THE FUTURE OF PRINT PLANNING

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The performance values for different media are measured using different methods and consequently lead to very different currencies for their performance. These differences in the methods of collecting data are sensible in that they are tailored to the different functions of the media and are technically feasible.

Readership research relies on respondents' memories. The major planning instrument or, if you will, the key currency, for magazines in Germany is the Media Analysis (MA). It generates performance values for about 180 magazine titles. The performance values are 'the average issue readership (AIR)' and 'the readership of an advertising page in an average issue'. The values are calculated using various steps including

- Awareness (general filter)
- Read within the last 12 publication intervals (total reach)
- Reading frequency
- Read within the last publication interval (recent reading)

The following applies in the context of this recent-reading-model: the average number of readers within the last publication interval equals the number of readers of any issue in the future. This model is based on various studies on cumulative coverage and the reader per average issue, which however were carried out in 1966 on the basis of 54 titles that were included in the MA at the time. This undoubtedly sophisticated method leaves questions unanswered that are also asked by print people themselves. On one hand the landscape of publications has undergone massive changes, with a steady increase in titles that fight for readers' attention. This obviously strains the memory of respondents when reconstructing their reading behavior. Parallel and repeated reading are two of many keywords describing problem areas.

Of course the ever-growing and diverging range of media products affects media planning. And this doesn't just concern the sheer quantitative performance of advertising media, but their functionality and various performance dimensions. Print planners increasingly demand information on readership per specific issue of a magazine, impact of advertising placement, the effective number of exposures, and the cumulative impact over time.

This has negative consequences for print planning. Magazines are often reduced to their circulation figures while readership gets neglected. That this development doesn't do justice to the medium magazines needn't be discussed. Yet lacking a better alternative, circulation plays an increasingly large role in planning.

The status quo might be summarized like this:

- the MA measures "average" readership
  on a high methodological level
- the MA and the market and media surveys adjusted to it
  generate detailed market and target group data,
  but no up-to-date data for print planning
- the importance of the Media Analysis has
  noticeably decreased in the past years
- the audience figures of TV, radio and online are put in relation to
  (parts of) magazine circulation.

Which options are there for print research to establish the required information? Respondents' memory can be supported by an issue-related and aided query. This method leads to additional information on the specific issue. This Cover Identification Model (TIM, from the German Titel-Identifikations-Modell) sticks to the basic procedure of the MA: awareness, read in the last 12 publications intervals, reading frequency and readership in the last publication interval. Focus Magazine publishing company/ Hubert Burda Media gathers data on magazine reading in the survey Communication Networks (CN) based on the specific issues of a magazine. To do this, the last 12 cover pages are shown on the screen and the respondent clicks on the ones he has read, and which he read within the last publication interval. This way, TIM replaces the query about an average issue during the time frame with a query about the reading of a specific one of the past 12 issues. The traditional term of Average-Issue Readership (AIR) in readership research is consequently replaced with the term Specific-Issue Readership (SIR).

AG.MA already focused on the topic in the 90s. "Under the aspect of title identification, displaying cover pages or original copies of a magazine is certainly an ideal approach. This way, the respondent is given a maximum amount of aided recall and needn't be confronted with abstract time intervals and frequency calculations." (Source: Erhebungsmodelle in der Printmedienforschung und ihre Bewertung im internationalen Vergleich, Editor Jürgen Wiegand, Frankfurt am Main, 1996, page 27).

Insights from TIM – Forgotten Readings and Errors

Up to and including the questions about reading behavior within the last 12 publication intervals (total readers) the TIM-Model is identical with the ma questionnaire. After the total readers are determined, all magazines that passed the general filter are subjected to the TIM-query. At this stage, respondents indicate which of the 12 issues that they are shown the cover page of they have read. This way, the results of ma-analogue data regarding total audience can be compared to the results of the TIM query. For instance, who only remembered certain readings during the TIM query, but not during the ma-questionnaire, and vice versa, can be determined.

Differing Total Readerships in TIM and MA

66 percent of respondents provide different information in regards to their reading in the ma-analogue and the TIM queries. These discrepancies are primarily due to forgotten readings. In net terms, more titles are gained in total readership than are lost using the TIM approach.

60 percent of the interviewees make "positive corrections", that is, they claim to have read certain issues of publications that they did not name in the ma-analogue total audience query. Only 24 percent make "negative corrections", which means that they claim to have read a certain magazine within the past 12 publication intervals in the ma-analogue query, but fail to recognize any of the last 12 cover pages as a magazine they read in TIM.

