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**THE ROLE OF NEWSMAGAZINES IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
THE EVOLUTION OF A JOURNALISTIC GENRE AND
HOW IT CAN STAY RELEVANT IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

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Foreword

On May 5th, one month after I finished this paper about the future of newsmagazines, the Washington Post Company put *Newsweek* up for sale. Created in 1933, the title was part of the group since 1961. The decision – not a surprising one, as Jon Meacham, *Newsweek*'s editor-in-chief, admits – raises doubts about whether the publication will continue.

Commentators on the media argued that *Newsweek* was suffering the consequences of the competition imposed by the internet. While it is true that the digital era certainly throws up major challenges to the journalistic business, it is also true that there are other important factors to determine one publication's vulnerabilities when compared to another's. This paper highlights some of *Newsweek*'s weaknesses, some of which date from the birth of the magazine.

Among the most important ones are the constant changes in editorship, the lack of a consistent editorial formula throughout its history and an unclear editorial culture. Alongside its editorial flaws, *Newsweek* shared with *Time*, its main competitor, an important question about its business model: whether it is still possible to have a mass magazine sustained by advertising revenues.

The demise of *Newsweek* is not good news for publishers around the globe and this work tries to better understand what has driven the Washington Post Company's decision and to point out possible ways to keep printing it in the 21st century.

Introduction

Much is said about the print media crisis – the decreasing circulation, the shrinking advertising market, and the fierce competition with other media for people's attention, first with TV and cable TV and now with the web (Turow, 2003). But very little of this debate takes magazines into consideration, whereas newspapers are the main focus of many academic studies. Notwithstanding, newsmagazines are facing the same challenges and, similarly to newspapers, may not survive the new conditions imposed by the digital era.

According to *The State of News Media* report, the circulation of the two biggest newsmagazines in the United States – *Time* and *Newsweek* – dropped from 7.6 million, in 1989, to 5.6 million copies, in 2009. In January 2010, *Newsweek's* American circulation was cut to 1.5 million copies, which is 46% less than two years ago. In May 6th, the Washington Post Co., which owns *Newsweek*, announced its intention to sell the magazine, prompted by the financial losses of the title. The most radical change, though, was accomplished by *U.S. News & World Report*, now being a monthly publication.

Having reduced their circulation base to cut costs on printing and distribution, newsmagazines are trying to persuade advertisers to pay more to get to a smaller, but arguably more elitist, readership. At the same time they are implementing an increase in cover price and subscription fees. *Newsweek* has also changed its content proposition during the last year, by moving towards analysis. All three major magazines are trying to increase revenues online while reorganizing their staff to cope with multimedia production.

Understanding the main challenges for newsmagazines in the current disruptive journalistic context as well as analysing possible ways to handle and overcome them is the purpose of this study.

One of the main difficulties, however, is the impossibility of lumping together all the newsmagazines under one single journalistic model or content proposition. Unlike the majority of newspapers, which are recognized for being generalists and having – to a certain extent – an objective and standardized approach to the news, newsmagazines vary significantly in the scope of the areas they cover, as well as in angle and in style.

Defining what a newsmagazine is by reassessing its historical background is the aim of the first part of this paper.

The second part is dedicated to study the differences between the newsmagazines and their approaches to the challenges. Besides *Time* and *Newsweek*, this work analyses how *The Economist*, *The Week* and *Der Spiegel* are dealing with the same situation and what the outcomes of each strategy are. Looking beyond traditional print media, it also analyses innovative experiences in print, *Única*, in Portugal; merging online and print, *Politico*, in the United States; and online only, *FLYP*, also in the United States.

In light of the historical knowledge and case studies, the third and last part of this study- summarises the possible future scenarios of newsmagazines in terms of content and staff organization. Moreover, it focuses on how the genre can stay relevant as a medium, regardless of its platform.

2. History – The birth of newsmagazines

No one would mistake a newspaper for a magazine or vice versa. It is challenging, though, to draw the frontier lines between the two journalistic genres, which have been blurred throughout the history of journalism.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the first newspapers were printed in quarto size sheets every four or six days and compiled foreign news – a role strikingly similar to that of modern weekly newsmagazines. The daily periodicity that defines newspapers today emerged in England only with the birth of *The Daily Courant* in 1702.

The first periodicals were literary digests such as the *Journal des Savans* (published in Paris in 1665) and the *Weekly Memorials for the Ingenuous* (published in England in 1682) and were very similar to newspapers in their format; they were mostly based on long texts with occasional woodcut illustrations (Davis 1988, 4).

The technique of lithography, which improved the quality of printing images, was developed in 1796; the first pictures were printed in half-tones and appeared only in 1871. The concept of a magazine as a design product was inserted much later than the genre itself.

From the beginning, periodicals had a link with literature and developed a strong culture of text. Fiction pieces played an important role until the verge of the 20th century and certainly increased the quality of writing in magazines. It was possible to read the best authors, Longfellow, Tennyson or Dickens among others throughout their pages (Mott 1938, 4).

It is arguable that periodicals have inherited a tradition of polished texts from their proximity to literary work and it is true that most readers expect texts of a higher quality in magazines than in newspapers. With more time to elaborate their articles, magazines must be able to inform and amuse at the same time.

The same close relationship between periodicals and literature might also have led to the perception of magazines as somewhat detached from the reality that was daily portrayed by the newspapers.

Indeed, the term “magazine” – from Arabic *makhazin*, “warehouse, storehouse” – currently used to refer to periodicals contains the idea of a mixture of different content (Johnson and Prijatel 1999, 4). The first periodical to use it, in 1731, was *The Gentleman's Magazine* (Mott 1938). Published by a London printer, Edward Cave, it "contained titbits of doing in the royal court and around the town" (Scott 2010) and was a miscellanea of essays, stories, poems, and political commentary selected from other publications printed in Britain at that time.

The Gentleman's Magazine's success spawned many imitators, including the two first periodicals in the United States, namely *The General Magazine, and Historical Chronicle, for all the British Plantations in America* and *American Magazine, or a Monthly View of the Political State of the British Colonies*, both published in 1741 by Benjamin Franklin and Andrew Bradford, respectively (Tebbel and Zuckerman 1991, 3).

The contemporary publication *Massachusetts* had a subtitle illustrative of the issues covered back then: "Monthly Museum of Knowledge and Rational Entertainment, Containing Poetry, Musick, Biography, History, Physick, Geography, Morality, Criticism, Philosophy, Mathematicks, Agriculture, Architecture, Chemistry, Novels, Tales, Romances, Translations, News, Marriages and Deaths, Meteorological Observations, Etc., Etc."

