

6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

INTRODUCTION

The Centre d'Etudes des Support de Publicité undertakes each year, in the course of three separate studies each of one month, two types of survey: the measurement of radio and TV audiences; and the measurement of cinema audiences and of the readership of daily newspapers and magazines.

We are concerned here only with the readership of magazines (weekly and monthly). This survey covers 15,000 personal interviews.

A range of questions are asked: reading habits (questions used as a selection criterion until 1974); publications read over the last 12 months (current selection criterion); the last time the interviewee read, which permits determination of the last period audience; and source of copy.

Over the last 15 years the CESP has carried out some methodological research with the aim of improving magazine readership measurement. This has led the CESP regularly to modify the survey questionnaire.

Our study starts from the above-mentioned research. We are thus aiming to measure the *effect of three independent variables* (controlled): question order rotation; section order rotation (monthly and weekly sections); the position of a title in the list: *and three dependent variables* (controlled): frequency statements; last period audience; number of weekly and monthly magazines read.

STABILITY OF FREQUENCY STATEMENTS

Prior to starting our subject it is worth considering a methodological study carried out in 1967.

During a test/retest of 'readership recall' the questions on reading habits were put again to a subsample of the original sample used in the press survey.

12 titles were tested. It was found that the statements were maintained in 67% of cases, that there was variation between two positions in 26% of cases, and variation of position in the frequency scale in 6% of cases.

These results show the great stability of the reading habits variable over time.

STATEMENTS OF READING HABITS

During the two last studies of the 1973 press survey, two alternative questionnaires were used by interviewers.

Q.1 The questions concerning the monthlies were asked before those concerning the weeklies.

Q.2 The reverse of Q.1

Also, whichever questionnaire was used, the interviewer randomly chose the first title and then continued the list of titles alternately from bottom to top and then vice-versa: there were four subsamples each of approximately 1,500 individuals.

TABLE 1
Distribution of reading frequency statements

		Question	Regularly	Often	Rarely	Very rarely	Never
All Weeklies	Top-bot		14%	13%	25%	10%	39%
	Bot-top		15%	13%	23%	10%	39%
All Monthlies	Top-bot		10%	11%	22%	9%	48%
	Bot-top		10%	11%	21%	9%	49%

6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

Thanks to this methodology, we can isolate the three independent variables: question order rotation; section order rotation (monthly and weekly); title position (34 weeklies and 40 monthlies were studied).

We can therefore try to measure their influence on the statements, successively varying each variable whilst keeping the other two constant. It must be remembered that in 1973 the question of reading habits was used as a filter.

Variation in question order rotation

As **Table 1** shows, the variation of question order alone does not seem to have an effect on frequency statements.

Variations in the section order on the average audience of each section (Weeklies/Monthlies)

We next consider the sums of the 'never' frequency in terms of the absolute sample sizes for each section, for Q.1 and Q.2

TABLE 2
"Never" frequency statements

Never	Q.1		Q.2		Position 1/ Position 2
	Position 2	Position 1	Position 1	Position 2	
Weeklies	2,883	2,856			+ 1%
Monthlies	3,488	3,559			+ 2%

It can be seen from **Table 2** that for weeklies and monthlies when the section position in the questionnaire passes from 1st to 2nd position, the number of "never" answers tends to increase slightly — this can be caused by a certain degree of fatigue which is easily understandable.

Title position variation

We now consider, to isolate this variable, the sum of "never" statements for titles taken in groups of 5 (in order of presentation in their section): this for all interviewees.

A regular increase in the number of "never" statements is observed (see **Table 3**) as one reaches the

TABLE 3
Statements "never" (based on all interviewees, indexed on 5,000 statements per group of 5 titles)

Title position	Weekly (100)	Monthly (100)
1 - 5	102.4	108.4
6 - 10	104.4	108.6
11 - 15	104.3	109.3
16 - 20	104.4	108.9
21 - 25	105.1	109.3
26 - 30	105.6	110.1
31 - 35	105.5	109.3
36 - 40	-	109.9

end of the list, whatever the order of the titles. It should be noted, however, that the observed variation is small.