At the same time, positive-correctors make visibly more corrections. They name an average of 4.0 additional titles. In contrast, negative-correctors name 2.9 titles less on average. There are two possible causes for these changes: either the issue the respondent has in mind is more than 12 publication intervals ago, or he/she confused the title with another publication.

Across all respondents, an average of 2.4 additional titles was named in TIM versus 0.7 titles that were taken from the list. Looking at the corrections made, 42 percent of the respondents made only positive and 6 percent solely negative corrections. 18 percent made corrections in both directions.

These results, based on data from CN 12.0 are remarkably stable. Reference values to CN 11.0 are as follows: 69 percent of respondents corrected their values. This can be further split into 44 percent of respondents who only made positive corrections, 6 percent who made only negative corrections and 20 percent who made corrections in both directions. On average, 2.7 additional titles were named while 0.7 titles were cancelled.

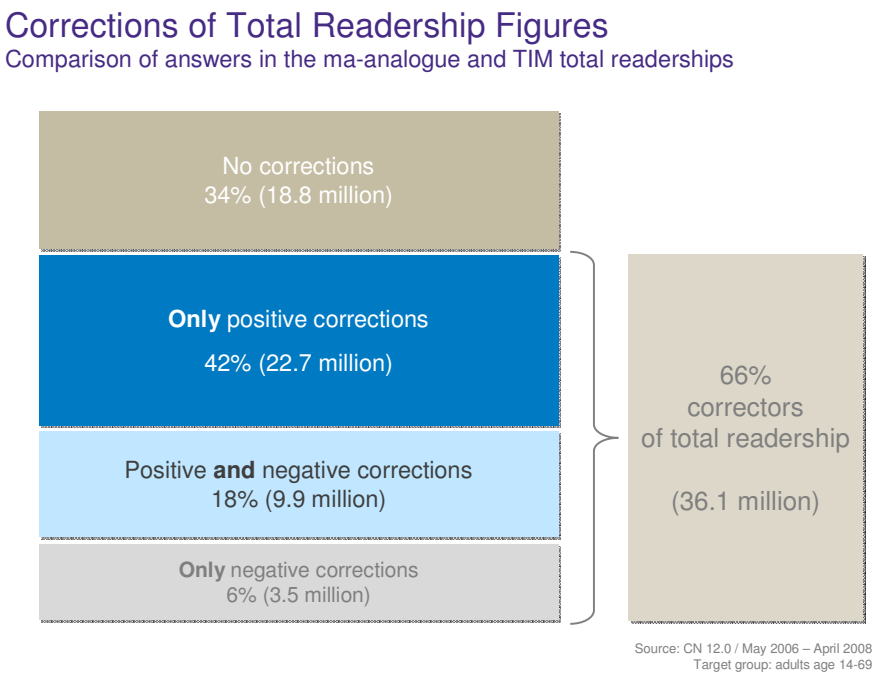


Figure 1

Taking the values of the TIM total readership as a basis, over 60 percent of the responses in the ma-based total readership include errors. This error generally goes in the direction of underclaiming. In principle, this is a less disturbing finding for the advertising community than overclaiming would be, especially as the forgotten readings often lie back a while.

For print campaigns, readings that lie back a while or readings in older issues aren't of much importance. This would change if the reader per copy, in contrast to what planning has presumed in the past, contained relevant parts of older issues or if certain people made more corrections than others.

Not all demographic characteristics point to a higher tendency to make corrections. The analysis shows that there are hardly any demographic differences between the positive- and negative-correctors. However, groups that read a lot of magazines, that is females and younger people under the age of 50, are more likely to make corrections than their counterparts.

