

6.5 Analysis of readership levels by age of issue

This analysis was undertaken by PMB to determine whether the age of issue of PMB magazines should be increased or decreased to better record the magazines' average issue readership. The source of the data is PMB III, conducted in 1979. It covers English language magazines only.

BACKGROUND

Readership of magazines accumulates over time. It is assumed that the growth curve flattens out after a time interval which will depend on different publications and perhaps for different issues. (Figure 1)

With the TTB method, if the stimulus was sufficient to ensure zero or negligible forgetting, then obviously we would interview with an issue of sufficient age to have accumulated very close to 100% of its maximum eventual readership.

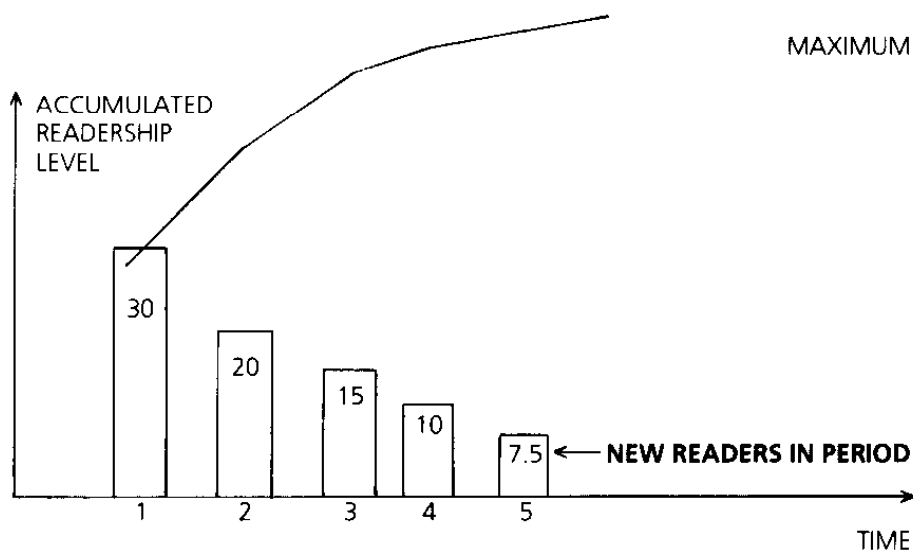
Diary studies, and yesterday reading studies, have established considerable data which indicate the rate of audience accumulation.

(1) For example, Simmons' prototype Sortem (Study of Readers Total Experience with Magazines) reported that newswEEKLIES would accumulate close to 85% of their readership at about three weeks. Women's service publications would attain 85% at 8 weeks. (Table 1)

TABLE 1

	NEWSWEEKLIES				WOMEN'S SERVICE		
	After 1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	After 4 weeks	6 weeks	8 weeks
% of Average Audience	53	78	84	86	71	80	85
Primary only	50	97	n/a	n/a	89	94	95

FIGURE 1



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(2) *Newsweek's* 1977 Study had a more rigorous sample. It showed faster accumulation for newsweeklies. On average 90% of their eventual maximum readership was accumulated after just 14 days. (Table 2).

**TABLE 2
NEWSWEEK'S EXPLORATION OF DAILY
AUDIENCE ACCUMULATION — 1977**

<i>Newsweeklies</i>	<i>After 7 Days</i>	<i>After 14 Days</i>
Total	60%	90%
Primary	75%	90%
Secondary	35%	85%

The TTB technique is subject to the informant forgetting that he/she read or looked into the issue in question. Presumably, if one were to interview many years after publication most respondents would be unable to recall whether or not they had looked at it.

A model of recall decay has often been presented (Figure 2).

It is not the purpose of this analysis to evaluate D (difference between 'true' accumulated level and the level measured by TTB technique). I would just observe in passing that I know of two studies that speak to this question: the ARF Validation Study found appreciable numbers of people unable to recall reading the very next day; Wally Langschmidt has reported that newsstand buyers recalled readership at 90% level, and (an important finding) this level was largely unchanged over the time that is typically used for TTB measurement (6 — 10 weeks).

