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## Niche Theory in New Media: Is Digital Overtaking the Print Magazine Industry?

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NICHE THEORY IN NEW MEDIA: IS DIGITAL OVERTAKING  
THE PRINT MAGAZINE INDUSTRY?

By

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Bachelor of Arts in English  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
December 2006

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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**May 2012**

## ABSTRACT

### Niche Theory in New Media: Is Digital Overtaking The Print Magazine Industry?

By

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New challengers in mass media are poised to annihilate the competition. The trials and tribulations that magazine publishers have conquered over the years is a testament to the industry's undaunted resilience and perseverance against such competition. Presently, the paper-based medium has enjoyed massive success by catering to readers' individual interests in special interest publications called niche magazines. However, the future of print magazines is unclear as recent technological innovations in digital publishing become the latest contender against print media. Analyzing the possible effects of the new digital medium upon the incumbent print magazine may help publishers prepare to face their electronic-based challenger. This paper aims to use Niche Theory to examine the latest stage of competition between print and digital magazines. Niche Theory originates from the ecological study of competing animal populations and has been applied to the rivalry in mass media for the common resource of consumers. As an incumbent medium matures, it will need to adapt, converge or become obsolete when faced with a new medium. Through the combined methods of quantitative surveys and qualitative focus groups, trends in media consumption of both print and digital platforms can be observed through consumer behavior. It is expected that consumers will maintain a preference for traditional print

magazines with a slow shift toward the digital alternative, indicating the need for the incumbent print medium to eventually adapt or converge to the new digital medium.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Since the debut of *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731, known as the first general interest magazine, the print magazine publishing industry has faced various obstacles to obtain and retain readers and advertisers, its two major sources of revenue. The latest challenge is of a technological nature; glossy, bound magazine pages now appear on the computer screen in digital form as web pages and electronic files. Emerging media technology have given traditional print magazines a new outlet in the digital world through electronic devices such as e-readers, tablets and laptops designed to eliminate the need for printed material. With increasing accessibility, readily available technology and unrivaled convenience, some readers have turned to e-readers and tablets as their source for digital magazines. Whether this move to electronic publications is foreshadowing a complete industry transformation remains to be seen as “[n]ew media have a tendency to both displace magazines, but also cause increasing specialization” (Randle, 2003).

Borrowing from its ecological application to the animal community, Niche Theory will be employed to study the competing effects of the newly developed medium upon an older established medium. By conducting surveys and subsequent focus groups to observe consumer behavior, this study will analyze whether digital publishing alters consumption of traditional print magazines. Consumer media preferences will be examined for current trends that may demonstrate a potential shift in the magazine industry toward the new medium at this point in time. If participants continue to gravitate toward the familiarity of paper copies, it could be surmised that print magazines maintain

a future on the shelves. If results show a converse move toward the novelty of electronic copies, this may be signaling a digital overtaking of the print medium.

### *Background*

A spokesperson for *Forbes* magazine admitted that “denying consumer choice does not seem like a winning strategy” (Ives, 2010). This is especially true in the magazine industry as the reader is considered “the person towards whom the entire publication is geared” (Husni & Main, 2002, p. 8). It is believed that the effect of media is dependent upon individual motives of media content consumption (Dutta-Bergman, 2004). Furthermore, it should be noted that media planning, the process of aligning marketing goals with available media forms, is considered static while the medium and the consumer are rather dynamic (Pilotta, Schultz, Drenik & Rist, 2004, p. 6). Consequently, addressing readership in media planning for the print and the digital magazine formats is likely crucial in accommodating consumer choice. As McLuhan (1995) once famously stated: “the medium is the message.”

Magazines, newspapers and books within the print medium have long found a home on the shelves at checkout counters, the corner newsstand and the bookstore. In particular, annual magazine circulation trends have been compiled by the Audit Bureau of Circulation on the top 100 magazines for over 40 years. From 2000 to 2009, overall magazine circulations and single-copy purchases have decreased while magazine subscriptions have actually increased. Of total magazine sales in 2009, subscriptions amounted to 90% of sales, returning 70% of the revenues, whereas single-copy purchases equaled 10% of all sales with 30% of the revenues (Black, 2010). Although subscriptions

totaled \$6.36 billion, single-copy sales totaled \$2.73 billion, providing the largest gross profit margin. While print sales have experienced some shifts in general purchase patterns, it is also probable that readers are also transitioning toward mobile or web sources with a growing consciousness of the available digital alternative.

Alternatively, e-publishers wanting to appease their customers are attempting to show readers that the unfamiliar digital platform for traditional print content is an innovative and improved medium for accessing the same material, and essentially receiving the same message. According to Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2007), the top five reasons for balancing the considerations to enter the digital world were to: (1) attract readers to the print magazine (92%); (2) expand beyond the print realm to create an online audience (81%); (3) strategize for long-term revenue and profit (77%); (4) increase frequency of communication with the target audience (75%); and (5) promote web-based advertisements as an added value for print advertisers (56%).

As such, the formerly exclusive print industry has begun to tackle the technological platform. Interactive websites are not simply the online version of a print publication but an entirely different format, containing the same content with the added ability to conduct searches and access related hyperlinks that are largely lacking in the static print version (*Computer Assocs. Int'l, Inc. v. Altai, Inc.*, 1992). In addition, publishers must face the challenge of multiple devices including portable tablets, PCs and mobile applications. Technological innovations such as iPad apps are also counted toward the Audit Bureau of Circulation's total circulation numbers, with reports that tablet users are 82% agreeable to making purchases on their devices (Whitney, 2011).

Digital magazines are clearly striving to attract an online audience by producing an appealing electronic version of their once flourishing print market.

### *Significance of Study*

Magazine publications are produced for and targeted at consumers using intriguing content that appeal to loyal subscribers and produce value in advertisements through relevant articles and product placements (Husni & Main, 2002). “The real uniqueness of magazines, however, stems from the fact that they are more than the sum of their ink and paper” (Click & Baird, 1990, p.5) so “[i]f we then acknowledge magazines as both mirrors and motivators in American society, technological developments in their production will be felt directly and indirectly in American culture” (Schmidt, 1980, p. 7). Print magazines have encountered and overcome a number of technological developments during their history. Wolseley acknowledges that “there has been a tradition within the [magazine] industry since the early 1800s of having to adapt to change and new concepts of society. How the magazine industry adapts to changes is how it remains strong” (as cited in Rhodes, 2001). However, the ground-breaking technological development that is digital publishing may alter the entire landscape of the magazine industry, possibly changing consumption habits and upending the well-established print publication altogether. Some industry experts are pushing for the integration of the two media (Ellonen, 2006; Picard, 2003) while others worry it may be detrimental to print magazines, fearing that new media could cause the slow decline of older media toward extinction altogether (Lee & Leung, 2006; Newell, Pilotta & Thomas, 2008).

Digital publications may have both advantages and disadvantages for the magazine industry. On the one hand, the direct connection affords publishers and advertisers an opportunity to interact and communicate with readers to relate to their interests (Guidone, 2000; Rhodes, 2001). Digital magazines could transform the industry by providing for consumer needs and wants not previously addressed in print. On the other hand, the media technology and its adoption is at its infancy among consumers who have yet to learn how to use e-reader and tablet devices, necessary before consuming digital magazines (Finn, 2010; Warren, 2010). Publishers risk a decline in overall consumer subscriptions and advertiser interest in an unfamiliar environment by moving to an online platform. Or worse, consumers may shift entirely toward digital versions, leaving print magazines behind as a mere memory. The question is whether the introduction of digital technology into the magazine industry will compete and overtake traditional print.

### *Limitations of Study*

This study addresses the competition between two different media in the context of print and digital magazines. Therefore, findings will be relevant to only one type of publication and likely cannot be generalized to other media types for the entire mass media industry. Additionally, based on Niche Theory, the unit of analysis is confined to the resource of magazine consumers for which the two media compete. The study concentrates on consumer habits, specifically their purchase patterns, media consumption and personal opinions. A final drawback is the brief time frame of the research. This cross-sectional study will be limited to a single moment in time during an ongoing rivalry

between print and digital media. It is suggested that these shortcomings be examined in subsequent studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Pertinent scholarly articles to the topic were broadly classified into the following categories: (1) the application of Niche Theory to the mass media industry; (2) the background, history and common trends of print magazine publishing and other media industries; (3) technological innovations contributing to digital publishing and magazines; and (4) the marketing concept of product lifecycle.

#### Niche Theory

Sociologists in the 1920s applied the ecological study of animal species to “human ecology” in various fields including psychology and economics (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984). Niche Theory predicts the possibility of coexistence or extinction when two species compete for the same resources in a defined environment (Dimmick, Kline & Stafford, 2000; Kayany & Yelsma, 2000; Milne, 1994; Randle, 2003). Factors in studying the animal community include animal niches, food chains and food cycles, the Pyramid of Numbers and size of food (Elton, 1927). An animal’s niche is defined as its relation to food and enemies; interactions with each determine that animal’s ability to survive. Under the Pyramid of Numbers, larger animals were typically the predators, preying on smaller animals for food that prey on even smaller animals as their food source, etc. However, an animal’s psychology may overcome its relative size if compensated by a skill or other defensive adaptation against its predators. Yet another technique to ensure survival is a system of territories where animals coordinate their

specific terrain to lessen competition with others and protect their source of food.  
Animals unable to find a method of adaptation risk extinction.

### *Theoretical Application*

In 1981, the National Association of Broadcasters used “ecological niche” as a metaphor to predict the fluctuating categories of national cable network programs in the midst of new media forms (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984). The theory has also been used to study advertising in television, radio and newspapers (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984); to examine online usage by factors of gender and functional displacement (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000); to compare differences in traditional news content use between online and offline users (Dutta-Bergman, 2004); and to measure displacement effects caused by the addition of the Internet to one’s media budget (Lee & Leung, 2006).

Dimmick and Rothenbuhler (1984) found that the communication field concentrated too narrowly on audience alone and failed to address the viability of the industry as a whole. Employing ecological niche as a mass media theory would broaden analysis of consumer behavior in a medium-centric application to determine a medium’s position in its industry’s overall resource space (Dimmick, et al., 2000; Dutta-Bergman, 2004). To do so, Niche Theory must be applied to human ecology within an underlying concept of community (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). As a mass media theory, niche is broadly defined as a medium’s use of limited resources that determines its ability to compete and coexist with another medium (Dimmick, et al., 2000; Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). The metaphor further defines magazine consumers as the resource that a medium must draw upon in order to survive (Newell, et al., 2008).



One criticism of Niche Theory is its limited ability to describe relationships between populations. It is likely that the theory's usefulness extends only to explaining the differences between past and present behaviors rather than providing long-term predictions (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984). However, recurring historical patterns observed with movies, radio, television and the Internet may carry significant applicability of the theory to the introduction of digital publications to the print industry.

Three concepts within Niche Theory determine the coexistence or competition between two media: niche breadth, niche overlap and niche superiority (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984; Dimmick, et al., 2000; Milne, 1994; Randle, 2003).

### *Niche Breadth*

Niche breadth describes a medium's use of resources, in this case magazine consumers (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984). A specialist medium has narrow breadth, using limited categories of consumers. A generalist medium has a wider breadth, employing broad use of consumers. Dimmick and Rothenbuhler found that "[w]hile the specialist may be more efficient in exploiting its resource base, the generalist is better equipped to remain viable if the environment changes in ways that affect the resources it utilizes" primarily due to their "ability to adapt to changing resource availability by altering its resource utilization pattern" (pp. 106, 117).

The earliest publications were generalist, containing a wide variety of content to accommodate a broad audience (Campbell, Martin & Fabos, 2005). General interest magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, *Life*, *Look* and *Collier's* were in mass circulation from the 1920s to the 1950s for their ability to cater to

a large reader base (Campbell, et al., 2005; Vivian, 2005). The *Saturday Evening Post* brought popular fiction to the masses, *Reader's Digest* reprinted condensed versions of articles from other publications and *Life* pioneered photojournalistic pieces on a wide number of topics in its oversized weekly.

In an example of specialization, Husni and Main (2002) chronicled the use of laser targeting—a method in marketing to simultaneously cater to readers' changing needs and create consumers who are attractive to advertisers. Their research found that, as a response to television's pervasive reach and enlarging market share in the 1960s, magazine publishers adopted a specialist approach by narrowing their audience and advertisements. Husni and Main concluded that the specialization of content was a reaction to new audience subcultures.

### *Niche Overlap*

Niche overlap measures the degree of complementarity between two media (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984; Dutta-Bergman, 2004). A high degree of overlap indicates that one medium's function can be replaced by the other, triggering competition if there are similarities in function between the competing media. A low degree of overlap indicates that the two media's diverse functions are able to complement each other and facilitate coexistence. According to Hardin, "[e]cological differentiation is the necessary condition for coexistence" (as cited in Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984)

Dimmick and Rothenbuhler (1984) use the concept of competitive displacement to demonstrate niche overlap, which occurs if "one medium acquir[es] resources at the expense of other media" when consumers are the common resource (Newell, et al., 2008,

p. 132). Prior research utilized the principle to study media budget, or the relative number of minutes per day that a person allots to media usage that is typically constrained by time and money (Lee & Leung, 2006; Newell, et al., 2008). In several studies, the media budget was addressed in the context of simultaneous media usage—when consumers multitask and use multiple media at one time (Pilotta, et al., 2004; Troland, 2005). It was hypothesized that if each media exposure occurs in isolation, then it is possible that simultaneous media usage will result in the loss of one or both messages. In one survey, results indicated that 51.1% paid attention to one medium over the other while 32.9% claimed to have paid equal attention to each medium (Pilotta, et al., 2004). With the addition of cable television, home video and the Internet, other research found that annual time spent reading magazines decreased from 118 hours in 2004 to 110 hours in 2008 (Troland, 2005). As a result of the high degree of niche overlap, media planning has largely adjusted from media weight, where messages are sent in greater volumes at low cost per message, to media allocation instead, sending messages in more concentrated amounts based on the value and media usage attributed to a certain medium by the audience.