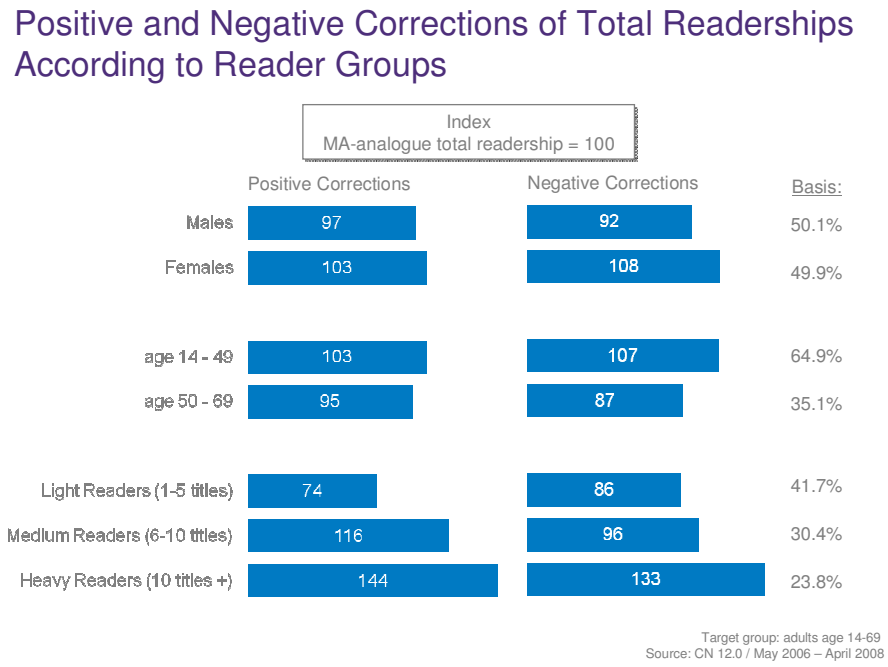


Figure 2

The number of corrections made is less influenced by demographic data than by the number of publications the respondents read. The more titles are used, the higher the number of corrections is. This relationship is not perfectly proportional, however; but instead gets weaker, as the following chart shows. 96 percent of the deviations in the total readerships can be explained by the number of titles read. The trend relation is logarithmic.

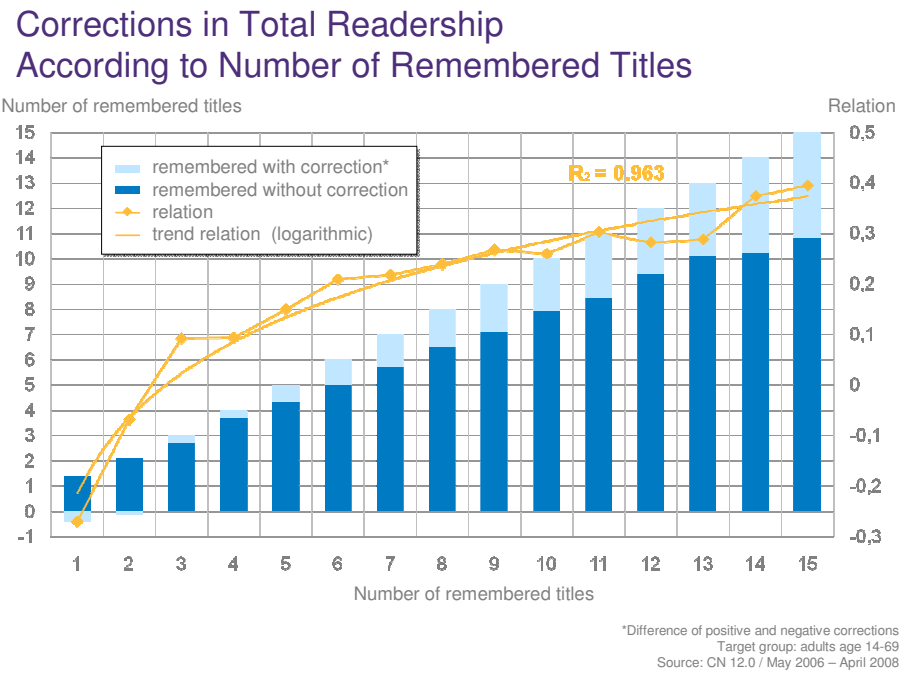


Figure 3

The Effects of the TIM Query on Readership Groups of the Reader per Copy

The TIM query brings more titles into the total readership. The cover page-aided query apparently activates respondents' memories of readings, especially when it comes to older issues, which respondents don't remember using just masthead cards as an aid.

The changes in the total readership using TIM have consequences for the Readers per Copy: The readers per copy have more occasional and infrequent readers in TIM as compared to the ma, and far fewer core readers. We must assume that this has immense impact on print planning.

Thus far, not having established probabilities (p-values) for the titles nor having tested the effects on a media plan – except on the level of gross contacts – it is to be expected that the individual p-values will decrease due to the larger numbers of occasional and infrequent readers. Smaller p-values mean that an ad would have to be placed more often in order to attain the required portion of the target group and the necessary level of coverage.

