivation for their print pursuit and which in turn makes the print component of the publication the most important to them.

The motivation that drove the production process also was a significant by-product of the result. The credibility of print is a major motivating factor for contributors as well as producers, and is important to consider when involving writers, illustrators, photographers, and designers

who contribute to independent magazines for little or no money. Of the eight participants, five paid the contributors; however, all five emphasized the amount was nominal in relation to their skill level or what they would have liked to pay, and what they perceived as only slightly better than no money. Contributors' compensation came in bylines, reference letters, subscriptions, portfolio additions, experience, training, and credibility. As *Beatroute's* editor noted, "People love seeing their name in print," which is not meant to discredit association with digital versions of publications. It is doubtful that any author or illustrator would balk at being tagged by *The Atlantic* on Instagram or having a digital-only column shared on Facebook by *Rolling Stone*. The point is that these indies do not typically have the same clout online as they do in print. Almost anyone can be tagged on social media or have a byline on a blog post, but it does not mean that everyone actually will. If a contributor is tagged *and* has a byline, the power of the hybrid publication is further realized. The added exclusivity of print and association with a title is worth the time and effort for emerging and developing creatives who make up most of the contributors to these publications.

Creative Freedom and Control Afforded by Print

Participants described the environment of the indie magazine as a place that invited creative freedom and allowed creative control for both producers and contributors at a range of skill levels. This included the beginners who "had never held a camera before" (*Discorder*) to professional writers who routinely got paid two dollars per word as a freelancer for other publications (*Asparagus*). The independent nature of the publications varied with respect to the person or organization who ran the magazine—for example, *Discorder*, *SAD*, and *Adbusters* were all registered non-profit organizations—so, while those participants did not own the publication like the other participants did, they still enjoyed and reported the same liberties, as

well as perceived and practised ownership that *Maple*, *Barnacle Babes*, *Archive*, *Beatroute*, and *Asparagus* enjoyed in their approach to piloting the magazine. In other words, *Discorder*, *SAD*, and *Adbusters* felt a true sense of ownership because of the indie nature, even without owning the magazine.

The art director of *Discorder* exemplified the creative liberty afforded as a result of its non-profit structure. He recalled in 2014, shortly after graduating from Emily Carr University of Art and Design specializing in print making and lithography, entering print production for the first time with the magazine, and his bewilderment at having complete creative control over every aspect of what the magazine was about to manifest as:

For me as a young designer, I asked them who needs to give me approval on this?

Nobody. I was like, that's crazy. I kind of just went for it. Tweaking a bit here, a bit there. I used it to sharpen my own skills.

While he also admitted to stretching the truth about his technical skill level with InDesign in order to get the job, his knowledge of DIY practices, the local music scene, and a hunger for print production specifically, combined with values that aligned with the mandate of the magazine, all contributed to his being hired. Today, InDesign is one of his strongest programs and he has designed other art books, magazines, and branding as a freelancer. He has also been the magazine's art director for five years. *SAD* also described the creative control bestowed upon the editor/designer team as gravitas for being involved, and recognizing that any successor to the current art director and EIC could give the magazine a completely different look and feel, right down to deciding to no longer be analogue-only photography, as long as they maintained the core values and mandate of the publication.

Creative control expressed by participants was a motivation the producers had for working in print when their craft was situated in the context of hybrid model of independent magazine publishing. *Beatroute* stated that “in the print realm, you can just do more,” and *Discorder* agreed, describing specific choices made for a short fiction spread, and design elements used in print that could not be made with digital:

I changed very specific things about it, like individual letters of the story. That’s something you just wouldn’t get on social media or on the web. It’s such a printed thing. I think part of the design, you can only appreciate it as a print piece.

The platforms of digital media take a template structure that flatten design choices made for print, like typesetting, font, colour, and illustrative or filmic qualities. These cannot be translated and do not have the same desired effect on the reader as they do in print.

Strategy and Choices for Use of Digital

Participants reported similarities and differences in the choices they made when integrating digital components and what kind of factors enabled or restricted that integration. On the one hand, navigating and managing the digital realm as a print-first producer was no easy task for any of the participants. On the other hand, all eight participants reported using social media, a website to some degree, one a podcast, one a custom app, and various modes of video production like a web series, and documentaries, and concurrently expressed the challenges introduced by incorporating these media. Indeed, a platform that can be used to share time-sensitive content and reach an audience far greater than the distribution of the print version—being issued monthly at the most—had its benefits, but even though these components are typically cheap or free to launch, the cost in human resources to maintain them presented a challenge.

Constraints on digital adoption. Time constraint was reported by all participants as a reason for not integrating digital components to their full potential. Social media algorithms favour accounts that post frequently and engage constantly with other accounts; magazine websites are most interesting when new content is continually added; and podcasts and web series require new episodes to be released on a regular and predictable schedule to keep audiences returning; and for small teams of print lovers, spending that time in cyberspace was often opposed to their values and motivations described in the previous section for investing their resources into the print version. Their overarching feeling was that digital integration was imperative but lacking. *SAD* described the magazine's perceptions of the digital print relationship, the gaps it saw in its framework, and what the ideal relationship could entail:

It's a really beautiful relationship, but there are definitely ways that we could make it work better... Such simple things but we just don't have time to do them. Like we do a [print] article and we use one photograph. What about the other 24 photographs that are beautiful that we couldn't include? The digital space can be used to expand and augment the print issue. Support the print, and direct people back to the print. It's so funny because so many people on our board are digital strategists, but we just don't have the time to do everything we want to do.

This is a publication where the people involved solved digital issues like *SAD*'s as professionals, and still could not dedicate the time they felt was needed to resolve the disparity between digital and print in *SAD*.

Archive was in a similar situation. The app-to-print photo-based magazine used a customized app to collect user-generated content that comprised the print issue each month. Even though the app developer was employed as one in his professional life, *Archive*'s editor

explained part of its setbacks and failures due to insufficient time commitment by the app developer:

There were things I wanted to change about the app that I couldn't change [because I didn't have that knowledge]. Even just A/B tests to find out whether people would like the app more if we [released it in one way or another way]. But I couldn't do that work. And I couldn't force [the developer] to do the work either.

The disparity described between the vision for *Archive* and the result of *Archive* was big enough to negatively affect the whole publication. Without an app that functioned seamlessly, its user base was not growing and existing users were not returning with the regularity needed for the print issue to be sustained, or even expand.

Beatroute expressed similar frustration with digital integration, although where *SAD* and *Archive* had the know-how on their teams to tackle the problem, *Beatroute* identified where its digital components could be strengthened to complement the print version, but simply did not understand how it could be beneficial. When describing that they could sell advertising packages that combined print and digital, *Beatroute* did not understand how a digital ad could even be a value add:

I don't know how it works. I know now we've installed some backend stuff that will translate to digital sales. But I don't know how to be like hey, would you like to buy the "leaderboard ad" [sarcastically] on our website? Because for me it's always been like, if you want an ad on our website, buy the print ad [and] I'll give you this ad on the website.

Beatroute also viewed social media as being a competitor of its print edition, not as complementary:

Obviously if you're on Instagram, you're not reading our paper. So get off your phone and pick up the magazine.

Perhaps social media could have been more beneficial to *Beatroute's* publishing framework if the components were strategically incorporated with one another.

