

**AN INTERNET STRATEGY FOR A NICHE MAGAZINE:
A Uses And Gratifications Approach**

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DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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November 2009

ABSTRACT

Magazine publishers are under increasing pressure to extend their business strategies beyond the traditional printed products. A culture of instant gratification of media needs, pervasive social networking and the immediacy of content delivery, which are all provided by the World Wide Web, aggravate fears that readers will ultimately abandon the printed media in favour of the Internet as the primary content provider. These fears are rooted in the assumption that consumers choose the media they use based on preconceived ideas as to how these media will fulfil their needs.

If the Internet succeeds in supplanting or displacing printed media, it could potentially destroy the traditional magazine model whereby publishers simultaneously generate revenue from the sale of media content to their audience and the sale of the audience's attention to their advertisers. Therefore it is imperative that magazine publishers develop a relevant and efficient strategy to maintain their position as "intermediary" between advertisers and the media audience. To develop such a strategy, they need to understand what media uses consumers have for the Internet and what gratifications they expect to receive. Once this is understood, publishers could develop their online and offline strategies to service these uses and gratifications.

This thesis contains qualitative research conducted in a phenomenological paradigm through the application of two descriptive surveys. The first survey focused on the experiences and attitudes of visitors to the website of *WegSleep*, an Afrikaans South African niche magazine for the caravanning and camping community, whilst the second compares similarities between the seven most visited magazine websites in South Africa during 2008.

A correlation of the findings leads to the conclusion that although the Internet could potentially emulate all media, readers do not employ the Internet for exactly the same purposes as printed media. Whilst some displacement does take place, magazines are still better at serving readers' affective and escapist needs. Conversely, the Internet is the preferred medium with regard to information gathering and cognitive media needs as well as personal integrative needs. Social integrative needs appear to be non medium specific. A complementary combination of the printed product and the online offering could therefore provide gratification of all media needs and promote brand loyalty instead of medium loyalty.

OPSOMMING

Daar is toenemende druk op tydskrifuitgewers om sakemodelle te ontwikkel wat nie net die gedrukte medium insluit nie, maar ook voorsiening maak vir 'n strategie in die digitale milieu. Die vermoë van die Internet om onmiddellik aan gebruikers se mediabehoefte te voldoen, sosiale netwerke te vestig en inhoud dadelik beskikbaar te stel, wakker vrese aan dat verbruikers dit uiteindelik as hul primêre media bron sal gebruik en die gedrukte media gevolglik die rug sal keer. Hierdie vrese is gegrond op die aanname dat gebruikers 'n keuse uitoefen oor die media wat hulle gebruik aan die hand van hul behoeftes en die bevrediging wat hulle van hierdie media verwag.

Indien die Internet wel daarin sou slaag om gedrukte media te vervang of verplaas, kan dit 'n vernietigende uitwerking op die tradisionele tydskrif-sakemodel hê. Volgens hierdie model genereer uitgewers gelyktydige inkomste uit die verkoop van inhoud aan lesers en die verkoop van die lesers se aandag aan adverteerders. Derhalwe is dit noodsaaklik vir uitgewers om 'n relevante en effektiewe strategie te ontwikkel ten einde hul rol as tussenganger tussen adverteerders en die mediagehoor te behou. Om dit te doen moet hulle hulself vergewis waarvoor lesers die Internet gebruik en watter behoeftes hulle verwag om met die gebruik daarvan te bevredig. 'n Grondige begrip hiervan sal uitgewers in staat stel om toepaslike strategieë vir hul gedrukte produkte en digitale aanbiedinge te ontwikkel.

Hierdie tesis bevat kwalitatiewe navorsing in a fenomenologiese paradigma deur die toepassing van twee beskrywende peilings. Die eerste peiling het gefokus op die ervarings en gesindheid van die gebruikers van die webwerf vir die Afrikaanse tydskrif *WegSleep* – 'n nismarktydskrif vir die Suid-Afrikaanse karavaan- en kampeergemeenskap. Die tweede peiling vergelyk ooreenkomste tussen die sewe Suid-Afrikaanse webwerwe wat die meeste besoekers in 2008 ontvang het.

'n Korrelasie van die bevindinge lei tot die gevolgtrekking dat hoewel die aard van die Internet dit moontlik maak om alle media na te boots, lesers dit nie vir dieselfde doel as gedrukte media gebruik nie. Ofskoon daar wel 'n mate van verplasing is, voldoen tydskrifte beter aan lesers se affektiewe behoeftes en hul soeke na ontvlugting. Die Internet bevredig op sy beurt weer kognitiewe behoeftes en die behoefte aan persoonlike integrasie. Maatskaplike integrasie is skynbaar nie afhanklik van 'n bepaalde medium nie. Uitgewers kan dus munt slaan uit 'n strategie wat bestaan uit 'n meewerkende kombinasie van die gedrukte produk en die digitale aanbieding om sodoende in al die media behoeftes te voorsien en eerder 'n lojaliteit teenoor 'n titel of handelsmerk te kweek as teenoor 'n bepaalde medium.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 ORIENTATION

The advent of the Internet and the World Wide Web has often been heralded as the final blow that would destroy the already embattled printed media, which are fighting dwindling readership numbers, declining circulation and shrinking advertising revenue. As with all these threats to its very existence, the publishing industry is faced with the inevitable challenge to adopt the new medium and to find ways to use it beneficially. Magazine publishers in particular are currently faced with one of their biggest challenges to date, namely how to adapt from publishing physical, printed products to establishing their brands in the digital sphere.

Advances in the digital technology, which are rapidly changing the manner in which society distributes, receives and consumes media, have created the general impression that the three-century reign of newspapers and magazines is on the decline. This fuels the debate on the future survival of printed media (Sikiti da Silva, 2007: 1). The interactive nature of the Internet and peripheral digital media has left publishers with the fear that the accompanying culture of instant gratification of media needs, pervasive social networking and the immediacy of content delivery, will ultimately encourage readers to abandon the print media in favour of the Internet as the content delivery medium of choice (Kummerfeld, 2007: 3). These fears are rooted in the assumption that consumers are not passive recipients of media, but instead actively choose how they use media, based on preconceived ideas as to how these media will fulfil their needs (McQuail, 2005: 424; Sangwan, 2005: 3; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974: 510; Eighmey & McCord, 1998: 188; Cho, De Zúñiga, Rojas & Shah, 2003: 48).

Without fail, each new medium has an impact on existing media and some degree of substitution or displacement is inevitable (Randle, 2001: 1). Dimmick, Chen and Li (2004: 19) argue that displacement is the most common consequence of competition. The logic of niche theory and the theory of uses and gratifications¹ propose that a new medium will only survive and grow if it competes directly with existing media by offering new and better ways of fulfilling these needs. If a new medium is successful in offering new and alternative gratifications to the same needs as the existing media, it will ultimately lead to its displacement or complete substitution (Cho *et al.*, 2003: 48).

¹ See Chapter 3 for a detailed exposition of these theories.

In the case of the Internet and print media, consumers' preference for the digital medium could therefore ultimately result in declining readership figures and an associated decline in advertising expenditure. Such a move could potentially be devastating to the traditional (print) media, due to these media's unique business model in terms of which it simultaneously generates revenue from the sale of media content to its audience (cover sales) and the sale of the audience's attention to advertisers (advertising revenue).

Since the advent of the Internet, advertising expenditure in the United States of America grew from non-existent in 1990 to more than \$7 billion in 2003 (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006: 50). In 2006 the Internet ad spend in France exceeded €1 billion (Lin, 2008: 1), whilst the United Kingdom recorded an unprecedented £2,8 billion (IAB 2008: 1). Goldstuck's study, "The Online Media in South Africa 2009" shows that online advertising in 2008 grew by 32%. This equates to total online adspend in 2008 of R319 million (Goldstuck, 2009: 4). What is significant is that South Africa attained the fastest growth rate of all English-language countries in the world during 2008, and is likely to do so again in 2009.

In 2004 the term Web 2.0 was coined as nomenclature to describe this new approach to the Internet. The premise of Web 2.0 lies not in the potential of the Internet as a primary source of information dissemination by centralised entities such as publishing companies, but rather as a platform for interaction between innumerable users (O'Reilly, 2005: 1). Web 2.0 thus represents a different perspective on how people use the Internet.

However, Berman, Abraham, Battino, Shipnuck and Neus (2007: 23), suggest that although the "battle" between traditional and new media is not exaggerated, it is an uneven one, because despite growing numbers of new visitors to online media sites, the advertising revenue generated by these sites does not yet reflect this migration from traditional media to new media. Yet, Berman *et al.* expect this state of affairs to change as the revenue growth for online media is forecast to reach 23% between 2006 and 2010, as opposed to a mere 6% for traditional media in the corresponding period. Given the pressure that the digital era has subsequently brought to bear on traditional print media, it is apparent that the latter needs to find a new competitive strategy and business model even if it is just to maintain its share of the consumer audience as well as advertising expenditure.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTION

It is imperative that magazine publishers develop a relevant and efficient strategy to maintain their position as “intermediary” between advertisers and the media audience if they are to remain profitable. Furthermore, in order for magazine publishers to develop an efficient online strategy, they need to take cognisance of which portion of the resource (audience attention) the Internet can lay claim to and how it does so. In other words they need to understand how their audience uses the Internet and what it uses it for. Once this is clearly understood, it would be possible to determine which uses and gratifications are better served by the Internet and World Wide Web than by traditional media and vice versa. Publishers could then tailor their online and offline strategies to exploit the different uses and gratifications in a complementary fashion which would ultimately culminate in a cohesive brand strategy.

However, after the collapse of the so-called dotcom empires in 2000 and 2001² whereby billions of dollars were lost on venture capital deals, it became evident that existing commercial models for offline businesses were not as easily transferable to the online environment as had been anticipated. The Internet was consequently viewed with much scepticism, promising far more than it could in fact deliver (O’Reilly, 2005: 1).

The Internet has most definitely offered consumers of media new uses for the medium and new channels through which to seek gratification. Therefore an understanding and application of uses and gratifications theory could prove vital in developing a successful online strategy. Furthermore, niche theory proposes that if two parties compete for the same limited resources, coexistence is only possible if one or both parties adapt their respective strategies to exploit a particular segment of the resource which is not consumed by the other (Dimmick, 2006: 351). In the case of the media industry, this means publishers need to find ways to best exploit audience attention and advertising revenues through the new medium, without cannibalising their printed product.

This seems to suggest that if a magazine website is to be relevant and successful, it should represent more than a one-way conduit between the publisher and its audience. Instead, the website should serve as a platform through which users can connect not only to the editorial content or editorial team generating the content, but also to each other. This supports the notion that users are not passive recipients of information, but that they rather use the media and the

² In the late 1990’s many Internet companies benefited from the enthusiasm for the new medium and pushed their stock valuations beyond reasonable expectations even though they were not profitable. Subsequently billions in venture capital were lost in entrepreneurial schemes that failed.

Internet in particular as an actual tool that can be employed in a virtual space to satisfy wants and needs in the real world.

The subsequent research question therefore is:

How can a better understanding of Internet uses and gratifications assist in developing an appropriate online strategy for WegSleep, a South African niche magazine for caravanning and camping enthusiasts, without undermining the printed product?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To provide a theoretical framework for the study of suitable internet strategies for magazine publishers;
- To examine niche magazine readers' needs and the gratifications they expect to obtain from the use of the internet in general and magazine websites in particular;
- To analyse and compare seven successful South African magazine websites in order to derive possible best practices;
- To derive possible guidelines for the development of an online strategy for *WegSleep*.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Magazines are under escalating pressure to extend their brands to the online environment. It is therefore important to establish best practices and trends in website usage to assist in managerial decision making. As the researcher is employed as the deputy editor of *WegSleep*, a South-African niche magazine for the caravanning and camping community, it is of particular practical relevance to his daily work. Although the study focuses primarily on *WegSleep* and its readers, it is possible that the findings might be relevant in a broader context.

1.5 THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

For the purposes of this study, the researcher examined the needs and perceived gratifications of magazine readers when using the Internet. Within the body of work relating to the adoption of new media and the possible displacement of existing media, the theoretical work on uses and

gratifications is arguably most relevant to the hypothesis of media displacement (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000: 24-25). Lee (2004: 6) cites Rafaeli as well as Morris and Ogan when arguing that uses and gratifications theory is often employed as the first theory by which a new medium is studied. The prevailing argument is that if an audience adopts a new communications medium it does so because the said medium offers new uses and gratifications to its consumers. As such it is an appropriate theoretical approach for this study.

1.6 METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

The nature of the methodology is descriptive, interpretative and qualitative. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998: 11) qualitative research may be conducted to examine people's lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, feelings as well as organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena and interaction between nations. This then gives further credence to the argument that the study of uses and gratifications is a study into human behaviour and attitudes – which are in essence qualitative values.

Qualitative research is also fundamentally interpretative (Cresswell, 2003: 182). As such the researcher's aim is not to prove hypotheses, but rather to interpret the data in a manner that facilitates the ability to derive meaningful conclusions which may lead to further theorising and further questions to be researched (Cooper, Potter & Dupagne, 1994: 55). The research contained in this report was also conducted from an interpretative or phenomenological paradigm, which, according to Hussey and Hussey (1997: 52), concerns itself with the study of phenomena. In the case of this study the phenomena in question are the uses that consumers have for a particular niche market magazine and a website related to the magazine and the gratification they derive from these media.

The research is structured as follows:

- Chapter Two provides a descriptive review of existing literature regarding online media strategies.
- Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework of the study, based on the uses and gratifications theory which assumes that the consumers of mass media are not passive recipients but rather represent an active and discerning audience. It also assumes that this audience exposes itself to media in a selective manner, based on pre-existing perceptions that diverse media will

deliver a variety of gratifications. Lastly, it assumes that the effect of the choices that the audience make will ultimately manifest itself in varying degrees of substitution or displacement.³

- Chapters Four and Five present a qualitative survey based on two questionnaires. Chapter Four focuses on the methodology and research design, whilst Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings and interprets the relevance in terms of the research question.

Questionnaire 1 comprises 105 self-report-questionnaires which were completed by users of the chat forum on the *WegSleep* website. It aimed to measure and explore the needs these users have and the gratifications they derive from the use of the Internet and the website of a niche magazine in particular. The questionnaire was designed to extract information regarding their general online activities as well as their likes and dislikes regarding website design and content. (In this regard a pilot survey was initially conducted amongst 40 *WegSleep* readers who attended a camping weekend organised by and for users of the magazine's website.)

Questionnaire 2 (also a self-report questionnaire) was intended as a comparative study of existing online strategies in the magazine industry. The purpose was to seek and identify trends amongst successful convergence strategies. The seven top ranking South African magazine websites⁴ were selected for case studies. The primary data collected during this phase represents a qualitative indication as to which common elements the better ranking websites share and to what extent they contribute to the success of these sites.

(A copy of each of the three questionnaires is attached as *Appendixes A, B and C.*)

1.7 SUMMARY

This chapter gave a brief synopsis of the perceived competition between printed media and the internet. It highlighted the necessity for magazine publishers to adopt an effective online strategy to ensconce their brands in an increasingly demanding market. It stated the research question and objectives, motivated the choice of methodology and outlined the structure of the following chapters. The following chapter comprises a review of current literature on the subject.

³ This also reflects the qualitative nature of the study as it follows an inductive reasoning according to which the research is based on a number of assumptions (Du Plooy, 2002: 83, Cooper, Potter & Dupagne, 1994: 55).

⁴ As per the Nielsen's Net ratings for the period 1 January 2008 to 31 January 2009 www.nielsen-online.com

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: INVESTIGATING ONLINE OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Due to the popularity and especially the interactivity of the Internet and World Wide Web, media organisations recognise the need to adopt and master the web as a medium if they are going to remain relevant and prosperous (Randle, 2001: 1). In the context of magazines and the Internet therefore, the source of the threat is not just external, but publishers themselves threaten to cannibalise their own readers and advertisers by adopting the web as a publishing platform (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005: 10). This raises the question as to why magazine publishers should not simply abandon their traditional printed products and move their business online.

Because the Internet is a relatively new medium when compared to the printed media, which has been in existence for centuries, publishers have very little institutional knowledge on which to base their assumptions in order to make relevant decisions and from which to draw inspiration when venturing online.

However, after researching the impact of the online offering of German women's magazines on the demand for the printed product, Kaiser (2005: 22-23) concluded that there are no significant effects of website provision on magazine demand and he proposes two possible explanations for this apparent anomaly: Firstly, he suggests that the substitution or cannibalisation effect and the complementarily effect may be of equal influence and thus provide a counterbalance to each other. The second is that a magazine's online version and the print edition are independent products and can therefore not easily be substituted.

The specific nature of special interest or niche magazines makes them less susceptible to the influences of new and online media than newspapers (Bivings Group, 2006: 4). The report's authors argue that this can be ascribed to the fact that whilst newspapers present news and information that can easily be obtained from other sources, magazine content is often harder to acquire as it represents niche information. Furthermore, they posit, magazines are more than mere information providers to its readers, but represent a culture of relaxation whilst holding the physical product in their hands.

A survey by a magazine website in the United Kingdom, *magazinesbymail.net*, also found magazines remain the preferred source of information regarding particular hobbies, and markets. Of all respondents questioned, 66% trusted magazines and only 7% preferred the Internet as a source of industry information (Fernandez, 2008: 1). It is thus deemed unlikely that the Internet could replace the tangible qualities of magazines (Bivings Group, 2007: 13).

Firstly, this chapter discusses the motivating factors for creating an online presence for a magazine by considering the real and perceived competition between the Internet and the online product. Secondly, it considers the various objectives that a publisher may seek to reach when embarking on a digital venture. Is income generation the only purpose for a magazine website and is it an achievable goal? Attention is also given to the main elements that might be employed to reach these goals.

Having discussed the goals and strategies as well as benefits of an online presence, attention is given to the audience to examine the manner in which website users engage with the medium and the possible opportunities and pitfalls this may hold for the publisher.