The word "news" was far behind almost everything and remained so for most of the eighteenth century, with very rare and localized initiatives to cover current affairs and politics, such as the satirical *The Bee* (1765) and the *Porcupine's Political Censor* (1796).

During this period, when magazines were an incipient genre, the “life” of most publications was very brief. Only 4 per cent of all publications “reached the ripe age of three and a half years” (Mott 1938, 21).

The only hope keeping American editors trying was the success of English magazines such as *Gentleman's* (1731) or *London Magazine* (1732). In 1828, *The Spectator* was released, a political and cultural periodical that claims to be “the oldest continuously published magazine in the English language”. In 1843, *The Economist* was launched by James Wilson to "campaign for free trade, laissez-faire and individual responsibility through the medium of rational analysis applied to facts" (Edwards 1993, XI).

Entirely dedicated to news and their analysis, *The Economist* could be hailed as one of the first newsmagazines, but its rather unique character and distinct approach to reporting news prevented most media researchers of giving it the title that many argue belongs to *Time*, launched in 1923.

From 1800 onwards, the presence of news has increased in magazines. Tebbel and Zuckerman describe the changes in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth as follows:

In terms of editorial content, the great change in magazines by the end of the century was the widespread reflection of public interest in politics, economics, and social questions, which gave rise not only to the ten-cent muckrakers but to a changed emphasis in many other magazines. While the quality periodicals had once led off with a travel article, a historical piece, or an essay on literature or the arts, they now were printing more and more comment on political and social problems, once again narrowing the distinction between newspapers and periodicals. (1991, 76)

The distinction between newspapers and magazines was not clear even in the minds of the former Yale colleagues Henry Luce and Briton Hadden when they started thinking about launching a new publication in the 1920s. First, they realised they did not have enough money to buy a newspaper press. This led to the creation of a hybrid genre, the newly coined 'news-magazine' (Wilner 2006, 62).

The main idea behind Luce's and Hadden's magazine was organizing, at low cost, all the material produced by regional newspapers and publish a "weekly report that would summarize and explain the news in a comprehensive, objective, and entertaining manner" (Wilner 2006, 80).

The first issue, published on March 3 in 1923, had 26 pages and a circulation of 12,000 copies. In December, it had reached 100,000 copies. Its number steadily increased until it reached 1,000,000 during the World War II (a term famously coined by *Time* itself). Since the 1930s, Time Inc. has invested in a large news-gathering operation to provide the magazine with original information and, in 1960, it reached 3,000,000 copies worldwide. In 1933, *Newsweek* was successfully launched by Thomas J.C. Martyn, a former foreign editor at *Time*, to compete for this massive audience.

Besides various industrial, economic and cultural factors – such as better printing and distribution systems, the rise of purchasing power and literacy levels – the success of

these newsmagazines during the twentieth century was related to the absence of a national newspaper in the vast American territory.

According to Wilner, people also started perceiving the newsmagazines as a way of self-improvement, expanding their knowledge about the world and, most importantly, saving time. Albeit not by means of a direct confrontation, the competition with newspapers started at that time as *Time* and other magazines were trying to offer better alternatives both to inform and to entertain people (Wilner 2006, 80).

Closer to news and farther from literature, many newsmagazines put all their efforts into striking a difficult and delicate balance between seriousness and entertainment, whilst newspapers prepared themselves to face the competition for their readers' time. Joseph Pulitzer and his New York *World* started developing Sunday editions as early as 1880, including more pictures and more analytical articles to challenge magazines.

The fierce competition kept transforming both newspapers and magazines throughout the twentieth century. One chapter of this dispute occurred in the 1960s, when some British Sunday papers, such as the *Sunday Times*, the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Observer*, included colour magazines in every issue, offering an enticing alternative for advertisers.

The popularity of hard news journalism in radio and, later, in television, was also an important ingredient in the evolution of newsmagazines and newspapers, pushing them, by all accounts, towards a more analytical coverage. It is, therefore, valid to conclude that, from the end of the 19th century onwards, the differences became more abstruse. In a way, the internet has just deepened a trend of resemblance that started more than a century ago.

In this context of fierce competition, the number of newspapers in the United States started to shrink: according to *Editor and Publisher Yearbook*, there were 1,611 daily newspapers in 1990 and 1,408 in 2008. The same, however, has not happened with magazines. In 1990, the National Director of Magazines registered 14,049 titles being published in the United States and by 2008, the number had increased to 20,590 publications.

Despite these numbers, it is not possible to say that magazines passed the so called "print crisis" unscathed. News-stands sales decreased – by 9.1% from July to December 2009,

compared with the same period in 2008, according to ABC – and advertising revenue fell – down 17.5% from 2009, as reported by the *Publishers Information Bureau*. Some weekly newsmagazines are among the ones struggling with losses: *Newsweek's* number of ad pages declined by 25%; and *Time's* dropped by 17% in 2009 within one year.

This challenging scenario, however, seems not to have reached some titles, notably *The Economist* and *The Week*. Having taken into consideration the fact that both British newsmagazines have historically had smaller circulation figures than their American counterparts and that this may have had an impact on the current results, it is still significant, though, that the two publications have been experiencing growth in circulation. In 2009, *The Economist* circulation reached 1,390,780 copies worldwide, which means a rise by 6.4% within one year. *The Week* increased by 9.8% up to 149,690 copies in the UK in 2009.

These numbers challenge the simplistic interpretation that newsmagazines, with their relatively slow pace to provide news, are doomed. The mixed messages given by the market bring both hope and doubts to publishers and reflect the complexity of a journalistic genre prone to individualisation rather than generalisation.

It is precisely this trend towards singularity that may distinguish newsmagazines from newspapers. The attempt to reach an original formula to present the world, with a specific mixture of certain kinds of content, may be the most essential characteristic of the genre. On the one hand, this uniqueness means that newsmagazines may be considered to be an addition to, but not the main voices of the public debate; on the other hand, giving it away might undermine their existence in a very competitive media landscape.

If the crisis faced by magazines is not as deep as the one which newspapers are experiencing, it is, among other reasons, due to the diversity inside the genre. Similarly to what occurs in nature's evolutionary process, the variation provides the species, not the individuals, with a greater chance of survival.

In order to adequately address this non-uniformity, the third chapter of this paper will present some case studies of various important titles. The aim is to understand the similarities as well as the differences between the respective content propositions; the question remains why some lead to success while others fail to do so.

