

Unravelling the true impact of reader feedback

 By Leigh Andrews

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The third Media24 Lifestyle summit was held from Wednesday, 9 September to Friday, 11 at the Mount Nelson ballroom. I attended the first day and was blown away by the depth of their reader insights shared...

Charlene Beukes, GM of Media24 Lifestyle, kicked off the day by pointing out that the biggest threat to all of us is that of losing our creative edge, and that attending regular sessions where insights are shared is one of the best ways to keep things fresh and innovative.

She then introduced the day's first speakers, b2 Strategic Marketing's Bridget Baalbergen and Sarah Bovim. They are insight specialists into the local market and shared the findings from their study for Media24 on 'magic moments of magazine engagement', based on 96 hour-long, face-to-face interviews they conducted with the publisher's readers. Some of these were filmed with permission, so as to share the insights with those who need them most - the magazine staff.

The two asked the readers to share a day in their lives and how they typically engaged with media. Interestingly, they all acknowledged technology's [disruption factor](#) and that the smartphone has changed news consumption habits drastically. This means that instead of sitting down to watch the evening news with the family, we're constantly drip-feeding news throughout the day. But that by no means reduces the importance of 'magazine time' - readers acknowledged that magazines are generally a luxury, but went so far as to call them 'indulgent necessities'.

Realising the role of magazines

In summarising the role of magazines, top of the list are that they help us to relax and zone out from this constantly connected world; keep up to date with all forms of new-ness, even in the advertising; to educate, escape and dream; with some going so far as to colour-code their favourites with highlighter Post-It notes and tearing things out to create mood boards.

As emotional beings, it should come as no surprise that women have a strong relationship with their magazines. They're seen as a confidante, advisor and close friend. Men feel similarly, but describe the connection as more about having the time to concentrate and find out more about the special interest or passion their magazine is centred around. And the ideal magazine moment?



For most, reading your magazine of choice is seen as a protected time to be alone, a moment for themselves at the end of the day when they are free of distractions and often accompanied by coffee, chocolate, wine or even a bubble bath. It's the ultimate antidote to our stressful daily lives.

Sweetening the readers' deal...

What most people love about magazines in today's time-shortened world is that all the information you'd expect has been researched and curated for you by a credible, trusted editorial team. It's focused, filtered, and offered in a distraction-free medium. The online space sometimes leads you down a rabbit hole, and is littered with pop-ups and sign-up blocks to distract you. Print, on the other hand, is an enforced, focused-attention space, and many readers state they discipline themselves to page all the way through their magazine of choice, without skipping ahead to their favourite bits. The tangibility of touching and even smelling a magazine also plays a big role in the readers' enjoyment. But it's more than that.

A number of readers explained that while there's a plethora of information available online, you can't always find what you want online. Even the ads are seen as being more trustworthy in print than online. That said, magazine readers aren't anti-digital - they definitely want a 360-experience, so they expect their favourite print magazines to also have an online presence and to be active on social media as part of the whole package.

It's interesting that the readers that responded claimed just as strong a level of engagement with advertising as with editorial, with many firmly believing that the ads are selected by the editorial team and not purely there to drive profit. Marketers couldn't ask for a better headspace to sell their product, provided it's relevant to the magazine's readers. It's seen as a form of shopping - that said, the readers also clearly sample as they see a wrapped magazine as a gift or treat to themselves.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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