2.2 WHY MAGAZINES GO ONLINE

Although new media displaces existing media (as with television and the general interest magazines), it can have a complementary effect as well (Randle 2001: 11). Barsh, Kramer, Maue and Zuckerman (2001: 63) suggest that the web offers a natural extension to the intimate relationship between magazines and their print readers. In fact, they argue that readers expect magazines to be online. Many publishers regard magazine websites as an additional service to their readers, for example the provision of a daily updated horoscope, thus pointing at complementarities between the print versions and the associated websites (Kaiser, 2005: 1).

However, this is an expensive service to render. Barsh *et al.* (2001: 86) posit that most magazine websites will never make money. According to their calculations the potential revenue and the costs associated with developing and maintaining a website would in most cases even make breaking even a challenge. In its biennial survey of successful magazine websites in 2007, the International Federation of the Periodical Press (FIPP) was more optimistic, but still found that less than half of the websites that were regarded as successful by their publishers, were in fact profitable, whilst approximately a quarter were just breaking even (FIPP, 2008: 5).

In recent times, however, a web presence has become so essential in the media environment that magazines can ill afford not to have a related website (Ellonen & Kuivalainen,

2005: 3). Publishers have come to realise this as is evident in their change of perception and disposition towards the necessity of an online presence (FIPP, 2008: 4).

The challenge for magazine publishers therefore, is to determine the best possible manner in which to employ an Internet strategy to benefit the magazine without cannibalising the printed product.

2.3 THE CHOICE AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN ONLINE STRATEGY

It is important to note that merely establishing an online presence by creating a website should not be confused with having an online strategy. A magazine's online presence is part of the publisher's strategy and needs to be carefully and systematically defined. Therefore the mere existence of a website does not constitute a strategy and the Internet per se is not an instant solution, but merely a tool to be employed in the pursuit of long term benefits for the magazine (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005: 6).

Furthermore, even if a print publication is successful in the offline environment, it does not automatically follow that it would be equally successful online (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005: 10). They refer to Kolo and Vogt, who found that the circulation market share of a printed title only accounts for between 10% and 30% of the same title's online success. This reinforces the notion that publishers need to have a profound understanding of the Internet as a novel and distinct medium if they wish to employ it as part of a successful business strategy. The following are some of the elements to consider:

2.3.1 The measures of success

Profitability is however, not the only measure of success for magazine websites, but should rather be included in a range of benchmarks measured against predefined objectives, as was highlighted by the FIPP study (FIPP, 2008: 5). The majority (80%) of respondents to the 2007 FIPP survey listed the following as the main objective for their online presence:

- To create new revenue streams or profits in the long term
- To expand their audience beyond the readership base of the printed product by creating an online audience (i.e. including non-readers of your print publication)

- To use the website to attract new readers for their print products
- To build a community around their brand.

These were also the dominant objectives in the 2005 FIPP survey. Furthermore,

- The ability to communicate with the magazine's target audience on a more frequent basis than the publishing frequency allows, was cited by 70% of respondents, making it the fifth most important objective.

Five additional objectives were also listed by a significant number of respondents. They were:

- To entice advertisers in the printed product by providing website advertisements as added-value
- To allow readers access to the content of the magazine at times and in places that are most convenient for them
- To form online partnerships with others in order to develop more powerful services
- To increase product lines
- To create new revenue stream and profits in the short term (FIPP, 2008: 4).

An almost negligible number of respondents chose "discouraging the print audience from seeking alternative online sources" as an objective.

It is also pertinent to note that although profit generation was the most prominent objective, most of the publishers participating in the survey do not expect their online investment to be profitable in the short term. Instead they only expect the financial benefits to prevail in the long term.

Nevertheless, almost half of the respondents to the FIPP survey deemed their websites to be profitable, a quarter of them are breaking even, and less than 20% are run at a loss (FIPP, 2008: 5). This is a significant improvement on the results of the previous survey conducted in 2005 (FIPP, 2008: 5) and in sharp contrast to the earlier statement of Barsh *et al.* (2001: 86) that

“(a)ny content website, whatever its business, finds merely breaking even a challenge. Unless the behaviour of readers changes significantly, profitability will probably elude most magazine websites.”

Barsh *et al.* (2001: 87) further posit that if a magazine website is to be profitable, more than half of its income would have to be derived through advertising revenue. In the results of the FIPP study (2008: 5) it was found that funds dispensed from a central source within the magazine’s holding company and internal funds from the magazines themselves, provide combined revenue amounting to just more than half of the website’s income, while advertising revenue provided the rest.

Compared to similar studies conducted in 2003 and 2005, the latest figures show a marginal increase. This is in contrast with the 20% growth in the number of visitors to the respondent websites (FIPP, 2008: 5). It thus becomes clear that despite a significant increase in the allocation of human and financial capital to online media, online profitability is not growing at the same pace as online usage.

Considering this development and assuming Barsh *et al.*’s statements regarding the profitability of magazine websites rang true in 2001, the only deduction that can be made is that readers’ behaviour is changing, albeit at a very slow pace.

2.3.2 Selecting the type of website

Publishers should be wary of indecision when choosing a strategy and consider their options carefully as many magazines build extensive websites at great expense, but are then often faced with a complete site that is too costly to be a “companion site”, but also not engrossing enough to be a “destination site” (Barsh *et al.* 2001: 85). In such an instance the site does not generate enough revenue to sustain itself and often becomes a waste of resources as it does not meet the expectations of readers who are familiar with the printed product. Such a site thus runs the risk of alienating readers without creating a new online audience.

It is therefore critical that publishers should not be motivated solely by the possibility of additional revenue streams, but should consider all the consequences of an online strategy and decide what they want to achieve by establishing a presence on the World Wide Web.

Another influence on the profitability of a magazine’s website is the variable cost in relation to the type of website that is being presented online. According to Barsh *et al.* (2001: 84)

publishers may choose to build either a destination site or a companion site. The following sections describe the nature of these types of websites.

2.3.2.1 Destination site

The former aims to become the top site in its market niche, attracting users by maximising the value of their time spent on the site and extracting money from them by providing a ‘complete’ and compelling interaction. Destination sites generally have unique content and applications that are continually updated and can serve as a guide to the niche as a whole. It is important for a destination site to develop a strong sense of community, among its users and between the users and the brand. It creates a sense of individuality for each user by profiling them, personalises the site for them, and providing them with many opportunities to interact and engage in commercial activity (Barsh *et al.*, 2001: 84).

As the name suggests, such a site is a true online destination and thus becomes a fully fledged media product in its own right.

According to Barsh *et al.* (2001: 84) in order to create a destination site, a magazine needs to satisfy three preconditions. Firstly, it needs a passionate audience that has adopted the magazine or brand as their primary choice in the niche market and who are not willing to compromise or substitute it with another.

Secondly, this audience has to be attractive to advertisers and hard to reach. Lastly the magazine and its brand need to be strong, distinctive, and well-understood in the competitive market.

If a magazine cannot satisfy all three these conditions or if it is not willing to accept the online presence as an equally important incarnation of itself, it would be better served by a companion site. In reality, few magazines have the online audience or the resources to create a true destination site (Barsh *et al.*, 2001: 85).

2.3.2.2 Companion site

By comparison, Barsh *et al.* (2001: 84) state that a companion site is designed to support and enhance the printed product by extending its brand online and reaching new audiences while creating new possibilities for its existing audience.

Such a site is most often intended to offer visitors a taste of the magazine and to encourage them to buy or subscribe to the printed product. User generated content is often presented along with extra content not available in the magazine.

Because its purpose is predominantly one of audience aggregation, a companion site generally offers a variety of customer-service facilities that make it easy for visitors to subscribe to the printed product, and manage their subscription accounts. They may for instance have the option to renew their subscriptions online or to change their address, and check their account status to determine when their subscription will lapse.

E-mail offers an easy channel for visitors to correspond with the editorial staff and also provides the magazine with the ability to gain information about the people who visit its site. Furthermore, a companion site often includes only a single interactive application such as a readers' forum that creates added value to the magazine's target audience (Barsh *et al.*, 2001: 84-85).

2.3.2.3 Subscription site

Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005: 13) suggest a third option, namely a subscription site. A subscription site is by far the cheapest option to develop and maintain, both in terms of capital and content. It does not provide content or interaction between readers or the editorial staff, but instead merely offers visitors the opportunity to subscribe to the printed product and gather advertising information.

2.4 THE ADVANTAGES OF MAGAZINE WEBSITES

In an attempt to determine the possible advantages of having a website, Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2008: 391) divided the business of publishing a magazine into three main functions, namely editorial, circulation and advertising. Each of these functions can benefit from an online presence in a number of ways as set apart in Table 1.

Table 1 *Ellonen and Kuivalainen's classification of online benefits to the three main functions of a magazine.*

Editorial	Circulation	Advertising
Means for communicating with the target audience on a daily basis	Defending the market position	Maintaining and increasing the volume of the site: another attractive forum beside the magazine
Grasp of the audience	Encouraging online subscriptions	Reaching a segmented audience
Idea pool	Extending the subscription length	Defending the market position in advertising sales brand
Touch of real life	Marketing of the print magazine	Improving the versatility, not volume, of online advertising
Communicates the magazine's values	Enhancing the customer loyalty	Increase of advertising sales
Continuous improvement	Supporting the brand	Improvement of pricing knowledge of online advertising
Complements and enriches the print magazine	Preventing the escape of the online audience to competitors' sites	
Communicates a modern image of the magazine	Positive publicity	

Source: Ellonen & Kuivalainen (2008: 391)

2.4.1 Editorial benefits

The editorial benefits predominantly relate to communication with the target audience. First and foremost, it connects the readers to the editorial team on a daily basis. This in turn promotes the sense of sharing in a product rather than just receiving it as a consumer at the end of the production cycle. The website also serves as an instant channel to conduct market research to establish who the target audience is and what their preferences are. Furthermore, it acts as an idea pool to generate possible topics for content in the printed product. Ironically, the website also serves as a virtual link to the real world. Through interaction with their readers and consumers on the website, the editorial staff can stay informed about the real life matters and salient issues that are important to the magazine's audience (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2008: 391).

The website also increases the opportunities for the magazine to convey its values and principles. Regular online interaction with readers, affords the editorial team greater scope to reiterate the printed product's positioning in the market along with its editorial policy. In order to maintain the interest of online visitors, any website needs to be updated on a regular basis and thus results in continuous improvement, both of the website and the printed product. Taking into account the benefits mentioned before, a website may complement and enhance the printed product if it is viewed as an extension of the brand and not a competing media channel. Finally, if nothing else, a website communicates a modern image of the magazine. Not only does it convey the message that the magazine has accepted the challenges and opportunities of digital media, but a website also offers more freedom to adapt the visual presentation of the brand without the cost and risk involved in doing so with the printed product (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2008: 391).

2.4.2 Circulation benefits

As with the editorial benefits, the benefits from a circulation perspective also relate to the increased opportunity to communicate with the audience. The website offers the opportunity to defend the magazine's market position by conveying this information to an audience that extends beyond the readership of the magazine. Offering visitors the ability to subscribe to the printed product online or to manage their subscription accounts increases circulation and extends the duration of subscriptions. A web presence also creates the opportunity to market and raise awareness of the printed product without the costs normally associated with advertising or projects such as subs drives or attending trade shows (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2008: 391).

Websites generally offer functions such as discussion forums and online feedback which ultimately foster a sense of community which in turn enhances customer loyalty. The efforts of any circulation department are almost exclusively aimed at increasing the presence of the brand in its particular niche and so the most prevalent motivation for an online incarnation is to support the brand in the marketplace. Although it was deemed of little importance in the FIPP survey (FIPP, 2008: 4), the ability to discourage the online audience to seek gratification on a competing website is also acknowledged. Finally, a dedicated website offers the opportunity to promote positive publicity for the magazine (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2008: 391).

2.4.3 Advertising benefits

From an advertising perspective the benefits also relate to the creation and maintenance of an online audience. Increasing the volume of site traffic can be equated to an increase in circulation of the printed product and thus provides the advertising team with another attractive advertising space that can be sold to clients. Due to audience segmentation the printed product may have relinquished readers to the Internet. These readers can be regained through an online strategy. The web presence also provides a platform to defend the magazine's market position with regards to advertising sales and expands the service that can be offered to advertisers through more versatile products. The combined effect of the aforementioned benefits can conceivably culminate in increased advertising sales.

Lastly, a website offers the advertising department the opportunity to disseminate information about its pricing structure and advertising possibilities (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2008: 392). One of the respondents in the 2003 FIPP survey explained that, after scaling down a costly website that did not meet the criteria for either a companion site or a destination site, the magazine website effectively became an online rate card (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005: 13).

2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AUDIENCE

As illustrated in the previous section (section 2.4), almost all of the benefits to be derived from an online strategy relate to the magazine's relationship with the target audience. This underscores the notion that at least with regard to its audience and advertisers, the dual market system on which the traditional media business model is built, is still applicable online.

The media is differentiated from other industries by the means through which it generates income from two distinct, yet interdependent markets (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006: 28; Grossberg *et al.*, 2006: 102). Firstly, the industry is in the business of selling a product to its audience. The product may be information or entertainment or both. At the same time, the media sells an opportunity or service to its advertisers to convey their own message to the same audience (Picard, 2004: 61).

However, Meyer (2008: 1) argues that the Internet has destroyed the traditional newspaper business model, because unlike the case of printed media, there is no variable cost such as paper, ink and distribution costs that increases proportionally with the number of copies produced and distributed. Secondly, the financial capital required to become an Internet

publisher is relatively small and in its most basic form is limited to the cost of a computer and an account with an Internet service provider. The underlying premise of Meyer's argument is one that supposes a fickle audience which easily substitutes one medium or publication for another.

McGovern (2001: 201) supports this notion, but argues that online readers are even more likely to switch between websites, as there is very little, if any, cost involved. Print media, by comparison, is most often only accessible once a premium has been paid. Readers therefore feel obliged to get their money's worth by reading it. No such an obligation exists on the Web. The first objective for an online strategy therefore seems to be the creation and retention of a loyal and stable audience.

McGovern (2001: 200-201) argues that the Web is not unlike other communication tools and proposes that publishers should approach their websites in the same manner as they do their publications and view the site visitors as readers in order to see the objectives of an online strategy more clearly.

Unlike the traditional media however, the size of the audience is of lesser importance when compared to its loyalty to a website. The 2007 FIPP survey (2008: 5) found that the size of the audience in itself is not an automatic indicator of success. The size of the online audience of the respondent websites (those that regarded themselves as successful) varied between five million unique visitors per month to as little as 20 000.

However, as argued before (in 2.3.2.1), an audience that is passionate about the brand, appealing to advertisers and otherwise hard to reach, is an essential prerequisite for a destination website, but arguably also necessary for the survival of most magazine websites. Indeed, the FIPP survey (2008: 5) urges publishers not to invest too heavily in web applications (forums, podcasts, etc) until they have built an online audience. Furthermore, the report encourages publishers to study visitor trends and react accordingly and to pay close attention to their website users. Its authors argue that publishers should ultimately know their web users as well as they know the readers of the printed product.

Because magazine websites are generally aimed at the same audience as the printed product, complementary brand usage is prevalent among its users and cannibalisation thus do however attract new audiences (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005: 9).

2.5.1 Characteristics of the online audience

In this regard, McGovern (2001: 201) has identified seven characteristics of magazine website users. He describes them as follows:

- *Practical and impatient.* They come to the Web wanting to find out something – possibly from more than one source. Subsequently they want to find the information they seek quickly and easily.
- *Conservative.* Online readers frequent very few websites, because the Web is huge and overwhelming. Once a user has found a branded website that satisfies their needs, they tend to return to the same site.
- *Sceptical.* There is no filter to verify the content that gets published online and readers have become wary. They will not linger on websites they deem to be untrustworthy.
- *Fickle.* It costs the reader very little to switch websites.
- *They “scan-read”.* They do not delve deeply in website content, but instead move through text quickly to find the salient points.
- *They prefer paper.* Online readers don’t particularly like reading online, as screen-based reading is uncomfortable.
- *They want your opinion.* They are not simply at your website to search for a particular piece of information, but also value your contribution.

Publishers therefore have to determine how to attract audiences and engage them effectively to generate brand loyalty. While it is relatively easy to determine the benefit web users gain from getting the news online and on time, it is much harder to calculate the ultimate value of a magazine’s online services to its customers and subsequently why users would return to a magazines website (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005: 3).

The key to attracting these audiences therefore seems to be the ability to establish what kind of online features attracts audiences and ensuring that the magazines’ websites are tailored accordingly. Judging by the responses of the publishers who participated in the FIPP survey, the sense of community; interactive content; the scope of available material; time-critical content; and searchable archives and databases are foremost in attracting audiences (FIPP, 2008: 3). These elements can be categorised as community, content and interactivity.

2.5.2 Community

Barsh *et al.* (2001: 85) argue that if a website is to succeed it has to have a loyal audience who are unwilling to accept another brand in lieu of their first choice. They also propose that a companion site should offer additional content provided by users. As such it is clear that a successful magazine website is as dependent on the development of an online community around its brand as a print publication is dependent on readership.

The benefits of having a loyal online community extend far beyond that of simply having an audience which could conceivably be turned into a revenue stream by selling it to advertisers. When viewed from different perspectives, it becomes evident that such a community is more flexible than a traditional print audience in fulfilling various needs of the publisher

2.5.2.1 Roles of an online community

Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005: 15; 2008: 392) identify six possible roles for an online community.

- a) *Constant updating of the website.* Keeping a website fresh and updated with new content can be a time consuming and costly enterprise as it requires the generation of new content or at the very least repackaging of existing offline content. A virtual community can be a cost-efficient way of addressing this matter as it automatically creates new content through forum discussions and other information aggregation applications such as online surveys and members' photo galleries.
- b) *Acting as a source for editorial topics.* By "eavesdropping" on readers' conversation in online discussion groups, editors may find ideas worthy of further exploration in editorial copy for the printed product as well as the magazine's website.
- c) *Brand ambassadors.* A virtual community helps to strengthen the brand and corporate images, and encourages customer loyalty. In exceptional cases virtual communities may even evolve into actual communities that promote the brand in an offline environment relevant to the magazine's niche market and thereby expanding the audience of both the website and the printed product.
- d) *Market research.* A responsive online community increases the possibility for target and frequent market research, and eliminates the expenses and pitfalls associated with traditional focus group-type of market research.

e) *Increased revenue potential.* By virtue of the fact that online communities inevitably discuss topics and exchange information such as product reviews and recommendations, they become more appealing to advertisers and suppliers of the relevant goods and services. Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005: 15) also cite research by Rothaermel and Sugiyama as well as Franz and Wolking, which suggests that members of an active online community are more likely to engage in e-commerce than others. Furthermore, if a community is informative and sociable enough, users may even be willing to pay a premium for membership or additional features and information.

f) *Expanding the readership of the printed product.* A virtual community with registration offers the possibility to identify potential new readers who could be contacted directly and persuaded to subscribe to the print product (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2008: 392).

