

B The One makes magazines that are tailor-made for every reader

Only people who are single will receive articles about dating

According to the international trade union FIPP, tailored magazines are the future. The Netherlands has the 'tailored magazine' *B The One*.

By our editor

JANNA LAEVEN

BUSSUM. A pile of magazines lies on the coffee table. On one of them there is a picture of a laughing Doutzen Kroes showing her white teeth, on another there's Jennifer Anniston turning into a pose. And on the third there is you yourself, in your best dress.

This might be more credible than it sounds. In the *Innovations in Media 2013 Word Report* by Fipp, the international trade union of magazine publishers, personalization is mentioned as one of the big magazine trends of this year. A 'My-agazine' is a quite logical idea to the reader, according to FIPP; on Amazon as well personal reading tips are presented to us, and on Facebook suggestions of pages are made to us which are based on our preferences. According to the organization it is only a matter of time that publishers change over to this.

Nevertheless the number of examples from daily practice are a bit disappointing. In the spring of 2012 the American magazine *Harper's Bazaar* published in each magazine a page on the luxury department store Neiman Marcus, with on it the name of the subscriber and the address of the nearest shop. In France *Action Commerciale*, a magazine for sales managers, made personalized covers for all 12,000 subscribers, based on their specific interests. And *Veronica Magazine* has an annual Valentine's campaign where readers can have their loved one's picture put on the front page.

But a magazine with a personalized cover and also a content adjusted to the reader's personal profile is not made very often.

Barbara de Roos *does* do this. A former drapery shop in Bussum now houses the editorial staff of her *B the One* magazine. The concept is simple: the reader can adjust the cover of the magazine with a photo of their own. The magazine contains existing and generic pieces, similar to those in the *Libelle* [JG: the biggest women's weekly in the NL]. But which articles will be put into the magazine is decided by the reader's taste. Does she have children? If so, then there is a children's section in it. For those who are single there will be a section about dating. ('take it slow!') and the person that has a sweetheart will get an article about relationship crises ('go for a time out!') Does the reader like spirituality? Then there will be extra articles on this. Per magazine there are three or four different 'categories'

For this reason *B the One* calls itself 'the first tailor-made magazine of the Netherlands'. "Segmentation isn't done on age but on life style", according to De Roos. "I have let go of age thinking."

In the shop window lie the most successful covers that have been made so far. They are at their best when the portrayed person on the cover is happy and laughing and in a green environment. "That goes with the atmosphere of the magazine". In principle the

customer may do anything. “I would prefer not to have the reader in her naked butt or with an idiotic exclamation on the cover, but if it only concerns one single copy, I don’t make a big deal out of it. On the other hand if she wishes to order a hundred of such copies, then I do say no”, according to De Roos.

The articles in *B the One* have a social twist; they are about realizing dreams. The sales could be better: up to 1,500 people have ordered their magazine on demand so far. “I have spent too much money on making a good magazine and too little on marketing”, says De Roos about this result.

She already had the idea for a personalized magazine in 2001, when she still worked as an editor at Sanoma and saw how people loved making their Yahoo page more personal. For the setting up of *B the One* De Roos visited all the large publishers of public periodicals in The Netherlands and abroad, searching for investors. She had a “solid business plan”, and wished to receive between 350,000 and 1,300,000 Euro. Publisher G + J seemed seriously interested, but heard from the parent company Bertelsmann that it no longer invested in print. However in 2010 she did receive from the Stimuleringsfonds voor de Pers [JG: Netherlands Press Fund, www.denieuwepers.nl] a subsidy of 175,000 Euro – half of her minimum financing need. This money is almost gone now. De Roos used it to make the first issue.

Now the task ahead of her is the publishing of number two. The editing staff now consists of 10 volunteers and a reintegration worker who is paid by the UWV [JG: Dutch employment exchange]. The fact that there is little money becomes naturally part of the concept. Therefore the magazine is ‘100 per cent model free’. Will the level remain high enough? De Roos, optimistic: “I am an excellent copy editor”

B the One does not have much competition. There are websites where a client can have a magazine filled with her own created content copy (see box). But that takes a lot of work; a 100-page magazine is not filled easily.

De Roos believes that the readers will not buy the magazine only to have their picture on the front cover. Especially the articles that are adjusted to their taste are important. “It’s not only about the gimmick.”

Also the large publishers seem to be ready by now to offer their segmented content to their readers. Last month Dick Molman, topman at Sanoma said in this paper (NRC Handelsblad) that by now the company has one large database, filled with the content of all the titles the company publishes. The question is: how will they release the articles based on the readers’ taste? Are they to be ordered as a single copy in a kind of iTunes? Or through a custom-made magazine on the iPad? The company isn’t sure yet. The chance of a personalized printed magazine seems small; surely that remains expensive.

This also applies to De Roos, who has put all her savings into the project and says: “But I am now much happier than when I was still publisher of *de Kampioen* [JG: monthly magazine of the Dutch AAA with a circulation of 4 million].”

Tailor-made magazine

Anyone who would like to make a magazine for someone else, can go to various providers. The most well-known is *Jiltser* (translator: see www.jiltser.nl), where the customers can compose the content themselves. One issue costs 29,64 Euro, excluding shipping costs.

Customers can choose between different types of paper and binding methods. Texts and photos need to be inserted by the customers themselves.

At *Magazine Plaza*, a similar initiative, the customer can hire a photographer or 'reporter' in order to provide material.

B the One is a different concept: the reader can adjust the photo on the cover and some of the texts. The content consists of articles that are tuned to the reader's taste. If she is a mother then there will be a children's section in it. Is she interested in spirituality? Then there will be an article about that. Costs: 12,50 Euro per magazine of 100 pages. [JG: 7,50 Euro for the basic mass customized version].

Left: the mass customized version of B the One [JG: 1 out of 20 variations].

Above: fully personalized copies of B the One that have been ordered by the readers, with their own photos.

Translation: Jane Green

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