3. Case studies – Different titles, different solutions for the same challenges

This section dedicates itself to describe the content proposition of the following titles: *The Economist*, *The Week*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Der Spiegel*, *Única*, *Politico* and *FLYP*. In all but *FLYP*, an online only publication, the questions are: what are the differences between print and online content and how has the staff been organized to cope with the new platform.

***The Economist* - The rise of a global magazine**

The Economist does not have lots of pictures and graphics, and does not talk about celebrities and the like. Instead, it has rather long anonymously written texts on politics and economics worldwide. The description could not be further from what many a media mogul would prescribe to guarantee a successful publication in the age of internet but the title could be described as the most successful newsmagazine in the last decade.

The Economist has enjoyed, in the past twenty years, a 97%-rise in circulation worldwide, according to Audit Bureau of Circulations figures. It has increased its presence not only in relatively new markets such as Middle East and Africa (44% increase in circulation) and Asia Pacific (66%) but also in mature markets as the United Kingdom (52%), where it was born, and in North America (152%). The American figures are particularly impressive bearing in mind that the three main newsmagazines in the United States (*Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News*) had a collective 27%-decrease in circulation from 1989 to 2009, according to the ABC.

The Economist currently sells a total of 1,4 million copies per issue worldwide, of which only— only 13,3% sold in the United Kingdom. The number is even more significant considering that the magazine reached 100,000 only in 1970 and that, during 1920s, it sold 6,000 copies. The path towards internationalization – -although potentially present since the beginning of the magazine, in 1843, because of its defence of free market and other liberal ideals – became reality in the first half of the twentieth century:

What made the paper particularly valuable abroad was its coverage of 'abroad', for it was under Layton [*Walter Thomas Layton, editor from 1922 to 1938 and chairman from 1944 to 1963*] that it strongly developed that paradox that has led to global success: it has flourished in inverse proportion to Britain's importance in the world. Under Layton, there was a growing perception of the reader as

English-speaking but not necessarily English; by the time war broke out in 1939, half of all the copies were going abroad. Solidly rooted in Britain and expressive of British liberal principles, though it continued to be, *The Economist* increasingly came to report the world in the manner of a multinational board where English is the lingua franca. (Edwards 1993, 654)

The consistent foreign coverage is accredited as one of the reasons for the current magazine's prosperity. While other media outlets were cutting their foreign budget, *The Economist* expanded its correspondent network to 28 people – a considerable number for a newsroom with about 100 people.

Investing in a systematic international coverage allowed the publication to aspire for readers overseas, increasing its circulation while keeping its content proposition. In the words of Michael Reid, editor of the Americas' section, *The Economist* is an interpretative digest of what is important in the world that week. The strong link with the news is one of the reasons why the publication refers to itself as a newspaper.

But *The Economist's* tie with the current news is arguably not of the same nature of a newspaper's and the key differentiation relies in the word “interpretative”. Leaving apart newspapers' efforts to become more analytical in the age of real time news, the publication's compromise to the “pursuit of a reason” is remarkable, as, described by the book which recalls its history as follows:

It was the combination of the persuasive – even rumbustious – writing style with a near-fanatical devotion to facts that was to give *The Economist* authority and influence from the outset. New papers often fail because they lack a clear identity: about *The Economist* there was no confusion. Its purpose was to further the cause of free trade in the interest of national and international prosperity: its voice was the highly distinctive voice of James Wilson, who announced himself in the prospectus (in the guise of “ourselves”) as having “very strong opinions, formed after long observation, experience, and reflection, and which the further observation of every day tends only to make stronger”. (Edwards 1993, 2)

The difficulty to draw a clear line between the ideal of rigorous analysis and the simple partiality constitutes the most common criticism towards the magazine. The lack of identified sources of information and author in various pieces can reinforce critics' arguments. Relying on anonymity is, though, an essential feature of *The Economist's* journalistic practice. By not naming its sources, the magazine claims to get better information free of public constraints and personal interests. By not naming its writers, the

title tries to build the above mentioned collective voice.

A possible interpretation of this culture of anonymity is that the newsmagazine is trying to be the depository of authority itself, instead of attracting it by quoting people with authority and building the public's trust in individual journalists.

If *The Economist's* idea of anonymity is proving interesting to its readers, it poses a challenge for the magazine in the highly personalized online world. How can it transfer its values and, consequently, its authority to the new medium?

One of the biggest challenges for *Economist.com* is to cope with the fast pace of news online, a condition intrinsically averse to the title's value of "long observation, experience, and reflection". The difficulty becomes even greater with a small team of journalists – incomparably smaller than the one broadcasters' and news-wires' have. The solution up until now has been to drastically limit the number of pieces published on the website. "We are quite disciplined in not trying to be Thomson Reuters or Bloomberg, so we are about analysis and considered opinion and we are very selective on the news we take. The print edition is about selecting what happened in the world and we try to do the same thing online", affirms Daniel Franklin, the executive-editor in charge of *Economist Online*.

The section dedicated to daily news analysis – probably the one which resembles more the print product – has, on average, two pieces per day, and some of them were originally published in the print edition. One of the main worries concerning this content, according to interviewed members of the staff, is keeping quality standards. "We certainly don't have that much time to search and report on a story but if you use the same journalists and if you use the accumulated knowledge they have on a story, and put through quality control tests and research, you can do that relatively quickly", affirms Franklin. All texts published online go through two editors and research to check facts, a process similar to what occurs in print, but with fewer steps. Keeping this routine is possible only for a limited number of articles.

These daily news analyses are done by a small staff – three people – entirely dedicated to the website. A number of times, though, the articles are written by the print staff, but it depends on the magazine workload. "About India, for example, we would ask to our India correspondent to write a story. It is not always possible, because they can be very busy

with the print edition, depending on the time of the week, but that is the ideal way”, says Franklin.

It could be said, therefore, that there is cooperation between print and online, but they are still different operations. There is a trend of integration and, in the next months, the editors of the sections of the print magazine – such as Americas, Asia, Africa, and Middle East – are going to be in charge of the corresponding channels on the website and will supervise the work of online editors responsible for each section. To a certain extent, the strategy chosen by *The Economist* keeps a part of the staff dedicated only to the website. It might be a reasonable solution while the print product – and the revenues it brings – still has supremacy over the internet and while asking the same staff to produce to both print and online would mean leaving the website unattended during some days of the week. Attaching online editors to print counterparts, though, seems to be important to guarantee uniformity and maintenance of brand values.

In order to preserve its character of anonymity, *The Economist* took a decision that could sound unthinkable in other media outlets. Its online columnists write under pseudonymous – such as Buttonwood (a reference to the homonym agreement that gave birth to the New York Stock exchange) and Charlemagne (French name to Charles the Great) – and even the blogs are anonymous, an unusual form for the blogosphere.