There are inherent risks associated with virtual communities as the conversation is relatively uncontrollable and may even endanger the brand's reputation (McWilliam, 2000: 48-49). McWilliam states that the origins of the Internet are based on free exchange of information and the Web developed as a user controlled environment. Subsequently, the matter of freedom of expression is a contentious one. By overly controlling the content and contributions of community members a publisher runs the risk of losing their interest and thus potentially valuable creative content. Alternatively, by transferring complete control to the users, publishers expose themselves to possible negative criticism which could ultimately harm the brand. An uncontrolled community also has the potential of allowing some users to behave in a manner which could alienate others and subsequently also lead to a decline in community numbers and contributions.

Despite Ellonen and Kuivalainen's clarification of the value and uses that an online community poses to a magazine website, and even though the authors of the FIPP survey encourage publishers to start building interactive communities that allow the visitors to contribute with the ultimate goal to earn money through such a community (FIPP, 2008: 11) neither explain the *raison d'être* for such a community nor how a publisher might go about creating one.

In fact, it appears that publishers may find it almost impossible to create such a community. Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005: 17) argue that having an online community on a magazine' website, or any website for that matter, is not merely a matter of decision, because a

virtual community cannot be built. It will only develop if there are enough users with the same needs and interests.

2.5.2.2 Motivations for a community

Hagel and Armstrong (1997: 20) suggest the real creators of an online community are its members, in which case the best a publisher could do is to provide the infrastructure to host such a community and to harness its potential.

They furthermore argue that users' need to belong to such a community stem from the desire to satisfy four basic needs, namely interest, relationship, fantasy and transaction (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997: 18).

a) *Interest.* Most human beings have at least one interest or hobby which they are passionate about and which they share with others. Virtual communities connect different users with mutual interests to one another so that they may discuss topics relating to their particular interest, such as new trends, industry developments, personal expertise and resources. They can also exchange ideas and seek advice. If one is to consider the audience of a magazine that serves a particular niche market, it is evident that interest is a common denominator when defining such an audience.

b) *Relationship.* The second social need that is addressed by virtual communities is that of shared experiences. The Internet frees its users from the constraints of space and time in their efforts to connect with others who are in similar life stages and whom they can relate to. This often revolves around shared experiences, both of a personal and emotional nature, as well as experiences within the context of a shared interest of lifestyle. Users benefit from the opportunity to recognise and engage with likeminded individuals and can form genuine relationships with people whom they perceive to be like them (McWilliam, 2000: 45).

c) *Fantasy.* Initially the fantasies to which Hagel and Armstrong refer were predominantly those that existed for the purposes of pure escapism such as online role playing games and were far removed from reality. More recently these fantasy worlds have evolved into applications such as Second Life⁵. Another example of how the need for escapism is served in an online community is that of fantasy leagues which are becoming increasingly prevalent on sports

⁵ A virtual world where users create an online persona and interact with one another through three dimensional drawings called avatars. The lines between fantasy and reality are blurred as users can form real or imagined relationships and engage in commerce to generate virtual or actual income.

oriented websites. These leagues are rooted in reality in that users create their own online sports teams by choosing well known real life players to compete against other users' teams. Match results are calculated through the analysis of the real players' actual performance during the sport season.

d) *Transaction*. When Hagel and Armstrong identified this use of online communities more than a decade ago, it was accepted in the broader context of the word to mean bartering for the ultimate online resource – information – on a *quid pro quo* basis. At that time technological constraints and sceptical user attitudes allowed only limited transaction in the economic sense of the word. However, attitudes and technology has evolved and e-commerce has become commonplace. As such, online communities are often used to execute transactions where monetary currency is exchanged or where expertise, time and knowledge are used in lieu of money to procure assets, labour or knowledge. Depending on the website, users may conduct these transactions among themselves or with the website owner. According to Sangwan (2005: 1) members of a virtual community are twice as likely to do online purchases as users who are not part of a particular community and are up to 9 times as likely to return to the relevant website's transaction pages.

Thus it becomes clear that if a website is to attract a virtual community in the hope of leveraging its potential to fulfil the six roles identified by Ellonen and Kuivalainen, it needs to take cognisance of the needs of users and the gratifications they seek.

2.6 THE RELEVANCE OF CONTENT

After coming to terms with the initial dilemma of adapting to the presence of the Internet on the media landscape, publishers of printed media saw an opportunity to transpose the dual market model by which they had been doing business to the Internet – at least in part. It was supposed that if a newspaper could sell its content as a commodity, printed on paper, then it should have able to do the same by selling it online as pixels on a computer screen (Berger, 2001: 8). However, the advances in interactive technology has increased the number of producers and the availability of content and have forced traditional media to reassess the manner by which they monetise the distribution of information (Picard, 2000: 61).

Due to the nature of the Internet, aspiring publishers and content distributors are no longer faced with the high costs of distributing information associated with traditional media. In the past the prohibitive cost of the infrastructure needed to publish a magazine or newspaper or to operate

a radio or television broadcast service effectively ensconced traditional media and added to the value chain of the information they were producing and distributing (Gazarov, 2008: 4). By this logic the monetary value of information became virtually zero with the advent of the Internet. Users could now find much or all of the information they wanted for free on alternative websites and were thus unwilling to pay for the content provided at a premium (Berger, 2001: 9).

The paid content or subscription model also had negative implications for generating advertising revenue. Although a subscription service made it possible for content providers to provide a well qualified audience to potential advertisers, the audience was limited and could hardly compete with the infinite number of consumers that visited websites with free content (Palser, 2008: 1). A further problem with the subscription model arose in that much of what is traditionally bundled together in a newspaper or general interest magazine may not appeal to a reader. In contrast, the nature of the Internet allows users to be selective in their choice of content and thus even further reduces their willingness to support the online subscription model (Burke, 2006: 1). The 2007 FIPP survey revealed that on average only one-tenth of the total online revenue for the successful websites was derived from subscriptions to paid-for web content (FIPP, 2008: 5). Only a few of these websites charge a fee for access to any or some of their content and none impose a charge for the whole site (FIPP, 2008: 7).

The problem may be overcome by re-organising content into bundles which would interest a reader and selling it to that person on a “once off” basis, or letting them subscribe to only a particular type of content, or charging a fee to allow access to an online publication’s archives. Gazarov (2008: 5) points out that such transactions present different problems.

Firstly, there is the matter of micropayments. The convenient micropayment system that has been envisaged since the 1990s has yet to materialise (Palser, 2008: 1). Despite the negligible cost of the article to be purchased, there are additional fixed costs associated with passing the transaction through a bank. Depending on the method used, the cost of the actual transaction may exceed the value of the product being bought. There are also additional factors which Gazarov (2008: 6) refers to as the “mental accounting costs” that the user needs to face. Before going ahead with the transaction the person needs to estimate the desirability of the transaction and balance the inherent security risks of online commerce with the convenience of the transaction. These factors will always result in some sort of trade off. Bundling of relevant content or paid access to archives may be more enticing to consumers and overcome these obstacles, but the demand for such information is much less than for immediate content – typically only by researchers or academic institutions (Gazarov, 2008: 6).

The traditional subscription model, whereby consumers have to pay to gain access to information either as single articles or bundled together, has failed by and large and in most instances been rejected.

Paid content still has to evolve as a genuine revenue source for magazine sites. The situation may change in time, but currently, although, these strategies may extract some revenue from the paid-for-content model, it will remain only a small portion of an online publication's revenue (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005: 9).

If this is the case, then how can publishers benefit from providing online content and what kind of content should they provide?

Many of the publishers questioned during the FIPP survey in 2003 emphasised that a magazine's online presence should not aim to emulate print product, but should rather take advantage of the Internet's potential in terms of interactivity, archives and forums (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005: 11). The sentiment was reiterated in 2007 when respondents remarked:

- “If the magazine cannot offer any added value to its readers online, there is no future.”
- “Offer more than in print. It does not have to be much, but your Webaudience should feel that there is always more to explore.”
- “Duplication of print content on the Web is not the answer. Produce original content across different media.”

Content is the catalyst with which to build a brand online (McGovern, 2001: 198). McGovern argues that branding on the Internet is different from the offline environment in that users will use and return to a website based on their experience and the fulfilment of their information needs, rather than the promotion of the website through advertising and marketing.

Once a user visits a website there is no more need to attract their attention. He or she is already aware of the particular website and would in all likelihood remain there, provided they can find the information they are looking for quickly and easily. Despite the relevance of search engines in navigating the World Wide Web, the relative importance of searching the Internet is often misunderstood. Users do not primarily access the Internet with the intention to aimlessly *search* for content. Their purpose is rather to *gather* or *accumulate* content. In this regard search engines are merely aids to find the content, much the same way as a map is to a person trying to

make their way to a particular destination. People do not consult maps for the purpose of directionless meandering. They purposefully navigate towards their destination and once they have reached it they have no more need for the map. Similarly, once a user finds a website that delivers the content they seek, they will be more likely to return directly to the website for future queries relating to the same topic (McGovern, 2001: 199-201).

McGovern (2001: 199-201) argues that the value of a website's content lies in the publisher's ability to present the relevant information to the users clearly and accessibly. The very nature of the World Wide Web, which has enabled any body with an Internet connection to become a publisher, has left users crippled by information overload. For this reason users rely heavily on trusted sites where they feel safe in the knowledge that the information they gather there is reliable, up to date and topical. The online content of a website thereby becomes the branding tool through which a publisher can hope to attract a virtual community.

It is important to note that the content need not always be editorial, as long as users have easy access to information. In their analysis of a successful companion website to a Finnish parenting magazine, Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2008: 389) found that during the initial development phase the website contained almost no content created by the editorial team, but that the discussion groups and online forums contained the sought after information and that the virtual community grew through word of mouth.

This reinforces McGovern's (2001: 198) assertion that the substance of the website is more important than the technical qualities and design.

2.7 THE NEED FOR INTERACTIVITY

In the context of online media in general and magazine websites in particular, *interactivity* is generally understood to refer to two basic communication processes involving individuals and networked computers. Firstly, there is a user's interactivity *with* a computer or Website and interactivity *through* a computer network or Website (Gerpott & Wanke, 2004: 242; Chung & Yoo, 2006: 8). In the first instance a user's actions may extract information or entertainment from a database stored on a web server or hard drive, whilst the second relies on the response of a second user to provide information or entertainment. By these definitions digital archives and discussion forums may both be classified as interactive applications.

Publishing companies' reasons for adding interactive features to their websites are normally rooted in the assumption that increased interactivity by users will increase the

likelihood that these readers will return to a website once they have been enticed by these features (Gerpott & Wanke, 2004: 241).

Indeed, the results of the 2007 FIPP survey indicate that publishers are increasingly incorporating interactive applications on their websites (FIPP, 2008: 3). The most prevalent interactive features were chat rooms, or message boards and facilities to subscribe online to the printed product. Approximately half of the sites offered blogs or articles submitted for publication that have not been commissioned by the publication and hyperlinks to relevant external sites, proposed by visitors (FIPP, 2008: 6-7).

Despite this growth in the provision of interactive applications on magazine websites, research which was also conducted by the Bivings Group (2007) showed that magazines are still lagging behind newspapers in adopting these features.

However, the slower pace at which magazines are incorporating elements such as newsfeeds, user comments on stories and similar features, collectively referred to as Web 2.0, may not necessarily indicate a negative approach to the expanding potential of the Internet. After all, running a successful website filled with games, multimedia and interactive content is not the same as running an active community. A website should involve its users in the content and thereby endear the brand to them to the point where they take ownership and feel responsible for its success or failure (McWilliam, 2000: 48).

Just as an Internet presence should not be seen as a complete strategy, interactivity on a magazine's website is not a goal in itself. Instead, it is supposed that interactive features along with a strong community and compelling content could stimulate usage of the particular website (Gerpott & Wanke, 2004: 243). If publishers can show maintained significant use of a website by a particular target group, this could be applied to establish the potential value that the particular audience may have for advertisers.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter examined the various strategies a publisher may pursue when creating an online presence for a magazine. In analysing these strategies, it became clear that financial gain is not the only motivating factor for establishing a magazine website. In fact, for most magazine websites revenue generation is only a long term goal. In most cases the editorial, circulation and advertising pillars of a magazine brand may benefit more from short term goals depending on the

manner in which the publisher decides to use a magazine's online presence. It is also evident that these goals will ultimately determine the scope of a magazine website.

Furthermore, close attention was given to the online audience and their engagement with the brand through online communities, content and interactive features. This discussion underscored the necessity to approach online users in the same way as readers of the printed product by delivering relevant, easily accessible content and not to overemphasise the unique abilities of the Internet at the cost of the user whose primary interest in the website is to gather information.

In the next chapter an applicable theoretical framework and research approach will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND APPROACH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Mass communication research aims to analyse the interaction between the media and the society it is meant to serve (Priest, 1996: xxv). Thus it examines the influence the media exerts over those who consume it (media effects), as well as the manner in which external factors influence the media. Such research contributes to the collective understanding of the functioning and role of the media in society and stimulates debate and serves as a catalyst to the formulation of new theories, which in turn generate new research questions (Lemon, 1997: 29).

Croteau and Hoynes (2003: 22) further define the object of mass communication theory and research as the study of three particular types of relationships involving the media, namely:

- Relationships with external institutions – such as government and organised religion
- Relationships with internal institutions – this includes any person or organisation directly involved in the production and distribution of mass media
- The media's relationship with its audience.

In order to understand and examine these relationships, media researchers have developed a wide variety of theories to use as analytical tools and to provide a context in which they can examine the power and effects of the media as well as the manner in which media is perceived, used and guided by its audience (Fourie, 2007: 104).

These theories are not intended as universal rules or propositions, but rather as ideas or perspectives to further better understanding, predict consequence and guide action (McQuail, 2005: 14). Fourie (2007: 104 – 105) assigns five goals to theory, namely to:

- **Describe.** Before analysing a subject it is necessary to define it.
- **Explain.** An explanation of a subject's functioning invariably needs to precede understanding.

- **Understand.** Once a subject is described and explained, it can be understood.
- **Predict and control.** Understanding a subject enables the observer to make predictions and postulate measures of control.
- **Reform.** If theory meets all four the preceding goal sequentially, it facilitates the possibility of change.

This thesis is concerned with the media's relationship with its audience and more particularly between the readers of a niche consumer magazine and their adoption of the World Wide Web as an alternative medium.

This relationship may be examined through a number of theoretical approaches such as the political economy theory whereby the researcher could for example examine the audience's role and value in dual market approach of the traditional media business model.

For the purpose of this thesis though, it was decided to rather focus on the possible influence of the Internet and World Wide Web on the way consumers use a traditional print medium, namely a niche consumer magazine such as *WegSleep*.

In this respect the uses and gratifications theory seems the most appropriate to aid the researcher to describe, explain, understand, predict and possibly reform the relationship between the magazine, the Internet and its audience.

3.2 DISPLACEMENT AS A RESULT OF EMERGING NEW MEDIA

The principles of niche theory originate from the description of the competition between ecological units who need to coexist while being dependent on the same resources (Dimmick, 2006: 351). This coexistence is facilitated by adapting in order to exploit a particular segment of the resource. In the case of the media the resources in question are the attention of the audience and the advertisers' budgets.

Media institutions have therefore evolved to adapt to audience segmentation whereby niche products are developed to satisfy the needs of the particular segments or gratification sets. This differentiation of content enables different media to avoid direct competition (McDowell, 2006: 240).

McQuail (2005: 408) refers to a group of media users who share similar needs and therefore use media with the intent on comparable gratification as “gratification sets”. As a result, the homogenous mass audience that is presupposed by functionalist and normative theory has been supplanted by a plethora of smaller, segmented audiences. Each of these gratification sets therefore represents a niche audience which can be serviced by a corresponding media supply.

In describing gratification sets as potential niche markets, McQuail (2005: 408) states that these groups may form and reform, depending on their circumstances and needs. It thus becomes apparent that an infinite variation of potential gratification sets and subsequent niche markets are possible. However, audiences are predominantly segmented by four determinants, namely demographics, life stage, geo-demographics and value systems (Callingham & Baker, 2002: 304-310).

Callingham and Baker’s categories can briefly be explained as follows:

- **Demographics** – defining potential markets or audiences through age, gender and social status or wealth.
- **Life stage** – Although closely linked to age, these are external factors such as tertiary education, marriage, pregnancy and retirement which define what individuals are, rather than who they are.
- **Geo-demographics** – A person’s physical location, such as his town or neighbourhood, can be used as indicators to determine aggregate behaviour or relative proximity to a localised target market.
- **Value systems** – Even though two 40 year-old people from the same sex may both be married and living in the same geographical area, their individual behaviour will be influenced by personal values and interests.

Each of these segments and combinations thereof offer a plethora of possible permutations and thus present the media with a variety of niche markets. Publishers are increasingly turning to these niche markets to defend their advertising market share in the face of escalating competition from electronic and digital media (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006: 60). However, even niche markets are under threat as new media, especially the Internet and World Wide Web, are causing increased media fragmentation which subsequently leads to a fragmented audience.

The logic of niche theory and the theory of uses and gratifications proposes that a new medium survives, grows, competes and prospers by offering a use or gratification to consumers. If a new medium is successful in this regard, it may affect existing media as it provides new and alternate gratifications to existing needs and may even create and fulfil new, contemporary needs (Dimmick *et al.*, 2004: 19). When a new medium is used for the same purpose as that of older media, the new arrival may potentially function as an alternative to the existing one (Cho *et al.*, 2003: 48).

In the case of the World Wide Web, it has been suggested that the new medium may complement traditional media usage without displacement (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000: 27; Lee & Leung, 2006: 3), however research in this regard has had mixed results (Randle, 2003: 1).

