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"Feel Your City:' The Importance and Uniqueness of City
Magazines like sensor for Urban Communities."

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Introduction

In the ever-changing and fast-developing world of online journalism and social media, magazines play a significant role in print journalism. Unlike newspapers, magazines target readers who are interested in specific topics or areas; these themes define the magazine's content and create a bond between the magazine and its readership. They differ from newspapers because their goal is not only to inform their readership but rather create a sense of community (Holmes and Nice 7). Through their informational weight, they have intellectual value; however, through the pleasure they bring to their readers, they also contain social value. Magazines can influence consumers; hence, they also contain a cultural value (Holmes and Nice 1).

There are countless possible topics magazines can focus on, ranging from sport to lifestyle, culture, food, family, and travelling. However, a sub-genre of magazines that combines all of them is the city magazine. City magazines focus on distinctive locations. They include general interests of their specific community and publish about, for example, urban attractions, food, personalities, culture, business, and shopping (City and Regional Magazine Association in Sivek "City magazine editors and the evolving urban information environment"). Their mixed content consisting of "journalism and infotainment" (Sivek and Sternadori 307) and special relationship with their readership in a specific place frequently leads to the construction of local identifications (Sivek and Sternadori 307).

Even though it is a common phrase within journalism and media research that print is dying or already dead, city magazines, due to their uniqueness and importance for urban communities, manage to prove the opposite. This paper aims to show the distinctiveness of city magazines using sensor Wiesbaden as a case study. I chose the freecirculating city magazine of the provincial capital of Hesse, Germany, because I had the chance to see behind the scene during an internship. sensor's slogan is "Feel your City," which stresses a strong relationship between the city, the magazine, and the urban readership. The goal of my paper is to illustrate why city magazines matter for urban communities and how sensor manages to not only construct local identifications for its readers, but also how the magazine shapes a community. First, it is necessary to establish what a city magazine is and what characterizes this sub-genre. Since this paper focuses on a certain magazine, it will also explain how a sensor issue is constructed and what themes the issues cover. Moreover, this paper will discuss what it means "to feel a city" and aim to explain how sensor evokes that feeling in its readers through its content. An interview with former editor-in-chief Dirk Fellinghauer will shed light on the editorial philosophy and history of sensor. Because the magazine is free, I will briefly discuss the business model of city magazines and take a further look into ad revenues. In doing so, the paper will argue that sensor functions as a major local platform and voice for overlooked perspectives, which builds and presents diverse identifications and therefore communities within Wiesbaden, through its exceptional local events coverage that serves as an important source of information, combined with articles that not only contain

emotions but evoke them within its readers. By including and portraying these multiple voices and communities *sensor* creates a sense of belonging.

What is a City Magazine?

Almost everybody is familiar with lifestyle magazines, but what do people know about city magazines? Often overseen, it needs a definition. City magazines usually publish monthly for a geographically bound area and focus on cultural events and happenings within the region, which makes them part of the regional periodical (Stadtmagazine - Definition und Strukturen). Some of the circulating one's cost money; however, the majority of city magazines are free and financed through ad revenue (Sivek and Sternadori 314). "Like most other magazines, city and regional periodicals feature content with a long shelf life. They are usually named after their geographical locales" (Sivek and Sternadori 308). This accounts for both sensor Mainz and sensor Wiesbaden, which are named after the city they report on. Most city magazines do not have a permanent staff of employees but consist of freelancers (Sivek and Sternadori 308). sensor, for instance, is run by a full-time editor-in-chief, a part-time employee, and an intern. Photographers and journalists work as freelancers. However, since Verlagsgruppe Rhein Main (VRM) publishes the magazine, the publisher organizes the printing and distribution.

As Sivek describes, city magazines are "one of the primary ways in which local audiences can learn about their cities and the major issues and events within them" ("City Magazines and Social Media" 3). Hence, due to their importance, it is interesting to look at what they cover and what they operate within an urban area. In what follows, this paper will focus on the themes sensor covers, how it brands the city, and the importance it has for the local readership. Due to the digital evolution, most city magazines broadcast crossplatform and are available both in print and online. Since they are only published monthly, the articles need to focus on topics that are not short-lived but remain relevant for a longer period. Breaking news cannot be included in the printed issues due to their longevity. However, this offers the opportunity for in-depth research and perspectives (Sivek "City Magazines and Social Media" 1, 4). City magazines not only inform about local events, but they also support local businesses through advertisements and articles. Due to the digital evolution, most city magazines also publish exclusive online content, which gives them the possibility to tackle more current issues that go "beyond a monthly publication schedule" (Sivek "City Magazines and Social Media" 2). Accordingly, sensor does not limit itself to its print format (Sivek "City Magazines and Social Media" 5) and has built a considerable online platform where readers can access print issues, read online only articles, breaking news, and more.