“You have to be true to the 'Economistness' and that is not easy. It is not easy to decide what, in multimedia, is distinctive for us”, says Franklin.

Debating adequate multimedia content can be challenging for a magazine that embraced colour pictures only in 2001. Besides logistical reasons, the resistance to abandon black and white was lead by the fear that colour could threaten the importance of the text in the magazine. And so all the multimedia content is —and fears.shaped by the same values and fears. “There are lots of experimentation going on to try to find what works and what resonates for us. The debate, for example, is something that works for us and it is true to our essence. We have developed, for example, things that we call videographics. *The Economist* is well known by its charts and this is an extension of what we do in print, but online using the ability to move. I think it is distinct but, again, very true to what we are”, explains Daniel Franklin. Besides the videographics, there are a series of interviews with

prominent names in the world – baptised *Tea with The Economist* –, as well as audio slideshows and reportage on various topics.

The online debate Franklin mentions above invites specialists to present arguments around a certain topic. They try to persuade the readers, who are solicited to express their own views by voting and commenting on the website. “*The Economist* is about intelligent and global debate”, defines Ben Edwards, executive vice-president of The Economist Group and publisher of *Economist Online*. In order to enhance this debate, the title is now investing in social tools. It is going to allow readers to use their Facebook profiles to access *The Economist*, similarly to what *The Huffington Post* does now. It is also preparing profile pages for its readers on *Economist.com*.

The move towards social media started in 2009 and is going to be the core investment for the website in 2010. The first changes allowed readers to have all their comments organized in one single page, a prototype of their profile page, and gave more prominence to interaction online. In the newly designed channels, the right superior square highlights readers' comments on recently published articles.

But is it a wise strategy to try to compete with social media websites such as Facebook or even LinkedIn? According to Ben Edwards, it is not a matter of competing for attention – since readers could use other tools to access the website, if they want to – but giving room for the ones who want to be closer to the brand. The most loyal readers will be able to choose special cartoons to illustrate their profiles, to customize a map showing their global background pointing places of origin and of interest to them. They will also be able to choose whether they want to receive a notification when someone mentioned their comments or if a person of interest to them published a new comment. Edwards doesn't think that the prominence of readers' comments could be seen as the triumph of user-generated content over professional content. “I think of this as a trend towards real-time conversation, hosted and catalysed by our editors. It is a familiar role for them – they host events and discussions often in the physical world”, explains Edwards.

Such investments in interaction tools suggest that *The Economist* trusts that the best online model is not only about absolute audience figures but about a significant number of deeply engaged readers. The room for tailored advertisements – and all the questions about privacy and consumer rights they bring – in this social environment is bigger than in

general websites. The future of *Economist Online* envisions highly priced targeted ads and premium and paid-for services for readers. These higher revenues could be driven by the same 4 million unique visitors that the website currently has per month.

While all publishers are trying to find what they should do online, *The Economist* seems to bet that the increase of content production online will not alone be enough to guarantee them a distinguished place in the internet world, but it is necessary to engage the audience around the brand. To a certain extent, it is a convenient conclusion for a weekly newsmagazine that could never keep up with the demand for real time news online. It is certainly worth observing the results of *The Economist's* proposition.

***Time* – The quest to keep the identity**

On 3rd March, 1923, Americans got the first issue of a new magazine, *Time*. 'One that could fill their need for information in just less than 30 pages a week', advertised its founders, Briton Hadden and Henry R. Luce. According to the two young men, people were uninformed not because of lack of information but because of its abundance. People did not have enough time to go through newspapers with as many words as an average novel and therefore, they argued, needed a publication to "summarize and explain the news in a comprehensive, objective, and entertaining manner" (Wilner 2006, 80). *Time* did that in very short texts – sometimes two-paragraphs long – and a distinctive style – full of sentence inversions and adjectives – and neatly organized sections:

Luce and Hadden, then envisioned a 'new-magazine' that freed themselves and its readers from the shortcomings of American journalism. The news would be written and organized differently. A week's events would be compartmentalized into regular departments and summarized in entries of no more than four hundred words (seven inches of type).

(Baughman 2001, 27)

Other publishers predicted the failure of the enterprise but within a few years, it started growing faster than its competitors (Wilner 2006, 3). One of the main advantages for Luce and Hadden's publication was the lack of a national newspaper distributed across the United States. Instead of appealing to the upper-class and busy worker of the biggest cities, as the editors were expecting, the newsmagazine was specially enticing for the middle-class worker from medium-sized cities, where newspapers focused only on local news (Baughman 2001, 50).

Although reaching an audience they had not initially aimed at, Hadden and Luce succeeded in their ambition of being largely read in the country. One of the strategies used by *Time* to appeal to a broader public was to simplify even the complex international events by personalizing their coverage. As Baughman points out: "People explained events" (2001, 171). Between 1923 and 1931, individuals made the cover of the magazine just under 95 percent of the time (Baughman 2001, 45). The news was told as a "grand epic spectacle", turning journalists from "mere recorders into storytellers" (Wilner 2006, 3).

To help readers depict the stories on their minds, *Time* usually added the small details around big events. The tactic also helped the newsmagazine to build a relationship of trust with its readers:

An eye for detail also conveniently left readers with the false impression that *Time* writers had attended the event covered rather than relied on a pile of newspaper clips and the weather report. The “knowing” and sometimes unkind item, moreover, gave a story authority. (Baughman 2001, 43)

The news narrative followed a literary order, with beginning, middle, and end, and from the same point of view, as Baughman explains: "Articles would not quote various voices but speak from one. This persuasion would not be narrowly partisan or ideological. It would be omnipresent." (2001, 31)

Following a well delimited writing style, *Time's* articles had no bylines and relied entirely on what others reported during most of the first decade of its existence. In 1927, Hadden decided to invest in original news-gathering, creating *Time's* first feature pieces (Wilner 2006, 194), but as late as 1937, journalists were considered “rewrite men” rather than reporters (Baughman 2001, 41).