THE 'LAST PERIOD' AUDIENCE

From 1971 to 1974, the questionnaires and survey methods of the CESP remained unchanged.

We study below the influence of section order presentation. We do not examine the order and direction of title list variables — the variations would have been too weak to be significant.

Section order rotation

We compare here the annual indices reflecting the influence on the last period audience of the alternative section order presentations.

The sub-sample Q1 always corresponds to the presentation "monthlies before weeklies".

The titles studied, 29 weeklies and 30 monthlies, which remained the same between 1971 and 1974, are listed in the Appendix.

The first observation to be made from **Table 4** is that the readership is highest, whatever the periodicity of the magazine, when the monthlies are placed *before* the weeklies.

Hypotheses may be put forward to explain this phenomenon. When the weeklies are placed after the monthlies (Q1), because the weeklies appear more frequently the interviewees may answer more often in line with their "regular" habits. This, by a follow-on effect, brings more readers in the 'last period' question. This hypothesis seems in agreement with the conclusion reached above: that weeklies placed in 2nd position have an increased number of "never" statements. This would prove that in this case a certain number of readers with weak motivation have not resisted fatigue and have

6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

TABLE 4
Sum of the last period audience contacts weighted for section groups

	Last period audience			
	1971	1972	1973	1974
WEEKLIES:				
Q.1	2,399	2,240	2,072	2,031
Q.2	2,278	2,087	2,000	1,887
Index Q.1/Q.2	105.3	107.3	103.6	107.6
MONTHLIES:				
Q.1	2,494	2,356	2,236	2,227
Q.2	2,287	2,164	2,097	1,984
Index Q.1/Q.2	109.1	108.9	106.6	112.2

become non-readers. Those that have "survived", more motivated, are therefore more frequently "regulars".

Moreover, one may think that having answered for several minutes in terms of the last monthly period, the interviewees only progressively get used to the reduction of the reference period (30 to 7 days for the weeklies).

The monthlies benefit from their place at the top of the questionnaire and thus avoid the phenomenon of fatigue.

We studied the cumulated two last 1973 and 1974 surveys, the interaction of the last period reading with the habit statements of the two types of presentation (Q1 and Q2), (see **Figure 1**).

It appears to be evident that when monthlies are presented before weeklies the last period audience of monthlies is considerably inflated with "often" readers; the last period audience of weeklies is slightly increased with "regular" readers.

THE NUMBER OF MAGAZINES READ

This study is based on the press survey of 1976.

The two subsamples Q1/Q2 correspond to the original presentation (the monthlies first in Q1, the weeklies in Q2). It was assumed that the two subsamples could be considered as equivalent.

We studied the influence of the section presentation order on the number of magazines read (weeklies/monthlies) during 12 months prior to the survey and in the last issue period. The findings are illustrated in **Figures 2-5**.

Over the last 12 months

The presentation of monthlies before weeklies seems to

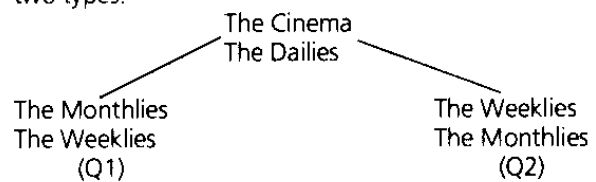
have an influence on the number of monthlies and weeklies read during the last 12 months: in fact, the distribution of sample Q1 seems to have shifted slightly towards the readers end of the scale.

Last issue period reading

We come to the same conclusion as above: the sample Q1 (monthlies first) is slightly weighted towards "readers" especially when considering monthlies.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE USED SINCE 1977

The questionnaires used by the CESP up to 1976 were of two types:



Since 1977, four types of questionnaires have been used (4 equivalent subsamples).

