

Mirdles

That's girdles for men. Or big pants for blokes. Hot stuff stateside and winging their way to an M&S near you soon. Here's to his 'n' hers Bridget Jones moments.



Norway

...where it's now law that at least 40% of company directors are female

Sitting on the fence

Goalies who position themselves halfway between the goalposts during penalty shoot-outs are more likely to make a save than their diving counterparts. They save 33% of the time versus 14% for those who dive left and 13% for right.



Boutique festivals

Glastonbury tickets have sold like distinctly lukewarm potatoes compared to last year as festival-goers head for the warmer climes of Benicassim and the Exit Festival in Serbia.

Separate bedrooms

As a woman faces jail in California for stabbing her husband because of his snoring, the National Association of Home Builders predicts that by 2015 more than 60 per cent of custom-built houses will have dual master bedrooms.

Bottled water

Right up there with popping to the shops in your Lear Jet swathed in a mink coat with a plastic bag dangling from your arm.



Keith Richards



Snorting your dead dad's ashes one week, advertising Louis Vuitton luggage the next. The tagline? 'Some journeys cannot be put in words.' Quite.

Wine

It shrinks your hippocampus apparently. For those of you too wine-addled to know what your hippocampus is, it's the part of your brain responsible for memory and spatial awareness.



Kate Moss for Topshop

More jumble sale dress from La Moss.

Michael Byers, Planner/Buyer explains the soon-to-be advertising phenomenon that is QR codes...



Boffins in the land of the rising sun have developed a truly ground-breaking piece of communications' technology in the form of QR codes.

First, the science bit. A QR Code is a [matrix code](#) (or two-dimensional [bar code](#)) created by Japanese corporation [Denso-Wave](#) in 1994. QR stands for "Quick Response", as the creator intended the code to allow its contents to be decoded at high speed, creating instant interaction at the point of experience.

Each QR code contains unique, encrypted information which can be decoded by scanning the code with a mobile phone. The phone needs to be equipped with bespoke software but this is available as a free download from <http://reader.kaywa.com/>. The scanned code then directs users to a WAP site where they can download anything from ringtones to business cards directly to their mobiles.



QR codes present a novel means of interacting with consumers when they are on the move, hence they lend themselves particularly well to outdoor posters and other static media. A quick scan of a QR code allows consumers to find out more information about a product or service either there and then or in their own time. Another boon for advertisers is the opportunity to gather customer data, often in exchange for free content or vouchers. QR codes also represents something of a holy grail in terms of accountability.

The technology has been embraced to such an extent in Japan that users can now display a QR code on their tombstone and relay an instant message from beyond the grave!

The next step here in the UK, however, is to use QR codes to direct the consumer to a purchase screen so that they can buy goods via their mobile phone with the charge being added to their monthly bill. Who said mobile phones weren't dangerous?

As Heat's circulation slumps to 533,034, down 12% year on year, Jane Stewart, Account Manager **ponders whether this signals the death knell for the once thriving celeb weeklies market...**

Heat, once the jewel in the crown of celebrity weeklies, is starting to feel the heat. Everyone's favourite sneak read has lost both Mark Frith, its editor of ten years, and 67,000 readers in the same fortnight.

Heat was not the sole casualty of the latest round of ABCs although, as the poster title for the celebrity weekly market, its fall from grace has invited the most comment. Closer and Now also experienced downturns of more than 11% while Hello dropped by 5.4%, suggesting that even the public's interest in minor European royalty is on the wane!

The decline is attributable to many factors: market saturation, tabloid encroachment on celebrity news and of course, the big, bad Internet. Having toyed with national newspaper circulations like a cat with a half-dead mouse, it has now moved on to their baby sister, the magazine market.

Readership of these titles is buoyed by internet-savvy 16-34 females who now spend more time online than their male counterparts. Websites devoted to the ignoble pursuit of scurrilous gossip-mongering such as: Perez Hilton, The Superficial and Holy Moly have rendered even the best of the celebrity weeklies almost instantly out-of-date. These sharp, witty sites have us logging on in our droves, desperate for a lunchtime fix of Britters tonguing her chihuahua or Lindsay Lohan's latest misdemeanours.

Which brings us neatly on to another reason for the decline – growing guilt that we are in some way to blame for the very public meltdowns of the likes of La Winehouse. It seems that the great British public does have a conscience after all. Sure, we all love to see a 'don't you know who I am?' type being taken down a peg or two. But there is a groundswell of feeling that we no longer delight in seeing 'our Amy' trapped like a deer in the headlights, her fearful gaze staring out at us over our breakfast. Maybe the memory of the chase to the death of Princess Diana lingers on? There was public outcry when Heat published distasteful stickers over photos of Jordan's disabled son. And there isn't a woman in the land who isn't thoroughly fed up with the market's betrayal of the sisterhood. Headlines shrieking: "Too Fat!", "Too Thin!", "Worst Dressed!", "Worst Skin!" are getting a bit, dare we say,... boring?.

It will be interesting to see how the genre reinvents itself in the face of all of the above. One only has to look at the runaway success of Grazia to see that there is plenty of life in the market yet. Something tells us we haven't seen the last of Paris's crotch...

Five ways to spend your time or money this month:

- *Limited edition 'Champignon et Poulet' Pot Noodle.* The 'Slag of all Snacks' has jumped into bed with posh totty Harrods to launch a posh noodle. Available exclusively at Harrods for an eye-watering £29.95, with all proceeds going to Action Against Hunger.
- *A Celebrity Blow-up Doll.* Why make do with a real-life prole when you could faux-bang an inflatable celeb? Take your pick from Jessica Alba, Lindsey Lohan or Eva Longoria. Available from Pipedream Products.
- *A Muxtape.* Once the calling card of every hackneyed teen seduction, the mix tape has been given a new lease of life at www.muxtape.com
- *The Quantum Sleeper.* The safest bed you will ever sleep in. A bed capable of surviving gun shots, chemical attacks and the best the bogey man can throw at you. Available at www.qsleeper.com for a cool \$135,000.
- www.boingboing.net Want to regale your friends and family with titbits from the fast-moving world of the web but don't have the time or inclination? This sparky website is the answer - a one stop shop for all the quirkiest web news from around the globe.