As such the arrival of a new medium always coincides with concerns over its impact on existing media, as it is assumed that people only have fixed amounts of time and money to spend on satisfying their media needs. Therefore, supposing consumer time and capital are finite and crucial resources for which there is fierce competition between the various fragmented media, it follows that consumers would allocate the time they spend on respective media in accordance with the ability of each individual medium to satisfy their diverse needs. In other words, the more time an individual spends on a new medium, the less they will set aside for old media (Lee & Leung, 2006: 2). One critical displacement effect of the new media lies in the reduction of time spent with older media (Dimmick *et al.*, 2004: 23).

Audiences choose between media by consciously or subconsciously evaluating the various media's gratification opportunities when determining which one better satisfies particular needs. It is therefore imperative for researchers and publishers alike to identify the social and psychological needs that different media can satisfy. They then have to determine whether these needs can also be satisfied by the World Wide Web in order to develop a better understanding of the effects of the new medium on audience behaviour, as well as to formulate new business strategies (Cho *et al.*, 2003: 48-49).

Dimmick *et al.* (2004: 22), define gratification opportunities

“as consumers’ beliefs that a medium allows them to obtain greater opportunities for satisfaction, more specifically, the perceived attributes of a medium relating to time use and expanded choice of content.”

Gratification opportunities can thus be viewed as properties of a medium that increase or diminish the likelihood of deriving satisfaction or gratification from its use.

Niche theory therefore proposes that a new medium will compete with traditional media for the attention of consumers and subsequent advertising expenditure by offering new or improved means of satisfying their needs. The consequence of this kind of competition for existing media would ultimately result in some form of exclusion, replacement or displacement as the new medium takes over some or all of the gratification opportunities, which had previously belonged to traditional media. The most common consequence of competition, when a new medium is functionally similar to traditional media, is displacement (Dimmick *et al.*, 2004: 22; Lee & Leung, 2006: 2).

Lee and Leung (2006: 2) suggest that there are two approaches to study the displacement effects of new media, namely “medium-centric” and “user-centric”. The former focuses on the attributes of various media whilst the second emphasises the needs of the user and the gratification they derive from media usage.

- **“Medium-centric” approach.** According to Lee and Leung (2006: 2-3) niche theory is a variant of the medium-centric approach in that it has the medium’s gratification opportunities as its central focus. As such it proposes that media selection is based on the superior properties of a particular medium. Lee and Leung cite research by Dimmick, Kline and Stafford, whereby it was found that e-mail displaces long distance phone calls to some extent, as an example. Within the dimension of gratification opportunities, both media offer users the ability of interpersonal communication over a long distance, but where e-mail fails to deliver the same degree of immediacy and personal interaction as the telephone, it supersedes the latter in terms of cost and convenience. The displacement, exclusion, and replacement of existing media are all possible outcomes of the medium-centric approach (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001: 159).
- **“User-centric” approach.** The user-centric approach posits that users select media on the basis of its ability to satisfy a particular need such as seeking information or relaxation. It is less technologically deterministic than the medium-centric approach in that it proposes displacement will only occur if old media fails to satisfy their needs. Even then they will not completely abandon a particular medium, but rather curtail the time they spend on the old media to allow more time for the new medium. The user-centric approach argues that needs are usually better served by multiple media than a single medium (Lee & Leung, 2006: 3-4). By means of clarification, McQuail (2005: 423) suggests that from this perspective it is rather content than

structure that determines an individual's choice in media. A person who wants to know a particular sports result will be less concerned with the medium through which they acquire the information than with the information itself.

A proper understanding of the reasons for the displacement of particular media by others is of vital importance to publishers who are left with the challenge to find ways to capitalise on the World Wide Web without cannibalising their own readership and advertisers (Randle, 2003: 1).

3.3 AN OVERVIEW OF USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

Within the body of work relating to the adoption of new media and the possible displacement of existing media, the theoretical work on uses and gratifications is arguably most relevant to the hypothesis of media displacement (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000: 24-25). Lee (2004: 6) cites Rafaeli as well as Morris and Ogan when arguing that uses and gratifications theory is often employed as the first theory by which a new medium is studied. The prevailing argument is that if an audience adopts a new communications medium it does so because the said medium offers new uses and gratifications to its consumers and thereby lends itself to study through this particular theoretical approach.

Over the last three decades research into uses and gratifications theory found that consumers' use of the media can be divided into four categories (Grossberg *et al.*, 2006: 265). These categories are:

Information: Gathering news and staying up to date with events in society, seeking advice and satisfying curiosity

Personal Identity: Validating personal values and seeking out likeminded others in the media

Integration and social interaction: Identifying with peers and others and having parasocial companionship

Entertainment: Using the media for escapism, relaxation, emotional release and cultural enjoyment.

Any argument about media displacement or substitution is based on the assumption that audiences are active rather than passive consumers of media. Within the collective body of work

that has been produced on the active audience principle, the theoretical work on uses and gratifications is arguably most relevant to the hypothesis of media displacement (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000: 24-25).

A core tenet of the uses and gratifications approach is the belief that people are purposeful and goal oriented in their use of media and therefore selective of the various media they employ to reach these goals or to satisfy media needs (McQuail, 2005: 424; Sangwan, 2005: 3; Katz *et al.*, 1974: 510; Eighmey & McCord, 1998: 188; Cho *et al.*, 2003: 48).

This perception of media use had its origins in the “two-step-flow” theory which evolved as a reaction to the so called “hypodermic needle” theory. The latter proposed that a media user’s behaviour can be altered by the “injection” of certain values, ideas and attitudes through media content (Fourie, 2007: 232-235). The most common example of the “hypodermic needle” theory in action would be propaganda, whereby a definite attempt is made to influence an audience’s behaviour through the use of media.

Following the Second World War, communications researcher Harold Laswell’s studies into the functions of the media and propaganda in particular, ultimately led to the formulation of the mathematical or transmission model of communication by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (Du Plooy, 1997: 6). This model posed the question: “Who, says what in which channel to whom with what effect?” This model dominated positivist communication research, especially in the United States of America and also fuelled researchers’ preoccupation with the media’s effects on its audience (McQuail, 2005: 64).

Positivist research has behaviourism (observable and predictable human action), empiricism (knowledge derived from measurement and evaluation of “facts”) and functionalism (the view that media serves to enhance the harmony of society as a cohesive “machine”) as its central principles (Fourie, 2007: 119-120). As such he posits the emphasis of positivist research to be the efficient working and management of the media, the efficient production of content, the functions of the media and the media’s effect on people and society.

One of the main critiques of positivism, especially of the functionalist view, is that it presupposes a society that can be viewed as a homogenous collective (Fourie, 2007: 187). This view therefore assumes an aggregative mass audience as recipients of a message transmitted by the mass media. However, it fails to take into account that the audience’s reception of the message is individualised and its interpretation influenced by social life and personal values (McQuail, 2005: 399; Fourie, 2007: 234-235).

In the middle of the previous century media researchers realised that these external influences made it very difficult to accurately measure media effects. It became clear that media users were not passive receivers of a mass media message, but instead exposed themselves selectively to the media, based on identifiers such as their personal background, status and interest (Fourie, 2007: 234). Underlying this perspective is the notion that people's needs are generated through social and psychological motives and that the media can help them in satisfying these needs (Cho *et al.*, 2003: 48).

Fourie (2007: 236) further states that this realisation inverted the question underlying effects studies, namely: "What do the media do to people?" Instead, researchers now asked "What do people do with the media?" The latter in turn formed the basis for what is known as uses and gratifications theory.

3.3.1 Seven aspects of the uses and gratifications approach

Katz *et al.* (1974: 510) describe the uses and gratifications approach as being concerned with

"(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones."

3.3.1.1 Social and psychological origins

McQuail (2005: 424) views the origins of needs as the principles for audience formation and argues that the long term goal of the research school was to formulate a general theoretical framework which could serve as guidelines for further studies relating to audience motivations. As such the term "media-person interactions" was coined to define four main typologies of media satisfactions that could serve as possible motivation for media use, namely: diversion, personal relationships, personal identity and surveillance.

3.3.1.2 Needs

These motivations can be correlated with the classification that Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973: 166) had previously developed for the needs referred to at (2), namely:

- *Cognitive Needs* – Cognitive needs represent the intrinsic desire for information acquisition, for knowledge and understanding in an increasingly information rich society and originate from the media-person interaction of surveillance (Sangwan, 2005: 3).
- *Affective Needs* – Affective needs are related to emotional experiences, and an intrinsic desire for pleasure, entertainment and aesthetic. These needs can be related to both the personal relationship and diversion dimensions of McQuail's motivation typologies (Sangwan, 2005: 3).
- *Personal Integrative Needs* – Personal integrative needs derive from an individual's desire to appear credible, be perceived as confident, and have high self-esteem and are closely related to an individual's value system. These needs originate from the social and psychological aspiration to personal identity (Sangwan, 2005: 3).
- *Social Integrative Needs* – Social integrative needs are affiliation needs where a member of an audience wants to be part of a group such as a family, a circle of friends or a special interest group and wants to be recognised as such. These needs reflect a sense of belonging and can thus be seen as being motivated through the media-person's interaction relating to personal relationship (Sangwan, 2005: 3).
- *Escapist Needs* – Are needs relating to tension release and diversion from problems and routines and clearly originate from McQuail's diversion typology (Sangwan, 2005: 3).

Comeau (2007, 21) cites Rosengren (1974) who refers to the correlation between these needs and Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. The media needs described above can be correlated with the upper end of Maslow's hierarchy which recognises (in order) humans' cognitive needs, aesthetic needs (escapist and affective needs), the need for self actualisation (personal integrative) and ultimately self transcendence (social integrative).

3.3.1.3 Expectations

Point (3) in Katz *et al.*'s (1974: 510) summary of the uses and gratifications approach relates to the audience's preconceived perception of a medium. As stated before, the central argument of

uses and gratifications theory is based on the notion that people employ various media for a variety of purposes, and that they choose a particular medium based on how well it helps them meet specific needs or goals. However, they cannot know for certain beforehand, without prior exposure to its content, whether a particular medium or source will be superior in meeting those needs. The decision is therefore based on the perception of a medium's usefulness which in turn leads to expectations of gratifications to be received. To the extent that a medium is perceived as superior for meeting a particular need or serving a particular function, people should be likely to choose that medium over others for fulfilling the specific need or function (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000: 25; Lin, 2002: 5).

3.3.1.4 Mass Media or other sources

Although most research relating to the field of uses and gratifications has been concerned with the way society interacts with mass media, an individual's media needs may also be met by interpersonal communication such as a telephone or face-to-face communication (Morris & Ogan, 1996: 46; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996: 3; Randle, 2001: 6).

3.3.1.5 Differential Patterns of Media Exposure

The preceding four aspects of uses and gratifications theory lay the foundation for the notion that an audience may select media and determine the manner and length of time in which it is exposed to various media based on motives, needs, and expectations of satisfaction (McQuail, 2005: 424; Sangwan, 2005: 3; Katz *et al.* 1974: 510; Eighmey & McCord, 1998: 188; Cho *et al.*, 2003: 48).

3.3.1.6 Gratifications

The Uses and Gratifications approach assumes audience members know their needs and can conceive of the ways and reasons in which they are better served by a particular medium rather than by competing sources. In the 1970s and 1980s, the approach was developed further when researchers refined this concept as "gratifications sought" and "gratifications gained" (Seungwhan, 2004: 1). The premise of these concepts is the assumption that there is a difference between the expected satisfaction by a medium and the actual experience. By using these

concepts as variables in quantitative studies, research can strive to measure the relative success of a medium in satisfying the needs of media users (December, 1996: 16).

3.3.1.7 Other consequences

Following the flow of Katz *et al.*'s (1974: 510) summation of the uses and gratifications approach, it is conceivable that the process ends with the user's gratification. However, the importance of further consequences is of exceptional value for further research in the field of mass communication. As Katz *et al.* (1974: 510) suggest, these consequences may be unintentional, but they do exist and are most visible when manifested as exclusion, replacement or displacement of media (Dimmick *et al.*, 2004: 22). Subsequently these consequences may be used to predict future audience behaviour and subsequent effects on existing and emerging media.

3.4 CRITICISM ON USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

There are a number of points of criticism on uses and gratifications theory, but they mainly relate to three recurring themes.

3.4.1 It lacks a common theoretical basis. Many critics argue that it is merely an approach to understanding media consumption based on an underlying tautology, namely that media use necessarily leads to the gratification of media needs. Furthermore they suggest that being a-theoretical, uses and gratifications do not really explain the complex cognitive processes involved in the experience and interpretation of media content (Fourie, 2007: 237).

Katz *et al.* (1974: 514) reported that uses and gratifications "barely advanced beyond a sort of charting and profiling activity", which merely provided a list of needs and gratifications. However it did not provide an analytical framework in which theoretical deduction can be made (December, 1996: 15; McQuail, 2005: 426). Recently more research time has however been devoted to the relevance of particular media attributes and their capacity to satisfy the needs that Katz *et al.* identified (Seungwhan, 2004: 3).

3.4.2 It has failed to deliver its own effects model. Critical theorists maintain that since uses and gratifications research is primarily "functional" in its approach, it is concerned with the

status quo and does not seek to dwell on the normative role of the media and its ultimate effect in or on society.

The assumption on which uses and gratifications is based, forms the bases of the media model, namely:

needs \Rightarrow uses \Rightarrow gratifications

Seungwhan (2004: 16) argues that gratifications can hardly be considered to be an ultimate effect and suggests that an ideal model should be presented as follows:

needs \Rightarrow uses \Rightarrow (gratifications) \Rightarrow effects

In such a model gratifications would merely be a precursor to effect and uses would ultimately determine the effect. However as yet, the effect has not been defined by subject – who or what is affected; scope – how are they affected; or agent – by whom or by what are they affected.

3.4.3 It has ignored the motivations that pre-empt media needs. Katz *et al.* (1974: 510) posit that media needs have “social and psychological origins”. Seungwhan (2004: 3) cites Palmgreen when arguing that

“more conceptualization of motivations is still necessary in order to apply the uses and gratifications approach, because motivations are the beginning of uses and gratifications studies: they explain the purposive nature of human behaviour.”

However, very little research has been done to determine the influence of these social and psychological factors on consumer behaviour when using media, and that which has been done, often found only weak links between motives and sequential use (McQuail, 2005: 426; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000: 24).

This is linked to another point of dispute: the methodologies employed by uses and gratifications researchers, namely self-report questionnaires. The uses and gratifications approach is founded on the supposition that media consumption is primarily rational and individualistic and that individuals control and determine this consumption according to conscious goals. It is thereby also assumed that respondents who are asked to explain their preferences when choosing a medium are aware of every factor entering into their choices and do not misjudge the causes of their behaviour.

However, the extent to which consumers are conscious of the reasons for their choices is a matter of debate. Critics argue that only once they are subjected to either a closed- or open-ended interrogation and are forced to formulate and answer, do they actively consider their motives (Seungwhan, 2004: 4-5).

Upon closer inspection it appears as if these arguments against the uses and gratifications theory fail to consider some of its most salient points relating to the media and consumer behaviour. Fourie (2007: 236) argues that the central question for uses and gratifications researchers is one that aims to explain what people do with the media they consume. As such the research focuses mainly on the gratifications users expect from a particular medium and the actual gratifications they obtain from it.

Indeed, this does not in itself seem to present any apparent effect at some point in the media use continuum. Nor does the apparent lack of consensus about and understanding of the origin of needs allow for the formulation of a clear framework to develop a theory from which deductions may be made regarding users' future behaviour.

However, the psychological variables are in fact immaterial. What is important is that they lead to needs. Even when acknowledging the fact that the origins of needs have a more complex nature than is often alluded to in uses and gratifications research, one must accept that it is ultimately the needs, irrespective of their origin, which have to be satisfied and consequently lead to media choices based on perceived gratifications. In other words, although users may be unconscious of the typology or origin of the needs they want to satisfy, and whether the choice of medium is made consciously or unconsciously, the needs are the primary catalyst for media consumption.

Furthermore, it is my assertion that an understanding of what people do *with* the media is only part of the contribution that the uses and gratifications theory can make to the field of mass communication research. Only when uses and gratifications theory is used to explain and predict

displacement of media does its true potential become realised. When the displacement effect is explained at the hand of uses and gratifications theory it becomes possible to reverse Shannon and Weaver's "mathematical model" (see 3.3). Instead of asking "Who, says what through which channel to whom with what effect?" researchers can now reasonably adapt the model to answer the question "Who, receives what, from whom, in which channel and with what effect (on competing channels)?"

Who? – Which gratification set or combination of gratification sets will be receiving content? (User-centric approach.)

What? – What content have they chosen to receive?

From whom? – Their choice of media supplier may be influenced by their perceived gratification.

Through which channel? – Audience formation is informed by media structure. The unique attributes of a particular medium may be better suited to gratify a consumer's needs. (Medium-centric approach.)

What effect does this have on competing channels? – If users' choice of one medium leads to the displacement of another, how will or should the displaced medium adapt to co-exist with the new medium?

3.5 APPLYING USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY TO MAGAZINES AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Uses and gratifications is often one of the first theories to be applied when researchers study a new medium. This is due to the reasonable assumption that users have adopted the new medium because they have found new uses and perceived, or real, gratifications in that medium. Therefore, research of new media tends to focus on how it is absorbed and used in society (Morris & Ogan, 1996: 44; Seungwhan, 2004: 5-6; Randle, 2003: 4-5).

In spite of a continually growing body of work by researchers who have applied uses and gratifications theory to the Internet, there is still no clarity as to what uses users have for the Internet and what needs they seek to gratify when connecting to the World Wide Web (Seungwhan, 2004: 18-19). This is due in large to the varying and often contradictory results of research in the field of Internet uses and gratifications. Even in the very early stages of this research approach, Eighmey & McCord (1998: 187-189) alluded to the possible disparity in

results due to the unique nature of the Internet. The Web's ability to simultaneously provide information to visitors, but also to facilitate an interpersonal connection between users on an individual basis, is an entirely new concept in mass media.

An additional explanation for difficulty in defining the Web's uses and gratifications is that it does not conform to accepted definitions of mass media and cannot be considered to comprise a single medium (December, 1996: 17).

