

Stop telling people print is dead. Please!

 By [Chris Gregory](#)

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How many of you are guilty of recycling the phrase 'print is dead'?

More than would care to admit. Why are we using it so much? Probably because we see dozens of print publications shutting their doors each year, we read countless articles about the power of digital and most commonly... we blindly accept what people write in our trade press.

Print IS a declining industry, the figures do not lie. Global print advertising revenues are set to drop a 8.7% to \$52.6 billion. This represents the largest drop since the recession in 2009, while growth in other mediums such as digital are still pushing double-digit growth.

However, what does this actually mean for publishers? Well, that depends who you ask. Recently, here in the UAE we saw the closure of well-loved title [7DAYS](#), citing the apparent impossibility of operating in a climate of such severe ad spend cuts. However, rather than address what was an inevitable shift in spend habits from clients, the title persisted in trying to hit targets with a combination of putting more ads in their publications and a half-baked branded content offering, sadly four years too late.

Dial the clock back four years ago. Were publishers in the region looking long-term when trying to change how they produce and present content to their readers? Were they trying to build a loyal, long-term digital audience through whom they could distribute their content? No, of course they weren't. They were trying to chase dwindling print budgets rather than fix the root cause, therefore never tackling WHY brands were shifting spend to digital.

I work in travel, so for many of my clients (hotels, airlines etc), much of their marketing budget across a given year has to work hard for them, and by this I mean ROI and attribution. Take an airline for example, which has a flash sale. If you're planning this campaign, you're going to be choosing platforms based on their audience and more so the ability to track the performance of that platform against KPIs. It doesn't take a genius to work out which publishers and platforms in this example are going to put bums on seats.

However, take a different example. Let's say this airline is launching a new route to a popular destination and it wants to get this message out to as many people as possible. Then what does that media plan look like? I would bet my bottom dollar there are a few choice print titles on there, with fairly big placements.

So, while we all agree print is declining, what we are not considering is how it's role is changing. Take the example below, this is a great piece of creative from TBWA Shanghai for McDonald's.

While it's not intended to sell more boxes of fries, it will help readers to reevaluate what McDonald's represents and perhaps next time they're hungry, popping into McDonald's for a box of fries doesn't seem so terrible.

Whereas, this creative in the digital space might not work, especially if measured on CTR, it doesn't invite a user to engage, there's no clear call to action, but that's the point. It's not meant to, everything McDonald's wants to say is right here in the creative.

I've gone off on a tangent here somewhat...

Print still very much has a role to play in this region's (and most others) marketplace, however it simply needs to re-evaluate where it fits. Publishers must now start to diversify their content offering so that they remain relevant across all devices and

platforms. Agility is the key here, publishers must be quick to react to the demands of their advertisers and develop their platform and content so that brands can deliver the right message to the right user at the right time on the right device.



How do they do this? That's for another time.

Print budgets are still there, publishers cannot ignorantly assume that their AVR deals are going to get them to targets. If you still want a piece of that pie you need to work with your editors and advertisers to help them create content that people still want to read - and probably tell the truth about your circulation, too.

So, next time you want to sound clever in front of your industry pals tell them print is most certainly not dead... well, not for everyone.

ABOUT CHRIS GREGORY

Chris Gregory (@listen_to_chris) is the Africa and Middle East Sales Manager for TripAdvisor, where he is responsible for paid digital media and content solutions. Chris is an avid chef who loves golf and Netflix.

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