As a service for its readership, *sensor* offers a weekly "Wochenendfahrplan" that provides information on the diverse events, concerts, and happenings every weekend from Friday morning to Sunday evening. Furthermore, it built a social media presence and informs its approximately 8,000 followers on Instagram and Facebook. This adaptation to digital opportunities and changes in journalism stands against the statement "that reads, 'If it is not ink on paper, it is not a magazine" (Mr. Magazine n.d. in Holmes

"Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines" 3). Magazines have become more than just their printed versions since they are fully adjusted to digital media evolutions. Through these changes, city magazines are able to compete with social media platforms such as Yelp (Sivek "City Magazines and Social Media" 4), and simultaneously "extend their work into the local information gaps created by the decline of traditional news providers" (Sivek "City Magazines and Social Media" 16). However, this makes the definition of what a city magazine is more difficult (Holmes "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines" 3). City magazines like *sensor* are not only defined by the monthly print-run—it is rather the online presence, the website, the social media posts, as well as the editor-in-chief present at almost all events around town, which makes the magazine exceptional. But, as Holmes explains, even though most city magazines broadcast cross-platform today, the print version should still be the primary focus, followed by the digital products ("Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines" 8). The distinguishing feature of a printed magazine is that people can browse through it. It does not require being read from start to finish, rather, people can consume bits and pieces while waiting for the bus or a friend.

The former editor-in-chief Dirk Fellinghauer maintains that people read *sensor* "because they are not only getting broadly and reliably informed about their city here but inspired in many ways" (translation mine). They inform people about what is going on in their city and give them a sense of belonging. So far, my paper has shown that city magazines are more than mere entertainment. They are agents that inform, connect, and support their communities. *sensor* embodies these characteristics by combining journalism, infotainment, and public service. As a cross-platform magazine, rooted in a specific urban area, it redefines what a "magazine" is in a digital consumer world, while forming and strengthening urban identifications. These identifications build urban communities, characterized by common interests, ethnicities, age, shared characteristics, and the geographical area of Wiesbaden. The latter is the underlying identification with being an inhabitant of the city and a *sensor* reader; all of these different identifications and communities have this identity in common. The following chapter will dive deeper into how a *sensor* issue is constructed to both reflect and serve its local community.

How a sensor Issue is Constructed

sensor publishes 21,000 copies monthly, overall, ten issues per year due to a double edition for July/August and December/January¹. The magazine was founded in 2010 in Mainz, and the Wiesbaden edition followed in 2012. It is published by the VRM and is the biggest city magazine in the Rhine Main Area. The publisher distributes the issues in the city, districts, and suburbs at 1,000 separate places. Hence, sensor reaches and can be consumed within the whole city. A typical sensor issue is about forty-eight pages long and printed in roll-offset on 60g paper. Even though the magazine is only stapled and not a glossy lifestyle magazine, the artistic focus on design and photography suggests high quality. Although "sensor has a fixed structure, but also enough space for creative design

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¹ In this paper the term "sensor" refers to sensor Wiesbaden, unless otherwise specified.

and a new dramaturgy in each issue. Every issue is new; no two issues are the same" (translation mine).² Hence, every issue is structured similarly and consists of an editorial by the editor-in-chief and cover artwork that matches the theme of the issue or current

problems. The first cover, e.g., shows a rubrics cube with the famous lily, which is part of the city's arm (see figure 1). Recurring topics are, for example, "What is going on?" (translation mine)³, a column, the title story, a monthly event calendar, advertisements, an Interview, recently opened or closed stores, restaurant of the month, horoscope, and listings. The general topic genres that change between the issues range from urban development, International, obituaries, Living, cultural guide,

games, art, clubs,



MADE IN WIESBADEN - HEIMLICHE KREATIVHAUPTSTADT WANDERN SO WOHNT ANDREAS GUNTRUM THAI KARAOKE VHS ORIGINELL GO EAST

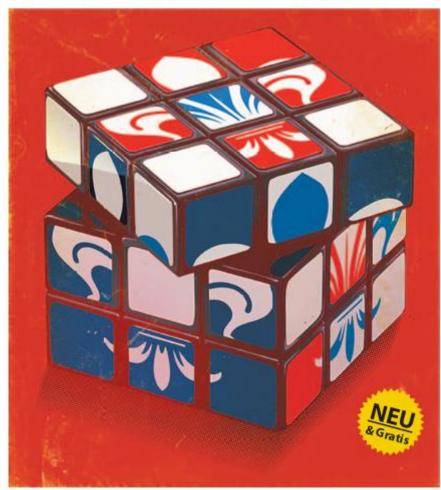


Figure 1: sensor Cover issue No. 1, April 2012.

