

POWER OF PRINT

Catalogs are More Vital than Ever

They reach millions. They sell billions. Nothing succeeds like a great idea. Especially one whose marketing prowess for reach and revenue has been around for centuries. A vital part of the shopping experience, catalogs are so engrained in our daily lives that it's easy to forget their rich history.

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Mail-order catalogs became more common in the 1830s. According to Wendy Woloson "The first enterprises to embrace mail order in the modern sense were seedsmen and nurserymen."¹ Yet it was Tiffany's *Blue Book* that set the industry standards.² First distributed in 1845, it's still being used today in highlighting the jewelry's most prestigious collection.

Catalogs were invaluable in helping many companies grow. Their power and pull are what turned Sears and J.C. Penney brands into American icons in the mid 20th century. Today some retailers have moved away from catalogs, yet many more have started

using them to stand out competitively. Catalogs are enjoying a resurgence for a variety of reasons. A primary one is that print on paper is the original interactive communication medium.

CATALOGS INSPIRE DISCOVERY.

You touch it. It touches you. Tactile and accessible, it's the power of print on paper epitomized by catalog's ability to connect emotionally. As a shopping guide and inspiration source, they're invaluable to browsers. It's a key reason why catalogs have gained popularity the last 3-5 years.³ And why they motivate sales even more than stores, which typically stock just 20% of their inventory.⁴

In recent Isobar research, 67% of people said catalogs inspire shoppers with more ideas than browsing the internet. 63% said they're handier than perusing products online or in-store.⁵ For e-commerce retailers, especially those without stores, a catalog enhances the ability to visualize product usage. As a physical asset, catalogs linger in households long after emails are deleted.

THE CURE FOR DIGITAL FATIGUE.

Catalog resurgence is also fueled by digital fatigue as people seek to disconnect. This is especially true of 18-35 year-olds.⁶ Unless you have a specific idea in mind, the internet is an unorganized headache.⁷ Catalogs create a delightful, curated experience. A collection of goods where browsers can see multiple paired items that trigger response. The trip to the mailbox is now an escape from the confines of home and an immersive connection to the world at large.

Catalogs are generational, too. Kids have always devoured every page of a toy catalog. This joyful memory carries over, as adults search for their own version of toys. For brands that offer a high degree of unique “giftability,” catalogs deliver an old-school simplicity both nostalgic and alluring. A stressfree invitation to stay awhile in a brand’s world.

THEY DO MORE AND COST LESS.

The biggest factor driving retailers to catalogs is the skyrocketing prices of digital advertising.⁸ The cost-per-thousand impressions and cost-per-click increased 40-50% in 2021. While charging more, any ROI is hindered by its reliance on digital devices. A catalog is always “on”, requiring only that you pick it up.

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“It’s a reality digital sources can’t claim. Today the all-pervasive reach of Facebook is proving unreliable and unaffordable. Advertisers must now deal with controversial changes to privacy and app tracking, drastically reducing marketing effectiveness. This while facing unacceptable fees on all such platforms.”⁹

Polly Wong, President of Belardi Wong, said: “With the rising cost of digital, suddenly direct mail looks far more affordable. For example, if retailers are paying \$2, \$3, \$4 costs per click, you can mail four, five, six catalogs for the cost of one click.”¹⁰ These costs jump 20-40% in peak season.



WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN.

Catalogs are timeless, highly effective and always evolving. Verifiable proof that the best way to reach a target market’s heart is through their hands. It’s this human touch that creates a unique emotional connection. They are the ultimate shopper’s guide – all year round.

Yet, what makes catalogs such powerful marketing assets is the overall experience that print on paper provides. The organization, the inspiration, the interactivity and three dimensionality they deliver are unmatched in building brands and driving sales. Catalogs have never been more vital.

To learn more about the power of print on paper, please visit us at billerud.com

— Source: 1 – “A Visual History of the Catalog” Publitas, 2020

— Source: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 – [You can almost taste the hot chocolate: Why catalogs are still winning holiday marketing](#) Retail Dive, 2021

— Source: 7 – Chad Lusk, senior director, Alvarez & Marsal’s Consumer and Retail Group.



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