Decades before the Internet and the World Wide Web became prevalent media, Katz *et al.* (1973: 175-177) ordered five existing media in the following circumplex:

←Books↔newspapers↔radio↔television↔cinema↔books→

The order was determined by analysing the attributes that the various media share, which are functionally similar. In other words, when considered from a uses and gratifications point of view, books shared the most functional attributes with newspapers on the one hand and cinema on the other. Books and newspapers both need to be read to retrieve information, but users are not reliant on scheduling to obtain the information they need once they have acquired the printed products. Cinema and books are used to entertain through storytelling and thus both satisfy escapist needs. This ordering of media enabled the researchers to define the degree to which the media are interchangeable and they could therefore reasonably predict and explain the displacement of one medium by another.

The Internet presents an environment where users can retrieve information in a wide variety of formats from simple text to live video and in addition they can interact directly with the content provider and each other.

As a collective knowledge base, the World Wide Web acts like an instantly accessible yet external human memory, giving users access to information they did not own moments before. For instance, if they have not purchased a newspaper or magazine, or watched a television broadcast or listened to the radio or through some other means received and remembered today's weather forecast, they do not own that information. Yet, provided they are equipped with the necessary (ubiquitous) technology, they can instantly retrieve this information. Furthermore, the users do not have to store this information either physically or mentally for future reference as in most instances the information will be available online for as long as it is deemed useable.

Today's weather forecast or stock prices may however be harder to come by in a month's time, than for instance a scholarly article about the evolution of the Internet.

If one therefore attempts to order the Internet and the World Wide Web in Katz *et al.*'s circumplex, it becomes apparent that due to the nature of its multiple media formats the Internet cannot be assigned a fixed position. For instance, the Internet shares functional attributes with newspapers and books in that it can be read in text format, in fact, it can contain complete books and newspapers whilst at the same time it can fulfil the same roles as radio (Internet radio), TV (Internet broadcast) and cinema (streaming video). It is therefore to be expected that users would report a complex assortment of uses and gratifications, depending on the manner in which they have employed the Internet (Eighmey & McCord, 1998: 189).

As a result it is not uncommon for researchers to come to different and often contradictory conclusions on the uses and gratifications that users derive from the Internet and the web. Whilst some studies suggest that users, particularly members of a networked community, use the World Wide Web mainly as a source of entertainment (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000: 26), others have reported information gathering and surveillance as the most important use of the Web (Cho *et al.*, 2003: 49; Seungwhan, 2004: 9).

In fact, there is no definite conclusion about which medium or function is more likely to be displaced by the Internet (Lee & Leung, 2006: 2). For instance, Seungwhan (2004: 11) cites the example of Ferguson and Perse who, in 2000, conducted two independent research projects on the user gratification and the Internet and came to two different conclusions.

Even though there is continuous debate about the precise uses that individuals make of the Internet and the gratifications they receive, there does seem to be some agreement that the Internet is not used to serve new needs, but instead offers novel ways to satisfy a relatively enduring set of existing needs (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001: 173- 175). For example, December (1996: 17) suggests that people use the Internet to satisfy three basic categories of needs, namely communication, interaction, and information. Likewise, Eighmey and McCord (1998: 193) found their contention, namely that people employ the Internet to satisfy the same needs that they bring to their consumption of other media, to be true. Importantly, they did include interactivity and direct involvement as a possible new dimension in user gratification. Dimmick *et al.*, (2004: 19) and Randle (2003: 5) reached the same conclusions. Researchers also found fair degrees of similarity between the niches of the World Wide Web and the traditional media on the gratification-opportunities dimension (Dimmick *et al.*, 2004: 19).

If one considers this along with the Internet's ability to emulate the functional attributes of traditional media, it is not inconceivable that the Internet as multimedia could, at least theoretically, displace all traditional media.

An alternative and more positive view would be that the Internet can also complement all traditional media. In other words, if a consumer uses a traditional medium, based on its functional attributes, to obtain certain gratifications the same user can use the Internet, for its functional similarity to other media, to satisfy diverse, but related needs. For example, a user may read a niche magazine for the caravanning community to be entertained by humorous columns and informed by articles about caravans and resorts. The same user may also use the Web to connect to other members of the niche audience through discussion forums or to collect more information on a particular topic relating to the subject by using the Internet's ability to deliver content in formats that resemble TV or radio.

Randle (2003: 4-5) argues that uses and gratifications theory has often been used to study the Internet and World Wide Web and to compare it to other media, but compared to other major media, magazine gratification studies, particularly those conducted on consumer magazines, are less prevalent. Those few studies that have been conducted focused mainly on general interest and news magazines.

Nevertheless, quantitative, magazine-specific research has highlighted three major gratification dimensions that reflect earlier, more general, uses and gratifications research, namely: surveillance, interaction and diversion. It was also found that gratifications can be correlated with particular types of magazines. Thereby the diversion dimension predicted the use of consumer and niche magazines whilst use of news magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* was informed by the surveillance and interaction dimensions (Randle, 2003: 5).

3.6 SUMMARY

The nature of uses and gratifications theory which suggests that users make choices – be they conscious or subconscious – about the media they consume based on perceived gratifications they expect to obtain from them, has been discussed in this chapter.

These perceptions may be influenced by the particular medium's functional attributes or by an individual's social and psychological disposition. It is possible that once these decisions have been made they can ultimately lead to the displacement of one medium by another due to its superior ability to gratify certain needs. This in turn will have an effect on the displaced

medium in the respect that it may either adapt to coexist with the new medium or it may face further displacement.

As the unique nature of the Internet and World Wide Web endows it with the ability to emulate many attributes of traditional media, it has the theoretical ability to displace all traditional media. Furthermore, the Web does not create new needs, but instead offers new ways in which to gratify existing needs which up till the advent of the Internet were satisfied by reliance on traditional media. It is, however, conceivable that although the Web can gratify all of the same needs as traditional media, the latter may still be superior in satisfying some of these needs.

One can therefore posit that magazine publishers wishing to develop an effective online strategy should strive to satisfy as much of their users' needs as possible by combining, but not duplicating, their content offering on the web and in the printed product. The challenge however would be to determine where the equilibrium lies and which medium is better suited to deliver which gratification of which needs. At the same time, they have to consider how to best leverage the attributes of the other medium to satisfy the remaining needs.

This poses the following research question: *Which media gratifications should a magazine website deliver so as to complement the printed product?*

In the following chapter the research design and methodology to answer the above question, will be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The broad aim of this chapter is to clarify the specific research design and methodology used for this part of the study. Firstly, it explains the rationale behind the choice of questionnaires as method of research. Thereafter the focus is on the specific questionnaires, explaining the respective objectives as well as providing detailed information on the sample groups and procedures followed.

4.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE METHODOLOGY

Research in the field of uses and gratifications is most often conducted by employing self-report questionnaires (Du Plooy, 2002: 245). The data for this thesis was collected by employing two self-report questionnaires which were intended to evaluate magazine readers' uses of the Internet and to determine correlating elements in successful magazine websites. Self-report questionnaires typically ask readers to respond to pre-determined statements or lists created by the researchers. Although such close ended questionnaires – which enables a researcher to count the number of similar answers in order to deduce a generalised attitude among respondents – is often associated with quantitative research, surveys may also contribute in collecting data for qualitative research (Du Plooy, 2002: 83). Strauss and Corbin (1998: 11) concur that although some of the data collected in such research may be quantified, for instance census or background information, the bulk of the analysis is interpretative. Surveys allow researchers to collect data that is qualitative in nature and code it in a manner that allows it to be analysed statistically. Leedy (1989: 141) uses the term “descriptive survey” to refer to this kind of research.

However, critics still note several areas where survey methodology may have associated flaws. Firstly, they argue that the predetermined statements and questions may not be applicable to the respondents and their responses may therefore not relate to their own, actual media-experiences, but rather to their perceptions of media and possible uses and gratifications. If respondents complete surveys and questionnaires based on these perceptions it will inevitably lead to skewing of the responses, which in turn will mean the validity of the data may be brought into question (Massey, 1995: 331).

Furthermore, surveys that employ primarily close-ended type questions and predetermined lists do not leave much scope for the possibility that the respondent may have another use of the medium or derive a gratification that has not been included in the response options made available to them. As such researchers necessarily forego the opportunity to discover new uses and gratifications and thereby adding to the existing understanding of the uses and gratifications of media. Instead they suggest open ended methods such as interviews and focus groups as alternatives (Seungwhan, 2004: 13).

Seungwhan (2004: 4-5) also argues that whilst the principal premise of uses and gratifications theory is one that assumes an active audience who makes decisions prompted by social and psychological motivations, these questionnaires do not provide better insight into these motivations.

Lastly, critics argue that much of the methodology of uses and gratifications research and close-ended surveys in particular, does not allow for a truly representative sample of society as they often require respondents to be consumers of a particular type of medium or content, in order to be included in such a survey (Massey, 1995: 331).

Nevertheless, it was decided to employ self-report surveys for the purpose of conducting the research as the aim of this study is neither to discover new uses and gratifications nor to ponder the origins of users' media needs. The research is merely intended to illuminate trends in Internet usage by readers of a particular niche market magazine and the gratification they seek and obtain from it with the ultimate aim to provide a contextual framework within which to formulate a possible answer to the research question.

Although uses and gratifications theory is often used to study audience formation, this thesis does not attempt to explain how an audience is formed by various media offerings, but instead, how an already existing audience uses different media to satisfy these needs. In this context the issue pertaining to the origins of these needs is moot.

Not only is the research aimed at developing a better understanding of audiences of niche market magazines in general, but of the Afrikaans camping and caravanning niche market in particular. This concurs with Creswell (2003: 185) who suggests that qualitative research should purposefully select participants that would best assist in understanding the problem and research question. As such, Massey's (1995: 331) assertion that respondents to uses and gratifications questionnaires are required to be consumers of a particular type of medium or content is borne out. In this instance they were required to be readers of the Afrikaans caravanning and camping

magazine *WegSleep*, who also use the Internet to visit the magazine's website. However, this does not have an obvious negative influence on the scope of this study or its applicability in a larger context.

Lastly, Du Plooy (1997: 129) notes several advantages and disadvantages in conducting surveys by mail. It is relatively inexpensive, requires few if any research assistants and allows researchers to reach respondents they may not be able to visit personally or contact telephonically. The disadvantages are mainly related to the lack of personal contact that does not afford respondents the opportunity to clarify questions or address any queries they may have. These factors contribute to a low response rate.

4.3 PILOT SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRES

This section presents the various surveys that were employed to conduct the research.

4.3.1 Pilot Survey

Initially, a pilot survey was conducted amongst 45 *WegSleep* readers. The survey was presented to them at a camping weekend which was organised by and for users of the chat forum on the magazine's website. The pilot survey served to identify possible trends relating to gratifications perceived and obtained through the general use of the Internet and specifically the magazine's website. It was subsequently adapted and refined to allow for better articulation of questions and to include questions designed to address the five types of media needs (Katz *et al.*, 1973: 166) directly.

4.3.2 Questionnaire 1

4.3.2.1 Aim of Questionnaire 1

The first questionnaire was aimed at understanding magazine readers' uses of the Internet and magazine websites in particular. The questionnaire was comprised of three sections which included a mixture of close-ended questions, paired comparison questions and ranking questions (Du Plooy, 1997: 134). The first section was designed to gather demographic data of the respondents while the second and third sections aimed to examine the respondents' general use of the Internet and of magazine websites in particular.

4.3.2.2 Sample Group

The sample group for the first survey was determined by selecting all registered users of the Internet chat forum on the *WegSleep* website. In order to register as a user of this forum visitors to the site need to supply a valid e-mail address. At the time of conducting the research the database for the forum contained a total of 2 311 addresses of registered users. This included all users that have registered on the chat forum since its inception in November 2006 and does not necessarily mean that all registered users are regular visitors to the forum. In fact, 572 registered users had not logged in to the forum for a period of 18 months preceding July 2009. Two of the addresses belonged to the researcher and the website administrator, leaving 2 309 possible respondents. A digital copy of the refined questionnaire was e-mailed to all of these addresses with the request that it should be returned in the same format. It is relevant to note that the number of registered users of the chat forum do not necessarily represent the entire audience of the *WegSleep* website. However, the chat forum is the only section of the website that requires registration that would provide a database of contact details such as e-mail addresses to be used for survey purposes.

A subscription to six editions of the magazine as well as an autographed copy of a book containing a collection columns of the magazine and its sister publication *Weg!* were offered as incentives in an attempt to increase the number of responses.

In total 118 e-mail addresses on the distribution list proved to be invalid or no longer in use. Of the remaining 2 191 addresses 107 users responded to the survey. This represents a return rate of 4,9%. Of the total responses 2 of the questionnaires were incomplete, leaving 105 respondents which could ultimately be used as a research group for the first survey.

4.3.3 Questionnaire 2

4.3.3.1 Aim of Questionnaire 2

The second questionnaire was intended to compare successful South African magazine websites. It was decided to use an abbreviated version of the same survey used by FIPP (2008: 12) to conduct its own research on successful magazine websites. The questionnaire was abbreviated to exclude questions contained in the original questionnaire which were aimed at establishing the respondents' perceptions of their websites' success. The remaining 32 questions included some open-ended questions, but were predominantly closed-ended. However, "write in" blocks were provided to afford respondents the opportunity to clarify their answers. The questions were

grouped according to website statistics, content, advertising and sponsorship, marketing, work hours and profitability. Lastly, respondents were invited to share their experiences and in creating and maintaining their websites. As with the first questionnaire, the second was also distributed via e-mail to the editors and web editors of the respective magazines. Although in some instances the e-mail was sent to more than one person at a magazine, only one response per publication was required.

4.3.3.2 Sample Group

Although the questionnaire which was used for this portion of the research was in essence an abbreviated version of the FIPP survey conducted every second year, the sample group was selected differently. Unlike the FIPP survey, which allowed respondents to define the success of their websites in their own terms, the success of the magazine websites included in this study was measured solely at the hand of their web statistics.

For this purpose it was decided to refer to the Nielsen's Net ratings (<https://secure.netratings.com>) of South African consumer magazines for the period ranging from 1 January 2008 to 31 January 2009. At first usage statistics were gathered for all the consumer magazines of which web data for the particular period was available from Nielsen's. This revealed 18 magazine websites in total. More magazines were included in the Nielsen measurements at various times during this period, but these 18 websites were the only ones for which data was available for the entire period.

The research group was then refined by calculating, firstly, the monthly average of unique visitors and secondly the total sessions for each of these websites. The two sets of data were both ranked from highest to lowest and compared. The comparison showed a number of discrepancies in the relation between the unique visitor statistics and the total sessions. For instance, the magazine that was listed 9th in terms of the average number of unique browsers it received was only listed 12th when the average number of total sessions it received per month (in the defined period) was compared to that of the other magazines. Such variances may indicate that a magazine is successful in attracting new visitors to its website, but that once they are there, it cannot maintain their interest to entice them to return on a regular basis. However, the top seven slots in both lists were occupied by the same websites, although not in the exact same order. This indicates a stable position with regards to the growth and maintenance of the individual websites. They were in order: *Kick Off*, *CarToday*, *FHM*, *Men's Health*, *Shape*, *Sports*

Illustrated and *Runner's World*. It was thus decided to approach the editors and/or online editors of these magazines and request them to complete the survey. In all seven instances the questionnaire was sent to the magazine editor and the online editor of the relevant brand. With the exception of *Shape Magazine* and *FHM* the editors referred the surveys to the online editors who were responsible for the daily management of the websites. The questionnaires were ultimately completed by Leonora Redelinghuys – head of new media for *Kick Off*, Mike Fourie – online editor of *CarToday*, Hagen Engler – editor of *FHM*, Gavin Dudley – Online editor for *Men's Health*, Toni Younghusband – editor of *Shape*, Caitlin Fitzgerald – online editor of *Sports Illustrated* and Kari Peters – online editor for *Runner's World*.

It is relevant to note that although these titles represent the top 7 positions on the list of magazine websites measured by Nielsen's during the defined period, the number of unique browsers that these sites have attracted range from 7 827 (*Runner's World*) to 67 705 (*Kick Off*). The number of total sessions range between 22 198 (*Men's Health*) and 357 311 (*Kick Off*). Furthermore, it is important to note that although statistics for the *Kick Off* website indicate a lead of 28 319 and 267 331 respectively in terms of unique browsers and total sessions when compared to the second place holder in both these categories, *CarToday*, the former is the only website in the list registered as a “.com” domain. All the other websites are registered with South African or “.co.za” domain names. The reason for the deviance in the instance of the *Kick Off* website is that the same domain name also hosts the web pages for *Kick Off* in Nigeria, Ghana and Europe. This may have a significant influence on the number of visitors that are measured by Nielsen's, but is unlikely to change the websites' inclusion in the top-7 list. It is pertinent to note that all but one of the websites (*CarToday*) belong to various business units in the Media 24 stable. Of the remaining six, five belong in the Touchline Media group. The website for *FHM* belongs to Upper Case Media.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the methodology of the study which represents qualitative research conducted in a phenomenological paradigm through the application of two descriptive surveys. The first questionnaire focused on the experiences and attitudes of visitors to the *WegSleep* website whilst the second was intended to compare similarities between the seven most visited magazine websites in South Africa. The following chapter will discuss the results and analysis of the surveys.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents information collected by the application of two research questionnaires. The purpose of the first questionnaire was to determine how regular visitors to a niche magazine website use the Internet. It was specifically designed to glean which media needs they expect to be gratified by the use of new media and what form they expect these gratifications to take.

The second questionnaire was presented to the editors and online editors of the seven South African magazines with the most successful websites, measured by the average monthly number of page impressions. The aim of the second questionnaire was to compare the attributes of these websites with the apparent trends in user behaviour gleaned from the first survey. It is proposed that a correlation in the results of these two questionnaires would serve as an indication of the pertinent points publishers should consider when developing an online strategy for their magazine brands.