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
cinema	cinema	weeklies	monthlies
dailies	dailies	monthlies	weeklies
monthlies	weeklies	dailies	dailies
weeklies	monthlies	cinema	cinema

When the new questionnaires appeared we studied the influence of the four types of presentation on: the proportion of "regular" readers in the last issue period readership; the number of magazines read in the last period; the last period audience.

Proportion of "regular" readers in the last issue period

"REGULARS": those individuals who state that they read the particular title every week for the weeklies and every month for the monthlies.

These results (see **Table 5**) show that the influence of section order presentation on the proportion of "regular" readers is weak.

Number of magazines read (Last period)

The curves in **Figure 6** for the samples 1 + 2 and 3 + 4 show that the average number of magazines read in the last period is smaller than when the cinema and dailies questions are asked at the start of the questionnaire (1 + 2).

6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

TABLE 5

Section order	1 + 2 (CD)(MW)	3 + 4 (MW)(DC)	1 C.D.M.W	2 C.D.W.M	3 W.M.D.C	4 M.W.D.C
WEEKLIES	20.2%	20.6%	19.8%	20.6%	20.0%	21.3%
MONTHLIES	18.2%	18.4%	19.4%	17.0%	17.6%	19.2%

TABLE 6

	Cinema and dailies after (3 + 4)	Cinema and dailies before (1 + 2)	1st position (Q3)	2nd position (Q4)	3rd position (Q2)	4th position (Q1)
READERSHIP OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS	100	86.8	100	103.8	87.0	90.1
LAST PERIOD READERSHIP	100	94.4	100	103.0	98.2	93.4

Last period readership THE WEEKLIES

The 'ideal' position for the weeklies remains the 2nd position after the monthlies, but before the cinema and the dailies (see **Table 6**).

THE MONTHLIES

In line with what we have already observed, when the monthlies are placed first in the questionnaire they maximise their readership, both for last 12 months and last period (see **Table 7**).

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the conclusions already stated, seem to verify

that:

(a) For all magazines, readership, both last 12 months and last period, is optimum when the question on the cinema and dailies are asked afterwards, not first.

(b) The 'best' position in terms of readership remains for the monthlies at the beginning of the list, and for the weeklies after the monthlies.

It therefore seems useful to alternate the section order, as done by the CESP. However, even if a certain degree of fatigue appears, the variations observed remain small and the precautions taken are mostly a matter of perfectionism.

On the other hand it is not possible, on the basis of these French methodological studies, to measure precisely the influence of the total list length — the number of titles examined. This would allow one to see how far one can go, but in France the number of magazines studied has varied little over the last 10 years.

6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

TABLE 7

	Cinema and dailies after (3+4)	Cinema and dailies before (1+2)	1st position (Q4)	2nd position (Q3)	3rd position (Q1)	4th position (Q2)
READERSHIP OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS	100	83.7	100	85.0	80.3	73.5
LAST PERIOD READERSHIP	100	88.8	100	87.3	88.1	78.0

TABLE 8
Press survey 1980 and 1982
Weeklies

	1980		1982	
	Reading over the last 12 months	Last period reading	Reading over the last 12 months	Last period reading
CINEMA — DAILIES after	100	100	100	100
CINEMA — DAILIES before	86.7	88.6	89.0	93.6
1st POSITION	100	100	100	100
2nd POSITION	101.3	104.6	99.8	97.2
3rd POSITION	84.7	91.1	87.7	93.8
4th POSITION	89.7	90.3	90.0	90.9

TABLE 9
Press survey 1980 and 1982
Monthlies

	1980		1982	
	Last 12 months	Last period	Last 12 months	Last period
CINEMA — DAILIES after	100	100	100	100
CINEMA — DAILIES before	84.0	89.6	83.7	88.6
1st POSITION	100	100	100	100
2nd POSITION	88.1	83.0	90.4	90.5
3rd POSITION	80.7	86.6	80.4	89.1
4th POSITION	77.3	77.0	78.7	79.7

