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5.1 Title recognition — is it a problem?

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses an aspect of the problem of title recognition and results from a small scale experiment conducted during the summer of 1982. I should say at the outset that the experiment had nothing to do with title recognition. Its primary purpose was to test whether asking respondents about their intended future reading frequency was a viable alternative — particularly for monthly publications — to the method currently used in Great Britain — "How many issues have you read or looked at in the last 6 months?"

It was decided to restrict the experiment to women's magazines and to sample only women. All the women's titles covered by the National Readership Survey were included. The mastheads were miniaturised and shown on two cards. The mastheads were grouped so that the titles which might be confused were all listed together — for instance, the eight titles containing the word 'woman' were all in one column, and *True Magazine*, *True Story* and *True Romances* were all together.

Throughout the interview, the respondent kept the two cards as an *aide-memoire*. Basically, the questions were:

(1) (For each in turn) have you ever heard of it?
(2) Have you read it in the last six months?
(3) When did you last read it?
(4) How many of the next six copies published do you think you are likely to read?

Question 1 was asked for all titles and used as a filter. Question 2 was also a filter. Question 3 was completed before Question 4 was asked, both filtered through Question 2.

In all, 261 interviews with women were completed, using a random location sample. In terms of social grade, the sample matched the population well. But in terms of age it was rather skewed towards younger women. **(Table 1)**.

Tables 2 and **3** compare the average issue claims on the experiment with those derived from JICNARS. As can be seen, we achieved higher ratings. However, this was not unexpected for two reasons.

(1) We were using a shorter list of titles, so the fatigue effect would not be as marked. As can be seen, when comparison is made with those parts of the JICNARS sample where women's monthlies (for monthly titles) or

TABLE 1

Social Grade					
	AB	C1	C2	D	E
	%	%	%	%	%
JICNARS	16	23	29	18	14
EXPERIMENT	16	20	29	18	17

Age						
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
JICNARS	19	17	15	13	14	22
EXPERIMENT	23	21	15	16	13	12

womens weeklies (for weekly titles) were shown first, the differences in some cases would not appear so marked. **(2)** For many of the titles, particularly in the weeklies, the young age profile of the sample would tend to produce higher ratings. A further possible cause is that responses were coded 'yesterday', '2-7 days ago', '8 days to 4 weeks ago', rather than 'within the last 7 days' for weeklies or 'within the last 4 weeks' for monthlies. Nevertheless, the rank order correlation is generally very good.

Asking respondents to predict their future reading behaviour did not appear to be a great success. With hindsight it might have worked better had we limited the question to a smaller number of future issues rather than the next six. Reactions from the interviewers — all of whom had worked on the NRS — suggested that respondents had more difficulty answering this question than reporting their average behaviour or their reading during the last six months.

Although the sample was very small, we calculated the cumulative coverage for titles with at least 10% average issue reading claims. Because the AIR claims in the experiment were generally higher than those observed in NRS, these are presented as indices so that the cumulations may be compared. **(Table 4)**.

The experimental figures tend to be higher, particularly with large numbers of issues, because some of the zero future claims were made by average issue readers and therefore have a probability larger than zero.

TABLE 2
Average issue readership — women's weeklies

	JICNARS %	JICNARS when women's weeklies shown first %	Experiment %	
Woman's Own	23	24	32	(1)
Woman	22	23	31	(2)
Woman's Weekly	18	18	20	(3)
Woman's Realm	11	12	14	(5)
My Weekly	10	11	16	(4)
People's Friend	9	9	14	(6)
Jackie	4	4	8	(7)
My Guy	3	3	7	(10)
Blue Jeans	2	2	7	(9)
Patches	2	2	8	(8)
Loving	2	1	2	(11)
Ms. London	1	1	(*)	(13)
Girl about Town	1	1	1	(12)

TABLE 3
Average issue readership — women's monthlies

	JICNARS %	JICNARS when women's weeklies shown first %	Experiment %	
Woman & Home	13	16	15	(1)
Good Housekeeping	10	12	14	(2)
Family Circle	10	12	14	(3)
Vogue	8	10	11	(4)
Cosmopolitan	8	8	8	(8)
She	7	8	10	(5)
Living	7	9	9	(7)
Ideal Home	6	9	10	(6)
Homes and Gardens	5	7	8	(10)
True Romances	5	6	8	(8)
House and Garden	5	7	7	(11)
Woman's Journal	5	7	6	(16)
Woman's World	5	5	5	(19)
Home and Freezer Digest	4	6	7	(14)
Annabel	4	5	7	(13)
True Story	4	4	7	(14)
Options	4	3	5	(17)
Company	3	4	3	(26)
'19'	3	3	4	(20)
Over 21	3	3	3	(22)
Pins & Needles	3	4	7	(11)
Honey	3	3	3	(22)
Harpers & Queen	3	3	3	(26)
Look Now	2	3	4	(21)
True Magazine	2	2	5	(18)
Parents	2	2	2	(28)
Woman's Story	1	2	3	(22)
Mother	1	2	3	(25)
Hers	1	2	*	(31)
Fashioncraft	1	2	1	(30)
Food Magazine	1	1	1	(29)

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Nevertheless, the curves are not markedly different, suggesting that, unless it were an easier method to administer in the field, there would be little point in changing from the current retrospective technique.