5.2 QUESTIONNAIRE 1: SURVEY AMONG USERS OF THE *WEGSLEEP* CHAT FORUM

5.2.1 Profile of Respondents

Respondents to the first questionnaire were asked to supply some personal information regarding their age, gender and educational qualifications. This information was used to compile a simple demographic profile of the respondents, which could be compared to the readership profile of the magazine. Such demographic information could highlight the possible existence of trends or indicate possible flaws in the research sample.

5.2.1.1 Sex

The research sample comprised of 82%⁶ (86) men and 18% (19) women.

⁶ All percentages given, are rounded to the nearest whole number.

5.2.1.2 Age

The age demographic of the respondents also showed a marked departure from the magazine's readership in actual percentages, but the trend remained similar. Of the 105 respondents, 56 were between the ages of 35 and 49, accounting for 53% of the respondents. A further 33% (35) of the respondents were 50 years old or older. The age group 25-34 constituted 12% (13) of the survey respondents. The last percentage of respondents came from the group which includes the 16-24 year olds.

5.2.1.3 Education

In total 28% (29) of the respondents have a matric (grade 12) certificate. A further 30% (31) hold a technical diploma. Of the remaining respondents 14% (15) are university graduates whilst 20% (21) acquired a postgraduate qualification. This leaves 8% (8) of the respondents who have indicated that they have other educational qualifications.

5.2.1.4 Frequency of Internet use

The vast majority (83) of the respondents indicated that they use the Internet daily. This represents 79% of the total. Of the remaining number 11% (12) access the Internet between four and five times a week, 7% (7) make use of it between two and three times a week. Only 3% (3) use the Internet just once a week.

5.2.1.5 Time spent online

More than half the respondents (58%) spend between one and two hours online when they use the Internet. A further 26% (27) said they use the Internet for up to four hours at a time and 16% (17) spent more than that online.

5.2.1.6 Internet experience

A total of 72 users, accounting for 69% of the respondents, stated that they have been regular Internet users for a period of more than five years. A further 10% (11) have been using the Internet for four to five years, whilst 11% (12) are relative newcomers to the World Wide Web

with less than two years Internet experience. The remaining 10% (10) are divided equally between users who have been using the Internet for two to three and three to four years.

5.2.1.7 Place of access

Just more than half (54%) of the respondents access the Internet from home as well as their workplace. Furthermore, 24% (25) use the office connection as their main Internet access, whilst 22% (23) mainly access the Internet from home. None reported using Internet cafés to go online.

5.2.1.8 Type of connection

The use of an ADSL broadband connection was by far the most prevalent, with 61% (65) of respondents using this kind of connection. The second largest segment representing 30% (31) of respondents reported that they use some sort of wireless broadband connection such as 3G or Iburst. Six respondents (6%) still used dial up modems and 3 (3%) said their main Internet connection was made via their mobile phone.

5.2.2 The data

5.2.2.1 Predominant Internet use

Respondents were asked to rank 10 Internet activities in order of importance by using a Likert scale, whereby 1 represented the most important activity and 10 the least important. This was done to assess which activities they engage in most when using the World Wide Web. A number of respondents chose not to rank the activities, but instead allocated a value between 1 and 10 to each activity to indicate its importance. This means that a respondent may value two activities as equally important.

Upon analysing the results of the questionnaires the Likert scale was inverted to give the most important activity a value of 10 and the least important activity was given a value of 1. A general value for each activity was then calculated by adding the values that individual respondents awarded to that particular activity together. A comparison of these results (shown in brackets) placed these activities in the following order:

1. Using search engines to find information about a particular topic (860)
2. Online banking (851)
3. Keeping up to date with news events (744)
4. Reading magazine articles (620)
5. Taking part in chat forums (619)
6. Doing online shopping (454)
7. Using voice over IP services such as Skype (398)
8. Watching video clips or listening to audio files (367)
9. Running a website (274)
10. Playing games (262).

A comparison of individual answers however, showed that 49 of the 105 respondents chose online banking as their most frequent activity, placing it ahead of the use of search engines, which was chosen by 35 respondents as their predominant activity on the World Wide Web. Only two respondents indicated that they regard reading magazine articles online as a primary Web activity.

5.2.2.2 E-commerce

A total of 86 respondents indicated that they have in the past conducted financial transactions other than Internet banking over the Internet.

5.2.2.3 Social Network

More than half of the respondents (61) belong to an online social network such as Facebook or MySpace.

5.2.2.4 Introduction to the website

Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents became aware of the *WegSleep* website by reading the magazine. Another 13% of respondents (13) initially found the *WegSleep* website through a search engine, whilst 10% (10) read about it on another website. Five respondents (5%) were directed to the website by word of mouth. One respondent did not answer this question.

5.2.2.5 Importance of a magazine website

Respondents were asked to rank 11 uses of a website associated with a niche magazine in order of importance to assess which of these uses they found most gratifying. Again a number of respondents chose not to rank the uses, but instead allocated a value between 1 and 11 to each use to indicate its importance. This means that a respondent may value two uses as equally important.

The same process of analysis was followed as with 5.1.2.1 and a comparison of the results (shown in brackets) placed these uses in the following order:

1. Receiving advice and assistance from fellow users (962)
2. Finding information about a chosen hobby or interest (871)
3. Receiving advice from an expert (842)
4. Giving advice and assistance to others (813)
5. Reading columns and blogs (741)
6. Staying updated about the magazine (716)
7. Feeling part of a community (716)
8. Reading the contents of the magazine online (709)
9. Having direct contact with the editorial team (550)
10. Not having to wait for the next issue of the magazine to read about a chosen hobby or interest (495)
11. Passing time (417).

The comparison of individual answers showed that 47 of the 105 respondents rated the acquisition of assistance and advice from fellow users as the primary benefit to be derived from a niche magazine's website. Keeping users up to date with the developments at the magazine and creating the ability to find information pertaining to a hobby or interest were each chosen by 27 respondents as a primary use, placing them in a collective second place. The ability to pass time on a magazine website was listed as the least relevant use by 34 of the respondents.

5.2.2.6 Gratifications of magazines and the Internet

Respondents were asked five questions and in each they had to choose between two statements that best described their attitude relating to the printed product and the magazine website. Each

of these questions addressed a particular need, according to the list of needs identified by Katz *et al.* (1973: 166). The results showed that:

1. 67% of respondents would rather look at beautiful pictures in print than on a website
2. 95% of respondents would rather search for information online than in a magazine
3. 93% of respondents would rather contribute to a chat forum than a letters column in a magazine
4. 54% of respondents feel socially integrated into a community because they read a particular magazine, whilst 46% feel the same because they take part in an online chat forum
5. 78% of respondents would rather relax with a magazine after a stressful day than online.

5.2.2.7 Facets of a niche magazine website

Respondents were asked to rank 12 facets of a magazine website in order of importance to assess which of these they found most relevant and indispensable. The same process of analysis was followed as with 5.1.2.1 and a comparison of the results (shown in brackets) placed these uses in the following order:

1. Search function to access information quickly (1064)
2. A chat forum where they can connect with other readers (978)
3. An interactive space to pose questions to experts (940)
4. Contributions by other readers (888)
5. Content extracted from the printed product (750)
6. Long articles not available in the printed product (712)
7. Photographs taken by readers (651)
8. Recipes (631)
9. Relevant advertising (572)
10. User profiles (522)
11. Video and audio files (481)
12. Games (259).

The comparison of individual answers showed that 39 respondents chose a search function as the most important aspect on a magazine website whilst 33 chose a chat forum. A total of 52 respondents indicated that they regard games as the least important.

5.2.2.8 The need for a magazine website

Respondents were asked to choose between one of three reasons why it is necessary for a magazine to have a website.

The results were as follows: 80% (84) said a magazine website complements their lifestyle and hobby in a manner which the printed product cannot, whilst 18% (19) said it is inconceivable for any business, media or otherwise to function without a website and that a website is therefore a necessity. Only one respondent said magazine websites are inevitable because the digital products will ultimately replace printed media; one respondent did not answer this question.

5.2.3 Findings and interpretation of the data

5.2.3.1 Demographics

Especially regarding the gender demographic the research sample differed significantly from that of the magazine's readership. According to the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) *WegSleep*'s total readership of 120 000 is divided between 52% men and 48% women (SAARF, 2008). However, the overwhelming dominance (82%) in the number of male respondents, indicate that the magazine's online audience is predominantly male. This may be ascribed to the fact that there is a global discrepancy in gender representativeness on the World Wide Web. Shumacher and Martin (2001: 109) and Fallows (2005: ii) argue that although women are becoming increasingly active on the Internet there are still marked variances in usage between the two genders.

The age profile of respondents closely resembles that of the magazine readership. The age group 35-49 (53% of respondents) is also the largest portion of the magazine's readership, representing 37% (34 000) of the total, whilst the age group 50+ (33% of respondents) contributes 26% (32 000) of the magazine's readership. The age group 25-34 also correlates with the readership of the printed product as this age group represents 14% of that readership and 13% of the respondents.

However, readers between the ages of 16 and 24 represent 28% of the magazine's readership, but only account for 1% of respondents. Although teens represent a large and growing number of Internet users, their use of the Internet differs from adults (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005: iv). Furthermore it is suspected that the large representation from this age group in the readership figure is indicative of incidental readership in households where parents buy the magazine. It is therefore not unexpected that the age group is not represented to the same extent online as it is in the magazine's readership.

The trend of the education demographic in the research sample closely resembles that of the magazine readership. As with the magazine readership, the majority (58%) of respondents hold either a matric (grade 12) qualification or a technical diploma from a tertiary institution.

The majority of the respondents are regular users of the Internet who access the web daily and spend one to two hours online and have been doing so for more than 5 years. One may therefore safely assume they have had ample exposure to the offerings on the Internet and can therefore form reasonable perceptions of the gratifications they may gain from its use.

Approximately three quarters (76%) of the respondents have access to the Internet from their homes whilst only 24% are solely reliant on office connections. Furthermore, 91% of the respondents use some form of broadband connection, whether it is wireless or fixed, to connect to the web. This indicates a relative lack of prohibitive factors such as Internet security policies and restrictive bandwidth that may limit the kind of online content that the respondents access.

As much as 71% of the respondents became aware of the *WegSleep* website only after they had first had experience of the printed product. This indicates that the website audience, at least at the time of the research, were also readers of the printed product.

One can therefore, conclude the following:

Finding 1. The web audience and the readership audience for WegSleep are essentially the same; in fact they may even be the exact same people.

5.2.3.2 The Web as information source

Questions about the respondents' predominant Internet use and online behaviour revealed a preference for activities that are cognitive and functional in nature and relate to information-

seeking and transactional functions. To this effect the use of search engines to find topical information and online banking was rated as the two primary activities for which the respondents put the Internet to use. The majority of respondents also indicated that they have engaged in online transactions other than online banking. The need to stay informed about current news events was listed as the third most important use of the Internet. This was also evident in the data relating to the importance of a website for a magazine. The top four reasons why users visit websites were all related to the acquisition and exchange of information. This affirms McGovern's assertion that content is the primary Internet commodity (See section 2.4.2).

When asked to choose between the Internet and a magazine for the purpose of gathering information, respondents also made it clear that they perceive the Web as better suited than the magazine to gratify their cognitive media needs. One can therefore conclude the following:

Finding 2. Respondents primarily view the World Wide Web as a source of information and therefore gratifying of their cognitive needs.

5.2.3.3 The Online community

Although the use of a chat forum may seem to be a diversionary or escapist function of the Internet, questions about the value of a magazine website and its functions revealed a trio of purposes, namely information, social integration and personal integration.

Users definitely also view chat forums as a primary source of information. In fact, although respondents rated editorial content as relatively important throughout the questionnaire, user-generated content was consistently rated as more valuable. A chat forum therefore represents the main channel through which they can connect with likeminded individuals who may have shared experiences and could possibly offer advice. It is also a channel through which they may share their own advice and opinions. This was further borne out by the respondents' definitive preference to rather assert themselves in a virtual domain than to do so in the printed format.

Chat forums simultaneously gratify users' social integrative needs, as they are recognised as a member of a particular special interest group. However, "feeling part of a community" was rated less important than "giving advice to others" when respondents were asked to rank the perceived gratifications they could obtain from a magazine website. This was on par with

“staying updated about the magazine”. The close proximity of these two gratifications were also mirrored in the choices when 46% of the respondents said regular participation in a chat forum engenders a sense of belonging whilst 54% felt the same as regular readers of a particular magazine. Therefore one may deduce that whilst an online community does gratify social integrative needs, these needs are equally gratified by a printed medium. One can thus conclude the following:

Finding 3. Personal integrative needs relating individuals’ desire to appear credible and be perceived as confident are better served through the Internet and the magazine’s website than the magazine itself.

Finding 4. The gratification of social integrative needs is not medium specific. Evidence suggests that it may rather be served through brand loyalty, irrespective of the medium.

5.2.3.4 The Web as diversion

The sample group deemed the diversionary functions such as playing games or listening to music online unimportant. These functions, along with the possible use as a way in which users may pass time, was consistently rated as the least important. Respondents also indicated that they prefer the printed product for purposes of relaxation and diversion to that of the Web. The majority also chose to rather view aesthetically pleasing photographs in print than online. One can thus conclude:

Finding 5. Escapist needs and affective needs are better served by a printed magazine than by a magazine website.

5.3 QUESTIONNAIRE 2: SURVEY AMONG EDITORS / ONLINE EDITORS OF THE SEVEN MOST SUCCESSFUL SOUTH AFRICAN MAGAZINE WEBSITES

5.3.1 Type of magazine

All seven of the magazine-websites that were included in the study are related to particular, niche magazine markets. This may be attributed to two possible explanations. Firstly, in South Africa, as in the rest of the world, niche magazines have become the norm and general interest magazines have been largely displaced by television. Publishers thus have turned to niche markets to adapt to the changing trend (Grossberg *et al.*, 2006: 115; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006: 60) (Also see section 1.1).

Secondly, it is also possible to argue that well defined niche markets are better suited to provide effective online offerings that are different from the printed product. One may argue for instance that although women's magazines by definition also serve a niche market, the niche is very broad and tends to simply address gender in general. Indicative of this point is the fact that the only women's magazine website included in the top seven most visited South African magazine websites is more narrowly defined as a women's fitness magazine site.

Six of the magazines were monthly publications whilst the seventh is published on a fortnightly schedule.

5.3.2 Objectives

From a list of 12 possibilities, the respondents to the magazine website questionnaire identified five main objectives for their websites. These were:

- To build a community around their brand
- Create a means of communicating with the target audience on a more frequent basis than the magazine can do
- Create new revenue streams/profits in the long term
- Expand their audience beyond the print-audience base by creating an online audience (i.e. including non-readers of the print product)
- Use the website to attract new readers for the print product.

All seven respondents agreed on the first two objectives whilst the remaining three were in each case selected by six of the seven. What is significant is that these are the same objectives that were rated the most important in the FIPP survey, although not in the same order (see 2.3.1). It also appears that the creation of an online community is as important a business imperative as it is a gratification of user's needs.

5.3.3 Audience

Respondents for three of the seven magazine websites stated explicitly that their audience is predominantly male. These were *Men's Health*, *Sports Illustrated* and *FHM* (Dudley, 2009; Fitzgerald 2009; Engler 2009). The rest made no direct reference to gender, although in the case of *Car* magazine and *Kick Off* a male gender bias may be inferred, whilst the target audience for *Shape* is predominantly female. Three more defined their audience by age group, namely 25-49, 18-35 and 25-35 (Fitzgerald, 2009; Engler, 2009; Fourie, 2009). Two respondents described their online audience as "more affluent with tertiary qualifications". All but one of the respondents agreed that their web audience is the same or very similar to their readership audience. In the case of *Car* magazine Fourie (2009) indicated that:

"The readers of *CarToday.com* are not necessarily *CAR* magazine readers, although more readers of *CarToday.com* read *CAR*, than the other way around."

This trend was borne out in the answers to the questionnaire which was circulated amongst the users of the *WegSleep* website (See Finding 1 in 5.2.3.1).

The exception was *Kick Off* soccer magazine whose online audience is "so vast and so different to the magazine" (Redelinghuys, 2009). This audience appears to be wealthier than the majority of the readers of the printed product with more readily available Internet access.

Five of the respondents indicated that the website drew an audience who did not previously read the magazine. In three of these cases the new audience was more than 20% the size of the print audience. This correlates with Ellonen and Kuivalainen's (2008: 391) circulation benefits of a magazine website (see 2.3.4). This also indicates that the magazines are successful in achieving the fourth objective in the previous section, namely expanding their audience

beyond the print readership by creating an online audience (i.e. including non-readers of the print product).

Five of the respondents indicated that a significant portion of their “online only” audience are users who reside outside the home country of the printed magazine and therefore use the website to stay informed about developments in the particular niche market.

5.3.4 Content

Five of the websites which were included in the study are updated more than once per day (Dudley, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2009; Fourie, 2009; Peters, 2009; Redelinghuys, 2009), whilst the remaining two are updated at least once per day. None of the sites charge a premium of any kind for access to the site as a whole or to parts thereof.

This supports the views of Palser (2008: 1), Gazarov (2008: 4) and Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005: 9) that the paid for subscription model has not proven to be effective and has been discarded in most successful websites (see 2.4.2).

A significant portion of the content for these websites is generated by editing and packaging content that had not previously been used in the magazine. This also reflects the opinions of respondents to the FIPP survey (see 2.4.2).

5.3.5 Web applications, WEB 2.0 and interactivity

All of the respondents either cited social networking applications such as Facebook and Twitter along with other applications that promote interactivity between users – such as fantasy sports leagues or other web 2.0 applications or “tools”⁷ as the main drawing cards to attract new readers to their websites.

One respondent noted that since the magazine introduced its own, highly successful Facebook group, where readers could interact directly with the magazine’s editorial staff and with each other, there has been a noticeable decline in submissions to the magazine’s letters page (Younghusband, 2009). This affirms finding 3 in section 5.2.3.3. namely that personal integrative needs relating individuals’ desire to appear credible and confident, is better served by the internet than by a magazine.

⁷ “Tools” mainly referred to online applications such as self-tests, voting polls, race diaries for athletes and fitness calculators.

All of the websites that were studied offer users print subscription requests, electronic newsletters related to the site, and video clips. Six offer archive retrieval facilities and mobile phone applications whilst five offer chat rooms and user generated content such as blogs or articles which were not commissioned by the magazine.