Between *SAD*, *Archive*, and *Beatroute* was the sentiment of the *Asparagus* founder, who viewed the integration of digital and print as necessary, but not as the crux of her operation and further, not something she expressed desire to focus on:

In this day and age, it does not make sense to *not* take advantage of the reach of the Internet, but I do not see the Internet as the be-all-end-all to what I'm doing.

Perhaps *Asparagus's* neutral yet cognizant perspective on digital integration could be attributed to its more recent launch in 2018, which was similar to *Maple* (2018) and *Barnacle Babes* (2016). Whereas *Beatroute* built itself in a time when a magazine could rely on print ad sales for revenue, *Asparagus* had not placed the same weight on funding from print advertising, nor did it ever operate in a media landscape where only one medium was sufficient to be viable. It is interesting that, whether or not the magazine had the brainpower to activate its digital assets alongside print more effectively, these examples show that time and desire were bigger deciding factors than skill.

Platform decisions. A significant consideration made by participants when deciding how to mobilize digital components was what type of content will be published in print format or shared in digital. The conversation became divided between two main areas of digital components: social media and the other digital components like the website, podcast, or app. Table 2 shows the digital components that participants integrated into their publishing structure.

Table 2

Digital Components Integrated into Publishing Structure

Publication	Launched	Website	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
Adbusters	1989	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Archive	2016	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Asparagus	2018	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barnacle Babes	2016	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Beatroute	2004	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Discorder	1983	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maple	2018	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
SAD Mag	2009	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) were used by all eight magazines—except for *Maple*, who did not use Twitter—for three main reasons which will be discussed next.

Drive to print. First, social media was used as a platform to promote and drive to the print issue. *Maple* would use an image from an article to be posted on Instagram with a pull quote to encourage the reader to pick up the latest print issue or purchase a subscription. Instagram was also a platform *Maple* coveted when borrowing intriguing design elements and inspiration for the magazine:

We're presenting *the* most interesting content. The biggest thing between digital and print is that we wanted to make something that's as beautiful to look at in print as they could find on Instagram. So that's where the design aspect comes in.

Maple describes here how their online presence created demand for their print issue by mirroring the design aesthetic. *Adbusters* created a video trailer when a new issue was released that would promote the new print issue on all digital platforms. Content from the print magazine would be spread out between issues to create a steady stream of online content, a key factor in remaining visible on social media where frequent posting and engagement is favoured.

Both *Asparagus* and *Barnacle Babes* reported the importance of social media for continually driving to the print issue, but also to the launch of the magazine's first-ever issue in print. They created and grew an online audience in the span of three months (*Barnacle Babes*) to a year (*Asparagus*) where they launched each of their social channels and posted a mix of articles, images, and relevant posts from other social accounts. Eventually, they shared the news of the first print issue and how to get it with that audience.

Timeliness. Second, the participants all reported social media as a platform that was used for time-sensitive posts that often were not directly related to the print issue, but that were important to their community both online and offline. This included announcements and invites for events like their own launch parties and fundraisers, posting articles that would be stale-dated by print time (like concert reviews), and supporting their community by sharing events and fundraisers of others. As *Discorder* noted:

We found that people are terrible at telling you they're doing something. So they'll contact us and say in three days we're doing this art show! But we are halfway through production, so. You're out of luck.

SAD reported use of Instagram specifically as an integral component used to promote their issue-launch parties because of their ability to reach a large, focused audience with the press of a button, and also to use as another platform to share images like photographs that did not fit the

print magazine mandate of publishing only analogue artwork (i.e., film and polaroid photography). In an accessible photo-based medium, a new breed of photographers has proliferated because of the app, and *SAD* recognized that by entirely excluding digital photography from their framework, they were excluding skilled, high-quality photography that resonated with their core values. While their mandate did not allow room for this niche of digital photographers to be published in the print issue, it did allow for them to be posted on their Instagram feed or website. That was where social media filled a gap for *SAD*.

Engagement. The third reason social media was core to the participants' business model, and perhaps required the most maintenance, was the ability it provides to engage with the magazine's audience. While engagement with a digital audience was reported by participants to benefit the publishing framework as a whole, it was also reported as a potentially high-maintenance feature that in some cases required more resources than the magazine actually had.

Actual engagement varied amongst participants and ranged from being positive and mutually beneficial between brands who were connecting with new audiences via influencers (*Maple*) to increase numbers of Likes and Followers online. Beauty, fitness, and food are amongst the industries that most use Instagram—a photo- and video-sharing app with about 1 billion monthly users—for social media marketing, and all fall under the lifestyle umbrella of the content included under *Maple* brand. The industry experts who write for *Maple* in print also have a substantial following on Instagram, where their contribution to *Maple* is shared amongst a whole new audience in their feeds. Influencers and regular readers also post about themselves reading the latest issue in the bathtub or opening up their Maple Box—the subscription sample service with organic skin care and natural health and wellness products that have been featured

in the print magazine—which *Maple* then shares on their Instagram feed. Engaging on social media for *Maple* increases their reach in ways the print cannot.

In contrast to *Maple's* method of engagement was *Adbusters'* approach, where the goal was to open up a two-way conversation with the audience about the sensitive and often controversial subject matter published that could not be done with the print edition. For example, when *Adbusters* posted an image, article, or statement on its Facebook or Instagram handles, they are by default participating in a public forum where the opinions and feelings of others can be expressed in the comments, including those that may agree or may disagree. While *Adbusters* does not necessarily respond to comments made by others on their social media posts—whether due to lack of time resources or actively declining to engage—those posts created a forum where thoughts can be expressed and opinions and ideals challenged. Their posts created engagement with their content and also amongst their followers.

The differences between how social media engagement was deployed by each these participants appears to depend on the genre of the magazine. This amicable and voluntary sharing and engagement for mutual benefit—and compensation and motivation for some to forego any paycheck in favour of credibility—reported by *Maple* is different from *Adbusters*, a left-leaning activist magazine with polarizing and often controversial subject matter. Their mandate was a blanket opposition to the advertising industry, who “needed to be knocked around a bit” and positioned *Adbusters* differently, which the founder recognized:

This is life. You've got to engage. And even if your vision is apocalyptic, you have to engage even more.

Most of *Adbusters'* following on social media is a community with core impulses that match the producers, and they engage with and support imagery like Donald Trump photoshopped to be

getting hit in the face with a pie, or emulating Hitler with a barcode mustache. These can be divisive posts on social media platforms, where anyone can comment. *Adbusters* opened themselves up for public debate in ways that a post of a glowing, healthy model trying out a new brand of organic mushroom tea does not. Social media engagement is a riskier and more time-consuming realm for publications like *Adbusters*. However, use of social media in the publishing framework of *Adbusters* undoubtedly increases its reach and connects it with an audience that is larger and different from the print-only audience.

This range of thought between pros and cons of social media engagement reported by participants also helped to explain why some publications would prefer to avoid social media completely if they could and why the engagement factor reported by *Adbusters* was a major deterrent for engaging more deeply on social media. Indeed, the landscape navigated by the seasoned and skilled team behind *Adbusters* was not one that the smaller publication intended for emerging contributors wanted to pursue or invest time in. For *Discorder*, a small publication that is a training ground and platform for freedom of expression and opinion (fact-checked, but by no means mainstream and more polarizing as a result) for beginning writers and artists, where their mandate is to give voice to underrepresented communities (contributors and subjects), social media was seen largely as a venue that exposed their community to unnecessary criticism:

We face a lot of places where the gaps in our knowledge or the things we didn't see, those often come back and bite you in the butt. And I think putting things on social media, you're putting it out to get beat down because that's all social media is good for.