However, one interesting result of the experiment was a measure of the awareness of the titles that are asked about on the NRS.

TITLE RECOGNITION

Out of the 42* titles shown to respondents, 18 were recognised by less than half the sample. The results are summarised below, and the full results are given in **Table 5.**

Recognition Level	Number of Titles		
	Monthly	Weekly	Total
90% or more	1	4	5
80-89%	2	1	3
70-79%	5	2	7
60-69%	3	-	3
50-59%	6	-	6
40-49%	2	1	3
30-39%	5	3	8
20-29%	4	-	4
Less than 20%	3	-	3
	31	11	42

* At this stage we have excluded two titles — *Miss London* and *Girl about Town* — which are distributed in the Greater London area only.

TABLE 4
Indices of cumulative coverage

		No. of issues			
		1	2	4	8
Woman	NRS	100	131	160	187
	EXP	100	135	171	202
Woman's Own	NRS	100	131	161	188
	EXP	100	137	174	209
Woman's Realm	NRS	100	138	176	215
	EXP	100	141	192	249
Woman's Weekly	NRS	100	128	154	178
	EXP	100	135	155	189
My Weekly	NRS	100	128	156	182
	EXP	100	144	192	237
People's Friend	NRS	100	128	157	184
	EXP	100	143	180	205
Woman and Home	NRS	100	136	172	209
	EXP	100	141	177	204
She	NRS	100	142	188	233
	EXP	100	143	183	227
Vogue	NRS	100	145	192	241
	EXP	100	156	220	270
Ideal Home	NRS	100	142	188	233
	EXP	100	136	195	243
Good Housekeeping	NRS	100	138	176	214
	EXP	100	139	182	220
Family Circle	NRS	100	135	172	207
	EXP	100	133	172	204

TABLE 5
Proportion who have heard of each title

Weekly Magazines		Monthly Magazines		Monthly Magazines (contd)	
Woman's Own	99%	Vogue	92%	Honey	53%
Woman's Weekly	97%	Good Housekeeping	86%	Home & Freezer Digest	53%
Woman	96%	Family Circle	83%	Woman's World	42%
Woman's Realm	96%	Ideal Home	78%	'19'	41%
My Weekly	84%	Woman & Home	77%	True Magazine	38%
Jackie	76%	Annabel	77%	Over 21	38%
People's Friend	70%	She	77%	Harpers & Queen	37%
Blue Jeans	42%	True Romances	73%	Mother	33%
Patches	38%	Living	66%	Look Now	30%
My Guy	35%	Pins & Needles	66%	Parents	28%
Loving	32%	True Story	65%	Options	26%
		House & Garden	59%	Woman's Story	24%
		Homes & Gardens	57%	Company	20%
		Cosmopolitan	56%	Hers	19%
		Woman's Journal	54%	Fashioncraft	17%
				Food Magazine	12%

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TABLE 6
Regression analysis — weeklies

	Launch Date	Circulation 000's	Predicted Recognition %	Observed Recognition %
Woman's Own	1932	1369	100	99
Woman	1937	1310	99	96
Woman's Weekly	1911	1309	99	97
My Weekly	1910	738	84	84
People's Friend	1869	640	81	70 –
Woman's Realm	1958	649	74	96 +
Jackie	1964	433	61	76 +
Loving	1970	105	45	32 –
Blue Jeans	1977	211	40	42
My Guy	1978	171	37	35
Patches	1979	157	36	38

$R^2 = 0.85035$

$\begin{matrix} + \\ - \end{matrix}$ = differences between observed and predicted source of 10 or more.

Since mastheads are currently used to prompt recognition on the National Readership Survey — and the problems of title confusion have been discussed at length — it should be interesting to see which, if any, titles suffered more from lack of recognition than might be predicted.

We decided to do a regression analysis using two independent variables — circulation and the length of time the publication had existed. The dependent variable was the observed recognition level. Weeklies and monthlies were analysed separately and, to simplify the analysis, we assumed that all titles which were more than 30 years old should be counted as equal as far as age was concerned. The analysis predicted what the recognition levels should be.

Dealing first with the weeklies, there was a very high correlation between age and circulation (0.85). The age of publication alone explained 79% of the variance and circulation explained 78%. The two combined accounted for 85%. **Table 6** shows the comparison between the predicted and observed recognition scores.

Four titles differed outstandingly from the predicted recognition levels. (**Table 7**).