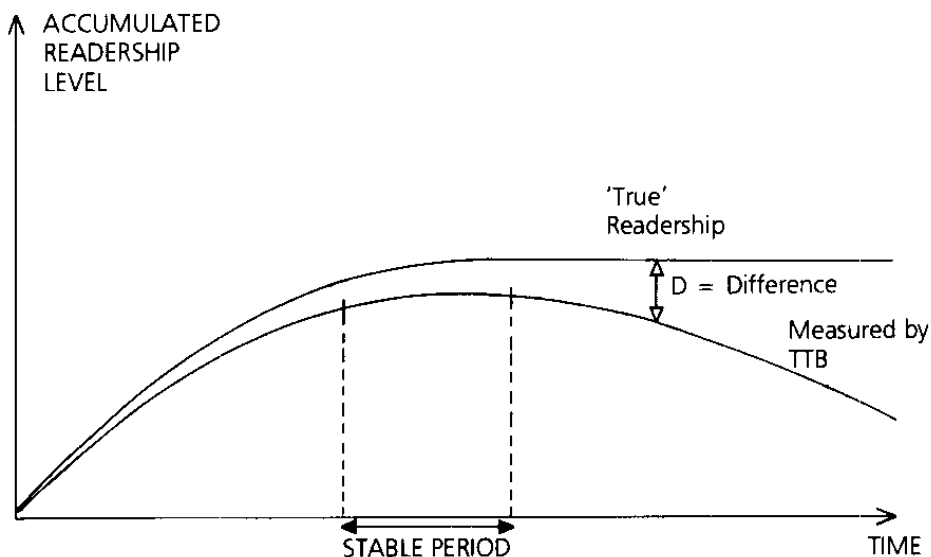
The purpose of this analysis, however, was to establish whether our Canadian magazines were in what I call on the chart the 'stable period' We want to be there because to the left we understate readership (as later readers are missed). To the right, the rate of forgetting exceeds the rate of accumulation of new readers.

PMB PRACTICES — AGE OF ISSUE

PMB allows each publication to choose its own replacement schedule. In PMB III, magazines generally followed the guidelines shown in Table 3.

The question for PMB members is whether within the confines of the skeletonized TTB structure, these

FIGURE 2



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TABLE 3

<i>Weeklies</i> TV Listing either or Newsweeklies	<i>Published</i>	<i>Used in Field</i>	<i>For How Long</i>	<i>Average Issue Age</i>
	Saturday	9 days later	2 weeks	2.3 weeks
	Saturday	16 days later	2 weeks	3.3 weeks
	Monday	3 weeks later	2 weeks	4 weeks
<i>Monthlies (Most)</i>	1st of month	6 weeks later	4 weeks	8 weeks
<i>Less Frequent Example</i>	1st of every other month	6 weeks later	8-9 weeks	10.2 weeks

replacement/age of issue practices are working.

FINDINGS — NEWSWEEKLIES

The replacement schedule calls for newsweeklies to enter fieldwork at 3 weeks and continue through 4th week, and then be replaced. We find little difference between readership scores for 3 weeks vs. 4 weeks. This is what would be expected from the Simmons 'Sortem' Study. (Table 4).

TABLE 4

	<i>Issue Age (at start of week)</i>	
	<i>3 weeks</i>	<i>4 weeks</i>
Base N =	4547	3974
<i>Newsweeklies</i>		
Readership for Magazine A	15.6%	16.0%
B	13.7	13.1
Avg	14.6	14.5

However, due to field considerations, there were instances where interviewing continued on without replacement. Readership scores then were 31% higher than the average (which is significant at 95% confidence level). (Table 5).

TABLE 5

	<i>N =</i>	<i>5 weeks +</i>	<i>Index to Average</i>
<i>Newsweeklies</i>		547	
Readership for Magazine A		19.7%	122
B		19.3	140
		19.4	131

This 31% difference is much larger than we would expect from either the Newsweek or the Sortem Study, and warrants further checking with newer PMB data.

Primary Readership scores showed the same Pattern. (Table 6)

TABLE 6

	<i>3 weeks</i>	<i>4 weeks</i>	<i>5+ weeks</i>	<i>Index 5+ vs. Avg</i>
<i>Primary Readers</i>				
Magazine A	9.3	9.3	10.6	(113)
Magazine B	6.4	6.5	11.0	(163)
	7.8	7.8	10.8	(135)
(As % of Total)	(53%)	(54%)	(55%)	

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TABLE 7

	Age at start	1st week (4547)	2nd week (3974)	3rd+ weeks (584)	Index 3rd+ vs Avg
Readership of:	A (2 weeks)	21.1%	20.6%	21.8%	(105)
	B (VAR)	19.8	17.8	10.8	(59)
	C (1 week)	2.8	4.1	5.8	(165)
	D (1 week)	9.9	11.8	28.0	(239)
	E (1 week)	1.3	1.2	1.0	(77)
		11.0	11.1	13.5	(121)
Primary readers of:	A (2 weeks)	17.8	17.3	18.1	(104)
	B (VAR)	18.4	16.8	10.1	(59)
	C (1 week)	2.2	3.5	4.9	(169)
	D (1 week)	8.8	10.9	26.7	(250)
	E (1 week)	1.2	1.0	1.0	(86)
		9.7	9.9	12.2	(123)

