The Magazine Industry: How the Internet Has Changed It All

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Commonwealth Honors in Communication Studies

Bridgewater State University

May 3, 2022

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Introduction

Imagine sitting in the doctor's office in the 1970s, waiting to hear your name called. There were no cellphones to endlessly scroll through to pass time, no Kindles to read from. What would you be doing? Perhaps flipping mindlessly through a magazine, chosen out of the pile stacked on the sterile table next to your seat.

The digital age has forced changes in all industries. Jobs that were once done by workers can now be done by robots, computers have made content creation much easier, and the internet has made publishing anything easier and accessible to all. These changes were also drastic for the magazine industry. The way society consumes magazines has shifted dramatically and publications now face substantial competition in the form of countless social media platforms and apps. In some ways magazine consumption still looks similar to that scenario from the 1970s, with people still subscribing to print magazines that are delivered to their home, flipping through them with their morning coffee. But like so many other types of media, magazines are transforming and experiencing some digital growing pains. Our relationship with magazine content has changed so much, it is difficult to relate to the way magazines were consumed in the 1900’s compared to today.

This thesis is focused on the different ways the Internet era has affected magazine production and consumption. The first part of this research project is a literature review focusing on the history of the magazine industry and technology. The second part of this project compares two magazines: Better Homes & Gardens- Do It Yourself and Real Simple, based on content, advertisements, formatting, etc… The third part of this research project is an analysis of a public
survey taken by over one hundred people, which focuses on their own magazine consumption and attitudes toward print and digital magazines.

The goal of this thesis is to understand the changes the magazine industry has seen through the emergence of digital technology. This project can help us further understand the role of online magazines, and how their reading experience differs from reading the traditional print magazines. This project can help consumers and producers understand what magazine readers are looking for in their magazine experience and what factors make them choose to read magazines from one platform to another. This is important for producers and publishers because it helps decide what content is worth creating based on the wants of consumers.

Several research questions guided this thesis:

1. How do online and print versions of magazines vary?
2. How do different magazines vary on the same platform?
3. How has the magazine industry as a whole evolved over time?
4. What are individuals' specific relationships with print and/or online magazines?

Before sharing the results of my textual analysis and survey, I will first review relevant literature to contextualize my project.
Literature Review

Origins of The Magazine Industry

Erbauliche Monaths Unterredungen, also known as Edifying Monthly Discussions, is the first example of a magazine known in history. Erbauliche Monaths Unterredungen was created by Johann Rist of Hamburg, in 1663, and was published until 1668. This early version of a magazine only consisted of works from Rist, who was most known for poetry and hymns ("Hymnology.").

The term ‘magazine’, translated from the Arabic word ‘makhazin’, first began as a military term for ‘a place of storage’, but was soon taken by Edward Cave, in 1731, to create Gentleman’s Magazine. Cave was the first person to name the type of published content, ‘magazine’, but it clearly gained popularity. Gentleman’s Magazine was advertised as “treasured up, as in a Magazine, the most remarkable Pieces” (Williamson), and was filled with weekly essays, poetic essays, and news. The final section was called “The Monthly Intelligencer” and was filled with information such as the weather, crime, duels, archeological finds, witchcraft, and casualties. The Gentleman's Magazine eventually included content from its readers, which made the magazine double in length. The magazine was printed and distributed through 1907, with different editors taking over after Cave’s death. From 1907-1922, four pages continued to be printed just to keep the magazine technically ‘in print’.

The London Magazine, published in 1732, was Gentleman's Magazine's biggest competition. Since it was first published, The London Magazine has had many different editors and has seen many format and content changes. The original magazine stopped printing in 1785. During the years of 1770 to 1785, the editor is not even known, although many claim it was

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Alexander Hogg. The lack of a known editor caused a lot of interest, and another publication, *Female Hand*, even wrote a satirical piece making claims of Hogg being the editor. To this day, there is no confirmation of Hogg’s involvement, aside from some revisions and personal submissions (Pitcher).

When magazines were created, they played a big role in people's day-to-day lives, specifically for women. Although the magazine industry began in the 1700s, the publication of *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, first published in 1850, was when the industry took off. This magazine was said to be the first of many to play a role in American women’s lives. *Godey’s Lady Book* was a magazine published from 1830 to 1898, in the time of the Civil War, and it had a major effect in the popularity of women's magazines because of its inclusion of female writers’ work.

*Godey’s Lady Book*, published in 1830, was the first magazine that pushed female writers' work. This magazine consisted of a variety of article topics such as fashion, needlework, music, crafts, interior decorating, poetry, fiction and nonfiction work. The magazine eventually evolved to also include reviews of books, and other literary pieces. Sarah Josepha Hale, also known as “the lady editor”, ran the magazine from 1828-1836. Hale was a strong advocate for women's rights, and her editorial mandate was, "...to provide quality material to benefit and educate the female reader." In Hale’s time as editor, *Godey’s Lady Book* reached 150,000 subscribers, which was the largest at the time (The Cleveland Museum of Art).

Prior to 1842, magazines consisted of only words on the page. *The Illustrated London News*, created by Herbert Ingram, was the first magazine to include illustrations. The magazine consisted of sixteen pages, filled with forty-eight columns of writing. The images included fashion trends, Queen Victoria, and city views in London. *The Illustrated London News* was
published weekly and contained lots of news issues and commentary. This magazine changed the future formatting and imagery of all magazines to come, and *The Illustrated London News* is still being published today (Leary).

*The Ladies' Home Journal* did more than just provide articles for women; it was a way for them to have a voice. On March 18, 1970, *The Ladies' Home Journal* put their motto, “Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman”, to the test. Over one hundred angry women came to the magazine's New York headquarters to discuss the needed change in the media's portrayal of women (Blakemore). The discussion with *The Ladies' Home Journal* eventually led to protests with other magazines, such as *Journaland*, where the women had strong demands for the current editor, John Mack Carter. The women requested “… Carter to step down in favor of a woman editor, an advertising and editorial staff of all women, free daycare for employees, an editorial policy against ads that were exploitative of women, and an end to the “Can This Marriage Be Saved?” column.” (Blakemore). The protest against Carter lasted for eleven hours, and after it concluded there was an agreement for new articles to be published such as ones that were more progressive and included more feminism. The publicity the protest got was the biggest win because it opened a lot of peoples’ eyes to changes that needed to be made. Despite the voice magazines gave women, Leonard pushes the idea that magazines main function and priority is for profit, rather than to help women in society. She also says, most women's magazines' purpose is “to reflect "mainstream thinking" rather than to work "to radically reconfigure women's lives or society”” (Leonard).
Evolving Cultural Context

First published in 1891, *Ringwood’s Afro-American Journal of Fashion*, was the first magazine published and edited by Black women. It was then followed by *Half-Century Magazine for the Colored Home and Homemaker*, first published in 1916, and *Tan Confessions*, first published in 1950. These three magazines were notable not only for the contributions of Black women, but also because they simultaneously wrote to an audience of elite upper class as well as the working class. The magazines were a form of activism, working to change perceptions of Black women and show realities of their lives (Callahan).

Following the Civil War, magazines also played a role in World War II. While cities in the United States changed from production sites to consumption based, the magazine industry also changed to be more consumer oriented. Many new magazines started, based on cities, such as *New York Magazine*. These magazines connected to the development of consumerism, to the changes in the industry (Greenburg). Consumerism affected the audience of magazines, focusing on the middle class. Greenburg states that “These urban lifestyle magazines…are consumer magazines that fuse the identity and consumption habits of their readers with the branded ‘lifestyle’ of a given metropolitan region and were shaped by the changing institutional matrix of magazine publishing in the post–World War II period, therefore magazines can target and market a specific lifestyle. This caused “…the magazine industry as a whole [to] shift away from mass-marketed general-interest magazines and toward niche-marketed lifestyle titles that could deliver a more specific market to advertisers.”, which is how marketing in magazines, and other platforms such as television, radio, and film, still work today.

