

Time spent with the New Musical Express falls 72% after magazine switches online-only

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A study published in *Journalism Practice* by City researcher Dr. Neil Thurman and co-author Dr. Richard Fletcher, concludes that the attention periodicals attract via print is unlikely to transfer to their online editions when they go online-only.

In the month *Marie Claire U.K.* publishes its last [print](#) edition, a new study asks, "How does going online-only affect a publication's audience?"

The authors, Dr. Neil Thurman, senior honorary research fellow at City, University of London, and Dr. Richard Fletcher, senior research fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, had previously shown that the U.K.'s *Independent* newspaper suffered an 81 percent fall in the time audiences were spending with the brand when it went online-only in 2016.

Would the same hold true more widely? To find out, they analyzed official audience data on the *New Musical Express (NME)*, a weekly British music magazine that went online-only in March 2018 after 66 years in print.

The *NME*'s audience is younger than *The Independent*'s, perhaps more likely to switch to its online edition when the print version was withdrawn?

Sudden and substantial

In fact Thurman and Fletcher found that, just like at *The Independent*, there was a sudden and substantial fall in the total time spent with the brand: the attention readers were giving to the *NME* in print did not transfer online once the print edition became unavailable.

Dr. Thurman says: "Given that the *NME* and *The Independent* differed in many ways—the periodicity and cover prices of their print publications, their [reader](#) demographics, and their content, it is remarkable that changes in time spent with the two brands post-print were so similar."

What about the *NME*'s reach? The study reports that official net weekly and monthly readership did grow post-print—by 19 percent and 27 percent respectively. However, the *NME*'s average online reader only spends around three minutes a month with the brand. In comparison the *NME*'s print readers spent an average of 31 minutes a week reading the paper [edition](#) of the magazine.

So, what happens to the time readers were spending with a publication in print after that publication goes online-only? This study clearly shows that they are not spending that time with the online version, but it is unclear whether they are turning to other print publications, or other online sources, or completely forgoing the type of information they once consumed in print.

The authors conclude by saying that "if the post-print behavior witnessed at the *NME* and *The Independent* applies to print news generally and the withdrawal of printed publications ultimately leads to a large reduction in the amount of news consumed, then the consequences for society could be profound."

More information: Neil Thurman et al. Effects of a Magazine's Move

to Online-only: Post-print Audience Attention and Readership Retention Revisited, *Journalism Practice* (2019). [DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2019.1685903](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1685903)

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