music/festivals, economy, crises, literature, design, creatives, movies, and volunteering. To further display how a usual issue is constructed and give a sense of the essence, layout,

2 "sensor hat eine feste Struktur, aber auch genügend Raum für die freie Gestaltung und eine in jeder
 Ausgabe wieder neue Dramaturgie. Jede Ausgabe ist neu, keine Ausgabe wie die andere." (Fellinghauer).
 3 "Was ist los?"

and design of *sensor*, the following part illustrates the December/January 2022/2023 No. 106 issue exemplarily.⁴

Cover and Front Section



Figure 2: *sensor* Cover issue No. 106, December 2022/January 2023.

The cover, designed by Steffen Kraft (see figure 2), shows a white dove on a pink background. Overall, the colors suggest a peaceful atmosphere. At the top are the logo, the slogan "Feel your City," with certain headlines below. The headline "Mourning Sigrid Skoetz" (translation mine)⁵ suggests that the dove represents a grief symbol for the well-known and culturally engaged personality. A local bank advertisement makes up the whole of the second page, with the index, table of contents, and editorial following on the third page (see figure 3). The editorial, as usual, refers to and discusses the theme of the title story, in this case, "skilled crafts and trades." Here, the editor-in-chief directly addresses the readers ("liebe sensor-Leser:innen"). At the end of the editorial, the editor-

⁴ For reading purposes, not every following description of the issue will feature the reference to issue No. 106, however, every page reference will refer to this issue.

⁵ "Trauer um Sigrid Skoetz."

in-chief says goodbye for the year and wishes everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy

New Year. This indicates a personal relationship between the readers and the magazine, which is a special characteristic of (city) magazines. Hence, magazines often address readers personally, and editors see their readership as a community (Holmes "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines").

The fourth page usually shows different advertisements, as well as the "Sag bloß!" segment (see figure 4). Here one can read about local news such as honors, concerts, personnel changes on the cultural or political level. Once again, the magazine invites readers to share news for future issues via email. of involvement the readership in the content of



The Figure 3: Editorial issue No. 106, December 2022/January the 2023.

issues can generate a feeling that *sensor* is "their" magazine and hence strengthen the urban community. The fifth page always consists of a snapshot and a short interview with one of the city's inhabitants (see figure 5). Since this issue focuses on crafts and trades, I interviewed a tiler about his job and the industry at a local makerspace. Next to the snapshot is the monthly column by *Falk Fatal* and a small info box that reports on records. Here, *sensor* invites readers to share local records they heard about for the next issue (see figure 5). The title story usually takes up pages six to nine. With this issue, I had the honor to author this story, which focuses on the progeny problems within crafts and trades. For the main story, the focus lies not only on the writing, but excellent photography by

freelancers. Here, a photo of the interviewees takes up a whole page. This is a classic example of *sensor* articles, which always include high-quality photos.



Figure 4: "Sag bloß!" segment issue No. 106, December 2022/January 2023.



Figure 5: Snapshot and column, Issue No. 106, December 2022/January 2023.

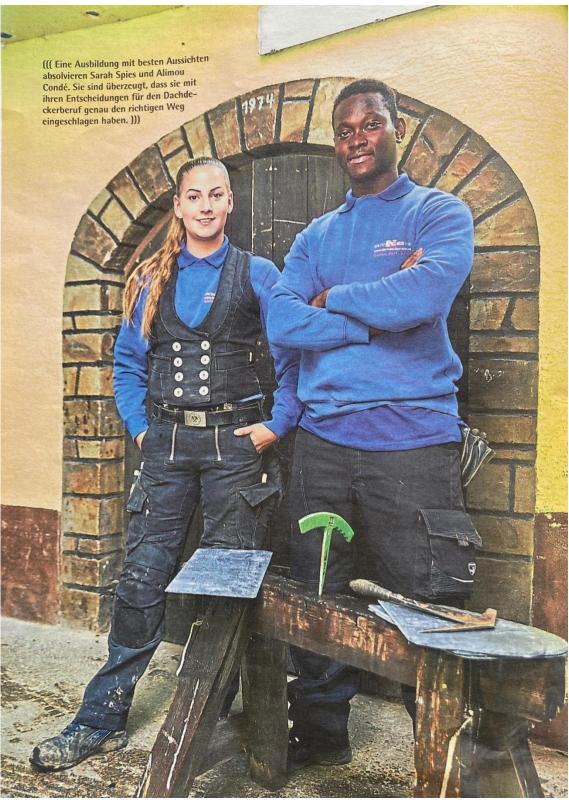


Figure 6: Cover Story Interviewees, issue No. 106, December 2022/January 2023.