For the two titles which were not as well recognised as their age and circulation might have warranted, one could hypothesise that, among those who did recognise them, a higher than expected proportion would have

claimed to have read them in the last six months and in the issue period. The converse should be true for *Woman's Realm* and *Jackie*:

	% recognising title who read in: last 6 months	Issue period
People's Friend	53%	20%
Loving	34%	6%
Woman's Realm	54%	15%
Jackie	25%	11%

TABLE 7

	Launch Date	Circulation '000s	Recognition predicted %	observed %
People's Friend	1869	640	81	70
Loving	1970	105	45	32
Woman's Realm	1958	650	74	96
Jackie	1964	433	61	76

This obviously is not the case, and it is unlikely that there is any single reason to explain the differences. *Woman's Realm* is heavily promoted with the other three larger-circulation IPC women's weeklies. *Jackie* for nearly 20 years has been the outstanding young teenage magazine and will therefore be recognised by the mothers of current teenagers, the teenagers themselves and those in-between who used to read it. *Loving* never achieved that status. And the older profile of *People's Friend* is under-represented in the sample.

Turning now to the monthlies, we reduced the list by three since the circulation data for *True Story, True Romances* and *Food Magazine* were not available. In this case, the correlation between circulation and the age of the remaining 28 titles was virtually non existent

(– 0.04). Circulation explained 27% of the variance and the age of the title 28%. Combined, they explained 57%. Other independent variables might be the amount of promotion over a period of years, the quality of paper, binding, cover, price, amount of colour, and so on. But none of these have been considered so far. A full comparison of the predicted and observed scores is given in **Table 8**.

In this case, 14 titles diverged substantially from the predicted recognition levels. **(Table 9)**.

Again, working on the assumption that readership prompts recognition, and those titles which were lower than predicted would have a higher proportion reading in the last six months and average issue period — and vice versa — we found:

TABLE 8
Regression analysis — monthlies

	Launch Date	Circulation 000's	Predicted Recognition %	Observed Recognition %
Woman & Home	1926	578	96	77 –
Good Housekeeping	1922	358	77	86
Woman's Journal	1927	249	68	54 –
Ideal Home	1920	198	63	78 +
Homes & Gardens	1919	187	62	57
Vogue	1916	131	58	92 +
House & Gardens	1947	91	54	59
Harpers & Queen	1929	76	53	37 –
Mother	1936	68	52	33 –
Pins & Needles	1949	55	51	66 +
She	1955	237	63	77 +
Honey	1960	150	50	53
Woman's Story	1956	82	49	24 –
True Magazine	1953	80	52	38 –
Family Circle	1964	504	76	83
Living	1967	422	65	66
Annabel	1966	220	49	77 +
'19'	1968	144	40	41
Hers	1966	91	38	19 –
Cosmopolitan	1972	420	59	56
Options	1982	252	34	26
Home & Freezer Digest	1974	246	42	53 +
Company	1978	244	37	20 –
Woman's World	1976	226	38	42
Look Now	1972	148	36	30
Over 21	1973	102	31	38
Parents	1976	85	26	28
Fashioncraft	1981	61	18	17

$R^2 = 0.56759$

$\genfrac{}{}{0pt}{}{+}{-}$ = *differences between observed and predicted scores of 10 or more.*

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	% recognising title who read in: last 6 months %	Issue period %
Woman & Home	42	20
Company	35	14
Woman's Journal	31	11
Woman's Story	29	15
Harpers & Queen	26	7
True Magazine	22	13
Hers	20	2
Mother	16	9
Annabel	23	9
Pins & Needles	28	11
Home & Freezer Digest	35	12
Vogue	37	13
She	38	13
Ideal Home	39	12

Again, there is no clear pattern, and certainly nothing to suggest other than that titles are not recognised because — irrespective of their age or circulation — they are not as widely read as might be expected. There is, perhaps, a suggestion that *Woman and Home, Woman's Journal* and *Woman's Story* are confused with the other titles containing the word 'woman', but that has often been noted before.

CONCLUSION

At the outset, when the low recognition scores for some of the titles were noted, it was thought that the current masthead technique might not be sufficient to prompt respondents' memories and certain titles would suffer as a result. By identifying the titles which performed less well than might have been predicted, I had thought it might show that, in such cases, it was readership — and recent readership — which prompted recognition. Improving recognition, therefore, might lead to a higher level of readership response. I have found no evidence to support this.

Nevertheless, it is clear that a number of titles have very low recognition among their target group — broadly defined as women. Since the same titles are shown to men — almost certainly with lower levels of recognition — and other magazines with predominantly male readership profiles are shown to women — it must increase the apparent irrelevance of the survey to many respondents (and, incidentally, dishearten the interviewers).

I await with interest the results of the current experimental work being done by JICNARS on an extended media list where respondents go through a selection process — compounded of recognition and reading within the last year — from groups of titles before being questioned on each individually.

TABLE 9

	Launch Date	Circulation '000s	Recognition predicted %	observed %
Woman & Home	1926	578	96	77
Woman's Journal	1927	249	68	54
Harpers & Queen	1929	76	53	37
True Magazine	1953	80	52	37
Mother	1936	68	52	33
Woman's Story	1956	82	49	21
Hers	1966	91	38	20
Company	1978	244	37	21
Home & Freezer Digest	1974	246	42	54
Annabel	1966	220	49	76
Pins & Needles	1949	55	51	66
Vogue	1916	131	57	92
She	1955	237	63	77
Ideal Home	1920	198	63	78