6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

APPENDIX

Weeklies

Bonne Soirée
Confidences ou Femme Moderne
Intimité
Nous Deux
Chez Nous
Echo de La Mode
Pour Vous Madame-Modes de Paris
Elle
Femme d' Aujourd'hui
Jours de France

L'Equipe (N° du Lundi)
Weekend
Ici Paris
France Dimanche
Journal du Dimanche
Humanité Dimanche

Entreprise
L'Express
Nouvel Observateur
Paris-Match
Point de Vue-Images du Monde
Le Pèlerin
La Vie Catholique
Télé Magazine
Télé 7 Jours
Télérama
Télé Poche

Detective
Rustica

Monthlies

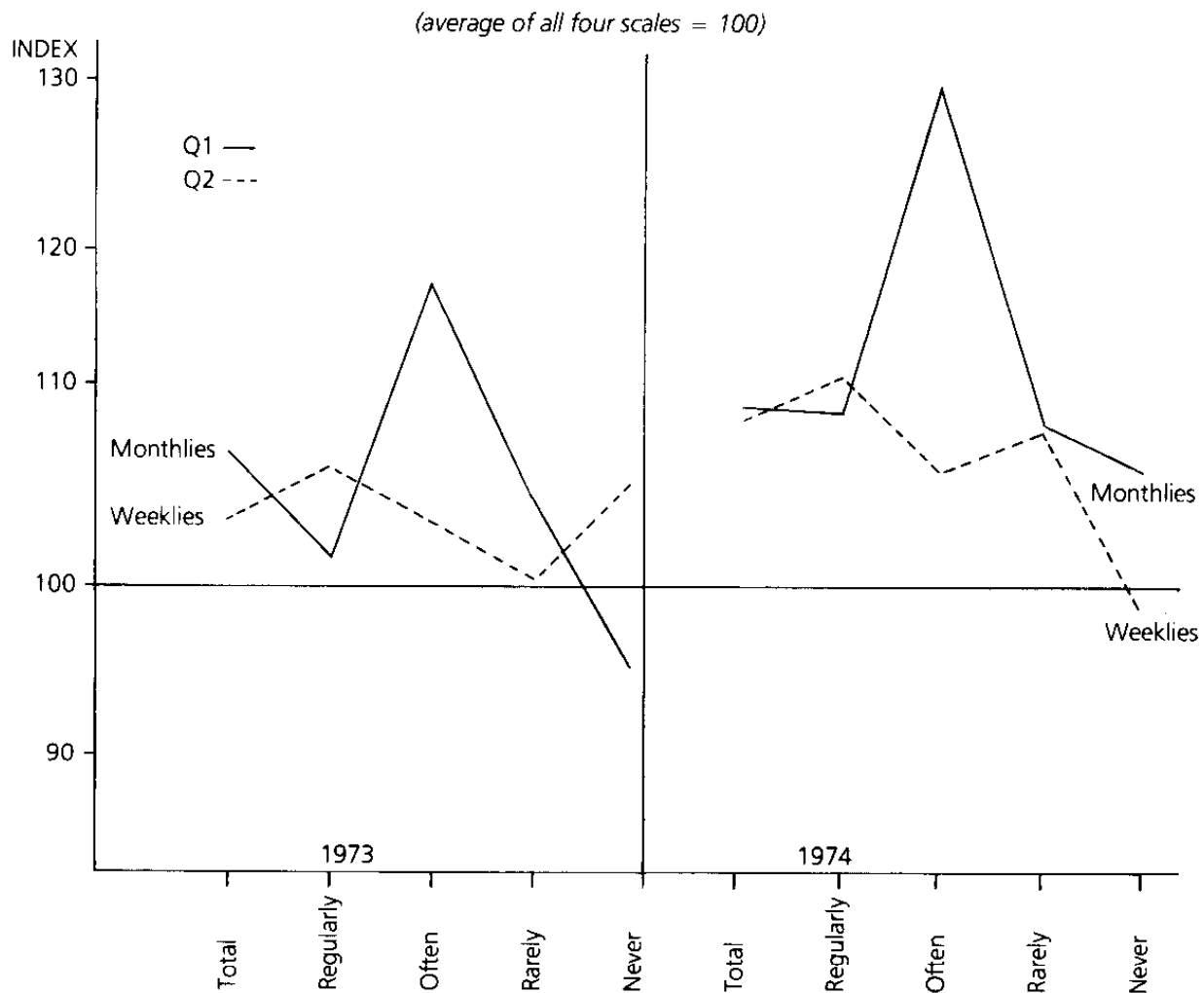
Bonheur
Clair Foyer
Echo de Notre Temps
Sélection du Reader's Digest
Chasseur Français
Historia
Parents
Mademoiselle Age Tendre
Salut Les Copains
Marie-France
Marie-Claire
Mon Jardin/Ma Maison
Maison et Jardin
Maison Française
Art et Décoration
Connaissance des Arts
Votre Beauté/Votre Santé
Femme Pratique
Modes et Travaux
Mon Ouvrage Madame/Ouvrages de Chez Nous
Pour vous Madame/Modes de Paris
Réalités
Expansion
Prevention Routière
Touring Club de France
Science et Vie
Action Automobile
L'Automobile