Following World War II, is the ‘post-war era’, in which some magazines began causing friction. At the time of *Fan Magazine*’s publication in 1911, many young people used the
magazine as a source for information, including for celebrity scandals. *Fan Magazine* helped the film industry because it increased awareness of celebrities and studios. Desjardins argues that the conflict caused by *Fan Magazine* played a role in celebrity gossip magazines and celebrity publicity. *Fan Magazine* published negative articles about celebrities and outing others for private scandals. Desjardins connects Hollywood gossip as we know it, to its origins in *Fan Magazine* (Desjardins).

Between the late 1800s to early 1900s, a special group of magazines began. “The Seven Sisters” is a group of women's magazines consisting of *Better Homes and Gardens, Family Circle, Good Housekeeping, Ladies’ Home Journal, McCall’s, Redbook*, and *Woman’s Day*. The ‘Seven Sisters’ term came from the Greek myth of Pleiades. These seven magazines are marketed towards moms and homemakers. Despite their publication starting over a century ago, three of the magazines are still in production: *Better Homes and Gardens, Good Housekeeping,* and *Woman’s Day*. In the mid 1980’s, there was a noticeable difference in that because the ‘Seven Sisters’ magazines had female editors, there was less stereotyping and an increase in positive portrayals of women (Jolliffe and Catlett).

During World War II, all products were limited and people weren’t purchasing an abundance of things. After World War II, Americans were more hopeful about their future, and were more willing to consume. Advertisers took this chance to market to American’s futures. This hope allowed for a boom in the United States advertising, and print media was the best play for advertisements. A lot of print advertisements were futuristic, almost like they were trying to predict the future. For example, a print advertisement is set in a living room with a television playing, but the window peers into a massive swimming pool so that the swimmers can peer into the living room and watch television as they swim. Following World War II, “…Artists and
advertising agencies wanted to sell a bright and hopeful future. But they were also working to produce something that their audience would recognise and find plausible.” (Garrett).

By 1940, women's magazines had gained some traction, such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Woman’s Home Companion*. These three magazines were considered mass-circulating because of their popularity amongst English speakers (Walker). Popular topics in these magazines consist of World War II, marriage, motherhood, homemaking, fashion, beauty, and the workplace. Women's magazines at this time were aimed at middle and upper-classes, as well as white women. This increase in traction lasted from 1940 to 1949, where there was a “50 percent gain in circulation for all magazines…There seem to be no data that give a precise picture of how much magazine circulations in aggregate grew during the war” (Peterson). During World War II, to the end of the war, *Ladies Home Journal* saw an increase of circulation by twenty-six percent, from 3,823,000 to 4,818,000 (*Modernist Journals Project*).

Shifting ahead to the 1960s, content in the magazines began to shift. This was a time of growth for feminism, and consumers looked to the media to reflect that: “As the second wave of feminism began in the United States in the 1960s, health became a topic of intense concern for women's advocates, many of whom argued that if women were to control their bodies, they needed factual information about biology and physiology” (Barnett). Aside from the typical fashion and lifestyle magazines, health related content is also a popular topic. Female scholars have argued the role that women’s magazines play in women's health, oftentimes improving it. Through magazines, health concerns can be spread to the public quickly. For example, both *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* published articles regarding negative effects on patent medicines, which changed the public's perspectives on such medicines. Other magazines have advocated for food and drugs laws, venereal disease, maternal death and accountability, sex
education, birth control and more. The most common health topics in women's magazines are on pregnancy and birth, which has helped women with disease prevention, treatment options, and provided other resources. Aside from just educating, women's health magazines have also been known to advocate for their readers (Barnett).

Heading into the 1970s, women used magazines as a way to spread feminism. *Country Women*, which was published from 1973-1979, was known as a ‘feminist back-to-the-land publication’. This feminism movement began from a reader who wrote a piece that talked about feminist issues and gender assumptions. The ‘back-to-the-land’ movement encouraged families to move from the cities into rural areas to become self-sufficient and get away from the Vietnam War, but people who moved were often unprepared to live this type of ‘off the grid’ lifestyle. This whole movement grew to expose how ‘back-to-the-land’ exploited women’s labor, and aimed to provide empowerment for women. On the side, *Country Women also* worked to fight against racism, therefore the magazine covered a lot of ground (Carroll).

Moving into the 1980s, a study was completed to look into the average magazine consumer. The study was done in the United States, between 1979 and 1983. The researchers also completed a content analysis of magazines during the time, totalling of 234 magazines. They studied circulation, similarities in the first issue, price, publication, frequency of publication, location of headquarters. The researchers concluded that the two biggest factors in survival rates of magazines in the 1980s was the price of one magazine and the frequency of the magazine’s publication (Husni).

Journalism in the 1990s took a turn due to education. Prior to the 1990s consumers didn’t think much about the paper the articles were printed on, or the effect that this had on the planet. Once 1990 hit, consumers became a lot more educated on the planet and becoming ‘eco-friendly’
was a trend. Magazine content had to make changes to keep up with the trends. For example:

“Life magazine’s special April 1990 issue, complete with a special Green Life logo, Outside
magazine’s roundup and rating of major environmental organizations, and Reason magazine’s
intelligent analysis of repressive tendencies within some environmental groups.” (Sipchen).

In 1998, Jakob Nielsen, co-founder of the Nielsen Norman Group, predicted that “Legacy
media cannot survive because the current media landscape is an artifact of the underlying
hardware technology. Whenever the user experience is dictated by hardware limitations, it is a
sure bet that something better will come along once these limitations are lifted.”. He was correct.

Before the increased involvement of the internet, consumers would have to look through three
different media products to get what they could now see in one. For example, consumers would
have to watch television to see an event, read the newspaper to see the report on the event, then
read a magazine to see an analysis of the event. Nielsen also predicted that integrated media
would improve to remove major flaws, such as low resolution and slow loading times, which he
was correct in predicting (Nielsen). Despite a shift in magazine content in the 1990s, the decade
was still a high for the industry.

Now, looking into the 2000s, the arrow has shifted down.“In a turnaround of almost
Biblical proportions, the business category, which enjoyed seven or so of the fattest years in
magazine history in the 1990s now is suffering through seven or more of the leanest.” (Webber).

Because magazines were doing so well in the decades prior, it was inevitable for there to be a
fall, and with the economic crisis in the 2000s, coupled with technological innovations, it finally
happened. Consumers were scared during this time, and didn’t want to turn to the same old
things they have been. Consumers wanted new technology and hope for the future. Magazines
during this time had to reinvent themselves to have a purpose, rather than just staying in business (Webber).

Internet’s Effect on the Magazine Industry

Even during the early rise of the internet, around the 1990s, magazines were affected. The internet and television allowed news to break much more quickly than magazines and newspapers because it didn’t have to print and hit the newsstands. Newspapers and magazines were forced to compete with the speed and content the internet was providing. Mafalda Anjos, editor of the magazine Unica, says, “With more and more news being broken online and on TV, the daily newspapers moved towards the weekly newspapers; and these weekly newspapers moved towards news magazines with the same content. The newspaper was doing reportage, opinion pieces, and reflective articles that were clearly exclusivities of the magazine in the past”. This led to some magazines reinventing themselves, while others suffered major losses in readers (Sorg).

Now that consumers don’t rely on magazines and newspapers for news and information, the way they consume news has changed. Prior to the popularity of the Internet, magazines had a lot more control over the information being published and how it would be worded. Also with the increased popularity of the Internet, online-only magazines now exist, “Online-only magazines include Slate, which offers a daily digest of information from newspapers around the globe, and Salon, which provides readers many stories for free and more in-depth coverage for a subscription cost. All these factors contribute to changing perspectives on the way that information is being controlled in the journalism industry” (Saylor). These web-only publications began to blur the line between online magazine content, blogs, and other forms and forums of digital writing.
Continuing on with the increase in accessibility to the internet, technology grew from traditional internet (computers) to smart internet (cell phones), and now users have a lot more access to applications and information. All internet interactions are fast-paced and constantly accessible. This complication has an effect on both individuals, as well as companies (Zheng Simplot-Ryl, Bisdikian Mouftah). These developments were beneficial, but also led to the Digital disruption. The digital disruption is the “turbulence induced by digital innovation that leads to the erosion of boundaries...” (Skog, Wimelius, Sandberg). Digital disruption majorly affects industries and markets through digital innovations. This disruption causes creative destruction and has the potential to change every industry (Skog, Wimelius, Sandberg).