### *Niche Superiority*

Niche superiority weighs competitive exclusion against displacement to determine a medium's superiority over another (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984; Randle, 2003). Here again, resources are defined as media consumers. Under competitive exclusion, the superior medium better fulfills consumer gratifications, and is therefore able to extinguish the inferior medium's access to resources (Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Randle, 2003). To

supplant consumer time spent on existing media, it is suggested that a new medium demonstrate superiority by providing competitive content more easily and effectively, thereby creating a high overlap in function and excluding the older medium from use of common resources (Dimmick, et al., 2000; Picard, 2003).

Alternatively, displacement explains when one medium retains access to resources by altering its niche to differentiate its needs and lowers competition with an opposing medium. Consumer usage research in mass media consider two types of displacement based on the logic of substitution and physical limitation of time: symmetrical and functional displacement (Newell, et al., 2008). In symmetrical displacement, consumers decrease the use of one medium when increasing the use of another to maintain a balance of media consumption. Meanwhile, functional displacement is when use of one medium actually replaces another based on that medium's satisfaction of consumer needs, much like competitive exclusion (Lasswell, 1948; Lazarsfeld, 1940). Mass media research has shown an asymmetrical change—while there was a quick rise in use of new digital media, there was a slow decline for older print media, thus there was evidence of asymmetrical rather than symmetrical displacement, but not of functional displacement (Picard, 2003). This may be indicative of an overall increase in media consumption rather than total displacement.

It is expected that the “reason that changes will be incremental is that human behavior involving temporal and monetary expenditure patterns is moving far more slowly than changes in information and communication technologies” (p. 132). One model illustrates that over time revenue from a new medium will continue to increase as revenue from an old medium decreases to a point of financial loss and possible demise

(Table 1). One thing to note is that digital media largely depends on content originally produced by traditional print media, which causes a delay in use of the new media and creates opportunities for the older media.

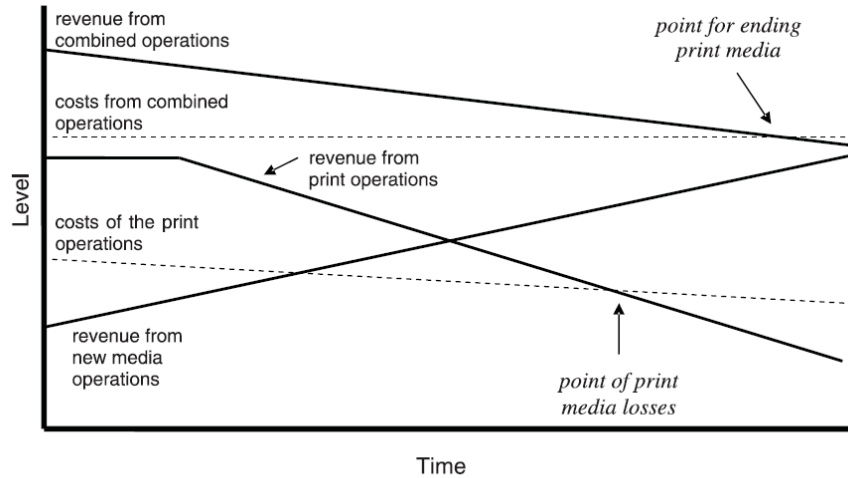


Figure 4 Decision model of revenue and costs for a company's print and new media activities and closure of print activities.

Table 1. Picard, 2003, p. 135

## Background and History of Mass Media

### *“Medium of Leisure”*

*Gentleman’s Magazine* was published in London in 1731 and is known as the first print publication to call itself a *magazine* (Campbell, et al., 2005; Reitan, 1985). The ancient word has been used to mean “storehouse” for such things as ammunition storage in the military (Campbell, et al., 2005; Tunis, 1999). In the English language, the term magazine has come to represent the wide assortment of general interest articles found in the first monthly periodical, which included poetry, travel, sciences and medical-related news (Porter, 1985; Reitan, 1985; Troland, 2005). Its variety helped the publication gain widespread popularity, reaching an impressive circulation of 10,000 in the United States by the 1740s (Porter, 1985).

### *National Culture*

“[T]he objects of mass consumption are...merely manufactured to exploit the cultural needs of the masses” (Schmidt, 1980, p. 4; MacDonald, 1957). Indeed intended to be enjoyed as a “medium of leisure,” the earliest issues provided news and entertainment but were also an instrumental tool in unifying the nation by forging a national identity of American culture in an affordable print magazine (Randle, 2001; Vivian, 2005). In the 1740s, the pioneering publication enjoyed growing popularity as the first national mass medium to discuss sweeping political and social issues, act as a vehicle for propaganda, provide an expansive platform for aspiring writers and expose scandal and corruption with investigative journalism called muckraking (Campbell, et al., 2005; Rhodes, 2001; Schmidt, 1980). For example, the *Saturday Evening Post* was the first general interest magazine containing original works such as essays, a column appealing specifically to women and reprints from other publications. The publication also offered an literary avenue for fictional writers like Edgar Allen Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne to reach the masses with their short stories and poetry, a trend subsequently followed by many other titles (Rhodes, 2001).

### *Modern Magazine*

At its infancy, the medium relied on private funding and subscription revenues to produce its titles, though magazines remained less expensive and more accessible than books. The Postal Act of 1879 endorsed magazines as an invaluable means of promoting literacy by discounting mailing rates to \$0.01 per pound to facilitate nationwide distribution (Campbell, et al., 2005; Vivian, 2005). Decreased distribution and production

costs helped to increase circulation, making print magazines more mainstream and attainable to the working class. New shelf space created a new marketplace for the modern magazine as prices dropped from a high of \$0.35 to a more reasonable \$0.10 per issue (Campbell, et al., 2005).

Experiencing a shift toward mass production and a growing popularity of brand names in the 1890s, magazines began showcasing advertisements between its pages and soon became a marketing tool for product placement and endorsements. The print publication provided a national marketplace for both consumers and advertisers that helped to propel the United States into a modern economy (Rhodes, 2001; Vivian, 2005). Now available on an international scale, magazines increased the number of advertising pages, which in turn increased advertising revenues and overall profits. In addition, warfare, rail transportation and rising literacy rates helped to solidify national readership and establish mass circulation, ushering in an age of “literary nationalism” (Schmidt, 1980).

### *Rivalries*

Technological changes to the mass media industry began invading in the early 1900s. Each new innovation impacted both reception by the target audience and marketing strategies of existing media. When new media reaches critical mass, it threatens existing media and is likely to produce displacement effects, consequently forcing modifications by older media to adjust to the newcomer (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000; Lee & Leung, 2006; Randle, 2001). With each technological development the magazine publishing industry faced a new obstacle; therefore it is helpful to examine how

the print publication has overcome these rivals to address the latest challenge from digital media (Carey, 1989).

### *Film*

During the early 1900s, printed texts would begin to encounter commercial advertisements and four-color printing. Between 1910 and the 1940s, films and other media became among the earliest non text-based mass media competitor, unlike books and newspapers (Peterson, 1956). The film industry would shift consumers to a picture-based medium, prompting publication of movie magazines to satisfy moviegoers' newly developed curiosity about the lives of Hollywood stars beyond the silver screen (Tebbel, 1969). Movies brought a positive impact to the magazine industry mainly because they did not rely on advertising revenues as an income source (Randle, 2001). The resulting complementary effect required specialization by magazine publishers to fulfill readers' evolving interests in an unrelated medium. The need for quick and relevant adaptation benefitted the print medium by supporting the content of the non-print medium within the magazine's established context as an entertainment source and a "medium of leisure" (Randle, 2001). However, this complementary effect did not carry over to later media.

### *Radio*

Radio's effect differed from movies because, like magazines, it equally required consumer time and advertising dollars as a revenue source. Pittsburgh aired the first commercially sponsored radio programming in 1920. The following two decades were the "Golden Age" for radio with half of all U.S. households owning the audio-based



equipment and rising to 80% penetration by 1940 (Randle, 2001). Magazines began publishing radio programs if newspapers did not provide schedules to listeners, thus promoting a slight complementary effect. However, the growing threat to print publications prompted the use of photographic reproduction in full color by titles such as *Vogue*, resulting in an altered publishing format and creation of the picture magazine as the new industry standard (Edkins, 1978; Randle, 2001).

Photojournalism allowed magazines to report news through pictures—daring photojournalists would capture war images, share unfamiliar cultures, show natural phenomena and document social issues on the printed pages of a magazine. *Life* was an oversized newsmagazine weekly that brought much attention to photojournalism in the 1930s by encapsulating real-life images and bringing visual life to text (Brennen & Hardt, 1999; Campbell, et al., 2005; Peterson, 1956; Vivian, 2005). The title fully embraced use of the photo essay in which photographs were used specifically to intensify the news story. By using this tactic to distinguish itself from audio-based radio and other media, the visual-based magazine transformed and continued to flourish.

### *Sound Recording Devices*

In 1922, sound recording devices, including the phonograph record, soon became a threat to radio, but they brought a positive effect to the magazine industry. As an entertainment medium without the need for advertising dollars to generate profits, the audio-based medium was a welcome invention for the magazine industry. The 1950s was the time of recording artists and musical instruments, inspiring music magazines such as *Rolling Stone* that would later transcend genres to encompass social, political and cultural

journalism (Brook, 1977). Between 1989 and 1999, the music category grew to be the third-fastest growing magazine genre both for fan and trade publications (Randle, 2001).

### *Television*

Network television began airing in 1949 and had a widespread impact on the mass media industry by shifting from print to a multi-sensory medium (Troland, 2005).

Television's penetration quickly outpaced radio's previous levels with 35 million TV sets in U.S. households by 1956 (Randle, 2001). By the 1960s, television became the biggest challenger in mass media and advertisers wasted no time gathering up television spots to reach the new national audience. The advertising cost per 1,000 readers, called CPM, was largely affected by the attraction of television's less expensive and far more extensive reach (Vivian, 2005). As a result, magazines experienced a sizeable drop in advertising market share to a mere 8% compared to network television's 12.2% when it first entered the competition (Randle, 2001).

Television's paralyzing impact occurred in 1969 when less expensive, color TV sets reached 97% penetration in U.S. households, threatening magazine's once successful strategy of publishing color photographic advertisements, originally in response to the introduction of radio (Carey, 1989; Randle, 2001). The rise of nighttime television viewing, growing audience segmentation and a move toward a "visual culture" of less text prompted circulation battles among general interest magazines for consumers who were now turning to television for their entertainment source (Troland, 2005, p. 6; Randle, 2001). The resulting modification has transformed into the magazine format that readers are familiar with today.

*TV Guide* led the way toward niche publishing by capitalizing on their latest competing medium, providing television programming listings in a pocket guide (Campbell, et al., 2005). The overall shift toward narrow content and audiences compelled magazine publishers to concentrate on special interests and begin the trend of niche publishing (Abrahamson, 1996; Randle, 2001). Special interest magazines were first produced in response to television viewers' fascination with documentary television, consulting magazines afterwards as a secondary source in search of more detailed information (Randle, 2001). Magazines assumed this new role completely by the 1970s, modified its content accordingly, fragmented interests for targeted audiences and inaugurated the age of niche publishing, a format widely recognized by modern audiences. The *2004 National Directory of Magazines* reported over 18,000 varieties of consumer and business publications in North America (Dizard, 2000; Troland, 2005).

Later, newly invented electronic devices would in turn create a new magazine category dedicated specifically to the end users of the latest technological craze. Such was the case with entertainment gaming magazines for video game enthusiasts and computer magazines for PC products and owners. These specialized magazines were easier to read than technical manuals, provided advertising opportunities and offered promotional materials designed to boost single-copy sales. Fortunately for print magazines, some of these titles outlasted the product itself. In one example, *AmigaWorld* continued publication despite the computer maker's move to cease manufacturing of actual Amiga products, stating that consumers remained loyal to the magazine content (Wilson, 1994). Similarly, *Byte* magazine was originally dedicated to small computers

and software, such as the Amiga PC, but now concentrates on IT-related issues. Today, the former print title is currently only available via digital subscription (Crawford, 1998).

### *Internet*

Finally, the magnetism of the Internet's rapid technology outranked all other mass media, quickly penetrating U.S. households in a few short years. Internet advertisers spent \$2 billion in 1996, which swiftly increased by 63% only three years later (Randle, 2001). In 2001, about 63 million consumers averaged three hours per week online (Randle, 2001). Magazines were no longer the premier source of specialized information for users seeking obscure information. As a result, the trend captured by the 1999 Audit Bureau of Circulations revealed a decrease in general interest magazines and simultaneous increase in specialized niche magazines when the Internet was added to overall media usage (Randle, 2001; Troland, 2005). In the *IAB report: Internet use affects traditional media*, approximately 11% admitted they read fewer magazines as the Internet became the primary entertainment source (Lee & Leung, 2006). Keeping afloat among the bombardment of emerging mass media has made print magazine publishing a resilient industry for the past two hundred years.

### Technological Innovations

Technological innovations have had a huge disruptive effect on older media, vastly changing the format, delivery, readership and potential profitability of print magazines over the years. Recent new media having major influences on print magazine include the Internet, e-readers, tablets and other digital devices which are meant to house

digital versions of traditionally printed publications. Each new technological development disrupts both the way print magazines are published and the way consumers view the value and utility of magazines as they consider media consumption and purchase habits.

Media and technology are constantly evolving as newer methods of production and content distribution are developed. Digital publications can be traced back many years but the most well-known electronic book (e-book) creation was Michael Hart's 1971 experiment at the University of Illinois to type the Declaration of Independence and send it en masse via computer. What he deemed to be "Replicator Technology" was an attempt to alter the function of computers from computing to storage, retrieval and mass reproduction, utilities which he believed to be far more valuable for the device than its original intent (Hart, 1992). Hart's first e-book would eventually launch Project Gutenberg, an online source of classic texts and literature, gaining popularity in 1996 when it reached 1,000 book titles in its free database. This revolutionary development would be the start of digitizing printed materials, echoing the radical changes to reading rates and literary distribution when the printing press was first invented. In this format, e-books could be distributed much faster, more easily, in larger quantities and with less expense than printed books.

