

MILLENNIALS AND THE FUTURE OF MAGAZINES:
HOW THE GENERATION OF DIGITAL NATIVES
WILL DETERMINE WHETHER PRINT MAGAZINES SURVIVE

by

ELIZABETH MARGARET BONNER

CHRIS ROBERTS, COMMITTEE CHAIR
DIANNE BRAGG, COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR
MARGOT LAMME

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ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly evolving media ecosystem, two important narratives emerge: the demise of print publishing and the rise of the Millennial generation—the digital natives—as media consumers. In the midst of the persistent discussion that print journalism is dying in this era of digital revolution, data and literature suggest that many magazines are thriving, particularly with Millennials. This discovery, while noteworthy given its direct contradiction to the popular belief that Millennials have forsaken traditional media, is where knowledge pertaining to this phenomenon is prematurely truncated. This study seeks to contribute to a greater understanding of the motivations behind these quantitative conclusions by giving voice to Millennials' reasons for continued magazine consumption in a way that the available data from closed-response surveys and questionnaires has not.

Through a mixed-methods study grounded in uses and gratifications theory, utilizing a preliminary survey and subsequently concentrating on a qualitative design built around focus groups with Millennials (ages 18-25), this work seeks to reveal how this instrumental demographic—the industry's audience for the years to come and the population whose lives have been most immersed in digital technologies—feels about magazines. Participants reported reading magazines for reasons that pertain to content, aesthetics, entertainment, escape, habit, and ease of use.

Findings revealed three instrumental themes: (1) although participants admit that “everything is going digital,” they still overwhelmingly prefer print magazines; (2) while print remains their magazine media preference, they will consume digital content when it infiltrates their daily lives; and (3) despite their strong feelings for print magazines, they think print magazines could cease to exist at the hands of the generation that follows them—Generation Z. Participants feel they are the “in-between” generation, and Generation Z is the one most likely to force future media into the realm of digital-only. The future of print is one of the most pivotal points of discussion trending across the publishing industry today. These digital natives will inevitably dictate the course of the industry through their collective consumer behavior in the coming years. Therefore, the motivations behind their use of such media are of more importance than ever.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

Focus Group 1

Participant A 21-year-old Hispanic male, Major: Journalism, Minor: Creative Writing

Participant B 21-year-old white female, Major: Advertising, Minor: History

Participant C 21-year-old white female, Major: Journalism, Minor: Art History

Participant D 20-year-old white female, Major: Public Relations, Minor: Management

Participant E 20-year-old white female, Major: Public Relations, Minor: Communication Studies

Participant F 22-year-old white male, Major: Advertising, Minor: Art

Participant G 20-year-old white female, Major: Advertising, Minor: Political Science

Participant H 20-year-old white female, Major: Advertising, Minor: Art History

Focus Group 2

Participant I 21-year-old white female, Major: Public Relations, Minor: Business

Participant J 18-year-old white female, Major: Telecommunication and Film

Participant K 20-year-old white female, Major: Journalism, Minor: Sociology

Participant L 20-year-old white female, Major: Public Relations and Dance

Participant M 22-year-old African American male, Major: Journalism, Minor: Art

Participant N 21-year-old white female, Major: Public Relations, Minor: Communication Studies

Focus Group 3

Participant O 22-year-old African American male, Major: Journalism, Minor: Creative Writing

Participant P 21-year-old white female, Major: Public Relations, Minor: Spanish

Participant Q 20-year-old white female, Major: Public Relations, Minor: Computing
Technologies and Applications

Participant R 20-year-old white female, Major: Telecommunication and Film, Minor: Creative
Writing

Participant S 21-year-old white female, Major: Public Relations, Minor: Business

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review and Hypotheses	6
CHAPTER 3: Methodology	32
CHAPTER 4: Results	41
CHAPTER 5: Discussion	78
REFERENCES	104
APPENDIX A: Online Survey	110
APPENDIX B: Focus Group Discussion Guide.....	116
APPENDIX C: IRB Approval Documents.....	117

LIST OF TABLES

1. Survey Participants Who Reported Reading a Magazine in the Last Month.....	42
2. Relationships Between Majors and Magazine Readership.....	43
3. Reasons Nonreaders Reported for Avoidance of Magazines in the Last Month.....	45
4. How Many Magazines Did You Read in the Past Month?.....	46
5. What Categories of Magazines Did You Read in the Past Month?.....	47
6. In What Formats Do You Read Magazines?.....	48
7. Formats for Reading Magazine Content.....	49

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“Net Generation,” “Generation @,” “Digital Natives,” “Dot.Com Generation,” and “Net Kids” (Kilian, Hennigs, & Langner, 2012, p.115)—these are just a few of the names to which Generation Y, more commonly known as the Millennial generation, answers. The Pew Research Center defines a Millennial as anyone born after 1980—“the first generation to come of age in the new millennium” (2010, p. 4). Millennials capture the essence of how society as a whole tends to characterize today’s youth—digitally driven, forsaking all forms of traditional media in favor of the new, the edgy, and the innovative (see for instance, Loda & Coleman, 2010). Despite their status as the most ethnically and racially diverse generation (Pew Research Center, 2010), they all exhibit one commonality—their heritage as digital natives. This time of technological transformation is all many of them have ever known, and they are thriving in it, rather than struggling to transition like so many around them (Prensky, 2001), namely the members of the print publishing industry.

It has become common thought that the Millennial generation may have little desire for media content that is not digital, but statistics reveal this is a stereotype that should be reassessed (Steinberg, 2007). Wolburg and Pokrywczynski address the danger of typecasting entire generations in their psychographic analysis of Millennial college students, saying, “Pertinent to the discussion of generational influences is a consideration of the confusion over labels, the

problems with stereotypes, and ways of communicating with the generations,” (2001, p. 35). This reevaluation must look deep into the Millennial generation’s media preferences, giving voice to its members in a way that the proliferation of available data from closed-response surveys and questionnaires has not (Zerba, 2011).

Within the current narrative that print journalism is a dying field, an argument furthered by the recent decline of newspapers, data and literature suggest that many magazines are prospering—particularly (and to many, surprisingly) with Millennial audiences. Based on such findings, it can be inferred that this group, presumed by so many to snub conventional media, actually continues to find worth in print magazines for a multitude of reasons that have gone unexplored due to over-generalized assumptions about this generation. Therefore, the present study involves a qualitative design with deep inquiries into why Millennials still purchase and consume magazine media on a regular basis and what their motivations are for doing so.

Through a design built around an online survey and three focus groups with undergraduate students, this study seeks to define why Millennials value print magazines and continue to find them useful and relevant. This study analyzes how this group reads magazines—whether these habits tend to revolve around the traditional print product or extend to hybrid models that encompass the digital realm as well. This study seeks to contribute to further discovery regarding how this instrumental demographic, the industry’s audience for the years to come and the population whose lives have been most immersed in digital technologies, feels about the process of reading a magazine and how it fits into their lives and their futures. Whether or not they currently find and continue to place value in print publications to the point of regularly reading and purchasing these products will eventually settle the questions surrounding print’s chances of survival.

Significance

The future of print is one of the most pivotal points of discussion trending across the publishing industry today. Flavián and Gurrea said “the advantages of digital media, and the Internet in particular, have thus brought about a revolution in journalism” (2009, p. 635). Many believe the established normalcy of computer and Internet usage as well as the more recent digital developments with mobile technology, tablets, and e-readers signal a bleak future for print (see for instance, Sasseen, Matsa, & Mitchell, 2013). Still, others hold onto the perspective that print is an enduring staple of the industry that will survive this time of turmoil (Carter, 2010). In the midst of this debate, a key group emerges—the Millennial generation. These digital natives will inevitably settle this discussion simply through their collective consumer behavior in the coming years.

Studies have shown that the buying habits of this generation will have a tremendous influence on the future of the retail world (Loda & Coleman, 2010). Whether or not this group continues to value print magazines to the point of purchase, reflected in readership and circulation numbers and subsequently the advertising revenue magazines receive, will ultimately determine whether or not this sector of journalism survives. Put simply, “Young users are both the present and future audiences for news, and, as such, their experiences and opinions are of interest” (Sturgill, Pierce, & Wang, 2010, p. 5).

The Millennial generation has been called one of today’s “most coveted consumer markets” (Loda & Coleman, 2010, p. 119). Loda and Coleman credit this distinction, in part, to the group’s size—approximately 80 million in the U.S., a number made possible by the segment’s allotment of a greater time span than that of Generation X (2010). The Pew Research Center focused its study on the 50 million Millennials between the ages of 18 and 29 (2010), but

Loda and Coleman looked specifically at college students, labeling the group an economically important but communicably aloof target market (2010).

Wolburg and Pokrywczynski (2001) built their study around the longstanding importance of the youth market, specifically the college-student sector. They cited a plethora of support from historical and contemporary scholars and extensive reasoning regarding the group's significance, which included the market's size (expected to reach 22 million by 2015 (Bernstein, 1999)), status as trendsetters and early adopters, strong brand preferences, loyalties and influence, and forecasted future success (2001). Furthermore, this time of dramatic technological upheaval is unquestionably magnifying the importance of this group. The Millennial generation has been defined—and even defines itself—by technology use, according to the Pew Research Center (2010). Twenty-four percent of Millennials cite this attribute as what makes their generation unique (Pew Research Center, 2010). While the rest of the world, namely the publishing industry, struggles to adapt to the new digital landscape, most of this group has never known anything different. It is this fresh, innovative viewpoint that will determine the direction of the industry, and, ultimately, the future of print.

Loda and Coleman also assert that there is a scarcity of research focused on Millennials' "preferred informational sources" (2010, p. 119). Additionally, few studies have begun to "examine the real motivations and behaviour of readers given the opportunity to buy or consume goods and services in each of the channels" (Flavián & Gurrea, 2009, p. 638)—these "channels" being the multitude of media formats available to today's audiences. Previous studies that have analyzed the motivations behind individuals' discontinued use of traditional media sources, such as newspapers, have primarily sampled from the overall adult population, with only a "handful" (Zerba, 2011, p. 597) of works focused on young people. Qualitative research that allows for

open-ended responses and the potential for deeper, more novel discovery has also been limited in this realm (Zerba, 2011).

It is hoped that this study will shed more light on the future of print magazines with the generation that will largely determine this fate. Millennials are the magazine readers of today and tomorrow. Through qualitative investigation into the minds and motivations of this group, this study seeks to discover more than has been found in the previous surveys and statistical analyses regarding whether Millennials still find worth in magazines as physical products. This comprehensive exploration seeks to reveal more extensive information than has yet been established regarding what kinds of magazines Millennials read, why they read them and what this will look like as this group grows up and technology grows with them.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review and Hypotheses

In the rapidly evolving landscape of print journalism, we need not look too far back into the literature to assess both recent and current trends in the field. This review focuses on the present state of the industry, with a brief history of how it arrived at where it is today, predictions for the future of print publications during this time of technological revolution, and the involvement of Millennials in these recent trends. This chapter also discusses the theoretical framework of uses and gratifications that could prove to be a helpful tool to magazines looking to make it through this time of transformation. The chapter has a specific focus on how Millennial readership is affecting and will continue to affect the broader interplay across the publishing industry of print versus digital, with a particular concentration on print magazines. It concludes with the study's four exploratory research questions, which are grounded in the literature, that guide the research.

Print Declines: News is the First to Fall

The turn of the 21st century was marked by an influx of advancements in digital and Internet technologies. For many, it was an exciting time of bombardment with advantageous, innovative tools and devices that set a standard to which people quickly became accustomed. For print newspapers, it was a time of transition for which they were not prepared. In the early 2000s, few could have fully predicted that the digital sector would spread to cover as much of the

publishing world as it does today. However, as this century progressed, some publications began adapting on the basis of such suspicions, while others dismissed the new wave of technologies as trend and suffered subsequently.

In a 2006 issue of *Media Industry Newsletter*, Ed Papazian, founder of Media Dynamics, Inc., warned newspapers and magazines of such possibilities regarding the future of print based on a study by The Media Audit that spanned the years 2000 to 2005. At that time, there was still a slight gain (51% to 53%) in the percentage of adults in the 87-market survey who read the cover of daily newspapers; however, most other sections showed significant decreases (32% and 27% both down to 23%). Papazian offered “the availability of similar (and timelier) information from other media—notably the Internet” (2006, p. 8) as reasoning for the declines. This is a deduction that seems obvious to someone reading it in 2015, but even less than a decade ago, this notion was not yet widely accepted. Papazian concluded his column with a call to action for both newspapers and magazines to explore “new media venues” (2006, p. 8), specifically those involving digital formats. Papazian wrote, “We aren't advocating change for the sake of change. But shouldn't more effort be expended now in this vital ‘what's next’ quest before whatever is next passes us by” (2006, p. 8). This insight proved to be valuable advice, but it was ignored by many print publications. Those publications were in fact passed by, made evident by the great declines that began soon after the column was published.

According to the Pew Research Center's *State of the News Media 2013* report, the newspaper recession peaked in 2007 (Edmonds, Guskin, Mitchell, & Jurkowitz, 2013), right in line with Papazian's warnings (2006). Print advertising revenues declined from \$45.4 billion in 2007 to \$37.8 billion in 2008, and thus began the newspaper industry's free fall that still continues today. Edmonds et al. began their annual report with a humorous yet accurate single-

line summation of the industry's past few years: "If the newspaper industry had theme music in 2013, it might use 'Been down so long it looks like up to me,' the much-recycled line from a 1920s blues song" (2013). The Pew report highlighted a few marginally positive developments newspapers were able to capitalize on in recent years, which included digital paywalls and reduced print frequency, most often from daily publication to three days per week. Edmonds et al. referred to these undertakings as encapsulating "that odd mix of expansion and contraction now typical within the industry" (2013). However, newspapers' economic troubles are far from over, as 2012 marked the sixth consecutive year of declines in overall print advertising revenue with a \$1.8 billion (8.5%) decrease and digital advertising still far from reaching the capability of making up for such losses (Edmonds et al., 2013). Media consultants have predicted that newspapers' digital advertising dollars will not rival their print counterparts until 2018 (Ives, 2008). Total newspaper circulation reportedly began to stabilize in 2012, but this was largely because of the new allowances for the incorporation of paid digital content in such reports and ultimately does not reflect a greater health for print newspapers (Edmonds et al., 2013).

News magazines have suffered a similar fate. Since the Internet's takeover of the news industry, these magazines have been in the tenuous position of keeping up with the public's expectation for instantaneous information while offering the least frequent publication schedules of all news providers. The Pew Research Center narrowed its research on this sector to *Newsweek*, *Time*, *The Economist*, *The Atlantic*, *The Week*, and *The New Yorker*. In 2012, the group collectively experienced a 10.4% drop in advertising pages with newsstand sales falling 16%.

In a November 2008 *Advertising Age* cover story, Ives posed the question, "Will print survive the next five years?", in the wake of a week that included the termination of *The*

Christian Science Monitor's 100-year-old daily print edition, Time Inc.'s announcement of 300-700 impending layoffs, Gannett's pledge to lay off 10% of its local newspaper employees, and similar cuts at Condé Nast and other news organizations (Ives, 2008). As Ives predicted, this "horrifying" week was not an anomaly in the weeks, months, and years that followed, but print survived those next five years. In 2015, however, it seems the industry is no closer to a consensus on the format's future. Many pose the same question today. What will 2020 bring for print—survival, extinction, or another five-year-cycle of continued uncertainty?

Print Magazines: The Landscape Grows More Complicated

As predictions of the imminent death of print remain at the forefront of industry discussions, literature regarding the health of the overall magazine industry materializes as strikingly inconsistent. Some group the sector with its ailing print counterparts, newspapers and news magazines. The Pew Research Center claims there has been a "broad decline of the magazine industry in recent years" (Sasseen et al., 2013), citing an 8.2% decrease in advertising pages as well as single-issue sales for magazines overall. However, other studies suggest this guilty-by-association of format mentality is unfair to magazines, and, more importantly, statistically inaccurate when assessing the state of the sector in terms of readership and audience perspectives of product value ("Condé Nast Research," 2012).

Forecasts of the fate of print magazines are made more difficult to assess by this growing database of inconsistent findings. According to GfK Mediamark Research & Intelligence data presented in the 2013 *Entertainment, Media & Advertising Market Research Handbook*, while magazine circulation has experienced a continual decrease throughout the last decade (down by 12.8%), magazine readership has been steadily increasing over the same time frame (up by 9.6%), with the exception of a slight decrease between 2010 and 2011 (down by 1.3%) (Miller &

Washington, 2013). According to the *2013/2014 Magazine Media Factbook*, 91% of all adults read magazines. This percentage actually increases with younger age groups. For instance, it showed magazine readerships of 94% in the under-35 age group and 96% in the group under 25. Additionally, 90% of college students reported having read a magazine during the month they were surveyed, and 65% said they had read one during the previous week (MPA, 2013). Scott McDonald, senior vice president for market research at Condé Nast, conducted a study based on GfK MRI data and found substantial readership increases in 2011—even increases specific to Millennial readership. McDonald said his findings provoked the question, “How can the conventional wisdom be so wrong?”, which he responded to with the following:

The marketplace confuses newspapers with magazines. Newspaper circulation began declining even before the Internet became a force a decade ago. The same applies to magazine newsstand, but for most titles, it is a tiny fraction next to subscriptions, which are more than holding their own. . . . The declines in such mass-circulation magazines as TV Guide and Reader’s Digest helped skew the gross circulation numbers and total aggregate down. (“Condé Nast Research,” 2012)

Pew also reported that overall magazine circulation stabilized in 2012, due in part to combination subscriptions that included both print and digital content (Sasseen et al., 2013). In this case, it seems the industry’s technological transformation actually could be helping print magazines, as digital magazine content is most often paired with print in subscription packages. This cross-platform category boasts higher satisfaction and intent-to-renew rates than those of digital-only subscriptions (92% and 93% compared to 82% and 73%) (MPA, 2013). A February 2012 survey by GfK MRI revealed that although 65% of tablet magazine readers still “find the print magazine experience more satisfying” (Miller & Washington, 2013, p. 134), 67% of tablet users would prefer to read digital magazines. This discrepancy suggests that electronic magazines could surpass their print counterparts in popularity if publishers were to invest more time and resources into making them a more “satisfying” format. But does this leave the decision

up to publishers? Will consumers continue to use print magazines if they are not given another option, or will they grow weary of the product and forsake magazines altogether?

Another important consideration in this matter lies in the fact that while tablet ownership is on the rise, a majority of the American adult population (66%) still does not own any form of the device. Millennial tablet ownership falls in the middle of device ownership by age group (33% of 18-24 year olds and 37% of 25 to 34 year olds) (Zickuhr, 2013). This technology has not yet taken over, and, while some magazines are beginning to choose the path of tablet-only, it is not likely this will become any kind of industry mandate until a more widespread proliferation of ownership occurs. In an October 2012 survey by the Alliance for Audited Media, only 5% of magazine publishers said they currently had plans to offer digital-only subscriptions. Just 17% of these publishers reported an expectation that their readers would move to consuming their content through strictly digital means, an anticipation that a higher percentage (25%) of newspaper publishers reported (Alliance for Audited Media, 2012). In an exploration into “consumer perceptions of digital versus print magazines,” Krishen, Kachen, and Haniff asked the question, “Are we locked in print?” (2015, p. 291). Utilizing the “cognitive lock-in and power law of practice theory base”—which “states that when individuals practice a certain task, repetition creates higher efficiency and due to higher familiarity, they tend to become locked-in to that environment”—Krishen et al. acknowledged that “consumers in the marketplace cling to the comfort of routine and tradition,” (2015, p. 291) but then proclaimed that the Millennial generation is breaking this custom in favor of emerging social technology. They asserted, “The impending downfall of the age of printed magazines is greatly implied by the current technologically savvy youth,” but subsequently admitted that “regardless of the trends in devices,

single magazine copies still have a higher selling rate in print than in digital form” (Krishen et al., 2015, p. 291; see also, Matsa, Sasseen, & Mitchell, 2012).

It cannot yet be determined if this is a good sign for the future of print magazines or simply a case of history repeating itself with a failure to understand the urgency of adapting and innovating in this digital age—the same situation that brought newspapers to their adverse position in today’s market. Still, at least for now, a strong case can be made that print magazines today are in a much better market position than newspapers were. Studies exploring the perceived substitutability of print and online press have found that searching for updated news comes with a clear penchant for the web, but when reading for entertainment, as a leisure activity or out of habit (Flavián & Gurrea, 2009)—which characterizes much of consumer magazine reading—users consider both traditional and digital formats to be viable options. Relaying the findings of a Deloitte study, Steinberg reported that approximately 75% of consumers ages 13 to over 60 choose to read print magazine content even when it is available on the Internet, and, more than that, they enjoy doing so (2007).

Furthermore, magazines are finding that innovation is not limited to the digital arena and advances can be made within the print medium in many progressive ways. According to a 2012 PBS MediaShift article, “the land of startup magazines exhibits just enough novelty and success to keep print hope alive” (Xie). Xie explained that, “in the past year, there has been a steady output of crowdfunded journalism projects, many of which are entrepreneurial in spirit” (2012). She asserted that most of these startups have chosen a local angle or niche interest on which to focus editorial direction. According to MPA - The Association of Magazine Media, 231 magazines launched in 2012—with the top categories including crafts/games/hobbies/models (23), special interest/lifestyle (19), and metropolitan/regional/state (15) (2013, p. 83). In 2013,

185 magazines entered the media landscape—with special interest/lifestyle (24) and crafts/games/hobbies/models (16) still leading the pack. The first half of 2014 saw 123 startups (MPA, 2014, p. 63). Many of these new ventures have even been able to adopt an unhurried pace in today’s age of instant information. Xie stated, “In contrast to the online publishing cycle, which demands constant and regular updates, these print magazine projects embrace the slow and mulled-over nature of the print format” (2012). This reveals a striking contradiction between common narratives regarding the demise of print and the actual health of magazines. However, despite these findings that magazines are continuing to achieve success today, the question regarding whether Millennials will give magazines the chance to further such successes in the media landscape of tomorrow remains.