The Body of the Magazine

Following the cover story, the category "Stadtgeschehen" (City Events) informs the reader about local town gossip. The next page shows another advertisement, the monthly calendar for the local museum. After that, follow articles about urban development, Iranians in Wiesbaden, an obituary, a home story on how people in Wiesbaden live, and more advertisements. Another recurring category is the culture guide, which focuses on various aspects, e.g., film, or, as in this issue, reading. Since No. 106 is a double issue, the event calendar takes up the next ten pages. First of all, two pages present "Die Perlen der Monate," (see figure 7), which highlight certain events with short descriptions and further information. After that, advertisements by theatres, clubs, and cinemas, as well as the actual calendar, which includes categories such as concert, cinema, family, party, literature, stage, and art, follow. Every event lists the title, date, time, and place (see figure 8).



Figure 7: "Perlen der Monate", issue no. 106, December 2022/January 2023.



Figure 8: Monthly event calendar, issue no. 106, December 2022/January 2023.

After the massive event section follows a double spread interview follows – the 2x5. This interview differs from classic ones since it has two sections, each containing five questions, divided into the categories "Work" and "Human Being." For this issue, the editor-in-chief interviews Stefan Füll, the president of the Handwerkskammer Wiesbaden. This choice re-establishes the connection to the title story and therefore ensures a thread throughout the issue (see figure 8). The next article belongs to the "games" category, which is irregularly recurring and introduces board and card games to the readership.



Figure 9: 2x5 Interview, issue no. 106, December 2022/January 2023.

The Back Section

Next is an advertorial that introduces diverse cultural, retail, and gastronomy stores within the city. Each section contains their supply, website, address, contact information, opening hours, and specials. The food and retail segment also continues on the following pages with the "Auf und zu" category (see figure 9) and the "Restaurant/Geschäft des



Figure 10: "Auf und zu", issue no. 106, December 2022/January 2023.

Monats" (see figure 10). Here, the magazine reports on recently opened and closed stores, and one is especially emphasized on a whole page. On the last pages, every issue contains a horoscope page and the listings. Readers can submit their listings for free and *sensor* encourages them to do so, as well as give feedback through letters to the editor. To further

include the readership, every issue ends with a riddle that readers can solve and win a prize for (see figure 11).



Figure 11: Restaurant of the Month, issue no. 106, December 2022/January 2023.



Figure 12: Listings and Riddle, issue no. 106, December 2022/January 2023.

The structure of each sensor issue balances between consistency and creativity. Recurring formats and regular columns create a sense of familiarity, while dynamic themes and personal touches make each issue unique. The editorial structure not only informs but also encourages readers to actively participate in the city's life. After the establishment of

format and content, the next chapter will explore the emotional mission of *sensor*: what it means to truly "feel a city."

What Does it Mean to "Feel a City"?

"The slogan 'Feel your City' was developed by a core team of creatives under the leadership of David Gutsche in 2010" (translation mine). Hence, the slogan has existed since the founding of *sensor Mainz* and was adapted for the Wiesbaden edition of the city magazine. The slogan represents that *sensor* as a medium wants to contribute to feeling one's city, to perceive awake and curious, and detect things (Fellinghauer). However, the goal is also to transform the readership from a passive role to "active inhabitants and, in the best case, contributors" (translation mine).

The target audience of sensor ranges from around 25 up to 60 years and includes young families, singles, workaholics, employees, self-employed workers, academics, creatives, freaks, as well as middle- and upper-class individuals (sensor "Über uns"). All these individual and diverse people find themselves and a voice in sensor. They get the chance to look at the notable things happening in the city and read about trends, information, and gossip. The significant focus of each issue lies on layout, design, and photography, which frame the articles. Moreover, sensor provides a service for the people via its monthly calendar and free listings. Readers can find notable events, search for, and offer jobs and goods. The monthly published magazine practices community journalism due to its regional focus on Wiesbaden and the presentation of a local identity and issues within said location (Sivek "City magazine editors and the evolving urban information environment" 3). The focus lies not only on providing information, but rather on emotions, worries, and excitement about what is going on within the city and inspiring readers to become active contributors. The magazine's representation of local leaders, political or economic, as well as the usual inhabitants, strengthens a sense of community and belonging. This emotional connection between the people and the city becomes visible through the prominent discussion of international crises like the War in Ukraine, or how the Gaza conflict affects the city and its people. However, not only the content but also the personal relationship of the magazine and especially the editor-in-chief with the readers is what embodies the slogan "Feel your City." Dirk Fellinghauer explains that he always tried to

be present in the city, as well as attentive both as a representative and contact person, who finds out things about the city, preferably first and often exclusively, and then to be able to pass them on to the city and its dwellers (or guests) in a curated manner via the magazine's content. (translation mine)⁸