### *Desktop Publishing*

In 1998, desktop publishing allowed magazines to develop a new trend of niche titles that were designed for specific, targeted segments of consumers. Formerly available only in portable document format (PDF), browser-based digital magazines now offered

navigation tools, graphics and other multimedia features (Jue, 2009). These magazines typically used the Internet and emerging digital platform to boost awareness of their print titles by building the brand and launching e-commerce to generate new audiences, subscriptions and other purchases. The business tactic was geared toward generating a complementary effect anticipated to strengthen the reader's relationship to the magazine through brand recognition and additional services not available in print such as extended in-depth information, immediate feedback, interactivity and access to archives (Guidone, 2000).

#### *Digital Devices: E-readers and Tablets*

E-readers were also released and promoted in 1998 specifically for the consumption of digital publications. E-readers are portable devices designed to download and read digital publications including e-books, digital newspapers and magazines without the hassle of bulky paper copies. These digital devices seem to perform the same functions as print publications but with a myriad of innovative features in a single piece of handheld technology. Examples of the most popular devices include Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble's Nook and Sony's Reader series. In a 2008 study by Forrester Research, e-readers had gained a high awareness but slow adoption rate among consumers (Warren, 2010). In the following year, 17% had heard of e-book devices, actually dropping 20% from the previous year; 36% had used an e-book, up 15% from 2008; and only 1.5% owned an e-book, which was an increase of 0.7% (p. 38). A survey conducted at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo asked students' willingness to purchase a tablet (Black, 2010). Results indicated that approximately 88% would pay less

than \$400.00. The reality is that tablets currently range between \$400.00 and \$1,000.00. Later in mid-2011, however, e-reader ownership doubled in a mere six months. The adoption rate of e-readers has far surpassed tablet computers that were created to carry the same functions as e-readers but with added web interactivity. The number of consumers who own portable devices such as e-readers, tablets, cell phones and the like has similarly and dramatically multiplied in the past decade. Overall, there is an increasing interest in portable devices over stationary desktop computers. It was additionally suggested that to maintain brand loyalty, publishers must offer bundles of their products and services across multiple platforms to include digital, print and mobile.

### *Digital Purchases*

In addition to an increase in the ownership of portable devices, paid online content is also on the rise as 65% of total Internet users have paid to download or access content online, 18% of whom attested to having paid for a digital newspaper, magazine or journal article, according to a Pew Research Center study (Jansen, 2010). On average, consumers paid roughly \$47 per month for online content, including monthly average rates of \$12 for subscriptions and \$22 for individual file access.

Meanwhile, the overall circulation trend for print magazines is slowly waning each year. Print publications struggle to stay alive with the hope that “the ‘high touch’ allure of magazines may give the medium a definite advantage over the ‘high-tech’ sterility of a computer screen” (Guidone, 2000). The publisher of *Uptime Magazine* stated: “Digital publications and digital editions may be the future, but the print magazines have a certain endearing quality about them” (as cited in Jue, 2009). Those

hopes are dashed as declining magazine sales may be attributed to a number of factors, including the Internet, developing digital technology and increasing sales of e-readers and tablets (Dutta-Bergman, 2004).

A rise in both digital devices and paid online content is indicative of the growing popularity and acclimation to the new media as yet another source for information and entertainment. Consumers are beginning to foster trust in the medium, establishing a purchase history and acquiring digital media via digital devices. This poses the next challenge for print magazines as to whether the new multimedia digital platform will affect its sustainability.

#### *Digital Media Consumption*

After acquiring digital media, it is essential to address its consumption. In the *Survey of the American Consumer* conducted on media consumption, e-reader and tablet owners were cited as also being heavy users of print media such as magazines and newspapers (GfK MRI, 2011; Rhodes, 2001). Heavy magazine users are defined as consumers who read an average of 13 or more magazines on a monthly basis. Although heavy Internet use far outranked any other mass media usage, 23% of e-reader owners and 66% of tablet owners were more likely than the average American to heavily consume print magazines (Table 2). Additionally, consumers reported heavier use of text-based media overall, including magazines and newspapers, than radio and television.



<b>INDEX</b>					
<b>Traditional Media Consumption Of Tablet and eReaders Owners</b>					
<b>Personally Own...</b>	<b>Heavy Magazine User</b>	<b>Heavy Newspaper User</b>	<b>Heavy Radio User</b>	<b>Heavy TV User</b>	<b>Heavy Internet User</b>
Any Tablet	<b>166</b>	<b>154</b>	92	63	<b>179</b>
Any eReader	<b>123</b>	<b>163</b>	96	65	<b>136</b>
iPad	<b>160</b>	<b>156</b>	88	63	<b>171</b>
Kindle	<b>125</b>	<b>166</b>	90	58	<b>143</b>
Source: GfK MRI Survey of the American Consumer, Wave 64. Interview dates: September 2010 through April 2011. Definitions: Heavy Magazine Users Read 13+ magazines, on average, in a month; Heavy Newspaper Users read 25+ newspapers, on average, in a month; Heavy Internet Users spend 22.5+ hours on the Internet in an average week.					

Table 2. GfK MRI, 2011, p. 1

Use of the digital device for media consumption of books, magazines and newspapers was also measured, finding that 15% of e-reader owners and 39% of tablet owners used their device to read a digital magazine (Table 3). Although the survey shows greater consumption of books overall, magazines and newspapers have similar consumption rates in both devices.

<b>Media Usage on Tablets and eReaders Among Owners</b>				
<b>Media Used on a Tablet or eReader In Last 6 Months...</b>	<b>Own Any eReader</b>	<b>Own Any Tablet</b>	<b>Own an iPad</b>	<b>Own a Kindle</b>
Book	<b>87%</b>	<b>57%</b>	57%	87%
Magazine	<b>15%</b>	<b>39%</b>	41%	12.%
Newspaper	<b>14%</b>	<b>41%</b>	43%	13%
Source: GfK MRI Survey of the American Consumer, Wave 64. Interview dates: September 2010 through April 2011				

Table 3. GfK MRI, 2011, p. 1

The actual purchase of digital devices is also considered in consumption patterns. Rapid acceleration in ownership after the 2010 gift-giving holiday season may have been an influential factor in digital media consumption. Ownership by American adults escalated in the four months immediately following the holiday season for e-readers from 2.3% to 5.1%, and tablets from 1.8% to 3.5%. Although the percentages of growth for each

device may seem minute, total ownership after growth amounted to 12 million e-reader owners and eight million tablet owners, respectively. The vice president of research at GfK MRI stated that:

These data reinforce the fact that for a device that's been in the market for a little more than one year, Tablets have caught on in a big way.

Approximately three-and-one-half percent of all adults is not a big number in and of itself, but the growth has been very swift and publishers will be encouraged to know that Tablet owners are devotees of both magazines and newspapers. (GfK MRI, 2011)

Print and digital consumption patterns and device ownership are crucial to determining the lifeline of either medium in mass media. Whether such consumer trends predict a small shift from or a complete upheaval of older print media still needs to be explored.

### Product Lifecycle

In analyzing its potential for survival, it is essential to consider the product lifecycle of media products, a marketing concept which intentionally takes on a biological analogy and follows six basic stages: (1) birth; (2) penetration; (3) growth; (4) maturity; (5) self-defense; and finally (6) adaptation, convergence or obsolescence (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004; Randle, 2001; van Zuilen, 1977).

The founding editor of *New York* magazine put it succinctly as:

[A]n almost inexorable life-cycle of American magazines that follows the pattern of humans: a clamorous youth eager to be noticed; vigorous, productive, middle age marked by an easy-to-define editorial line; and a

long slow decline, in which efforts at revival are sporadic and tragically doomed. (Felker, 1969; Husni & Main, 2002)

### *Beginning stages of life*

The birth stage of a product, or technical invention, often draws on a prior medium and is developed as a continuous innovation of the former. At first, magazines were a new mass medium and competed with other print products but did not necessarily have a functional predecessor. Digital publications, on the other hand, draw on older media for content and contextualize them in an electronic format. Digital magazines are a technical invention based on but not necessarily dependent upon its print predecessor for its birth.

At the second stage of penetration, the only necessary skill to consume magazines is the ability to read. When literacy rates began to rise, the print medium quickly found adapters to pass the 16% threshold to advance to the next stage. While digital publications also require reading, digital devices necessitate access, aptitude, autonomy and some level of self-taught technological training for consumption. The University of California at Berkeley studied self-training to adapt to new technological innovations with the aid of social networks, concluding that the learning process was rather involved, requiring a number of skill sets to succeed (Finn, 2010).

At the third stage of growth, print magazines took decades to reach a mass circulation in the United States, experiencing a relatively slow climb due to distribution problems, censorship, propaganda and the introduction of other developing media (Schmidt, 1980). Digital publications and devices are still developing and experiencing

slow adoption rates but currently on the rise as consumers are increasingly shaping their function.

At the fourth stage of growth, a new medium must exceed 50% of users to reach maturity. Considered the “Golden Age” of a new medium, this growth level is reached once the product nears universal use at 90% saturation when most problems have been fixed, production costs have lowered and the number of content providers has sufficiently increased to create competition and greater market saturation (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004, p. 716). The implementation of the Postal Act of 1879 lowered distribution and production costs, boosting circulation and overall readership. The late 19th century onward felt the widespread success of popular print magazine titles such as *The New Yorker*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Time* and *Life*.

At the fifth stage, in which gross income, consumer time and the number of users are all significantly reduced, is classified as defensive resistance, defined as when a new medium offers a new service or function that disrupts old media. Here, digital publishing may be the new medium whose service disrupts the established print medium. This leads to the sixth and final stage of a product lifecycle which dictates the future of that media product.

Magazines continue to experience this sixth stage at different periods with the introduction of movies, radio, television, the Internet and now digital publications and devices. When an old medium competes with a new medium, as print magazines are now competing with e-readers and tablets, there are three possibilities—adaptation, convergence or obsolescence.

### *Adaptation, Convergence or Obsolescence*

The average successful life span of a magazine title is a mere 2.4 years (Husni & Main, 2002). This is especially telling as 70% of all start-up magazine publications make it to their second issue; only half of those will survive a full year. Given these statistics, publishers of traditional print may need to venture into the digital realm.

Lehman-Wilzig and Cohen-Avigdor (2004) put forth that the older medium can achieve adaptation by concentrating on an audience niche, adopting a technical update for multi-functionality or financially investing in the new media to subsidize its own adaptation. Similarly, Husni and Main (2002) suggest predicting and adjusting to the audience's evolving sociological changes. Historically, general interest magazines did modify their format and began the trend of niche publishing when television's mass appeal threatened their circulation numbers. Some others were resurrected with a new editorial approach as when *Rosie* saved predecessor *McCall's* by attracting a younger female audience or with the rebirth of *Vanity Fair* nearly five decades after it had ceased publication (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004). The problem is that print magazines cannot become multi-functional unless they are converted to the rival digital format, actually leading print to obsolescence (Randle, 2003).

To achieve convergence, the old media could either offer a parallel medium that mirrors the new media to its existing audience or retain its function while discontinuing its technology, though this is considered a partial obsolescence (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004). Essentially, this is the goal of digital publications – to assume the function of printed text yet discard actual printed materials in lieu of an electronic format. While the content remains the same, the context is meant to be better than traditional

print. Jenkins (2004) believes that ultimately convergence is “both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer driven-process” (p.37). While businesses are attempting to converge media and expand their customer base, consumers wish to actively participate in the process and incorporate their own needs and desires in newly formed media products.

Finally, obsolescence occurs when an older medium is technologically limited by its narrow function that cannot communicate with other media in order to adapt or converge, and so cannot survive. Disruptive technology is defined as technology “that emerge and upset established markets” (Picard, 2003, p. 128). It is evident that digital media are a disruptive technology and poses a legitimate threat to print. However, some researchers believe that there is limited growth for mature industries as a consequence to the saturation of a new medium, risking full displacement (Newell, et al., 2008; Picard, Grönlund & Pönni, 2000; Picard, 2003).

Duguid (1996) warns that under the supersession theory, history tends to repeat itself when new media completely replace old media as a solution to problems that the older media could not resolve. Oftentimes, this theory is used in the marketing of new media to prove that it can resolve the issues that old media cannot. Therefore, death of the old media is inevitable, essentially predicting obsolescence. According to Duguid (1996), supersession theorists suggest that the Internet, as the supplier of electronic publications to desktop computers, e-readers, tablets and other digital devices, is the new medium that possesses the ability and intent to replace traditional print. This prediction based on the Internet’s expansive offerings could easily upset all print publications, perhaps requiring the older medium to become more dynamic in order to compete (Ellonen, 2006).

Electronic publications, digital devices and changing consumer behavior seem to endanger the future of print magazines. While the print industry may have entered the final stage of its lifecycle where it must adapt, converge or become obsolete, the digital publication industry is in its early stages in which its interactions with the older print media may determine the latter's final fate. It is important to study the possible effects of emerging digital media on the state of traditional print magazines and what this could mean to magazine publishers overall. By studying the effects of new media development on changing media consumption, publishers will be able to adjust and implement changes in content, context and production methods to adapt or converge with emerging digital publication and devices for its continued existence.

#### Methodology—Analyzing Audiences

Niche Theory will be applied to the current study to determine whether traditional print magazines in its mature stage will need to adapt or converge to the new digital medium, or whether it will become obsolete. The following methodology is formulated to examine the niches of print and digital magazines based on the facets of niche breadth, niche overlap and niche superiority.

#### *Research Questions*

“The posing of research questions in a competitive frame, in turn, leads to a research methodology that is created to detect competition, constraining the answers of respondents to a competing media framework” (Dutta-Bergman, 2004, p. 45). Therefore, survey and interview questions regarding the competition between print and digital

magazines were formulated based on literature on the three facets of Niche Theory, prior rivalries in mass media history, digital technology innovations and the stages of product lifecycle:

1. Function—what are the gratifications<sup>1</sup> of consuming print magazines? Of digital magazines? What is most attractive about print magazines? About digital magazines?
2. Competition—what are the differences and similarities between print and digital magazines? Between print and digital media?
3. Adoption—what makes print or digital superior to the other medium? Have digital magazines resulted in complete, partial or no adoption of the new medium?