Millennial Readership

This overview of the industry’s recent history leads to one question: Where do Millennials fit into this discussion? This generation, often characterized by its digital roots and lack of interest in traditional news media, will ultimately determine its future.

The term “Millennial” was first introduced in the early 1990s in the work of Strauss and Howe, which redefined Generation Y by the “natural generation boundary” (Markiewicz, 2003) of the 1980s, reassigning the previously accepted 70s-born sector to Generation X (Strauss & Howe, 2000; Markiewicz, 2003). The term has since become commercialized and commonly used, and Strauss and Howe, whose studies encompass “both the social and technical long-term changes caused by the Internet” (Kilian et al., 2012, p. 115), became known as the preeminent scholars focused on Generation Y. Kilian et al. describes Strauss and Howe’s work as “a holistic view on new media usage compared with the use of traditional media in different generations” (2012, p. 115). Their work is primarily concerned with how Millennials are covered and catered

to in the new media ecosystem with commentary regarding the plethora of media options now available to this group, but they seemed to stop short of explaining how Millennials use this media. Though they frequently cited magazines to support their assertions about the Millennial generation, they did not analyze how Millennials use magazines or if and how they might continue to do so in the future (Strauss & Howe, 2000).

Prensky, the first to call the members of this generation “digital natives” and, alternatively, assign individuals within older generations the label of “digital immigrants,” argues that this technologically induced generation gap has actually produced individuals that “think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). He further explained this phenomenon with the following:

A really big discontinuity has taken place. One might even call it a “singularity”—an event which changes things so fundamentally that there is absolutely no going back. This so-called “singularity” is the arrival and rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades of the twentieth century. (Prensky, 2001, p. 1)

There is no denying that Millennials tend to seek information and entertainment from nontraditional media (see for instance, Hendrickson, 2013). Studies have found this generation to have little interest in newspapers for reasons that pertain to issues of inconvenience, time, and relevance (Zerba, 2011). One such study found that young people represent only 7% of overall newspaper readership (Reese, 1997), and general trends in newspaper readership, noted above, suggest this number would inevitably be lower today (Edmonds et al., 2013). The present study seeks to build on the work of Zerba, who conducted focus groups to discover the motivations behind a lack of newspaper use among the young adult population. Focus groups for this study will inquire into some of the reasoning Zerba’s respondents reported for nonuse of newspapers in an effort to explore whether any of these sentiments are surfacing among magazines readers in the same age group. It is hoped that this will not be the case, as Zerba also asked her respondents

to suggest specific improvements they would recommend to newspapers, and many of their answers actually described magazines—proposing a new format style like that of a magazine or a book, the inclusion of a table of contents, more color and pictures, and the reporting of entertainment news (2011). These findings suggest that young people’s print preferences continue to align with magazines for reasons that pertain to aesthetics, readability, and coverage, but this assertion must be explored more directly.

This generation, unsurprisingly, displays a preference for the Internet (Loda & Coleman, 2010; Pew Research Center, 2010), but despite the group’s affinity for the World Wide Web, magazines have emerged as a traditional medium that remains relevant to them (Steinberg, 2007). Steinberg summarized the findings of a Deloitte study mentioned above as follows:

In an era when new forms of media and technology seem to sprout up almost weekly, you would think that much of it would be embraced by younger consumers. And you would also think the younger digerati would begin to shun some of the more traditional media venues. Turns out that’s not entirely so. (2007)

Steinberg remarks that Millennials read magazines as often as older generations do. Studies have shown that Millennials turn to magazines for both information and entertainment on a regular basis (Reese, 1997; Steinberg, 2007). Loda and Coleman’s experimental study of 18-24-year-old college students revealed that magazines remain an important avenue for reaching the “large, lucrative and elusive” (2010, p. 128) Millennial market. This group displayed an inherent trust in magazine content (Loda & Coleman, 2010).

McDonald’s study of GfK MRI data from 2011 and previous decades revealed Millennials currently between the ages of 18 and 24 to be a stronger magazine readership group than both their fellow Millennial and Generation X predecessors were when they were a part of that age group in 2001 and 1991 respectively. McDonald asserted that “the magazine dynamic has shifted from ‘mass’ to ‘enthusiast,’ and young readers have been strong supporters of niche

titles from beauty to outdoors.” He acknowledged that the presence of more of these types of magazines could have marginally contributed to the increases (“Condé Nast Research,” 2012).

This is not to say that magazines should ignore the digital inclination of this generation. Instead, print publications should use technology to their advantage. In recent years, social media has emerged as an increasingly important way to reach this group, and magazines that have experienced continued success in print have also adopted social media strategies to “increase reach and cultivate audience loyalty” (Hendrickson, 2013, p. 1). Hendrickson reported results from a 2012 MPA study stating that 83% of Millennials who own smartphones (which includes 79% of all Millennials) consume magazine content through mobile applications (with an average of 2.6 apps downloaded), and 76% of this group wants to be able to share this content through social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter (2013). Steinberg cited similar findings, stating that the group has found great power in its ability to amplify media messages substantially through “extensive use of instant-messaging and texting tools” (2007). Hendrickson asserts that “this group as a whole has almost limitless opportunities to connect to anything and anyone, and arguably, Millennials expect some level of engagement in return” (2013, p. 2).

These types of progressive strategies will play an instrumental role in print magazines’ efforts to sustain themselves between weekly or monthly issues by helping them remain relevant and available to their Millennial audiences, whose upbringing as digital natives “invariably increases the consumer expectations of anytime-anywhere digital magazine content” (Hendrickson, 2013, p. 2). However, some studies have found that the hype surrounding social media could be exaggerated, with results indicating that while “participation in and identification with social media is generally high” (Kilian et al., 2012, p. 1) among Millennials, there are subgroups within the generation that exhibit lower levels of social media activity that many have

failed to notice. The subgroups Kilian et al. discovered included “highly connected” users, but other Millennials fell into the categories of simple “entertainment seekers” and even “restrained” users (2012). Society tends to presume all Millennials are “innately capable and comfortable with interactive communication technologies” (Sturgill et al., p. 4), but studies show that this is not a generalizable truth (Sturgill et al., 2010). Additionally, Kilian et al. found that, contrary to popular belief, conventional media have not yet been replaced by their technological counterparts and “still represent integral parts of the overall media portfolio” (2012, p. 1).

Theoretical Framework: Consideration of Uses and Gratifications

In spite of this plethora of positive findings, print magazines that wish to survive the media landscape of the future must make every effort to understand the ways in which this instrumental Millennial demographic uses magazine media and what gratifications its members seek in those uses. The uses and gratifications theory (sometimes referred to as U&G) will be a pivotal consideration in this issue regarding the survival of print, specifically print magazines.

The uses and gratifications theory appeared in 1959, when Elihu Katz advocated that communication research “move from what media do to people (persuasion) to what people do with the media” (Bryant & Miron, 2004, p. 686). In the midst of a conversation spurred by Bernard Berelson that “communication research may be dead” (Katz, 1959, p. 1), Katz, much like innovative industry leaders dealing with similarly negative debates today, appealed to a new focus for communication research and candidly responded to the inquiry of the “classical approach” regarding the media’s direct impact on the public. Katz said, “The answer, from study after study, is that the media do less than they had been expected to be able to do” (1959, p. 2). Katz went on to propose an evolved course for future study: “The direction I have in mind has

been variously called the functional approach to the media, or the ‘uses and gratifications’ approach” (1959, p. 2).

Klapper’s (1960) extensive empirical review of mass media effects from the 1940s through the 1960s revealed the emergence of this “new academic orthodoxy” (Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott, 1982, p. 7) focused on a limited influence model of the media, and Katz admitted his idea was not entirely original, but rather an appeal to “making this trend more explicit and more self-conscious” (1959, p. 3). This movement asserted that people “manipulated—rather than were manipulated by—the mass media,” which was “further reinforced by a number of uses and gratifications studies which argued that audience members are active rather than passive and bring to the media a variety of different needs and uses that influence their response to the media” (Curran et al., 1982, p. 7). This represented a general shift from the traditional “mechanistic perspective” (Rubin, 2009, p. 165) that assumed audiences were primarily passive to a new research philosophy focused on active audiences that demanded an understanding of “the characteristics, motivation, selectivity, and involvement of individual communicators” (Rubin, 2009, p. 165; see also, Bryant & Miron, 2004). Katz reinforced this idea of the active audience, stating the following:

The “uses” approach—as I shall call it—begins with the assumption that the message of even the most potent of the media cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no “use” for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives. The “uses” approach assumes that people’s values, their interests, their associations, their social roles, are pre-potent and that people selectively “fashion” what they see and hear to these interests. (1959, p. 2-3)

U&G media-use typologies. Most U&G work includes categorical consumer objectives for media use—the general gratifications that people using certain media seek from that media. While many scholars have cited distinct objectives, the proffered categories often have much overlap and relative consensus regarding common media-use typologies. These typologies

“speak to connections between goals and outcomes” (Rubin, 2009, p. 168) of media use. For example, Lasswell (1948) asserted that people consume media for surveillance, correlation, and transmission purposes, and Wright (1960) added entertainment to Lasswell’s list. In 1977, Lometti, Reeves, and Bybee presented a restructured list of three motivation typologies that included (1) surveillance/entertainment, (2) affective guidance, and (3) behavioral guidance. Blumler (1979) cited cognitive, diversionary, and personal identity as reasoning behind media use. Payne, Severn, and Dozier (1988) said preeminent scholars such as Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rosengren (1985) and Blumler and Katz (Rosengren, 1974) created broader, “but not substantively different” (p. 909) lists. Payne et al. claimed that “many apparent motivational differences proposed by uses and gratifications research may be largely chimerical” and suggested “user motivations may be reduced to three: (1) environmental surveillance, (2) environmental diversion, and (3) environmental interaction” (1988, p. 909). Ruggiero (2000) contributed similar updated claims and cited four comparable typologies:

U&G research continues to typologize motivations for media use in terms of (1) diversion (i.e., as an escape from routines or for emotional release), (2) social utility (i.e., to acquire information for conversations), (3) personal identity (i.e., to reinforce attitudes, beliefs, and values), and (4) surveillance (i.e., to learn about one’s community, events, and political affairs). (p. 26)

More recently diverging from the trend toward reduction, McQuail (2005) offered an extensive list with meticulous motivation classifications that furthered several established categories and included information and education, guidance and advice, diversion and relaxation, social contact, value reinforcement, cultural satisfaction, emotional release, identity formation and confirmation, lifestyle expression, security, sexual arousal, and filling time (p. 428).

In the few contemporary studies more specifically focused on the uses and gratifications that magazine readers seek from the medium, similar typologies were discovered with a few

uniquely detailed findings. Randle (2003) claimed that “it is in the more affective, diversionary and internally oriented functions that magazines still reign—or at least have the opportunity to do so.” These functions specifically applied to categories that included to offer companionship, to improve the quality of the reader’s lifestyle, to look at photos, to play, to gain status, to learn about famous people, to be happy, to combat boredom, to live out a fantasy, to feel important, to help the reader pass time, to relax, to look at interesting graphics and pages, and to feel good (Randle, 2003). Jere and Davis (2011) studied the gratifications sought by women’s magazine readers and reported that “the most salient factor was Surveillance, followed by Status, Diversion, Career opportunities, Self-development and Exploration” (p. 18). They touted their list as “a much wider gratification structure than the three factors ... found by Payne et al. (1988),” but also offered their own simplified list, saying, “Using the meta-classification structure (Stafford et al. 2004), the factors may be categorised as Social gratification (Status), Content gratification (Surveillance, Self-development, Career opportunities and Diversion) and Process gratification (Exploration)” (2011, p. 18). They asserted that “content gratifications (for example, Diversion, Social escapism, Surveillance and Self-development) predominate” (2011, p. 21). Carter (2013) recently conducted a study focused on leisure travel magazine readers that confirmed four commonly cited U&G motivations—surveillance, interaction, diversion, and guidance—but also discovered two new motivations—inspiration and retrospection. The reasons why people consume magazine content—and media in general—are endless in today’s expanding media ecosystem; however, as Payne et al. (1988) suggested, the uses and gratifications theory offers a helpful tool in providing wide-ranging common categories for such motivations and simplifying such objectives for research purposes.

Contemporary criticisms and strengths of uses and gratifications. Bryant and Miron (2004) asserted that the theory appeared to be utilized decreasingly in the 21st century, but Ruggiero argues against scholars who have accepted this diminishing view of U&G, stating that “any attempt to speculate on the future direction of mass communication theory must seriously include the uses and gratifications approach. . . .The emergence of computer-mediated communication has revived the significance of uses and gratifications” (2000, p. 3). Ruggiero admitted that the theory “fell out of favor” within mass communication research for a few decades during the late 1900s, but “the advent of telecommunications technology may well have revived it from dormancy” (2000, p. 13). He claims that in today’s immense and still expanding media ecosystem, society is receiving more and more media selection options, and, therefore, “motivation and satisfaction become even more crucial components of audience analysis” (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 14).

Many modern scholars have appealed to the flexibility of the theory, claiming this inherent trait positions U&G well within our rapidly evolving media environment. Papacharissi said the “strength of the U&G perspective lies in its applicability to a variety of media contexts” (2009, p. 139), and Ruggiero touted the significance of the theory’s “capacity to develop over time” (2000, p. 25). Papacharissi discussed the role of U&G in this technologically transformed era:

A principal strength of the Uses and Gratifications approach is its inherent ability to interface interpersonal and mediated communication. In the contemporary converging environment of traditional and new digital technologies, media are selected by users for their availability to sustain multiple and diverse channels of communication and to fulfill needs that are both interpersonal and mediated. (2009, p. 144)

Ruggiero claims that this “cutting-edge” theory has been pivotal in every major time of transformation the media has undergone—from “newspapers, radio, television, and now the

Internet” (2000, p. 27). Within mass communication research, U&G seems to be one of the most, if not the most, applicable theories to the current state of the industry. The value of U&G research is often found in its real-world applications with practical recommendations for modern media professionals. The evolutionary nature of the theory is perfectly suited for today’s media environment marked by the same defining trait. However, Payne et al. asserted that “uses and gratifications research exclusively relevant to magazines is sparse” (1988, p. 909). Many U&G studies have explored television use, some have concentrated on radio media, and fewer have focused on print publications—and magazines seem to have received the least attention within this already underrepresented group. Despite the lack of research devoted to them, magazines are a prime medium for U&G exploration, especially in today’s digital day and age.

Uses and gratifications in modern magazine media. A survey of the literature reveals much information regarding how the Internet has amplified a distinction between information and entertainment-seeking media format preferences. Flavián and Gurrea assert that “the powerful emergence of the internet has not only affected the way in which the media work and the information content itself but has also unquestionably had an impact on readers’ motivations, and their reading and information search habits” (2009, p. 641; see also, Dimmick, Chen, & Li, 2004). Based on such contention, Flavián and Gurrea claim U&G as “one of the most accepted frameworks to study media adoption and use” and appeal to the logic behind the notion that readers “make distinct selection across press distribution channels” (2009, p. 641). Borrowing from McQuail (1983), Kilian et al. assert that there are four primary motives for individual media use: “information, personal identity, entertainment, and integration/social interaction” (2012, p. 116)—fitting with many of U&G’s frequently cited media-use typologies. Using an online questionnaire and subsequent cluster analysis, Kilian et al. found that respondents’

motivations for consuming traditional media other than newspapers fell largely into the entertainment category. However, with social media use, which magazines are capitalizing on more and more—especially to reach young audiences (see Hendrickson, 2013)—motivations were focused on the information and self-identity categories (Kilian et al., 2012). Flavián and Gurrea studied how a person’s motivation for reading news will often determine the format—traditional or digital—through which the user wants that news. Through conducting interviews and focus groups, they discovered four overarching motivations for consuming news: “to search for specific information, to get updated news, for leisure reasons, and as a habit” (Flavián & Gurrea, 2009, p. 635), again, fitting with common U&G typologies. Despite some distinct categories, their findings remained similar to Kilian et al.’s in that respondents who read for entertainment—for leisure reasons or out of habit—perceived print to be as viable an option as digital (Flavián & Gurrea, 2009; Kilian et al., 2012). These findings relate directly to the issue magazines are facing in the print-versus-digital debate, as print magazine consumption is often considered an entertainment or leisure activity. Such findings offer magazines hope when considering medium preferences based on specific uses and gratifications, but, with this assessment, a few key factors emerge as critical to this consideration.

Media-use motivation. The motivations behind media consumption are limitless, but often relate to the comprehensive media-use typologies established within U&G research through the years. These motivations reveal the gratifications consumers are seeking from the media they use. In one of the few U&G studies dedicated to magazines, Payne et al. examined the applicability of their standardized media-use typology—in which “user motivations may be reduced to three: (1) environmental surveillance, (2) environmental diversion, and (3) environmental interaction” (1988, p. 909)—to magazine use, specifically its ability to predict

choices between trade and consumer magazines. Based on Towers' (1987) study of user motivations that drive consumers to choose between news and general circulation magazines—treating trade magazines like news magazines given that “both are information-rich sources” (Payne et al., 1988, p. 910)—Payne et al. expected consumer magazine use to be linked to diversion motivations and trade magazine use to be associated with surveillance and interaction objectives.

In a telephone survey with a national sample of 200 magazine subscribers, respondents were asked to identify their reasons for their magazine consumption choices. The authors' hypotheses were all supported, and they assert that “these findings offer support for the view that uses of particular media types can be predicted from the content of a medium” (Payne et al., 1988, p. 913). They also appeal to the practical importance of these findings, saying, “The demonstrated use-content relationships should also prove helpful guides to publishers, editors and others involved in magazine management and development of editorial policy” (Payne et al., 1988, p. 913). Today's magazines—really, all of its media—should be paying close attention to the specific desires of their audiences, as today's audiences have a plethora of media options and can move on to the next option if their current media choices are not satisfying and gratifying them.

Availability of competing mediums. As the amount and type of competing mediums available alongside magazines continue to increase, this factor's importance is amplified, as the potential to choose media other than magazines becomes greater. Furthermore, Ruggiero points out that, “unlike traditional mass media, new media like the Internet provide selectivity characteristics that allow individuals to tailor messages to their needs” (2000, p. 16). Magazines have to compete with these new media developments as well as the mediums themselves.

Though focused on the press in general, Flavián and Gurrea’s study, referenced above, examining the motivations behind choosing certain mediums looks at feelings of “perceived substitutability” (2009, p. 635) between print and digital and proves applicable to magazines specifically.

In their mixed-methods study, Flavián and Gurrea first identified general motivations for reading the press with distinct medium preference pairings through a focus group and in-depth interviews. In the next portion of their study, the authors conducted a survey and subsequent binary logistic regression analysis. They found that searching for updated news involves a proclivity for the Internet, but when reading for leisure, audiences consider traditional media as useful as digital. Flavián and Gurrea assert that “these findings suggest that both channels can survive alongside one another, avoiding cannibalistic effects, and that the newspaper industry should recognise the difference of the digital channel by paying more attention to its peculiarities” (2009, p. 635). These real-world applications fit into today’s magazine industry just as well as they do with newspapers, as both Towers (1987) and Payne et al. (1988) found that motivations for magazine use are often associated with entertainment and diversion purposes.

Audience engagement efforts. Additionally, the degree of audience engagement efforts exerted by magazines, often through the use of supplemental media channels, seems to be an important aspect of this issue as well. This is especially critical in appealing to the Millennial age group (see for instance, Hendrickson, 2013). The print magazines experiencing continued success today seem to be those making use of supplemental mediums such as social media in an effort to augment audience engagement digitally. While magazines will inevitably continue to expand their online and digital presences, these technological components can work together with their respective print products in a complementary fashion that enhances both brand power

and audience reach. Unlike the predicament newspapers have fallen into, magazines are not expected to give away their print content online for free, and digital magazine material will most likely remain supplemental to—not substitutable for—print material. In this case, digital content will continue to be used to entice readers to seek out the print magazines.

Furthermore, many believe audience engagement is a new concept born from the Internet and subsequent social media developments, but magazines have been a leading medium in efforts to engage readers since they began in America in 1741. Aronson asserts that “historically, the American magazine arose as a polyvocal, participatory, and inherently elastic form not unlike digital and social media platforms today” (2014, p. 315). Some contend that print, set in its traditional ways, gave up the fight to remain a legitimate rival against its digital counterparts too early. According to an *Advertising Age* report (Bloom, 2006), magazines such as *Real Simple*, *Domino*, and *Every Day with Rachael Ray* continued in the challenge and have since become examples of print thriving in the digital age. Magazines such as these are proving that “print—perhaps the most seemingly one-way medium—can be an interactive, even user-generated affair” (Bloom, 2006). *Domino*’s founding editor Deborah Needleman explained this concept, saying, “Digital isn’t better because it’s digital, but what it has done well is spoken to younger generations in their direct, honest language, not in the patronizing journalese of some editors” (Bloom, 2006).