Along with the investment in reportage, *Time* stood out for its focus on photojournalism. The magazine “in the early 1930s ran photographs that the dailies had refused to include, with perhaps the most vivid example being that of the naked corpse of a lynched man.” (Baughman 2001, 83)

Regarded by some critics as simplistic and biased, *Time* thrived and changed along the decades and the death, in 1967, of its founder, Henry Luce (Briton Hadden had died longer before, in 1929). Tebbel and Zuckerman describe the changes in the seventies as follows:

Time was redesigned to give it a stronger, more elegant look; bylines appeared, news essay forms were tried, and a general modernizing process took place. The emphasis was still on hard news. As the eighties progressed, however, there remained an uncertainty about the future. (1991, 306-207)

In 1988, the title underwent another renovation. Two new departments were created,

Travel and Interview, the later a question-and-answer session with celebrities. Two pre-existing sections, Critic's Choice, on culture, and People, gained pages. These modifications were attributed to pressures from the competition and might have been inspired by the success of TV and celebrity magazines as People, published by the same Time Inc.. The changes, somewhat followed by the main competitors, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report*, prompted fears that the newsmagazine would become irrelevant:

Noting these changes, the *New York Times*'s Geraldine Fabrikant wrote again that all three magazines were moving away from hard news. *Time* was emphasizing stories with a universal appeal, for mass audiences." (Tebbel and Zuckerman 1991, 310)

More than twenty years later, there is now another competitor, the internet, and *Time* seems to be trying to reverse the process it had initiated in the eighties. The section called *Life*, with health, travel and technology features, has not been present in all the last editions, giving preference to politics, economics, and international affairs, the magazine's core business during its creation 87 years ago.

The changes in focus are probably an attempt to reverse the trend of decrease in circulation – from the 4.3 million copies it had in 1989 in the United States, it now has 3.4 million copies per issue in 2009, according to data from the American Audit Bureau of Circulations – and in advertising revenue, down 17% in 2009 compared to 2008.

The fall in advertising is arguably more relevant than the downturn in print readership specially because *Time* website reached 1.8 billion hits last year, compared to a base of 100,000 some years ago, as Simon Robinson, London-based senior editor of the title, points out.

The audience figures are even more impressive considering that the vast majority of online readers – presumably something around 90%, confidential data non-disclosed by the company – are not readers of the print product. The small overlap is probably behind the decision to keep the print content free for online access even 36 hours before the magazine reaches the news-stands or the subscribers' homes. While the company may be following, as the rest of the industry, Rupert Murdoch's attempts to build a “paywall”, there is no official intent to change the policies towards content on the web.

Apart from the print articles, *Time* produces a considerable amount of web-exclusively content following a similar editorial line of the paper magazine. "What we try to do online is to offer, as we do in the magazine, smart analysis about news events", says Simon Robinson. "Probably online is more mixed than magazine, covering a wider range of things. Like others, we offer different ways of getting the news, with top 10s and photo galleries". The common hard news is offered in the website by *CNN*, the broadcaster that belongs to Time Inc., while *Time.com* tries to reflect on the importance and consequences of the fact or event.

The online articles, despite being usually shorter and more direct, could, in general, be edited to be fit to print, something that happens relatively often. "Some years ago there used to be a magazine piece and an internet piece. There is much more cooperation now", affirms Robinson. "Last week, for example, there were two stories that started on the web and ended up in the print edition. And vice-versa".

The similarities between print and online content are due to the integration of its newsroom staff. "Perhaps there are still people who write primarily for the magazine and primarily for the web but I can't think of anyone at *Time* who writes just for one or the other", describes the editor.

The responsibilities regarding editing the website are divided across the world among the main newsroom, in New York, and the bureaux in London and Hong Kong. The day starts with New York, then leaves it to Hong Kong at night (morning in Asia), then leaves it to London before dawn in New York.

The current routine could not be more different to that described as an ordinary week in the twenties:

Time arrived in mail boxes over the weekend. To reach readers on schedule, the magazine had to be printed on Tuesday morning. The editorial staff worked hardest on Saturday and Sunday. On Monday, while the rest of the city began its workweek, the staff at *Time* raced to finish up. The odd hours suited Hadden. He drove his writers and researchers relentlessly four days a week, then left them free for most of the others. (Wilner 2006, 114)

The integration does not mean, though, that every journalist should be able to produce multimedia content such as video and graphics. “During the web 1.0, there was this idea that everyone would be able to do everything. Our experience is that not everyone could do that and that is a silly way to do it. Our videos tend to be done completely separately. There will always be a producer”, clarifies Robinson.

As to whether chasing the audience can dilute the editorial line, the editor gives a personal view: “It is very easy to see a story made by a newspaper that is incredibly popular and we could do a version of it ourselves. Even though we will do original newsgathering, should we be chasing these kinds of stories all the time? My personal view is that it is fine to do a little of that but hopefully you will be in a position where many people are going to copy you”.

There is the key question, though, of whether *Time's* content proposition is clear enough to be diluted. With a beginning as a news digest comparable to the modern *The Week*, it followed the path of original news-gathering and changed its ambition. “We do not necessarily try to be comprehensive and we have not tried to be so for a long time. But we do try to cover the biggest stories in an interesting, very well reported, very well written and hopefully thought-provoking way in well-designed pages”, says Robinson.

Newsweek – The recreation of a weekly newsmagazine

Of the three [Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report, *the biggest American weekly newsmagazines*], only *Newsweek* appeared to be in any financial distress. Its profits dropped to \$15.3 million in 1987, with the future uncertain. (Tebbel and Zuckerman 1991, 306)

Twenty years later after the time described by Tebbel and Zuckerman in their *The Magazine in America 1741 – 1990*, *Newsweek's* delicate economic situation sounds strikingly familiar. At the end of 2007, *Newsweek* reduced its circulation guaranteed to advertisers from 3.1 to 2.6 million copies. In February 2009, it confirmed that it would drop to 1.9 million copies in July and to 1.5 million copies in January 2010. After the massive cuts in circulation, after another editorial reformulation in May 2009, and after speculation that it was going bi-weekly – maybe following the path of *U.S. News & World Report*, that turned into a monthly under a different content proposition –, the future of *Newsweek* continues to be uncertain. The Washington Post Co., which owns the magazine since 1961, decided to put the title on sale, raising doubts about the continuity of the publication. The question is whether the weekly is going to overcome the crisis, as it has been doing until the present time.

Founded on February 17th, 1933, *Newsweek* is known as a spin-off of *Time* and its main competitor over most of the twentieth century, making many attempts to overtake *Time* leadership – something that it did only for a brief period in late 1960s. Its founder, Thomas J. C. Martyn, was a former foreign editor at *Time* who decided to chase the considerable audience that would be interested in what *Time* was doing but could not cope with its peculiar writing style or its political identification with the Republicans. In the launch prospectus, Martyn said that “some people feel *Time* is too inaccurate, too superficial, too flippant and imitative” and proposed a magazine which would be “written in simple, unaffected English [in] a more significant format [with] a fundamentally sober attitude on all matters involving taste and ethics” (Tebbel and Zuckerman 1991, 173). For a newsmagazine that intended to be an antagonist, *Newsweek* may have taken too much of *Time's* formula, with the same kind of departmentalization. It did not have, though, as Tebbel and Zuckerman describes, any “particular approach to the news except to digest it” (1991, 173).