Similarly, six specific motivations for medium preference were also drawn from literature: (1) affordability—based on the finding that a decrease in product pricing and production costs correspond to increased consumer usage and expanded distribution outlets (Carey, 1989; Jenkins, 2004); (2) convenience—impressed consumers as a compelling factor in the print medium (Husni & Main, 2002); (3) ease of reading—researched as ease of use of digital devices (Clark, Goodwin, Samuelson & Coker, 2008); (4) multi-functionality—focused on the audio and visual modality as well as communication capabilities of the Internet (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004); (5) portability—found in technology that is embedded in handheld devices (Troland, 2005); and (6) timeliness—a factor addressed by digital magazine readers (Jue, 2009).

<sup>1</sup> Here, the term gratifications is not used in association with uses and gratifications theory; gratifications was simply the best possible synonym in the thesaurus. Rather, it is defined as the “functions and uses served by a specific medium in driving individual selection” (Dutta-Bergman, 2004, p. 4).



Emerging online platforms for publications that were once exclusively in print have consumers exploring digital versions of magazines. Given that readers are dynamic consumers, Lee and Leung state that “different media usually provide somewhat different content, in different formats, with different types of gratification” when a single magazine title is widely distributed to a large population (2006, p. 4). Thus, individual readers should be studied to understand how overall consumer behavior in magazine consumption will affect the viability of print and digital media. Furthermore, an individual’s viewpoint may change when in a group setting or vice versa, called the group effect (Carey, 1994; Carey & Smith, 1994; Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Thus it is important to study the two dynamics jointly—in focus group discussions—and separately—in individual surveys—to determine the effects of personal thoughts and collective notions upon each other with respect to magazine consumption. Therefore, a mixed methodology of surveys and focus groups will be utilized to explore consumer behavior as it relates to each facet of Niche Theory: function to niche breadth, competition to niche overlap and adoption to niche superiority.

### *Survey*

A questionnaire is an instrument used to elicit information for analysis and gathers data by asking respondents to answer questions, a method much credited to sociologist Lazarsfeld (McDonald, 2004). Researchers are able to quantify their findings and compare results between individuals for similarities and differences in responses. The purpose of survey research is to establish individual attitudes and perceptions on a particular topic (Morgan, 1996; Ward, Bertrand & Brown, 1991).

### *Focus Group*

“Researchers increasingly prefer insightful findings and ecologically valid, interpretative techniques to the more experimental, quantitative, or supposedly scientific methods and their perceived limitations” (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 79). A focus group is a critical/cultural research method with a qualitative aspect used to study social issues. By gathering information from a wide-ranging sample of people to measure attitude or perception, the method researches how and why people think, feel or behave toward something (Quible, 1998). Similar to a group interview, a researcher asks questions both systematically and simultaneously to all individuals present (Morgan, 1996). The guided discussion is likely to occur in a private, comfortable setting to allow participants freedom of expression. Typically, focus group research consists of four to six groups, each containing at least six and up to twelve diverse individuals (Morgan, 1996). The technique has an exploratory aim since results from the focus group may or may not statistically represent the general population. Advantages to conducting a focus group are that it (1) captures real-life data, (2) is flexible, (3) has high face validity, (4) produces quick results and (5) is inexpensive (Quible, 1998).

Merton used focus groups as a supplement to the quantitative methods of questionnaires and experimental studies (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). It is considered effective due to its ability to “quantify subjectivity” (Gustafson, Yssel & Popovich, 1994). The qualitative approach of focus groups is instrumental in collecting consumer data through self-disclosure and social interaction in analyzing and determining collected data regarding media influence on the receptive audience (Sharts-Hopko, 2001). The

method of posing candid open-ended questions to voluntary participants promotes such self-disclosure (Sharts-Hopko, 2001).

In an example of the focus group method in use, a journalism professor at the Missouri School of Journalism conducted a focus group of 43 students to test consumer usage of three digital reading devices on a number of attributes, focusing mainly on the level of comfort of use (Fidler, 2008). The study utilized a focus group to gather qualitative and quantitative data. The purpose of digital reading devices is in the name—it is an electronic device used to read digital content. However, its functionality and usefulness is highly subjective and dependent on the individual user’s technical skills and personal perception. Results showed that approximately 33% indicated some ease using a tablet PC, 60% were comfortable with an e-reader and 63% preferred notebook computers (Exploring new media habits, para. 6). Although the two are similarly constructed devices with comparable sizes and functions, the difference in reported comfort levels was explained by the relative ease of use and simplicity of the e-reader in contrast to the tablet. The problem stems from the device’s lack of comparison to reading traditional print publications. Researchers reported that:

A significant number said they were not ready to give up paper. Their comments ranged from “I’d still prefer to use paper textbooks” to “I don’t like reading on computers” and “never not read a paper-based product for newspapers, magazines or books.” (Exploring new media habits, para. 9)

Furthermore, participants stated availability and access to digital content did not replace inclinations for print-based products such as textbooks.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DATA AND COLLECTION

For this study, the preliminary survey will be used to guide the focus group discussion in which the primary interpretative analysis will be focused (Morgan, 1996; Shively, 1992). Using a focus group for data collection compiles information on print and digital media consumption directly from the source—magazine readers themselves. One reason for combining focus group data with another research method was to uncover more in-depth insight and information that would not otherwise be discovered (Morgan, 1996). Discussions can be analyzed for recurring patterns in order to generalize findings to a wider population. Such a method is efficient, inexpensive, rich in data and highly beneficial for studying magazine consumption in print and digital media. One small concern with the converged method is the role of the moderator in guiding discussion as being potentially disruptive within an interactive group dynamic (Morgan, 1996).

#### *Sample*

A sample was organized by requesting participation via electronic mail, then asking those individuals to contact other potential participants, creating a snowball sampling. Potential participants were screened by determining if they were between the ages of 18 and 65 and readers of either print or digital magazines. Qualifying participants were asked for voluntary participation and informed of anonymity prior to placement into focus groups. A prize drawing was offered as incentive for participation by providing an e-mail address for the chance to receive a one-year subscription to a magazine of choice. E-mail addresses were numbered in no particular order then randomly selected; the participant with the winning number was notified via e-mail of the prize.

A total of 53 qualifying participants were randomly placed into five focus groups of 10 or 11 in each group. Participants in this study were between 18 and 45 years old with an average age of 23.8. Division of gender was greatly skewed with 40 females and 13 males. The majority was single; only two participants were married. About 39 (74%) participants indicated that they were currently employed. A few individuals indicated mixed ethnicities: 13% Asian, 15% African-American, 60% Caucasian and 17% Hispanic.

### *Data Collection*

Focus groups were conducted at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas for approximately 45 minutes each. The moderators are graduate students at the university who were trained by the researcher. Moderators were provided with a script containing general questions and a timeline to lead the focus group discussion. Additionally, moderators were provided with a researcher worksheet to record the tally of participant responses. Each question on the worksheet contained sample answers that the researcher anticipated from focus group participants. Two moderators were present at each focus group, alternating tasks of distributing the survey, conducting the focus group and reporting responses.

During the focus group, participants were provided with print and digital magazines to browse before beginning the survey. Individuals then completed a survey containing 5-point Likert scales and basic demographic questions to identify magazine consumption patterns. After which, moderators asked open-ended questions loosely based on survey questions about why participants regularly consume magazines, why

they are attracted to the medium and what retains their interest in the medium. The focus group discussion was audiotaped by a moderator and later transcribed. After data had been collected, they were evaluated for any interviewer error or anomalies in survey design or data collection.

The qualitative data were analyzed and coded for contextual themes and patterns as they emerged. Thematic analysis led to classification of data into several broad categories: digital; print; media purchases; media consumption; medium preference; digital device ownership and open discussion (See Appendices D-J). The first category on digital included discussion on either magazines or media, specifically regarding digital technology (See Appendix D). Print was the second category, focusing on why some participants chose print over the digital alternative (See Appendix E). In the third category of media purchases, participants evaluated convenience, cost and gratification of subscription or single copy purchases in both print and digital magazines (See Appendix F). For the fourth category of media consumption, participants shared the occasions and locations when they tend to consume magazines (See Appendix G). In responding to questions about medium preference, participants expressed favoritism for certain media by citing their superior qualities in the fifth category (See Appendix H). Within the category of digital device ownership, participants discussed digital devices, particularly of tablets and e-readers (See Appendix I). Finally, the last category was left to open discussion in which participants volunteered responses at the conclusion of each focus group (See Appendix J).

The survey initially framed the issue, which was followed by guided discussion to help triangulate the data. On the one hand, a survey forces the participant to contemplate

aspects of the subject that may not have otherwise been considered. On the other hand, the participant's response is limited to the provided statements and the ranking of those statements. The qualitative direction of the focus group combined with the quantifiable analysis of the ranked survey statements provided a comprehensive description on consumer behavior toward print and digital magazines. The method was designed to act as an open forum for participants to supplement the limitations of predetermined survey statements by qualitatively explaining their quantitative choices.

By allowing a participant to analyze and support his or her distinct viewpoint, researchers are able to familiarize themselves with the reader's perspective and thought process from a first person point-of-view. In an informal environment in which participants feel they are among others with similar interests or opinions, an organized and structured in-depth discussion cultivates a level of comfort and trust for participants to freely share personal beliefs, encounters and/or habits with an intimate group, and ultimately the researcher. At the same time, widespread societal opinions may influence or frame individual attitude toward magazines, as would occur within the group dynamic of a focus group.

### *Interview Questions and Measurement*

In the survey, research questions about rationales for consumer behavior and medium preferences relating to magazine consumption were posed. The 12-question survey instrument was structured to answer the following topics: one question about digital device ownership, three questions about the frequency of magazine consumption, one question about purchase patterns, two questions about gratifications and five

questions about basic demographics with a space for additional comments (See Appendix A).

Depending on the question prompt, the 5-point Likert scale ranked responses from 1 to 5: “not at all” to “very often” or “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Completed surveys were tallied and analyzed for significance. A selection of 3 was considered neutral, and thus not ranked. Selections of 1 or 2 were both ranked as either “not often” or “disagree”; selections of 4 or 5 represented “often” or “agree.” For each question, the total count of responses was divided by the total number of respondents to yield a statistical percentage. Unanswered questions were omitted from the total count to preserve a true calculation. Focus group data were qualitatively analyzed for thematic significance.

### Expected Findings

Recently popularized electronic publishing has brought new technology and new consumption habits to the longstanding print magazine industry. Readers will likely continue to consume the highly influential publications capable of shaping popular culture and reputations, but readers will now have the added option of digital access to magazines. Overall, it is expected that magazines in general will retain a following among consumers, whether in the print or digital medium.

As for publishers, magazine layouts and content have evolved over the years due specifically to competing technological developments and innovations. It is anticipated that print magazines will once again alter their format and publishing processes to cater to the coming shift in the form of data retrieval and storage via Internet. During its history,



the idea of the magazine has endured and outlasted the actual concept on several occasions, remaining a constant cultural fixture along the way, and the digital medium is set to seal the same fate.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS

#### Survey Results

A total of 53 participants completed the 12-item survey, administered by a researcher at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas campus. No anomalies or interviewer error were found; however, some participants did not respond to all survey questions. The following research questions based on the survey items were developed to contextualize results:

RQ1: Do magazine consumers own digital devices, particularly tablets or e-readers, which may be used to consume digital magazines?

RQ2: How frequently do magazine consumers use a particular medium? Do magazine consumers who regularly use one medium often use the alternate medium?

RQ3: What motivates magazine purchases?

RQ4: What motivates the preferences for print or digital media used to consume magazines?

#### *Research Question 1*

RQ1: Do magazine consumers own digital devices, particularly tablets or e-readers, which may be used to consume digital magazines?

The first survey item asked participants to disclose ownership of any digital or electronic devices, many of whom own more than one device (Table 4). About 35.8% own a laptop while 32.1% own a smart phone and only 19.4% own a PC. In regards to digital device ownership, 11 (8.2%) own a tablet and only 6 (4.5%) own an e-reader.

<b>Digital Device Ownership</b>	
<i>Device</i>	<i>Total</i>
Tablets	11
E-reader	6
Laptop	48
PC	26
Smartphone	43

Table 4. *Survey question 1*

Most participants (35.8%) owned a laptop, relatively similar to a portable personal computer. Ownership of tablets (8.2%) and e-readers (4.5%), devices predominantly designated for the consumption of electronic media such as digital magazines, is lagging among participants. It is possible that the access to and amount of digital consumption is affected by the apparent lack of digital device ownership.

#### *Research Question 2*

RQ2: How frequently do magazine consumers use a particular medium? Do magazine consumers who regularly use one medium often use the alternate medium?

In survey questions 2 through 4 about frequency of magazine consumption in print and digital media, participants were asked how often they read magazines in each medium. A print magazine was defined as a paper copy and a digital magazine was defined as an electronic copy (Table 5). Print (36.5%) was more preferable than digital (26.4%) by over 10%, though neither medium attracted a large majority.

<b>Medium Preference</b>		
	<i>Print</i>	<i>Digital</i>
Strongly Disagree	5	19
1	11	11
2	17	9
3	11	7
4	8	7
Strongly Agree	5	7

Table 5. *Survey questions 2-4*

Although neither medium had a significantly large following, it is worthy to note that 19 participants expressed strong dislike of the digital medium while merely 5 participants disliked print. Since the digital medium had nearly four times as many opponents as print, it might be inferred that print is generally the preferred medium.

*Research Question 3*

RQ3: What motivates magazine purchases?

In survey question 5, participants shared motives for magazine purchases (Table 6). Although the highest recorded average at 3.21 was during travel or commute, nearly half (41.5%) agreed that they subscribe magazines. On the other hand, a significant majority does not regularly purchase magazines (86.8%).

		<b>Purchase Patterns</b>				
		<i>Subscription</i>	<i>Convenient</i>	<i>Travel/ Commute</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Appealing</i>
Strongly Disagree	1	22	10	12	40	9
	2	3	8	6	6	7
	3	6	13	10	4	18
	4	9	11	9	1	12
Strongly Agree	5	13	11	16	2	7

Table 6. *Survey question 5*

On average, participants were more likely to subscribe to magazines than to purchase single copies on occasion. The magazine industry retains a larger number of loyal consumers than the few impulsive purchasers who are motivated by convenience.

*Research Question 4*

RQ4: What motivates the preference for print or digital media to consume magazines?