In Aronson’s study specifically concentrating on late 18th century and 19th century women’s magazines, Aronson describes these magazines in their first century of existence as “largely user-generated and perpetuated by reader response, they invited a range and promoted the exchange of audience voices and views—much like digital and social media today” (2014, p. 313). What online publishers are doing with the Internet and social media today is simply a

digitally updated version of what magazines have been doing since they originated, and they should not give up doing so simply because the web has drastically transformed the practice. The Internet can even be used to improve print engagement. Xie revealed the prevalence of crowdsourcing among many of the startup magazines addressed in her PBS MediaShift article (2012). Cara Lynne, co-creator of the startup magazine *Chickpea*, stated, ““The content in our issues are all submissions from people all over the Internet; their submissions steer the magazine in the direction they want it to go”” (Xie, 2012). Xie asserted, “The idea of ‘complementary talent’ and assembling voices is a promising one for magazines. ... Crowdfunding and crowdsourcing are all methods that bridge the gap between those who labor tirelessly for publications and the readers, new and old” (2012). According to MPA, magazines are still the top medium in reader engagement compared to both the Internet and TV, specifically when it comes to ad attention/receptivity, inspirational content, life-enhancing qualities, trustworthiness, and social interaction (2013, p. 13).

Uses and gratifications theory applied. These factors will play a pivotal role in the development of the print-versus-digital debate and the ways in which it unfolds in the evolving media environment of our time. Criticisms against the prominence of recent U&G work have been based on the contention that the theory has been “utilized more often in entertainment theory than in media effects research” (Bryant & Miron, 2004, p. 696) in contemporary studies. However, this is not a compelling argument against the theory, as much mass media today exhibits entertainment qualities even when it is not within the actual genre. All kinds of modern media are utilizing entertainment appeals to attract preoccupied audiences with endless media options and short attention spans. This is even more relevant to magazines, as many of the primary motivations behind magazine consumption have been found to be entertainment focused

(see for instance, Towers, 1987; Payne et al., 1988; Kilian et al., 2012). U&G's applicability to entertainment theory actually seems to strengthen its position in media effects research in the current media landscape. The theory is helpful in bridging and distinguishing entertainment theory and media effects research in that it demands that media developers consider the formats through which media consumers desire to receive various content. For example, people might want hard news through one medium and more entertaining content through another—often a magazine (see for instance, Flavián & Gurrea, 2009). Consideration of these preferences should be more important than ever given the growing abundance of available media. Deliberation over such distinctions could be the key to the print magazine's continued existence.

Conclusions

Media choices today are endless. Millennials are the first generation to grow up with this multitude of media options as the standard. Through qualitative methods similar to the ones employed in this study, Sturgill et al. found that college-age users want control over their news content, which should simultaneously inform and entertain, engage and interest. They also want quick and easy access to all of this content (Sturgill et al., 2010). While this list, presented in such a straightforward manner, might seem a bit demanding, society has taught the digital natives to uphold such expectations. Zerba's focus groups confirmed this, as one of the five needs that materialized from her participants' responses regarding why they had forsaken using print newspapers was a "choice need." "Today's young adults grew up with choice," Zerba said (2011, p. 608). As Zerba emphasized in the conclusion of her qualitative exploration into young adults' reasoning for discontinued newspaper use, "understanding the relationship of young adults' needs and wants to media use needs to be part of the industry's discussion and future changes" (2011, p. 609). Unlike newspapers, it seems that many of today's print magazines,

especially those innovating with multi-platform content and enhancing their print products with social media and digital engagement of their audiences, offer readers this “choice,” and, therefore, signal a likely continued appeal to Millennials. However, these findings also directly make way for the present study, leaving open the question of whether Millennials evaluate magazines in the same ways they assessed the news content of the aforementioned studies.

Entertainment most likely will remain a prominent reason for magazine use, and it seems print magazines’ chances of survival are strongest when comfortably situated in the category of leisure reads. Graydon Carter, who has served as the editor of *Vanity Fair* since 1992—before most Millennials reached an age of exposure to this top industry title—was solicited by *Adweek* in 2010 for his first-hand take on the future of magazines. Carter explains the aforementioned theory regarding reading magazines for entertainment and wraps up the argument of such findings concerning the future of print magazines eloquently with the following words:

It’s become fashionable to proclaim that print is dying, as if a medium that has been around for more than five centuries might, like a guest who has overstayed his welcome, suddenly glance about the room, see his hostess nodding off in her chair, and realize it’s time to call it a night. I have my doubts about the all-encompassing scope of the so-called digital revolution, but as the father of five children, I can certainly see what all the fuss is about. Kids have a zillion ways of finding out just about anything they want, when they want, but the smart ones—historically, the magazine subscribers of the future—still read. The reading business is not the same as the search-and-find business, and if you’re in the print version of the latter, on either a daily or a weekly basis, you have reason to be anxious. The rest of us have a fair chance to survive and perhaps even thrive. (2010)

Still, this surviving and thriving will necessitate that magazines undertake continuous assessment of the needs of such audiences with subsequent evaluations of their products based on their ability to fulfill those needs. It seems print magazines can have a future, but this future will depend on meticulous attention to the ways in which readers use magazines and deliberate action in the ways in which magazines seek to ensure their readers’ gratifications in those uses are met.

The hopeful findings referenced throughout this review demand greater understanding of the motivations behind Millennials' reasons for continued magazine consumption to better enable magazines to continue providing media that this generation considers relevant and gratifying. Though wrought with contradictions characterized by an uncertainty that has become an intrinsic attribute of the publishing industry, this body of literature produced meaningful findings regarding the state of the print magazine sector and how Millennials are affecting its position therein. Most studies to date have focused on quantitative measurements of Millennial magazine readership with limited qualitative exploration into the reasoning behind young adults' newspaper and online reading habits, or lack thereof. A qualitative study regarding the motivations behind Millennial magazine readership is the natural next step in this ongoing narrative surrounding the uncertainty of print's survival and the instrumental demographic that will play the greatest role in determining this future. Positive data suggesting continued Millennial magazine readership enforces the worthwhile nature of this study, while the conversation's inconsistencies and lack of qualitative discovery reveal a meaningful landscape for further exploration.

Research Questions

In the midst of the current narrative that print is dying and Millennials are digital natives who desire only such media, many magazines seem to be surviving, and even thriving, among the young readers of the Millennial generation. Through a preliminary survey, the present study first sought to research on an individual level with as theoretically and logically generalizable a respondent base as possible whether this common typecast is in fact false. Research Question 1 focused on survey results:

RQ1: Are Millennials still reading magazines on a relatively consistent basis? If they are, how are they doing so? If they are not, what is their reasoning?

Subsequent research questions regarding Millennials' magazine reading habits and preferences involved qualitative exploration into the following areas through focus groups:

RQ2: What are Millennials' motivations (uses and gratifications) for reading magazines? For example, do they use magazines to be informed, entertained or both—or for entirely different reasons? Do they see these motivations lasting further into the digital revolution? Do they see them diminishing with increases in digital options?

RQ3: What formats do they use when consuming magazine media—original print products, tablet editions, websites, social media, etc.? Which formats are the most satisfying for them and why? Conversely, which formats do they avoid and why? Which formats do they see themselves continuing to use in the future? In which do they see themselves continuing to invest?

RQ4: What about magazines do Millennials find valuable? What about magazines do they find relevant to their lives? Do they see this relevance lasting into their futures? What makes magazines more relevant to them than newspapers?

Ultimately, this study sought to explore the question of *why* Millennials still read magazines as broadly as possible in an effort to obtain the deeply qualitative data that is distinctly absent from this topic in the research landscape.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The goal of the present study is to explore the motivations behind continued use of print magazines in the digital age among the digital native generation—a seemingly paradoxical relationship that has persisted for reasons that remain largely unknown. Several survey studies have made basic discoveries regarding the fact that members of this generation still read magazines as well as what kinds of magazines they are reading (see for instance, “Condé Nast Research,” 2012; MPA, 2013; MPA, 2014; Steinberg, 2007). These studies provide helpful base findings, but they offer no insight into the driving forces behind this puzzling trend. Qualitative research takes on an important role in this regard. In his book “Learning from Strangers,” Weiss explains the benefits of qualitative exploration:

Quantitative studies pay a price for their standardized precision. ... The information they obtain from any one person is fragmentary, made up of bits and pieces of attitudes and observations and appraisals. If we want more from respondents than a choice among categories or brief answers to open-ended items, we would do well to drop the requirement that the questions asked of all respondents be exactly the same. (1994, p. 2-3)

Additional support for the methodology of this study comes from usability expert Jakob Nielsen, who claims that when “judging the quality of a user experience, you absolutely have to do an observational study where you look at a small number of people in great detail and see how they use the products” (Pack, 2001, as cited in Sturgill et al., 2010, p. 3).

Among the plethora of quantitative studies surrounding Millennials and magazine readership, a review of the literature reveals a few qualitative studies on which this study seeks to build. Sturgill et al. (2010) and Zerba (2011) both utilized focus groups to analyze young adults' media use in various capacities; however, Sturgill et al. focused on college students' online media preferences (2010) while Zerba focused on the motivations behind 18-29 year olds' decreased use of newspapers (2011). Though Flavián and Gurrea's (2009) primary methodology was a survey, they conducted preliminary focus groups and interviews "with the aim of familiarising (themselves) more thoroughly with the subject of (their) analysis" (2009, p. 639). Through their mixed-methods study, they practically acknowledged that discovering the motivations behind young adults' decision-making processes regarding circumstantial preferences for newspaper and online content would be best achieved through such qualitative measures (Flavián & Gurrea, 2009). These methodological constructs and findings lend valuable framework to the present study that explores both motivations and preferences in the realm of Millennial media use, but they also reinforce the importance of this study, as it embarks on new territory, exploring a medium these scholars left uncovered—print magazines.

The research methodology was approved by the University of Alabama's Institutional Review Board (approval number: 15-OR-109) on April 9, 2015 (See Appendix C).

Preliminary Survey

Although this study is rooted in qualitative investigation, a two-part, mixed-methods research approach was used to obtain more comprehensive data regarding Millennials' magazine reading habits or lack thereof. In an approach adapted from Flavián and Gurrea's (2009) combination of a preliminary focus group and subsequent survey that yielded their chief findings, the present study was initiated with a preliminary survey, with subsequent focus groups

conducted as the principal methodology. The first part of this study involved an online survey (see Appendix A) open to any 18-25-year-old University of Alabama student in the College of Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool. A recruitment post on UA's College of Communication and Information Sciences' Institute for Communication and Information Research (ICIR) system website asked students to complete an online survey via a secure online survey platform (Qualtrics) regarding whether or not they read magazines and why. Because the participant pool closed for the semester in the midst of the study, a contingency recruitment plan involved reaching out to large university classes with the permission of professors. Emails were sent to students in the classes of professors who allowed it, offering 18-to-25-year-old students the same information about the study that the students in the participant pool received. The email contained a link to the online survey via a secure online survey platform (Qualtrics).

This link (on both the ICIR system website and emails) connected students to an information sheet (see Appendix A) regarding the study and the survey, and after consenting and/or assenting (for 18-year-old minors) to participate in the study based on the information sheet, participants were directed to the survey. They were first asked if they had read a magazine in the last month. Those who said they had not read a magazine in the last month were asked why. Those who said they had read a magazine in the last month were considered magazine readers and asked a few questions about their magazine consumption habits and preferences. These magazine readers were then invited to participate in subsequent focus groups to discuss their magazine consumption habits and preferences further. Survey participants who said they would be willing to participate in the focus groups submitted their contact information to receive information about the focus groups in an email. At the end of each branch of the survey, both

groups of students—the magazine readers and nonreaders—were asked to report basic demographic information such as age, gender, ethnicity, major, minor and year in school (see Appendix A). Respondents from the university’s College of Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool received credit toward the fulfillment of the research participation requirement for courses they were enrolled in. Other students received extra credit based on the discretion of their professors. A total of 266 students completed the survey, which was open from April 9 to April 24, 2015.

The survey was created using Qualtrics software, and responses were exported from the program into an Excel database where information was analyzed for basic statistical findings as well as common themes pertaining to magazine use and nonuse. This analysis produced findings that reinforced previously referenced quantitative conclusions regarding Millennials’ general continued consumption of print magazines, but, as no trend can achieve consensus across a generation, it also offered instrumental insight into reasons why some Millennials have diverged from the trend and do not read magazines. Furthermore, the survey was used to obtain focus group volunteers, and the results of the survey were used to assign them to their respective groups. One of the primary purposes of the survey was to gauge the magazine consumption practices of potential focus group participants. Flavián and Gurrea found intentional segmentation of their focus groups based on participants’ levels of experience with the Internet to be constructive to their study (2009). This seemed to be a strong method for achieving the homogeneity desired in focus groups. The survey was used to assess focus group participants’ levels and preferences of magazine use and divide them according to prominent segments that emerged from the magazine consumption habits they reported, which included categories such as frequency, magnitude, genre and format (see Appendix A).

Focus Groups

Part two of this study involved the main methodological component—focus groups. Three focus groups were conducted, each consisting of five to eight Millennials (ages 18-22) who considered themselves to be magazine readers of any kind—a purposely broad initial requirement. Conducting multiple groups (preferably three to four) is necessary for obtaining results that can be considered valid, as it can be expected to reach a point of saturation after this amount of discussion. These efforts were made to ensure findings are “reliably social and not just individual” (Luker, 2008, p. 167; see also, Eliot & Associates, 2005). This dialogic method provided the broad level of discovery sought in this study.

As mentioned above, participants for the study’s focus groups were recruited from the group of UA student survey respondents who reported interest in the focus groups and submitted contact information to receive more information about them. Therefore, we accepted survey responses until we obtained responses from enough magazine readers who wished to participate in the focus groups to satisfy the goals outlined above. Interested survey respondents were sent emails regarding participating in the focus groups, and, in an effort to achieve the homogeneity desired in focus groups, their survey responses were used to assign participants to specific focus groups based on prominent segments that emerged from the magazine consumption habits they reported. During the study, identifying information, such as these emails, was kept on the primary researcher’s password-protected computer. At the study’s conclusion, such information was permanently deleted.

Focus group participants. Convenience sampling was used to recruit volunteer college students from the University of Alabama. Fortunately, this study took place in an area ripe with Millennial respondents, justifying such a sampling method. The university’s College of

Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool was utilized, as were large university classes with the permission of professors after the participant pool closed for the semester. All recruitment materials related to the study's focus groups specifically asked for 18-25-year-old magazine readers (in contrast with the inclusive 18-25-year-old survey participants).

Journalism students were not excluded altogether; however, the number of journalism students participating in this study was monitored to ensure that they did not become a majority of the sample (only 5 of 19 focus group participants reported journalism as their major), as this could have skewed results away from representing the general Millennial population. Sturgill et al. drew their sample entirely from journalism students with the justification that content that did not appeal to this group would, presumably, not appeal to “students who are not as attuned to news” (2010, p. 6). However, they failed to assess the other side of this scenario—the risk that content that appealed to the journalism students might not appeal to those less journalistically inclined. Flavián and Gurrea recruited respondents “who had no professional connection with the issue concerned” (2009, p. 640). The sampling approach of the present study took a more moderate route with this issue, falling in the middle of these two studies. A mixture of media experience and exposure among respondents provided beneficially representative perspectives.

Efforts were made to secure a group of respondents that represents the diversity of the Millennial generation (in gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) through a participant screening process aimed at obtaining a deliberately diverse sample and keeping record of such demographics throughout the study (see for example, Appendix A). Efforts were also extended to ensure “the profile of the sample selected for the focus groups was representative of our target public” (Flavián & Gurrea, 2009, p. 639-640)—the best possible embodiment of the diverse group that is

the magazine readers of the Millennial generation, with the inclusions and exclusions mentioned previously. However, these efforts were limited by the volunteer-based sample of this study.

Focus group participants from the university's College of Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool received additional credit toward the fulfillment of the research participation requirement for courses they were enrolled in. Other students received extra credit based on the discretion of their professors. Nineteen students participated in the study's focus groups.

Procedure. Focus groups were conducted on April 22 and April 24 in the University of Alabama's ICIR facilities in a room designed for interviews and focus groups, and equipped with a two-way mirror. The ICIR facilities have continuous video recording in both group interview rooms for security reasons. Because of this and to enable transcription of the group discussions for subsequent analysis, consenting to being video recorded was a requirement of participating in these focus groups. Video recordings, as well as all other confidential study materials, were kept on the primary researcher's password-protected computer. The data was permanently disposed of when the research was completed.

An initial gathering area was designated in the chosen facility where participants met the moderator and settled in while enjoying a complimentary refreshment and looking over an information sheet regarding the study and the focus groups (consent/assent form) (see Appendix C). Consent and/or assent was collected before each focus group began.

Each focus group included five to eight participants led by a moderator who was trained to lead the discussions. The primary investigator observed the sessions from behind the room's two-way mirror, something Luker recommends because it allows for catching "meta-themes" emerging that the facilitator, caught up in his or her written focus-group guide, sometimes can't

see” (2008, p. 183). If an unanticipated theme emerged, the primary investigator was able to bring a note into the room instructing the moderator to probe respondents further regarding this topic.

Following a welcome and introductions as well as a brief explanation of the purpose of these focus groups and, more broadly, the purpose of this study, the moderator “set ground rules” (Eliot & Associates, 2005, p. 9) and then began each focus group with an icebreaker question. She led the focus groups based on her training and the question guide created to direct the group discussions (see Appendix B). The focus groups lasted approximately 30-45 minutes each, but in recruitment materials, participants were told to plan for the groups to last 90 minutes in an effort to ensure all participants remained present and engaged for the duration of the groups. The focus groups sought to capture this seemingly anomalous description: “Focus groups are structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions . . . but the discussion is free-flowing” (Eliot & Associates, 2005, p. 2). This open-ended data collection method produced substantial discovery regarding the heretofore-unexplored motivations behind Millennials’ magazine use.

Analysis. The first round of analysis occurred during in-session note taking by the primary investigator. Immediately following each focus group, the primary investigator assessed and recorded first impressions of the groups’ responses. The focus groups were all video recorded and transcribed, with observational notes woven into the dialogue when applicable for subsequent analyzing and synthesizing of the qualitative data. Using Word and Excel documents, participants’ responses were extracted from the transcripts, separating each individual “new thought or idea,” which were then entered into a database to be coded based on “common categories or themes across the entries of each question” (Eliot & Associates, 2005, p. 11). Common themes were determined by searching for repeated key words, and these themes were

assigned a number to enable sorting for commonality. Strong categories and sub-categories emerged from the responses, revealing common motivations and preferences among Millennial magazine readers that can be applied to a narrative that sheds light on this phenomenon with greater clarity and depth.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The results of this research will be presented in two parts, in the order in which the mixed-methods study was conducted. The first section of results includes the quantitative data gleaned from the preliminary survey in which respondents reported information regarding an array of magazine reading habits and preferences—or a lack thereof. This section answers the first set of research questions. Survey results provided meaningful quantifiable findings that offered a helpful framework for subsequent qualitative investigation via focus groups. Focus group discussion explored the remainder of the research questions, which included Millennials' motivations for reading magazines, their magazine media format preferences, and their reasoning behind the value they continue to place on the publications. These questions also sought predictions regarding how participants felt their responses might evolve in the future. Focus group data is reported more dialogically given the conversational nature of the research collection method. These qualitative findings offer richly detailed results pivotal to the motivation-seeking study.

Survey Statistics: RQ1

A total of 266 respondents (ages 18-25) participated in the study's preliminary online survey. Of these respondents, 67% were female. Additionally, 79% were white, 14% were African American, 3% were Hispanic, 2% were Asian, and 2% were American Indian or Alaska

Native. Participants were all college students studying a wide range of majors and minors. majors included public relations (39%), telecommunication and film (TCF) (15%), journalism (10%), advertising (10%), marketing (4%), undeclared (4%), communications (3%), computer science (2%), business (2%), criminal justice (1%), history (1%), theater (1%), and more than 10 others fields of study that were reported by less than 1% of participants.

The survey was designed to answer RQ1, which asked: “Are Millennials still reading magazines on a relatively consistent basis?” This research question sought to confirm that the quantitative findings across the research landscape regarding continued Millennial magazine readership were accurate and applicable to the present study’s survey sample—from which focus group volunteers were recruited. Therefore, survey participants were first asked a simple question regarding their magazine reading habits: “Have you read a magazine in the last month?” (see Table 1). Survey responses reinforced the research mentioned above with a majority of respondents (73%) reporting that they had read a magazine in the last month. From here, magazine readers and nonreaders were directed to different branches of the survey to report basic reasoning for their distinct choices.

Table 1

Survey Participants Who Reported Reading a Magazine in the Last Month

N= 266

Read in last month	n	%
Yes	194	73
No	72	27

Similar statistical trends emerged when this question was analyzed to determine the relationships between participants' majors and magazine readership (see Table 2). Most notably, 100% of communications majors reported that they read magazines. Computer science majors reported the lowest magazine readership rate, at 40%. Most other majors were relatively aligned with the survey's overall readership rate of 73%. Marketing, public relations, business, and advertising majors all reported slightly higher readership rates. Journalism majors just missed the study's average percentage with a 72% readership rate. Criminal justice, history, theater, TCF, and undeclared majors all reported readerships slightly below the general group number. It seems that participants in media-related majors tended to be more loyal magazine readers; however, both groups had outliers, as the above-average sector included business majors, and the below-average claimed TCF majors.