⁶ "Der Slogan 'Fühle deine Stadt' wurde 2010 von einem Kernteam Kreativer unter Leitung von David Gutsche entwickelt." (Fellinghauer)

⁷ "aktive Bewohner und bestenfalls auch Mitgestalter." (Fellinghauer)

⁸ in der Stadt präsent zu sein und aufmerksam zu sein als Gesicht und Ansprechperson, die Dinge über die Stadt, am liebsten als erstes und oft exklusiv, erfährt und dann in kuratierter Manier über den Content des Magazins an die Stadt und ihre Bewohner (oder auch Gäste) weitergeben zu können. (Fellinghauer)

The editor's statement displays how readers not only "feel" their city through the content sensor produces, but also through the presence of the editor-in-chief in Wiesbaden. Fellinghauer attends many events, he converses with the inhabitants and therefore strengthens the distinctive and personal relationship between the magazine and its readers. To "feel a city" through sensor means to experience the city emotionally, participatory, and evolving. By including diverse voices, highlighting overlooked themes, and encouraging community involvement, sensor asks readers to become active participants rather than passive observers. The slogan evolved from a branding to an editorial philosophy. The people who write and work for the magazine, especially the editor, shape this emotional connection. Therefore, the next chapter will explore sensor's editorial philosophy and the role of Dirk Fellinghauer as former editor-in-chief.

Editorial Philosophy

For city magazines such as sensor, editors play a crucial role. They maintain a strong relationship with their readership through editorials and careful selection of voices and themes for their coverage. "The editorial team ... create the content of a magazine. They do so with a clear purpose, which is ... to serve the readers ... and keep them as readers for future issues" (Sharpe 105). In what follows, I will discuss the role of the editor and explain the editorial philosophy of sensor and how it seeks to shape an urban community. In his goodbye interview (issue no. 126), former editor-in-chief Dirk Fellinghauer, who was part of sensor since its beginning in 2012 until the end of 2024, described how people, when asked if it was possible to replace him, said "There is no way – you are indeed sensor" (translation mine).9

Accordingly, Sharpe explains: "The editor is also



Figure 13: Dirk Fellinghauer, photo by Arne Landwehr, issue no. 106 p. 23, December 2024/January 2025.

often the external voice of the magazine" (122). This proves how deeply involved the

⁹ "auf keinen Fall – du bist doch der sensor." (Fellinghauer 23).

editor is with the magazine. He not only represents but also personifies the magazine. To understand *sensor*'s editorial philosophy, it is essential to examine the role of Dirk Fellinghauer. When asked about his editorial philosophy, he states:

My editorial philosophy was to show the city in its whole diversity and beyond the always reproduced, ever-same prejudices, and in its dynamic and development as a city that gets a needed update, all of that in a positive attitude. Which is to report about things that work well and people who make things possible. sensor as a platform and encourager to create ideas and make them known. (translation mine)¹⁰

His words show how the editorial philosophy of *sensor* is to give the city's people a voice; everybody should feel seen, heard, and represented in the magazine. But also, to show what moves the city. Wiesbaden and its citizens are often seen as snobbish and entitled. Through its editorial philosophy *sensor* tries to break out of the cliché of Wiesbaden and its inhabitants as arrogant and instead form a community that brings together all people to see the potential of their city. The emphasis on potential further supports the point that city magazines are particularly important for urban communities, not only to inform, but rather to transform. As Sternadori and Sivek explain, editors often see their magazines as "the city's 'owner's manual' and ... 'opinion leaders'" (Sivek "City magazine editors and the evolving urban information environment," pp.9-10, 16). This, however, does not only mean reporting solely in a positive way. As Fellinghauer describes:

The focus on what is possible, however, does not exclude tackling critical themes, to bring up a painful subject, to address what does not work or goes wrong – this, however, not in a destructive, but constructive voice with the intention to get things working again. (translation mine)¹¹

This aspect brings up the transformative role again, the goal of *sensor* is to function as an "opinion leader" as Sivek and Sternadori displayed, which shows people what can be reformed by addressing critique, not in a mean, but well-intentioned way. "I did not know that' is a typical and often mirrored effect in reading sensor: We tell unknown and surprising things about the city (translation mine). ¹² The editorial philosophy aims to tackle stories and information that people do not know about, things that are overlooked in the daily life of a city that is mostly anonymous.