The difficulties to break even during the first years led Martyn to sell *Newsweek* and it merged with *Today*, a weekly journal, in 1937. Malcolm Muir, the new editor-in-chief, introduced in-depth stories, signed columns and started *Newsweek's* internationalization process, with editions in other countries. In 1961, when the newsmagazine was bought by the Washington Post company, it received considerable investment and a new editor-in-chief. For the first time since its creation, *Newsweek* topped *Time's* leadership with outstanding coverage of the Vietnam war and the black civil rights movement in the United States.

After the brief glorious period, *Time* fought back, regaining its position. In the efforts to reverse the process, *Newsweek* had five editors in ten years. The constant change in the newsmagazine's command is a concrete signal of its quest to find an identity.

Despite the relatively good results in readership – in 2003, it reached the peak of 4 million copies worldwide, 2,7 million in the United States – the newsmagazine has always been seen in the shadow of *Time's* success, arguably because of the similarities between the two. This context of frequent changes in editorship and frustrated attempts to consolidate its own personality makes *Newsweek's* new editorial formula, presented in May 2009, even more important. It sounded as a last shot to reverse financial losses and a final attempt to definitively detach its image from that of *Time's*.

The idea behind the project of Jon Meacham, the editor-in-chief, is to turn the magazine into a deep read, with “original reporting, provocative (but not partisan) arguments and unique voices”. It has as one of its premises that the readers know about the news, and it does not have the ambition of being “your guide through the chaos of the Information Age” because the readers do not want or do not need “one single Sherpa”. Meacham describes the new editorial formula as follows:

There will, for the most part, be two kinds of stories in the new NEWSWEEK. The first is the reported narrative – a piece, grounded in original observation and freshly discovered fact that illuminates the important and the interesting. The second is the argued essay – a piece, grounded in reason and supported by evidence that makes the case for something.

(...)

Will we cover breaking news? Yes, we will, but with a rigorous standard in mind: Are we truly adding to the conversation? When violence erupts in the Middle East, are we saying

something original about it? Are our photographs and design values exceptional? If the answers are yes, then we are in business.”

The editorial piece, while clear about the new content proposition, prompted some questions as to what readers could expect from the magazine: if *Newsweek* publishes a piece on the news of the week only when it is exceptional, what does it mean when a news event is left behind? Does it mean the event was not relevant enough to make the pages or does it mean that *Newsweek's* journalists were not able to find any new angle or information on that? If the later is an option, *Newsweek* risks its trust as a source of relevant news.

One criticism over Meacham's proposal was that it was, ultimately, a way to adapt the content to the reality of a smaller staff. According to the Project for Excellence in Journalism, the newsrooms of both *Time* and *Newsweek* have employed more than 350 staff, a number that fell below 200 by 2007. The shrinking size of newsrooms is said also to be behind the integration of the print and online teams, as it is now in many titles, including *Newsweek*. Now most of the journalists of the newsmagazines have an online presence, in a pretty much integrated newsroom. Besides filtering “the most important stories and concepts”, *Newsweek.com* presents four special features – “high-interest story packages” – per day and opinions of the some of the columnists of the print edition. All the print content is also available for free online.

In the context of the crisis that lead to *Newsweek's* reformulation, it was inevitable to interpret the interviewed members of staff as somewhat hopeless regarding the future of the newsmagazine. Stryker McGuire, who worked for the magazine for 30 years and was the last London bureau-chief, describes the current situation as follows: “Basically and sadly, reporting, having people in the field, is probably the most expensive component in terms of putting together a magazine. What happened is that there is less and less old style reporting in *Newsweek* than there was in the past. It has closed most of its bureaux, has drastically cut its reporting staff and, therefore, what the magazine has more and more is commentary and analysis. And I think that the commentary and analysis are often very good, but it is a different kind of journalism and sort of has taken the news out of *Newsweek*. *Newsweek* is what it is today because it has not had a choice”, says McGuire, now a contributing editor of the newsmagazine. The change in the kind of content is translated in the titles of staff members: there are no reporters, but different types of editors.

In the opinion of some interviewees, although the new *Newsweek* has been compared to *The Economist*, this is not the case. The comparison was brought up mainly because of two elements: the strategy of drastically cutting the circulation and increasing the cover price to attract a more affluent reader, and the move towards ideas and analysis. But *The Economist* remains, apart from the leaders, a magazine with articles based on reporting. “*Newsweek* has become much more commentary based on the knowledge individuals commentators might have”, says one journalist. Another main difference is *The Economist's* systematic coverage of the world. *Newsweek* does not do this kind of comprehensive review of the last week.

According to the most recent available data, readers and advertisers are not reacting well to the new model and some say 2010 will be the most decisive among the 87 of *Newsweek's* history. The earnings report in the fourth-quarter of 2009 suggested that the title lost US\$ 28.1 million during the whole year of 2009, but it lost less in the last quarter. The subtle trend upward did not prevent the Washington Post Co. from putting the magazine on sale, challenging its own existence.

***Der Spiegel* – The value of investigative journalism**

With about 430 people on its journalistic staff, there is no doubt *Der Spiegel's* newsroom is one of the biggest in the world of newsmagazines – *The Economist* has about 100 journalists and *Time* now has about 140 journalists in its main office and in its foreign bureaux. Out of the 430 journalists, 330 work exclusively for the print magazine and 100 for its website.

The comparatively huge manpower is justified by the newsmagazine as essential for its efforts to carry on its editorial formula based on investigative journalism published weekly right across its magazine which often boasts more than 200 pages. Before making it to print, every article goes through a documentation journalist – there are around 70 of them in the newsroom – who “check and verify the articles for plausibility, facts and figures”, according to information released by the newsmagazine.

Producing in-depth coverage of politics, economics and international affairs, and, ultimately, obtaining exclusive stories is what defines the title, according to Hans-Ulrich Stoldt, its spokesperson.

Since its beginning in 1947, *Der Spiegel* has distinguished itself by a great tradition of scoops. In 1962, it had one of its most remarkable exclusive stories, revealing that NATO considered the German army “prepared for defence only to a limited extent” in the case of a conflict with the communists. The leak caused a strong reaction from the then Minister of Defence, Franz Josef Strauss, who urged the arrests of some of *Der Spiegel's* staff, including the author of the piece and Rudolf Augstein, the magazine's publisher, founder, and first editor-in-chief.

