

Magazine Industry Trends: Looking Back at 2021 & Forward to 2022

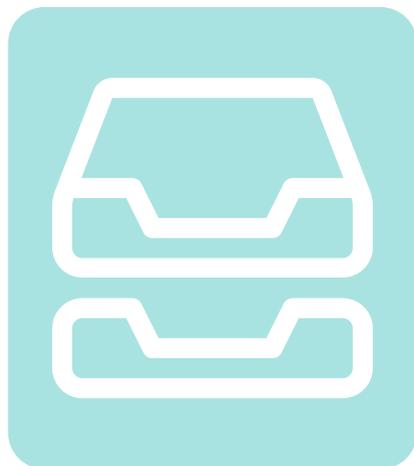
By Jessica Patterson

What Happened in 2021?

Accelerated pace of readers migrating to digital platforms.

In 2021, pandemic-related impacts in advertising and consumer behaviour continued to transform the Canadian magazine industry. Print readership, which has been on a slow decline, reached 3% in 2021, according to the [Reuters Institute's Digital News Report](#). However, online readership rose to 28% in 2021, up from 27% in 2020, and the use of push notifications increased to 10% in 2021.

Magazine publishers have seen an increase in online traffic since the beginning of the pandemic, according to the [Vividata Fall 2021 survey](#). This was driven by readers' lack of new content to consume as they were locked-down or spent more time at home. 21 million adults (69%) read or accessed magazine brand content in an average month.



Rethink and reorganize: Statistics Canada reported the magazine industry was not insulated from pandemic-related economic impacts on operating revenue with a decline in newsstand sales and advertising spend. With various levels of lockdown occurring across the country, storefronts closed, advertising drying up, and in-person events cancelled for the foreseeable future, magazine publishers got creative.

The pandemic, while difficult, brought about some fascinating innovation of products, as magazine publishers launched or refocused products, verticals, and newsletters, to fulfill specific needs. For example, Group Nine Media's NowThis launched NowThis Kids, a weekly video series, newsletter and podcast. Audiences turned to their smartphones for the comfort food of apps and entertainment. Stamina Group Inc. launched WanderEater magazine that explores top wanderlust destinations. Ricardo started a home economics class for adults.

Growth in subscriptions: In 2021, chasing reader revenue accelerated. "50% of publishers see reader revenue as being their primary source of income in 2021, while 35% believe that reader revenue and advertising revenue will be equally important," according to MPPGlobal. With more ways to pay – annual subscriptions, digital/print bundles, virtual wallets, in-app payments, and region specific methods of payment, the advantages to subscribers are clear.



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Predictions for 2022

Digital shifts that would have taken 5 or 10 years to occur have taken 5 to 10 months. The pandemic brought about **widespread adoption of digital** technology for consumers, and for companies across industries and sectors. It has accelerated the digitization of customer interactions by up to four years across the globe, [according to McKinsey](#).

In 2022, **talk to your audiences directly**. Ask what they need. Use social data, but try other methods of connecting, like focus groups, surveys, and town halls, to address their needs more closely.



News fatigue. Understand that people suffer from news fatigue and spend hours doomscrolling. The Reuters Institute 2021 report suggested a substantial numbers of consumers felt worn out by the amount of information they were exposed to. Some even avoided it, exhausted by media content on multiple screens and platforms. Now, audiences want someone like a trusted friend to explain and curate vetted, accurate information that cuts through the noise. Magazines can provide this. People will search out, share and engage with content around their passion points, interests and hobbies.

Care, thought and purpose. Be value-based and purpose-driven. Pandemic-weary audiences have a hunger for formats that feel more approachable. They've been re-evaluating their jobs, their relationships, their budgets and their consumption habits. They gravitate towards stripped-back, personal content. "As an effective editor, you need to read the room constantly," Laura Brown, editor of InStyle, told [The New York Times](#). "Now we need to read it not just every day, but every hour and minute, registering appetites and anxieties that are constantly changing."

Need for immediacy: Consumption of on-demand media has skyrocketed through the pandemic. VOD services like Netflix, Amazon, Crave, Disney+ (each saw over 40% increase in subscriptions in 2020, [according to eMarketer](#)) will flourish in 2021. For publishers, this need translates to live events and brand opportunities, from celebrity speaking opportunities, to cooking classes, fitness, and education.

