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## The purpose of magazine Web sites

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# **THE PURPOSE OF MAGAZINE WEB SITES**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Mass Communication

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

By  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this thesis was to determine whether online versions of printed magazines shared an overall purpose. Guided by grounded theory, interviews were conducted of publishers and staff members from the Web sites of 15 printed magazines. The analysis of the interviews suggested that the overall purpose of online versions of magazines is marketing of the printed magazine, and that the sites also are intended to accomplish a number of secondary purposes.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Researchers have examined the purposes of Web sites published by various traditional forms of mass media. Harper (1996), for example, conducted research that partly examined the reasons why newspapers posted Web sites. Potter (2002) analyzed radio station Web sites and concluded that the content of the sites was different than the type of content that audiences preferred. Chan-Olmstead and Park (2000) studied television Web sites and reasoned that television broadcasters should improve their understanding of the Internet as a strategic tool for gaining competitive advantages. The intention of these studies partly was to offer guidance to the media industry about the best ways to utilize the Web.

Evidence suggests that many magazines publish Web sites. NewsLink (1995) reported that 23 of the 50 largest-circulation American magazines were online in 1995, and an Internet search showed that more of those magazines published Web sites in 2004. In 1999 a number of articles in *Folio*, the magazine-industry trade publication, argued that online versions of printed magazines would remain integral to the business of publishing a printed magazine during the foreseeable future.<sup>1</sup> It seems likely that this remains the case today.

The magazine industry therefore appears to spend considerable money and resources publishing Web sites. But nearly no academic research has provided guidance about the best ways that the industry can spend its online efforts.

<sup>1</sup> See the following articles, available at <http://foliomag.com>: “Magazines 2005 ... and 2010 ... and 2050,” by the *Folio* staff, published in December 1999; “The Internet Connection,” by Vira Mamchur Schwartz, published in December 1999; and “Don’t Let Print’s Power Blind You to the Web,” by Anne Graham, published in November 1999.

The purpose of this thesis was to determine whether online versions of printed magazines shared an overall purpose, which could provide guidance to publishers about some of the best ways to spend their resources on posting magazine Web sites.

Guided by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), interviews were conducted of publishers and staff members from online versions of magazines, and an analysis of the interviews was carried out that suggested that the overall purpose of online versions of magazines is marketing of the printed magazine. The analysis also suggested that the sites are intended to accomplish a number of secondary purposes.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Research About the World Wide Web

Early research about computers dealt with whether the computer was a new form of interpersonal communication. Biocca (1992) said that in the mid 1980s, ambivalence existed about considering the computer as a communication medium. Soon, though, “the computer emerged as more than just an information storage device or a fancy calculator. It became a means of human-to-human communication” (p. 8). Biocca noted that subsequently, scholars such as Everett Rogers, in his 1986 book *Communication Technology*, acknowledged that the computer was affecting human communication.

Prior to the 1990s, public access to the Internet mostly was limited to the government, universities and computer-related organizations (Tomasello, 2001). The World Wide Web became publicly available in the United States in 1992 and began to diffuse widely in 1993 (Tomasello, 2001).

Researchers began to call out for Internet research. For example, Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996) published a dialogue discussing why researchers should study the Internet. They said the Internet had the potential to create new effects on communication. Rafaeli said the Internet had unique, defining qualities that should be studied, including multimedia, hypertextuality and interactivity. Rafaeli also said the Internet likely would fill a communication niche that was yet to be discovered. Newhagen added that older media probably would be transformed by the Internet, and those transformations were areas that would need to be studied.

Morris and Ogan (1996) argued that the Internet should be considered a mass communication medium. They argued that Internet research offered the opportunity to



build upon existing mass communication theories. They said that as a new form of communication, the Internet enabled researchers to rethink answers to some of the questions that go to the heart of the source-message-receiver model with which the mass communication field has struggled. For example, researchers can test their findings about the effects of traditional media by applying similar research to the Internet, and research about the Internet can develop new ways of thinking about the traditional structures of mass communication research.