Consequently titles that qualify in the query should be booked more often – which is good news for publishing houses. Efficiency-oriented planners won't find this quite as attractive. Just like every methodology-caused change in performance values this will lead to discussions about costs per contact and thus about advertisement prices, should TIM become the basis for price calculations.

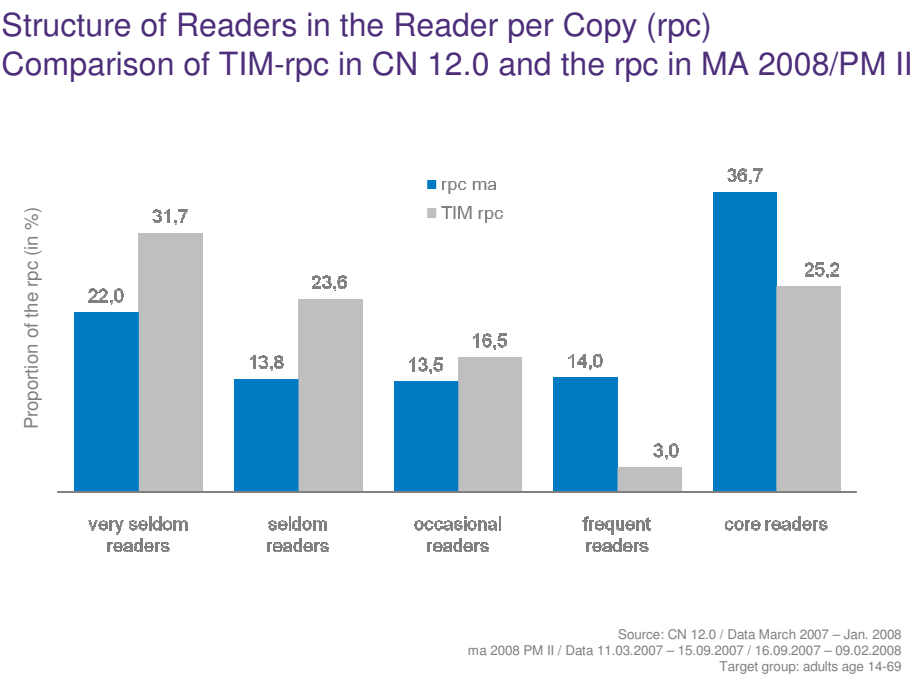


Figure 4

Interim Conclusion

The aided recall in TIM isn't equally relevant for all readership groups. Light readers obviously remember their readings more thoroughly than heavy readers, whose high number of titles are at the expense of regular reading. Readings that are less regular or lie further back are remembered less often.

If media usage becomes more and more selective, situational and event-driven as the range of media products increases and diversifies, then this implies an increasing number of memory lapses, especially for heavy readers. Media research will have to face the issue of suitable memory aids.

This debate will not only be about the topic of "aided recall". Rather, it also concerns the parameters underlying readership research: do we want to display the reading of an average issue within the publication interval or the reading of a specific issue of the past 12 issues over time?

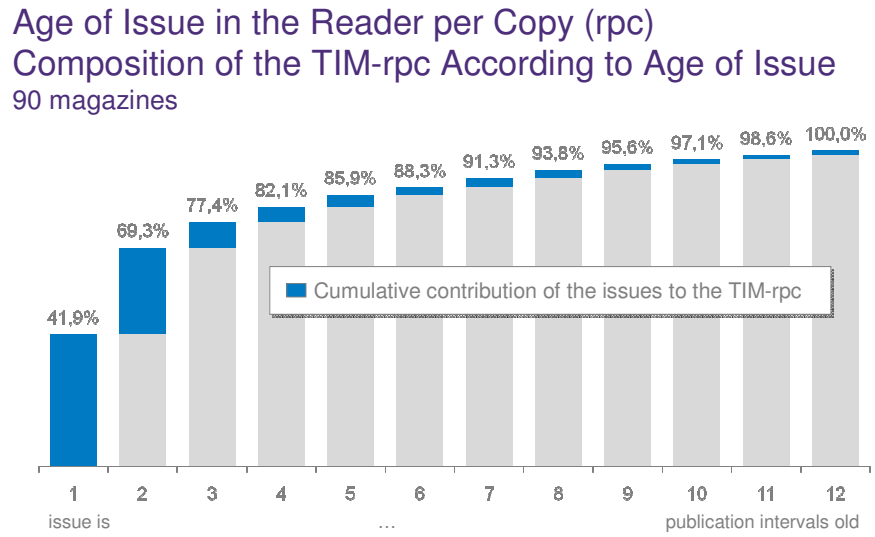
We expect that less frequent readings will increase in widely saturated markets. The query model should take this into account.