Table 2

Relationships Between Majors and Magazine Readership

<u>Major</u>	<u>Read</u>		<u>Did not read</u>	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Communications	9	100	0	0
Marketing	8	80	2	20
Public Relations	78	76	25	24
Business	3	75	1	25
Advertising	20	74	7	26
Journalism	21	72	8	28
Criminal Justice	2	67	1	33
History	2	67	1	33
Theater	2	67	1	33
TCF	25	61	16	39
Undeclared	6	60	4	40
Computer Science	2	40	3	60

Quantitative results from magazine nonreaders. The 27% of survey respondents who reported that they had not read a magazine in the last month were asked to offer reasons why (see Table 3). Participants were able to choose as many options as they felt applied to them from a list of reasoning that included inconvenience, time, relevance, format, access, and lack of control over content. There was also a self-report section (“Other”) in which respondents could include any reasons not mentioned beyond the ones offered in the question’s multiple-choice list. The 72 participants provided 109 reasons why they did not read a magazine in the past month. The top three reasons respondents reported for not reading magazines were time (32%), access (25%), and inconvenience (23%). Within the four responses reported in the “Other” section, a theme emerged concerning the cost of magazines and participants’ desire to save money by opting out of purchasing the publications. Despite the presence of such issues with magazines among some Millennials, these concerns have not stopped the majority of participants from seeking out magazine media.

Table 3

Reasons Nonreaders Reported for Avoidance of Magazines in the Last Month

N= 109

Reasons for not reading	n	%
Time	35	32
Access	27	25
Inconvenience	25	23
Relevance	15	14
Other	4	3
Format	2	2
Lack of control over content	1	1

Quantitative results from magazine readers. The majority of survey respondents who described themselves as magazines readers (73%) were asked to report a few basic details concerning their magazine consumption habits and preferences, which included categories such as frequency, magnitude, genre, and format. In an effort to explore the extent of participants' magazine reading habits, they were asked to report how many magazines they had read in the past month (see Table 4). A majority of magazine readers (85%) said they had read one to three magazines in the month before they were surveyed. The second largest group (12%) had read four or five magazines in the same time frame, and only a few respondents reported reading more.

Table 4

How Many Magazines Did You Read in the Past Month?

N= 194

Magazines read	n	%
One to three	164	85
Four or five	23	12
Six or seven	4	2
Eight or nine	1	1
More than 10	2	1

Participants were also asked to report what magazine genres they enjoyed reading (see Table 5). They could report as many genres as they read. This question produced a wide variety of responses that included categories such as Women’s, Men’s, Teen, News, Lifestyle, Home and Garden, Sports, Music/Entertainment, Fashion, Gossip, and others. The three most-reported genres were Women’s (19%), Fashion (15%), and Lifestyle (13%), with Music/Entertainment and Gossip tied for a close fourth (12% each), and Sports in fifth (10%). Through the question’s “Other” section, participants also reported reading Car (2), Food, Science/Technology, Outdoors, Finance, and Women’s Empowerment magazines. One reported a specific title—*Game Informer*. Such reports signaled a strong diversification of interests within the survey sample.

Table 5

What Categories of Magazines Did You Read in the Past Month?

N = 576

Category	n	%
Women's	110	19
Fashion	84	15
Lifestyle	76	13
Music/Entertainment	69	12
Gossip	67	12
Sports	56	10
News	35	6
Men's	32	5
Teen	21	4
Home and Garden	17	3
Other	9	1

The final survey question for magazine readers analyzed what formats they use to consume magazine content (see Table 6), with participants again allowed to report as many answer choices as applied to their magazine reading habits. Responses again reinforced the statistics within the research landscape regarding continued Millennial readership of traditional print magazines. A total of 46% of magazine reading respondents remain loyal to the print product. Still, these digital natives reported some digital consumption, with 27% using social media (a term left undefined for participants), and 23% visiting magazines' websites. Only 4% of respondents reported reading tablet editions, and no one self-reported a format that was not offered as an option.

Table 6

In What Formats Do You Read Magazines?

N= 359

Format	n	%
Print Editions	164	46
Social Media	98	27
Magazines' Websites	82	23
Tablet Editions	15	4

Additionally, when format preferences were analyzed for overlapping trends, a few notable insights and relationships emerged to show that print remained part of the diet of most who read magazines (see Table 7). Nearly a third of all participants (n=61) reported that they read print only and did not follow magazines in digital formats. Furthermore, 53% of magazine readers (103) reported reading print as well as at least one digital format. When looking at all print readers, 62% of the 164 respondents who said they read print magazines also consume digital magazine media. Print and social media were the most common pair with 32 participants, and print and magazines' websites came in second with 20 participants. Print, magazines' websites, and social media were the most common grouping (44 participants). However, five participants reported a combination of magazines' websites and social media, so it seems that print is the critical link to these relationships.

A minority of 15% of magazines readers (29) reported digital-only consumption of the medium. Only two participants reported getting their magazine content strictly through the digital repertoire of magazines' websites, tablet editions, and social media. Furthermore, only four participants reported that they consume magazine content through all four formats. This question

revealed valuable insight into the ways in which this group generally feels about various formats of magazine media and provided a strong starting point for further focus group discussion. Though participants seem to uphold a predilection for print, digital content materialized as an important part of their magazine reading practices as well. They may prefer print, but slightly more than two-thirds are already consuming magazine media through multiple channels that include digital.

Table 7

Formats for Reading Magazine Content

N=193

Alone and in Pairs Only

Formats	Print	Web	Tablet	Social
Print	61	20	2	32
Web	-	7	0	5
Tablet	-	-	5	1
Social	-	-	-	9

Note: “-” represents cells that would be duplicated from rows and columns already reported.

Three or Four Formats

Print, web, and social: 44

Print, tablet, and social: 1

Web, tablet, and social: 2

Print, web, tablet, and social: 4

The preliminary survey fulfilled its purpose in providing quantitative results. It reinforced the finding that Millennials are still reading print magazines and offered a helpful base for the broader, more detailed discussions that would follow in the study's subsequent focus groups.

Focus Group Findings: RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4

Information gleaned from the study's focus group sessions was analyzed in order to gain insight into the remainder of this study's research questions. These exploratory questions guided the reporting of the results and allowed for the emergence of themes and trends regarding focus group participants' magazine reading habits and preferences. The three focus groups ranged from five to eight participants, for a total of 19 Millennial participants (ages 18-22). Overall, 21% of the participants were male, with at least one male participant in each group. Additionally, 84% were white, with one Hispanic and two African American participants. Volunteers were all enrolled in college and studying a variety of subjects. All participants had read between one and five magazines in the month they participated in the study, and these magazines covered categories that included Women's, Men's, Teen, News, Lifestyle, Home and Garden, Sports, Music/Entertainment, Fashion, and Gossip. Almost every participant read print magazines, but some also reported consuming magazine content from magazines' websites and social media. One participant reported reading magazine tablet editions as well.

RQ2: Millennials' motivations for reading magazines. RQ2 asked "What are Millennials' motivations for reading magazines?" in order to examine the reasoning behind Millennials' continued use of magazines in the midst of the industry's technological transformation. It included inquiries into how their magazine reading habits have changed in the last few years as well as how they anticipate these habits might continue to change as they move deeper into the digital era. Focus group participants were asked to bring an issue of their favorite

magazine to their respective sessions, and these favorites spanned a wide variety of titles including *The FADER*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Coastal Living*, *National Geographic*, *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *Seventeen*, *People*, *ESPN The Magazine*, *Rolling Out*, and *Entertainment Weekly*. Prominent categories and sub-categories emerged from the discussions, revealing common motivations for reading magazines among members of all three focus groups. Some of these motivations reinforced and developed previously referenced research findings, while others offered new insight into the phenomenon under study. Six specific themes emerged to help explain why Millennials read magazines: content, aesthetics, entertainment, escape, habit, and ease of use. Many of these themes included several dimensions, and participants' mixed-reviews regarding whether or not such motivations will last into their futures contained similar complexities.

Content. Though a seemingly simplistic motivation, participants in every group reported that they read magazines because they are drawn to content unique to the medium. This central motivation emerged in two distinct ways. Some read magazines for specific niche content that appeals to their narrow respective interests, while others are drawn to magazines that offer an eclectic variety of interesting content, often within more expansive niches.

Narrow niches. Participants who read magazines to satisfy a desire for certain niche content offered reasons behind seeking out specific titles. For instance, Participant C, a 21-year-old white female, said she reads *Coastal Living* because she loves traveling. This reflects the inspiration motivation that Carter (2013) discovered in her study focused on the uses and gratifications that leisure travel magazine readers seek. Participant F, a 22-year-old white male, said he reads *National Geographic* because he likes to learn about history and culture. Participant O, a 22-year-old African American male, reads *Rolling Out* magazine for a more specific kind of culture. "It's a cultural magazine with primarily black feature stuff," he said.

These motivations fall in line with McQuail's (2005) cultural satisfaction media gratification. Several participants reported seeking out specific music-focused magazines. Speaking generally, Participant G, a 20-year-old white female, said she likes *Rolling Stone* because "you get a lot more of the music," while Participant A, a 21-year-old Hispanic male, goes out of his way to obtain New-York based magazine *The Fader* for its specific focus on "music and pop culture—mostly rap and indie rock and stuff like that." Participant N, a 21-year-old white female, said she reads *Vogue* because it has "all the latest fashion trends." Participant M, a 22-year-old African American male, said he reads *ESPN The Magazine* because he is a "big sports guy." He went on to describe the appeal of such a niche publication with an explanation that applies to all of these specialty genres, saying, "I like reading their stories because they have feature stories about stuff a lot of people don't really know about, like behind the scenes things." As Jere and Davis (2011) found in their study concerning the motivations of women's magazine readers, "The respondents agreed strongly with statements describing the rich content (in-depth, interesting stories) of magazines" (p. 20), which pertained to uses and gratifications media-use typologies such as surveillance, status, diversion, career opportunities, self-development, and exploration, with "content gratifications ... predominat(ing)" (p. 21). Such typologies apply to the motivations participants' reported in this category.

Many participants admitted affinities for gossip magazines, but also reported a need for a reasonable expectation of credibility. Participant N said she loves *People* and explained this preference, saying, "I love any trashy, gossip magazine, but I feel like *People's* the most accurate source when it comes to that kind of thing." Other group members shared this sentiment. Participant J, an 18-year-old white female, said, "I just like reading about all the gossip and stuff with the stars, ... but I don't even look at any of those other ones—only *People*. I really trust

People.” Participant P, a 21-year-old white female, said, “I like *People*. It’s junk. Cool clothes. ... I think because even though it is more gossip and trashy, it’s not as much as the other ones. I guess it’s a little more credible.” Participants R, 20 years old, and S, 21—both white females—agreed. This motivation seems strongly associated with the commonly cited U&G media-use typology of diversion (see for instance, Payne et al., 1988; Ruggiero, 2000; McQuail, 2005). This niche need even comes down to specific kinds of gossip, as Participant N revealed with an elaboration regarding her motivation for reading *People*. “I love the Kardashians,” she confessed. “I’m not going to lie. This whole Bruce Jenner thing really has me interested. So all these magazines that I keep seeing at Publix—I’ve bought every single one just to keep up with it.” This dimension of the motivation seems to align most closely with information-seeking gratifications (see for instance, McQuail, 2005; Flavián & Gurrea, 2009; Kilian et al., 2012). More specifically, in Randle’s (2003) study regarding the gratification niches of monthly print magazines, survey respondents reported “to learn about famous people” as an “affective/self-oriented factor” for reading magazines. The study found that “magazines hold their ground for more affective, self-oriented uses” (Randle, 2003).

Variety within niches. Participants who read magazines for the variety of content offered within several of the medium’s more broad-spectrum titles expressed why they seek out particular magazines that offer such diversification of content. For instance, Participant G said she likes *Glamour* because, although she appreciates a certain amount of fashion coverage, she wants more than that in a magazine. “I understand some fashion, but there’s a lot of other ones like *Lucky* and *Allure* that are just fashion, and that kind of bores me,” she said. “So, if there’s other stuff, that’s good.” She also elaborated on her *Rolling Stone* preference, mentioned above, in terms of its coverage beyond music and echoed Participant M’s insight—as well as the

findings of Jere and Davis (2011)—regarding the appeal of original, in-depth magazine writing. “They don’t hold back with a lot of stuff, so they have a lot of articles that you won’t find anywhere else. Like they’ll talk about marijuana and all this stuff, and I like them,” she declared. Participant Q, a 20-year-old white female, said she subscribes to *Entertainment Weekly* because “it’s a little bit of everything. You get one every week, which is nice. If I’m going to read this, I’m going to get through some stuff about what’s going on in the world with pop culture.” Participant P, reframing her preference for *People* referenced above, said, “They have pretty interesting stories—like it’s not always just about celebrities and stuff like that.” Other group members simply said they were open to exploring magazines if they happened to contain coverage that looked interesting to them. Referencing what magazines he will check out, Participant M said, “It just depends on the topics. Like if I’m passing by, and I see something that I’m interested in—it’s just depending on the topics.” Participant O said he just looks around to find what interests him. He said, “I’m just reading stories”—rather than specific magazines. Participant F said diverse content is the quality he finds most satisfying about magazines in general. “I like it because it varies a lot—like the stories and articles. It doesn’t really follow a theme like a book would,” he said. This motivation applies seamlessly to one of U&G’s original and enduring typologies—surveillance (see for instance, Lasswell, 1948; Ruggiero, 2000).

Aesthetics. A second motivation for reading magazines that came up among participants in every group was the aesthetic qualities of the medium, which ranged from the general look and feel of magazines to design work such as layouts and other technical aspects associated with the publications. Discovery of this motivation furthered Zerba’s (2011) findings regarding what changes young people believe would make newspapers more appealing to their age group. Studying nonuse of daily print newspapers among the young adult population, Zerba asked focus

group participants to suggest specific improvements they would recommend to newspapers, and, as previously referenced, many of their answers actually described magazines—proposing a new format style like that of a magazine or a book, the inclusion of a table of contents, more color and pictures, and the reporting of entertainment news (2011). Many participants in this research echoed the Zerba recommendations as they described the aesthetic inclinations that draw them to magazines.

Overall look. Many participants asserted that the overall look of a magazine is often the biggest determinant in their decision to purchase and read an issue. This decision is frequently based primarily on the magazine’s cover. Participant I, a 21-year-old white female, described this thought process:

For me, if the cover looks really nice and polished and professional, then I’m more likely to trust the content inside of it than something that doesn’t look nice... Like if a magazine doesn’t look like it’s that great of quality, then you probably wouldn’t think that the content is as great.

Several participants shared this feeling. In addition to appreciating its diverse content, Participant Q said another reason she reads *Entertainment Weekly* is because of the magazine’s consistently strong cover stories, and Participant O agreed that the publication has “great covers.”

Celebrities seem to have an important role in this cover-selection process. Participant K, a 20-year-old white female, said, “I don’t really think I have a favorite magazine. I look at the cover a lot and see who’s on the cover and just go through different ones.” Participant G also said she normally chooses to read certain magazines “because of who’s on the cover”—and vice versa. For example, she reads *Cosmopolitan*, but did not buy it this month because she was not interested in Madonna, the issue’s cover-featured celebrity. Participant N said an unappealing cover will even deter her from purchasing magazines she reads regularly. “If the star on the cover isn’t one of my favorites or the caption or the headline isn’t that interesting, I’m probably

not going to buy it versus if it's something that would catch your eye more," she said. Participant I expounded on how critical this eye-catching component can be for magazines:

If I see a magazine, and it has someone that I like on the cover or it looks really appealing, sometimes I'll just pick it up. The cover is the first thing you see. It's the most eye-catching thing. If the cover isn't very good or it's something that you've never heard of, then you probably wouldn't pick it up.

This motivation seems tied to such uses and gratifications as social utility, personal identity, and integration and social interaction (see for instance, Ruggiero, 2000; McQuail, 2005; Kilian et al., 2012) as well as the more recently developed social gratification of status (see for instance, Randle, 2003; Jere & Davis, 2011).

Pictures within the magazines emerged as important pieces of this motivation as well. Participants J and P both touted *People's* pictures as further reasoning for their predilection of the publication. In Randle's (2003) study focused on the gratification niches of monthly print magazines, survey respondents reported "to look at photos" as an "affective/self-oriented factor" for reading magazines, and the study found that magazines should be capitalizing on such affective, diversionary, and internally oriented gratifications.

Inherent properties of print. Because of the medium's inherently aesthetically pleasing characteristics, many participants also reported a prominent use of magazines as decorative household features. Participant A said, "I like the idea of framing covers sometimes—like if it's a fantastic one." Many participants said they display magazines on their coffee and bedside tables, and they often store old magazines in plain sight where such collections can take on both a decorative and practical function by providing nice-looking, easy-access reading materials. Participant K said such displays "make the apartment look nice." Participant N said she takes full advantage of this convenient décor with magazines covering her coffee and bedside tables and filling a bucket in her bedroom—all available for a quick read whenever she wants one. She also

said her family displays a collection of *Coastal Living* issues spanning several years on their beach house coffee table. “Maybe people at our beach house enjoy reading them—I don’t know. When I’m at our beach house, I’ll look at them because I like looking at all the pictures and stuff like that, so I’ll just flip through,” she said. However, sometimes this decorative feature trumps the publication’s primary purpose—to be read. Participant N admitted as much regarding her vast magazine collection, saying, “Honestly, they kind of just look cute and go with it.”

Participant I elaborated:

One time I just bought a *Marie Claire* with Claire Underwood on it from ‘House of Cards.’ I like that show and the cover looked really great, so I bought it, but I haven’t read it yet. Sometimes I’ll just do that, and use it as decoration, and read it whenever I get around to it.

This type of magazine use seems to fall in line with McQuail’s (2005) lifestyle expression media gratification. By choosing which magazines to showcase in their homes, participants are essentially choosing the lifestyle they wish to promote through such displays. This also pulls in the identity formation and confirmation and social gratifications previously mentioned (see for instance, Ruggiero, 2000; McQuail, 2005; Kilian et al., 2012).

Similarly, participants also discussed the magazine’s ability to instill lasting appeal through the preservation of certain issues that can eventually bring them collector’s status.

Participant G described a moment when she realized this:

My dad’s yelled at me because I took some of his old *Time* subscriptions, and I was about to cut the cover and do something with it. He was like, ‘Do you know how expensive that could be?’ It was Kate Middleton and Prince William. He had that one. He had all these really good covers—that’s why I wanted them. But he was like, ‘No.’ And he took them back and was like, ‘Those could be really expensive one day.’

In addition to the gratifications concerning this category mentioned above, McQuail’s (2005) security motivation is also applicable in this regard due to the aforementioned value associated with collector’s items. Participant F said he found a few magazines from the 1930s in his

mother's house and was struck by the history displayed on the cover. He summed up the experience with the following:

It's a cover from the '30s with Dirty Davis on it, and then there's one from a World War II bombing. It was so cool. I was like, 'Oh, my gosh. I want to keep them.' So I just put them in my room.

Design. Similar to the overall look of a magazine, but with a slightly more advanced dimension, many appealed to strong design work as an important aspect within the aesthetic motivation for reading magazines. Participant I asserted such feelings with simplicity, saying, "I just really like *Vogue* because it always looks clean and polished. The lighting is always really nice, and the colors always look put together really well." Participant C elaborated on her enjoyment of *Coastal Living*, saying, "I'm really a visual person, so just the way they lay out things on the pages, I just love it." Participant F said he also likes *Vogue* because of its many impressive technical visual feats, which he has begun to notice since studying Advertising in college and learning design programs such as Adobe's Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign. "And then I have a friend who's going into fashion design, and he has me help him with the lighting and everything, so I actually know a good deal about it," he said. Several other students going into similar fields expressed the existence of this newfound appreciation for such aesthetics. This dimension of the motivation specifically reflects a few of the gratification factors described by Jere and Davis (2011)—career opportunities, self-development, and exploration.

Entertainment. Most participants said they read magazines as a means of entertainment. This motivation reinforced many of the previously referenced statistical findings regarding reading print magazines for entertainment purposes (see for instance, Towers, 1987; Payne et al., 1988; Kilian et al., 2012), but findings from the present study enhanced this knowledge, adding greater depth and detail to the commonly cited motivation.

Participant L, a 20-year-old white female, said she reads magazines “for entertainment,” while Participant N said she reads magazines “for enjoyment.” There was much agreement around the room. Participant R, a 20-year-old white female, said, “It’s kind of something to keep you busy for a second—to entertain you or just to distract you.” She and Participants P and Q said magazines are a great source of entertainment when you’re waiting somewhere such as a nail salon or the dentist. Participant Q expressed why she reads magazines for entertainment with blunt reasoning. “Because I’m bored, to be honest,” she admitted. Participant I said she enjoys reading magazines when she has free time. “If I don’t have anything else to do, like traveling,” she explained. These responses fall in line with the commonly referenced U&G media-use motivation diversion (see for instance, Payne et al., 1988; Ruggiero, 2000; McQuail, 2005), which is often associated with entertainment objectives. More specifically, these statements align with McQuail’s (2005) “filling time” media gratification.

The presence of this motivation among focus group participants signals that magazines are still providing content that Millennials consider entertaining, and the publications are, therefore, fulfilling their role as producers in the uses and gratifications relationship between magazines and this pivotal generation of consumers. Furthermore, by positioning themselves as entertainment media, many feel magazines’ chances of survival are strongest (see for instance, Carter, 2011).