Even while researchers made arguments saying the Internet should be studied, research on the Internet and Web already was published. Examples are Bromley and Bowles' (1995) article on the impact of the Internet on the use of traditional media, Hoffman et al.'s (1995) research on the Web's commercial potential, Harper's (1996) study that made predictions about the future of newspaper Web sites and December's (1996) article about units of analysis in Internet research.

As use of the Internet diffused worldwide, researchers recognized the importance of studying the Web (Tomasello, 2001). The researchers' next discussions involved the unique challenges of studying the Internet. Examples are Stempel and Stewart's (2000) article about the opportunities and challenges of Internet research, Weare and Lin's (2000) article about the opportunities and challenges of Web research and McMillan's (2000) article about applying content analysis to the Web. These researchers said, for instance, that sampling is a problem because no comprehensive list of all Internet sites exists (Stempel & Stewart, 2000), hyperlinks can obscure the boundaries of units of analysis (Weare & Lin, 2000), and Internet research can be difficult because Web site content can rapidly change (McMillan, 2000).

By now, communication researchers have begun to study numerous aspects of the World Wide Web. Their research topics have included: content analyses that mostly are baseline descriptions of various types of Web sites (Chan-Olmstead & Park, 2000; Dominick, 1999); the purposes of sites (Dibean & Garrison, 2001); the audience's uses and gratifications (Chyi & Lasorsa, 1999; Wu & Bechtel, 2002); the effects of Web sites on printed newspapers and broadcasts and vice versa (Bromley & Bowles, 1995; Kiernan & Levy, 1999); advertising content on the Web (Li & Bukovac, 1999); the credibility of online journalism (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Sundar, 1999); the impact of the multi-media aspect of Web sites (Sundar, 2000); interactivity (Paul, 2001); and whether Web sites seem to be taking full advantage of the Web's potential (Lind & Medoff, 1999; Potter, 2002).

Researchers from other disciplines, such as business and sociology, have focused on other topics related to their fields. For example, business research on the commercial prospects of the Web, such as Liu et al.'s (1997) article about how Fortune 500 companies used Web sites to conduct business, is popular. Social scientists, for example, have examined the ways that the Internet affects society, such as Katz and Rice's (2002) book about the social consequences of Internet use.

Still, though, relatively few Web studies have been published. Kamhawi and Weaver (2003) studied research trends in 10 major communication journals published from 1980 to 1999 and found that only 2% of the journals' studies were about the Internet. Tomasello (2001) did a content analysis of five leading communication journals published from 1994 to 1999 and found that less than 4% of the journals' articles, or 37 out of 961 articles, dealt with the Internet. Of that number, 15% dealt with the World

Wide Web. It seems doubtful that in the past five years the journals have substantially made up for this deficit.

Magazine Web sites rarely have been studied academically. Non-academic articles have been published, such as articles about the phenomenon of online magazines published in trade magazines such as *Folio* and *Advertising Age* and magazines such as *Time* and *Gentleman's Quarterly* (Endres & Caplan, 1997). The reasons for the scarcity of Web research are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Only one article about magazine Web sites could be found in the academic journals. Endres and Caplan (1997) published a content analysis of magazine Web sites that mostly was a baseline description of the sites. They studied all types of online magazines, not just online versions of printed magazines.

Their research determined that online magazines were a new breed of Web site proliferating on the Internet. A minor aspect of their study attempted to determine the purposes of online magazines. Those purposes included: providing entertainment and information; selling products; providing personal information, such as a site expressing a person's views on a variety of subjects; persuasion, such as sites published by special interest groups; and other purposes, such as selling subscriptions or advertising. But Endres and Caplan said, "... future research has to deal with the issue of why these publications are going on-line ... more is needed on the purposes of these periodicals ...." (p. 9).

No research was found that exclusively examined the purpose of any type of Web site. Some studies, though, partly discussed the various purposes of certain types of sites. For instance, Harper's (1996) research mainly intended to determine whether the future

was promising for newspaper Web sites but partly found that a goal of online newspapers was to market the printed paper to young people. Ha's (2002) study was meant to compare and contrast broadcast and cable television Web sites, and it partly determined that the sites' purposes included sales of products, creating loyal fans and extending the reach of television networks. Liu et al.'s (1997) research mostly described the content of Fortune 500 companies' sites and partly contended that the sites were supposed to promote the company's image, enhance public relations, collect user data and attract visitors to browse products and services.