Because of all the developments the Internet has caused, the magazine industry has had to make their own changes. There is an importance of content and finding the niche of the magazine. The main aspect that will make or break the magazine is having the right content that is going to the right audience, which can be done by being a trusted brand with quality content. Magazines’ Instagram accounts are the best way to draw traffic onto online sites, which can lead to subscriptions (Guidone). It is also important for magazines to create digital content that is both suitable for multiple social media platforms, but also reinforced their brand and publication.

Subscriptions and Business Factors

Given all these digital disruptions to the magazine industry, it is not surprising that subscription models have evolved as well. Prior to magazine subscriptions that we know now, where magazines get delivered to our homes automatically, subscriptions did not exist. Consumers would buy magazines at newsstands, whenever new ones were published. Eventually companies caught on to the idea of subscriptions and created a ‘subscription guarantee’ so that
readers would automatically receive new issues. Subscriptions now have changed to often include additional content that can be found online (Magazines.com).

While some consumers are looking to find more magazine subscriptions, some consumers are trying to get rid of subscriptions. One program, called the Preferred Subscriber Automatic Renewal Program, forces consumers to cancel their subscription, compared to alternatively having to renew each term. This relates to the gym membership model, where companies hope that individuals forget to cancel and continue paying the membership since it is automatic. An example of the program in action is *Time Magazine* using this technique, but they have received many consumer complaints. The average magazine has seven percent of their customers on continuous renewal, while *Time Magazine* has thirty percent on continuous renewal. This renewal confusion makes it difficult to understand subscribers' wants (Solomon).

*Time Magazine* isn’t the only magazine causing confusion for its consumers looking to unsubscribe. Tom Miller shares that, “Problems with magazine subscriptions ranked second for total number of complaints received last year by the Consumer Protection Division”. While some complaints were solved easily, other complaints involved possible illegal actions by magazine companies. It is recommended to look out for sweepstakes, telemarketers, free issues, or other special offers that sound too good to be true (Miller).

Subscriptions have not only changed for magazines, but now exist in areas we couldn’t have expected, such as streaming services, food subscriptions, and clothing subscriptions. Consumers choose subscriptions over paying individually for items for various reasons such as price and convenience. Subscriptions allow consumers to pay less for items, while having them delivered to their home, compared to a higher price and having to drive to a store to purchase them. This connects to convenience because having something delivered to your house is about
as easy as it gets. It also saves the consumer from having to remember to purchase the item. Subscription models have grown and are continuing to grow, “Today, both startups and established businesses are using the subscription model to grow their customer base” (Barseghian). This ‘subscription culture’ is real, and quite profitable. Consumers spend money in lots of little cuts, so none of the prices seem too high, but once the consumer has a dozen or more charges to their account regularly, the total can get high.

Looking at funding for magazines, a study on the relation of spending on online vs print content, to the number of readers on each platform was analyzed. The analysis shows a correlation of popular magazines, in print and online, having more readers both online and in print. This increase in readership is caused by further engagement online, which encourages users to then also consume the print media. The conclusion says that print magazines have been able to continue a strong audience online (Tarkiainen, Ellonen, Ots and Stocchi).

Business models have shifted to examine the effect magazines have on online formats and how the online formats affect the print magazines. Researchers conducted interviews and customer feedback was looked at to study the magazine's website development. The research found that discussion forums and making the online format a community helped to gain overall success and positive feedback. They also concluded that these online formats complement the print form of the magazine (Kuivalainen, Ellonen and Sainio).

The impact of the internet on magazines in a business sense can be seen from two levels: the industry level and the company level. The industry level is a broader look at the resources and barriers that the industry as a whole faces, while company level is the resources and barriers that just one firm in particular faces. The industry level is impacted by the internet because it affects the rivalry between publishers. The Internet hasn’t changed the competitiveness of the
industry, it just “adds another competitive weapon to the arsenal” (p. 4). At the other level, the company level, the internet doesn’t change the core competencies of the company because it still follows the needs of the consumer (Ellonen). Although all industries are facing the new weapon of the internet, it is more difficult for the magazine industry given that the industry has had to add a completely new way to publish their content through the Internet.

The addition of an online magazine option changes the overall experience for the consumer, as well as tests their loyalty to the print version. The addition of the online format complements the print format in many ways, including providing an easier way to engage with the magazine, which in turn, creates more frequent engagement. The addition also allows outlets to publish new content more quickly, as they don’t have to wait for a monthly, or even weekly, print edition. The online format also provides ways for consumers to interact with one another, which creates more overall engagement. Because of the new ways of engagement, the internet in this way has been a positive addition to the magazine industry (Tarklainen).

A major factor to how a magazine is affected by the internet is the age and size of the company. A study of 150 different magazine companies concluded that there was indeed an impact due to the age and size of how the magazine works with the Internet and digitizes their content. It is also concluded that digitizing the magazine's content is a strategy for innovation, as well as lowering cost. Lastly, digitizing the content was more successful in companies where there were stronger relationships with the consumers, which tended to be smaller companies (BarNir Anat, et al.).

An additional factor is that some magazines may have an easier time adapting to the Internet era than others, based on the content. For example, agricultural magazines have always done well in the form of print, and editors had trouble translating this online. Not only was it
difficult to translate the content to an online format, but a fair portion of the audience did not care for the online platform. The Livestock Publications Council concluded that agricultural magazines should continue to run the print versions for the audience that prefers it, but as the rural and urban areas shrink, the magazines have to prepare for the consumer to be more open to reading their content online (Rhoades).

In some cases, the online format of a magazine is seen to be the off brand, while the print format is the ‘parent’ format. The loyalty of consumers to these online formats depends on the satisfaction of the website and the overall experience with the brand. Two other major factors of loyalty to online platforms is the length of history and the similarities between the online format and the ‘parent’. Researchers have suggested that if the brand has a heavy influence offline, this will then transfer online. Consumers will then be receptive and utilizing online platforms if they already trust the brand (Horppu Kuivalainen Tarkiainen Ellonen).

Like mentioned previously, there are both opportunities and challenges for magazines as they transition to the inclusion of online platforms. The publishing industry will be at risk once the magazine companies, and the industry as a whole, can make the same amount of money from the online platform, as they do from the traditional print format. Other changes that come along with the transition of print to online are date access, consumer engagement, and production of the magazine. Researchers concluded that how well the magazine industry does, will ultimately depend on how the industry, and specific companies, do in market development (Guenther).

**International Trends of the Magazine Industry**

While this project focuses primarily on United States based magazine production and consumption, it is valuable to survey some global context as well. The major differences within
magazines are in the depiction of men and women and the information varied. This is believed to have to do with the role of religion, culture, and economic differences between the countries. There is a major difference in the content of magazine advertisements in the United States and twelve Middle Eastern and African countries. After looking at 1,604 magazines, researchers found that there are fewer people featured in Arabic advertisements and that the United States provided more informative content in their advertisements (Al-Olayan and Karande).

Moving on to a different continent, Australia, magazines and magazine photography play a large role in Australian society. There is an importance in photography for the news and magazines and also how that gives credibility to photographers. Many people also believe that the United States and United Kingdoms trends play a major role in the Australian press and magazine photography developments. Although there may be some influence, there is a focus on the professional trajectory and how it differentiates from other places. One major difference is the iconography of images, as well as recognition of photographers. It is also important that news and magazine photographers from Australia were not likely to be by-lined for decades and didn’t really have a voice. Researchers concluded that the history of photography for news outlets makes the current experience different from other societies (Anderson).