In survey questions 6 and 7, participants were asked about specific rationales for their medium preference including: affordability; convenience; ease of reading; multi-

functionality; portability and timeliness. Relative to other factors in print, participants are clearly partial to the ease of use (73.5%) and portability (65.3%) of the medium (Table 7). The least favorable factors in print were pricing (38.8%) as well as lack of multi-functionality (34.7%) and timeliness (32.7%).

<b>Print Magazine Consumption</b>							
	<i>Affordable</i>	<i>Convenient</i>	<i>Ease</i>	<i>Multi-functional</i>	<i>Portable</i>	<i>Timely</i>	
Strongly Disagree	1	9	4	2	11	4	5
	2	10	4	3	6	4	11
	3	15	12	8	9	9	12
	4	6	12	16	14	17	10
Strongly Agree	5	9	17	20	9	15	11

Table 7. Survey question 6

In contrast, participants most enjoy affordability (49%) and convenience (51%) when it comes to digital (Table 8). The most disagreeable qualities in digital media were ease of use (55.1%), which received the lowest average of 2.33 of either medium, and multi-functionality (42.9%).

<b>Digital Magazine Consumption</b>							
	<i>Affordable</i>	<i>Convenient</i>	<i>Ease</i>	<i>Multi-functional</i>	<i>Portable</i>	<i>Timely</i>	
Strongly Disagree	1	10	8	17	13	11	8
	2	3	3	10	8	6	5
	3	12	13	15	6	13	13
	4	7	11	3	7	6	11
Strongly Agree	5	17	14	4	15	12	12

Table 8. Survey question 7

Overall, participants found the print medium superior to the digital medium in comparison on the factors of ease of use (73.5%), portability (65.3%), convenience (59.2%) and multi-functionality (46.9%). Conversely, digital won out in only two categories: affordability (49%) and timeliness (46.9%). Here, the participants' choice is

clear. Favoritism for the print medium could be indicative of a stronger preference for print magazines.

### Focus Group Results

To some extent, most responses from the open discussion supported results from the survey. Major trends in the qualitative focus group highlighted practicality as the main concern in either medium when used to consume magazines. While most expressed a strong preference for traditional print magazines, participants in general admitted awareness of the advantages inherent in digital devices.

### *Consumption Patterns*

Since it is considered an entertaining activity rather than a necessity, focus group responses largely cited leisure as a gratification for magazine consumption. Participants enjoy reading magazines for relaxation of mind, as a reward or to pass time while waiting. Typical places and occasions when magazines are consumed include during travel or commute via air and ground transportation, in office waiting rooms, in line at the cash register and at home. Magazine content is typically discussed with spouses or family members, and less often with co-workers or friends.

Numerous factors are considered in selecting a magazine to read. For some, the visual appeal of individual magazine covers or contents of a specific article will motivate purchase of that particular issue, as stated by one participant: *“Sometimes at the store, you see the title that interests you and want to get that”* (See Appendix F, lines 13-14). For others, entertainment news and celebrity gossip intrigue the reader. Getting new ideas

for do-it-yourself projects and autodidactic purposes also drove sales. Finally, staying updated on current events was yet another reason for reading magazines.

Participants were evenly divided on the subject of magazine subscriptions based on convenience, cost and gratification. On the subject of convenience, some tend to buy single copies when they happen to be at the grocery store while others prefer monthly subscriptions to arrive in their mailbox. Others still purchase “[a] mixture. Sometimes magazines I’m not subscribed to, I go to stores and buy them” (See Appendix F, lines 5-6). Those who purchase single copies favor the flexibility of choosing from a variety of titles based on the appeal of the magazine cover or specific content. One participant provided the example of *Seventeen* magazine: “[Y]ou could just look through the pictures just for fun, you know?” (See Appendix G, lines 31-32). Subscribers who already have an interest in a niche magazine benefit from the convenience of home delivery and discounts for a bulk subscription because they “get everything in the mail” (See Appendix F, line 17).

Additionally, cost is another factor in magazine purchases. For those who prefer single copy purchases, the freedom of choice saves money if the reader only buys a particular issue that attracts them and does not necessarily purchase a magazine each month. One participant commented: “I don’t really like the idea of subscribing to magazines. Mostly because you...I don’t know how it is but you basically have to pay monthly, right? I don’t really like the idea of paying so much money” (See Appendix F, lines 23-25). Conversely, subscribers justify that it is cost-effective to subscribe if the publication is already a topic of interest. One subscriber aptly explained that “if you like

*the magazine, you're going to get the year's subscription because it's cheaper. Because you already know you're going to like it"* (See Appendix F, lines 18-19).

Lastly, instant gratification drives print single copy sales over subscriptions. One magazine purchaser reveals:

*I think one of the problems with subscriptions is that you have to wait around for it to come. I feel like people nowadays want instant access to their information. I think there's more depth to it, but waiting around does kind of get annoying.* (See Appendix F, lines 45-48)

The most detrimental factor to magazine consumption is having enough time. As a leisurely activity, participants state that the lack of free time corresponds to decreased magazine consumption. Many remarked that the introduction of the Internet and the vast amounts of information available online takes time away from other activities. So claims one participant:

*I read so much news articles and blogs and stuff online that I don't have time to read magazines anymore. It used to be, I'd read more magazines generally so I subscribe to a whole bunch of magazines. In my free time, I'd read magazines.... So as a result, there's an indirect online effect for magazines. Because of the fact there's so much information online.... So that's really where the online effect is having, to me, an impact on the reduced amount of print magazines that I read.* (See Appendix J, lines 21-33)

### Trends in Medium Preference

When it comes to choosing media for magazine consumption, participants expressed various rationales for what attract and retain their interest in a certain medium. Participants voiced an overwhelming favoritism for print publications and their reliability, appearance and professionalism. A minority of participants fancied digital magazines for their convenience, timeliness and compactness.



### *Print Medium*

Surprisingly, while both media could feasibly be considered portable, only print was described as having this advantage. Participants tend to read print magazines while traveling on airplanes, during road trips, in company break rooms or other places where they are able to easily take a print issue with them. Another equally important factor is their durability against the elements such as inclement weather or wear over time whereas digital devices may lose their function and utility if they were to undergo the same conditions. One participant states:

*I like the print version because sometimes I like an article and if I take it to the barn, it's ok if it gets wet or if it gets stepped on or if it gets dirty. I would never take my tablet or my computer to the barn. [Print] has portability and durability. (See Appendix F, lines 52-55)*

Paper copies are also cited as being reliable because they are consistently accessible, a quality that addresses the prevailing concern among participants about the potential for equipment failure with the digital medium. One print advocate exclaims:

*"[W]hat are the chances that you would probably run out of batteries or whatever.... To get connected would probably be a difficult thing. Print is always better"* (See Appendix

E, lines 1-3). Since they do not require additional hardware, software or Internet connection for consumption, print magazines also offer instant gratification:

*I like print a lot better. I work, like, every day, so on break I get, like, a half hour. I'm not going to take my iPad everywhere. I just can't do it. I don't get signal in the back of my store. So I take a magazine or something. (See Appendix E, lines 18-20)*

All of these factors—portability, durability, reliability and accessibility—also facilitate the sociability aspect of borrowing or lending print magazines with others. With

digital devices, participants fear incompatibility would not allow for sharing of digital materials.

The physical aspects of print also influence emotional responses. Sentiments brought on by print magazines include indulgence, accomplishment, recollection and attachment. Reading print magazines offer an entertainment value for some participants:

*I just want to say they're kind of like a treat for me, like, if I'm going on a flight or a long drive and I'm not driving. I don't buy into them regularly, but for entertainment purposes just when I have nothing to do. That's when I read magazines. (See Appendix G, lines 20-23)*

Some disclosed that physically turning the pages of a magazine after finishing an article provided a sense of accomplishment and closure:

*I like having it so I can turn the page and really read it. I don't like staring at the screen for long amounts of time...I get headaches. I just think it's [more fun], I think it's more enjoyable. It's just like, when you finish an article, you turn the page. (See Appendix E, lines 4-7)*

Associated with its physicality, the organization of content within a magazine can also trigger strong memory recall that reinforces the ability to precisely relocate a particular page, article or advertisement by its exact place in the publication. An e-reader owner confessed: “*Something that's harder with digital though, that I don't like—it's a lot quicker to try and find something that you're looking for in print*” (See Appendix E, lines 24-25). He explained that one must know the exact wording to locate the same text using a digital device.

Participants also felt a sense of attachment to the print publication when they are able to physically select and purchase a magazine from the store or a newsstand:

- *Print is more personal. When you go out and buy something, you feel more connected to it rather than just like, “Oh, I just downloaded that on my iPad.” (See Appendix E, lines 15-17)*

- *I like just holding it and flipping through the pages. I think it's more like, not relaxing, but I like it a lot better. I like that feeling when "Oh, I got through a certain amount," it just looks cool. I just like holding it, I guess. (See Appendix E, lines 20-23)*

These sentiments of personal connections lead to a tendency of saving magazines and other print publications, such as books, as keepsakes or to display as décor.

On the other hand, magazines commercially displayed on store shelves or at cash registers are common sights. Visual appeal is understood by the participants to be a marketing technique that utilizes the color and context of magazine covers to attract the audience to the content between the pages. The magazine's appearance must spark enough interest to entice a sale, whether it is the subject matter, cover art or even paper product. Participants claim that visual displays do effectively capture one's attention, leading to actual purchases:

- *You know, this [print] magazine caught my eye because of the fashion. It's colorful and looks pretty sharp. I wouldn't have chosen this magazine online. I've never heard of it before. But because it's there, it looks good, it looks like something I'm interested in.... But you don't really have that option online. You have to know you like that magazine. (See Appendix H, lines 39-45)*
- *I look at the front of the magazine or the table of contents, find an article that I like or interests me, captures my attention and then I read that particular one, you know? (See Appendix G, lines 45-48)*

Finally, concern about content and professionalism also adds to the appeal of print. Consumers wish to read magazines with a reliable journalistic quality:

*Print has always been more professional and always will be as far as I'm concerned. There are too many errors online. And articles, you don't necessarily know where they got their information from. And you don't even really know if*

*they're journalists, depending on what you're reading.* (See Appendix E, lines 8-11)

Print is able to offer credibility to readers. It is critical to consumers that sources and their content are trustworthy authorities. Unlike digital, the paper-based medium becomes permanent as soon as it is printed. It is evident that print remains a powerful source of information among advocates.

### *Digital Medium*

Contrastingly, participants who argued digital as the more attractive medium provided a few identical descriptors yet with converse reasons. Digital devices were also deemed durable, reasoning that plastic hardware can outlast paper products, which are a natural material that cannot withstand environmental elements and will inevitably deteriorate over time. Aside from their perceived resilience, digital devices can save space by offering a variety of titles from a single portable gadget. One participant explains why he is partial to the digital bookshelf:

*[E]verything is in one place so you don't have to keep track of all your [print] magazines if you want to refer back to an issue at all. You know exactly where it is on your iPad whereas you don't have to run around your house looking for a [print] magazine that you saw an article in a while ago or something.* (See Appendix H, lines 60-64)

Along with the capability to access the same digital material from different devices, environmental consciousness is cited as yet another benefit to electronically storing publications by helping reduce the volume of paper copies that may contribute to waste:

*"Some people might opt for that because of the green option too. That's a real thing—that people won't have to contribute to waste and stuff"* (See Appendix J, lines 52-53).

The effort to be environmentally friendly adds to the convenience of purchasing digital magazines at the click of a button. Participants enjoy the ease of buying their next issue from their device rather than spending time, money, gas, and possibly causing pollution, to physically visit the store for a print magazine. Eliminating travel time coupled with instant access to all types of digital media further promotes the convenience of the digital medium as affirmed by one participant: *“I’ll be sitting in bed, finish a book, hit a button, I already have the next book right there, ready to read. I don’t have to stop, go to the bookstore and hope it’s there”* (See Appendix H, lines 26-28).

Digital content can be updated instantaneously so that accessing magazines online is timely for those who want to stay current but do not want to wait for the printed issue. Digital content also extends beyond the printed pages by offering additional multimedia options and detailed articles not available with paper publications. Related audio and video features attract some participants to go online for their magazines: *“There’s the multimedia application.... Sometimes I use videos because they’re trying to show you something”* (See Appendix H, lines 56-58). Furthermore, the ability to purchase and view multiple publications in one transaction draws participants to digital: *“Sometimes I look at multiple newspapers. I try to go online, it’s more conducive”* (See Appendix H, lines 20-21).

Finally, a few participants have begun to shift entirely toward digital for all media, not exclusively for magazines: *“I’m all digital, especially now, except for one print medium I read every once in a while. But I’m all digital. If it all goes digital, that’s what I would want”* (See Appendix D, lines 22-24). Overall, digital advocates foresee a conversion to digital and reduction in use of the print medium: *“I think [print] magazines*

*will phase out. But not totally out. I guess they'll be more phased down"* (See Appendix I, lines 18-19).

## Discussion and Implications

Results of the survey and focus groups will be evaluated separately for trends and significance. After which, both survey and focus group findings will be considered jointly when applied to Niche Theory.

### *Survey*

Overall, results from the quantitative survey did not indicate any significant differences between the two media. Preferences for the consumption of each medium were fairly similar, although there was a small inclination toward print magazines (36.5%) over digital (26.4%) (Table 5). Participants indicated slightly stronger opinions and preferences for the long-standing print magazine than its digital counterpart.

