

CATALOGUE COMEBACK

By Kasia Maciejowska and Jessica Smith

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The printed shopping catalogue is enjoying a surprising renaissance. Traditional retailers are committing to their existing catalogues while e-commerce platforms with no mail-order heritage are introducing them as a way of tempting customers into a more pleasant relationship.

With its magazine aesthetic and content – which has earned it the nickname magalogue – the catalogue has become one of multi-channel retail’s most unexpected and valuable tools.

What this means to your brand

The simple logic of digitising everything need not always apply. As online experiences surround customers they increasingly look for ways to get offline and are reassured by physical materials.

If you can integrate an offline element into your role in people’s lives, then it can complement your online relationship with them.

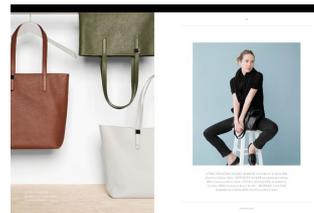
As customers receive snippets of information all day online, they are looking for a more narrative experience when they turn to print, and brand publications are no exception.



onFocus Magazine for Prats by
Usted



Everlane catalogue



Everlane catalogue



onFocus Magazine for Prats by
Usted

The book is back

Among traditional retailers revisiting their long-running catalogues, **Ikea** released a satirical advert for its ‘book book’, making it feel relevant by framing it within post-digital colloquialisms.

Having discontinued its Big Book five years ago, JC Penney is re-introducing smaller versions this year. Kate Coultas, senior manager corporate communications at JC Penney, is keen to distinguish between old and new as she explains: 'Our Big Books were typically 800–1,000 pages long and operated as a separate shopping channel, whereas this new home mailer is part of a broader promotional mix designed to keep JC Penney top of mind and entice customers.'

E-tail to detail

Counter-intuitively, e-tailers – usually lean and light – are turning to catalogues to complement their digital offer. Almost one-third (31%) of shoppers have a paper catalogue with them when making a purchase online, according to American retail agency Kurt Salmon, so it makes sense for e-commerce to offer a print accompaniment.

For 2015 menswear e-tailer **Bonobos** is increasing its print mail-outs, having introduced a catalogue in 2013. 'Direct mail has always been one of the most quantifiable channels so we're able to feel confident in the return on our investment,' Craig Elbert, vice-president of marketing, tells LS:N Global. Transparent fashion e-tailer Everlane similarly introduced its first catalogue last season, in keeping with the modern, minimalist style already established on its site.

Touch and go

As consumers spend a higher proportion of their time online, they miss life's more tactile aspects. This played into creative agency Usted's decision to include a **magalogue** in the rebranding of Spanish optician Prats. 'We used quality materials and presented the content beautifully as we wanted to create something that doesn't 'die' like most online communications do,' says Marc Torrell, co-founder of Usted. 'It's an object that people want to keep – that's the importance of a physical creation. Launching a magalogue has become a way to show how premium your brand is. Printing is a luxury nowadays.'

Dive in

When people shop online they are often multi-tasking, making the window in which a brand can engage with its customers a short one. By contrast, print materials introduce a space for more in-depth engagement.

'Catalogues allow us to tell a full brand story to a customer who is in more of a 'leaned-back' mindset,' says Elbert of Bonobos. 'They may pay more attention than when staring at a screen.'

Torrell similarly emphasises the opportunity for detail in the Prats catalogue. 'It's hard to read 112 pages of information on the internet,' he says. 'The magalogue is the perfect form for slower communication that both informs and entertains.'