This differs slightly from the results of the FIPP survey (see 2.4.3), but still indicate a strong emphasis on chat forums, and user generated content. Bearing in mind that print subscription requests and electronic newsletters generally serve the purpose of promoting the printed product and the website and are therefore not aimed at gratifying users' needs, the list closely resembles the primary functions and uses chosen by respondents to the *WegSleep* website user survey (see 5.2.3.3). The notable exceptions in this instance were the offering of video clips and mobile Internet services. In general however, this supports Gerpott and Wanke's (2004 :243) assertion that interactive features alone are not enough to stimulate usage of a website, but instead it is reliant on a strong community and compelling content.

5.3.6 Comments from respondents

At the end of the second questionnaire, respondents were afforded the opportunity to share insights or give comments that were not explicitly dealt with in the preceding questions. Significant excerpts from these comments are quoted below.

- “Don’t reproduce your printed product online. This may work for newspapers, but it does not work for magazines. A magazine website should be something completely different from the magazine itself.” A magazine website should therefore be an online brand extension that complements the printed product and does not compete with or replicate it (see 2.4.2) (Younghusband, 2009).
- “Too many media companies in South-Africa are not building a web strategy first, followed by their web efforts. We’re all too quick to launch a site and add bits like headless chickens and then work backwards...Plan properly. Research. Plan. Test. Test again. Launch. Test. And follow the strategy. Know what you’re aiming for” (Peters, 2009). (see 2.3)
- “Simple is always better. A major pitfall in our website is that it is too busy and can often be overwhelming” (Fitzgerald, 2009). (see 2.3).
- “To keep people coming back online, the website has to move quickly, news has to be changed very regularly and it must be very interactive” (Redelinghuys, 2009 (see 2.4.2).

5.4 THE VALUE OF CONTENT AND COMMUNITY

A number of meaningful deductions can be made from the results of the two surveys. These deductions can be categorised as dealing either with content or with community and interactivity.

5.4.1 Content

Both surveys highlighted users' preference to rely on the digital domain when seeking to gratify their cognitive needs. This underscores the necessity to provide relevant, updated and accurate content.

As McGovern argues (see 2.4.2), content is the main catalyst to developing a brand online. The World Wide Web's ability to collate vast amounts of information on any imaginable topic is also its largest hindrance. Users are often faced with an information overload and no clear indication as to the credibility of the information they are presented with. Relevant, accurate and up to date information thereby becomes a valued commodity, which will entice readers to return to its source in future when they seek similar information (see 5.3.6).

Furthermore, the results of both surveys indicate that online audience of niche magazine websites are very similar to the readership of the printed products (see.5.2.3.1 and 5.3.3). This may partially explain the premise that website content should differ from that which is presented in the magazine. This premise is also substantiated by the kind of content that users deem to be most valuable; namely interactive tools and functionalities that cannot be replicated in a print environment.

Apart from being useful and reliable, content should also be easily accessible.

The accessibility of content has a significant influence on a magazine's online strategy, as it has been shown that the paid for content model has been largely discarded both internationally and locally. In the pursuit of the long term profitability goal, publishers should therefore seek to find other ways of monetising their online offering.

5.4.2 Community and Interactivity

Despite the superlative importance of information in a digital venture, both surveys showed that the information presented need not be editorial content. Besides being possibly the most

significant functionally different attribute between the Internet and magazines, interactivity is also one of the most important sources of content on magazine websites (see 5.2.3.3 and 5.2.5).

The research has shown that users rate the interactive ability to share information with their peers as one of the most important uses of a magazine website. This highlights a reliance on user generated content as a pivotal attribute of a successful magazine website. Developing an online community is therefore an essential short term objective when formulating a sustainable online strategy.

In addition to being a source of information, these communities also serve in gratifying users' personal integrative needs in that they provide a forum in which users can establish themselves as informed individuals within a community of their peers. Considering the fact that cognitive and personal integrative needs are the two media needs best served by the Internet (see 5.2.3.2 and 5.2.3.3), it seems inevitable that a strong online community should form an integral part of any successful online strategy.

5.5 SUMMARY

Although the Internet could potentially emulate all media as discussed in chapter 3, the research suggests that readers do not employ the Internet for exactly the same purposes as printed media. Although some displacement does take place, especially with regard to information gathering and cognitive media needs and personal integrative needs, magazines are still better at serving readers' affective and escapist needs. Social integrative needs appear to be non medium specific. One may therefore argue that a complementary combination of the printed product and the online offering may enhance the gratification of this need and therefore promote brand loyalty instead of medium loyalty.

It is apparent that users predominantly use the Internet to gather information. Relevant content is therefore the key to attracting readers to a website. This information need not necessarily be content generated by the website providers. In the case of magazines, user generated content on a website is as highly regarded as a source of information as editorial content, but has proven to be even more popular as it is perceived to be authentic, unbiased and reliable.

As relevant content is essential, it is equally important to ensure that it does not become outdated and should therefore be continually refreshed and updated to ensure that users return to the website in future.

The reliance on user generated contents highlights the importance of online communities in providing such content. These communities are also invaluable in contributing to the gratification of users' personal integrative needs.

Although the majority of the respondents to the survey relating to the *WegSleep* website indicated that they had participated in e-commerce transactions other than online banking, a paid for content system still does not seem viable and none of the seven websites included in the second half of the research employ such a system.

Furthermore, the research indicates that online audience of niche magazine websites are very similar to the readership of the printed products. This may partially explain the premise that website content should differ from that which is presented in the magazine. This premise is also substantiated by the kind of content that users deem to be most valuable, namely interactive tools and functionalities that cannot be replicated in a print environment.

The last chapter will discuss the conclusions that may be drawn from the foregone findings and subsequent recommendations that could be made on the strength thereof.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

In the analysis of the various strategies a publisher may pursue when creating an online presence for a magazine, it became clear that financial gain is not the only motivating factor for establishing a magazine website. In fact, for most magazine websites revenue generation is only a long term goal.

Publishers should therefore determine the short term objectives which will enable them to reach the long term goal of profitability and develop a sustainable web strategy based on these objectives. International trends indicate that the most prevalent short term objectives of successful magazine websites are

- to expand their audience beyond the readership of the printed product,
- to attract new readers to the printed product via the website,
- to build a community online, and
- to communicate with the magazine's target audience on a more frequent basis than the publishing frequency allows.

The research for this thesis, conducted amongst successful South-African magazine websites, has reflected the same short term goals. In most cases the editorial, circulation and advertising pillars of a magazine brand may all benefit from short term goals of an Internet strategy, depending on the manner in which the publisher decides to use a magazine's online presence. It is also evident that these goals will ultimately determine the scope of a magazine website. A publisher's decision whether to develop a destination site, a companion site or a mere subscription site should thus be informed by the intended benefits they hope to reap from an online presence.

Almost all of these benefits are dependant on the relationship which may be engendered between a magazine website and its audience. It is therefore important to emphasise the necessity to approach online users in the same way as readers of the printed product. However, online media differ from traditional media in that the loyalty of the audience of a magazine website is of greater importance than the size of that audience. In the case of magazine websites the size of an

online audience does not necessarily predict success in achieving the short term objectives which will lead to the fulfilment of the long term profitability objective.

The underlying premise for this line of reasoning is one that views media consumers as inherently fickle in their association with particular brands. Information is the main commodity presented by these brands to the consumers, and whichever brand presents the best information and access to that information will receive the consumers' attention. An online strategy should therefore deliver relevant, easily accessible content and not overemphasise the unique abilities of the Internet at the cost of users whose primary interest in the website is to gather information.

This assumption, namely that media consumers make choices – be they conscious or subconscious – about the media they consume based on perceived gratifications they expect to obtain from them, forms the central tenet of uses and gratifications theory. These perceptions of the gratifications to be obtained are either influenced by a particular medium's functional attributes (media centric) or by an individual's social and psychological disposition (user centric) or by a combination of these two factors.

Consumers' media needs can be labelled as cognitive (the need for information), affective (appreciation of the aesthetic), personal integrative (a desire to be perceived as knowledgeable and credible – relating to personal identity), social integrative (the need to belong to a group) and escapist (the need for diversion).

A medium's relevance is thus contingent on users' unwitting choices based on their own perceptions regarding its ability to address some, or possibly all of these needs.

As an extension of uses and gratifications theory, niche theory proposes that once a consumer has made a decision based on these perceptions and has obtained the gratification they expected, they are likely to repeat the decision and form a behavioural pattern. Such recurring behaviour based on preference, ultimately lead to the displacement of one medium by another due to its superior ability to gratify certain needs. Displacement is the most common result of competition between various media. As a result of displacement, media may either adapt to coexist with the new medium or it may face further displacement.

The Internet is an exceptional medium in that it has the unique ability to emulate virtually all of the functional attributes of traditional media. When viewed from a media centric perspective it therefore seems quite plausible to assume that the Internet can, at least in theory, displace all traditional media, including printed media and magazines in particular. Furthermore,

it has been established that whilst it is not very likely that the Internet will create new media needs, it is very well suited to offer new and innovative ways of gratifying existing media needs.

However, despite the Internet's varied functional attributes the psychological disposition of its users may still be such that they prefer traditional media, such as magazines, to gratify certain media needs. This suggests that magazine publishers who wish to develop an effective online strategy should identify which needs are better gratified through the online experience and which needs users prefer to gratify through their choice of the printed product.

Once these divisions have been clarified they can be used to develop a strategy. Such a strategy should endeavour to fulfil short term objectives that will assist in promoting the brand by providing users with the relevant content in the medium that has proven to be best suited to gratify a particular need. In the case of magazine websites content should therefore be divided, but not duplicated between the online and printed products.

The research data gathered for this thesis shows an inclination by readers towards using the Internet for the gratification of cognitive and personal integrative needs, whilst choosing magazine when gratifying affective and social integrative needs. A relevant point to note, which seems to underpin the importance of a well defined and complementary digital strategy, is the fact that social integrative needs seem to be almost equally well served by digital media as by printed magazine products.

One may therefore deduce that the gratification of the need to belong to a particular group and to be identified as such, does not hinge on the functional attributes of a particular medium, or necessarily on users' psychological disposition towards a medium of choice, but rather on their disposition to the brand which is conveyed by these media.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research contained in this study seems to support Kaiser's explanations for the seemingly insignificant impact of the provision of magazine websites on the demand for the printed product (see 2.2). The research data shows that the apparent anomaly can be explained through the application of uses and gratifications theory which highlights consumers' differentiation in their media use depending on the needs they seek to gratify.

It therefore becomes clear that understanding which perceived gratifications users seek to obtain when using a magazine website and which needs they prefer to gratify through the choice

of a printed product enables a publisher to develop synchronous web and print strategies. These strategies should be complementary in satisfying the full suite of users' media needs so as to ultimately strengthen the brand through multiple media.

In the case of *WegSleep*, this would mean that to develop an online strategy that does not undermine the printed product, the magazine's website would have to be focused on gratifying cognitive and personal integrative needs, whilst the printed product should be aimed at satisfying affective and escapist needs. The two channels should be employed cooperatively to gratify social integrative needs.

In practical terms this means *WegSleep* should maintain a strong online community on its website through the use of its chat forum and enhance and expand its digital offering of reliable, easily accessible content. The latter may be achieved through editorial input as well as a heavy reliance on user generated content. Diversionary applications such as games, video clips, podcasts and other non informative applications may be included in the online strategy. However, it should be understood that these are not the main generators of user attention and should therefore not be integral or pivotal elements of the online strategy.

It is important to bear in mind that the research sample for this study was limited. Due to the practical difficulties of accessing a larger sample the respondents to the first questionnaire were limited to existing users of a single niche magazine website. In order to enhance the generalisability of the study it would be preferable to employ a larger research sample.

Although an indication was given of the profitability of magazine websites included in the second survey, the success of these websites was measured solely by taking into account their respective average monthly page impressions. The websites included in this survey may therefore not necessarily fulfil the criteria of financial success as may be desired for a commercial website strategy.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The data relating to the users of the *WegSleep* website revealed a discrepancy in the representation of the different sexes in the composition of the online audience and the readership of the printed magazine. Although a brief explanation for this discrepancy was presented, further research into this matter is warranted. It may therefore be useful to explore the different sexes' relative approaches to new and old media, especially within the context of niche magazines, from a uses and gratifications perspective.

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Addendum A: Pilot Survey

1. Ouderdom		2. Geslag		M	V					
3. Akademiese kwalifikasie			Matriek		Diploma		Graad		Nagraads	
4. HOE GEREELD GEBRUIK JY DIE INTERNET?										
Elke dag		3-4 keer per week		1 keer per week		minder as 1 keer per week				
5. HOE LANK IS JY AL 'N GEREËLDE INTERNET GEBRUIKER?										
Minder as 2 jaar		2 Jaar		3 Jaar		4 Jaar		5 Jaar		5 Jaar +
6. HOEVEEL UUR SPANDEER JY GEMIDDELD PER DAG OP DIE INTERNET?										
Minder as 1 uur		1-2 uur		2-3 uur		3-4 uur		Meer as 4 uur		
7. VAN WAAR IS JOU VERNAAMSTE TOEGANG TOT DIE INTERNET.										
By die huis		By die werk		Internetkafee						
8. WATTER SOORT INTERNET KONNEKSIE GEBRUIK JY?										
Telefoon inbellyn (Dial up)		Breëband adsl?		IBurst		3G				
9. WAT IS JOU VERNAAMSTE GEBRUIK VAN DIE INTERNET? (nommer 1 – 10 itv belang)										
Ek doen my banksake										
Ek lees tydskrif artikels										
Ek bly op hoogte van die jongste nuusgebeure										
Ek doen aanlyn inkopies										
Ek gebruik soekenjins om inligting oor 'n bepaalde onderwerp te vind										
Ek neem deel aan internetgespreksforums.										
Ek speel speletjies										
Ek bedryf my eie webwerf										
Ek gebruik die internet om langafstand foonoproepe te maak met bv. Skype										
Ek soek multimedia soos musiek en videos										
10. BUITEN VIR INTERNETBANKDIENSTE, HET JY AL TRANSAKSIES MET INTERNET GEDOEN?										
Ja		Nee		As jy JA geantwoord het, vul asseblief 10 (a) i en ii in. Indien jy NEE geantwoord het, vul asseblief 10 (b) in.						
i. Watter soort transaksies het jy al op die internet gedoen?										
10. (a) Bespreek flik- of teaterkaartjies.										
Bestel boeke, cd's DVD's.										
Doen aanlyn verblyfbesprekings en betalings by hotelle gastehuse of kampterreine.										
Koop of verkoop produkte op veilingswebwerwe.										
Koop by kettingwinkels met 'n aanlyn-inkopiefunksie										
ii. Watter van die volgende webwerwe se transaksiefasiliteit het jy al gebruik?										
www.Kalahari.net										
www.amazon.com / www.amazon.co.uk										
www.computicket.co.za										
www.sterkinekor.co.za										
www.sanparks.org.za										
www.nightsbridge.co.za										
www.ebay.com										
www.gumtree.co.za										
www.payfine.co.za										
www.sars.gov.za										
Ander (spesifiseer)										
Waarom het jy nog nooit transaksies op die internet gedoen nie?										
10. (b) Ek het nog nooit nut gehad daarvoor nie.										
Ek verkies persoonlike aandag.										
Ek voel nie veilig om my bankbesonderhede te verskaf nie.										
Ander (spesifiseer)										

11. IS JY 'N LID VAN 'N SOSIALE NETWERK SOOS FACEBOOK OF MYSPACE?			
Ja	Nee		
12. NOEM ASB. 5 WEBWERWE WAT JY GEREELD BESOEK. (buiten WegSleep/Weg/WegRy)			
13. HOE HET JY VAN DIE WEGSLEEP WEBWERF TE HORE GEKOM?			
Via die tydskrif	'n Vriend het my vertel	Deur 'n soekenjin	Via 'n ander webwerf
14. WAT IS VOLGENS JOU DIE BELANGRIKSTE VAN 'N TYDSKRIF-WEBWERF? Nommer van 1 - 8 itv belang.			
Ek kan nuus oor die jongste uitgawe van die tydskrif lees.			
Ek kan inhoud van die tydskrif aanlyn vind.			
Ek kan rubrieke/blogs deur lede van die redaksie of gasskrywers lees.			
Ek kan raad, nuus en wenke eerstehands by ander gebruikers kry.			
Ek kan direkte kontak maak met die redaksie.			
Ek kan my raad, nuus en wenke direk met ander gebruikers deel.			
Ek kan "expert" advies by 'n kenner kry.			
Ek voel deel van 'n groep met 'n gemeenskaplike belangstelling.			
15. 'N NISMARKTYDSKRIF SOOS WEGSLEEP BEHOORT 'N WEBWERF TE HÊ WANT: (Kies net een)			
Tydskrifte se dae is getel. Lesers gaan een van die dae nie meer die papier produk wil hê nie, en gaan dit eerder aanlyn lees.			
Dit is ondenkbaar dat 'n besigheid deesdae sonder 'n webwerf funksioneer. 'n Webwerf is dus onvermydelik.			
Die webwerf kan die tydskrif - en my lewenstyl/stokperdjie - aanvul op maniere wat nie in die gedrukte medium moontlik is nie.			

Addendum B: Survey among users of the WegSleep chat forum

1. Ouderdom	
2. Geslag	
3. Akademiese kwalifikasie	
4. Hoe gereeld gebruik jy die Internet?	
5. Hoe lank is jy al 'n gereelde gebruiker?	
6. Hoeveel uur spandeer jy gemiddeld per dag op die Internet?	
7. Van waar is jou vernaamste toegang tot die internet?	
8. Watter soort internetkonneksie gebruik jy?	
VUL ASSEBLIEF ELKE BLOKKIE IN	
9. Wat is jou vernaamste gebruik van die internet? (rangskik van 1 - 10 itv belang)	
Ek doen my banksake	
Ek lees tydskrif artikels	
Ek bly op hoogte van die jongste nuusgebeure	
Ek doen aanlyn inkopies	
Ek gebruik soekenjins om inligting oor 'n bepaalde onderwerp te vind	
Ek neem deel aan internetgespreksforums.	
Ek speel speletjies	
Ek bedryf my eie webwerf	
Ek gebruik die internet om langafstand foonoprope te maak met bv. Skype	
Ek soek multimedia soos musiek en videos	
10. Buiten vir internetbankdienste, het jy al ander internet-transaksies gedoen?	
11. Is jy 'n lid van 'n sosiale netwerk soos Facebook of Myspace?	

