

2.5 How copies produce audience: the dynamic model

One of the conclusions of the 1981 Readership Symposium and the audience research community around the world was that we had to expand our efforts to define audience. One of the goals at this present Symposium is to develop and perhaps agree on a basic audience model. I would like to try to contribute to this evolution by presenting a model of how copies produce audience. I suggest that the principles of an audience model for any magazine are similar.

(a) Copies of issues exist in a specific time frame. The data in **Figure 1** from a 1977 Audits & Surveys study shows news weeklies accumulate audiences over a period of time. The smooth curve is the accumulated Gamma function, the parameters of which were estimated from the survey data.

(b) The location of the copy during this time frame determines the number of people to whom it is available.

(c) A number of copies move between high reader-per-copy locations and low reader-per-copy locations.

(d) The magazine itself stimulates public place pick-up.

(e) In fact news magazines, if they are to achieve audience, do not compete only with the three news weeklies. At various times and locations they also compete with *Vogue*, *Business Week*, *People* and the US personality magazines.

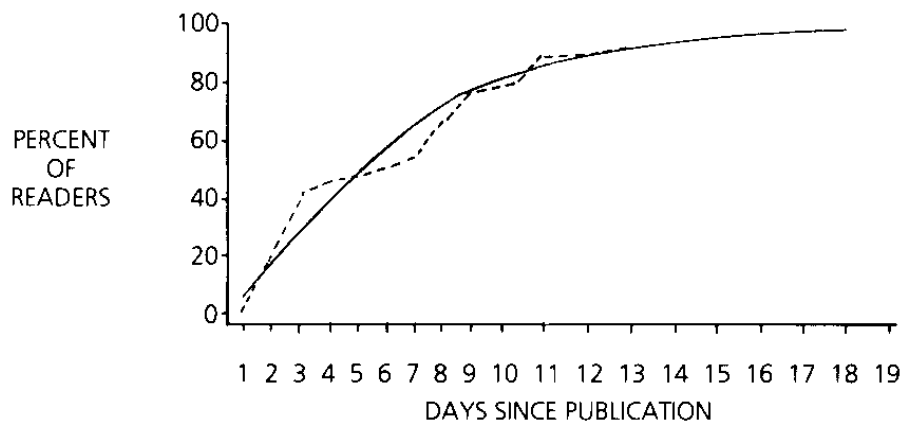
Newsweek estimates a news weekly in the USA has 75% of its circulation delivered to the home and 25% delivered out of home or to a public place. By the end of the issue's life, it is in a position where about 30% of the copies have been in both places, in home and public place.

Data that exists for average issue audience as measured by MRI in Fall 1981 using recent reading for a news weekly show that 45% of the audience is in-home and 55% of the total audience is out-of-home. You are probably wondering how 75% of the circulation produces 45% of total audience, while 25% of the circulation produces 55% of the audience. Well, that is not the correct place to begin.

The question is — what is the total number of available copies in public places or in the home during an issue's life, and how many readers-per-copy can be achieved in that location during the time the issue remains there?

Let us review in **Table 1** the arithmetic that is the foundation of the model. At the start of an issue's life, we estimate 75 out of 100 copies arrive at the home and the other 25 copies begin their journey at a public places. By the end of the issue's life, 90 out of 100 copies have been in individual homes and 40 out of 100 copies have been

FIGURE 1
Daily audience accumulation all news weeklies



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in public places of various types.

Therefore, we estimate a total of 30 copies out of 100 have moved. We estimate that 15 of the original 75 have moved to the offices or other public places from the home, and we estimate 15 of the original 25 public place copies have moved to the home. They could have, in fact, moved more than once.

Figure 2 is a branching diagram (or dynamic model of audience), which describes the movement of copies from place to place. This branching diagram describes the path of copies of a news magazine as they leave the publisher's control and proceed to home or public places.