Augstein was kept in prison for over 100 days and the newsroom was closed for weeks during the crisis, which prompted demonstrations against the government and lead Strauss to step down from the Ministry. The series of events, known afterwards as “The Spiegel Affair”, are regarded as an act in favour of freedom of the press in Germany and consolidated the role of the newsmagazine in German democracy.

Throughout its history, the title has broken several stories and has been thriving in the quest for news stories in an ever more competitive market.

In 2004, for example, a *Der Spiegel* article revealed that the then president of the Bundesbank, Ernst Welteke, had accepted free hotel accommodation for him and his family from the Dresdner Bank. Welteke resigned from the office two weeks after the publication.

The scoops are perceived as essential for keeping the relevance of the newsmagazine and its investigative profile:

“This revelation will be a great boost for *Der Spiegel*”, said Joachim Klewes, a journalism professor at Berlin's Free University. “They have been under pressure a lot over the last few years, and this is a very big scoop”.

Klewes, who is also co-owner of a Düsseldorf public relations company, said the *Der Spiegel* story was likely to reaffirm in the public's mind the magazine's investigative bent, which would help it grab new readers and bolster circulation.

In 2003, *Der Spiegel's* total advertising pages fell 12.5 percent from the previous year, to 3,929, according to the German magazine publishers' association. That was almost three

times as steep as the industry's 3,7 percent average decline. *Der Spiegel's* publishing sales, which peaked in 2000, at 277.8 million euros, fell to 226.4 million last year.”

Regardless of all its efforts, *Der Spiegel's* circulation has been pretty much steady in the last years, selling 1.04 million copies according to official figures . The copies are distributed in Germany (93%) and other European countries – especially Austria (1.3%) and Switzerland (1.5%). The cover price is the main source of revenue for the newsmagazines, and is higher than that from advertisements. It is noticeable that under the sector's economic pressures, *Der Spiegel* has managed to keep 22 foreign bureaux and a considerable journalistic staff.

Out of the total of 430 journalists, the remaining 100 are responsible for the online content, in a completely separate newsroom. According to Rüdiger Ditz, editor-in-chief of *Spiegel Online*, the different pace of content production is the main challenge for a unified operation. “Working for a weekly like *Spiegel* and working for a minutely like *Spiegel Online* is very different. However there is a lot of cooperation. Print editors write for online, and sometimes online editors write for print – not strictly established, but rather in a cooperative exchange”, says Ditz.

The brand tries to keep the same content values such as relevance and accuracy in the print newsroom in the online world, where the challenge is coping with speed and chasing audience ratings. “The topics on the website are widely the same: most important are politics and economics, published in hourly or minutely mode with a bigger part of news than background information compared with the print edition. For *Spiegel Online* news content in sports, some people gossip, cars, travel and web and computer topics are much more important than in the print edition. And certainly multimedia and UGC [*user-generated content*] make a big difference”, affirms Ditz.

With a broader range of content than its parenting title and focusing on immediate news that are not included in print, *Der Spiegel's* website has its own editorial line and works as an independent operation. “A newsmagazine website in general should be the rounding off the brand of the print edition. It should lead the web-audience to the brand”, says Ditz. “In our case, *Spiegel Online* itself is one of the leading media brands in Germany, a very special situation compared with other markets, where newspaper or TV websites are the

leading news sites. The unique selling point of *Spiegel Online* is to combine hard news, reports, in-depth stories, soft news and entertaining features”.

The website currently reaches 5.65 million unique visitors per month. According to figures released by the magazine advertising team in February 2009, slightly less than 1 million of these users also read the print issue. To read the print articles online, readers have to pay as much as for the print version, but it is possible to search the archives for past editions after two weeks of publication.

***The Week* – The rebirth of a model**

“Instead of gathering his own news – an arduous and expensive chore – he would assemble the most interesting information from the newspapers.” (Wilner 2006, 65)

If the “he” in the sentence above could be replaced by Briton Hadden or Henry Luce, the founders of *Time*, in 1923, it would not be totally wrong to substitute it with the name of Jolyon Connell, the creator of *The Week*, in 1995. Connell's weekly magazine's content proposition is strikingly similar to *Time*'s original model: filtering the increasing amount of information and organizing it in a brief, easily understandable and witty way.

While, as stated in the quotation, *Time* had the ambition of selecting content from numerous regional newspapers in the United States, *The Week* has to deal with the current multiplying sources of information in print and online. *Time*'s initial premise that there is more information than people could absorb has never been more true. The same can be said about *Time*'s realization that filtering published news would be far less expensive than investing in original news gathering – although not necessarily easier, as implied by the citation above.

Both premises, proved right by *Time*'s success seven decades ago, could help to explain the relatively success of *The Week*, that grew from 178 thousand copies sold in 2003 to 517 thousand copies in 2009, according to Audit Bureau of Circulations figures. Its subscription renewal rate in UK is remarkably high (about 90%) and its main source of revenue, subscriptions (70%), is less susceptible to short-term fluctuation caused by economic crises. While other newsmagazines are struggling to cut costs, including the closure of international bureaus, *The Week* has always been a small operation – now it employs about 20 journalists in the UK newsroom – and has decided to expand its formula to the United States (2001) and Australia (2008).

But if the economic reasons for the success are somewhat clear – considerably low costs of production – it is uncertain – there is incertitude whether people would be interested in reading a news summary. Notwithstanding the fact that the amount of information has been increasing with the introduction of new media and new media outlets during the last decades, there was some scepticism over the idea that a magazine could be successful reflecting the facts of the past week. Would it be possible to appeal to readers by offering

news that they have probably heard of some days ago in the newspaper, TV or on the web? How could news of yesterday or even before survive in the age of immediacy?

In fact, the idea that one publication could survive doing that has not been popular since the 1930s, when *Time* abandoned its original formula and moved towards original news gathering. And this was still the case when Connell created his *The Week*. But going against the common sense seems to be paying off – although it is a fact that the magazine still reaches a small fraction of what its counterparts do.

“Everybody was sceptical at the time but *The Week* seems to be exactly what the world needed. Jolyon came with the idea that many might have had but he came with a solution which are these 36 pages. They allow readers to think 'these are the main stories, the controversies of the week'”, says Jeremy O'Grady, editor-in-chief of the British branch. The current formula is, to a large extent, the same as the first issues. One of the newer sections, incorporated eight years ago, is “The last word”, a longer article “that we know most people would be interested in”, says the editor. There were some other changes, as described by O'Grady: “We started with a very 'unglossy' paper and it has got more glossy. And it started without advertising, but now it has got advertising”.