Moving on to Canada, 223 ten-to thirteen-year-olds were surveyed on their reading habits of magazines to understand the magazine's audiences. The results of the survey showed that regardless of age, the girls read mostly fashion and entertainment magazines, while the boys read sports and video game magazines. The study concluded that during the age of preadolescence, the major factor in what kids read was gender. The research also showed that because of the
topics discussed in the magazines that the girls were reading, the magazines were more likely to affect their self image and self awareness (Bosacki Elliott Bajovic Akseer).

Much like how United States magazines evolved to focus on specific communities and publications, we see this globally as well. The Polish magazine called *Midrash* was first published in 1997 and focuses on society and culture, the main audience being those interested in Jewish literature. *Midrash* had a positive impact on the image of Jewish women because of its inclusion of imagery of women’s roles in society, interviews with women, and overall positive inclusion of women. It is also noted that the magazine presents women in a direct way and creates a balance between the classic Jewish views and modern day opinions (Pietrzyk).

Also focusing on women’s relations to magazines, researchers studied the role popular women’s magazines have on readers' idea of feminine beauty, identity and representation in Malaysia. Researchers analyzed magazine covers and advertisements to study the message the magazine is trying to portray. They concluded that the magazines in Malaysia were trying to sexualize women and the magazines only represented mainstream views, with much less inclusion of local views. The argument is that this is despite the desire by locals for magazines to be more focused on local issues and views. The only difference between the local and international magazines was the advertisements of local products (Khattab).

In this section, I reviewed that online platforms often gave attention to print publications, magazines were forced to create content that could be suitable for many different platforms, and magazines were able to spread feminism. In the next part of the project, I will be completing a textual analysis of *Real Simple* and *Better Homes & Gardens- Do It Yourself*. 
Better Homes & Gardens- Do It Yourself and Real Simple Comparison

Methods & Analysis

This analysis compares print vs. online versions of Real Simple magazine and Better Homes & Gardens- Do It Yourself, also known as BH&G- DIY magazine. To do so, I conducted a qualitative textual analysis of print versions of both magazines issued in November 2021, as well as their online counterparts from the same time frame. I focused on specific aspects of the magazines such as formatting, tone, content, and advertisements.

There are many popular lifestyle magazines currently being published, including: People, Us Weekly, The New Yorker, Esquire, Cosmopolitan, Vanity Fair, GQ, Bazaar, Southern Living, InTouch Weekly, and more. Ultimately, the two chosen magazines to analyze were Real Simple magazine and Better Homes & Gardens- Do It Yourself. These magazines were chosen based on their popularity and the expansion from the magazines. The magazines both differ enough from one another to be able to compare them, but are also similar enough that they are in the same category of magazine.

The research questions asked during the magazine comparison section include:

1. How do online and print versions of magazines vary?
2. How do different magazines vary on the same platform?
3. Does the target audience vary between online and print magazines?
4. How does representation differ in online and print magazines?
To answer these research questions, I will be analyzing the history of both Real Simple and BH&G - DIY, and comparing and contrasting aspects of the content in my sample such as structure, tone of voice, content, advertisements, representation, and social media.

Better Homes & Gardens Background

Better Homes & Gardens was originally founded in 1922 by Edwin Meredith, who was the United States Secretary of Agriculture under Woodrow Wilson. The magazine was originally founded under the name of “Fruit, Gardens and Home,” but was changed to its current name two years later. Better Homes and Gardens used to consist mostly of contests and recipes, and often their recipes were specific to the times. For example, during World War II, there was a major shortage of eggs and butter, so the published recipes in the magazine during this time used less or no eggs and butter to be more effective for the readers (Black).

Contests were another major piece of the popularity of Better Homes and Gardens. In 1926, the magazine created the first contest called “Cook’s Round Table,” which ended up being the longest contest in magazine history. The “Cook’s Round Table” was a contest in which readers would submit recipes and other readers would make the recipe and then submit their vote on the best one. The “Cook’s Round Table” eventually transitioned into a new name, “Prize Tested Recipes,” with the same idea and ran for a total of twelve years (Black). As mentioned earlier, Better Homes and Gardens is considered one of the ‘Seven Sisters’ of women's magazines, which also includes; Family Circle, Good Housekeeping, Ladies’ Home Journal, McCall’s, Redbook, and Woman’s Day. The term ‘Seven Sisters’ came from the Greek myth of Pleiades, which includes the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione.
BH&G- DIY has grown beyond just the magazine. They now have a real estate website in which they help individuals find real estate, as well as estimating their own home value. Better Homes and Gardens also has a line of lighting fixtures and ceiling fans available to shop at Walmart. The magazine also has multiple books out, ranging from cookbooks to books about quilting. Lastly, from 2007 to 2015, the company produced a talk show television series called Better: The show aired in the United States, on KCTV, weekdays and discussed celebrities and lifestyle.

There is currently no public information regarding the amount of subscribers to BH&G-DIY. The magazine's current editor is Stephen Orr, who has been in this position since 2015 and it is currently considered the fourth best-selling magazine. BH&G-DIY is published four times annually, and costs $7.99 per issue, and $19.96 for an annual subscription.

Real Simple Background

Real Simple is a fairly new magazine, being first launched in 2000. The magazine is under the Meredith Corporation, which is America’s largest digital and print publisher and the same publisher as Better Homes & Gardens. Real Simple currently has 8.6 million readers per month, according to www.RealSimple.com, and has extended their brand to cookbooks, books, and other products that are currently sold at Bed Bath and Beyond. Real Simple even extended into a television show, also under the name of Real Simple, which aired on PBS from 2006 to 2007. Following the cancellation of that show, a new show was produced, called Real Simple Real Life, and that aired from 2008 to 2009. As of April 2022, there are 2,011,092 people who subscribe to the print version of Real Simple (https://www.realsimple.com/about-real-simple). The current editor for Real Simple is Sarah Collins (https://www.realsimple.com/about-real-simple).
Real Simple is published every month, with a total of twelve issues per year. One issue costs $5.99, and an annual subscription costs $28.95.

Magazine Structure/Layout

The layout or structure of a magazine can be the factor that draws a reader in. The biggest similarity between both the BH&G- DIY, print and online versions, as well as Real Simple print and online versions, is an overall simplicity and lots of white space. The Real Simple print version had a major focus on minimalist layouts with a lot of white space, also known as negative space, even on pages with photographs. This doesn’t necessarily mean that the pages are white, but just that these spaces aren’t filled with photographs, text, or other designs (Canva.com). BH&G- DIY print version had white space as well, but oftentimes the photographs took up full pages and spreads. As far as spacing goes, BH&G- DIY print version used photographs to take up more space than writing. On the other hand, Real Simple had space filled more with writing than photographs, and even had full spreads made up of writing, with limited photographs.

The length of articles varied, but Real Simple’s print version had the longest articles compared to its online version and BH&G- DIY online and print version. The longer length for these articles made sense because of the more detailed and extensive content of the articles. The BH&G- DIY print version had the shortest articles. The BH&G- DIY online version was longer in length often due to material lists and step-by-step instructions. All the article lengths feel natural and fair given the content and goals of the article.

Both BH&G- DIY’s online format and Real Simple’s online formats had easy to navigate websites. BH&G- DIY online version had links to their social media, the magazine's email for readers to send questions, and a link to subscribe to the print magazine, followed by a few
articles. *Real Simple*’s online magazine was more sectioned off with different tabs. Rather than scrolling past advertisements to subscribe to the magazine like *BH&G- DIY*, *Real Simple* had pop-ups that encouraged subscription to the print version. Also, when you clicked on articles for *Real Simple*, similar articles were recommended. For example, when I clicked on an article about scalps, other hair care articles came up below as recommended.