¹⁰ Meine Editorial Philosophie war es, die Stadt in ihrer ganzen Vielfalt und weit über die immer wieder verbreiteten immergleichen Klischees hinaus zu zeigen - und in ihrer Dynamik und Entwicklung, als eine Stadt, die ein überfälliges Update erfährt - all das in einer in erster Linie positiven Grundhaltung, d.h. über die Dige zu berichten, die gut funktionieren und die Menschen, die Dinge ermöglichen. sensor als eine Plattform und Ermutiger, Ideen zu entwickeln und bekannt zu machen. (Fellinghauer).

¹¹ [d]er Fokus auf das, was geht, schließt jedoch nicht aus, kritische Themen anzupacken, den Finger in die Wunde zu legen, das anzusprechen, was nicht läuft oder schief läuft - dies dann aber nicht in destruktiver, sondern in konstruktiver Tonlage mit der Absicht, Dinge (wieder) zum Laufen zu bringen. (Fellinghauer).

¹² "Das habe ich nicht gewusst' ist ein typischer, uns vielfach gespiegelter Effekt der sensor-Lektüre: Wir erzählen Unbekanntes und Überraschendes über die Stadt." (Fellinghauer).

sensor distributes issues in "stores, gastronomy, cultural institutions, official bodies, doctors' offices, hairdressers, gyms and so on" (translation mine). ¹³ This shows the influence sensor has on local businesses. "sensor readers actively grab their issues, i.e., they consciously decide to read sensor and do not receive it unwillingly in their letterbox. The immense demand shows that there is a real interest in sensor" (translation mine). ¹⁴ Because "readers want information to help them in their everyday lives" (Sharpe 106)," the magazine reports on stores, openings, restaurants, and events, which they are also encouraged to visit to grab their newest issue. Hence, sensor not only boosts the local economy but also gets people to explore and get to know their community, i.e., city.

Dirk Fellinghauser significantly shapes the editorial philosophy of *sensor*. It consists of diverse themes, (constructive) critique, and tries to display the city's potential for transformation. Functioning as both a voice and a platform, the magazine's creators see it as an encouragement for dialogue and innovative ideas for the city. It focuses on more than just describing stories by shaping experiences and engagement in Wiesbaden. This understanding of *sensor*'s editorial philosophy undermines how the magazine builds trust with its readership, maintaining loyalty and sustaining itself. The following chapter will explain how *sensor* finances itself and explore its business model.

How sensor Finances Itself

Unlike glossy (lifestyle) magazines, which finance themselves either through subscriptions or sales, the business model of city magazines is different. But, the models of city magazines also vary, from free-circulation publications such as *sensor*, to those that also generate sales revenue (Sivek and Sternadori 309). However, "[b]y opting for free distribution, publishers put total dependence upon advertising ... with freedom to set print numbers at a level which will deliver the most profitable outcome" (Stam 186). Hence, free circulating city magazines such as *sensor* finance themselves through advertisements of local stores, paired with digital advertising. *sensor*'s funding bases almost entirely on advertising in the form of ads, supplements, online banners, and advertorials (Fellinghauer). Furthermore, *sensor* offers readers a special support subscription for fifty euros a year, where all issues are sent to their homes. Though this percentage is only "marginal" (Fellinghauer).

As shown in the construction of a *sensor* issue, most of the magazine consists of advertisements, but not all of them are visible at first sight. The magazine manages to integrate, e.g., the monthly schedule for the local museum and theatre into its event calendar section, which makes it difficult for a reader to detect if they consume the service infotainment or ads while reading. Even more difficult are advertorials, which often seem like normal articles but are instead paid for by customers (Sinclair 110). *sensor* uses direct

¹³ "Geschäften, Gastronomie, kulturellen Einrichtungen, offiziellen Stellen, Arztpraxen, Friseuren, Fitnessstudios und und und." (Fellinghauer).