Compared to other devices, ownership of digital devices, including tablets and e-readers, was slim. Survey results showed that 4.5% of participants owned an e-reader while 8.2% owned a tablet. The small numbers parallel findings from the *Survey of the American Consumer* that only 5.1% of American adults own an e-reader and 3.5% own a tablet (Table 2). Two contentious survey results pertaining digital device ownership should be considered. First, in contrast with other similar research, digital device owners within the sample indicated the reverse pattern—more participants owned tablets than e-readers. Secondly, the relative proportion of ownership within the sample was larger than has been found in recent studies among the general population. As noted in a 2008 study by Forrester Research, the slow adoption rate of digital devices may have been due to two

factors: lack of awareness and price (Warren, 2010). In this study, most participants were aware of digital devices and media, and nearly half of all participants (49%) strongly agreed that digital magazines are affordable (Table 8). Likely explanations for the anomalous survey results might include the time of study, the average age of participants, the state of developing technology and growing awareness. The *Survey of the American Consumer* indicated that a large number of digital devices were purchased during the gift-giving holidays, increasing ownership thereafter (GfK MRI, 2011). Here, the survey was conducted during the first quarter of 2012, just following the late 2011 gift-giving season. Another possibility may be the average age of the sample at 23 to 24 years old. Generally considered young adults, it is possible that this age range may have more familiarity and experience with digital technology beginning at a younger age. A third possibility is developing technology and growing awareness of tablet devices such as Apple iPad tablets—each new edition is designed to be an improved, and at times cheaper, version of the preceding device.

Survey questions regarding purchase patterns aimed at discovering motivations for magazine purchases and whether consumers typically buy single copies or subscribe. Similar to the annual magazine circulation trends from the Audit Bureau of Circulation, participants were more likely to subscribe than purchase single copies. Participants purchase magazines via subscription (41.5%) but do not buy single copies on a regular basis (86.8%) and typically do so when it is convenient (41.5%) or when the front cover or articles appeal to them (35.8%) (Table 6). Such findings may help explain the declining circulation of magazine titles in recent years, as found by Troland (2005). Those who consume magazines tend to subscribe annually to a particular title rather than

make sporadic purchases. But in order to attract consumers to buy individual issues, participants stated that the magazine must have attractive visuals or interesting content to someone who does not regularly read the title. Additionally, magazines must be easily accessible to motivate a single copy purchase. Overall, magazines entice participants through visual appeal, content and convenience such as home-delivered subscriptions or accessible single copies.

Within the study, motivations for medium preference were categorized into six factors based on literature: affordability, convenience, ease of reading, multi-functionality, portability and timeliness. Based on the findings, participants did not rate either medium as excelling in all six factors. Factors that were ranked as superior in either medium had a low degree of overlap with the other so that both print and digital could co-exist in accordance with niche overlap under Niche Theory. Print was ranked above digital for four out of six factors: convenience, ease, multi-functionality and portability. From the collected data, 73.5% favored the ease of print to digital for magazine consumption (Table 7). Perhaps in relation to the ease of the paper-based medium, 65.3% also found print to be more portable (Table 7). Moreover, 59.2% believed print versions to be the more convenient medium than their digital counterpart (Table 7). On the other hand, only 34.7% of participants agreed that print was the more affordable medium, with 49% attributing affordability to digital instead (Table 7, 8). Digital magazines are likely contributing to the rise in paid online content as found in a Pew Research Center study (Jansen, 2010). Additionally, the ability of digital to update content instantaneously is considered more timely than the permanence of print by 46.9% of the participants, one function that paper-based publications cannot rival (Table 8).



### *Focus Group*

During the focus group, participants communicated their likes, dislikes and general opinions on print and digital as a medium and in the form of magazines (See Appendices D-J). Overall, many shared the perception that digital devices and media are more pervasive than print. The overarching belief was that the digital media are rapidly growing in adoption and popularity among magazine consumers. However, it is significant to note that the majority were adamant about their own consumption of traditional print over digital for text-based media, indicating a strong preference for paper-based magazines.

The more personable and relatable qualities of print, not considered present in digital, were repeatedly discussed throughout the focus groups. Among the many unique traits of print is its visual appeal. Print magazines are purposely displayed at newsstands and on store shelves to entice readers by appearance first rather than by content: *“You know, this magazine caught my eye because of the fashion. It’s colorful and looks pretty sharp”* (See Appendix H, lines 39-40). Additionally, publishers must consider the actual material of the paper product—its texture, thickness and gloss—all of which are highly capable of adding allure and value to influence the content between the pages by way of the context on the front cover. While digital publications are also displayed by its magazine cover, digital users search for specific titles by familiarity rather than browsing images and previewing the magazine before purchase: *“Even if it’s not the appeal of the look, you’re more likely to choose something that you recognize when it’s online”* (See Appendix H, lines 47-48). According to the participants, the visual and textural aspects of

paper copies provide a rich context for print magazines that simply cannot be translated through digital magazines.

Print's visual attraction also imparts emotional appeal into the publication. Unlike with digital magazines, a majority felt a personal connection evoked by a paper copy in their hands. The feel of a print magazine provides relaxation, feelings of attachment and accomplishment as well as strong memory recall. Some participants enjoy reading from a paper copy rather than from a digital screen, adding that print magazines can be rewarding when consumed during breaks or vacation: *"Usually on my break or something like that, I just go to the store and read the entire thing..."* (See Appendix F, lines 34-35). Participants regard the process of buying a magazine at the store as part of an overall experience—the physical purchase is integral in creating a personal connection between the consumer and the print magazine: *"When you go out and buy something, you feel more connected to it rather than just like, 'Oh, I just downloaded that on my iPad'"* (See Appendix E, lines 15-17). Holding onto individual issues as keepsakes and décor captures the sense of attachment that participants feel toward print publications: *"I like having books on my shelves as opposed to having books on my shelves on my iPad or something"* (See Appendix H, lines 35-37). Yet another emotion associated with print magazines is accomplishment—being able to physically turn the page after finishing an article signifies a feeling of success and a sense of closure that is not possible with Web-based pages of digital magazines: *"I think it's more enjoyable...when you finish an article, you turn the page"* (See Appendix E, lines 6-7). Furthermore, the actual organization and placement of magazine content triggers a strong memory recall with some participants who are able to locate an article based on where it is situated in the

print copy: “[I]t’s a lot quicker to try and find something that you’re looking for in print” (See Appendix E, lines 24-25).

Participants go on to say that the physical aspects of print magazines add to their attraction as a medium. Paper copies are portable in size, lighter in weight, easy to store, immediately accessible and fully functional without additional equipment. Technical issues with digital devices and media are not an issue with the print medium: “[W]hat are the chances that you would probably run out of batteries or whatever” (See Appendix E, lines 1-2). Whereas participants are concerned with problems which may arise with electronic equipment—owning digital devices, lack of Wi-Fi connectivity, battery life and incompatible software—these are non-existent troubles for paper-based magazines. On the other hand, problems for print publications are the same problems cited for electronic copies—withstanding weather and wear over time: “[P]aper over time will get ruined and you won’t have a magazine anymore” (See Appendix D, lines 13-14). Where print magazines can be ruined by rain, wear and tear and the like, so can digital devices by water and improper storage.

Finally, the journalistic aspect of print magazines adds a professional quality to a medium deemed by participants to be more permanent and credible, thus more valuable and compelling: “Print has always been more professional and always will be as far as I’m concerned” (See Appendix E, lines 8-9). In contrast, digital magazines are transient by nature as publishers can easily change and update the content at will, thus it is considered to be a more fleeting and unstable medium: “There are too many errors online. And articles, you don’t necessarily know where they got their information from”

(See Appendix E, lines 9-10). Participants proclaimed that the journalistic quality of print remains important in an age of developing digital media.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### Application of Theory

The purpose of this study is to analyze the competition between print and digital media, specifically in the forms of electronic publications and digital devices as they affect the current consumption and future outlook for traditional print magazines. Niche Theory was applied within the framework of product lifecycle to the analysis of results from distributed surveys and conducted focus groups on magazine consumption.

Research questions that guided this analysis were:

1. Function—what are the gratifications of consuming print magazines? Of digital magazines? What is most attractive about print magazines? About digital magazines?
2. Competition—what are the differences and similarities between print and digital magazines? Between print and digital media?
3. Adoption—what makes print or digital superior to the other medium? Have digital magazines resulted in complete, partial or no adoption of the new medium?

#### *Product Lifecycle*

As introduced in chapter two, the product lifecycle sequence chronicles each stage of a medium's life; the final stage holds several possible directions for the future of an older medium when a new medium begins to compete (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004; Randle, 2001; van Zuilen, 1977). In this particular study, the product

lifecycle of the digital medium is highly relevant in shaping the market for print. The first stage of birth, digital is reliant upon the preceding print publication, the content of which is formatted into digital form. At the second stage of penetration, digital devices are experiencing slow adoption rates based on unfamiliarity and distrust of the medium's technological reliability and dependability. Consequently, this disadvantage results in limited circulation of digital media among consumers at the third stage. A general lack of awareness of the technology itself together with a lack of necessary operative skills are crucial factors that are impeding mass consumption of the digital medium and its products. For these reasons, digital media has not yet reached the fourth stage of growth; on the other hand, it is at this point that the print medium has unknown potential for growth. There is a possibility that digital growth could rapidly saturate the market if and when it reaches this next stage; at which time print may be met with the fifth stage of defensive resistance against the digital medium. Nevertheless, it appears that the print medium is presently at the fourth stage of growth rather than at the fifth stage of defensive resistance, and certainly not nearing the sixth stage of adaptation, convergence or obsolescence, as previously proposed. One notable mention is that the Internet appears to have moved at a faster pace than the typical product lifecycle due to the foundational groundwork earlier set by such media as the telephone (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004).

It is important to note that survey and focus group findings at present do not foresee the digital medium as an immediate threat to print magazines. In light of this observation, the sixth stage—when an older medium should opt for adaptation or convergence, or else risk obsolescence—will be reevaluated in terms of print magazines.

Magazine consumers have yet to evolve their consumption habits from print to digital, thus there is little need for print to adapt to the digital medium. Without a large demand for digital, convergence is also not necessary as print is still the desired medium for magazine consumption. Finally, while digital has entered the market as a competitor for the common resource of magazine consumers, the medium has not yet become a significant enough threat to be considered a “disruptive technology” capable of driving print to obsolescence. Therefore, it does not appear as if the print medium has reached the sixth and final stage of its product lifecycle.

### *Supersession Theory*

Without having reached the final stage of the product lifecycle, the supersession theory should not apply. Duguid (1996) once forewarned that under the theory, the succession of new media at the death of old media tends to be a recurring pattern. This occurs when an older medium cannot resolve its problems and risks being overthrown by a new medium that presents itself as the solution to those problems. In this study, the supersession theory has been reversed wherein the old medium resolves the problems of the new medium—print is considered superior to digital in the qualities of portability, durability, reliability and accessibility. While it is apparent from the findings that the two forms of magazines are not necessarily in fierce competition, digital magazines are not the only threat to the incumbent print magazine—the Internet is another contender.

Duguid (1996) had further suggested that the Internet is capable of upending the print medium. Focus group findings echo theorists’ forecast, reasoning that regardless of the device used for access, the Internet provides information beyond the contents of a

magazine. The Internet, as a digital medium, acts as an alternative for “electronic communication, content creation and content delivery” (Picard, 2003, p. 129). Thus, it is seemingly more attractive and better serves users than a traditional medium that may be considered “information-poor sources” (Lee & Leung, 2006, p. 2). Participants confirmed that the Internet’s ability to provide varied content poses a more formidable threat to print than do digital magazines: “*The Internet can chew up all your time*” (See Appendix J, line 34). The quantity, quality, variety and instant access to such information distracts from magazine consumption altogether by greatly reducing consumer time.

### *Niche Theory*

Originating from bioecology, Niche Theory addresses the possibility of coexistence or extinction between two media when both compete for the same resources (Dimmick, et al., 2000; Kayany & Yelsma, 2000; Milne, 1994; Randle, 2003). Ecological niche as a mass media theory applies a medium-centric approach to the study of consumer behavior in order to define the medium’s position within its industry (Dimmick, et al., 2000; Dutta-Bergman, 2004). The three facets of Niche Theory are niche breadth, niche overlap and niche superiority.

Under niche breadth, a specialist medium has narrow use of resources whereas a generalist medium has broader use of resources (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984). Dimmick and Rothenbuhler believed that the specialist exploits resources more efficiently while the generalist is better able to adjust for changes. Print magazines today are specialist by nature, typically concentrating content by interest, hobby or trade and so appropriately called niche magazines. Although digital magazines are also specialist in



content, the medium itself is not. The digital medium is meant to be generalist—digital devices are used to read multiple types of publications, not exclusively magazines. However, consumers stray away from the publication, consuming digital-based books and newspapers but continuing to read paper-based magazines in their original form. A combination of slow digital adoption and even slower ownership of digital devices allows print magazines to maintain popularity. Assuming Dimmick and Rothenbuhler’s theory is true, print magazines will have better use of the pool of consumers but digital devices will be able to weather the storm over time, figuratively speaking.

The second facet of niche overlap concerns the degree of complementarity between print and digital media (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984; Dutta-Bergman, 2004). There is a high degree of overlap when one medium’s functions replace those of another medium. There is low overlap when the functions of the media complement each other. Evidently from the focus group discussions, consumers prefer the touch of paper copies to looking at the digital screen when reading magazines: *“I don’t like staring at the screen for long amounts of time. Like, I get headaches”* (See Appendix E, lines 4-5). Digital devices can mimic the content but clearly cannot offer the physical quality of print magazines, and as such, the low overlap in functions between print and digital facilitates coexistence between the two forms of magazines. As previously discussed, the concept of media budget parallels competitive displacement under niche overlap, when a medium acquires resources at the expense of another. Within media budget, time is the defined resource for which the print and digital media compete. Participants have allotted more media time to the Internet than to either forms of magazines, claiming that this shift leaves little free time available in their media budget usually reserved for magazine

consumption: *“Now I’m online everyday. I read so much stuff online, I only have time for a couple magazines”* (See Appendix J, lines 24-25). Within the context of niche overlap, focus group results support findings by Troland (2005) that annual time dedicated to reading magazines—whether print or digital—has generally declined in recent years.

