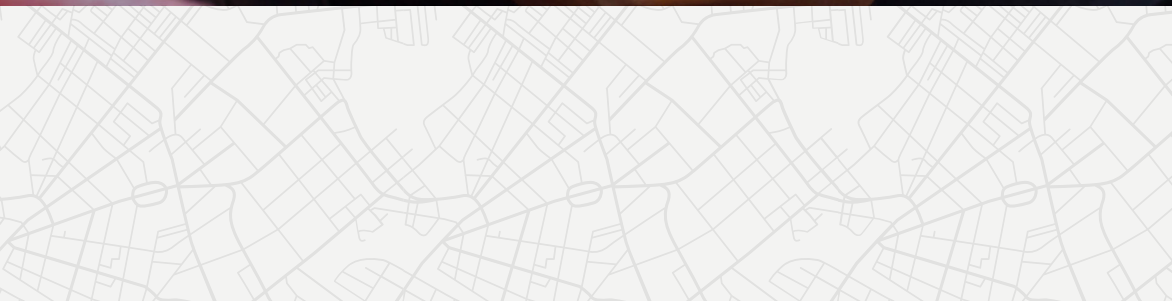


# The Value of Print in a Digital Marketing World



In today's marketing landscape, digital advancements are rapidly enhancing how tourism businesses engage with travelers. However, even in the rush to embrace everything digital, we've seen a growing recognition of the enduring value of analog experiences, particularly print.

As David Sax observed in his novel *The Revenge of Analog*, digital's initial dominance once rendered print nearly obsolete, but today, the perception of print's value is experiencing a resurgence.

Despite the prevalence of digital channels, print media remains a vital part of the strategy for many companies. In 2022 and 2023, over 70 new magazine titles debuted each year in the U.S., with the majority focusing on niche interests.<sup>i</sup> These publications cater to specific interest-based audiences, offering a level of engagement that is often missing in the fast-paced world of online content. This approach aligns perfectly with destination-focused visitor guides and other print pieces that allow for hyper-local storytelling, like Maryland's guide to the Underground Railroad or Loudoun County's Wine Trail Guide.

Even online giants like Wayfair, Amazon and Bonobos are recognizing the power of print. Wayfair's head of North American marketing, Bob Sherwin, noted that their print catalog offers "a rich, tactile shopping experience" that enhances customer engagement.<sup>ii</sup> Similarly, satirical newspaper *The Onion*, which stopped printing in 2013, revived its print edition in the summer of 2024, while *SAVEUR* magazine celebrated its 30th anniversary by launching a new quarterly print edition available for \$25 per issue, demonstrating that a strong distribution strategy is essential in the print equation. These pieces are designed to continue the conversation.

70+

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## Print Works

What makes print so valuable in a world dominated by digital media? According to a study by GoodQues and Dotdash Meredith, print magazines feel intentional, both in terms of the experience they provide and the content they feature.<sup>iii</sup> The study found that the combination of attention and appeal makes print a powerful tool for influencing purchase decisions. In fact, 70% of magazine readers reported giving print publications their full attention, while 82% said that magazines help them “escape the algorithm” and discover new things outside their digital habits.

Research shows that print can move consumers from consideration to conversion more effectively than digital alone. A 2022 *Harvard Business Review* study found that adding direct-mail catalogs to an email marketing campaign led to a 24% increase in purchases. Moreover, marketing materials that combined photos with narratives were 40% more effective in driving sales and engagement than those that used only product images and names.<sup>iv</sup>

In addition, print advertising is often perceived more positively than digital ads. In the same GoodQues/Dotdash Meredith study, 56% of readers said they enjoyed print ads as part of the reading experience, while Gen Z readers, in particular, reported that print ads made them feel more confident in their purchase decisions. This data demonstrates that allowing partners to purchase placements in print guides deepens the experience for both the reader and the advertiser.

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## Visitor Guides

So where do visitor guides fit in the marketing mix? The 2023 State of the American Traveler study shows that 40% of visitors used a print resource to help plan their vacation in the past 12 months. For tourism and destination marketing, visitor guides represent an ideal way to leverage print's unique strengths, bringing a destination's brand to life by telling compelling stories and showcasing experiences in a tangible, memorable format. A well-designed visitor guide can disrupt a consumer's routine, drawing their attention in a way that digital advertising often fails to do.



### **A strategic distribution plan for your visitor guide is essential to maximize its impact.**

By aligning the guide with your overall marketing goals, you can extend your message and engage your audience across multiple channels. This multi-touchpoint approach not only boosts brand awareness but also strengthens your relationship with both new and returning visitors—and also supports the local businesses that are featured and advertised within the guides. States like Colorado, Georgia and Alaska balance beautiful design, brand storytelling and contextual features for their industry partners to help reach these engaged audiences to inspire and support trip planning.



**Visitor guide direct requests contribute to a destinations' first-party database and can help build a better understanding of your audience.** Ensuring the right mix of direct requests and bulk channel distribution guarantees your messaging is reaching the right audience. Bulk distribution channels can include visitor centers and other travel information hubs; you can also strategically align with relevant brands through co-mailing to targeted communities. Calling readers back to your brand for more information facilitates that continued conversation and potential conversion to travel to your destination.



In conclusion, print media's tactile, immersive nature provides a welcome break from digital overload, allowing brands to connect with consumers in more meaningful ways. Whether through magazines or visitor guides, print offers a powerful tool to complement digital efforts and create lasting impressions. This renewed interest and value in print mediums is clear and print remains a critical component of a balanced, successful marketing strategy.

## Three Key Takeaways:

1

In today's digital-first media landscape, print is making a surprising comeback. Tactile, aspirational print catalogs and magazines give consumers an escape from digital overload and encourage them to connect with brands, moving them toward conversion.

2

Print is particularly impactful in the travel and tourism industry: 40% of travelers used a print resource to plan a trip in 2023, according to The State of the American Traveler.

3

Destinations can take advantage of this resurgence in print popularity through a strategic development and distribution plan for their visitor guides. By creating rich, immersive guides and choosing the right channels for distribution, you can meaningfully engage with right-fit travelers, building relationships that lead to lifelong brand loyalty.

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<sup>i</sup>Watson, Amy. "Number of print magazines launched in the United States from 2019 to 2023." Statista, January 26, 2024.

<sup>ii</sup>Bhattacharyya, Suman. "Why print catalogs are still important in the age of Amazon." *Digiday*, October 16, 2018.

<sup>iii</sup>"Proving the Power of Print" Goodques, Dotdash Meredith, 2024

<sup>iv</sup>Zhang, Jonathan Z. "How Paper Catalogs Remain Relevant in a Digital Age." *Harvard Business Review*, July 19, 2022.

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