SAD magazine echoed these sentiments in a specific post where their lack of resources was cited in mistakenly involving a contributor whose values were opposite theirs:

Although it may seem that we are a big magazine with many resources, in reality, we are volunteer-run by a handful of people after work, before work, and on weekends.

Unfortunately, this means that things fall through the cracks and we make mistakes. We apologize for not being thorough in our background fact-checking on this

writer. (@sadmagazine, Feb. 2, 2019)

On the other end of the spectrum though, *Discorder* did recognize the spreadability of social media to its contributors when sharing their work online:

What they end up doing is sharing it and tagging it with *Discorder*. Because we ask, you know you made it for us. And you might not have had the opportunity to do this, to draw this for this band if it wasn't for *Discorder*, so we ask if you can tag us, cool thank you.

And they always agree...but they'll share it in their own way.

A proper social media strategy was cited as an enabling factor for *Discorder* to use social media in the future, but the time and resources are not available as their current organization stands.

Any resources gained went to prioritizing the print magazine.

Another digital component used by all magazines in some capacity was a website, whether hosted on its own server or on another platform like Medium (*Asparagus*). The primary purpose of the website was essentially a digital storehouse; an archive or database, a gateway to the other digital components, or a place to make payment for subscription. Like the social media components, the website was often neglected due to lack of resources, but in some cases was recognized as a platform with more creative control. For example, *Adbusters* had begun to experiment with a digital language with the intent to make a web page with a purpose, flow, and language that approached guiding the reader as it would when flipping of the pages of their print issue. Constraints still stemmed from resources, priorities, and knowledge, though. The digital

realm came second, similarly to the social media components, and producers did not place the same value or importance as it did with print.

Other tools for digital engagement. Other digital components varied between publications and included a podcast (*SAD*), a web series (*Barnacle Babes*), and a custom app (*Archive*). Use of these components appeared to depend on one person or a separate team to manage it, and who typically operated independently from the print magazine. This divide reflected how some participants viewed the print and digital editions of each issue of the magazine as being different separate editions, even when much of the content was shared. While these three components were not integrated with the same ubiquity as social media and a website in this sample, they are common forms of digital publishing for independent magazines beyond this sample, and are useful when discussing how digital components can be integrated into an independent magazine's publishing framework in order to increase print viability. These other digital components are discussed in more detail below.

Podcast. While several magazines in the sample reported the desire to integrate a podcast into its publishing framework in its future, *SAD* was the only magazine that reported using one at the time of interview. Titled SADCAST, "The Podcast for Working Creatives" was broadcast monthly since 2014. The content aligns with the values of *SAD* as a whole while reaching a broader audience, and more frequently than the biannually published print issue. Equipment, technical skill, and time resources involved in making an engaging podcast appeared to be barriers to entry for those not using a podcast; however, in comparison to integrating an app or web series, a podcast appeared to be more accessible than the latter.

Web series. *Barnacle Babes*'s integration of the web series in its publishing framework was as essential as it was challenging to produce it on a regular basis due to resources required

for film production. In turn, while the web series was released in tandem with the first print issue of the magazine and was considered to be a mainstay of the brand, it was not possible to publish or release it with the same regularity as the print issue, and so its role was not given the same gravity as the print issue.

Custom apps. *Archive* was the only participant that used an app. The other seven were uncertain what it could be used effectively for. In fact, their consensus appeared to be that any extra resources that could be spent beyond the print issue, website, and social media integration, the next in line would be a podcast. *Archive's* integration of its custom app, described as a social photo-sharing app that was a cross between Tinder and Instagram, was imperative to its business model that used user-generated content to make each print magazine. Even though *Archive* identified as a print magazine, its start-up funding came from a new media grant to build the app, which created a bit of a split over how the resources of the team should be used. The founder reported his frustrations with trying to be “a kind of buggy photo app” that was not built with the same psychologically addictive qualities of Instagram. Furthermore, he reported that while the app was an innovative idea, for which he had plans to expand into other cities as a cultural asset for the community, they probably would have been better off simply using a custom hashtag on Instagram to crowdsource photos to build each issue instead of going their own way. He was not wrong. Using a hashtag with Instagram is exactly what a publication titled *Street Dreams* does to create each print issue. (They were unable to participate in the study.) It was one of only two digital-to-print examples that could be found, and the only one that appeared to still be running, and evidently quite successfully.

Diversification of Funding

All participants described their use of multiple revenue sources in the magazine's framework at some point during its lifespan, which indicated the importance of funding diversity—especially beyond heavy reliance on print ad revenue—to the magazine's viability, even if their motivations were not primarily financially driven. While the goal of making a living wage was indicated by participants from *Barnacle Babes* and *Discorder*—and conversely, not enough compensation was a reason for some to fold (*Archive*) or move on (*SAD*)—nobody was looking to get rich. The approach each took to running the magazine, however, was certainly with the intent for it to remain viable, and the decisions made in order for it to make money were made with viability in mind. In other words, it was clear that, even though the print magazine was at the centre of the framework, the magazine needed more than revenue from the print issue to sustain it. In addition to print ad revenue, which was used by all except *Adbusters*, other sources included subscriptions of the magazine and curated samples of products from the magazine; tiered memberships; grants; community events such as launch parties and fundraisers, partnerships; and donations.

Print advertising. With the exception of *Adbusters*—the only ad-free publication in this study and indeed an anomaly in all independent magazine publishing, indie or not—all participants reported print advertising as a significant and necessary source of funding. Because these producers valued the cover-to-cover reader experience, they were able to facilitate and curate with their print magazine, careful choices were made to incorporate ads as organically and synergistically as possible. *Maple* described their approach to combining their ads with editorial:

You want everything to be relaxed, to be beautiful, even the advertising, even advertorial... It's not a big deal when you're *Vogue* and your ads are beautiful and done

by proper designers, but it's a bigger deal when the ads are made by not so savvy natural health companies.

In addition to synergizing the look and feel of ads with articles to ensure flow was *Maple's* mandate to maintain the ratio of ads to editorial needed to maintain the reader experience:

We do measure success as growth through advertising dollars. We want the most [dollar] amount per page, and we want the least amount of ads [in the magazine]. We cap the ad ratio at 35%, and for example *Alive Magazine* [a Vancouver-based wellness and lifestyle magazine] is over 50%.

Maple's cautionary stance on ad saturation did not seem to be an issue with other participants, who described finding and maintaining advertisers as a challenge.

In some cases, this struggle to find and maintain relationships with appropriate advertisers appeared to perhaps be reflective of the magazine's genre (*Beatroute*, *Discorder*, *SAD*, *Archive*, *Barnacle Babes*). The lifestyle and wellness industry that hawks myriad products, diets, and personalities synonymous with healthier and happier living is currently booming, and *Maple's* timing and understanding of its target market from previous experience made it easy to secure advertising. Conversely, *Beatroute* was founded on selling advertising to record labels that were brick-and-mortar music stores that have been replaced by streaming services; and club and promoter event listings that have been mostly replaced by the internet. *Beatroute's* struggle to sell and secure ads now seemed to be because of its inability to adapt to a change in the landscape specific to independent music, arts, and culture; the companies that advertised with them in its first 10 years do not see the same value in print advertising now as they did then. Having just been purchased by an outside investor, the founder described its upcoming overhaul

as one that will morph *Beatroute* from a community-based magazine into *Beatroute* as a media company, and its advertising strategies were about to be diversified as a result.