**Tone of Voice**

The tone of voice represented in a magazine plays a major factor in the audience of the magazine. Whether the voice is informative and factual, compared to lighthearted and fun, completely changes the magazine. Oftentimes a magazine adopts a specific tone of voice that is consistent through all articles, which is beneficial because it becomes recognizable and helps make the writer seem more human and enables them to build a connection with the reader (Street 2021). Both the print and online versions of *BH&G- DIY*, had a voice that was informative, educated, and factual. The tone of voice was also more serious and matter-of-fact in the articles. For example, from the article *Turn Basic Wood Trellises Into a Stylish Outdoor Plant Stand* by Jessica Bennett, she writes, “This easy weekend project uses inexpensive wood trellises and dowels you can buy at most home improvement stores. Round duct caps are the secret to its unique design. Once you've completed the garden project, make sure to secure to a wall to protect it from the elements.” This is informative and makes suggestions for the reader.

Different from *BH&G- DIY*, *Real Simple*, both print and online, is more casual. While both the *Real Simple* print and online formats are informative, the tone of voice represented is more enthusiastic and conversational, even if it still is informative. For example, in an article titled *Takeout Waste* by Julia Mercado, she writes, “If you are not ready to give up Taco Tuesday, here are a few ways to make the transition to lower-waste takeout practically, well, seamless.”
This casual tone allowed *Real Simple* to more closely resemble the conversational tone of many other digital lifestyle sites and accounts. The online version of *Real Simple* included a lot more quotes from professionals, for example: "Just like there are different skin types, there are different scalp types," says Adriana Lombardi, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist and founder of Skin Cancer & Cosmetic Surgery Center of New Jersey. "The amount of sebum production typically dictates what type of scalp you will have." Having an expert be quoted in an article or write one themselves helps make the voice sound more professional. It is also beneficial to show that the magazine is providing accurate information and can be trusted.

Content

Content is what makes up the majority of a magazine, and in turn is what brings in the reader and makes them subscribe or follow a specific magazine. *BH&G- DIY* web content consists mostly of how-to articles. Some examples include, “15 Incredible Resin Art Ideas You Won't Believe You Can Create at Home”, “Transform IKEA Wardrobes into a Built-In Workstation for Your Home Office”, “Make Your Own Paper Pendant”, and “Turn Basic Wood Trellises into a Stylish Outdoor Plant Stand”. The articles would be layed out with the materials needed, followed by the steps to accomplish the DIY project. The target audience for the online articles seems to be readers who plan on making that specific project, because casually reading a step-by-step article for something you aren’t building would be pretty dry. It also seems like the target audience for these online articles is women who are middle class because a lot of these projects require money and time.

The print version of *BH&G- DIY* has very similar content, but often with a more personal touch. All DIY projects would be set up the same as the online format, but other articles
would include cultural backgrounds or personal backgrounds for the inspiration behind these projects. Some article examples include, “DIY Q&A; Handy Girl”, “Meet the Maker, Weaving Hand”, “Order in the House; Mobile Office”, and “What to do with Store-Bought Blooms”. These articles are similar to posts social media users might see on their feed, just more extensive due to the higher word count. The target audience for the print articles seems to be anyone interested in DIY projects because they are more ideas and inspiration, with more content than just the how-to aspect. Similarly to the online articles, the print articles also seemed to be aimed towards women in the middle class because they are DIY projects, but they can still potentially be costly. The article titles also refer to women, such as the article mentioned previously, “DIY Q&A; Handy Girl”.

Real Simple’s print version consisted of a lot of personal stories and product recommendations. Article examples include, “Who Would You Like to Write a Thank-You Note To?”, “Cook These Books”, “Plan a Potluck Like a Pro”, “Test Your Immunity IQ”, “A Separate Peace”, as well as a whole bunch of food recipes. The target audience of these articles seems to be casual readers. The articles also seem to be targeted more towards young adults to middle-aged women in the middle class. For both magazines, their print versions contained more personalized content, having more of a human touch. Because people read the print versions of magazines with less intent for specific articles, the personalized articles allow the reader to connect with the articles, even though they didn’t actively choose to read those specific articles like they would with the online format.

The online format of Real Simple still included product recommendations, but featured less personal stories. Online article examples include, “10 Trader Joe's Thanksgiving Offerings You Need on Your Holiday Table This Year”, “5 Popular Plants You Should Never Grow in Your
Yard”, “These Were the Top Home Renovation Trends of 2021”, and “5 All-Star Foods That Are High in Healthy Fats”. These articles were more lists rather than personal anecdotes. The target audience for these online articles seems to be readers looking for specific information. I would say similarly to the print version, these articles seem to be targeted towards young adults to middle-aged women in the middle class.

In both the print and online formats of Real Simple, print and online formats, the content has a variety of topics. Food was definitely a big topic for both the online and print versions, but both also covered topics such as plants, skin care, home decorations, etc.. While Real Simple had this variety of topics, BH&G- DIY stuck to home renovation and plants for their topics both in the online and print versions, which makes sense given the magazine name.

Another aspect of the content is how it is organized. In the print versions of these magazines, it is much easier to navigate the pages because of the table of contents. Real Simple organizes their table of contents by sections labeled ‘delights’, ‘guides’, ‘lives’, and ‘food’, with a few special page numbers at the bottom for important pieces like the Editor's note. BH&G- DIY also has their table of contents organized in sections, labeled ‘features’ and ‘departments’, also with special page numbers off to the side. Real Simple has categories labeled at the top of their website for consumers to find articles easier, labeled topics such as ‘food, ‘home, ‘life’, and ‘money’. When a user clicks on these tabs, more specific topics come up. For example, if a user clicks on the money tabs, the next page lists topics such as ‘saving money ’, ‘spending’, and ‘invest better’. This is helpful to find general topics, but if the user is looking for a specific article, it is more complex than looking at the table of contents and flipping to the exact page. BH&G- DIY has the same idea, the user just has to click the ‘explore’ button to have the different topics listed.

Bradstreet 26
Readers consume newspapers similarly to magazines. In the print versions of newspapers, readers are able to use the table of contents to physically flip to the page they would like to read. With online newspapers, readers can find articles within specific subjects, search for the specific article they want, or just browse the trending articles. On the contrary, videos such as broadcasts, social media clips, news clips, etc… are consumed differently. Videos can be posted on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, Twitter, websites, or so many other places. On places like Youtube or Tik Tok, users might click from video to video, similarly to magazines or newspapers. When videos pop up on social media, consumers are more likely to watch the video and then move on to other content. On social media sites, videos are likely to pop up due to advertisements or because they were shared by friends or family. When consumers watch videos on video platforms, the consumer watches them with more motive for media in the video platform. This relates to magazines and their multimedia platforms because if a consumer is on the magazines’ website then they are likely to read multiple articles, but if a recommended article appears on their social media, they are more likely to only read that one article and then continue on to other social media content.

What you need

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<th>Tools</th>
<th>Qty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circular or table saw</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clamps</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine-grit sandpaper</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tack cloth</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angle paintbrush</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drill/Driver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screwdriver</td>
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</table>

BH&G- DIY has articles with layouts as such that show the different tools you would need in a list format.
The experience of reading magazines in print vs online, are also completely different. A print magazine is flipped through, typically read cover to cover. Readers may not read every single word on the page, but they will most likely at least take a peek at each page. On the contrary, with reading magazine articles online, readers are more likely to only read the specific article they clicked on. Online readers are probably clicking on a specific article because it interests them and they might only arrive on a publications site because of a post on a separate social media platform, compared to a physical magazine where a reader is skimming through the articles because they are there, organized in a linear and strategic manner.

In general, reading magazines online can feel a bit stiff at times. The flow of reading from article to article isn’t as smooth as flipping a page. Oftentimes, when reading a magazine online, it feels more like a blog post or website. The websites feel more purposeful, informative, and straight to the point, whereas the print reading experience is more entertaining and time consuming.