In niche superiority, competitive exclusion describes a medium which fulfills gratifications and extinguishes another medium’s use of resources (Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Randle, 2003). Conversely, displacement describes when a medium alters its niche to differentiate its needs and lower competition. Furthermore, it was suggested that a new medium must provide content more effectively for a high degree of overlap to sufficient displace the other in function (Dimmick, et al., 2000; Picard, 2003). Currently, there is low overlap between the two media as digital delivery of magazine content functions less effectively than print copies, according to findings. Instead, the print medium has been described as more personable, relatable and easily and instantly accessible than the digital medium for magazine consumption: *“Print is more personal. When you go out and buy something, you feel more connected to it”* (See Appendix E, lines 15-16). Moreover, the study of displacement in consumer usage research is subdivided into symmetrical displacement—when use of one medium is decreased in order to increase use in another, and functional displacement—when use of one medium replaces use of the other entirely based on its ability to completely satisfy consumer needs (Newell, et al., 2008). While print magazine consumption has generally decreased, there is no corresponding increase in use of digital magazines. Instead, a rise in Internet use results in to the decrease in magazine consumption, indicating there is symmetrical displacement involved. As for

functional displacement, print has not been entirely displaced and is still preferred to digital magazines, despite an overall reduction in magazine consumption.

### *Summary*

The theoretical application of Niche Theory to analyze the competition between print and digital media within the magazine industry has found that the two media are not equally matched competitors. In general, print is considered the more attractive medium for magazine consumption. Its colorful visual appeal and textured paper product is unrivaled even when replicated on the digital screen; emotional connections to a print publication evoke feelings of relaxation, attachment and even constructs strong memory recall; the convenience and reliability of paper copies outweighs the uncertainty associated with digital technology; and finally, the permanence of the printed page lends professionalism and credible journalism to the quality of the magazine content.

This study has examined whether digital publishing alters the current consumption of print magazines. More noticeable changes have been observed in other publications, such as books and newspapers, but less so in magazines themselves. Among the reasons why these publications were more popular in digital form included the convenience of online purchasing, instant access to the digital copy and viewing several publications in a single digital device. Ultimately, consumer preference for either print or digital form depends on the particular type of publication. Deciding factors include frequency of content update, length of publication and the occasion or location of consumption.

Whether the introduction of digital technology will overtake print is too soon to tell. Presently, digital adoption rates are slow due to a lack of digital device ownership and skepticism about the reliability of the technology such as Wi-Fi connectivity and electronic durability, etc. Print remains the medium of choice among magazine consumers who depend on the portable publication for quick and immediate accessibility. Furthermore, consumers develop a personal connection to the paper copy, expressing the tendency to make in-store purchases an experience, saving issues as beloved keepsakes or sharing magazines: “*With print, I feel like you could share more and borrow*” (See Appendix E, line 12). Conversely, a complementary effect between the two media was not established in the current study. Consumers appear to maintain exclusive use of certain media types for certain publications rather than shifting completely toward one particular medium altogether. Thus far, digital magazines have resulted in partial adoption of the new medium, based on each individual’s personal preference, dispelling the notion that the digital medium is overtaking print magazines. As Anthony proclaims: “Calming the soothsayers’ prophecies of doom is the fact that print is thriving in many different ways, not in spite of new media but because of it” (as cited in Rhodes, 2001).

#### Limitations of Study

In this study, the results from the sample may not be representative of the general population. The sample being limited to a small size, participants were mostly female and Caucasian with a slight lack of digital media consumers. Furthermore, the study was short-term and thus could not track long-term trends. Finally, the study was conducted during a time when digital device adoption is not widespread, a factor to be considered in

the research results. Therefore, the results of this study should not be generalized to a greater population.

### Future Implications

A suggested study for the future would be a cohort study by generations. Digital devices and magazines of today are only recent innovations beginning from the mid-2000s. Participants in this study were ages 18 and over, who were likely introduced to the fairly new technology during their adolescence at the earliest, and would have adopted the medium alongside older generations. A younger generation that has grown up with digital technology from birth may approach digital devices and magazines differently. One consideration would be to examine at what instance and to what degree a younger generation begins to adopt digital media consumption, and whether they would do so in lieu of print.

Yet another approach may be to consider the influence of marketing and advertising in shaping public perception regarding magazine consumption patterns. Participants in this study largely believed that digital media and magazines were more widespread than was actually recorded via survey and focus groups. Instead, participants were adamant about retaining print readership. Despite the misconception, a small number of participants did own digital devices and read digital magazines on a regular basis. It may be noteworthy to investigate the role of marketers in contributing to use of digital media. Conversely, qualitative data from this study could be used by magazine marketers to gauge the current market and shape the future market by assessing participant perception in comparison with consumption habits and content distribution.

APPENDIX A

Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please check *ALL* devices that you own.

If checked, specify device.

- Tablet: \_\_\_\_\_  PC: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Reader: \_\_\_\_\_  Smartphone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Laptop: \_\_\_\_\_  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. In general, how often do you read the following *MEDIUM*? (1=not at all; 5= very often).

	Not at all					Very often
Print magazines (paper copy)	1	2	3	4	5	
Digital magazines (electronic copy)	1	2	3	4	5	

3. Do you regularly read digital magazines? If yes, how often do you read print magazines?

If no, continue to next question.

	Not at all					Very often
Print magazines (paper copy)	1	2	3	4	5	

4. Do you regularly read print magazines? If yes, how often do you read digital magazines?

If no, continue to next question.

	Not at all					Very often
Digital magazines (electronic copy)	1	2	3	4	5	

5. I buy magazines in the following *FORM*: (1=strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree					Strongly agree
By weekly/monthly/annual subscription.	1	2	3	4	5	
A single-copy when it is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5	
A single-copy when I travel or commute.	1	2	3	4	5	
A single copy on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5	
A single-copy when the front cover/articles appeal to me.	1	2	3	4	5	

Please complete both sides

6. I read in *PAPER* form because:

	Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				
It is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is affordable.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is multi-functional.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is portable.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is easier to read.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is timely.	1	2	3	4	5					

7. I read in *DIGITAL* form because:

	Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				
It is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is affordable.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is multi-functional.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is portable.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is easier to read.	1	2	3	4	5					
It is timely.	1	2	3	4	5					

8. What year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Gender: Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_

10. Ethnicity (circle): Caucasian      Asian African-American      Native American

Hispanic/Latin American Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Marital status: Single \_\_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_

12. Are you currently: Employed \_\_\_\_\_ Unemployed \_\_\_\_\_

Please include additional comments below:

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Please complete both sides

APPENDIX B  
FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT  
(1 hour)

Time (minutes)	Activity
5	<i>Magazine browsing:</i> Researcher will provide assortment of titles in both print and digital formats; materials to be collected at the conclusion of the focus group.
5-10	<p><i>Introduction:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide each participant with researcher's contact information, name tag, pen and refreshments.</li> <li>2. Ice-breaker to introduce moderators and participants.</li> <li>3. Ensure anonymity and voluntary participation.</li> <li>4. Explain purpose of research and focus group procedure.</li> </ol>
5	<i>Survey:</i> Each participant will receive a single sheet of paper and pen to complete the survey; materials to be collected at the conclusion of the focus group.
10	<i>Open discussion</i>
30	<p><i>Guided discussion:</i> Questions to be asked and recorded are below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If you could only have one type of magazine, would you prefer print or digital?</li> <li>2. Do you own any digital devices? If so, which one?</li> <li>3. FUNCTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What magazine titles / genres do you read?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Why do you read magazines? Convenience, price, multi-functional, portability, ease, timeliness, sociability?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Examples: When and where do you usually read magazines? With whom do you discuss and/or share magazines?</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. COMPETITION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What are the similarities / differences between print and digital magazines?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What are the similarities / differences between print and digital media?</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. ADOPTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you subscribe, how often? If you buy a single-copy, where do you buy them? How often?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Why do you buy a single-copy rather than subscribe, and vice versa?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> With other entertainment media (books, newspapers), what medium do you use? Why?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What is the biggest selling point of print or digital magazines?</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Back to Question 1: Has your opinion changed and why?</li> </ol>



APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP ANSWERS  
(Record tally of participants per question)

- 1. If you could have only one type of magazine, would you prefer print or digital?      Print \_\_\_\_\_      Digital \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Do you own any digital devices?

FUNCTION

3a. What magazine titles do you read? (record most repeated titles & # of participants for each)


- 3b. When do you usually read magazines?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Before bed      \_\_\_\_\_ Travel/Commute      \_\_\_\_\_ In my spare time  
       \_\_\_\_\_ During/after work      \_\_\_\_\_ To take a break      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

- 3c. Where do you usually read magazines?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Home      \_\_\_\_\_ Work      \_\_\_\_\_ Other (office, travel)

- 3d. Who do you discuss magazines with? Do you share magazines?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Family      \_\_\_\_\_ Friends      \_\_\_\_\_ Co-workers

- 3e. Why do you read magazines?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Current events      \_\_\_\_\_ Relaxing/Escapism      \_\_\_\_\_ Visuals  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Entertainment      \_\_\_\_\_ Social      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

PURCHASE PATTERNS

- 4a. If you subscribe, how often?      Weekly/Monthly \_\_\_\_\_      Annually \_\_\_\_\_

- 4b. If you buy single-copies, where do you buy them? How often?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Online store/app      \_\_\_\_\_ Magazine stand      \_\_\_\_\_ Bookstore  
       (Amazon, Zinio, etc.)      \_\_\_\_\_ Grocery store      \_\_\_\_\_ Other  
     a. Why do you buy single-copies rather than subscribe, and vice versa?

MEDIUM PREFERENCE

- 5a. With other entertainment media (books, newspapers, radio), what medium do you use; With magazines; Why?      Print \_\_\_\_\_      Digital \_\_\_\_\_

- 5b. What is the biggest selling point of print/digital magazines?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Availability      \_\_\_\_\_ Ease/Features      \_\_\_\_\_ Multi-functional  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Archive      \_\_\_\_\_ Portable      \_\_\_\_\_ Social/Interactive  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Convenient      \_\_\_\_\_ Price      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

- 6. Has your media preference changed? Why?      Print \_\_\_\_\_      Digital \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### Digital

- 1 *Moderator:* *Imagine you're stranded on a desert island. Which type of magazine*  
2 *would you like to have, between print and digital, and why?*
- 3 *Participant:* Print (overwhelming response)
- 4 *Participant:* Digital (few)
- 5 *Participant:* Digital. You could pick different magazines.
- 6 *Participant:* What if you don't have a plug-in?
- 7 *Participant:* Stranded for how long?
- 8 *Participant:* How are you going to get Wi-Fi?
- 9 *Participant:* I'd say digital too. Without the storms and weather, your print copies are  
10 going to get drenched.
- 11 *Participant:* But then your digital thing is going to go short.
- 12 *Participant:* Digital is way better protected from that kind of thing these days.
- 13 *Participant:* I would say digital because the paper over time will get ruined and you  
14 won't have a magazine anymore.
- 15 *Participant:* And it will become out of date.
- 16 *Participant:* Do you have electricity? Is it wireless? How much battery life do you  
17 have? Is it Gilligan's island? Is it Hawaii? (laughter)
- 18 *Participant:* If you have working digital?
- 19 *Participant:* It's more convenient. I think it's a lot more cost effective. Like I read a lot,  
20 and if I have a book on my phone or my laptop, then I can read it on my  
21 phone. I can get like... like it costs a lot less than if I go out, get the book.
- 22 *Participant:* I agree with everything she said. I'm all digital, especially now, except for  
23 one print medium I read every once in a while. But I'm all digital. If it all  
24 goes digital, that's what I would want.

## APPENDIX E

### Print

- 1 Participant: My reason is: what are the chances that you would probably run out of  
2 batteries or whatever on a tropical island. To get connected would  
3 probably be a difficult thing. Print is always better.
- 4 Participant: I like having it so I can turn the page and really read it. I don't like staring  
5 at the screen for long amounts of time. Like, I get headaches. I just think  
6 it's funner, I think it's more enjoyable. It's just like, when you finish an  
7 article, you turn the page.
- 8 Participant: Print has always been more professional and always will be as far as I'm  
9 concerned. There are too many errors online. And articles, you don't  
10 necessarily know where they got their information from. And you don't  
11 even really know if they're journalists, depending on what you're reading.
- 12 Participant: With print, I feel like you could share more and borrow. Like, I'm not just  
13 going to lend my Kindle to my friend and like "Hey, give it back when  
14 you're done."
- 15 Participant: Print is more personal. When you go out and buy something, you feel  
16 more connected to it rather than just like, "Oh, I just downloaded that on  
17 my iPad."
- 18 Participant: I like print a lot better. I work like every day, so on break I get, like, a half  
19 hour, I'm not going to take my iPad everywhere. I just can't do it. I don't  
20 get signal in the back of my store. So I take a magazine or something. I  
21 like just holding it and flipping through the pages. I think it's more like,  
22 not relaxing, but I like it a lot better. I like that feeling when "oh, I got  
23 through a certain amount," it just looks cool. I just like holding it, I guess.
- 24 Participant: Something that's harder with digital though, that I don't like, it's a lot  
25 quicker to try and find something that you're looking for in print. So like  
26 if there's a book that I have and it's a really good book, and there's a  
27 certain part I like to read over and over again. ... You know, it's easier to  
28 thumb through, find, you know, I'll figure out where in the book it is and I  
29 can pin it. Whereas in digital, it takes longer to do that.
- 30 Participant: Control find.
- 31 Participant: Well, then you need the exact wording.
- 32 Participant: Didn't you read it twice? (laughter)

## APPENDIX F

### Media Purchases

- 1 *Moderator:* *Where do you usually buy your magazines? Do you subscribe, do you buy*  
2 *from grocery stores?*
- 3 *Participant:* Wal-mart
- 4 *Participant:* Grocery store (several)
- 5 *Participant:* A mixture. Sometimes magazines I'm not subscribed to, I go to stores and  
6 buy them.
- 7 *Moderator:* *Why is that? Is there a reason you would buy it at the store rather than*  
8 *subscribe?*
- 9 *Participant:* You just want that one magazine from that one shelf.
- 10 *Participant:* Usually by topic because you don't know what's going to be in the next  
11 one.
- 12 *Participant:* Too expensive.
- 13 *Participant:* Sometimes at the store, you see the title that interests you and want to get  
14 that.
- 15 *Moderator:* *Like the visual appeal? And how about the reverse? Why do you subscribe*  
16 *rather than buy single copy?*
- 17 *Participant:* You get everything in the mail.
- 18 *Participant:* If you like the magazine, you're going to get the year's subscription  
19 because it's cheaper. Because you already know you're going to like it.
- 20 *Participant:* Yea, if you're really interested in one topic.
- 21 *Moderator:* *Do you subscribe weekly, monthly, annually?*
- 22 *Participant:* Monthly (several)
- 23 *Participant:* I don't really like the idea of subscribing to magazines. Mostly because  
24 you...I don't know how it is but you basically have to pay monthly, right?  
25 I don't really like the idea of paying so much money whereas I can just go  
26 on the Internet and get the same information from, you know, what I pay  
27 for. I can just get it all free on the Internet. So like, the other two people  
28 who chose digital, I love reading books, I like the hard cover feeling and

29 everything, but when it comes to magazines, you know like the tabloids,  
30 just the magazines that are at the grocery store, whereas you could just  
31 glance through them. I think we just put it back. Because you know, “Oh I  
32 remember that picture,” I could just look it up on the Internet the same  
33 day.