Other participants discussed their adaptation strategies in this changing media market. *Discorder* described a concert listings advertisement that a promoter created just for them that adapted to their design specifications, which used a niche printing process called spot colour. It was not a process the magazine had always used, so even though the resulting ad was uniquely integrated and a welcome addition with some, it was not with others.

It was a bit of a weird thing for advertisers to accept. Some were like, we want to pay more for colour. But they don't pay for the spot. For every advertiser we lost, we gained an awesome one... Like Timbre was so on board that they got a designer to design that back page ad specifically for us.

Producers of *Archive*, *Beatroute*, *Barnacle Babes*, *Maple*, and *Asparagus* were or at some point had been in charge of ad sales in addition to their editor and roles at the magazine, a double-duty that was unanimously reported as an exhausting job that they would delegate to someone else whenever resources were there. *SAD* and *Discorder* both had dedicated ad rep roles, which appeared to be an enabling factor for staying focused and being immersed in their roles, or simply just not burning out. While print ads were sometimes integrated with ease and sometimes met with frustrations, seven of eight magazines still cited their importance to print magazine viability.

All participants recognized that funding or revenue in order to break even on each issue—even if that meant simply covering printing costs with print ads—was necessary. Their publishing frameworks reflected funding strategies that aligned with their values and mandate.

Furthermore, these magazines used the opportunities presented by having both digital and print components fund the magazine.

Subscriptions and memberships. Subscriptions and memberships were used by seven participants and were reported as beneficial to varying degrees. *Adbusters'* global circulation of approximately 150,000 was managed by a centralized distributor in America, presumably deeming their subscriptions a significant source of revenue, or to at least cover printing costs in addition to donations. Others managed subscriptions independently, typically with a spreadsheet and a quick trip to the post office when spare time allowed, which was time consuming, but also the only option when subscriptions ranged about 75 to 300 copies per issue, as was the case with six of the participants. *Maple* took a unique approach to the subscription model with the *Maple Box*, a seasonal subscription aligned with the publishing cycle of the magazine that included samples of products for skin care, health, and wellness, and included a copy of the magazine. *Maple Box* subscriptions were about 50% of the publication's revenue. *Barnacle Babes* offered membership in three tiers, where levels included the print magazine and add-ons like seminars, discounts on organized trips, and more. Regardless of the product, the audiences of these publications were more inclined to pay for something tangible, and both also incorporated the strategy as a significant source of income to their publishing framework. Moreover, the publication's digital components were places that made subscribing easy and accessible for their audience.

Grants. *Archive*, *Asparagus*, and *SAD* all had won either one-time or continuous grants to fund the magazine. While *Asparagus's* was awarded as a periodical, both *Archive* and *SAD* were awarded on merits peripheral to the print magazine. *Archive* was developed as a photo-sharing app in tandem with the print publication, which qualified it for an interactive media grant

administered by Creative BC, a provincial funding organization for film, music, digital arts, and literature. *Archive* sold print ads as well to attempt to cover costs, but the editor described the grant as a significant catalyst for the magazine's launch and first several issues. *SAD* approached grant applications as an odds game, reporting that chances of winning would always be higher if there were fewer applicants to compete with. A significant portion of their funding came from a community grant awarded by the BC Arts Council. It was first awarded on a project basis, and the magazine's audience and reputation grew as an inclusive organization with a positive impact on LGBTQ arts and culture communities in Vancouver, they were able to secure annual operational funding. This would not have been possible operating solely as a print magazine. *SAD*'s community extended to myriad events and a podcast, which, when combined with high standards in publishing practices and art and editorial curation, opened doors for funding beyond the magazine realm.

Summary

The analysis of the interview data found that all eight publications in the sample deployed digital components like social media, websites, podcasts, and video in their publishing framework, to some degree. All eight magazines also unquestionably identified the print magazine as the backbone and central component of the framework, and the foundation upon which its digital extensions were integrated. Despite increasing or expensive printing costs, and challenges of trying to cover those costs through traditional methods like advertising dollars, participants unanimously acknowledged the value of the print issue beyond money. This was echoed by both magazines that had adapted to the shifting media landscape since their analogue launch in the 80s (*Discorder*, *Adbusters*) and those that used Instagram, Facebook, Medium, or a custom app to create an audience online that subsequently became a subscriber base for its first

print issue (*Asparagus, Barnacle Babes, Maple, Archive*). Whether the magazine launched in print or digital, the very fact that a print component was included at all meant it was unquestionably the centre.

The print magazine was viewed by all participants as an increasingly important component of the framework *because* of the digital ubiquity and prevalence of independent publishing, and they saw no threat of it being replaced by any digital components. The shared sentiment of participants was that the digital realm was simply another platform where the publication was visible and could be made shareable to a larger audience than the print issue, in a form that is not meant to replace print, but instead to repackage, repurpose, and extend it elsewhere. Reasons for lacking or neglecting to integrate the digital components were due to shortage of resources like time, people, money, or understanding of how to use them most effectively for the type of content the magazine covered. None of the producers interviewed saw digital components as being detrimental to their publishing framework or the print issue. The digital realm was simply not the experience they wanted personally, nor wanted to produce and provide for their readership. These people, and the audience they sought, all thought “print first.” I will now move into a discussion where the findings will be analyzed in light of studies from the literature review and Marshall McLuhan’s tetrad of media effects.

Discussion

In this section, I discuss the findings in light of the literature and through the lens of McLuhan’s “laws of media” tetradic framework, with the aim of answering the main research question of this study: *How can an indie magazine structure its digital framework to increase print viability?* The discussion will be centered on the following topics: What are the strengths of

print, why are those strengths important, what are the strength of digital, and why are those strengths important.

The data collected through these interviews yielded information on how independent publications that use both print and digital components, and placed the print component at the forefront, used a hybrid model for their publishing framework. The data showed that integration of digital and print elements often lacked direction or strategy that could have made the digital components more useful. To that end, the data from the eight participants will be combined with the literature that grounds this study, including phenomenological connection to print and material culture, medium theory and specificity, and analysis by Marshall McLuhan's tetrad of media effects, to form a framework that can be integrated in an existing independent magazine or implemented by a magazine that seeks to launch.

Marshall McLuhan's tetrad of media effects is a tool that can be used to evaluate the patterns and effects a medium can exert on the society in which it is situated (McLuhan & McLuhan, 1988). Analysis of a hybrid publishing model using the tetrad can determine what each component enhances, obsolesces, retrieves, and reverses within the context of the hybrid media environment. Subsequently, the analysis can then inform how that component can be used most effectively and synergistically with the other components of the publishing framework. Because the goal of this study is to determine the best use of print and digital components within a niche area of communication, components were analyzed through the narrower lenses of the magazine producer and its audience instead of society as a whole. McLuhan's tetrad is a model that can analyze, on a continuum, literally any medium, in any context, and so the choice to narrow the focus was made with the intent of acknowledging the specific nuances that emerge from the components of an independent publishing framework. Analysis of the effects of each

component on the producers and readers revealed traits and qualities to consider when launching, redesigning, or restructuring an indie magazine, as well as some significant principles to consider for integration of digital media that increases print viability. First, I discuss print's strengths, followed by discussion of the strengths of digital media, with a final section of the discussion offering strategic recommendations on how to combine the best of both forms of media.