Some researchers have suggested that the purpose of online versions of media was unclear. For example, Saksena and Hollifield (2002) determined that most newspaper managers were unsure about the goals of the online versions of their newspapers.

### **Grounded Theory**

Introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory is grounded in the data. In other words, a study's predictions and its answers to research questions, or its theory, are discovered through the collection of the data itself (Charmaz, 1983). It is a qualitative theory, because it describes the data rather than counting and measuring it, which quantitative research does. A main difference between grounded theory and quantitative research is that grounded theory uses the data to create the theory, but quantitative research uses a preconceived theory to determine which data are studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The process of conducting grounded theory research begins with identifying a general problem area, "... such as what happens to students in a medical school that turns them into doctors, or how do milkmen keep housewives from canceling their service and

using supermarkets or how do lawyers develop a solo practice” (Glaser, 1978, p. 44). The research is “not based on a preconceived framework of concepts and hypotheses” (Glaser, 1978, p. 44).

The next steps are to collect data and then code the data. In grounded theory, the term coding has a different meaning than the type of coding done in quantitative research. In quantitative research, coding refers to the quantifying of the data. In grounded theory, coding involves categorizing the data.

A description of typical data will help explain how the data are categorized. Field notes, historical documents or other collected materials are examples of data (Charmaz, 1983). A transcribed interview that asks magazine publishers why they post online versions of their magazines is a more specific example.

Categories are created through what are called memos, which form the bulk of the analysis. Memos are notes that the researcher writes to describe the data and ideas about the data. The researcher codes the memos to label, separate, compile and organize the data (Charmaz, 1983). Thus the memos are sorted into categories, and then the relationships between the categories are established or integrated to create the theory (Glaser, 1978).

The researcher avoids collecting more data than is necessary, because he or she only collects data until the codes are saturated (Glaser, 1978). The codes are saturated when no new information is discovered or nothing comes as a surprise (Glaser, 1978).

After the categories are sorted and integrated to create the theory, the sorting and integration are “written up” to form the theoretical monograph or, in my case, a thesis. “So goes the sort, so goes the paper or book,” Glaser wrote (1978, p. 116).

Glaser (1978) seems to suggest that his methods for conducting grounded theory are the best possible methods for doing so. However, other researchers, such as Strauss and Corbin (1998), suggest that once researchers understand the logic behind the methods for conducting grounded research, they can apply them flexibly or adapt them to their own unique methods of conducting grounded research.

When theoretical integration is completed, the research has arrived at a substantive theory. A substantive theory is grounded in research on one particular substantive area (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which in my case was online versions of state magazines, such as *Louisiana Life* and *New Jersey Monthly*. The reason I studied a specific genre of magazines is explained in the methods section of this thesis.

The theory might be taken to apply only to that substantive area (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, the theory can become a stepping stone toward developing a grounded formal theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), or a theory that describes and makes predictions about an entire area beyond just the substantive area. For example, my research possibly could have created not only a substantive theory about state-magazine Web sites but also a formal theory about media Web sites in general.

At its highest conceptual level, a formal theory describes an area at even a higher level, such as media in general. Examples of the highest conceptual level of formal theory are theories of influence or the uses and gratifications theory. Charmaz (1983) said that most grounded theory research is only substantive and does not create formal theories. My research did the same. It did not create a formal theory, and it instead made general conclusions about state-magazine Web sites and also about all genres of online versions of printed magazines.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Using grounded theory, I conducted telephone interviews of publishers and staff members from a specific genre of magazine Web sites: online versions of general-interest, state magazines, such as *Louisiana Life* and *New Jersey Monthly*. The reason I limited my study to this genre was that it made my research manageable. If I had attempted to study all magazines in general, I would have dealt with thousands of magazines, which is beyond the scope of a master's degree thesis. State magazines provided a universe that was quite manageable. The universe of general-interest, state magazine Web sites consisted of about 30 Web sites.