Bi-Monthly

L'Auto Journal
Le Coopérateur de France

6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

FIGURE 1
Cumulation of two last surveys



6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

FIGURE 2
Population distribution of number of magazines read over the last 12 months

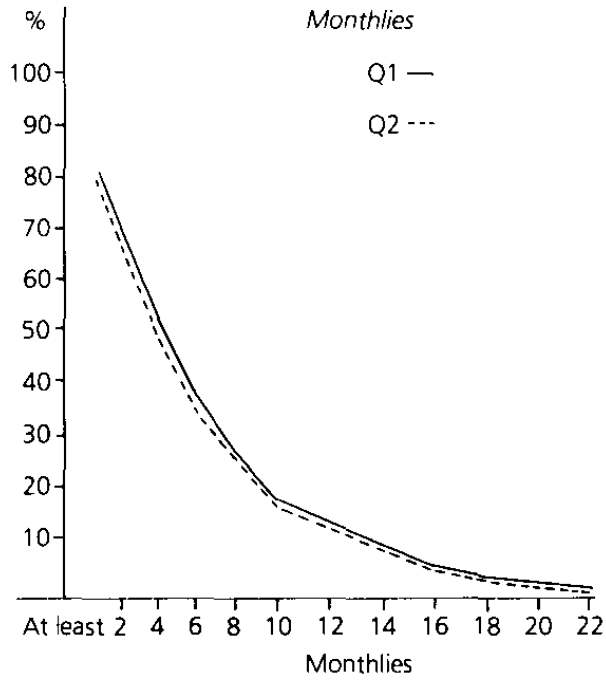
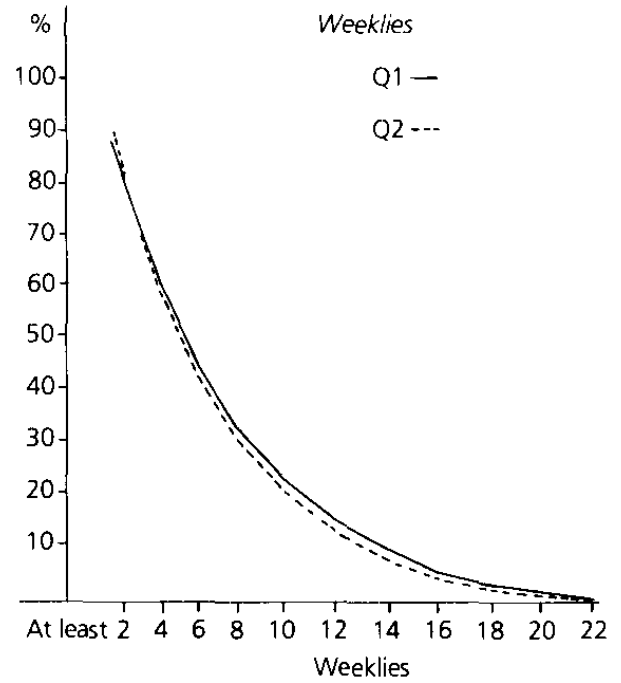