Print Strengths: What Are They?

Triangulation of the literature, data, and tetradic analysis of the print magazine reveals three key strengths of print to consider when designing a hybrid independent publication. These strengths are creative freedom and control, tactility and tangibility, and archivability and permanence.

Creative freedom and control. The independent print magazine is a medium for creativity and expression that extends from its producers with fewer barriers and more accessibility to those qualities than its digital counterparts. Some examples of creative freedom were altering font and typeface within a written piece (social media genericizes these) and experimenting with page layout and printers; some examples of creative control were complete autonomy for the producers in running the magazine and ability to choose and change the publishing frequency at will, both resulting from independence from outside stakeholders. The *Adbusters* founder described his journey from filmmaking into magazine production in the late 1980s as largely propagated by his loss of creative control. He could no longer protest the government or speak out against corporate America via film:

Suddenly the director wasn't the king anymore. The executive producer was the king.

And they start telling you things and how to do stuff, and holding back the money if you didn't do what they told you. And then all of a sudden there was this heave within

filmmaking which I didn't like... creative control but also feel that you're no longer master of your own baby.

Not only was his departure from film driven by loss of freedom, his passion and affinity for print magazine production was very much propelled by reclaiming that creative control and freedom:

There was something about the production of a magazine that really appealed to me. It felt every bit as good as making a film. And it was quicker and dirtier, instead of it taking one year to make a documentary and running around the world and carrying heavy equipment everywhere... Putting out a magazine every three months felt like a real lark.

Adbusters' account highlights how an independent magazine can be a place to experiment, to grow, and to take risks without being confined by corporate constraints and with less financial investment than an artform like film.

Tetrad analysis digs deeper and reveals how in the context of the hybrid publishing model, creative freedom and control become print strengths. The independent print magazine is made possible in large part because of developments in desktop publishing and printing that democratized media in an unprecedented way. Therefore, we see barriers to access and production obsolesced, we see corporate control obsolesced, and we see tools and vessels for creativity enhanced, all via the independent print magazine, and all in ways that are embodied more strongly in the print magazine than in its digital counterparts. The literature review echoed this particular strength of print in its discussion on motivation of both readers and producers of print magazines (Bonner & Roberts, 2017; Le Masurier, 2012; Currie Sivek & Townsend, 2014). These studies underscored the desire of a range of age and skill to engage with print to express themselves, take creative risks, and become more skilled; indeed, they described the independent print magazine as a platform for creative freedom and control. Perhaps unsurprisingly, just as the

tetrad operates on a continuum and the literature overlaps, so do these print strengths amongst themes. Paper, font, colour, binding, and printers were all as listed as strengths under the theme of physicality as well, discussed in the next section.

Physicality, tangibility, and tactility. Print provides a unique experience for both producer and reader as a direct result of its existence as a physical, tactile, and tangible object, and tetradic analysis can help explain the meaning behind that experience.

First, when situated in the context of the hybrid publishing framework, the print magazine retrieves the materiality of the reading experience including the sensory pleasure and stimulus evoked by flipping through pages, touching the paper stock, running fingers over raised type, and wafting the smell of a freshly printed issue. These phenomenologically charged strengths of print that participants reported as motivators to produce a magazine were also supported by the literature review (Abrahamson, 2009; Piepmeier, 2008), especially by Le Masurier (2012):

The indie producers have identified core elements of the printed magazine and pushed them to the foreground: the quality and tactility of the paper, format (size, shape, binding), the integration of words, images and space as an expression of graphic design specific to print, and the life and function of the magazine as a material object. All are untransferable elements in the experience of both making and reading a magazine (p. 394).

The producers demonstrated their knowledge of the significance of those core analogue elements to the print magazine whether they knew it explicitly or not. *Maple's* goal with every issue was to “make the most beautiful magazine possible,” showing their intent for its editorial and advertising choices to be significantly informed by visual and physical aesthetics. For them, this

meant choosing a paper stock and a printer that did justice to their photographs and illustrations, and adhering to a ratio of editorial to advertising that guided the design of the visual flow and reader experience without interrupting stories every few pages. While the design of the flow described by *Maple* was also key to *Adbusters*, advertisements did not hold a place in the content of their framework. *Adbusters* deliberately and intentionally excluded ads—hence the title *Adbusters*—to align with the values and mandate of the media foundation as a whole. The contrasting approaches to designing the reader experience by *Maple* (a highly consumable lifestyle and wellness magazine hawking experts and the products behind them) versus *Adbusters* (a vehement leftist, anti-consumer magazine) using or excluding ads illustrates the effect of genre on how to fit the publication's content. Ads in *Adbusters* would make it worse; ads in *Maple* are complementary.

While participants did not express creative constraints due to advertising partnerships, there was a slight loss of true independence that came from them. When positioned next to *Adbusters* and the uninterrupted mind journey one is guided through on a 70-plus page print publication completely free of products being sold, there was no denying a difference in the cover-to-cover immersion and the reader experience. Complete absence of ads may not be in the future for the other seven participants, but all did express and attempt to demonstrate thought, intent, and careful planning when it came to integrating ads, and its effect on the linear, cover-to-cover experience of print magazine, an important strength of print to consider for the framework.

Next, print's physicality retrieves content limitations of media such as books, and it reverses media saturation facilitated by the seemingly infinite content published and posted on digital media; the number of pages that can be flipped in a magazine is limited by money and practicality; the information that can be scrolled through on the Internet is not. This was voiced

by participants like *Discorder* as a significant strength of print and a counterbalance to a kind of paralysis caused by the digital deluge he called Netflix Syndrome:

You spend more time scrolling through Netflix than you do watching the movie. I think that with print stuff, it just comes down to, I could scroll the 20,000 magazines that get made worldwide, or I could pick up the free one over there and rid myself of this awful decision.

In brief, less is more. A nod back to media bias (Innis, 1950; Innis, 1951) explains that the printed magazine is heavy, stable, and physically stationary compared to its content in digital form, which makes it space-biased, and prescriptive—a kind of antidote—to the problem people experience due to a surplus of digital content. In other words, the fact that a physical piece of media limits choice can be beneficial. The concept of hot and cool media (McLuhan, 1964) can help explain why *Discorder*'s statement and feeling overwhelmed to the point of proverbial paralysis is undesirable; Netflix leaves little room for conversation or novel thought, and now invites less engagement, leaving more room for print media to take on that role. The physicality of a print magazine facilitates the balance of space- and time-bias and hot and cool media, and cuts through digital noise.

Choosing a printer that worked with unique requests and ideas can contribute to the overall framework's ability to maximize print potential. For *Discorder*, this meant sometimes embracing “fuck ups” such as their struggles of using of spot colour, a finicky process that has been obsolesced by the accessibility and ubiquity of digital offset printing and is difficult to calibrate on screen and even more difficult to transfer onto the printed page. However, this unique choice set *Discorder* apart from other publications in the city and retrieved tactile and tangible strengths of print, enhanced the DIY punk ethos it was founded on, and apparently has

contributed to a print issue that is the healthiest it has been in years. In *Adbusters'* case, they recently switched the stock of the cover and inside pages, deliberately selecting a paper with a rough sandpaper quality paired with a flimsy thin interior page to retrieve, in print, the core anti-capitalist values and content of the magazine's mandate in the present political, environmental, and economic crisis, and how their publication can most effectively extend those values in print:

We wanted to go for something rough. Something heavier and grittier that was more like this activist rag.