To compile a list of Web sites whose staff members I could telephone for the interviews, I used the 2003 edition of *Writer's Market*, the most current edition available, and also the Internet search engine Google. *Writer's Market* provided an index of current United States magazines, including a list of the magazines in alphabetical order by states. I searched under each state to find all the general-interest, state magazines. The listings for the magazines sometimes included a Web site address, and to check for any Web sites that possibly were missing, I searched on Google, using the magazine's title as my keywords. Because some general-interest, state magazines possibly were not included in *Writer's Market*, I also conducted a separate Google search for each state, using the state's name and the word "magazine" as my keywords. The list of Web sites that were found in *Writer's Market* and on Google totaled about 30. I telephoned for the interviews in alphabetical order by state until my data were saturated, and the reason I telephoned in alphabetical order simply was to provide order to the process.

I interviewed a variety of staff members, including, for example, publishers, editors, Web masters and advertising sales staff, depending on who was available when I telephoned, and so long as that person was knowledgeable enough to tell me the purpose of the Web site. I interviewed a variety of staff members because it was practical. Tracking down one specific staff member, such as a publisher, potentially was more time consuming than tracking down any knowledgeable staff member who currently was available. More importantly, though, I interviewed a variety of staff members to determine whether the different types of staff agreed about the purpose of the Web sites.

I interviewed one person per Web site, and I informed those people that their names would be kept confidential. Their names were kept confidential because the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board for Human Research Subject Protection required that the names not be identified directly if the interviewees' responses potentially could harm those people if made public. For example, it was possible that an interviewee's employer could consider an interviewee's answer to an interview question unfavorably, potentially harming the interviewee's relationship with the employer. Confidentiality also potentially encouraged the interviewees to be frank. For example, before one of the interviewees answered a question, he first asked me to confirm that his name would be kept confidential. Apparently he thought that his employer could consider his answer unfavorably.

Before conducting each interview, I reviewed the interviewee's Web site, so I could ask appropriate questions about the specific site. For example, I used an interview guide, included in the appendix of this thesis, that included questions about the role of



advertising on the Web site. If the site did not include advertisements, I did not ask about the role of the site's advertisements.

McMillan (2000) found that researchers have used either the home page or the entire Web site as the unit of analysis. I reviewed the entire Web site, because the relatively small number of sites that I studied made it practical to do so, and because it ensured the most thorough review.

After conducting the interviews, I transcribed, memoed and coded each interview until my data were saturated, or until, as Glaser (1978) defined saturation, no new information was discovered or nothing came as a surprise. Saturation occurred by the time I coded 15 interviews. Those interviewee's Web sites are listed in the appendix of this thesis.

I used the interview guide, or a series of questions about the purpose of the sites, to guide me in interviewing the publishers and staff members. An interview guide, in contrast to an inflexible set of questions, allows the interviewer to improvise or change questions during the interview, in case doing so potentially could reveal data relevant to the research.

### **Research Question**

My research question was: Do online versions of printed magazines share an overall purpose?

Although this was my research question, the analysis of the interviews suggested that the sites shared an overall purpose plus a number of secondary purposes.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

An overall purpose of the sites that were studied in this research was apparent: The sites were intended to market the printed version of the magazine. The sites also accomplished a number of secondary purposes.

### **Overall Purpose of the Web Sites**

All the Web site publishers and staff members who were interviewed were asked the purpose of the magazine's Web site, and two articulated no clear purpose of the site, but all the rest said the purpose was to market the printed magazine. For example, they said the following:

- “Generally our Web site is to promote our magazine, the printed copy.”
- “I would say it's to create awareness about the magazine.”
- “It's intended to display and sample the actual print magazine in hope that people will want to subscribe.”

