

## HOW MAGAZINE AUDIENCES EXPAND AFTER INITIAL LAUNCH PERIOD

When a magazine is first launched, relatively few people are aware of it and it takes time for the sampling process, word of mouth and other exposures to make its presence known. Since awareness of a title is a prerequisite to people claiming readership in the recent reading audience studies, it is not surprising that reader-per-copy (RPC) rates—particularly those of the pass-along variety—take years to develop.

In order to evaluate this process, we reviewed MRI's RPC data for 30 magazine launches over the past several decades. The books involved included **Allure**, **Child**, **Cooking Light**, **Elle Décor**, **Men's Fitness**, **FamilyFun**, **Marie Claire**, **Premiere**, **Smart Money**, **Vanity Fair** and **Victoria**, and represented a reasonable cross-section of publications, if a little skewed towards female readers.

In each case, the first MRI report occurred sometime after the book's launch, generally a year or two later. However, taking this as the starting point (year one), we found that on average the 30 magazines attained 3.45 readers-per-copy in their first MRI outings, with an estimated 45% consisting of primary readers (newsstand buyers & subscribers). As the accompanying table reveals, the average RPC levels for the 30 magazines grew to 3.70 in year two, 3.84 in year three and maxed out at 4.60 in year seven. Needless to say, most of these gains accrued in the pass-along column (MDI's estimates).

Interestingly, not every magazine we examined followed these general and fairly positive patterns. In most cases, the exceptions were books that failed to gain widespread acceptance or create a viable presence and a distinct branding personality (i.e. **Mirabella** and **Victoria**). Such magazines actually suffered RPC declines over time, a sharp contrast with highly successful launches such as **Martha Stewart Living**, **Allure** and **Vibe**, for example.

Since publishers rely so much on recent reading audience measurements in selling ad space, it behooves them to make every effort to promote new titles to stimulate awareness, whether via the Internet or any other vehicles, multi-media tie-ins, etc.. It's as simple as this: the more people who think they might have read a magazine in the past six months (MRI's initial screening question), the more people who will be asked the actual readership question and possibly respond in the affirmative. ■

Continued

**How Magazine Audiences Expand** Continued**ADULT READER-PER-COPY ESTIMATES FOR 30 MAGAZINES  
FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> TO 7<sup>TH</sup> MEASUREMENT YEAR**

YEAR	PRIMARY <sup>1</sup>	PASS ALONG <sup>1</sup>	TOTAL AUDIENCE	% PASS- ALONG
1	1.55	1.90	3.45	55
2	1.58	2.12	3.70	57
3	1.62	2.22	3.84	58
4	1.63	2.51	4.14	61
5	1.64	2.74	4.38	63
6	1.64	2.86	4.50	64
7	1.64	2.96	4.60	64

<sup>1</sup>Media Dynamics, Inc. estimates.

Source: Media Dynamics, Inc.'s calculations of MRI RPC data for 30 magazines, 1980s-2000s.