An activist rag, much like *Discorder's* DIY punk roots, was exactly the ethos *Adbusters* was founded on, so choosing to mobilize tactile and tangible elements of the print magazine to retrieve the essence of its physical foundation that was shaped in 1989 was, ironically, a logical progression. It began as a newsletter, created with a xerox machine, printed on office paper. For their part, *SAD* chose to publish only analogue artwork, meaning all photography included was shot on film or polaroid, which retrieved the filmic nuances of analogue film that have been diluted by the prevalence of digital photography. In contrast, *Archive* chose the best paper to print their digital photography submissions, which ranged from iPhone to DSLR, and published them in perfect-bound magazine. Perhaps its choice to emulate digital photography in print with these physical choices contributed to its eventual demise; the paper quality and binding were the most expensive reported by amongst participants (and across print publishing as a whole), and perhaps it only competed with digital instead of defining itself by publishing analogue art like *SAD* or *Discorder*. Tactile, tangible design choices that can be made exclusively in print and stimulate the sensory experience of print should be made with care and intent in order to make the print component of the magazine most viable.

Finally, with print, there is the prestige associated with uniqueness, durability, and tangibility, and in turn people are more compelled to pay for something they can touch and feel and hold. This holds true for ads as well, as pointed to by *Asparagus*, who noted that, “It’s not easy to sell print ads, but it’s impossible to sell digital ads,” which nods to print’s value as a revenue source because of its physical form, even if it is one of several revenue sources.

Tetradic analysis of print’s physical qualities confirms that the hybrid publishing model can benefit from maximizing the tactile and tangible qualities that cannot be replicated in print. Its materiality retrieves the pleasure and engagement afforded by the cover-to-cover reading experience that is obsolesced by the online experience of endless scrolling. The unique choices for paper, binding, and printing all allow the printed magazine to retrieve and amplify an ethos of a bygone era of punk or activism, in a physical way that digital cannot. Finally, the prestige of print can create reason and desire for advertisers to align with an independent publication in a way that cannot be paralleled in digital. Next, the discussion will move to the archival and permanent strengths of print via tetradic analysis.

Archivability and permanence. In addition to the independent print magazine’s strength as a tangible, tactile object that provides a platform for creative freedom and control is its archivability and permanence as an object. While similar to the other major strengths discussed, this refers to the ability of its content to endure time because of its objecthood, which is tied to Innis’s theory on the importance of space-biased media.

This strength of print’s permanence was summarized by *Discorder*:

We still have the first *Discorder* [from 1983] hanging on the wall. It’s still there! I don’t know if anyone can find that [digital] master file anymore. Was there a master file? I don’t know. Even the first InDesigned *Discorder*, where is that? It’s gone. So without

that physical copy, that magazine is gone. We archive it, it gets archived in special collections, it gets archived with us, it gets archived at the VPL [Vancouver Public Library].

Discorder also spoke to the print magazine as a “teeny billboard for CiTR all over the city” which was echoed by *Barnacle Babes*, who called the print issue a “giant business card,” and by *Maple*, and *Asparagus* as well.

What these participants were speaking to is the significance of the print magazine for building the visibility and credibility of the brand or title. They were all aware and understood that in the hybrid model, the print magazine would be a hard cost that as a standalone component would maybe break even or lose money on every run. However, it anchored the model and brought awareness and value to the publication as a whole. This was evidenced by the IBIS World report (Ozelkan, 2017) on the Magazine and Periodical Publishing Industry, wherein pockets of promise in a declining industry were found in the models that were investing significantly in hybridization, such as Rogers Communications. While the print issue might not directly make money for the publication, its value as a component is unmatched because of its permanence and archivability in comparison to, and situated amongst, the digital counterparts.

The print magazine’s place as a lasting and stable component that retrieves and enhances archivability and permanence are significant strengths of its physical form. The digital realm, one where information and content can be easily forgotten because of the disposability and transience of its ability to enhance access to and consumption of information, renews the importance of the physical form because of the digital ubiquity. That importance will be further explored in the next section.

Print strengths: Why are they important? Independent magazines are powered by passionate individuals who are motivated by more than money. They are motivated by freedom of creative expression, by skill and career advancement, and by phenomenological connection to the medium. The exclusivity, credibility, and authority provided by the agency with an independent magazine—all reported as motivational factors of producers and contributors—are also strengths of print that should be considered when determining a publishing framework. The participants understood and made decisions based on their publication's ability to benefit themselves and those involved by embodying the print strengths, and in turn revealed why those strengths were important.

The print magazine as a centrepiece for creative freedom and control is important because of how those qualities invite and encourage contribution, participation, and agency from a range of skill level, formal education, cultural backgrounds, sex and/or gender identity, and age. This mirrored some motivations described by Currie Sivek and Townsend (2014), where the digital indie magazine was a training ground and venue for producers and contributors to practise and hone their skill without rules or borders, and to learn and develop skills like writing, illustration, photography, and collaboration in a structured and open professional editorial setting.

The objecthood and materiality of the print magazine also points to its importance, in the print form specifically. Its physical, tactile, tangible, and permanent nature is a gravitational force for the producers, contributors, and audience. Its medium specificity creates value that its digital counterparts did not hold, and value beyond money. Physicality, then, is important because the print magazine becomes social currency and positive affiliation that can compensate where money might usually be.

Digital Strengths: What Are They?

Tetradic analysis of the digital components of an independent magazine's publishing framework reveals what should be pushed to the forefront of the hybrid framework in order for those digital components—including social media, websites, apps, podcasts, and web series—to increase print viability. The digital strengths identified by this study are timeliness and urgency, audience expansion, and opportunity for engagement, which will be discussed next.

Timeliness and urgency. Digital technology has increased the speed of publishing to an instantaneous pace. Anyone with a smartphone, tablet, or computer—media that have become ubiquitous in tandem with the endurance of the independent print magazine—paired with the Internet, can transmit a message that can be accessible to almost anyone, anywhere on the globe. The timeliness and urgency that digital media fulfills cannot be replicated or substituted with print media, and therefore creates a demand for it in a viable indie publishing framework.

Tetradic analysis of digital components of an independent magazine show that publishing frequency is enhanced and mechanical printing media, such as the printing press and the xerox printer, is obsolesced. In their historical context these were two mediums that enhanced speed of and accessibility to information and content, removing what slows the publishing process now. The good news is that there are plenty of ways that participants mobilized digital strengths of publishing frequency, timeliness, and urgency. One method was posting partial or whole articles to its digital components at scheduled intervals between print runs, which extended the issue's longevity and visibility, and drove back to the print issue. Some participants reported publishing time-sensitive articles like concerts reviews (typically published the day after), advertising their own launch parties (which can be brought to the top of a follower's feed to remind them consistently), and other community events that the magazine was not notified of until after going

to print. These are all examples of content that could easily become stale-dated even in a monthly print edition like *Beatroute* but fit well with their social media or website execution.