¹⁴ "sensor-Leser greifen aktiv zu, d.h. entscheiden sich bewusst für den sensor und bekommen ihn nicht ungefragt in den Briefkasten gesteckt. Die immense Nachfrage zeigt, dass ein echtes Interesse für sensor besteht." (Fellinghauer).

advertising as well as native advertising and advertorials. Native advertising, e.g., "conceals itself in plain sight" (Sinclair 110), it contains "promotional messages ... that match the form ... of the ... media" (Hardy 19 in Sinclair 110). An example is the monthly event calendar of the local museum, theatre, or club right next to the event calendar

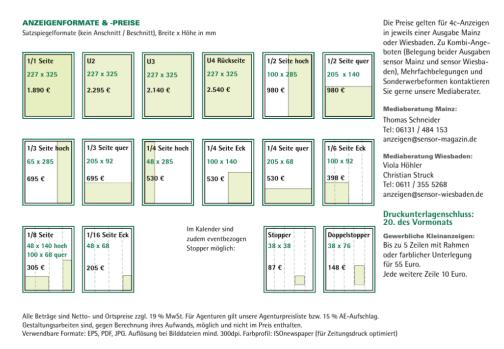


Figure 14: Print ads - formats and prices (sensor Mediadaten 2025).

curated by *sensor*. Hence, the events seem like just an additional calendar, rather than an advertisement. Advertorials might seem like an article at first sight, because they also match the style and format of the magazine. However, readers "know that they are reading an advertisement, but they also see it as an article, which gives it a certain added value" (Morrish and Bradshaw 113). *sensor* uses advertorials to promote possible volunteer work in cooperation with the local *Freiwilligen-Zentrum e.V.* But ex-editor-in-chief Dirk Fellinghauer claims:

Our goal was to produce quality journalism, even as a free medium, which indicates professionally arranged, sophisticated content that is relevant and interesting. No bought articles, no ads for story deals – our credo: we create such exciting and noted content, that your advertisement works without (hidden) PR-articles. (translation mine).¹⁵

Adapting to the digital age, *sensor* offers different ad packages, both for its print version and its online and social media platforms. The prices for ads in the print issues range from as low as eighty-seven euros for a small stopper in the event calendar to 1,899 euros for a whole page (see figure 14). Hence, not only do big companies such as local banks and

¹⁵ Unser Anspruch war es, auch als Gratismedium Qualitätsjournalismus zu produzieren, d.h. professionell gestalteten, anspruchsvollen Content, der relevant und interessant ist. Keine gekauften Artikel, keine Anzeige gegen Bericht-Deals - unser Credo: Wir schaffen so spannenden und beachteten Content, dass deine Werbung hier auch ohne (verstecktem) PR-Artikel wirkt. (Fellinghauer).

cultural institutions have the chance to advertise within *sensor*, but also small businesses with a smaller advertising budget. There is also the possibility to book a combiadvertisement in both versions of *sensor Mainz* and *Wiesbaden*. The prices for digital advertising range from 250 euros to 650 euros for one month (sensor "Mediadaten 2025"). On top of that, *sensor* offers a social media package, which includes digital advertisement on Instagram and Facebook with a caption with accurate wording, tagging of the company, a campaign goal, demographic targeting, as well as an evaluation of the campaign. The prices range from 300 euros for five days, to 500 euros for ten, and 1,000



Figure 15: Online and social media ads (sensor Mediadaten 2025)

euros for fifteen days (see figure 15, sensor "Mediadaten 2025"). Furthermore, *sensor* offers several corporate publishing projects (see figure 16), such as brochures and consumer magazines. The Tip Berlin Media Group, Germany's largest city magazine marketer, which manages twenty titles, manages these national campaigns (sensor "Mediadaten 2025").

Even though the goal is to continue to distribute *sensor* free of charge, "in the long term, of course, we will have to look at how a product and a brand like sensor can be taken into the future; expansion - and monetization concepts - in digital formats are predestined here" (translation mine). ¹⁶ Although *sensor* maintains a steady readership and advertisers, the magazine has to adapt to the digital evolution and find new ways to finance itself, going beyond print advertisements. However, through adaptation and transformation to

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¹⁶ "perspektivisch wird man natürlich schauen müssen, wie ein Produkt und eine Marke wie sensor in die Zukunft geführt werden kann, prädestiniert ist hier ein Ausbau - und Konzepte der Monetarisierung - in digitalen Formaten." (Fellinghauer).