Escape. Many participants revealed that they often turn to magazines to escape their daily routines. This motivation is rooted in reading magazines for the promotion of relaxation—a frequently cited media-use typology associated with the medium (see for instance, Ruggiero, 2000; Jere & Davis, 2011). Participant R said, “It’s just kind of relaxing—just taking time for yourself to read a magazine.” Many group members agreed. Numerous participants also

discussed the important role magazines have in various leisure activities they engage in.

Participant D, a 20-year-old white female, described this role:

I just like sitting outside in the sun and reading a magazine. It's my favorite thing to do. If I have the time, I'll just go relax instead of doing something. Instead of going to the library, I'll go read a magazine.

Several shared this sentiment. Participants C, I, K, N, and P all reported that they enjoy the ritual of reading magazines at the pool, lake or beach. Participant P said, "When I was growing up, we'd always get magazines going to the beach or the lake. It was just like, 'Oh, you know, we're going to go to the beach, let's get some good reads for the water.'" Participant N expressed her predilection for print in this regard:

I'd rather bring a magazine than a Kindle or an iPad, especially outside because you can't see the screen. ... And who wants to take a tablet to the beach and have it overheat or get sand in it or turn off?

This furthered Flavián and Gurrea's (2009) finding that when reading as a leisure activity, users consider both print and digital formats to be viable options, but participants suggested that print prevails in many of these situations.

Habit. Another motivation many group members reported for reading magazines related to lifelong habits. This objective reflects McQuail's (2005) identity formation and confirmation media gratification. Some—like Participants F and C—simply like to read as a hobby, and magazines provide content they enjoy reading. Participants H, D, L, N, and P said they always had magazines in their homes while they were growing up. Participant C put it simply, but strongly, saying, "I'm just emotionally attached to magazines." The revelation of this motivation in the present study reinforced Flavián and Gurrea's (2009) finding that when reading out of habit, readers also feel traditional and digital formats are fungible—offering hope to print magazines when read for this gratification.

Ease of use. The final motivation respondents reported for reading magazines was an instrumental one—simply the ease with which magazine content can be consumed. Participant I said, “They’re easier to read than just bringing a book, because the articles are shorter. Everything is just a quick read.” Many other participants echoed this idea.

Predictions of future motivations for reading magazines. The next dimension of RQ2 analyzed whether participants thought these motivations would last further into the digital revolution or whether they foresaw them diminishing with increases in digital options. Participants felt they would still be motivated to read magazines based on content in the future, but that the content motivating them would most likely evolve as they grew older. (These expected content preference changes are explored further in RQ4.) Participants felt strongly that they would continue to be motivated to read magazines because of many of the medium’s aesthetic qualities discussed above; however, if print declines or dies out, this motivation would be diminished for them. Overall, they do not find digitally formatted magazine content to be as aesthetically satisfying as the traditional print product. Participant Q summed up such feelings with the following:

Sometimes I just like to look at the pretty pictures. Just take your time—‘This is really pretty. I like this,’ or ‘This is a nice dress,’ or ‘This is a really nice place I’d like to visit.’ I just don’t feel like you can do that on your phone or your computer as much. You can’t rip out a picture you really like and put it on your wall.

Despite this partiality for print, most participants said the development of digital magazine media has augmented the ease of use motivation they reported for reading magazines. They felt this motivation would continue to increase as technological transformations across the media landscape progress.

As for the more personally driven motivations participants reported—entertainment, escape, and habit—group members said they see these motivations lasting for themselves, but

assume they are gradually diminishing for many others. Several participants believed they would continue the ritual of consciously setting aside time for their magazine reading hobby in the future. Participant L said, “I feel like I would sit down and read,” and Participant N said, “Yeah, I would sit down and try to rest my mind and read a magazine when I get home at night.” Participant O even predicted, “I think I’ll read more in the future than I did.” However, when asked if they believe this customary magazine reading ritual is still prevalent among the general population, answers were more negative. Participant C said, “I think for some people, but I don’t think a lot of people do that.” Still, certain participants felt this tradition would live on—at least to some extent. Participant B, a 21-year-old white female, described her aunt’s magazine reading habits with amusing appreciation, saying, “My aunt—she’s addicted to *People* and all of the trash magazines. So every Friday, she’ll go and get a spot and a Coke and sit down and read them.” However, again, these motivations are primarily rooted in print products, and if print is removed as an option from the magazine industry of the future, many of these motivations that participants believe could endure through the years would be forcibly diminished for them. This print versus digital discussion leads directly into the next research question.

RQ3: Millennials’ magazine format preferences. RQ3 asked: “What formats do they use when consuming magazine media?” It assessed whether Millennial magazine readers still use traditional print products to consume magazine content, or if they use other formats such as tablet editions, websites, or various forms of social media. Participants were asked to explain which formats they find most gratifying as well as which formats are least satisfying and the rationale behind such preferences. They were also asked which formats they suspected they would continue to utilize in the future. Participants across all three focus groups overwhelmingly preferred print, making it the irrefutable first-choice format for magazine consumption; however,

many reported that they also supplement their traditional magazine content with digital. Still, participants expressed several reasons why print remains a more gratifying magazine-consumption format for them compared to digital. Because of such sentiments, they hope to be able to continue using print in the future, but they also revealed reservations regarding the format's chances of survival.

Overall print preference. Group members revealed reasons why they find print to be gratifying, which included its physical attributes, the experience associated with reading the print product, familiarity with the format, certain content, and the credibility and authenticity they have come to expect from it. Many common motivations were discovered among participants.

Physical attributes. The most basic reason participants reported for reading print magazines was the physical attributes of the publication. Participant G said, "I like print. I don't like the digital. I don't even like the Kindle. I like the hard copy. I stick with print. I don't like the idea of it all being digital. I just like it being there." Many group members shared this mindset. Participant D said, "I have a lot of problems with technology all the time, so I'm not going to use that if I can sit and read it and feel the pages." Participant P appealed to the readability of print, saying, "I think it's easier to read too. I cracked my phone, so it's hard to read on the screen." Overall, participants seemed to want a physical product they could hold in their hands.

The experience. Participants also expressed the sentiment that reading a print magazine adds an inexplicable but enjoyable element to the practice of magazine reading. Participant P called it an "experience." Participant R expounded on this idea, saying, "I think it's more of an experience because you do so much on your phone all the time. When you sit down to read a magazine, you're sitting down to just kind of relax and read a magazine." Participant D said

technology takes away from the experience. “There’s just a certain thing about print,” she said. This rationale echoed findings from the study Jere and Davis (2011) conducted concerning the uses and gratifications women’s magazine readers seek in that they reported, “The fact that qualitative studies have shown that women describe their magazine reading as ‘affective,’ ‘ritualistic’ and ‘experiential’ indicates that magazine consumption provides meaningful gratification” (p. 21). Participants in the present qualitative study offered the same type of description here.

Familiarity. Many group members appealed to the feelings of fond familiarity they hold for print magazines. Several participants reported growing up with magazines around the house, and they revealed many positive memories in which the traditional print publications played a role. Participant D said, “It reminds me of my childhood—just like holding a magazine—so that’s why I like it.” This seems to reflect McQuail’s (2005) “security” media gratification.

Content. Participants reported a preference for print content that involved several dimensions. Many said they were more likely to read the stories, comprehend the content, and retain the information when consuming print magazine content compared to digital. Participant G explained, “I’ll actually read the articles in the hard copy. I’ll just skim it online.” Participant C agreed, and Participant D went further, saying, “If it’s in front of me, I’ll actually read it and understand why they’re saying that instead of just going through.” Many group members claimed they are better able to recall printed information. Participant L said, “I feel like I retain information better when I have a hard copy rather than online. When I’m online, I’m just like, ‘Whatever,’” and Participant M added, “Yeah, I’m just scanning it.” Participant P expounded on this phenomenon while pointing to a print issue and explaining, “I think I retain the information better when it’s on here versus on my phone because I already scroll through so much stuff on

my phone.” Participants also asserted that the print product contains more information than its digital counterparts. Participant N said, “Even on your phone in Newsstand—like *Cosmo* is in there, and it’s the same cover, but I feel like there’s so much more in print than there’s ever going to be in here,” she said as she motioned toward her phone.

Credibility and authenticity. Among group members, print was widely perceived as the most reliable magazine media format. Participant F expressed this viewpoint, saying, “With the hard copy, you know it’s authentic. Online, there’s so many bogus websites, and you think you’re reading the real thing, but you’re really not.” This desire for authenticity ties into McQuail’s (2005) security media gratification. This association between magazines and credibility is reinforced by existing research (see for instance, Loda & Coleman, 2010; Jere & Davis, 2011).

Some appreciation for digital. Despite participants’ indisputable preference for print, several reported that they also supplement their traditional magazine content with various digital formats. Although they prefaced their appreciation for these digital formats with proclamations of their loyalty to print, participants offered several shared reasons why certain digital formats are satisfying to them that pertain to accessibility, timeliness, interactivity, and the inclusion of multimedia content.

Accessibility. The main motivation participants reported for consuming digital magazine content was the inherent accessibility and ease with which one can do so in today’s day and age. Participant N stated, “I guess digital would be more convenient for some people.” Participant J said, “Digital’s always just way faster for everything. If you don’t want to go to the store, then just look online.” Participant P said she often relies on this convenience. “If there’s anything I want to read or get news or something, then I’ll just get it on my phone,” she said. Participant D

expressed negative feelings about this mindset, saying, “I feel like it’s making America so lazy. You’re like, ‘I don’t want to go read these stories in a magazine, so I’ll just go look online.’” Still, as digital options continue to increase, this accessibility factor is becoming undeniable—even for the most dedicated print magazines readers. Participant C summed up this situation with the following:

I feel like it’s hard—especially, I would say, with food and travel magazines and stuff—because ...you have Pinterest. You have things online where you can easily just look up recipes. I think that’s a huge difference. Our moms—if they wanted to see how to make a dish—they’d have to buy the magazine, look at it, keep it around the house, that kind of thing. The only way they could find that recipe is if they read that magazine. Now it’s just so easy to go on Pinterest and find a recipe for anything. For traveling—I feel like it’s the same thing. I feel like that can relate to anything. You can just look it up online. So people are always just lazy.

A few other specific examples of this trend were reported. Participants in every group frequently referenced the new magazine segment of Snapchat—an application that allows for the sharing of videos, photos, and text messages with time-controlled viewing—called “Discover.” Participant G stated, “On Snapchat—with their update now—you can look at *National Geographic*, *Cosmo*, and *People*. Every day they put little blurbs about some news that they have in their magazine.” Most participants expressed excitement for this digital development. Participant J said, “I really like the new Snapchat update that has *Cosmo*, *People*, *ESPN*—like I think they have most all those.” Participant N said social media in general is “huge.” Participant O said he relies on social media and other online avenues when he cannot access his favorite magazine because it is not widely printed and distributed. “I can’t get *Rolling Out* here, but it’s all online. Breaking news stories, they’ll email to you. On Twitter, I follow online accounts and stuff, and most of the news stories, you can just click on them,” he said. Participant Q also utilizes email to receive magazine content. “I signed up for email alerts from *Vogue* magazine, and I get those with their new stories and stuff every week,” she said.

Timeliness. Participants also mentioned the appeal of the Internet's offering of instantaneous information. The expectation for this type of on-demand content has permeated our society in the digital age. Participant E, a 20-year-old white female, explained, "You get more up-to-date articles if it's online. They can post something really quickly. Like I found out Emma Stone broke up with her boyfriend today because *Cosmo's* Twitter told me."

Interactivity. Similarly, today's media consumers—specifically its digital native consumers—have also come to expect a certain level of interactivity with their media due to the Internet's breakdown of the boundaries between producers and consumers. For example, referencing Snapchat's magazine section, Participant D said, "It's cool. It's interactive. Things move and pop out at you." Still, Participant I expressed such sentiments conditionally, saying, "I think it's cool that (magazines) are interactive on iPads, but it is nicer to hold it."

Multimedia content. Finally, participants reported an appreciation for the multimedia inclusions made possible by digital magazine formats. Participant G said she enjoys the multimedia elements of the magazine blurbs featured on Snapchat, and many participants agreed. Participant S, a 21-year-old white female, said she likes being able to watch related videos while reading various magazines' tablet editions. "If you do it on your iPad, there will be videos included in the magazine too. When you flip through it, you can watch a video," she explained. Participant O described similar views regarding the integration of video in magazine content with the following:

I think they're doing a good job with it just because they do have all these features. Like they talk about a Beyonce video, and you can click on the Beyonce video and watch it right there. So that's something that you can't get from a magazine. It's more information, so I guess that gives it a plus.

General dissatisfaction with digital. Conversely, the next component of RQ3 explored which formats Millennials avoid when consuming magazine media and why such formats do not

satisfy them. Although participants reported a certain level of satisfaction with some forms of digital magazine content mentioned above, they also expressed discontentment with many others. A few frequently referenced reasons for such avoidances emerged from the group discussions that involved the overwhelming nature of the ever-expanding World Wide Web and the technological issues that have come with its advances.

Overdone and overwhelming. One of the main reasons participants offered for their dislike of digital magazine content revolved around the magnitude of the growing new media landscape. Participants appreciate the gatekeeping role print magazines take on through the format's offering of more controlled, deliberate content. They feel that magazines help them determine what information is important. This reflects U&G media-use typologies that involve affective guidance (Lometti et al., 1977) and advice (McQuail, 2005). Participant I described these feelings with the following:

I feel like it's hard to find the medium—posting too much or not posting enough. I'll go through my Twitter feed, and I feel like *Cosmo* posts literally five posts in a row, and they'll post the same article three times a day or something like that. And then *People* kind of does that with pictures on Instagram. But you have to post a lot, otherwise people aren't going to notice what you're doing.

Participant C said the multitude of websites causes them to run together in her mind, while print magazines remain distinctly memorable. "There's so many websites. They all end up just looking the same at some point, and you're just like reading words. With magazines, you have a specific look to each magazine, and you know what you're getting," she said. Participant C also described such digital content as "distracting." Participant F agreed, saying, "When you're online reading a magazine, there have to be other links to other things," which often creates a loss of focus. Participant I summed up this sentiment:

I think it's easier to read (print) because if you ever like to read articles online, there's just a bunch of tabs and a bunch of different articles you can click on, but (print) has a set amount of articles that they want you to read that they published in the magazine.

Technological issues and inaccessibility. Group members also seemed to be deterred from digital magazine content because of its potential for various technological problems. Participant S said, "Sometimes it doesn't load or something like that," and Participant Q continued, "I'd rather have the physical copy of it rather than here's this link, and, oh, the link doesn't work." Participant A asserted, "It's not always accessible because sometimes the website updates or something like that, and it changes the story," and Participant O concurred, saying, "It will be online, but it might be hard to find." Participants also appealed to the superior readability of the print product compared to digital material. Participant M said, "I think it's the size too because when you look at the screen sometimes you have to zoom in to see everything," then Participant I added, "And sometimes the formatting gets messed up when you zoom in." Group members also reported frustration with digital paywalls. Participant D explained the reasoning behind such frustration:

If you've got a magazine, you get the whole article, and online it's like, 'Subscribe for a whole year to finish reading this article.' I'm not going to subscribe for a whole year to a magazine I don't like when I just want to read the article.

These inconveniences have contributed to participants' continued print preference and reveal several areas where magazines could reevaluate their digital strategies to improve consumer satisfaction.

Predictions of future magazine format preferences. The final facet of RQ3 analyzed which formats Millennials predict they will continue to use in the future. Once again, participants across all three focus groups said they expected their predilection for print to persist in the coming years. Participant M said, "I think I'll still read the magazines. ... I don't like to read it

online. I like the paper.” However, group members did express concerns that the option to continue choosing print formats might be taken from them. While they prefer print, they assume many others no longer do. This fear is substantiated by existing research on the subject (see for instance, Miller & Washington, 2013; Krishen et al., 2015). Participant R revealed this feeling, saying, “It’s kind of sad, honestly. It’s like everything’s moving to technology.” Participant C said, “I feel like people read it more online now. I feel like people read it on their iPad or something instead of the actual (magazine).” Participant A agreed and said he thought digital subscriptions were on the rise. On an even more ominous note, Participant F said, “Or (people) just don’t read it at all.”

Participants reported a decrease in subscribing to print magazines in recent years for several reasons. Money was the primary motive they reported for this drop. Participant Q said, “I think I’ve decreased my reading just because my parents are the ones who paid for subscriptions, and I just don’t have money to do that.” Participant D echoed her statement, saying, “We’re kind of poor college students.” Participant F asserted, “Magazines can get expensive.” He admitted that if he did not have access to his family’s subscriptions, he would probably find a cheaper solution at bookstores. “I would probably go there [bookstores] to read it, but I wouldn’t buy it, because I feel like I need to conserve my money,” he said. Some group members simply posed the pivotal industry question of our day and age: “Why buy them if we can get them online for free?” Participants also explained their subscription decline with the assertion that the nomadic college lifestyle offers “no home” to which subscriptions could consistently be sent. Participant I said, “I definitely subscribed to a lot more in high school, but now that we don’t have a home, there’s not really an actual place to subscribe to.” Many also reported that they are being sustained on the subscriptions of the former residents of their respective homes. Participant L

said, “At our house, we still get the people’s who lived there before us. Like this is their magazine,” she said, pointing to the magazine she brought to her focus group session. “It’s not subscribed to me. We just keep all of them.” Participants P and R voiced the same admission. Participant P said, “I definitely do it less—except for whoever lived there before me, whatever magazines they ordered.” Because most of these reasons were rooted in the college-student status of group members, their subscription habits could make a resurgence in the coming years. Participant C said, “In the future, since I’ll have a job, I’ll probably get subscriptions.” However, this age group also could be forming habits that keep such subscriptions stagnant.

Despite their strong preference for print and optimism that this penchant will prevail, many group members said they see the value of various types of digital magazine content and expressed the likelihood that they will use such formats in the future. Participant K conveyed this viewpoint with an explanation of her evolving magazine readings habits:

Back in high school, it was a huge thing to get *Teen Vogue* or *Seventeen* in the mail. I just felt so cool. But now I’m using more social media because I see everything that I see in magazines online. Growing up with a (magazine), it was nice to just have it right there, and those were the articles for that day, and that’s it. But I understand the whole digital thing, and how it’s easy to access. You can go and use it whenever versus having to go out and buy a magazine or a newspaper or something.

Several participants said they thought that technological transitions are inevitable in today’s advancing media landscape, and it seems they will have no choice but to accept the push toward digital. Additionally, their partiality for print has not made them immune to the appeals of free online content. Participant P expressed such feelings with the following:

I think in the future, I’ll have to—well, to an extent—I’ll go to technology more. . . . It sounds stupid that I don’t want to pay for it, but when I can get a similar article or something like that for free, then I would prefer that.

Participant I said she had similar sentiments, but upheld her loyalty to traditional print magazines, saying, “Five dollars doesn’t seem like a lot, but when you’re already spending \$35 on groceries,

that's \$40...when you could just get it online for free. But it just looks so much better the way it does in print.” Several participants shared comparably mixed feelings concerning predictions of their future magazine format preferences, but most remained passionate in the expectation that they would utilize print as long as it was available to them.

RQ4: Magazines' value and relevance. RQ4 asked: “What about magazines do Millennials find valuable?” It sought to determine what it is about magazines that Millennials find relevant to their lives and whether or not they feel this relevance will last in today's rapidly evolving media landscape. In an effort to build on previous qualitative research conducted in this realm (see for instance, Zerba, 2011), this question also explored why magazines seem to be more relevant to young people than newspapers in today's day and age. Many of the relevance reasons participants reported mirrored the motivations they voiced for reading magazines discussed in RQ2; however, additional explanations emerged as well. These reasons include magazines' saliency, their superiority among print media, particularly newspapers, and participants continued appreciation for the medium's content and aesthetics, which they predict will evolve in a variety of ways that shape the value of magazines in their futures.

Saliency. One of the primary reasons group members felt magazines have remained valuable to them is because of the medium's success in appealing to their generation through efforts to better evolve with them than much other print media. Though an expansive explanation, participants said it applies with specific magazines that appeal to certain demographics within their generation, but they also emphasized that magazines in general have earned their respect for their fruitful determination to keep up with what their audiences want from them. For example, Participant E said she reads *Cosmopolitan* “because it's geared towards women my age,” and Participant D agreed, saying, “It's very perfect for our age.” Participant N offered similar

reasoning, but went a bit broader with her example, stating that she reads *Vogue* because “it’s very up-to-date and current.” Participant R voiced the most wide-ranging accolade for magazines in this regard. “I think they do a really good job of keeping up with what the generations like and what we’re all interested in,” she said. With these statements, participants essentially reported that magazines have remained relevant to them because the medium has fulfilled its end of the uses and gratifications theory. Overall, participants’ responses signaled the prominence of one of U&G’s most commonly cited typologies—surveillance (see for instance, Lasswell, 1948; Ruggiero, 2000). Specifically, participants seemed to be appealing to Lasswell’s (1948) correlation motivation as well as McQuail’s (2005) identity formation and confirmation and lifestyle expression media gratifications. As Jere and Davis (2011) reported, “Magazines are ... used to keep up to date with trends and lifestyle issues” (p. 20), and participants’ saliency reasoning also applies to the authors’ status, self-development, and exploration media-use motivation findings. By keeping up with the gratifications their audiences seek and offering them such content, magazines have maintained their value where many other traditional print publications have plummeted—namely print newspapers.