Innis's work on media bias (1950) combined with tetradic analysis again illuminates the significance of light, portable media that can be transmitted instantaneously, which in the context of the independent publishing framework is complementary to the space-biased print component. Together, the digital time-biased media and space-biased print media create the hybrid framework that can maximize the medium specificity of each, and most importantly the print component. The strengths of digital are next discussed further through audience expansion via hyperlinking on the web via digital platforms; or, shareability and spreadability that only the internet can provide.

Audience expansion by shareability and spreadability. Hyperlinked interconnected online communities make digital media spreadable, shareable, and in turn can enhance the audience and visibility of an independent publication in a way that print obsolesces when analyzed through the tetrad of media effects. Digital components that participants incorporated in their publishing frameworks, like social media, websites, a podcast, an app, and video, are all time-biased media that enable distribution of power and in relation to heavier space-biased media have a shorter lifespan (Innis, 1950; Babe, 2008). These concepts are a significant and complementary benefit of digital in the context of print for shareability and spreadability. By publishing content online, whether time-sensitive or not, the print issue takes on a new life when hyperlinked wherein it can extend to a wider audience via sharing by its producers, contributors, and readers. *Archive* gave an example of an article published in an issue of the print magazine versus Twitter and Medium:

I wrote a [politically charged] piece in one of the essays in the magazine. Finally, I was like, I had this piece, why don't I just put it on Medium and on Twitter. And there were thousands and thousands and thousands of views on it. And when it was in print, I don't think anyone said anything about it. So the nice thing about text when it's online is that it's so shareable.

Asparagus, *Archive*, and *Barnacle Babes* all used the value of digital to grow an audience that eventually crossed over to subscribers and readers offline. The shareability of their online presence made the publication more widely known and benefitted the print issue in turn.

Jenkins, Ford, and Greene's (2013) work on the spreadability of information on the Internet supports the place of digital media in the hybrid publishing framework. It creates a space where the ideas and values contained in the physical magazine can reach like-minded audiences, and like-minded audiences that are broader than the passing of a print issue from one hand to another. Spreadability on the Internet also creates a space for agency, trust, and clout by the authors who are spreading it; indeed, seeing a post from an indie magazine by a close friend or mentor with similar values could reinforce the credibility of a piece, and in turn increase its likelihood for being spread.

Time-biased digital components of an independent publishing framework enhance the magazine's ability to reach a broader audience and its hyperlinked environment supports that reach in a way the print edition cannot. Next, the ability of digital media to provide a two-way platform of communication—sometimes negative, sometimes positive—between producer and audience will be discussed.

Engagement. Engagement afforded by digital media is a strength that, in the context of the independent magazine framework, retrieves the global village and the public forum that is

obsolesced by the one-way platform of print. With the digital realm, especially social media, comes a public platform for communication between audience and producer, and among the audience, that enables engagement that is not possible with the print issue. As discussed in the findings, publications choose to engage to varying degrees and it can be positive, negative, or neutral. Engagement can manifest like *Discorder*'s choice to limit certain kinds of content on social media due to community vulnerability and desire to protect its community or like *Adbusters*' choice to have a voice and take a pronounced stand online and mobilize that transactional nature of social media in order to engage on controversial subjects. *Archive* found that engaging somewhat sarcastically and comedically with its audience ended up negatively affecting their audience and discouraged users to continue using their app. In contrast, *Maple*'s digital components enabled almost completely positive engagement due to its genre and the desire for its contributors and audience to have an exchange over advice and products that brought wellness and better living. While digital engagement can be positive or negative when choosing how to enhance the print edition, it is an important consideration when integrating digital components to a hybrid publishing framework. Depending on the genre of the magazine and resources available, creating a conversation about the magazine using the power of two-way communication online can help make the print issue more viable.

The choice and degree to which an independent magazine—often with limited resources to sustain such a conversation—engages online, can be justified either way; this portion of the discussion is intended to shed light on how the publishing framework can be strengthened if the resources to engage online are available. A nod back to Neil Postman's work on media ecology (1986) suggests that because of its fixation to page, print could be the only medium that can convey rational argument, so while the digital realm can create a space for engagement unlike

that print realm, perhaps whether an independent publishing framework leans toward *Discorder's* cautious approach or toward *Adbusters'* more aggressive approach, the most meaningful discussion will be the one that stems from the print edition.

The discussion of digital's strengths compared to print in the context of a hybrid independent publishing framework now moves into why those strengths are important.

Digital strengths: Why are they important? Digital strengths include increase of agency, audience, engagement, and participation, all in ways that print cannot. While print has the ability to validate and enable authority because of its permanent form—a space-biased and relatively fixed form according to Innis (1950)—digital broadens that reach because of its spreadable form, a form enhanced by Innis's space-bias. Digital components of an independent publishing framework are imperative to growing the audience of a small print run of a few hundred to a hundred thousand into an exponentially larger audience. The magazine's accessibility is expanded, its footprint grows, and more people can be invited into the conversation being generated by its producers, contributors, and readers. By integrating the strengths of an independent magazine's digital components with the strengths of its print components, the framework as a whole amplifies to a sum greater than its parts.

Recommendations

Three recommendations emerge from this study that any independent magazine can use to launch on or use to consider if adjusting an existing publication to the current hybrid realm. These three recommendations are based on medium specificity, motivation, and the unique ability of an independent magazine to fulfill a niche.

Push to print with digital and push to digital with print. The print magazine should drive readers to the magazine's digital realm to enjoy unique, medium-specific content published

and tailored specifically for that component, and vice-versa. This can include using social media to announce a new issue or community event and distributing content from the print issue over the time between its publication date and the next issue's publication date to engage an audience over a longer period of time. The print issue can also include social handles, extended versions of articles, extra photos or illustrations, and calls to express an opinion online. The digital issue should leave a tangible, tactile quality of the magazine's physical elements to be desired, including analogue artwork and long reads design to be read cover-to-cover and not via digital-scrolling on a screen. Pushing from print to digital and digital to print via each medium can increase overall viability and especially that for the print issue.

Motivate beyond money. Compensate contributors in ways that motivates them by more than money, and structure the publications so that motivation can be amplified by the components of the hybrid platform. The producers of *Maple* and *Barnacle Babes* both included the Instagram handles of their contributors as well as the full name when including a byline, which was reported and a mutual benefit for the magazine and contributors for engaging and growing an audience in print and digital. A simple gift of the print issue to which the person has contributed or a gift subscription can serve as motivation for contributors, as can links to articles online and being tagged when articles are shared. Crossover of contributor credit between digital and print is fairly simple yet motivating enough for many.

Identify a niche, own it, and grow with it. *Adbusters* identified and rode the activist wave; *Archive* built a crowd-sourced perfect-bound photo magazine with free, user-generated content from an app; *Asparagus* aimed to become the *Wired* of green culture. As soon as *Discorder* found its content too similar to a national music magazine, it became local, and as soon as it found its content too similar to another local music magazine, it overhauled its content

and mandate. *Maple* forged new territory in the Canadian wellness and lifestyle landscape that included men and women in the audience. All of these publications identified a gap in the publishing landscape that could be filled and continually refined. A magazine's adaptability and openness to evolve its niche content and design based on developments in technology, politics, arts, culture, music, and health, increase the viability of the print magazine. Furthermore, that niche can make identifying, creating, and growing a digital audience even more effective by understanding specific interests and values within a genre. The hybrid model is one that facilitates the ability of the magazine to tap into each and every niche available to the magazine's varied components.