The Composition of Readers per Copy for Current and Older Issues

It is essential for planning, to which extent older issues can be found in the Readers per Copy and how this affects the composition of the rpc according to how new or old the issue is. So far, there is no data to this effect, aside from a former exploration on the dimension time in media planning, on the basis of which a model for media planning was developed.[1]

In the TIM query, reading is collected separately for each of the 12 latest issues, so that the contribution of each issue towards the Readers per Copy can be analyzed in detail. In total, the magazines that were read during the past publication interval are not only the current issue but issues of different ages.

In the CN 12.0, the two latest issues account for 69 percent of the rpc, including the third-latest issue, this becomes 77 percent of the rpc.



Reading instruction: Across all magazines, 41,9% of the TIM-rpc is based on the current issue; including the second-latest issue, 69,3% of the TIM-rpc are reached, etc.

The figure shows aggregated additive percentages
(approximated increase in coverage)
target group: adults age 14-69
Source: CN 12.0 / May 2006 - April 2008

Figure 5

Broken down, the current issue of a magazine accounts for 42 percent, the second-latest issue for 27 percent, and older issues for 31 percent of the Readers per Copy. If we keep in mind that at the time of the interview not all respondents had already had the opportunity to read the current issue, the contribution of the current issue to the rpc may actually be higher.

The Influence of Age of Magazine on the Reader per Copy According to Magazine Type

The finding for a total of 90 magazines serves as a point of orientation. For planning, results according to publication intervals and magazine types are much more interesting. That is because media planners first determine relevant topics for the communication, and the publication intervals that qualify for reaching the campaign goal, before examining the specific titles.

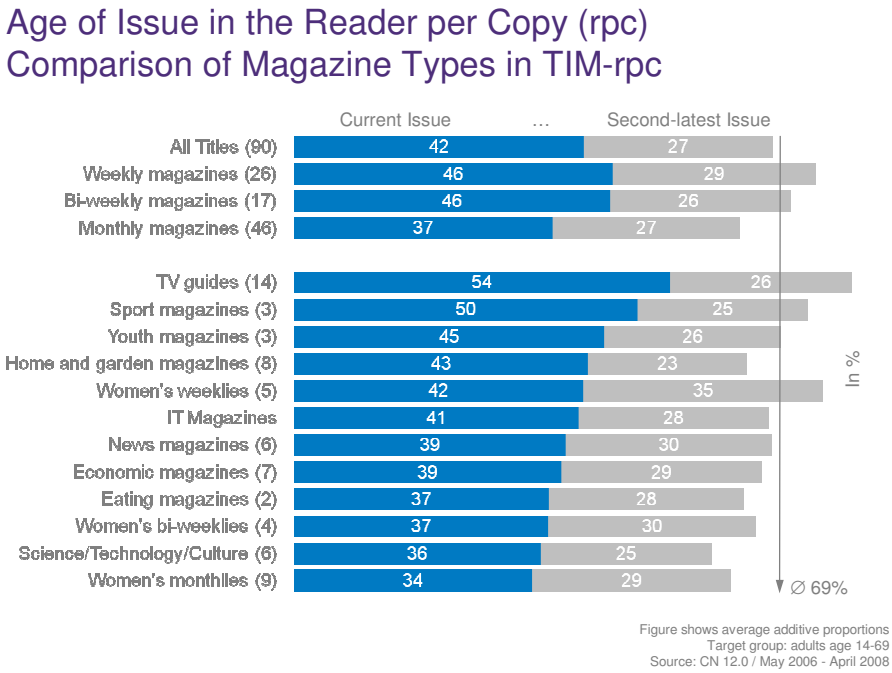


Figure 6

The shorter the publication interval, the more up-to-date the issues read in the last publication interval will be: For weekly titles, the two latest issues account for 76 percent of the rpc, for bi-weekly magazines this number is 72 and for monthly magazines 65 percent.

Looking at the same data according to magazine types, it becomes clear that the topics also influence the contribution of different issues to the rpc. At 63 percent for the two latest issues, women's monthlies are clearly below average for monthly publications. The two latest issues of women's bi-weeklies and weeklies also fail to reach the benchmark for their respective publication intervals.

