



WHAT DID VIRGINIA TECH LEARN ABOUT DIGITAL VERSUS PRINT PUBLICATIONS?

Facing budgetary pressures, many organizations are considering changing their print magazines to online publications. A recent Virginia Tech study¹, however, indicates that this might not be wise.

Subscribers to Virginia Tech's alumni publication were sent either a print version of the magazine or an email invitation linking to the online version of the magazine, and then contacted by telephone and asked a series of questions about the publication. The results showed that:

More people remembered getting the print magazine—Only 49% of those who received the online version remembered getting the email, while 82% of those who received the print version remembered receiving it.

More people opened the print magazine—The print magazine was viewed by 77% of those who remembered receiving it, while only 49% of those who remembered receiving the online invitation actually clicked through and viewed the publication.

More people remembered articles from the print magazine—Respondents who viewed the print version recalled a significantly greater number of articles than did those who viewed the online version.

All in all, the print publication appeared to be more effective than the online publication. As the author surmises, "ceasing a print publication in favor of an online-only publication might hurt the effectiveness of an organization's marketing communication, and managers should not make the decision based on cost alone."

¹ Magee, Robert G., "Can a print publication be equally effective online? Testing the effect of medium type on marketing communications," Virginia Tech, Marketing Letters, March 2013, Volume 24, Issue 1, pp 85-95.