Summary of Recommendations. This study identified three main recommendations an independent magazine can use to launch on or use to consider if adjusting an existing publication to the current hybrid realm. Medium specificity, motivation, and the unique ability of an independent magazine to fulfill a niche are all proven practical for an independent publication at any stage of its existence.

Summary of Discussion

This discussion probed the strengths of print and why they are important to increasing print viability in a hybrid publishing framework, and next the strengths of digital and why they are important to integrate with a hybrid publishing framework. The print strengths significant in this context were creative freedom and creative control; physicality, tactility, and tangibility; and archivability and permanence. These strengths are made more significant when situated alongside the digital components of the framework because they each embody medium specificity and become synergistic. Timeliness and urgency, spreadability and shareability, and

engagement were all strengths of digital that were made more so in tandem with the print magazine.

The strengths and weaknesses of each medium were found by using McLuhan's tetrad of media effects analysis. Tetradic analysis of print and digital in each strength section concurrently identified the weakness of the opposite media when the content was put to the same use in the different medium. Medium specificity of parts like social media, websites, podcasts, paper, printing, and typeface were identified in the context of the independent publishing framework, and it was demonstrated that the model wherein the print component was the most viable was that where all hybrid components were integrated to maximize their strengths, in their niche, and very specifically.

Conclusion

This study explored the strengths and weaknesses, benefits and struggles reported by interviewing eight producers of indie magazines. The participants embraced hybridization of media and their magazine, although they did not all necessarily desire to prioritize them in the same way. All eight identified the print magazine as the central component of the framework, and the foundation upon which the digital extensions of it were integrated. While the print issue was not always a money source for the publication, participants unanimously acknowledged the value of the print issue beyond a monetary one, which strengthened the discussion for a model that prioritized the print issue. Whether the magazines had adapted to the shifting media landscape since launching in analogue (*Discorder*, *Adbusters*) or launching first in the digital realm like Instagram, Facebook, Medium, or a custom app to create an audience online that subsequently became its subscriber base for its first print issue (*Asparagus*, *Barnacle Babes*, *Maple*, *Archive*), producers were motivated to persist in publishing their print issues in the hybrid

era. Even though digital integration was a challenge, it was still one worthy of tackling in the name of print viability and in the “argument for analogue.” The tetrad of media effects analysis was a tool used to analyze the print and digital components in a hybrid framework separately to identify the strength of each, which consequently were the weaknesses of others, when situated synergistically in the hybrid model. Tetric analysis made a clear case for integration of print and digital and that there are phenomenological, physical, and permanent reasons that print can remain viable and centrifugal in the framework.

Study Limitations, Exclusions, and Opportunities for Future Research

This study had some limiting factors. First, it was limited geographically, as my sample was restricted to Metro Vancouver in Canada, the region in which I live and intend to launch a magazine eventually. Second, time constraints and the scope of this project and requirements for fulfillment of a Master’s degree limited the participant pool to a small number, considering the vast number of independent titles in existence, both within the region and beyond. For example, had time allowed, I would have wanted to involve *Street Dreams*, a publication quite similar in the crowd-sourced, digital-first structure of *Archive*, but unlike *Archive* is not only publishing but evidently thriving as a hybrid publication with a strong print foundation. Also, data collection and analysis were limited to magazines that not only fit the sample criteria, but also that responded, were available, and were willing within the timeframe of this study. I acknowledge that the data and results will be limited to the publications from which I collect data, but the findings did allow me to present some principles for informed design of the hybrid publishing model discussed.

Furthermore, this study is a useful launchpad for future research in the area of independent magazine publishing and the structuring and integration of both digital and print

components. The area of future research that came to mind over and over as I wrote this was how deep focus and attention span has waned with the influx of digital reading, scrolling words on a screen versus turning printed pages, and how retention of information is lessened. I have personally experienced a significant difference in my ability to read and focus on words whether on screen or a printed paged, and to retain the information within since starting this very paper about two years ago. I believe it has a lot to do with my professional life, where I spend a significant amount of time reading and writing for social media and writing ad copy of no more than 20 words in length. Transitioning every work day from that into trying to read and write deeply analytical and contemplative academia at night has prompted me to consider an argument for print media as more than phenomenologically pleasurable; I would be interested to argue print as prescriptive for people who have depleted attention spans due to digital deluge. The argument for analogue could indeed continue, and beyond the benefit of my own self.

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Appendix 1

Consent Form for Participation in Study

Consent Form

Project Title: An Argument for Analogue: How Can an Indie Magazine Structure its Digital Framework to Increase Print Viability? A qualitative research inquiry.

Researcher and University affiliation: Laurel Borrowman, MA in Professional Communication thesis candidate, School of Communication and Culture, Royal Roads University

Research Supervisor: Virginia McKendry, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Communication and Culture, Royal Roads University

Research Purpose: To determine a model of publishing in which an independent magazine's printed form can be made more viable because of its digital components, not despite them.

Verification can be provided by the Research Supervisor or Royal Roads University's School of Communication and Culture Program Head Dr. Julia Jahansoozi.

Dear [Name] of [*Magazine*],

You are invited to participate in a research project I am conducting about independent magazine publishing. Specifically, the goal of the research is to determine a model of publishing in which an independent magazine's printed form can be made more viable because of its digital components, not despite them. You are being asked because of your professional experience as a producer of an independent magazine, and because there are no foreseeable conflicts of interest.

Your participation, which can be withdrawn at any time, would take approximately two hours of time in which I would conduct and digitally record (handheld recorder, not smartphone) an interview with you in your workplace (or location of your choosing) to understand your motivations for producing [*Magazine*] and how you use digital and print components in publishing. The interview, which will be transcribed by me afterward, will be guided by, but not limited to, the following questions:

- What was your related experience prior to running [*Magazine*]?
- What are your motivations for publishing an independent magazine?
- What do you see as the importance and significance of the print component?

- How has [*Magazine*] chosen and integrated its digital component(s) into the publishing framework?
- Does a hybrid model support or negate the print component of the magazine?
- Does a hybrid model increase the viability of the magazine as a whole?
- What are some significant factors that contribute to the success of the magazine?

This proposal has been approved by the RRU Ethics Office. All information you provide will be kept in secure, offline, and password protected storage and be kept confidential. You will remain anonymous. Your magazine will be named with consent, and without will be given a code such as Magazine A. You will be given access to the results of the study once completed. In fact, one of the goals of the research is for the results to be incorporated into your practices if you wish. Your data will be retained on secure storage until one year after completion of the project and then destroyed. If for any reason you choose to terminate your participation at any time and decline use of information given to that point, that data will be destroyed and excluded from the research and results. Any information you provide will only be used for this project and not for any other projects or further research without consent. Your consent will be confirmed after this Letter of Consent has been read, understood, acknowledge, and signed, and can be withdrawn at any point.

On a more personal and professional note, I'd like to add that your participation in this project contributes not only to research that benefits communications studies as a broad area of scholarship that will inform students and scholars ahead, but to the evolving magazine and publishing industries as areas pursued for the intersecting purposes of work and pleasure. Furthermore, the fulfillment of my degree requirements would not be possible without you. I am confident our combined areas of knowledge, experience, and formal education can make a meaningful contribution to the future of independent magazine publishing.

If you have any questions prior to giving consent, please ask. Please retain a copy of this for your records.

I understand and give consent to participate:

Name

Signature

Date