Five interviewees said that the Web site was intended to accomplish more than one purpose, but when that occurred, the most important purpose always was marketing of the printed magazine. For example, when asked what the site's overall purpose was, some of them said:

- “Number one is to heighten or increase the awareness of the publication. And number two, to sell merchandise or books and subscriptions.”
- “I think it has three main purposes. The first is to advertise the current issue of the magazine .... So that's the first one, to advertise and drive sales of the magazine. The second one is to support our sales people (by doing things like providing media kits online so the sales staff can avoid having to mail the kits to potential advertisers) .... And then it's also kind of a community. There are some elements of, kind of, community service to it. There's a listing of charitable events that people can access, and there's some links to activities such as ... tourism, various neighborhood associations, those kinds of things.”

- “Three things. First, it promotes the magazine. Second, subscriptions. Third, gift shop.”

The sites marketed the printed magazines in a number of ways, and the predominant ways are described below.

The most obvious way that the sites marketed the printed magazine was that the sites provided a sample of the content of the current issue of the printed magazine. Some ways that they did so were that the sites sometimes included a limited number of articles from the current issue, and some of the sites included only “teasers” or brief descriptions of the articles, and others included merely a table of contents from the current issue. None of the sites included all the articles from the current issue. The idea was that the Web sites provided an example of what was included in the magazine without actually giving away the printed magazine’s content, because the purpose of the Web sites was to generate sales of the printed magazine. As one interviewee said, “...our core product is the magazine ... that’s how we get our revenue, subscriptions and newsstand sales. So you don’t want to put up on the site for free what you’re trying to sell (in the magazine).”

The content samples on the sites were a direct means of marketing the printed magazine, compared with more indirect means that are described below.

One of the indirect means was that the sites provided customer service that apparently helped to market the printed magazines. For example, all the sites allowed visitors to subscribe online, and some provided visitors the opportunity to submit feedback to the magazine through an online form or e-mail. Numerous interviewees said that visitors preferred the convenience of subscribing and providing feedback online instead of through the postal service or a telephone. The interviewees also noted that the

online forms or e-mails saved visitors the monetary expense of mailing a letter through the postal service or making a long-distance telephone call.

Another indirect way that the sites marketed the magazines apparently was that many of the sites included content that seemed to promote the magazine through public relations. For instance, the sites often included such content as calendars of community events, articles that rated aspects of the community like the best high schools or best medical doctors, and restaurant reviews. The interviewees repeatedly said that such content particularly was popular. This raises an obvious question: If the purpose of the Web sites is to generate sales of the magazine, and if the publishers wanted to avoid giving away the magazines' content on the Web, then why was content such as community events calendars or restaurant reviews so often posted on the sites?

One answer is that this content can provide public relations to the audience to help promote sales of the printed magazine. None of the interviewees directly said that this was a purpose of such content, but some seemed to imply so. As was mentioned previously, one said, "... there are some elements of, kind of, community service to (the Web site) ...." Another said that his site was intended to market the printed magazine, but that "...the site reflects more public relations than it does selling ..." or that the site is supposed to "...generate good will and publicity for the magazine ...." This type of content at least partly seems to be a goodwill gesture to the public, so that the public feels good about the magazine and becomes more familiar with the magazine, making the public more likely to purchase the printed magazine.

But such content can also be intended to accomplish other purposes. For example, one publisher said that his site includes promotions such as vacation giveaways that

members of the public are awarded at community events such as festivals. He said that these promotions always are “tied in” to the site. “So it helps us maintain a good, solid traffic plan with the Web site,” he said, “and that, in turn, translates into a stronger added value for (the site’s) advertisers.”

Web sites probably can market printed magazines an indefinite number of ways, and the sites studied in this research marketed the magazines in many different ways, and these were examples that were the predominant ways.

### **Secondary Purposes**

The interviewees sometimes also described secondary purposes of the sites, which were as follows:

- Customer Service
- Added Value to Advertisers
- Online Advertising that Directly Generates Revenue
- Product Sales
- Increased Operations Efficiency
- Miscellaneous Minor Functions of the Sites

A table showing the exact number of interviewees who said that his or her site accomplished such purposes is included below. First, though, descriptions of these purposes are provided.