34 Participant: Yea, I hardly ever read or buy magazines. Usually on my break or  
35 something like that I just go to the store and read the entire thing then put  
36 it back. I’ve done that with books too. I’ve had one job where I had a 30-  
37 minute break and I go to our bookshelf, our book area, I just the read the  
38 book. Like \$15 books, I was reading them and putting them back.

39 Participant: And personally, I don’t want to be saying that because I feel personally it  
40 sounded bad. I don’t think it’s worth it so...

41 Participant: Well, it’s not like we’re walking out of the store with it.

42 Participant: I mean, it’s a really good idea. Like magazines, you know, are a part of the  
43 medium and should be respected, you know, in a way. But it’s just, for  
44 example tabloids, the Internet is full of them.

45 Participant: I think one of the problems with subscriptions is that you have to wait  
46 around for it come. I feel like people nowadays want instant access to their  
47 information. I think there’s more depth to it, but waiting around does kind  
48 of get annoying.

49 Participant: Like, I subscribe to a horse magazine. That’s the only way I can get  
50 information, like, if there’s new rules or in each new publication, there’s  
51 new rules in the system. And also, like, I choose the print version because  
52 they also are starting now to make it digital. But I like the print version  
53 because sometimes I like an article and if I take it to the barn, it’s ok if it  
54 gets wet or if it gets stepped on or if it gets dirty. I would never take my  
55 tablet or my computer to the barn. It has portability and durability.

56 Participant: I don’t really believe in, like, gossip magazines, like *People* and *U.S.*  
57 *Weekly* and stuff like that because I feel like they’re just trying to make a  
58 sale without actually informing readers. I feel like it’s just monthly rumors  
59 and gossip and I don’t actually take any of that seriously. So I don’t really  
60 see the point in paying for something that’s just pure rumors. I can go  
61 back to high school if I wanted to do that.

## APPENDIX G

### Media Consumption

- 1 Moderator: *And when do you typically read magazines? For example, do you read*  
2 *right before bed, or when you travel, or to take a break, like a lunch*  
3 *break?*
- 4 Participant: When I travel.
- 5 Participant: At the doctor's office.
- 6 Participant: In line at the grocery store.
- 7 Participant: After I check the mail.
- 8 Participant: Receptionist's desk.
- 9 Participant: Just at home.
- 10 Participant: Waiting in line.
- 11 Participant: Airports.
- 12 Participant: Bathroom.
- 13 Moderator: *Now the next question, why do you read magazines?*
- 14 Participant: An appealing cover. Or subject.
- 15 Participant: Entertaining.
- 16 Participant: Gossip.
- 17 Participant: New ideas.
- 18 Participant: Other people's drama.
- 19 Participant: Update.
- 20 Participant: I just want to say they're kind of like a treat for me, like if I'm going on a  
21 flight or a long drive and I'm not driving. I don't buy into them regularly  
22 but for entertainment purposes just when I have nothing to do. That's  
23 when I read magazines. But it's definitely not a daily, monthly thing.
- 24 Participant: Are you talking about magazines, like *Sky Mall*?
- 25 Participant: No, I like buy magazines.

26 Participant: Because I love *Sky Mall*. *Sky Mall*'s the greatest.

27 Participant: I have another comment. I feel like time is also an issue. I feel like  
28 sometimes I don't have time to look through a whole entire magazine.  
29 Like a real critical, or not critical. Like a *National Geographic*, I feel like I  
30 don't have the time or the effort into reading a really good magazine.  
31 Whereas *Seventeen* you could just look through the pictures just for fun,  
32 you know? So time is an issue too. Because we do a lot of reading in  
33 college, you know? And that's what you have to read. You're pressured  
34 into, not pressured but you know what I mean, you have to read because  
35 you actually get things out of it. And I don't feel like I get anything from  
36 just looking at the pictures. Time is a thing.

37 Participant: What was that magazine that people, there's multiple, that are totally  
38 outlandish, false things like about alien?

39 Participant: National Inquirer?

40 Participant: Is that what it is? Do people buy that?

41 Participant: Yes.

42 Participant: Really? Because I sit there in the store and I'm like... (laughter)

43 Participant: Someone was mentioning time reading the magazines. I mean, I don't  
44 know. I've never, I have to admit, I've never actually sat down and read a  
45 magazine cover to cover. I don't have the patience or the time for that. I  
46 look at the front of the magazine or the table of contents, find an article  
47 that I like or interests me, captures my attention and then I read that  
48 particular one, you know? Then I usually just toss it on the table and go  
49 about my day. That's usually my approach whenever I do that kind of  
50 stuff.

51 Moderator: *So it has to grab your attention?*

52 Participant: Yea, it has to grab my attention.

53 Moderator: *And does anyone read it for the social aspect—to discuss with others?*

54 Participant: Nah.

55 Participant: For current events.

56 Moderator: *And who do you typically discuss magazines with? Would it be co-*  
57 *workers, friends, family members?*

- 58 Participant: Spouse (several)
- 59 Participant: Family members.
- 60 Participant: Whoever the topic applies to.



## APPENDIX H

### Medium Preference

- 1 *Moderator:* *So what do you find similar or different between print and digital? What*  
2 *are major similarities?*
- 3 *Participant:* Content
- 4 *Moderator:* *Does that matter to you? If it's similar or if it's different?*
- 5 *Participant:* Content? Yes, it matters. I'd hope I'm reading the same as someone who  
6 buys a hard copy. If I'm reading it on my digital device.
- 7 *Moderator:* *And what if there were differences? What differences would you like to see*  
8 *or what wouldn't you like to see?*
- 9 *Participant:* I can see more online. Like more options and more articles online. I don't  
10 want to have a billion-page magazine.
- 11 *Moderator:* *Now for other entertainment media, such as books, newspapers and radio,*  
12 *what medium do you use? Do you use print or digital?*
- 13 *Participant:* Digital (several)
- 14 *Participant:* Oh no, I read print books. But radio and magazines, I use digital.
- 15 *Participant:* Both.
- 16 *Participant:* I still read my books in print. I can't stand reading a book on an e-reader.  
17 Those things cannot be the way of the future.
- 18 *Participant:* I agree with that.
- 19 *Participant:* Digital for newspapers, but books in print.
- 20 *Participant:* Sometimes I look at multiple newspapers. I try to do online, it's more  
21 conducive. So instead of print. Sometimes, some avenues, there's only two  
22 newspapers on sale anyway. So I read online more.
- 23 *Participant:* I have an e-reader, I like e-books. I finish one then I order the next one.
- 24 *Moderator:* *So that leads to my next question—why do you prefer that medium? And*  
25 *you're saying convenience?*

26 Participant: Yea, yea. I'll be sitting in bed, finish a book, hit a button, I already have  
27 the next book right there, ready to read. I don't have to stop, go to the  
28 bookstore and hope it's there.

29 Participant: We actually go to the library and check out books. Not for myself, but for  
30 my oldest daughter. She prefers to have the actual book. She actually  
31 wants to have the copy and have it on the bookshelf.

32 Participant: Yea, I like to decorate my bookshelf.

33 *Moderator: What is the biggest selling point in print? What do you like the most about*  
34 *it?*

35 Participant: The fact that we have something to hold onto and keep. I like having  
36 books on my shelves as opposed to having books on my shelves on my  
37 iPad or something.

38 Participant: Digital shelves.

39 Participant: You know, this magazine caught my eye because of the fashion. It's  
40 colorful and looks pretty sharp. I wouldn't have chosen this magazine  
41 online. I've never heard of it before. But because it's there, it looks good,  
42 it looks like something I'm interested in...

43 Participant: And it's shiny.

44 Participant: Well, this is matte (laughter). But you don't really have that option online.  
45 You have to know you like that magazine.

46 Participant: Right.

47 Participant: Even if it's not the appeal of the look, you're more likely to choose  
48 something that you recognize when it's online.

49 Participant: Right.

50 Participant: Because there's so much ...

51 Participant: You market the magazines though, you realize. As opposed to, you can't  
52 market them online.

53 *Moderator: So what about digital?*

54 Participant: It's convenient. And if you could buy something at the click of a button  
55 rather than having to drive to the store to go get it.

- 56 Participant: There's the multimedia application. It can help you. If there's certain data  
57 and things you could calculate. And also like, sometimes videos help you.  
58 Sometimes I use videos because they're trying to show you something,  
59 how to do something.
- 60 Participant: The digital bookshelf, everything is in one place so you don't have to keep  
61 track of all your magazines if you want to refer back to an issue at all. You  
62 know exactly where it is on your iPad whereas you don't have run around  
63 your house, looking for a magazine that you saw an article in a while ago  
64 or something.
- 65 Participant: Yea, to save space if you're an avid book reader. And after a while you  
66 probably start piling up your library and you could save space.
- 67 *Moderator: So let's go back to the desert island game. Based on the discussion, would*  
68 *anybody change their mind with the type of media that they would have?*
- 69 Participant: No.
- 70 Participant: No, definitely no.

## APPENDIX I

### Digital Device Ownership

- 1 *Moderator:* *I know you had answered this on the survey, but how many of you do own*  
2 *a digital device? So do you read magazines and newspapers on your*  
3 *iPhone?*
- 4 *Participant:* Mm-hmm, yea.
- 5 *Participant:* Notice what we're talking about though is basically using one form of  
6 digital versus the other form of digital. We're not even talking about print  
7 anymore. People just shifting from one type of digital to a more  
8 convenient digital.
- 9 *Participant:* I don't know. The contradiction to that is that it's much easier to all of a  
10 sudden move everything you've got, you know, wiped out the whole  
11 playlist or the whole set of books.
- 12 *Participant:* And you could let people borrow and not give them whatever it is, the  
13 Kindle...
- 14 *Participant:* But if they have the Kindle too, you could let them borrow it.
- 15 *Participant:* That's true, but if they don't?
- 16 *Participant:* And what if they have a Kindle and a Nook?
- 17 *Participant:* They're not borrowing the Kindle.
- 18 *Participant:* I think magazines will phase out. But not totally out. I guess they'll be  
19 more phased down.

## APPENDIX J

### Open Discussion

- 1    *Moderator:*    *Does anyone have anymore comments? Anything they'd like to share as*  
2                            *far as what they like or what they don't like?*
- 3    *Participant:*    Let me just throw a couple things out there, just if you're interested in  
4                            adding a couple more. One is the question about magazines online and  
5                            how much they cost. Sometimes they're like free versions of magazines  
6                            online versus the cost of subscribing. That makes a difference. If there's  
7                            like a free magazine online, I'll read it. And that's kind of relevant with  
8                            whether I choose print or online. The other thing, newspapers are online  
9                            too. I read newspapers online all the time.
- 10   *Participant:*    Yea, yea.
- 11   *Participant:*    From anywhere.
- 12   *Participant:*    That goes to my Kindle and stuff. Then you don't have those newspapers  
13                            piling up in the center of your room and saying "now what do I do with  
14                            these?"
- 15   *Participant:*    The other thing, I used to subscribe to a lot of magazines. I've definitely  
16                            shifted over as the years have gone by. I used to get a number of magazine  
17                            subscriptions. Now, I'm down to like one or two.
- 18   *Moderator:*    *Why is that?*
- 19   *Participant:*    Because I read so much... I don't have enough time anymore. What  
20                            happens is that, I do so much stuff online, and not just porn, although  
21                            that's part of it, I read so much news articles and blogs and stuff online,  
22                            that I have time to read magazines anymore. It used to be I'd read more  
23                            magazines generally so I subscribe to a whole bunch of magazines. In my  
24                            free time, I'd read magazines. Now, I'm online every day, I read so much  
25                            stuff online, I only have time for a couple magazines. I subscribe to  
26                            *Maxim* and *National Review*. And I only subscribe to them because I  
27                            travel. When I travel, I don't always have online capability when I'm in  
28                            airports or on airplanes for long flights. So as a result, so basically there's  
29                            an indirect online effect for magazines. Because of the fact there's so  
30                            much information online. And because I get newspapers, I get other  
31                            information online, there's just not as much free time that I have to read  
32                            magazines. So that's really where the online effect is having, to me, an  
33                            impact on the reduced amount of print magazines that I read.

34 Participant: I agree. Internet can chew up all your time. And I always buy magazines  
35 before a flight. Always.

36 Participant: And then what's going to happen is that, also if you notice, I don't know if  
37 you guys are frequent flyers too but, is that now they've got online  
38 capabilities on a lot of the airlines. But pretty much, they're starting to,  
39 pretty soon, it's going to be free online access. Online you'll be able to use  
40 your smart phones, and once that happens, you know, at that point I won't  
41 need to get magazines at all because you're going to be able to just get on  
42 your flight, you're going to be able to use your smart phone or your laptop  
43 or whatever it is. Pretty soon you're not going to have to worry about ever  
44 getting print magazines because they're going to have online capability  
45 everywhere in a few years, including on airlines, so that'll probably make  
46 print really obsolete.

47 Participant: Yea, my concern too, I'm very close to [participant] with you don't have  
48 time anymore. Um, also they start piling up, those magazines start piling  
49 up in your closet. And you're like, "I don't want to read this from January  
50 2010, it's obsolete." So I've kind of converted too just because it takes up  
51 too much space.

52 Participant: Some people might opt for that because of the green option too. That's a  
53 real thing that people won't have to contribute to waste and stuff. I know  
54 for music, I always do like Pandora or Yahoo! music or whatever because  
55 it's free. Like you said, the expense or not the expense.

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