Print Content vs Online Content

Now that *Real Simple* and *BH&G- DIY* have multiple platforms that they are looking to produce content on, the major question arises of what content should go on each platform? As far as the online platform goes for both magazines, they have a lot more content being produced and published on their online versions. While both companies are only releasing magazines monthly, their online versions are releasing new articles every single day. The print versions of both magazines also have a lot longer and more in depth articles, while their online versions have articles set up in shorter formats.
Advertisements

The chosen advertisements and how they are incorporated into the magazine is important to the reader and can affect their attitude while consuming the magazine. *Real Simple* print version had advertisements that took up full pages. The print version seemed to have more advertisements that were related to the season and content in the magazine. For example, in the November/December issue, some of their ads were McCormick, Goya, Savethechildren.org, Curel lotion, The Container Store and Pom drink. As for the online version of *Real Simple*, the advertisements were at the top of every page and were not super noticeable. The online advertisements did not seem to be related to the season or content. Examples of *Real Simple* online advertisements include, Dove, The North Face, Homegoods, Motrin, Stop & Shop, Hotels.com, and Best Buy. It is notable that the online version and the print version of *Real Simple* did not have any of the same advertisements. It also seemed like the advertisements for *Real Simple* online version were targeted to an audience with a bit more money than the print version. This is interesting because the online version is free, while the print version costs a monthly subscription charge.

While online advertising typically costs less than print advertising, online advertisements still contain higher end advertisements. This could be for various reasons, such as the technology and research behind which consumer gets which advertisement. Overall, magazines know their target audience and make that information accessible to advertisers, so while consumers may have a more difficult time finding this information, advertisers are able to target their marketed audience. This means that higher end advertisers are expecting the online readers of *Real Simple* and *BH&G- DIY* to make more expensive purchases (Medium).
BH&G- DIY online version has advertisements both on the top like in Real Simple, as well as going down the right hand side. These advertisements are bigger than on the Real Simple online version. Examples of BH&G- DIY online version advertisements include: Lowe’s, Corolla Cross (car), Jardiance (Diabetes medication), Audi Q7 (car), Lexus (car), Centrum (vitamins). Given the amount of higher-end car advertisements, they seem to be targeting a wealthier audience. BH&G- DIY print version has a lot fewer ads than a typical magazine and their ads consist mostly of smaller businesses. These advertisements are presented much differently than usually seen in magazines because they are not major name brands. Examples of advertisements from the print version of BH&G- DIY include; Cozi Family Organizer, Singer (sewing machine), Woodcraft (store), DR Power (power tool company). The target audience of the print advertisements seems to be much different than BH&G- DIY online version.

Real Simple’s home page with a large advertisement at the top.

Real Simple and BH&G- DIY did not have any of the same advertisers. Both magazines' print editions marketed more towards the content of the magazine, while their online versions were broader ranges and targeted at a more higher end audience.

Although this was my personal experience while engaging on the online websites, the advertisements I saw might be different than advertisements others see. This is because of ‘targeted advertising’. Targeted advertisements are when an individual’s computer uses cookies
to use their browser history to create advertisements better fitted for the individual. There are two 
ways that these targeted advertisements work: contextual ads and personalized ads. With 
contextual ads, a company pays the search engine to promote something to an individual on a 
specific website. For example, if Sally was on a food blog, there might be ads for cooking 
equipment. As for personalized ads, this is based on the individual's online activity. This could be 
based on location, past search history, and past browsing history (“ITIF Technology Explainer: 
How Do Online Ads Work?”).

Because these advertisers are able to promote their products in these ways, each 
individual's advertisements on Real Simple and BH&G- DIY may be different. Having different 
advertisements could change the experience of the user, but the size and placement of the ads 
will be the same for each user.

Despite technology being able to personalize advertisements per individual, research 
completed by Newswords shows that print ads not only have stronger branding, have a higher 
recall right for consumers, but are also 139% more likely to interest the consumers, compared to 
digital advertisements. Digital advertisements do have an extra leg up with the ability for easy 
access to view their website and products by just a click. Overall, advertisements do well when 
they are in a trusted environment, and articles are considered to be a trusted environment.
Similarly to Real Simple, BH&G-DIY also has a large ad immediately on the top of the home page.

The inclusion of advertisements for both Real Simple and BH&G-DIY on their online formats felt more unnatural and forced. These ads disrupted my viewing and messed with the flow of the website. They also didn’t aesthetically match with the other colors and photographs on the website. Navigating the print advertisements felt a lot more natural and normal. They felt easy to skip past and didn’t disrupt the flow of reading. While the advertisements were not targeted directly towards my search engine history, they reflected the aesthetic of the magazine's articles and were cohesive with the content featured in the magazine. Overall, advertisements may play a major role in the experience a reader has, both in print and online magazines.

Another ad going down the side of BH&G-DIY’s main page.
Representation

Representation, both of the individuals photographed and within the editorial team, can play a role in a magazine's content, tone of voice, and can shift the potential audience. With authors of different backgrounds, their content may differ due to different cultures, family traditions, and life experiences. Some readers may be more likely to pick up a magazine who has individuals that look like them represented in it.

*Real Simple*’s online and print versions contain photographs of people with a variety of skin tones. Scrolling through their website, it is entirely pictures of individuals dressed with traditionally feminine clothing and characteristics. With *Better Homes and Gardens- Do it Yourself*, both print and online editions, there are very few photographs with real people in them. On the rare occasion a person is in the photograph, they are white. A few male-appearing individuals were in the pictures, but the majority featured female-appearing individuals. Like mentioned previously, this could discourage male readers and readers who are not white because they are not seeing themselves represented in the magazine.

The authors of both *Real Simple*’s print and online versions are individuals who have traditionally feminine characteristics. These individuals appear to have different skin tones, but still mostly white women are writing their articles. The authors’ appearances are based on their photographs and biography paragraphs directly from the *Real Simple* website and the authors’ personal websites. *Better Homes and Gardens- Do it Yourself* also had majority white female authors, although they had more male writers than *Real Simple*. The lack of diversity in authors could also discourage readers who are not represented because they may find it more difficult to connect with the writing.
Like mentioned in the literature review, magazines have made an impact on feminism and diversity, despite the lack in Better Homes and Gardens- Do it Yourself and Real Simple. For example, Harper's Bazaar is a magazine that has continued to promote diversity in the magazine industry. Harper's Bazaar often features people of color in their magazines, with full profiles. Another example is Hearst, a media company that recently did a series on Black individuals in the fashion industry, as well as recently creating the ‘Hearst Black Culture Summit’. Other magazines that promote diversity, inclusion, and social justice include, Against the Current, The Black Scholar, Ms. Magazine, and New Moon Girls.

Social Media

Magazines create and use social media accounts such as Instagram to gain outreach and promote their articles. When it comes to who is seeing these social media posts, Instagram accounts for both Real Simple and BH&G-DIY have a far outreach. Real Simple’s Instagram account has a total of 1,800,000 followers. This compares to the 2,011,092 people who subscribe to the print version of Real Simple (https://www.realsimple.com/about-real-simple). BH&G-DIY has 23,900 Instagram followers. There is no information available regarding current subscriptions of BH&G-DIY.
An example Instagram post from BH&G-DIY.

How to Make Your Fragrance Last All Day Long
1. Moisturize first.
2. Spritz onto skin after showering.
3. Aim for pulse points.
4. Don’t rub your wrists together.
5. Spray your hair, too.
6. Don’t use expired perfume.

An example Instagram post from Real Simple.

With the rise of followers on social media platforms, the companies have more of an ability to self advertise their content. Both Real Simple and BH&G-DIY advertise their online articles on their social media platforms a lot more often than their print articles. Real Simple consistently posts about online articles, telling the follower to go read that specific article. When a new print issue of Real Simple is released, posts are published to promote the new issue, but the posts don’t focus on specific articles within the print issue. BH&G-DIY promotes the print issue more than Real Simple, but only by two or three posts. Mostly BH&G-DIY social media directs readers to their online articles, similarly to Real Simple.
When reading the online articles, there are buttons with the logos of social media, that when clicked, share the article to a reader's personal social media or email. This makes it easy for users to share the articles they are reading with friends and family. This makes sense given what publishers know about encouraging consumers to visit one platform while they are reading another, like mentioned by Tarklainen which was discussed earlier in this project. At the bottom of the site, there are all the magazines' social media sites linked as well, for easy access to follow them or view their posts.