Superiority among print media. Participants offered several explanations for why magazines have earned a more relevant position in today’s media landscape than newspapers; however, while their media consumption habits and preferences might not reveal such sentimentalities, many said they were saddened by the demise of print newspapers. Participant M described himself as “a newspaper person,” but he was not joined by many group members when he reported, “I like to read the newspaper—like the paper.” Still, when asked how they felt when people say newspapers are dying, several participants’ responses were negative. Participant B said, “It makes me so sad.” Participant F followed with, “Yeah. I love newspapers,” and

Participant D added, “I just like having it in my hands.” Participant R revealed similar feelings, saying, “It makes me really sad, honestly. ... It’s a newspaper. It’s what you get every day.” However, these feelings achieved no consensus within the group discussions. Participant E asserted, “I don’t ever pick up a newspaper. If I’m going to pick something up to read, it’s going to be a magazine.” Many expressed agreement and said they simply don’t read newspapers.

The reasoning behind participants’ feelings that magazines have more to offer them than newspapers (RQ4 continued) materialized through three primary components: (1) aesthetics, (2) timeliness, and (3) accessibility and ease of use. These three common responses duplicated comments related to RQ2 and RQ3. The responses also reinforced many of Zerba’s (2011) previously referenced findings focused on motivations behind young people’s nonuse of print newspapers, specifically her conclusion that “the ‘wants’ of a print daily newspaper that participants described center mostly on presentation, format, access, and types of content” (p. 607). Participants proclaimed the superiority of magazine aesthetics simply with statements such as the following from Participant C: “I don’t like newspapers that much—just because I’m a visual person. I just love all the visual aspects of magazines more.” In terms of timeliness, accessibility, and usability factors, many discussed the consumption of news content rather than entertainment material and expressed a predilection for online formats over print newspapers in this area. These varied reasons for avoidance of print newspapers in favor of mixed-format alternatives reflected Flavián and Gurrea’s (2009) discovery that searching for updated news involves a preference for the Internet, but when reading for leisure, audiences often consider traditional media as practical as digital; however, the present study revealed that not all traditional media is considered equally suitable, and print magazines seem to receive greater consideration than print newspapers in this regard. Despite some unexpected fond feelings for

newspapers that emerged in the midst of this discussion, participants were clearly more upset by the idea of the demise of magazines than they were by the reality of newspapers facing the same fate. When asked how they would feel if someone told them magazines were dying, Participant I summed up the group's general sentiment, saying, "Depressed. I just think it would feel like something was missing."

Evolving appreciation for content and aesthetics. Other common reasons group members offered to explain the value of magazines in their lives focused on two primary motivations they reported in RQ2—content and aesthetics. In general, participants felt their perception of the medium's relevance would last into the rapidly evolving media landscape; however, many predicted that their respective reasoning behind such relevance would evolve on an individual level as the industry undergoes external changes around them—just as their magazine reading habits and preferences have transformed in years past. Participant I illustrated this idea:

I feel like I was a lot more into magazines whenever I was younger because I had more time in high school just to read all these magazines, but now—I wish I had more time to just sit down and read magazines—but I don't read them as much anymore. I feel like I'll buy them for bigger reasons now. ... (In the future) I think I'm going to read things that are about more important things rather than just the gossip stuff. I feel like the younger generation—us now—we just want to read something that's quick and not so long, or we'll only read like the first half of the article.

Many other group members reported similar accounts and predictions concerning personal content and aesthetics preference evolutions. Participant L said, "I feel like I used to look at the pictures more when I was younger in high school and stuff, but now I'll sit down and actually read the articles." Participant J added to her statement, saying, "I feel like that too. I used to go through and just look at the pictures, and now I'm more interested in reading all the separate

articles.” Participant R expressed the presence of similar changes in her magazine reading habits and preferences as well as the medium’s relevance to her:

I think what I read is different too because, like, you’ll see a cool place on the cover of a magazine wherever you’re waiting, and you’ll be like, ‘Oh, my gosh, what’s that?’ and then you’ll look at it. But when you’re younger, you’re like whatever. You don’t care.

Others described how they thought the magazine content that they feel draws them to the medium might be different in the future. Though they are not entirely sure what content they will desire at older ages, they expect that there will be shifts in the content they consider relevant.

Echoing portions of Participant I’s statement above, Participant L said, “I feel like I won’t read as many of the gossip magazines when I get older. I’ll probably read more like *Vogue* and—I don’t know—what are the other ones? Things that are more toward that age group.” Participant I also said, “You’ll probably get into more magazines in the field you’re in. Now that I’m getting more into classes in public relations, I like looking at the design work in the magazine. I like paying attention to the layout.” Participant N described an instance in which she realized this phenomenon:

I’m not even graduating, but my advisor thought I was, so she gave me this PR magazine. I was like, ‘I’m not graduating.’ But that’s just the thing—she gave me a magazine that I wouldn’t read right now, but I might read a year or two from now when I’m out and working.

Jere and Davis (2011) reported such media-use motivations at work among the magazine readers they surveyed through their discovery of a content gratification category that included surveillance, self-development, career opportunities, and diversion.

Some participants also revealed a few conditions that could weaken the appeal of magazines for them in the coming years. While most conveyed confidence in the idea that magazines would remain relevant in their lives, a few group members seemed to think the medium might lose some of its value without a renewed commitment to creating strong content.

Participant D said, “I think that magazines have gone down in content a little bit.” When asked if she was referring to the amount of content or the quality of content, she responded with the following:

A little bit of both. I think it’s harder to find a story in a magazine because everyone’s attention spans are just shot, so it’s more like ads and pictures, which is kind of sad because there’s not really anything to read. And then it is also very basic. I mean, in magazines like *Cosmo*, there’s nothing like hard, heavy hitting. It’s just kind of fluffy. It’s a lot more pictures every issue.

Depending on the value one places on magazines’ aesthetic components, Participants C—a self-pronounced “visual person”—said there are “pros and cons” to the decline in content quality perceived by Participant D.

Still, in an ideal world, participants all reported that they would read magazines for several hours every week, and they did not foresee such desires diminishing any time soon. Participant O said he would read magazines for 10 hours a week in his perfect world. Participant N stated, “I would say a couple hours a day at least. I’d love to just sit on the porch reading a magazine. That would be great right now.” Such responses positively signaled that participants consider magazines significant enough to take up time in their imagined idealistic lifestyle. Despite the presence of some potential pitfalls for the medium, participants seemed relatively assured of the lasting value and relevance of magazines in their lives.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The goals for this exploratory study looking into the magazine reading habits and preferences of Millennials were wide-ranging and multifaceted. The study first sought to confirm the statistics within the research landscape revealing that many magazines seem to be surviving, and even thriving, among the readers of the digital native Millennial generation. This revelation was reinforced with a preliminary survey in which a majority of respondents (73%) reported that they read magazines, with 85% of this majority reading at least one to three magazines in the past month and the rest reading more. Furthermore, 46% of magazine-reading respondents reported print as their magazine format preference.

The goals for the qualitative portion of the study, which consisted of three focus groups involving people who said they read magazines on a regular basis, were to:

- Understand Millennials' motivations for reading magazines, and whether or not they foresee such motivations lasting into the digital revolution;
- Examine what formats Millennials use when consuming magazine media and why they choose the formats they do;
- Analyze why Millennials find magazines to be relevant to their lives and whether they believe this relevance will last into their futures.

The present study is also unique in that it contributed to a greater understanding of the motivations behind quantitative conclusions concerning the magazine reading habits and

preferences of Millennials by giving voice to the generation's reasons for continued magazine consumption in a way that gleaned deeply qualitative data that is distinctly absent from the present realm of research on the subject. This study was ultimately a comprehensive exploration into the expansive question of *why* Millennials still read magazines. Findings from the study revealed three instrumental themes at work in this issue: (1) although participants admit that “everything is going digital,” they still overwhelmingly prefer print magazines; (2) while print remains their magazine media preference, they will consume digital content when it infiltrates their daily lives and already established routines, requiring little to no extra effort; and (3) despite their strong feelings for print magazines, they think such magazines could cease to exist at the hands of the generation that follows them. These themes will be presented with related recommendations to the magazine industry, as they emerged from common responses regarding the magazine reading habits and preferences of members of one of the industry's most influential demographics—Millennials. This report will be followed by a discussion of the limitations and justifications of the present study. In conclusion, recommendations for future research based on the findings of this study will be offered.

Recommendations for the Magazine Industry

Because of the practical significance of the three primary themes mentioned above that materialized within this research, they will be reported with subsequent suggestions for magazine-industry professionals. These recommendations offer meaningful insight into the ways in which magazines can provide content that is gratifying to their Millennial readers in today's day and age characterized by digital technology. Advice includes prioritizing the group's print preference, utilizing supplemental digital content in ways that infiltrate their daily lives, and

keeping a close watch on their successors—Generation Z—who could become a greater threat to the future of their print products than the Millennials themselves.

Despite digital roots, print preference should be prioritized. Participants in all three focus groups seemed to agree that the media landscape is undergoing a total technological transformation; however, despite such extreme trends toward the digital, these Millennials—members of the group supposed to be the most digital-savvy of all society—overwhelmingly prefer print when it comes to consuming magazine media. Participant E asserted, “Everything’s gone digital,” and Participant C continued, “Everything’s online now.” Participant D said, “There’s apps and all the websites, and when you’re on your iPhone—they’re Apple adaptive—so they’ll have a different format. They’re just easier to access now, but (print’s) still my favorite.” Participant Q expounded on this emergent impression of magazines, saying:

You see them everywhere. You see the Facebook links, the Twitter stuff. Even some have Pinterest accounts. It’s crazy. You saw it first with the QR codes and stuff—like, ‘Scan this for more digital stuff.’ Now it’s just like, ‘Here’s the digital magazine with extra features.’

Despite such drastic digital developments, participants have maintained an indisputable loyalty to print magazines. This focus group revelation was prefaced by 46% of survey respondents reporting a print preference for magazine content. A few common categories emerged from the group discussions that helped explain why participants continue to choose traditional magazines when digital content is available all around them. These are hopeful findings for print magazines, but if magazines wish to continue delivering content Millennials desire, they need to understand some of the specific reasons behind this persistent preference. These rationalizations reflected some of the reasoning referenced in the research questions, but also introduced trends of distinct justifications.

Physical attributes. Group members consistently contended that the physical appeal of print magazines outweighs the convenience of digital magazine content. Participant I asserted, “Digital is definitely more accessible, but I like the hard copy. It’s more exciting to get it in the mail or buy it. It’s glossy, and it’s fun to flip through. . . . It’s more of a tangible item.”

Participant C expressed comparable feelings as she described her disappointment in the digital revolution with the following:

I feel like they’re trying to find ways just to put everything online and downsize, which is sad because I like holding a magazine. Looking at stuff online is great, but I like how it’s put together in a magazine. That’s my favorite thing about it.

Many group members agreed. Others referenced appreciation for the feel of the physical product.

Participant R said, “I love the feeling of the pages. They’re so flimsy, and they make that noise, and I love it.” Participant Q continued, “Sometimes you just want to see everything at once, and you just flip through. Sometimes you want to flip to a random spot. You can’t flip to a random spot when you’re on your tablet or whatever.” Some even appealed to other senses piqued by the paper publications. Participant F said, “This may sound so strange, but I like the smell of a new magazine.” Participant Q supported his statement with a similar one and asserted, “Weirdly enough, I just like the smell of a magazine. I mean, magazines have all of these perfume samples. You don’t get that with digital.” Participant O summed up these sentiments, saying, “Print’s made to keep. Online’s made to transcribe. Print has a different form to it. The same stories might be (online), but print actually comes with the whole package.”

Content. The study’s frequently referenced content motivation resurfaced in this theme with participants offering several explanations for why print magazine content appeals to them in ways the content of its digital counterparts does not. As reported in RQ3, group members claimed they are much more likely to fully engage in print stories than digital articles. Participant

G said, “I’ll actually read the articles in the hard copy. I’ll just skim it online because you can just scroll. I’ll look at what they bold, which is most important, and whatever.” As she pointed to the print magazine she brought to the focus group, she asserted, “This—I’ll read all of it.”

Participant D conveyed comparable habits:

(Online) there’s all those ‘Five Things to Know You’re a College Student’ and then it has a description. ... I’ll just go through the five. But if it’s in front of me, I’ll actually read it and understand why they’re saying that instead of just going through.

Many group members felt that print content is simply more substantial and of higher quality in terms of reporting, writing, and design than digital. Participant J declared, “There’s a lot more information. That app I was talking about—the Snapchat thing—there’s just five or six stories.” Overall, participants expressed greater faith in the reliability of print content compared to digital. Participant O explained, “I like having something. It may just be me, but I just have this weird thing of the article being done better with the physical product that you keep.”

Advertisements. An unexpected topic that emerged within this theme materialized in a considerable amount of organic conversation regarding print versus digital advertisements with reports of a fondness for print ads and, conversely, a frustration with digital ads. Many participants claimed that advertisements in print magazines are, for them, meaningful components of the publications. Participant N explained that she appreciates an advertisement “if it looks pretty.” As she flipped through a magazine, she mused, “All of these pictures... You’re not going to see these ads (online).” Participant L countered with an assertion against digital ads, saying, “But at the same time, I feel like if I were looking at a digital magazine, I would be like, ‘Oh my gosh, this stupid ad.’” This contention spurred much support among the group. Participant I added, “If they try to get you to click it’s annoying. ... They are kind of annoying sometimes because they just fill up the article, and they’re in the middle of everything. ... I think

they're a lot prettier in print." Participant N agreed that the ads she was just admiring would aggravate her if they were digital and added that she will be angry if print magazines eventually make a complete digital conversion. Participant R summed up such feelings:

On your phone, you see an ad, and you immediately skip by it. You're just like, 'Oh my gosh, another ad.' But when you look at an ad in a magazine, you take it in because you're like, 'That's such a cool picture. That's such a pretty picture. I want to see what you get there.' You get the clever caption. You actually focus on the product and the marketing. But when you're on your phone, you don't care because you're just like, 'Oh my gosh, I'm not looking to see that right now.'

Some also appealed to the tangible perks of print ads. Participant K said, "In fashion magazines, some ads have concealer or makeup stuff—like free samples—inside. I wouldn't want to look at it, but then when they have free samples, I'm like, 'Oh, OK, maybe I'll try it.'" Participant N concurred: "Yeah, the perfume samples smell great. I don't know how they would do that (with digital). What are you going to do, scratch your computer screen?" Several group members also communicated a frustration with the lack of control they have over online advertisements. Participant S said she does not like being forced to watch video ads. "That just annoys me," she asserted. "If I don't want to look at an ad, I just flip through it. But some magazines, with their online content, I have to sit there and watch a 30-second video of some lady washing clothes or something."

This persistent preference for print seems to be rooted in the undeniable dominance of technology. Group members reported growing weary with using technology for various tasks throughout the day, which amplifies their desire to sit down and unwind with something different.

Pointing to a print magazine, Participant N described this desire:

I would much rather flip through this than read it on the computer. I'm on the computer enough for school that if I don't have to look at a computer, I'm not going to. When I'm home, I literally don't take my computer out of my bag unless it's to watch Netflix. I'm so sick of looking at a computer.

Participant L expressed the same sentiment, saying, “I feel like I’ve been on the computer so much with school that when I get on the computer, I’m like, ‘This is a task.’ It becomes like homework almost. I’d rather have (a magazine) in my hand.” Participant C echoed this idea, but broadened it to include the variety of digital devices they encounter every day. “It’s kind of nice to put your phone and computers aside—like if you were doing school work—and just pick up a magazine, and kind of separate it,” she explained. Participant P said, “I already scroll through so much stuff on my phone that it’s just kind of whatever.” Many claimed that they look at screens so much throughout the day that it has begun to give them frequent headaches. Several also appealed to the experience motivation reported in RQ3, which discussed print vs. electronic formats, asserting that the digital experience does not compare to that of print. Participant D said it is gratifying to “detach yourself” from technology for a while, and reading a magazine is a great alternative to digital entertainment. Participant C contended, “It’s really nice to just put digital things away. There’s just so much of that. It’s just all the time, in your face.”

It seems that even the digital natives are overwhelmed by today’s digital media landscape, and its overabundance may be driving them to print. Therefore, magazines must recognize this trend and take advantage of it by extending efforts to enhance their print products rather than scaling them back in favor of the digital sector that is so often prioritized in the media environment of our time. These enhancements should focus on a commitment to adhering to the physical attributes of a traditional print magazine that participants expressed such delight for and loyalty to. In this regard, magazines must do their best to give readers the print magazine experience they desire. Furthermore, magazines should take note of the fact that participants reported greater engagement and recall with print content. Therefore, it seems logical that magazines should provide their most substantial, in-depth content in print, while offering easily

digestible content online. They must also continue to provide better content than the content available through online-only competitors. Finally, magazines should capitalize on the positive feelings participants expressed regarding print advertisements. From a business standpoint, participants revealed the importance of print magazines as advertising platforms. Because there is currently such a gap in satisfaction between print ads and digital ads, magazines should work to apply as many of the characteristics of their print ads to their digital ads as possible, especially characteristics that involve aesthetic components and audience control. Generally speaking, participants reported positive feelings for print magazines, and, therefore, magazines should continue their efforts to ensure such sentiments persist.

Digital must infiltrate daily life. While participants' predilection for print was clear, it would be impossible to avoid all digital media in today's day and age. As reported in RQ3, group members expressed satisfaction with certain digital magazine content. Survey respondents reported consuming digital magazine content via social media (27%), magazines' websites (23%), and, rarely, tablet editions (4%). The focus group trend that emerged in this regard revealed that participants will consume digital magazine content when it penetrates their daily lives and already established routines, requiring little to no extra effort on their part to obtain it. This type of content normally comprises various forms of social media, such as the frequently referenced new magazine segment of Snapchat called "Discover" (see RQ3 for more information). Participant C said, "All of the (magazines) have Instagrams and Pinterest now, and they're constantly posting things—like pictures on Instagram, and 'Oh, read this article about this...' Just trying to get people to read the full article, but while using apps." Participant A called such content "click bait," and Participant E added, "Yeah, and it works." Magazines should utilize these types of simplistic approaches that pull in readers almost subconsciously.

Participant Q offered uncomplicated logic for consumption of such content, saying it is “more accessible.” Participant P expounded on this thought, saying, “It’s obviously a lot easier for someone to pick up their phone and read it that way than have to drive somewhere, but I mean, I do like flipping through the pages instead of staring at my phone.” These statements echoed the survey responses of the minority of participants who reported that they did not read magazines and cited time, access, and inconvenience as their top three explanations. When focus group participants were asked why they use social media to obtain magazine content, Participant P—like many other group members—offered “ease and accessibility” as reasoning. Participant R said, “It just kind of pops up. It’s there—and a lot on Facebook, with people sharing articles and stuff. It pops up all the time.” Participant Q continued, “I just see it when I scroll through the feed.” Many participants expressed the same idea. Although participants revealed an intact print preference, in today’s digital age, magazines must utilize the web—if only to point to their print products in a place where Millennials are sure to be exposed to such plugs.

There was also considerable discussion of Snapchat’s “Discover” component, much of which focused on its extreme ease of use. Participant P explained its appeal:

I think Snapchat—that was a smart one. It’s really easy. They have all the different (magazines)—like the food ones, the gossip ones, the more gritty ones—stuff like that. I wouldn’t necessarily download the (magazines’) apps and look at the information I downloaded, but when it’s already there, I’m more likely to click on it and read that stuff.

Participant I elaborated on this thought process, saying, “Yeah, because everyone has Snapchat, but not everyone might have the *Cosmo* app or any app.” Participant N illustrated this format’s infiltration quality when she alleged, “It’s readily available. Everyone always has their phone. Everyone’s always checking Snapchat—I mean, at least I am. You may not always have a magazine, but you always have your phone with you, so it’s getting your attention.” Further proving the point that this type of content penetrates the lives of digital natives, Participant D

even admitted that she sometimes reaches this section of Snapchat unintentionally. “I always accidentally swipe over too far, and then it’s there, and I’m like, ‘Oh, I could click on these.’ It’s just like a little snippet to get you through your day instead of a whole digital magazine,” she said. Participant G communicated a comparable appreciation for “Discover:”

I think it was smart of *Cosmo* and *People* and *National Geographic* to go on Snapchat because you just swipe it over, and it’s updated every day, and then they’re like, ‘We’ll see you again tomorrow at so-and-so time.’ I already check it every day. I go for print, unless it’s that Snapchat thing where I just kind of look it over in class or something. If I’m in class, I can’t just take out a magazine.

Participant R summed up the group’s general sentiment regarding their consumption of digital magazine content:

I think it’s more the accessibility of it. It’s like the more that we get of it through technology, the less we need (print). It doesn’t mean we like it that way. It’s not like we wanted the app this whole time. But it’s kind of like, you rely on it more. It’s what we’re subjected to.

Such digital subjections have not yet diminished the group’s general print preference; however, magazines would do well to capitalize on some of these digital developments even if their sole purpose in doing so is to draw in print readers. The digital content participants reported consuming normally comes in the form of free teasers to paid magazine content—complementary to, not substitutable for, the primary print product. This type of digital content is actually beneficial to print, as its primary function is to entice readers to seek out the print magazines themselves. As Jere and Davis (2011) concluded in their study focused on the motivations behind reading women’s magazines:

The findings of this study suggest that the fear of the Internet supplanting print magazines could be premature. The Internet gratification factors seem to suggest that the Internet may not be a threat to magazines but rather a complementary medium. Generally, the two media seem to gratify different motivations, and using a magazine website to drive print readership and vice versa could only strengthen magazine brands. (p. 23)

The present study furthers this claim and reinforces such recommendations for the industry regarding utilizing the Internet to supplement and support print magazine content. It is recommended that magazines invest in attaining a strong online presence in order to remain relevant across all formats within today's media environment, thereby indirectly strengthening their chances of survival in the print sector.