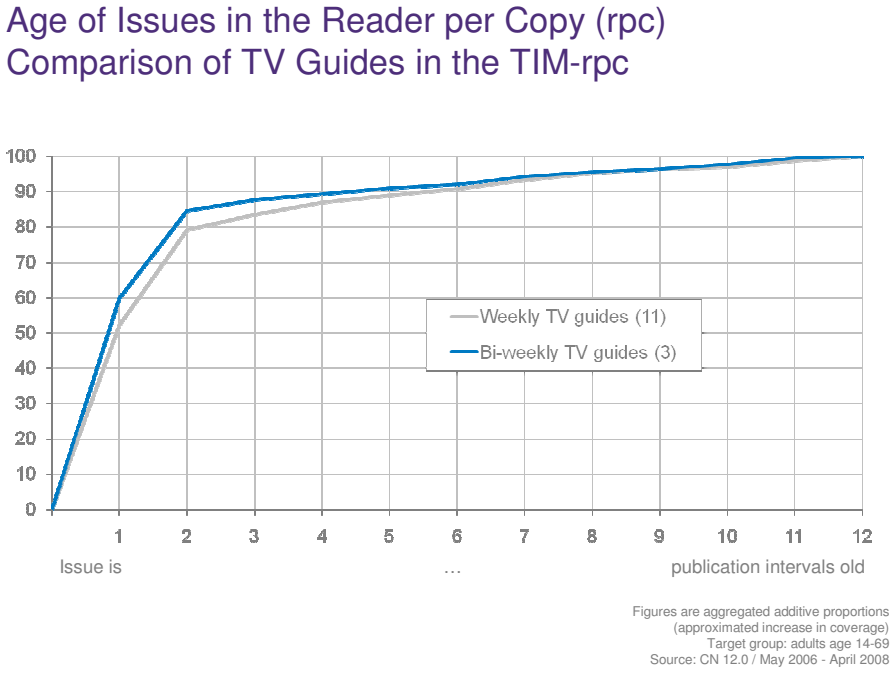


Figure 7

TV guides are a good example of how the up-to-datedness of an issue may also depend on what chance the respondent had to already read the current issue, or, how relevant having the latest issue is.

If the interview takes place when the current issue of a weekly TV guide has already been published, but the timeframe that the guide refers to is still a week away, not all readers have looked into this issue yet, but instead only about half – in this case 52 percent.

This is different for bi-weekly TV guides. Here, an issue stays for two weeks straight and therefore has a higher chance that the readers have already engaged with it. In accordance with that, the current issue for bi-weekly magazines accounts for 60 percent, the second-latest for another 25 percent, adding up to 85 percent of the Readers per Copy accounted for by the two latest issues.

The question of the optimal age of an issue for the TIM query will require extensive further research, also under the aspect of so-called "title justice" across publication intervals or publication types.

Interim Conclusion

Information according the age of an issue for the Readers per Copy is highly relevant to planning when it comes to campaign scheduling. If the Readers per Copy include a fair proportion of issues from the second-latest publication interval, then longer pauses in the media plan would be worth consideration.

After all, the life span of an average issue has effects on the speed with which an advertising message can spread, and how long this message prevails on the market, because additional contacts with the advertisement are also achieved via older issues.

Planning would need to be optimized in regards to the optimal booking strategy per issue, as well as the assumed development of advertising effectiveness. Until now, planning assumes that the effects of the Gross Ratings Points (GRP) remain the same independent of the age of the issue at the moment the recipient came into contact with the advertisement.

However, it must be assumed that other, differentiating cause-effect-relationships will be established over time for print-GRPs, if repeated contacts and the age of an issue are considered in the Adstock calculation. (Adstock calculates the effectiveness of a GRP over time).

Conclusion

What can be said about TIM at the moment?

- Using an easily comprehensible model, TIM demonstrates that the MA doesn't count too many readers, but in many cases actually too few
- The number of "also used" titles is underestimated: The TIM query enables a more precise description of hard-to-reach light readers.
- The coverage of a magazine issue continues to grow after the actual publication interval.
- Qualifying early and late exposures is possible.
- Contact cumulation through multiple bookings can be analyzed in more detail for media planning purposes.
- TIM provides the opportunity to conduct planning and advertising effectiveness tracking in a single source survey.