While a textual analysis can provide some level of understanding of a media product and its interpretation, it is just one piece of the puzzle. To more broadly understand how media content may be interpreted and experienced, it's necessary to ask audiences directly, which is what I will explore in the next piece of my project.
Survey Analysis

Introduction

While an analysis of magazine content allowed us to understand the role tone of voice has in allowing the writer to connect with the reader, how advertisements can disrupt a consumer's experience, and the difference of experience based on how a magazine formats their articles, I was also interested in surveying magazine readers about their attitudes related to print and online magazines, and their own personal consumption methods.

The anticipated benefit of the survey will be to provide insights to the future of the magazine industry. The survey results will give us a better sense of consumers' relations to magazines. The magazine industry has had to change drastically with the increase in digital media and the decrease of print media, and therefore having these insights from consumers will help to determine what aspects of these changes are working, and what aspects may not be working. Overall, the results from this research will help to make a positive impact in the magazine industry because of the insight they provide. Additionally, the study will allow participants to reflect on their own media consumption habits, and what social media platforms are meaningful to them.

The following results and analysis are based on a survey that was sent out on March 31, 2022, and was open to submissions for one week for participants over the age of eighteen to participate. The Bridgewater State University IRB approved survey was conducted via Google Forms and it was split into three sections: consumer relations with print magazines, consumer relations with online magazines, and demographics. Both myself and my thesis advisor
promoted the survey through personal social media accounts and invited others to share it with their own networks. We collected about 132 responses.

Demographics

Getting a broad demographic to take the survey with snowball sampling was definitely a challenge, and therefore the results are not representative of national demographics. 2017 data shows that 44.7% of print magazine readers are aged 55 and older, a percentage that is continuing to grow. Still looking at the age group of 55 and older, only 29.9% of this age group visited a magazine within the 30 days of the research being completed (Marketing Charts).

As for readership based on gender, women are 16% more likely to read magazines than men, especially print magazines. Another important thing to note is how magazines are often marketed towards a specific gender, but readers may not always be that specific gender. Looking at “women’s magazines”, 71% of the readers identify as women. As for “men’s magazines”, 45% of the readers identify as men, while 20% of those readers identify as women. This shows that putting magazines in a gender box may not be the most beneficial for marketing, since men and women are both interested in many different magazines (Ipsos).

Of the participants, 91% identified as female, and 65.1% are fifty-five years of age or over. As for ethnicity, 95.2% of the respondents were caucasian. It is difficult to decipher if these are the demographic results due to outreach of the survey, or due to this demographic being more interested in taking the survey, or in magazines more generally. The age and gender of the survey participants, although more extreme, does line up similarly to the readership of magazines.
Also important to note is the content these consumers are reading. Of the participants, 45.2% were subscribed to lifestyle magazines, 41.3% were subscribed to entertainment magazines, and 34.1% were subscribed to cooking magazines.

Consumers’ Experience With Print Magazines

After receiving over one hundred responses on the survey, there were plenty of unexpected and expected responses. Of those who took the survey, 99.2% have subscribed to a print magazine at some point in their life. This is a higher percentage than I expected, although did expect it to be a majority given that all the other questions following this one would be irrelevant if the participants did not subscribe to any magazines in their lifetime. This is followed by a question asking if respondents are still subscribed, in which we see a dramatic decline to 57.6% of individuals still subscribed to print magazines. One might guess that the decline in subscriptions to print magazines is due to an increase in digital magazines, but only 19.7% of the participants said they are subscribed to digital magazines.

So what exactly draws in these consumers to a printed magazine? The most popular answer was that an enticing cover draws individuals in and encourages them to purchase or read the magazine. A big question regarding magazine consumption is where it happens, and the most common answer was in waiting rooms, dentist, or doctors offices. This answer is expected given that these are popular locations for magazines and they are free to read here. This also connects with lower subscriptions rates, as individuals are reading magazines issued to someone else.

When it came to asking the participants about what they enjoy about print magazines, their answers varied. One response read, “Variety of interesting topics but not too “deep”, which is a perfect explanation of a magazine. Several people responded how they liked the feeling of
holding it, “Just like my daily hard copy Boston Globe….holding it in my hands!” and “That I can share it with my 97-year-old mother who wants to read but cannot hold an iPad well, and phone screens are too small for her eyes.” Eye strain and the physical aspect of a magazine were popular answers amongst the other respondents as well. Another participant responded that “I can choose to read when I want to, refer back to it if I choose and NOT be interrupted by calls, texts, emails, etc.” like you might be if you were reading a digital magazine on a smartphone or tablet. Another positive mentioned by a participant is the ability to keep [the magazine] as a reference. Not being interrupted with distracting texts, phone calls, or other notifications definitely is an advantage of the print magazine reading experience and can be very beneficial to enjoying the magazine.

Although there are many things to enjoy about print magazines, there are also limitations. We asked the participants what these limitations are and they definitely had answers. Many people found the physical aspect of magazines a limitation, one response being, “Only the collection of them! I end up having to recycle them once I have too many. Digital files I can store and search for and they don’t become clutter.” Another common limitation is people felt like the print magazines are not great for the environment: “Well covid germs if the mag is in a public space, it uses a lot of trees”. The issue of germs makes sense given that many people are reading magazines in doctors’ offices. When magazines were originally published, environmental concerns were not as prominent, so this is another newer limitation that a digital magazine wouldn’t face. Other limitations of print magazines participants found included too many advertisements, small print, and if using the magazine to shop, it is more difficult to compare brands in the print magazine than online.
Consumers’ Experience With Online Magazines

Switching gears to the survey responses regarding online magazines, 80.7% of participants said they do not subscribe to online magazines. I did not find this surprising because online magazine articles are often accessible and subscriptions are not needed for the articles to be read. Despite the majority of respondents saying they do not subscribe to these magazines, 29.9% of the participants said they read online magazine articles daily, and 20.6% read them weekly. Despite not being subscribed, consumers seem to still read the digitally produced content consistently. When it comes to finding these articles, the most common way people found them is because they were shared on social media by friends or family. This is followed closely by consumers who follow the magazines' social media, so new articles pop up on their feed. It was surprising to see that tied for last place in terms of how readers find online magazine articles was via advertisements, given that the magazine industry spends $9.1 billion dollars a year on advertisements in North America alone (Guttmann).

While many respondents shared that they read print magazines in doctors offices and other waiting rooms, participants read digital magazines during lunch breaks at work, while being a passenger in the car, while drinking their morning coffee, and the most common place is at home. This is surprising because I would think having a physical copy of something would make consumers more likely to read it at home, while reading something on their phone which is already with them would make the articles more accessible outside of the home, but it seems like the opposite.

Similarly to the print magazine section, we asked the participants what they enjoy about engaging with online magazine content and the most common answer to this question was accessibility and convenience. This makes sense given the countless magazine articles available
on an electronic device that we already carry around. Other answers include, “I can follow links to research, resources, etc.”, “Can choose single article from any pub”, and “Can zoom in, click links within article, etc”, so it seems like users enjoy being able to easily flow from one article to the next, specifically to ones that interest them and are related. The way users can easily interact with links also helps improve engagement on other sites and is an advantage of the social media content.

As far as limitations to online magazine content, the most common answer was pop-up advertisements. Other answers included: the small size of the screen, having to have internet access to view the articles, and paywalls. It seems like eye strain and difficulty reading is a limitation for both print magazines and digital magazines.