### **Customer Service**

All the interviewees said that the sites provided customer service. For instance, such service included online subscriptions, subscription address changes and feedback. Such aspects of the sites sometimes potentially were improvements over the same

services previously available only through other means, such as a telephone call. To help illustrate this idea, a typical dialogue from the interviews follows:

Interviewer: “Do you think your Web site helps provide better customer service, such as convenient opportunities to change subscription addresses online or provide feedback?”

Interviewee: “Yes .... I think people like that convenience .... Obviously the demand is there. People would rather order (subscriptions) online rather than call us. You know they can call toll free, but some people would prefer to go online, so there is that convenience.”

### **Added Value to Advertisers**

The Web sites sometimes included advertisements from advertisers in the printed magazine. Interviewees said that the online versions of those advertisements were an added value to the printed magazines’ advertisers. For example, one said this:

“We use the online advertisements as sort of a value-added bonus for the print schedule .... they’ll (the advertising staff) package it up with ... like, a large print advertising schedule. It’s sort of like just a nice little thing to put on top.”

Another publisher said the following:

Interviewer: “How, if at all, are your online advertisements important to your Web site or your company?”

Publisher: “We use them for two reasons. Number one, we do sell advertising on the Web site. More importantly, I think we use it as added value for our print advertisers.”

Interviewer: “Does that seem to be popular with your print advertisers?”

Publisher: “It’s a very, very strong added value.”

The publisher said that many people visit the Web site. Therefore his belief that the advertisements were a “very strong added value” suggests that magazine sites that attract substantial numbers of visitors can benefit from using online advertisements as added value for the printed magazine’s advertisers.

## **Online Advertising that Directly Generates Revenue**

A few of the sites included Web-only ads or ads that advertisers specifically paid to post online, as opposed to ads posted as a perk for advertisers from the printed magazine. Perhaps the reason that more sites did not include such ads was that either doing so was cost prohibitive or the sites attracted too few visitors to appeal to advertisers, because those were reasons that some sites included no advertisements.

For example, several of the sites included no advertisements, and one of those site's publishers said that the reason was as follows:

“We just finished halfway through our third year as a monthly, and so we're working still on a shoestring, and we're trying to keep everything within a very tight budget, just to make sure that we get where we want to go. Where something like that (online advertisements) might bring in income, on the other hand, there is quite a cost to it from our perspective.”

Another possible reason that sites did not include advertisements was that the sites attracted too few visitors to appeal to advertisers. For instance, one interviewee said, “We found that it really wasn't that lucrative in terms of sales to specifically sell Web advertising. We don't have the traffic at this point ....”

In general, perhaps the success or failure of advertisements on magazine sites depends on whether the company can afford to spend resources on posting advertisements and whether the site attracts enough visitors to appeal to advertisers.

## **Product Sales**

Some of the Web sites were successful at selling products such as clothing and books, and some tried to sell products but were unsuccessful, and others never attempted to sell products.

Some of the sites were quite successful at selling products. For example, as was mentioned previously, one interviewee said that the second most important purpose of his site was “to sell merchandise or books and subscriptions.” When he was asked if the site was effective at selling products, he said:

“Very much so .... books, CDs and videos about the state are very popular. That’s actually one of the biggest revenue centers for us. We sell somewhere in the neighborhood of \$10,000 a month in books, videos and CDs.”

He said that the site was visited by an unusually large number of people, partly because of the state’s popularity as a tourist destination. Perhaps the success of product sales partly depends on whether the site is visited by a large number of people.

But apparently other factors also affect the success of product sales. One person, for example, said his site was ineffective at product sales, even though he said that “quite a few” people visited the site.

It is beyond the scope of this research to determine the factors that affected the success of product sales on the Web sites, but the point is that product sales sometimes were effective on the sites.

The Web sites sometimes increased the amount of sales of the magazine’s products since before the magazine had a Web site. For example, when one editor was asked if sales increased after the site was posted, he said, “We’ve marketed books in the magazine for a long time ... and when they brought that to the Web, they got a lot more response.”

One reason that the Web sites sometimes increased sales of products was that the Internet expanded the market for those sales. For example, one publisher said his site



receives orders for merchandise from distant countries that would not have been received from the printed magazine.