Beware of predictions that print could die with Generation Z. The emergence of this unforeseen theme brought the present study full circle. This study was built on the premise that in today's rapidly evolving media ecosystem, two central narratives are materializing: the demise of print publishing, and the rise of the Millennial generation—the digital natives—as media consumers. In the midst of the persistent industry discussion that print journalism is dying in the digital age, Millennials—the generation often credited with the format's demise—remain persistent in their preference for print magazines. This is the first surprising finding associated with this study; however, previously established research revealed this trend. It was simply unexplored and overshadowed by stereotypes that associate the Millennial generation with all things digital. Following the acceptance of this unexpected finding and subsequent exploration into it, a second unanticipated theme emerged within group discussions: Despite the strong feelings group members reported for print magazines, many participants still did not seem convinced that the format will hold a secure position in the media landscape of the future. This adds another complex dimension to this realm of research often thought to be so straightforward. The reason participants offered for such pessimism concerning print magazines' fate was not the oft-cited claim that their generation is not purchasing and reading print magazines frequently enough to keep the format in existence, but that their younger siblings, little cousins, and the children they babysit are not doing so. Participants predicted that they will not be the generation

to do away with print magazines in favor of digital formats, but there is a strong chance that Generation Z will be responsible for the final push toward a fully digital media domain.

Generation Z is the recently named group of babies born in the new millennium who are growing up quickly and becoming media consumers in their own right. With the oldest faction now embarking on middle and high school, a 2015 *New York Times* article described their quiet rise to prominence:

While executives have been fretting over the millennials, though, a new generation is growing up behind the scenes — Generation Z (born starting in the mid-90s to the early ‘00s depending on whom you ask). ... They are poised to be somewhat different from the millennials. (Levit)

According to the article, this group is independent, diverse, nontraditional, and—most critically—technologically proficient (Levit, 2015). If Millennials are digital natives, Gen Zers are digital experts. This idea brings contrast to the common societal narrative concerning Millennials and their supposed digital media consumption habits. In line with this novel view, participants in the present study did not consider themselves to be the most digitally driven generation. They feel they are the “in-between” generation, and the generation following them is the one most likely to force future media into the realm of digital-only.

When asked if they thought magazines might go completely digital in the coming years, group members responded with tentative uncertainty. Participant R said, “I think there’s a chance everything could go digital.” Participant N predicted, “Maybe not in our lifetime, but possibly in our lifetime,” and Participant I said, “Probably not soon. Maybe in the next 10 to 15 years.” Despite reporting different time frames for the transformation, most group members agreed a complete digital conversion would likely take place eventually. Participant Q reported such expectations paired with the hope that it does not happen soon:

I think at some point, everything will be digital. At some point, it's for sure, but I don't know about the next 50 years. I'm hoping not. I don't want that to happen. It's just something about having the physical magazine in your hands. It's just more enjoyable to hold it in your hands.

Despite their desire for print's continuance, participants admitted some fault in the situation.

Participant P said she thinks print magazines are already on the decline. "That's why the companies are trying to put it all on apps because they recognize it. I don't like it, but I guess I'm guilty of it because, I'm not using the apps, but I'm not buying the print," she said. Some group members reported that while they enjoy the print magazine experience, they will accept its demise if it comes. Participant S claimed, "I don't think people really care that much. Yeah, we like magazines, but you can live without them," and Participant Q continued, "We're not going to fight the man for magazines." Participant R followed their statements, saying, "We're not going to fight the man for it because it's the accessibility factor. Whatever's easiest." Still, despite any input Millennials might have contributed to print's unstable condition, most participants asserted that a bigger culprit is on the rise: Generation Z. This is a group magazines must start paying close attention to.

Several participants expressed concern for print magazines' chances of survival as the media ecosystem continues to evolve, and its consumers evolve with it. Participant J said, "I feel like it is going to be a lot harder as the years go on with all this digital stuff going on for print. It's just going to be a lot harder for them to keep up." Participant P said, "I think a lot of (magazines) aren't a fan of it because they do still want to keep that print, but they kind of can't ignore it, so they're keeping up with it to stay relevant." Participant G summed up the group's general thoughts on this topic with the following:

It could just end. It could all just go fully digital. That's the generation that we're breeding. Paper kind of fades away and then it's just going to be digital. ...I don't think it's passed, but it's kind of coming to its time. It probably won't even matter by the time

we're older. We might not even have the option to get the magazines that we want because the younger kids are going to take it from us.

Numerous participants expressed similar sentiments regarding the generation below their own—as well as the generation ahead of them. They feel that, as Millennials, they fall somewhere in the middle of society's digital trajectory. Participant D said:

We're the first generation that has handled technology like we do. My mom is the most technologically challenged person ever, so she's going to still go out and buy her magazine. I signed her up for Pinterest, and she just can't figure it out. So, once they're kind of out of the whole magazine-reading thing, I feel like it's really going to go digital just because everyone knows how to use the Internet now. There's babies using iPads now.

Although Millennials are often accused of desiring only the digital, participants overwhelmingly rejected this notion, claiming it actually applies to the members of Generation Z. Participant H, a 20-year-old white female, said:

I have younger cousins and younger siblings that, from when they were babies, they've used iPads. Up until, I feel like, eighth grade—for most of us here—we weren't totally... Not everyone had a computer in their house. Not everyone had a smart phone. We're the in-between. Maybe we still read magazines, but I think people younger than us probably don't buy them, and they don't see the same reasoning behind them. I just feel like it's different. I could be wrong, but I just feel like the way young people keep up with magazines isn't the same as it was.

Several group members expressed the notion of being the “in-between” generation. Participant K stated, “I think our generation—being in between—we're always partially online and partially just reading,” and Participant N continued, “Yeah, I think it comes down to personal preference.”

There was much consensus among participants that Generation Z could hasten the demise of print magazines. Participant Q declared, “They've already started. They've been on e-readers since they were infants—like the LeapFrogs [a brand name for a computer device for small children] and stuff. They're learning to read on tablets basically, so I think they're the ones who are going to accelerate everything going digital for sure.” Participant J held, “I hope it doesn't all

go digital, but—with the younger generation—I’m just wondering how that’s all going to play out,” and Participant N added, “They’re ruining it.” Participant J further explained the gap between society’s two youngest generations:

It’s a big change. A lot of kids now in fourth and fifth grade have cell phones, iPads, and everything. My little sister, I think she gets magazines. I think she has subscriptions, but I don’t think she reads it that much. She’s always on her cell phone.

Echoing the complaints many adults have waged against Millennials for years, participants expressed frustration and confusion with the extreme digital attachments of various children in their lives. Participant N illustrated this with the following account:

I have twin brothers that are 8, and they both have iPads. I didn’t get a cell phone until I was 14. But they do their homework on them. They do their reading on their iPad. They’re growing up with them. . . . Any time they get in trouble, you threaten their iPad, and it’s instant, ‘I’m going to behave because I don’t want to lose the iPad.’

Participant R reported, “The kids I babysit right now—all of their stuff’s on iPads. They give them iPads at school.” Participant I conceded solemnly, “I guess if the younger generation isn’t interested in magazines, then they probably will die out after we get older.” However, as this young group is still establishing both its media consumption and consumer habits, it is not too late for magazines to start making appeals to the generation. It is recommended that magazines exert extensive efforts to determine the gratifications Generation Z seeks from its media use with as much fervor as it has worked to discover the desires of the Millennial generation.

Still, despite reports of such indisputable insecurity inherently attached to the favored format, several participants offered optimistic stances concerning the future of print magazines. Many group members felt that certain magazines that appeal to older readers might survive.

Participant E said:

I think magazines that are directed toward older generations will stick around because I think as we get older, we’re all going to want to read *Time* magazine. I think things that are focused toward older generations may stay around. But like, I’m not going to be

reading *Cosmo* when I'm 80 years old. Maybe I'll be cool, and I'll still read it, but I think it [the printed edition] will die and become digital.

This could be true, as the majority of Millennial survey participants in this study reported currently reading lighter magazine genres such as Women's (19%), Fashion (15%), Lifestyle (13%), Music/Entertainment (12%), Gossip (12%), and Sports (10%), with news magazines only receiving a 6% readership score among respondents. Many group members seemed to agree that this content trend would be reversed in the future. Some participants held onto the hope that the trend toward digital is just that—a trend that will, by nature, fade away. Participant I attempted to communicate why digital content seems to be taking over the current media landscape as well as why she is confident this trend will not take root:

I think it's because digital is such a new thing, and everyone's so excited about it. Everyone's just like, 'We have to get everything on the iPad. We have to get everything digital.' So I think that's why there's been demand for it, and people have been moving towards that. But now I think people are realizing that it's so much easier just to read a magazine than to read it on your tablet. It is easier to carry around just one tablet with a lot of magazines that you want to read, but I think (print) is easier to read.

In conclusion, while it seems Millennials will not be the generation to forgo print magazines in favor of digital, Generation Z could do just that. Still, the present study produced valuable insight into the worth Millennials continue to place on print magazines—an appreciation that would surprise much of society today. Though the future of magazines remains relatively uncertain, if its fate falls into the hands of the Millennials—the generation of digital natives—print magazines' survival seems promising.

Limitations and Justifications

The mixed-methods approach involved in this study helped account for several of the limitations associated with each respective part—both the survey and focus groups. Visser, Krosnick, and Lavrakas offered the following validation regarding the strengths of such a design:

Social psychologists have long recognized that every method of scientific inquiry is subject to limitations and that choosing among research methods inherently involves trade-offs. ... The inevitability of such limitations has led many methodologists to advocate the use of multiple methods and to insist that substantive conclusions can be most confidently derived by triangulating across measures and methods that have nonoverlapping strengths and weaknesses. (2002, p. 223)

A preliminary survey and subsequent focus groups offered such a combination, as the blending of these quantitative and qualitative measures offered the “nonoverlapping strengths and weaknesses” referenced above.

Survey. Visser et al. touted the benefits of the survey in social science research, saying, surveys enable exploration of “social psychological phenomena with samples that accurately represent the population about whom generalizations are to be made. ... These advantages of survey research make it a valuable addition to the methodological arsenal available to social psychologists” (2002, p. 247); however, as previously explained, with surveys come the inherent limitation of working with closed-ended questions. This is not always a drawback, but for the present study, which seeks to explore the motivations behind a phenomenon based largely on inexplicable statistics produced from previous closed-response survey questions, this is an issue. Krosnick proclaimed, “It is now well known that even slight variations in the way an attitude question is asked can significantly change answers” (1991, p. 213) to survey questions. This describes a landscape of potential discovery too narrow for the present study’s purposes. Visser et al. warned that “if the meaning of a question is ambiguous, different respondents may interpret it differently and respond to it differently” (2002, p. 240). Therefore, they advocated for the avoidance of ambiguity with subsequent recommendations that “wordings be easy for respondents to understand (thereby minimizing fatigue), and this can presumably be done by using short, simple words that are familiar to people” (Visser et al., 2002, p. 240). The language

of this study's survey reflected such advice, and, therefore, obtained useful data despite the method's unavoidable depth deficits.

Following Visser et al.'s guidance also combated another problematic survey limitation referred to as "satisficing," which occurs "when optimally answering a survey question would require substantial cognitive effort, (so) some respondents simply provide a satisfactory answer instead" (Krosnick, 1991, p. 213). This study sought "optimized" participation from respondents, which arises from motives such as "desires for self-expression, for interpersonal response, for intellectual challenge, for self-understanding, for feelings of altruism, or for emotional catharsis" (Krosnick, 1991, p. 214). Additionally, "expenditure of great effort in answering survey questions can also be motivated by desires for gratification from successful performance, (and) to help manufacturers produce better-quality products that suit consumers' needs better" (Krosnick, 1991, p. 214). Many of these motivations apply to the content of this study's survey, and, therefore, signal a likelihood that optimization occurred. Furthermore, Krosnick concluded that, "fortunately, the most useful designs for experimental studies are quite straightforward. The dependent variables in these studies should be either the magnitudes of response effects or the extent of use of various response strategies" (1991, p. 229)—again, aligning with the subject matter and wording of the survey involved in this study.

This study's sample of respondents was drawn from a large public university with a student body rich in diversity with both broad domestic and international roots and varied socioeconomic backgrounds. This study took place in an area where the convenience sample was the ideal sample for the topic under study. Possible criticisms of the sample, such as the bias that could come from oversampling journalism students, were anticipated and accounted for in the design of the study with plans for screening and segmenting the sample (outlined above). Still,

despite such extensive efforts, demographic data from the study revealed that white females comprised a majority of the survey participants. The female majority (67%) could have skewed the top three magazine genres reported as the most popular among respondents who read magazines, which included Women's (19%), Fashion (15%), and Lifestyle (13%). Still, through the years, females have regularly been found to be more avid magazine readers than males (see for instance, Aronson, 2014; MPA, 2013; MPA, 2014), so perhaps the study's female-heavy sample is actually representative of a typical sample of magazine readers. Additionally, with a 79% majority of white respondents, greater racial diversity could have benefitted the study as well.

While the study's preliminary survey offered valuable findings concerning respondents' levels and preferences of magazine consumption—which included basic categories such as frequency, magnitude, genre, and format—this methodology could not satisfy the deeply explorative nature of the present study. Even Visser et al. admitted that, “when used in certain applications, closed-ended questions have distinct disadvantages. Most important, respondents tend to confine their answers to the choices offered even if the researcher does not wish them to do so” (2002, p. 238). Whenever possible, survey questions included a self-report section (“Other”) in which respondents could include any unique motives not offered in the question's multiple-choice list, and several respondents did utilize this section; however, this effort still did not achieve the dialogically produced data desired in the present study. Furthermore, failing to include “cost” as a reason for not reading magazines was a limitation. Some of the suggested reasons could be used to infer cost as a reason for not reading magazines, but omitting the word meant that the reasons provided in the survey were not sufficiently exhaustive. Additionally, Holbrook, Krosnick, Carson, and Mitchell found that “questionnaire designers could benefit

from gaining further systematic insight into all the conversational conventions potentially applicable to the sorts of questions they typically ask and from attempting to conform to those conventions whenever possible” (2000, p. 492)—a difficult feat to achieve in a short preliminary survey. However, an asset of the present mixed-methods study lies in the fact that many of these survey limitations were remedied by its primary methodology—focus groups.

Focus groups. Qualitative methods such as focus groups, especially those that utilize convenience sampling, are often criticized for their lack of basis for generalization. Both Strugill et al. (2010) and Zerba (2011) concluded their studies with disclaimers against the generalizability of their findings due to beliefs inherent in such criticisms. Strugill et al. called their results “noteworthy,” but “not intended for generalizing” (2010, p. 14), and it does seem that they did not make an effort to obtain a representative sample—only conducting one focus group with only female, journalism-student participants. The present study’s more inclusive sample makes it stronger comparatively, though still not generalizable. Zerba, who hired a recruiting agency to screen participants based on extensive criteria aimed at obtaining a representative sample, still said the findings from the eight focus groups conducted for her study “can only be applied to sixty-four participants” (2011, p. 608).

Luker asserted that “mainstream social scientists” often consider focus groups to be an “unscientific” method (2008, p. 183); however, scholars have made arguments against instating such limitations on the types of findings obtained through such qualitative study. Weiss offers several justifications that apply to the present study. Most simply, he says, “We can expect the same behavior from any other group with the same dynamics and the same constraints” (Weiss, 1994, p. 27), and, arguably, many Millennials are under the same constraints as those who participated in this study. He also speaks to the qualitative study’s level of depth as a

rationalization, saying, “Underneath the accidents of individuality lies an identity in structure and functioning among all members of our species” (Weiss, 1994, p. 27). Finally, he appeals to the “Theory Independent of Qualifiers,” saying:

There is no justification for questioning the exportation of a theory based on our sample. We might acknowledge that a sample is not representative but argue that there is no reason for the theory to be limited to the sample from which it was developed. (Weiss, 1994, p. 28)

Therefore, while a limitation of this study is that it does not look at a distribution of magazine reading Millennials across the globe, there is no reason why this should be seen as a limitation to the value of its findings.

Additionally, focus groups were conducted to the point of saturation. As mentioned above, focus group participants were recruited from the study’s survey respondents who reported that they read magazines, and the survey’s sample was drawn from a large public university with national prominence and exposure, and, therefore, a student body rich in diversity. Possible criticisms of the sample, such as the bias that could come from oversampling journalism students, were anticipated and accounted for in the design of the study with plans for screening and segmenting the sample (outlined above). Still, the majority of participants were students in media-related majors discussing a media-related topic. While such similarities in participants’ fields of study provided less diversity in this realm—a limitation—this could also be seen as a strength of the study in that these students are both consumers and have some understanding of mass media, making them highly qualified participants for focus groups focused on a media-related issue. As Luker put it, “We want to sample ... in such a way that *logically*, if not statistically, we can generalize to some larger population” (2008, p. 125). Still, despite such extensive efforts, the demographics of the focus group participants were similar to those of the survey respondents, as they were simply volunteers from that sample. Overall, 79% of focus

group participants were female, but there was at least one male participant in each session. Furthermore, as referenced previously, through the years, females have regularly been found to be more avid magazine readers than males (see for instance, Aronson, 2014; MPA, 2013; MPA, 2014), so it could be argued that the study's female-heavy sample is actually representative of a typical sample of magazine readers. Regardless of the question of gender, with an 84% majority of white participants, greater racial diversity could have benefitted the study as well.

Another criticism often waged specifically against focus groups is the method's potential to produce findings plagued by groupthink. This was combated by hiring a moderator with training in eliciting individual opinions within group discussions and actively ensuring that participants were not simply building on each others' statements with their respective responses. Lezaun spoke of the importance of such moderators in producing valid findings from focus groups:

A fundamental objective of the moderator's techniques is to prevent the emergence of a "collective" out of the group dynamic—to protect the individuality of the opinions expressed by each participant (Lezaun, 2007, p. 141). "The moderator," one of them argues, stressing this point, "is a bit like a puppeteer, controlling the action, yet hoping panelists don't see her pulling the strings." (Goebert, 2002, p. 35, as cited in Lezaun, 2007, p. 141)

The moderator of this study's focus groups conducted the sessions with these goals in mind. Furthermore, while the focus groups were as homogeneous as possible, there were some small differences within them that encouraged and stimulated critical thinking throughout the discussion. For instance, while everyone in the groups was a magazine reader, there were differences of opinion regarding specific publications, perceptions of the industry at large, and preferences for the formats of supplemental magazine content, which all illustrated the absence of groupthink.

A related concern often associated with focus groups is the potential for the emergence of

social desirability bias among group participants. Hollander stated, “Social desirability pressures induce participants to offer information or play particular roles, either to fulfill the perceived expectations of the facilitator or other participants or to present a favorable image of themselves” (2004, p. 610). However, Morgan and Krueger asserted that, like groupthink, this problem can be evaded through the efforts of a skilled moderator, saying:

A good moderator will strive to create an open and permissive atmosphere in which each person feels free to share her or his point of view. When there is some fear that pressures toward conformity may limit the discussion, the opening instructions to the group can emphasize that you want to hear about a range of different experiences and feelings, and subsequent questions and probes can follow up on this theme by asking for other points of view. When participants see that the researchers are genuinely interested in learning as much as possible about their experiences and feelings, then conformity is seldom a problem. (1993, p. 8-9)

Once again, the present study’s moderator conducted the focus groups based on these objectives. Furthermore, Nederhof described social desirability bias as “the tendency on behalf of the subjects to deny socially undesirable traits and to claim socially desirable ones, and the tendency to say things which place the speaker in a favourable light” (1985, p. 264). Social desirability bias is most often connected to sensitive, private topics of study, and in the present study, focus group participants consisted of only those who self-identified as being interested in the topic area, which simply involved discussing their magazine reading habits and preferences rather than any kind of controversial or deeply personal information.

Finally, it has been argued throughout this study that focus groups are the best method for exploration into the motivations behind Millennials’ magazine use, but, throughout the literature, focus groups also emerged as a strong method for working with the Millennial age group in general. Though primarily interested in digital native-driven transformations in the education sector, Singh and Runquist’s findings point out that Millennials’ attention spans are shrinking, and, therefore, the group requires “an educational experience that is immersive, hands-on, and

experiential” (2009, p. 3). Luker connects these attributes and focus groups, saying, “In modern terminology, focus groups are much more ‘interactive’ than surveys, and I would suspect more interactive than even the kind of interviews that I do” (2008, p. 183). Singh and Runquist offer guidelines for their approach to educating a digital-savvy generation, which involve ensuring that learning experiences are found relevant to each Millennial’s life and future goals on a personal level, “explorative” in nature, interactive with regard to giving an individual a voice within a group, and facilitated, but not in a way that feels like “spoon-feeding” (2009, p. 3). This description could arguably be applied directly to focus groups without alteration, offering further proof that this method is ideal for working with the Millennial population.