When asked to make a decision, if the respondents prefer print or digital magazines, I was surprised how split the answers were. I was expecting to see a higher percentage of preferences to print, but the answers were only slightly leaning in the favor of print magazines with 52% voting in favor of print magazines. We also asked the participants what their overall attitude towards magazines were, and received a positive response, which makes sense given the high percentage of people who are actively still paying for this product. Some of the participants' responses include: “Magazines, print or online, are a great way to keep up with what is going on in the world, local, national or international!”, and people are able to “Gain other perspectives other than TV. Healthy to read.” Another participant wrote, “I love magazines and I find both print and online an engaging way to hear about things going on in our world.”
Concluding Thoughts on Survey

The demographic participating in this survey lines up with the predicted consumers based on the literature review. It seems like regardless of whether or not the participants were subscribed to magazines, print or digital, the majority have a positive attitude toward magazines. Despite a positive attitude, consumers of magazines face unique limitations while reading print and online magazines. Because each consumer has a different reading experience for magazines, every individual has different opinions on how magazines should be written and published. While the magazine industry can’t make every single consumer happy, there are some limitations that are seen commonly enough that would improve the overall attitude of magazine consumers. These limitations include the abundance of advertisements on digital platforms and marketing towards a broader demographic. Other limitations are more difficult to tackle. For example, some consumers prefer the ability to zoom in and out that comes with reading magazines digitally, but others prefer reading content not on a screen. Based on the survey results, we now have a better sense of consumers' relationships with print and online magazines.
Conclusion

In this thesis, I conducted a detailed literature review, a textual analysis of two major magazines in two formats, and surveyed more than 130 respondents about their magazine consumption habits and attitudes. Each phase was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do online and print versions of magazines vary?
2. How do different magazines vary on the same platform?
3. How has the magazine industry as a whole evolved over time?
4. What are individuals' specific relationships with print and/or online magazines?

The literature review showed the changes magazines saw over time, starting from pages of poetry or words only, evolving to include photographs and so much more. A magazine's purpose has been consistent since the beginning, spreading news and providing entertainment. Women’s magazines also offered women a voice and a way to spread feminism. These magazines played a major role in the lives of women from activism, to helping to improve women's health. Fast forward to when the internet came to be, magazines were then forced to keep up with the high speed and constant content that the internet provides. Also with the introduction of the internet, magazines shifted their publication to also include digital magazines, allowing more access to users. This was complicated for publishers because they had to now create content that would easily transfer from all media platforms and still have that content represent their traditional branding. As the online content started to gain popularity, researchers
realized that the content could balance each other and encourage consumers to read both the print and digital content.

The magazine comparison showed the differences between *Real Simple* and *Better Homes & Garden- Do It Yourself*, as individual magazines and comparing their print versions to their online versions. This comparison covers a range of specifics including: content, formatting, advertisements, tone of voice, and representation. This section showed that advertisements felt a lot more natural in the print magazines, and felt more unnatural in the online magazines. The online magazines also felt more targeted to a specific topic and informative, while the print magazines seemed to appeal to a broader audience. From the magazine comparison, it also became clear that the tone of voice allows the reader to connect with the writer and sets the tone for the magazine. The tone of voice and content are what makes the reader connect on a more personal level with the magazine. While the literature review explained how magazines have helped improve feminism and diversity, the magazine comparison showed this may not be represented in each and every magazine. Overall, the magazine comparison showed that the experience of reading digital magazines compared to print magazines are two completely different experiences. Readers choose print magazines for casual reading and to flip through the pages. Readers choose online magazines to read specific articles that they are interested in, so there is a lot more intent in the reading of online magazines. Another important aspect to note from the magazine comparison is the difference in advertisements between online and print content. Because of technology, the online content has targeted advertisements based on a user's search history, so one person's advertisements could be completely different from someone else who is looking on the same page. This compares to the print magazines, where each individual is looking at the same advertisements. Regardless of what the advertisements consist of on the
online magazine, they are much more unnatural and disrupt the experience much more than advertisements in print magazines.

The survey results showed that despite the decreased amount of consumers subscribing in print magazines, there are still low numbers for those subscribing to digital magazines. We also learned that consumers enjoy print magazines because there are no distractions from texts or calls and an overwhelming number of participants said they enjoyed the ability to physically hold the paper in their hands as they read. Limitations for print magazines include having to carry around the magazine and environmental concerns. As for digital magazines, positives include convenience and accessibility because readers are already carrying around a device that they can read on. As far as limitations to online magazines, participants said advertisements and sizing of the screen. Advertisements were no surprise of an answer given my own experience while completing the magazine comparison. Participants leaned slightly more in favor, about 52% in favor of print magazines over digital magazines, despite the limitations faced with online magazines. These survey results help us understand consumers' relationships with both digital and print magazines, what keeps them reading magazines, and what limitations consumers face while reading magazines.

Overall, this research is important because the magazine industry is attempting to adapt to the technological advances society has gotten used to. Sometimes it is beneficial for industries to advance, but sometimes consumers want to stick with the nostalgia of favorite past products. This research can help us understand the way magazines have traditionally functioned and the direction they are headed.

Limitations for this project include the outreach for survey participants and limited comparisons for the magazine comparison. Due to the survey being promoted by personal social
media accounts, the survey participants were limited and therefore could potentially have a limited perspective. The magazine comparison only consisted of two magazines due to time constraints.

Future directions of this research may include interviewing individuals in the field such as magazine editors, magazine writers, or consumers on their personal experiences with the industry. A comparison of magazine writers who write for print formats compared to a magazine writer who writes for digital formatting could also help contribute to this research. Another future direction of this research could include an expansion on the survey data by reaching participants in a broader demographic and asking further questions regarding their magazine consumption. This research could be used alongside other forms of media to better understand the transition to online formatting as well, such as newspapers and books. It has also been made clear throughout this research that online advertisements are clearly an issue for consumers. Future research could look at ways that online advertisements could be integrated more naturally throughout sites to ensure a better and less interrupted experience for readers.

The prediction of the magazine industry dying may happen, but not for a long time. Magazines are currently gaining popularity because of social media sites such as Tik Tok and Instagram. Niche magazines will continue to sell, both print and online copies for the near future. It is important for the magazine companies to continue to market towards those looking for the nostalgic experience while reading magazines, as well as those looking to advance with the times of technology.
Appendix A- Survey Questions

Your Relationship With Print Magazines

Have you ever subscribed to a print magazine that was mailed to your address?
When did you first subscribe to a print magazine that was mailed to your address?
What types of magazines are you subscribed to? Select all that apply.
Are you currently subscribed to a print magazine that is mailed to your address?
If yes, which printed magazine(s) are you currently subscribed to?
Are there places outside of your house where you engage with print magazines (i.e. doctor’s offices, waiting rooms, etc.) If you read print magazines in these spaces, what draws you to engage with them?
Where are you most likely to read a print magazine?
What do you most enjoy about reading/engaging with a print magazine that gets mailed to your address?
Are there any limitations or challenges to reading/engaging with a printed magazine?
What sections of printed magazines interest you the most?
How much of your print magazines do you typically read?
Have you ever considered canceling your subscription to the printed magazine(s) you currently receive? If so, why?

Your Relationship With Online Magazines

Do you subscribe to any digital magazines?
If yes, which digital magazines are you currently subscribed to, and why did you decide to sign up for a digital subscription?
How often do you read online magazine articles?
Which magazine's websites or social media are you most likely to engage with (list all):
How do you find online magazine articles (check all that apply)
What kind of device are you most likely to use to read digital magazine content?
At which times, or in what physical spaces, are you likely to read digital magazine content? (i.e. reading articles on your phone on the commuter train)
What do you most enjoy about reading/engaging with digital magazine content (on a website or app)?
Are there any limitations or challenges to reading/engaging with digital magazine content (on a website or app)?
Overall, do you have a preference between reading print magazine content or digital magazine content? Why?
What is your overall attitude towards magazines, print or online?
How do you find out about new magazines?
When was the last time you unsubscribed to a magazine?
What was the reason for unsubscribing from that magazine?
How easy did you find it to be to unsubscribe?

About You

What do you identify as?
What is your age?
What is your ethnicity?
What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
What is your employment status?
Citations


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