No matter whether product sales were effective or not on the sites, generating additional revenue through product sales sometimes was a secondary purpose of the sites.

### **Increased Operations Efficiency**

Several of the sites increased the efficiency of the company's operations. For example, some sites included writer's guidelines that were the typical guidelines for potential writers for a publication. When, for example, a potential writer read the writer's guidelines online, this saved the magazine staff from spending the time and money mailing the guidelines to the writer through the postal service.

Other instances of the sites increasing operations efficiency included: online archives of past articles that prevented staff members from mailing past articles to readers who requested them; online media kits that prevented staff from mailing media kits to potential advertisers; online ordering of tickets to events produced by the magazine, which prevented the staff from either mailing the tickets or manning a booth or location to sell tickets to the public or both; a Frequently Asked Questions section answering readers' questions about such issues as how to prevent receiving duplicate issues; and online marketing through mass e-mailings of, for example, notices about upcoming events that the magazine produced, which prevented the staff from mailing such notices through the postal service.

### **Miscellaneous Minor Functions of the Sites**

The Web sites served other minor functions or functions that were less important than the overall purpose of the sites or even the other secondary purposes described

above. For example, some of the interviewees said that the Web sites enabled them to post timelier content than the magazine did, such as an event that was not included in a community calendar in the printed magazine, because the magazine's staff was unaware of the event before the magazine was printed. Such content conveniently could be added to the Web site's community events calendar practically at any time, but it only could be added to the printed magazine whenever a new issue of the magazine was published, such as once a month.

Another example of a minor function is that more content could be posted on the Web sites than could be published in an issue of the magazine, because a magazine contains a limited number of pages, but a Web site practically can contain unlimited space for content. An example is that some of the sites included archives of the articles from the magazine's past issues, but obviously a single issue of the printed magazine could not include all those articles.

Yet another example is that one publisher said that his site offers subscriptions to the printed magazine at a less expensive price than is offered in mass mailings, because subscription promotions that are mass mailed are more expensive than Web site promotions. He said, "We sort of shift that cost factor ... (to) a discounted offer on the Web site. So it motivates."

The number of minor functions of the Web sites probably is indefinite, but these are examples.

The table on the following page shows the specific number of web sites that were intended to accomplish the secondary purposes.

## Secondary Purposes Table

The asterisks in the below table indicate that the interviewee from the Web site listed on the left side of the row said that the site accomplished the secondary purpose listed at the top of the column.

	Customer Service	Added Value to Advertisers	Online Advertising that Directly Generates Revenue	Product Sales	Increased Operations Efficiency	Miscellaneous Minor Functions of the Sites
<i>Alaska Magazine</i>	*	*		*		*
<i>Connecticut Magazine</i>	*				*	
<i>Delaware Today</i>	*	*		*	*	*
<i>Florida Monthly</i>	*	*	*	*		*
<i>Idaho Magazine</i>	*					
<i>Kentucky Monthly Magazine</i>	*					*
<i>Louisiana Life</i>	*	*			*	
<i>Down East</i>	*	*	*	*		*
<i>Minnesota Monthly</i>	*	*			*	*
<i>Missouri Life</i>	*			*		
<i>Montana Living</i>	*	*				
<i>Montana Magazine</i>	*		*	*		
<i>Nebraska Life</i>	*	*			*	*
<i>Nevada Magazine</i>	*			*		
<i>New Jersey Monthly</i>	*	*		*		
Total Number of Sites:	15	9	3	8	5	7

## Conclusion

The data collected for this research clearly suggested that the overall purpose of the state magazine Web sites was to market the printed magazine. However, magazine Web sites, like all Web sites, are relatively new, and research about the purpose of magazine Web sites is scarce.

In addition, some of the Web sites' staff members who were interviewed for this thesis seemed to want to further experiment with posting new types of content. For example, one said the following:

"It's kind of a minimal site right now ... we worked on coming up with new content, designing a new site. And once that goes live, I think we're going to find a lot more content (that is popular). Right now, it's kind of like, here's the magazine, here's what's in it. Here's how to subscribe, and maybe a little information about advertising or submitting documents or something. So it's kind of hard to say what's working and what's not, because there really isn't a whole lot there right now. That's something we want to fix."