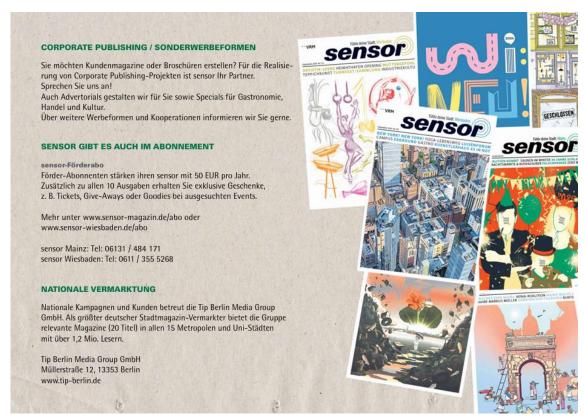


Figure 16: Corporate Publishing (sensor Mediadaten 2025).

online formats, it might be possible to remain a free-circulation magazine. Due to its advertising model, which uses print and digital formats, *sensor* can offer high-quality journalism while being a free circulation. The magazine integrates ads without diminishing its editorial philosophy. Because of its trustworthy relationship with its readers and its credibility within the city, *sensor* displays how paid and journalistic content can coexist. Through this financing model, the magazine cannot only sustain itself but also strengthens its relationship with readers and local businesses. The collaboration with the local economy, while staying independent, reinforces *sensor*'s role in Wiesbaden's urban community.

What Makes sensor Important and Unique?

sensor differs in many ways from newspapers and lifestyle magazines, through its high quality, its constantly surprising selection of topics, its connection to the city and communities, its special overall concept, the visual appearance, the collaboration with outstanding photographers, illustrators, and designers, the 'eye reads along.' (translation mine)¹⁷

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¹⁷ seine hohe Qualität, seine immer wieder überraschende Themenauswahl, seine Bindung an die Stadt und Communities, sein besonderes Gesamtkonzept, auch das visuelle Erscheinungsbild, die Zusammenarbeit mit hervorragenden Fotografen, Illustratoren, Designern, 'das Auge liest mit.' (Fellinghauer).

Hence, *sensor* as a city magazine distinguishes itself through its content, editorial philosophy, and design. All of these aspects contribute to the strong bond and lasting relationship it forms with its urban readers. Furthermore, *sensor* distinguishes itself from other magazines through its branding of the city. As Dirk Fellinghauer explains, *sensor* is often asked if the Wiesbaden City Marketing manages the publishing, since the magazine massively improves the city's image (Fellinghauer). This impression can be traced back

to the importance of a city magazine as a "platform and voice for other perspectives on topics and people be overlooked that might (translation mine).¹⁸ otherwise" This can also be linked to the slogan and editorial philosophy, sensor's uniqueness roots in telling unknown and unexpected stories, as well as to ensure that every reader finds a voice in the magazine. This makes it indispensable for a city like Wiesbaden. As mentioned above, newspapers can report on breaking news, however, city magazines can dive into in-depth research and therefore add significantly to the diversity of local news. Even though sensor publishes digital content cross-platform and has several exclusive online articles, the focus lies on the print issue. As Dirk Fellinghauer explains:



Figure 17: sensor Cover issue no. 100, May 2022.

#Printlives! In an increasingly digitized world with more and more information from more and more sources, it is print magazines that provide calm, orientation, and an overview, which give us the opportunity to concentrate on things and delve deeper into topics simply by creating a haptic experience. (translation mine)¹⁹

Accordingly, the defining features of a print magazine help *sensor* survive. The special experience that a reader gains while browsing through a magazine, slowing down from daily life, is another aspect that makes *sensor* important for the urban community. It invites readers to take a break, find calmness in the hectic of the city, but also to dive into

¹⁸ "Plattform und Stimme für andere Blicke auf Themen und Menschen, die sonst vielleicht übersehen werden." (Fellinghauer).

¹⁹ #Printlebt! In einer immer digitalisierten Welt mit immer mehr Informationen aus immer mehr Quellen sind es Printmagazine, die Ruhe, Orientierung und Überblick bringen, die Gelegenheit geben, sich mal wieder auf Dinge zu konzentrieren und in Themen zu vertiefen und die auch einfach ein haptisches Erlebnis schaffen. (Fellinghauer).

exciting and unknown stories. *sensor* as a city magazine provides new impressions about Wiesbaden, going beyond townish clichés, and sheds light on overlooked themes and peoples. By doing so, it invites the inhabitants to become a part of its mission: to "feel the city" and transform it day by day, story by story. Through its focus on a print magazine with high-quality journalism, paired with exclusive online content and services *sensor* manages to reform itself and therefore the definition of (city) magazines. The survival of city magazines shows that print is not dead, but rather it is ever changing and adapting to new challenges. Urban magazines like *sensor* document and archive an urban community's sense of being. As such *sensor*'s local paper world belongs to the city and gives its people an opportunity to identify with a place where they live.

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