

Journals, Trade Publications and Magazines: What's the Difference?

The chart below explains the differences between the three most common sources of editorial outlets—academic or scholarly journals, trade publications and consumer magazines.

Academic or Scholarly Journal	Trade Publication	Consumer Magazine
Examples New England Journal of Medicine, Journal of Technology Studies	Examples Innovation & Tech Today, Work Design, InformationWeek	Examples People, Huffington Post, New Yorker
Purpose To disseminate original research findings, reviews of existing research, or scholarly discussions	Purpose To advance a profession or industry, share news, information, trends, technologies and opinions	Purpose To entertain and inform about current events and popular culture
Audience Professional or academic researchers	Audience Experts in a specific industry or trade	Audience General population
Authors Professors, scholars, researchers, and students within a specific discipline	Authors Industry specialists and staff journalists with subject expertise	Authors Staff journalists and pre-approved contributors
Writing Style Expert, complex language, extensive bibliography	Writing Style Professional, may include industry jargon, may include references or sources	Writing Style Casual, simple, and non-technical
Article Length Long: 5,000-10,000 words	Article Length Short to medium: 800-1,800 words	Article Length Medium: 1,200-1,800 words
Frequency Quarterly, semi-annually, annually	Frequency Daily, weekly, monthly, bi-monthly	Frequency Daily, weekly, monthly
Content Review and Acceptance Process Blind peer review by an editorial review board or external panel of experts, low acceptance rate averaging 32%	Content Review and Acceptance Process Content is reviewed by internal editors prior to publication. When working with Trade Press Services, acceptance is guaranteed.	Content Review and Acceptance Process Rarely publish articles provided by outside contributors
Publisher Industry associations, academic press	Publisher Industry associations and commercial groups	Publisher Commercial groups

In terms of circulation, the more targeted and specific the audience is, the smaller the readership figures are likely to be. Smaller circulations do not detract from the quality of a publication and higher circulations do not necessarily indicate a high-quality outlet.