TABLE 8

		Issue age (weeks)				
		4-5 (1240) %	6 (1609) %	7 (2569) %	8 (1907) %	9+ (1780) %
Total Readers	A	1.1	.9	1.2	1.1	.7
	B	2.9	2.4	3.0	2.9	6.5
	C	.3	.6	.7	.3	.8
	D	1.5	2.6	3.1	1.6	2.1
	E	4.6	4.3	4.7	5.6	4.1
	F	26.2	23.5	27.5	28.4	23.1
	G	3.3	2.8	3.6	5.3	4.9
	H	22.8	19.6	19.0	20.7	18.6
	I	1.6	2.0	.8	2.6	1.0
Weekly Average		8.0	7.3	7.9	8.6	7.7
Index Weekly Average vs. overall average		(102)	(93)	(101)	(109)	(98)
Primary Readers Index		(97)	(89)	(102)	(109)	(103)

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TABLE 9

	AGE OF ISSUE (AT START OF WEEK)					Average
	6 weeks or less	7 weeks	8 weeks	9 weeks	10+	
A	10.2%	11.7%	12.2%	10.7%	10.9%	11.0%
B	2.7	3.0	2.8	2.2	2.4	2.6
C	13.1	13.9	15.3	15.9	17.8	14.9
D	1.6	1.4	1.2	.5	.5	1.0
E	3.2	4.0	3.0	4.2	3.0	3.4
F	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.5	2.5
G	1.0	2.5	2.4	1.9	.2	1.8
H	5.2	5.3	5.5	6.3	8.5	6.0
I	5.2	3.6	2.5	3.2	3.2	3.6
J	na	1.8	1.8	2.3	1.7	1.9
Average	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.1	4.9
Index avg for week to overall average	(102)	(102)	(98)	(98)	(104)	

TABLE 10

MAGAZINE 'C' READERSHIP SCORE BY ISSUE BY WEEK (FALL 1979)						
	3-4 weeks	5-6 weeks	7-8 weeks	9-10 weeks	11-12 weeks	Avg.
Issue 1				20	14	17
2			11	15		13
3		9				9
4	15	14	24			18
						14

FINDINGS — TV LISTINGS

Headings in **Table 7** are a bit different as they show 1st week of use vs 2nd week of use, vs 3rd week of use. This is because TV listings start in the field with differing ages as indicated in parentheses.

The average for the group shows a pattern like that for newsweeklies. But there are big differences between magazines with 2 going down, 1 flat and 2 going up in the 3rd and 4th weeks.

FINDINGS — MONTHLIES

Monthly magazines showed no significant variation in

the time periods analyzed. (**Table 8**). Our conclusion, therefore, is that the selected measurement period is in the 'stable period', where new readers and memory loss effects offset each other.

FINDINGS — LESS FREQUENT PUBLICATIONS

As for monthlies, the less frequently published magazines had on average almost flat readership scores regardless of age of issue. (**Table 9**). This suggests that these PMB publications are in the 'Stable Period' where any losses due to inability to recall are offset by new readers.

As with other publication groups, we find no

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difference in the average pattern by week for primary vs secondary.

Perhaps PMB is using too recent an issue for newsweeklies.

OTHER FINDINGS

The data suggest that there are as large or larger differences between issues as the differences between weeks of interviewing. For example, magazine 'C' in **Table 9** had week by week readership of 13.1% to 17.8%, which is a range of 5.7% on a mean of 14.9%. **Table 10** shows that for just 4 issues used in the full interviewing period, the issue by issue readership varied from 9 - 18%, a range of 9% on a mean of 14%.

CONCLUSIONS

- (1) For monthlies and less frequently published magazines, PMB's current age of issue practice appears to be right.
- (2) For newsweeklies and the weekly TV listings, we have results that indicate further investigation is required.

SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Prototype study conducted by Three Sigma Research on Sample of 355 women in 20 suburban areas, each maintaining magazine diary for 31 days. Reported by W.R. Simmons 1975.
- 3 *Reliability of Readership Research* by W. Langschmidt. Issued by S.A. Advertising Research Foundation (1978).