Although that person described his magazine's Web site as "minimal," the site included types and amounts of content similar to the other sites studied in this research. The types of content that he wanted to add to the site included interactive content, such as forums and galleries where visitors could submit their own photographs to post on the site. Or, as another interviewee said, he would like to add content that made the site "a destination in and of itself," instead of only content that mostly is from or about the printed magazine.

Therefore it seems possible that magazine Web sites still are evolving and that consequently their purpose could change. Perhaps this is unlikely, but there is room for future researchers to determine either whether the purpose of the sites might change or, in the future, has changed.

Another area of research that could affect whether the purpose of magazine Web sites appears to be the marketing of the printed magazine is research that examines a variety of genres of magazine Web sites, instead of only general-interest, state-magazine Web sites. Perhaps other genres have other purposes, and even if this seems unlikely, it has not been proven.

This thesis suggests that the purpose of all magazine Web sites is to market the printed magazine, but future researchers could examine the issue further to determine emphatically whether this indeed is the purpose of magazine Web sites. As is the case with this thesis, such research could help determine some of the ways that magazine publishers could best spend their money and resources in developing their Web sites.

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## **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Background Information**

- When was your site first published?
- Would you say that a considerable amount of money or resources have been spent on creating or maintaining the site?

### **Purpose of the Site**

- What is the overall purpose of your site or what is it intended to accomplish?

### **Site Traffic**

- Do many people visit the site?

### **Advertising**

- How, if at all, are your online advertisements important to your Web site or your company?

### **Customer Service**

- Do you feel that your site helps provide better customer service, such as convenient opportunities to change subscription addresses or provide feedback online?

### **Subscriptions**

- Do many people subscribe to your printed magazine from the Web site?

### **Articles**

- What is the purpose for including feature articles on your site?
- Why does the site include only a limited number of articles instead of all the articles from the printed magazine?
- Are articles posted that don't appear in the printed magazine?
- Are links to further information included with the articles, and if so, is such information included in the printed magazine?

### **Products**

- Is the site successful at selling the products that are for sale?

### **Content that Lends Itself to the Web**

- Newspapers have found that certain content lends itself well to the Web. For example, classified ads and article archives are convenient to search on the Web. Does any content lend itself well to your magazine's Web site?
- Has any content been posted on your site that you think was unpopular?

**Other Sections of the Site**

- Are there any other sections of the site that we have not discussed that seem particularly popular with visitors?

**Future**

- Will the site be changed in any ways in the future?

## **APPENDIX B: WEB SITES RESEARCHED**

The Web sites researched in this thesis are listed below. Publishers and staff members from these Web sites were interviewed over the telephone for this thesis between February 2004 and April 2004.

- <http://www.alaskamagazine.com>
- <http://www.connecticutmag.com>
- <http://www.delawaretoday.com>
- <http://www.floridamagazine.com>
- <http://www.idahomagazine.com>
- <http://www.kentuckymonthly.com>
- <http://www.louisianalife.com>
- <http://www.downeast.com> (a site from Maine)
- <http://www.mnmo.com> (*Minnesota Monthly*)
- <http://www.missourilife.com>
- <http://www.montanaliving.com>
- <http://www.montanamagazine.com>
- <http://www.nebraskalife.com>
- <http://www.nevadamagazine.com>
- <http://www.njmonthly.com>

## VITA

Mark Marquez II, a native of New Jersey, was an undergraduate music major at The Juilliard School before transferring to Rutgers University, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in English in 1995. Afterward he was employed as associate editor and circulation manager of the magazine *The Fisherman* in Point Pleasant, New Jersey, managing editor of the trade magazine *Fairs & Expos* in Springfield, Missouri, communications manager of the National Senior Olympics in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and, in 2003, editor of *LSU Magazine*. In 2004 he started his own business, FishingReportsNow.com, in New Jersey. His wife is Louisiana State University Barineau Professor of Piano Jennifer Hayghe.