Sturgill et al. offered a simple justification for their qualitative study, saying, “flexible data collection methods ... permitted conversations to flow freely. As a result, the researchers gathered important insights they might otherwise have missed” (2010, p. 7). This was the goal of the present motivation-seeking study. There is sufficient evidence throughout the available literature to support the need for this type of qualitative study into the reasoning behind this phenomenon, and, moreover, there is ample justification for using focus groups as the methodological approach for doing so.

Recommendations for Future Research

As Strugill et al. asserted, “As an example of qualitative research, this study’s findings are not intended for generalizing, but rather for capturing the experiences and attitudes of the participants” (2010, p. 14). The same can be said of the present study. Therefore, future research should consider exploring its contentions. Conducting future studies to determine whether the present study’s findings apply to different populations would prove worthwhile and provide helpful context to the conclusions of this work. Specifically, it could be beneficial to examine the

relationship between magazine reading habits and preferences and gender. Because there was a majority of female participants in the present study, analyzing gender distinctions within the data did not materialize as a fruitful purpose; however, future studies could build on the present study's general findings by investigating the discrepancies and similarities in how they apply to genders.

Additionally, the theme that materialized from group discussions regarding the important role that Generation Z could assume in determining the fate of print magazines provides a dimension within this realm of research ripe for discovery. Because of their categorization as digital natives, previous research on this subject has been focused on Millennials almost exclusively, and Generation Z has not yet been explored in association with this situation. Given the feelings of the Millennial participants in the present study that the generation behind them could prove to be a more critical factor in this issue than their own, quantitative and qualitative investigation into Generation Z's magazine reading habits and preferences—or lack thereof—is a logical subsequent study that could advance the research within this study and most likely produce fruitful findings regarding the future of print magazines. As Levit emphasized in her *New York Times*' article focused on Generation Z:

Even well-known organizations will have to rethink their recruiting practices to attract this group, and now is the time to start. Those who want to take advantage of Gen Z talent in the future need to develop relationships today with teenagers in grades seven through 12. Get into their schools, provide mentorship and education, and put yourself in a position to help shape their career decisions. They are eager to listen. (2015)

It seems that mass communication researchers could benefit from listening to Generation Z as well in regard to their media consumption practices, and, specifically as an extension of this study, their magazine reading habits and preferences. While the importance of the Millennial generation remains intact, this study revealed that the monopoly of attention they have attained

as society's crucial emerging group of consumers should be dispersed to include their successors. The future of print magazines seems secure when based on the sentiments of the Millennial generation, but this study shows that a voice must be given to Generation Z to determine this fate more definitively.

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APPENDIX A

Online Survey

Appendix A contains the text of the study's online preliminary survey, beginning with the information sheet (consent/assent form) participants were directed to before beginning the survey itself.

Online Survey

(To obtain focus group volunteer participants as well as information for segmenting focus groups)

Study Title: Millennials and the Future of Magazines: How the generation of digital natives will determine whether print magazines survive

Investigator: Elizabeth Bonner, MA Student in Journalism

Institution: University of Alabama

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called "Millennials and the Future of Magazines: How the generation of digital natives will determine whether print magazines survive." The study is being done by Elizabeth Bonner, who is a graduate student at the University of Alabama. Ms. Bonner is being supervised by Dr. Chris Roberts, who is a professor of journalism at the University of Alabama.

What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?

This study is being done to find out more about the Millennial generation's magazine reading habits and preferences. (Millennials are the current generation of young adults. This study will specifically focus on 18-25 year olds.)

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

- Report whether or not you have read a magazine in the last month.
 - If you have not, you will offer some of the reasons for why you have not.

- If you have, you will answer some basic questions about your magazine reading habits and preferences. You will also be invited to participate in discussion groups to discuss these magazine reading habits and preferences further. You will be able to submit your contact information to receive information about the discussion groups in an email.
- Answer some basic questions about yourself.

Why is this study important or useful?

With this study, the investigator hopes to discover how this important generation feels about magazines today. Millennials are the media’s audience for the years to come and the group most comfortable and experienced with digital technologies.

The results of this study may help magazines understand better ways to give their young adult readers what they want.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

You have been asked to be in this study because you are a member of the University of Alabama’s College of Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool and saw the listing for this study or heard about it from one of your professors. You are a member of the “Millennial” generation between the ages of 18 and 25, and we would like to learn more about your generation’s magazine reading habits and preferences.

How many people will be in this study?

The University of Alabama’s College of Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool currently has 559 students enrolled. Therefore, up to 559 students may participate in this survey. It is hoped that anywhere from 18 to 50 of the people who participate in this survey will go on to participate in the study’s discussion groups.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

For this part of the study, you will complete a short online survey at your convenience that asks about your magazine reading habits and preferences.

How much time will I spend being in this study?

It should take you no longer than 25 minutes to complete this survey.

Will being in this study cost me anything?

The only cost to you from this study is the amount of time that it takes you to complete.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?

You will not be compensated for being in this study, unless you are in a class that requires you to participate. In that case, you will receive 0.5 research credit towards that class’ requirement.

Can the investigator take me out of this study?

The investigator may take you out of the study if something happens that means you no longer meet the study requirements.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

There is little or no risk foreseen if you take part in this survey. The main risk is that you will have to answer questions about your magazine consumption habits. Nothing you report can be traced back to you, unless you are interested in the second part of this study and submit your contact information to learn more about participating in the discussion groups.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study? What are the benefits to science or society?

There are no direct benefits to you unless you find it interesting or enjoyable to describe your magazine reading habits and preferences. This study will help communication researchers understand how your important generation feels about magazines today. The results of this study may help magazines understand better ways to give their young adult readers what they want.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy will be protected because you will be able to complete this survey in your own time and at your own leisure. No researcher will be able to tell who you are or what you have revealed, unless you are interested in the second part of this study and submit your contact information to learn more about participating in the discussion groups. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

Your confidentiality will be protected by keeping your name (which is only recorded so you can receive class credit) separate from the other information you provide, unless you are interested in the second part of this study and submit your contact information to learn more about participating in the discussion groups. Only two researchers (Elizabeth Bonner and Dr. Chris Roberts) will have access to the information you provide. Data will be deleted once this study is complete.

What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?

The alternative to being in this study is not to participate. Students in the research participant pool may choose the designated alternative assignment for course credit.

What are my rights as a participant in this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (the IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please contact Elizabeth Bonner

at embonner@crimson.ua.edu or Dr. Chris Roberts at croberts@ua.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html or email the Research Compliance office at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu. After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website.

Before you begin this survey, check the box below to agree with the terms of the survey written above. You recognize that this survey is voluntary and anonymous. This survey will not ask for any personally identifying information, unless you are interested in the second part of this study and submit your contact information to learn more about participating in the discussion groups. Your responses will be used for a master's thesis and potential publication without any personally identifying information.

I agree

I disagree

(If the student agrees, the survey will begin. If the student disagrees, the survey will close.)

- **A-Q1:** Have you read a magazine in the last month?
 - **No**
 - **N-Q1:** Why not? (Choose all that apply.)
 - Inconvenience
 - Time
 - Relevance
 - Format
 - Access
 - Lack of control over content
 - Other (Please explain.)
 - **SKIP TO QUESTION A-Q2**
 - **Yes**
 - **Y-Q1:** How many magazines did you read in the past month?
 - One to three magazines
 - Four or five magazines
 - Six or seven magazines
 - Eight or nine magazines
 - More than 10 magazines
 - Other (Please explain.)
 - **Y-Q2:** What categories of magazines did you read in the past month? (Choose all that apply.)
 - Women's
 - Men's

- Teen
 - News
 - Lifestyle
 - Home and Garden
 - Sports
 - Music/Entertainment
 - Fashion
 - Gossip
 - Other (Please explain.)
- **Y-Q3:** In what formats did you read magazines? (Choose all that apply.)
 - Print editions
 - Magazines' websites
 - Tablet editions
 - Social media
 - Other (Please explain.)
 - **Y-Q4:** Would you be willing to participate in a focus group that would ask some deeper questions about your magazine use? It would last about 90 minutes at Reese Phifer Hall, and you would receive 0.5 additional credit toward your course research participation requirement. (Clicking 'Yes' involves **no** commitment to participate in a focus group. It simply signals your interest in learning more about participating.)
 - If **no**, SKIP TO QUESTION **A-Q2**
 - If **yes**, then: Please answer a few basic questions about yourself.
 - **Ya-Q1:** Name (to be used in contacting you about the possibility of participating in a focus group)
 - **Ya-Q2:** E-mail address (to be used in contacting you about the possibility of participating in a focus group)
 - **Ya-Q3:** Age
 - **Ya-Q4:** Gender
 - Male
 - Female
 - **Ya-Q5:** Race and Ethnicity (Choose all that apply.)
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - White
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Not Hispanic or Latino
 - **Ya-Q6:** Major
 - **Ya-Q7:** Minor
 - **Ya-Q8:** Year in school
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore

- Junior
 - Senior
 - Other (Please explain.)
- **A-Q2:** Please answer a few basic questions about yourself. (Both magazine readers and nonreaders will be asked to report this basic demographic information.)
 - **Aa-Q1:** Age
 - **Aa-Q2:** Gender
 - Male
 - Female
 - **Aa-Q3:** Race and Ethnicity (Choose all that apply.)
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - White
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Not Hispanic or Latino
 - **Aa-Q4:** Major
 - **Aa-Q5:** Minor
 - **Aa-Q6:** Year in school
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Other (Please explain.)

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Discussion Guide

The following appendix contains the focus group discussion guide the primary investigator created to direct the focus group discussions. The moderator led the focus group sessions based on this guide.

Focus Group Questions

(“Turn signals” (Luker, 2008, p. 184) included between sets of questions to alert moderator of slight subject changes)

“Engagement Questions” (Eliot & Associates, 2005, p. 3)

1. (Icebreaker Question) Tell me about your favorite magazine and what you like about it.
2. Why do you read magazines?

“Exploration Questions” (Eliot & Associates, 2005, p. 3)

Think-Back and Look Forward

3. In the last few years, what changes have you noticed magazines making? What are some of the pros and cons of these changes?
4. How do you think your magazine reading habits have changed in the last few years?
5. How do you think your magazine reading habits might change in the future?
6. In your ideal world, how many hours per week would you spend reading magazines?

Print vs. Digital

7. Tell me about how you get magazine content (print magazines, tablet magazines, websites, social media, etc.) and why you choose certain formats.
8. Do you prefer to read print or digital magazine content and why? What about the other do you dislike?
9. How do you think magazines are doing with adapting to the digital age? What are some of the best adaptations you’ve noticed?
10. How do you feel when people say newspapers are dying? Why?

“Exit Questions” (Eliot & Associates, 2005, p. 3)

11. Is there anything else you would like to say about what you enjoy or dislike about reading magazines?

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Documents



April 9, 2015

Elizabeth Bonzer
Dept. of Journalism
CCIS
Box 870172

Re: IRB#: 15-OR-109 "Millennials and the Future of Magazines: How the Generation of Digital Natives will Determine Whether Print Magazines Survive"

Dear Ms. Bonzer:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waivers of written documentation of informed consent and parental permission. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

Your application will expire on April 8, 2016. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped informed consent/assent to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,


Carpanito T. Myles, MSW, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer



333 Lake Administration Building
Box 900 27
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0900
Phone (205) 939-5466
Fax (205) 939-5189
TDD (205) 939-5669

Study Title: Millennials and the Future of Magazines: How the generation of digital natives will determine whether print magazines survive

Investigator: Elizabeth Bonner, MA Student in Journalism

Institution: University of Alabama

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called "Millennials and the Future of Magazines: How the generation of digital natives will determine whether print magazines survive." The study is being done by Elizabeth Bonner, who is a graduate student at the University of Alabama. Ms. Bonner is being supervised by Dr. Chris Roberts, who is a professor of journalism at the University of Alabama.

What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?

This study is being done to find out more about the Millennial generation's magazine reading habits and preferences. (Millennials are the current generation of young adults. This study will specifically focus on 18-25 year olds.)

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

- Report whether or not you have read a magazine in the last month.
 - If you have not, you will offer some of the reasons for why you have not.
 - If you have, you will answer some basic questions about your magazine reading habits and preferences. You will also be invited to participate in discussion groups to discuss these magazine reading habits and preferences further. You will be able to submit your contact information to receive information about the discussion groups in an email.
- Answer some basic questions about yourself.

Why is this study important or useful?

With this study, the investigator hopes to discover how this important generation feels about magazines today. Millennials are the media's audience for the years to come and the group most comfortable and experienced with digital technologies.

The results of this study may help magazines understand better ways to give their young adult readers what they want.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

You have been asked to be in this study because you are a member of the University of Alabama's College of Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool and saw the listing for this study or heard about it from one of your professors. You are a member of the "Millennial" generation between the ages of 18 and 25, and we would like to learn more about your generation's magazine reading habits and preferences.

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Approval date: 4/9/15
Expiration date: 4/8/2016

How many people will be in this study?

The University of Alabama's College of Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool currently has 559 students enrolled. Therefore, up to 559 students may participate in this survey. It is hoped that anywhere from 18 to 50 of the people who participate in this survey will go on to participate in the study's discussion groups.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

For this part of the study, you will complete a short online survey at your convenience that asks about your magazine reading habits and preferences.

How much time will I spend being in this study?

It should take you no longer than 25 minutes to complete this survey.

Will being in this study cost me anything?

The only cost to you from this study is the amount of time that it takes you to complete.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?

You will not be compensated for being in this study, unless you are in a class that requires you to participate. In that case, you will receive 0.5 research credit towards that class' requirement.

Can the investigator take me out of this study?

The investigator may take you out of the study if something happens that means you no longer meet the study requirements.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

There is little or no risk foreseen if you take part in this survey. The main risk is that you will have to answer questions about your magazine consumption habits. Nothing you report can be traced back to you, unless you are interested in the second part of this study and submit your contact information to learn more about participating in the discussion groups.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study? What are the benefits to science or society?

There are no direct benefits to you unless you find it interesting or enjoyable to describe your magazine reading habits and preferences. This study will help communication researchers understand how your important generation feels about magazines today. The results of this study may help magazines understand better ways to give their young adult readers what they want.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy will be protected because you will be able to complete this survey in your own time and at your own leisure. No researcher will be able to tell who you are or what you have revealed, unless you are interested in the second part of this study and submit your contact information to learn more about participating in the discussion groups. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

UA IRB Approved Document
Approval #: 49115
Expiration date: 4/8/2016

How will my confidentiality be protected?

Your confidentiality will be protected by keeping your name (which is only recorded so you can receive class credit) separate from the other information you provide, unless you are interested in the second part of this study and submit your contact information to learn more about participating in the discussion groups. Only two researchers (Elizabeth Bonner and Dr. Chris Roberts) will have access to the information you provide. Data will be deleted once this study is complete.

What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?

The alternative to being in this study is not to participate. Students in the research participant pool may choose the designated alternative assignment for course credit.

What are my rights as a participant in this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (the IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please contact Elizabeth Bonner at emberner@crimson.ua.edu or Dr. Chris Roberts at croberts@ua.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tania Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/IRCO_Welcome.html or email the Research Compliance office at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu. After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website.

Before you begin this survey, check the box below to agree with the terms of the survey written above. You recognize that this survey is voluntary and anonymous. This survey will not ask for any personally identifying information, unless you are interested in the second part of this study and submit your contact information to learn more about participating in the discussion groups. Your responses will be used for a master's thesis and potential publication without any personally identifying information.

- I agree
- I disagree

(If the student agrees, the survey will begin. If the student disagrees, the survey will close.)

UA IRB Approved Document
Approval date: 4/9/15
Expiration date: 4/9/2016

Study Title: Millennials and the Future of Magazines: How the generation of digital natives will determine whether print magazines survive

Investigator: Elizabeth Bonner, MA Student in Journalism

Institution: University of Alabama

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called "Millennials and the Future of Magazines: How the generation of digital natives will determine whether print magazines survive." The study is being done by Elizabeth Bonner, who is a graduate student at the University of Alabama. Ms. Bonner is being supervised by Dr. Chris Roberts, who is a professor of journalism at the University of Alabama.

What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?

This study is being done to find out why people in the Millennial generation are still reading magazines in our day and age that is becoming more and more about digital media. (Millennials are the current generation of young adults. This study will specifically focus on 18-25 year olds.)

The questions will look into topics such as:

- Why do Millennials still purchase and read magazines on a regular basis?
- How have these habits changed with digital transformations?
- How do Millennials think these habits might change as this technological takeover continues?

Why is this study important or useful?

With these discussion groups, the investigator hopes to discover how this important generation feels about magazines today. Millennials are the media's audience for the years to come and the group most comfortable and experienced with digital technologies.

The results of this study may help magazines understand better ways to give their young adult readers what they want.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

You have been asked to be in this study because you are a member of the University of Alabama's College of Communication and Information Sciences research participant pool and saw the listing for this study or heard about it from one of your professors. You completed an online survey for this study and identified yourself as a magazine reader between the ages of 18 and 25, and, after learning about this part of the study, expressed your interest in discussing your magazine reading habits and preferences in the study's discussion groups.

How many people will be in this study?

The investigator hopes to create three to five discussion groups that consist of six to 10 people per group. Based on this, this portion of the study could include anywhere from 18 to 50 people. However, you will only be asked to participate in one group, so you will only be interacting with six to 10 other group members. More people participated in the survey portion of this study because it included people who reported that they don't read magazines.

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What will I be asked to do in this study?

You have already completed an online survey for this study. During the survey, you identified yourself as a magazine reader between the ages of 18 and 25, and you expressed interest in being a part of the study's discussion groups. The results of the survey will help the investigator assign participants to the discussion groups based on similar magazine reading habits and preferences. Discussion groups tend to work best when the group participants have things in common.

If you agree to be in these discussion groups, you will be asked to do these things:

You will come to a laboratory classroom in Reese Phifer Hall and participate in a group discussion led by a moderator who will ask specific questions about your magazine reading habits and preferences. The investigator will video record the group discussions to be sure that all your words are captured accurately. Additionally, the laboratory classroom we will be using has continuous recording for security reasons. Because of this, consenting/assenting to being video recorded is a requirement of participating in these focus groups. If you do not wish to be video recorded you cannot participate in this part of the study.

How much time will I spend being in this study?

The discussion groups will last approximately one hour, depending on how much information the group participants choose to share.

Will being in this study cost me anything?

The only cost to you from this study is your time and your mileage to the university campus.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?

In appreciation of your time, you will receive 0.5 research credit if you are enrolled in a course that requires participation in research studies or the completion of another project.

Can the investigator take me out of this study?

The investigator may take you out of the study if something happens that means you no longer meet the study requirements.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

Participation in this study presents no foreseen risk to volunteers. If you are participating in one of the study's discussion groups, then you have already identified yourself as being interested in the topic area of the discussion groups. Your only role in the study will be to discuss a topic you have expressed interest in talking about.

Also, you will only be discussing your magazine habits and preferences rather than any kind of sensitive or deeply personal information. The moderator and the investigator will work to ensure the focus groups stay on topic and that everyone in the groups is respected and feels comfortable responding to the questions asked.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study? What are the benefits to science or society?

There are no direct benefits to you unless you find it interesting or enjoyable to describe your magazine reading habits and preferences and hear about other people's magazine reading habits

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and preferences. You may also feel good about knowing that you might help magazines understand better ways to give their young adult readers what they want during this time when many print publications are struggling.

How will my privacy be protected?

There is no guarantee of privacy because of the group setting in which these discussions will take place. However, the study's discussion groups will take place in a secure laboratory classroom where the group will not be overheard or interrupted. You and fellow discussion group members will be asked to discuss topics such as:

- What are your motivations for reading print magazines? For example, do you use magazines to be informed, entertained or both—or for entirely different reasons? Do you see these motivations lasting further into the digital era? Do you see them diminishing with increases in digital options?
- What formats do you use when consuming magazine media—original print products, tablet editions, websites, social media, etc.? Which formats are the most satisfying for you and why? Which formats do you see yourself continuing to use in the future? Which do you see yourself continuing to buy?
- What about magazines do you find valuable? What about magazines do you find relevant to your life? Do you see this relevance lasting into the future?

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

It is not possible to promise confidentiality when using discussion groups. The investigator will request that people keep the discussion confidential, but she cannot guarantee this will happen. Several more efforts will be made to ensure confidentiality is protected to the best of our ability. These efforts are outlined below.

The only place where your name will appear in connection with this study is on this information sheet and on the survey where you voluntarily submitted your contact information because you were interested in learning more about the discussion groups. The information sheets will be kept in a locked file drawer in Ms. Bonner's home office, which is locked when she is not there. Survey responses and any identifying information will be kept on her password-protected computer. The data will be disposed of after the research is complete. Responses from the discussion groups themselves will be recorded without identifying information.

The video recordings of the discussion groups will only be reviewed by the investigator. Recordings will be kept on Ms. Bonner's password protected computer. The data will be disposed of after the research is complete.

The investigator will write a thesis paper on this study, but participants will be identified only as "students at a large southeastern university." No one will be able to recognize you.

What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?

The alternative to being in this study is not to participate. Students in the research participant pool may choose the designated alternative assignment for course credit.

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 Approval date: 4/9/15
 Expiration date: 4/8/2016

What are my rights as a participant in this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board ("the IRB") is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please call the investigator Elizabeth Bonner at 205-910-3283. If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tania Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html or email the Research Compliance office at participantoutreach@barua.ua.edu.

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I give consent/assent to be video recorded during this study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

I have read this information sheet. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this information sheet to keep.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

UA IRB Approved Document
Approval date: 4/19/15
Expiration date: 4/18/2016