12. Hoe het jy van WegSleep se webwerf gehoor?

VUL ASSEBLIEF ELKE BLOKKIE IN

13. Wat is volgens jou die grootste waarde van 'n tydskrif webwerf? (Nommer van 1 - 11 itv belang.)

Ek kan nuus oor die jongste uitgawe van die tydskrif lees.

Ek kan inhoud van die tydskrif aanlyn vind.

Ek kan rubrieke/blogs deur lede van die redaksie of gasskrywers lees.

Ek kan raad, nuus en wenke eerstehands by ander gebruikers kry.

Ek kan direkte kontak maak met die redaksie.

Ek kan my raad, nuus en wenke direk met ander gebruikers deel.

Ek kan "expert" advies by 'n kenner kry.

Ek voel deel van 'n groep met 'n gemeenskaplike belangstelling.

Ek kan relevante inligting oor my belangstelling vinnig kry.

Ek kan tyd verwyd terwyl ek ledig is.

Ek hoef nie te wag vir die volgende uitgawe om te lees oor dit waarin ek belangstel nie

14. Kies by elk van die volgende groepe stellings slegs die stelling wat jou gevoel die beste beskryf. Klik op die blokkie regs van jou keuse.

a. Ek verkies om eerder na mooi foto's op 'n webwerf te kyk as in 'n tydskrif.



b. Ek verkies om eerder na mooi foto's in 'n tydskrif te kyk as op 'n webwerf.



a. Wanneer ek inligting oor 'n bepaalde onderwerp soek raadpleeg ek eerder die internet as 'n tydskrif.



b. Wanneer ek inligting oor 'n bepaalde onderwerp soek raadpleeg ek eerder 'n tydskrif as die internet.



a. Ek sal eerder bydrae lewer op 'n webwerf as om 'n brief aan 'n tydskrif te stuur.



b. Ek sal eerder 'n brief aan 'n tydskrif stuur as om 'n bydrae op 'n webwerf te lewer.



- a. Ek is 'n gereelde leser van 'n bepaalde tydskrif, daarom voel ek deel van 'n uitgesoekte groep.
- b. Ek neem deel aan gesprekke op 'n webforum, daarom voel ek deel van 'n uitgesoekte groep.

- a. Ná 'n moeilike werksdag ontspan ek eerder met 'n tydskrif as op die internet.
- b. Ná 'n moeilike werksdag ontspan ek eerder op die internet as met 'n tydskrif.

Kies asseblief een opsie by elke paar stellings

VUL ASSEBLIEF ELKE BLOKKIE IN

15. Rangskik die volgende funksies of elemente van 'n tydskrifwebwerf (na jou mening) in volgorde van belangrikheid.

'n Profielfunksie waar besoekers hul foto en persoonlike besonderhede kan laai.

'n Webforum waar lesers met mekaar kan gesels

Lesersfoto's

Inhoud wat ook in die tydskrif verskyn

Lang artikels wat nie in die tydskrif verskyn nie

Lesersbydrae

'n Soekfunksie om vinnig 'n onderwerp na te vors

Video- en klankopnames

Speletjies

Resepte

Relevante advertensies

'n Interaktiewe afdeling waar kenners lesersvrae kan beantwoord.

16. Waarom dink jy behoort 'n tydskrif 'n webwerf te hê? Klik op die blokkie aan die regterkant van jou keuse.

a. Tydskrifte se dae is getel. Lesers gaan een van die dae nie meer die papier produk wil hê nie, en gaan dit eerder aanlyn lees.

b. Dit is ondenkbaar dat 'n besigheid deesdae sonder 'n webwerf funksioneer. 'n Webwerf is dus onvermydelik.

c. Die webwerf kan die tydskrif - en my lewenstyl/stokperdjie - aanvul op maniere wat nie in die gedrukte medium moontlik is nie.

Addendum C: Survey among editors / online editors of the seven most successful South African magazine websites

Q1. Please write the web address of your website
<input type="text" value="[Type your answer here]"/>
Q2. Please name the magazine for which the site is operated
<input type="text" value="[Type your answer here]"/>
Q3. If this is a single magazine (or group of magazines of similar frequency), how frequently is the printed magazine published?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weekly
<input type="checkbox"/> Every two weeks
<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly
<input type="checkbox"/> Every two months
<input type="checkbox"/> Other frequency
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
Q4. Which of these are major objectives for the website? Click all that apply.
<input type="checkbox"/> Expand your audience beyond the print audience base by creating an online audience (i.e. including non-readers of print product)
<input type="checkbox"/> Use website to attract new readers for the print products
<input type="checkbox"/> Build a community around your brand
<input type="checkbox"/> A means of communicating with the target audience on a more frequent basis than the magazine can do
<input type="checkbox"/> Allow your audience access to your content at times and in places that are most convenient for them
<input type="checkbox"/> Discourage your audience from drifting to other online sources
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase your product lines
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide website advertisements as added-value for advertisers in print publications
<input type="checkbox"/> Create new revenue streams/profits in long term
<input type="checkbox"/> Create new revenue streams/profits in short term
<input type="checkbox"/> Form online partnerships with others, to develop more powerful services
<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Please describe 'Other'

[Type your answer here]

Q5. In the next 12 months do you expect to:

- Expand your online efforts for this website
- Reduce your online efforts for this website
- Maintain your online efforts at about their current level

Q6. What target audience is served by the website?

[Type your answer here]

Q7. Have you gained significant numbers of new audience to your website who do not read your print product(s)?

- Yes, 20% or more of print audience size
- Yes, less than 20% of print audience size
- No
- Don't know

Are you able to describe this new web-only audience? (for example, readers of rival print products, or outside the home country, etc)

[Type your answer here]

And please describe what online services or other aspect mainly attracts the new audience

[Type your answer here]

Q8. Approximately how many site visitors ('unique users') does the site receive each month?

[Type your answer here]

Q9. How does the figure for site visitors given above compare with the position 12 months ago?

- Increased 20% or more
- Increased by less than 20%
- Stayed about the same
- Decreased by less than 20%
- Decreased by 20% or more

Q10. Approximately how many page impressions does the site receive each month?

[Type your answer here]

Web content

Q11. How frequently is the site updated?

- Continuously throughout the day
- Once a day
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less often than monthly

Q12. Here is a list of ways in which visitors to a website might interact directly with the site's publishers and/or other visitors. Which of these does your site offer? Click all that apply.

- Chat room or message board discussion
- Articles or blogs submitted for publication on the site (not paid for)
- Paid-for online articles, reports or features
- Classified advertisements from visitors
- Hyperlinks to relevant external sites, proposed by visitors
- Online auctions
- Print subscription request
- Online subscription to member-only area
- Offers/discounts exclusive to members/subscribers
- Special interest clubs to which visitors may subscribe
- Other interactive facilities

Please describe 'Other interactive facilities'

[Type your answer here]

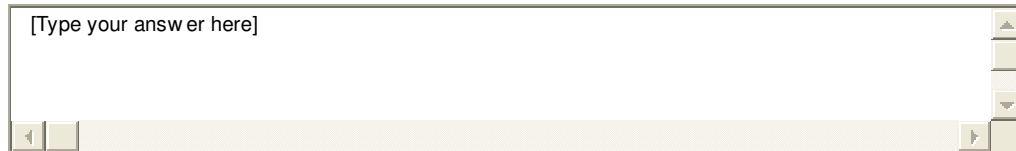
Q13. Which of these other services does the website offer? Click all that apply.

- Archival retrieval
- E-mailed newsletter linked to website
- News flash service
- Services designed for mobile phone access

- Services designed for PDA/handheld computer access
- Online games
- Search engine which searches external sites as well as your own
- RSS feeds
- Video clips
- Podcasts
- Other

Please describe 'Other'

[Type your answer here]



Q14. Does the site have e-commerce capability for online product/services sales (where customers pay online)?

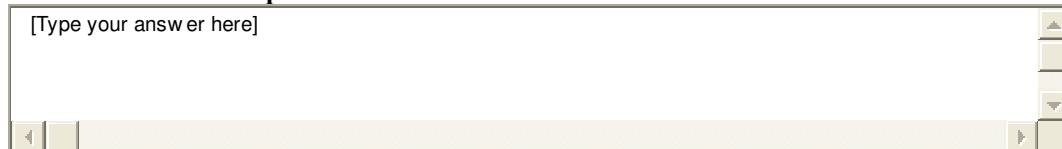
- Yes
- No

Which products do you offer for sale via e-commerce? Click all that apply.

- Print magazine subscriptions
- Subscriptions to online services
- Purchase of individual copies of print publications
- Database or archival material
- Conference/exhibition registrations
- Events, concerts, shows
- Branded goods
- Paid-for online content (e.g. articles, reports, features)
- Other products/services

Please describe 'Other products/services'.

[Type your answer here]

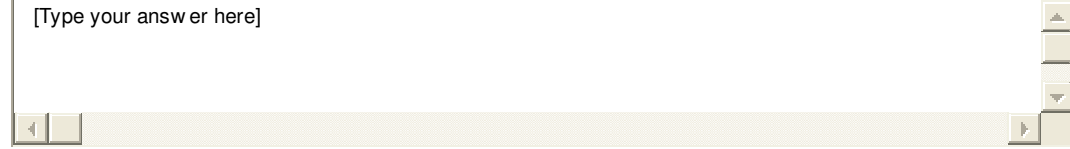


Q15. To what extent do you take information that has not been published in the printed magazine, and edit/package it for visitors to search on the website?

- Extensively; a significant part of site's content
- Limited
- Do not do this

Please summarise one or two of your best examples

[Type your answer here]

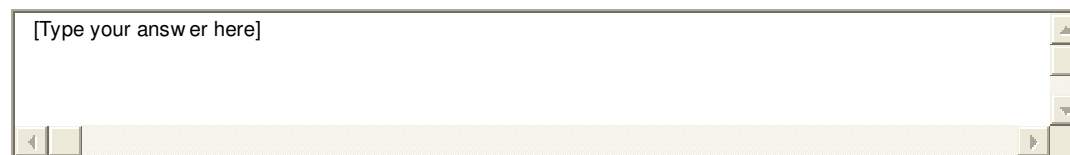


Q16. Is a charge made to users for access to any part of the site?

- Yes, for the whole site
- Yes, for part of the site
- No

Roughly what proportion of the site's content is in the paid area?

[Type your answer here]



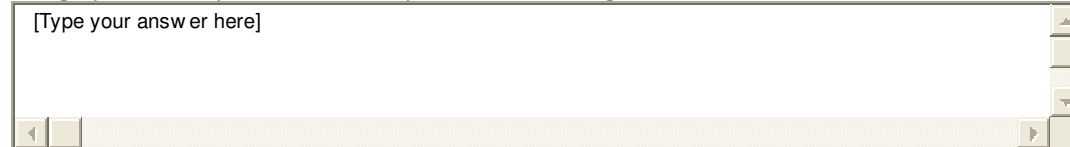
Digital editions

Q17. Do you publish a digital edition of your magazine? That is, an exact reproduction in electronic form.

- Yes
- No

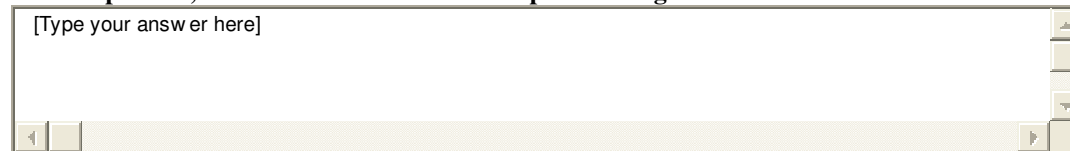
Roughly how many subscribers do you have to the digital edition?

[Type your answer here]



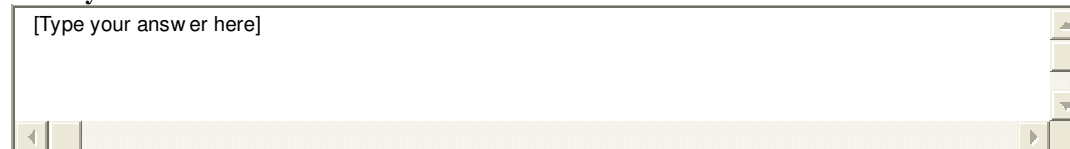
For comparison, what is the circulation of the printed magazine?

[Type your answer here]



Approximately what proportion of the digital edition's subscribers are resident outside the home country?

[Type your answer here]



Do you think subscribers to the digital edition are:

- Mainly new readers who did not previously receive the printed magazine

- Mainly existing readers who still receive the printed magazine
- Mainly existing readers who gave up the printed magazine because they receive the digital edition

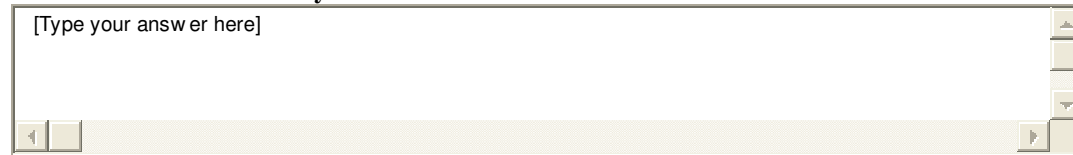
Advertising & sponsorship

Q18. Have you gained new advertisers on the web who do not advertise in your print product(s)?

- Yes
- No

Please describe what mainly attracts the new advertisers

[Type your answer here]

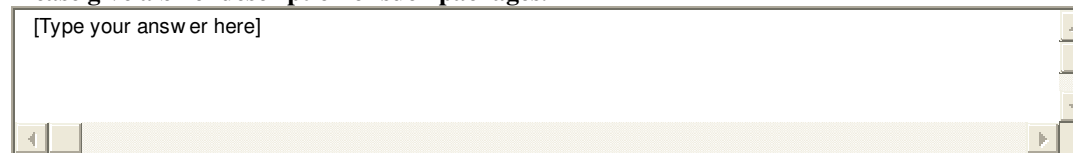


Q19. Do you create advertising/sponsorship opportunities across both the print and web brands, and/or with similar brands or portals elsewhere in the company, so that prospective advertisers/sponsors are offered mixed-media packages?

- Yes
- No

Please give a brief description of such packages.

[Type your answer here]



Q20. Does your site offer 'contextual advertising' - that is, the placing of advertisements on the screen according to keywords used by visitors when searching your site?

- Yes
- No

How important a part of your advertising revenue is contextual advertising?

- Very important
- Quite important
- Not very important

Q21. Do you buy contextual advertising on other sites (such as Google, Yahoo or other search engines) to drive traffic to your own site?

- Yes
- No

Marketing, man-hours & profitability

Q22. How is the website marketed to customers? Click all that apply.

- Promotion within the printed magazine(s) hosting the site
- Promotion within other magazines owned by the company
- Promotion/links (paid-for or free) from other websites
- Paid-for advertising in newspapers, magazines or other media
- E-mail promotion
- Promotional events
- Other

Please describe your 'Other' forms of marketing

[Type your answer here]

Q23. How do the man-hours currently devoted to your web operations compare with the position 12 months ago?

- Increased 20% or more
- Increased by less than 20%
- Stayed about the same
- Decreased by less than 20%
- Decreased by 20% or more
- Don't know

Q24. Taking account of all relevant overhead and operating expenses, is the website making a profit, breaking even, or losing money?

- Making a profit
- Breaking even
- Losing money
- Don't know / accounting procedures don't show website economics separately

Competitors

Q25. Who are your competitors online (for site visitors)?

- Mainly the same as your competitors to the printed magazine
- Mainly different competitors

Please describe the 'different competitors'.

[Type your answer here]

Q26. Do you believe that search engines such as Google may reduce visitor traffic to your site by directing internet users to alternative information on other sites?

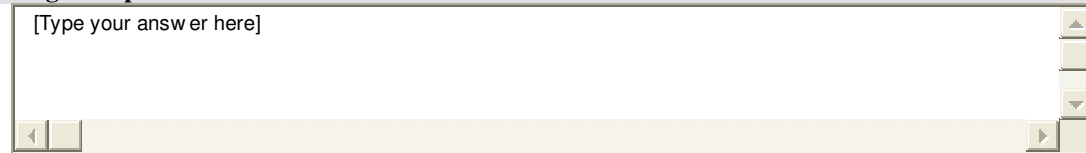
- Yes
 No

Q27. And do you believe that search engines such as Google may reduce advertisement revenue for your site, by attracting some of that ad revenue themselves?

- Yes
 No

Q28. Do you have any comments about the situation concerning search engines, or thoughts on how magazine publisher sites can deal with it? Please write in.

[Type your answer here]

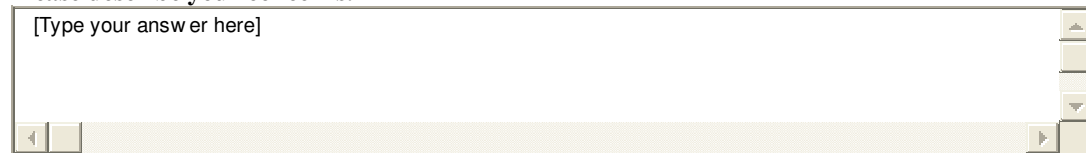


Q29. Do you have any concerns about copyright protection, in relation to search engines or initiatives such as the Google Print project?

- Yes
 No

Please describe your concerns.

[Type your answer here]



Finally...

Q30. Which of the following barriers to success are significant for you? Click all that apply.

- Initial low or negative return on investment in web
- Insufficient funds for web development
- Pressure to focus on print products
- Resistance by existing employees who work on print products
- Finding staff with the right skills
- Slow acceptance by internal management of need for electronic products
- Rapid changes in technology
- Mastering the technology
- Rapid changes in your sector's marketplace

Q31. What are the principal lessons you would like to pass on about developing and operating your web strategy?

[Type your answer here]

Q32. Do you have any instructive experiences derived from failed websites?

[Type your answer here]