FIGURE 3
Population distribution of number of magazines read over the last 12 months



6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

FIGURE 4
Population distribution of number of magazines read during the last issue period

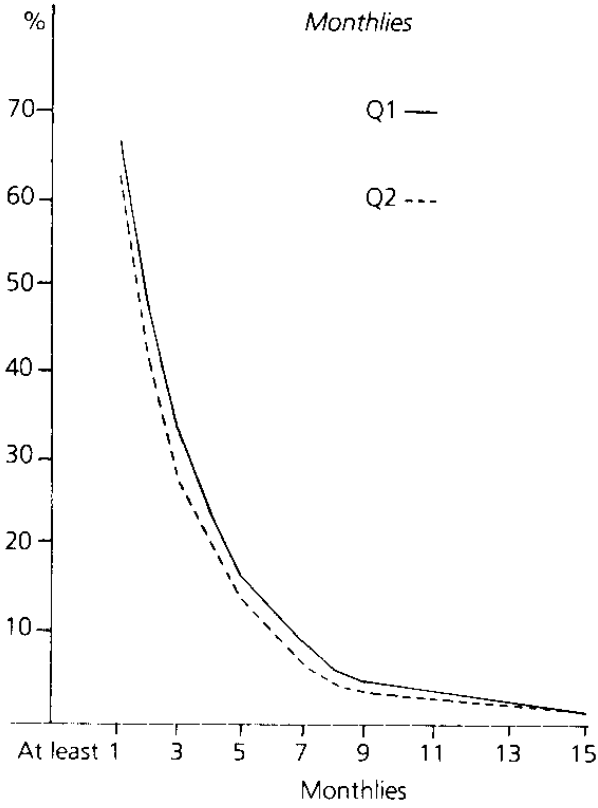
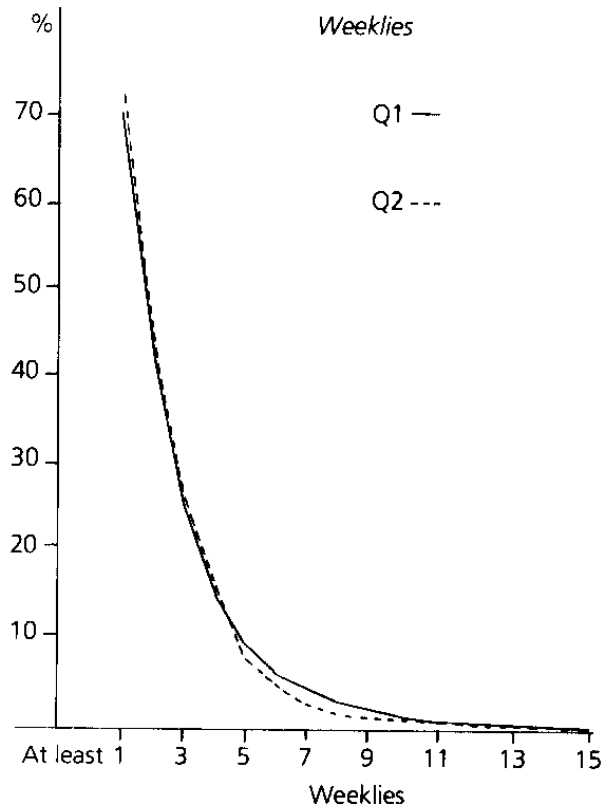


FIGURE 5
Population distribution of number of magazines read during the last issue period



6.3 The effect of permutations in the order of presentation of magazines

FIGURE 6
Number of magazines read in the last issue period

