

Custom

publishing adds value to travel communications :) 

ROSS RODGERS



Most of us have a favourite magazine that we like to occasionally curl up and read when time permits. Perhaps it is a weekly general interest news magazine, or maybe a sports journal. Or how about that fashion mag with all the latest trends. And just maybe... it might even be a travel or destination-focused magazine.

Even more likely is the possibility that we are doing our reading online, as both

research and casual observance suggests. There is an incredible growth in online publications' popularity whether on our mobile devices such as a Blackberry or iPhone, or on our laptops or computers. Regardless of what medium we use to read our publications, we love our magazines because they talk specifically to our interest. They report on things that we want to know more about and we, in turn,

invest a certain amount of trust in the publications' authority on the particular interest focus or topic.

THIS IS THE POWER of periodicals. They speak with a voice that is familiar and appropriate for our interests, creating a sense of connection with the greater community of the magazine readership.

I have had a career of magazine and publication design with award-winning

creative solutions applied to daily newspapers, magazines and advertorial insert publications for national news magazines including *TIME* and *Maclean's*. At RadonicRodgers Design+Marketing, we have provided custom publishing research, strategy, consulting, and publication design services for a number of clients including the Ensemble Travel Group's *Vacations*, Ontario College of Teachers' *Professionally Speaking*, Sunwing Airlines' *Wings*, TownMedia's publications *OntarioGolf* and *Equip Golf*, National Post's *Golf* and the RCGA's *Bell Canadian Open* programs and of course, the magazine that you hold in your hands, *ONLINE REVEALED's OFFLINE*.

SO WHAT IS CUSTOM PUBLISHING? This term simply refers to regularly released communications usually in the format of a magazine or journal with "magazine" fixtures such as columnists, features, editorials, and regular departments with a marketing-focused objective. To quote the Custom Publishing Council, "Custom publishing marries the marketing directions of a company with the information needs of its target audience. This occurs through the delivery of editorial content via print, Internet, and other media-so intrinsically valuable that it moves the recipient's behaviour in a desired positive direction."

A GROWING MARKETING TREND

My experience in publication design has led me to one conclusion: custom publishing is becoming more critical than ever as a way for travel marketers to distinguish themselves. Travel consumers are becoming less and less impacted by the confusion and sameness of the messaging often associated with traditional travel marketing campaigns. It is no surprise that "custom publishing" has become increasingly prevalent as a communications tool for organizations and companies – and more recently for travel firms – to build loyalty and foster a culture of association with their clients that traditional marketing cannot achieve to the same degree. While examples can be found, this medium is relatively new to the travel and tourism industry and early adopters who wish to employ publishing as part of their marketing arsenal enjoy a competitive edge coming out with custom-published communiqués.

Travel companies can use the editorial format to promote their products or services in a more subtle but effective way that adds value and relevance for the reader. There may be how-to articles or interest features that appeal to the particular target market. This marketing tool often combines the editorial magazine format

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with a catalog/brochure format (in either Web or print media) and is often referred to with many different terms such as: custom publishing, custom media, branded content, branded media, branded editorial, corporate journalism, advertorial, mag-a-log, mag-a-chure, etc. These publications foster interest in the publishing organizations' objectives and in its particular features and offerings.

This "softer" sell encourages regular reading by building a relationship with the reader while also drawing their attention to the underlying marketing message.

INCREASINGLY, content is being released online as well as print or exclusively for online, and most recently, specifically for mobile devices. People on the go are relying on the immediate convenience of mobile devices to access their "news" and even custom published content. Mobile devices present a huge growth market for custom-published content with specially-coded and simplified HTML layouts for the small screen smart phones and online devices.

There is a trust factor that comes into play when you offer readers relevant info in a magazine format. While these communications are generally very effective, it also presents an ethical challenge to the custom publisher and its editors to be factual with as much balance as possible, given the trust that readers invest in the publications they read. If this delicate balance can be achieved, as well as capturing that critical connection with the reader's interests, it is very likely the reader will become either a new customer or a more loyal customer. **off**