Once a copy arrives at the home, it can be thrown away, given to someone else, given to an institution or taken to work. The latter copy may continue to move. The copies that go to public places also have a wider number of ultimate destinations including back and forth from home, to office, routed, filed or placed in a reception room. Once a copy is in circulation it is driven by that magazine's visual appeal and editorial excellence.

The first point of this diagram is that the circulated

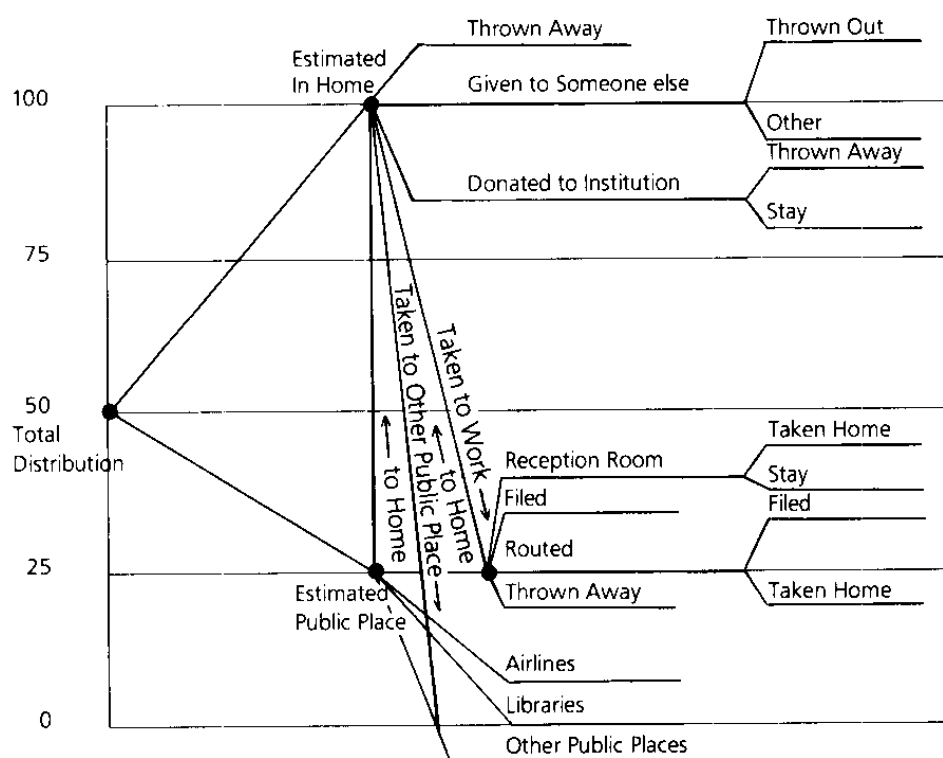
TABLE 1
Probable distribution of copies by location

Start of an issue's life Number of different copies		End of an issue's life Number of different copies	
Average per 100		Average per 100	
75	In-home	90	In-home
25	Public place	40	Public place
100		130	

issue must be available in public places. The second major point is the magazine itself, in this case, *Newsweek*. *Newsweek* moves through the distribution channel forcefully because of the timeliness of the editorial product — news.

The third point is that this model is truly three

FIGURE 2
Model of circulation distribution



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dimensional and the third dimension is time (with a small "T"). The fourth, and last major point is that people must be available in public places. If they are not there, they cannot read. There is some correlation with recession and generating high or low readers-per-copy.

It will be noticed that I have not included readers-per-copy on each of these lines. Estimates can be developed by observation study or survey. (Let me point out that there is probably a different reader-per-copy level for each line). But agency people should not run out and order high reader-per-copy circulation. The reason is that publishers can only *estimate* the number of copies that move from home to office and vice versa. In fact, we are not absolutely certain which copies are originally sent to business or other public places. To compound the problem, we have no idea which copies go from the home to the office, or vice versa. We know the phenomenon exists and we think we know why, but we

do not know exactly how many or which ones. If we knew the movement for any given week, it would change the next week because of the demand for news. All we can do is attempt to estimate the size of these groups. We simply cannot now identify those copies with any degree of precision.

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