The ambition of the publication remains unchanged since its creation and can be clearly identified by its subtitle: “All you need to know about everything that matters”. It would be easy, though, for a publication under this proposition to become a mere summary of stories published by the media on the most obvious issues such as the headlines on politics and economics – and therefore, to become uninteresting for the public by its predictability. Two of the magazine's strategies to escape from this fate is to be extremely careful about writing style, using the same witty tone, and to find a delicate balance between seriousness and fun.

“What we did not want to be is a digest in the usual sense of the world. We want it to be witty and to have a sense of style. The wit comes from not only from how it is written, but how it is headlined. For instance, we have things like that: 'It wasn't all bad', 'It must be true, I read it in a tabloid' or 'Boring but important'. They are funny and strike a nerve with people because many of the news are boring but important”, explains O'Grady. “The readers have to feel it as if it were relaxed, but you have only 200 words to do it. It is tough

and it requires a particular class of mind. That is why everybody who writes for *The Week* is an editor”.

The recommendation is to write as if the journalist were speaking to a clever friend over a beer. The main distinction, though, may be that clients at the pub would not be so careful providing their sources of information. Giving the credits to the other media outlets is one of the major differences between the contemporary *The Week* and the 1920s *Time*. It is constant concern for *The Week* to concede the credits in a less tedious way, avoiding expressions of reporting – such as “according to” – and rewriting the comments in the magazine's own style.

But if by sourcing news and commentaries, the magazine plays fair with the other vehicles, it also exposes its somewhat limited range of sources, mainly the traditional British broadsheets. Jeremy O'Grady admits that it is still a challenge for the newsroom to keep up with the best articles and commentary pieces published online. “We are looking more and more to blogs and the better the quality of the stuff, the better it should be reflected in *The Week*. But we are not as good as we should be on that”, says O'Grady.

Besides finding a new method to address, in print, the increasing relevance and quality of online content, the title has also to search for its own role on the web. Up until now, www.theweek.com offers a limited range of content: a selection of the main news of the day explained in a short and well organized text providing links to the best analyses. The multimedia content is represented by the section “Today's Video”, which points to a video produced by other media outlets. There are currently seven online columnists – with various profiles, online one part of the journalistic staff – that write, in average, once a week. The sections named after print sections reproduce print content accessible only to subscribers – who may have read it in the paper. It has no relevant presence in social media websites such as Facebook or Twitter. The website reflects the newsroom organization – there is no special staff assigned to the website nor is it an integrated newsroom – and, during the weekends, it hardly gets updated.

The staff is presently working on a new online content proposition but there were no official announcements about the future of the website before February 2010. One of the questions to be tackled by the professionals is certainly if each national edition (British,

American and Australian) should have its own website. Currently, the .co.uk and .com.au URLs are institutional pages and just theweek.com works as a website for the title.

As to whether the website could have the same kind of content published in print, but produced on a daily basis, O'Grady is sceptical. "The digest works because there is a passage of time and the minimum amount of time in the week. So as the week goes by I would like someone to make a summary for me. But nobody really wants you to sum up a day for you – they want the news hot of the press", says Jeremy O'Grady. "I don't think it [The Week's model] could work [on a daily basis] because the experience of the digest is reflective. Whereas the daily experience is that you don't want to reflect, you want to be told". It remains an open question what face *The Week* will have online.

O'Grady's conclusions concerning the role of news online do not mean, though, that the magazine will invest in gathering its own news online. "We started as *Time* but this does not mean that we are going to follow them. What we think is useful is not about newsgathering but about news sifting", explains O'Grady..

***Única* – The search for an identity**

Created in 1983, ten years after the foundation of Portuguese weekly newspaper *Expresso*, *Única* (“Unique”, in English) reflected the desire of the newspaper to have room for in-depth reportage and longer features reflecting the week, a kind of content that would not be published in its normal pages. The content model has proved valid and successful – the magazine has always been the first or the second most profitable section inside the newspaper in terms of advertisements, being distributed within the paper, as a premium content included in the cover price.

But the changes in the content of the weekly paper, mainly influenced by the rise of internet in the early 2000s, created an awkward situation within the company, in which *Expresso* and *Única*, sibling publications, ended up competing to produce the same kind of content. The consequence was that nobody could explain why a certain feature should be published in the pages of the newspaper or in the pages of the newsmagazine. “With more and more news being broken online and on TV, the daily newspapers moved towards the weekly newspapers; and these weekly newspapers moved towards newsmagazines with the same content”, explains Mafalda Anjos, current editor of *Única*. “The newspaper was doing reportage, opinion pieces, and reflective articles that were clearly exclusivities of the magazine in the past”.

The convergence in content was perceived as an identity crisis and led to a reformulation process that started in 2007 and was completed in 2008, with the re-launch of the newsmagazine under a new content proposition. The main point was to give the newsmagazine a character that guaranteed it a distinguished place inside *Expresso*. *Única* should not compete with the other sections of the newspaper but it should add something that was not being given to readers by them.

The decision was to invest in “fusion journalism”, described as follows by Innovation, the media consulting group that was hired to work in the reformulation process:

The application of multiple journalistic tools – interviews, extensive reporting, analysis, photos, essays, etc. to cover a single subject from various angles. To put into a simpler context, *Única* creates a theme, and the content of the magazine is then driven by that theme, usually a word or an image.

Fusion journalism conveys various fundamental messages: newness (as in modernity and innovation), harmonisation of different ingredients, and luxury, as an expression of excellence and the combination – or fusion – of multiple elements. (Señor and Wilpers 2010, 44)

The first issue of the new *Única* was published in September 2008, and had articles around the concept “change”. It presented a longer piece with stories of people who decided to take radical changes in life, a two-page info-graphic about how politicians were moving from left wing to right wing political parties in Portugal, an interview with a former minister who was also a former drug addict, and a short piece of humour appealing for preserving some Portuguese traditions and popular institutions. “Despite having one single concept, it is not a mono-thematic magazine in the sense that we talk only about one thing. We have politics, local, science, and different formats”, says Anjos.

“It is clear that giving the news is not our primary objective. This is what the newspaper does”, affirms Anjos, saying that the newsmagazine would not publish an article on the Haiti earthquake one week after the tragedy but would do a special piece about the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The editor admits that one of the main challenges imposed by the new formula is keeping the news in the pages of the magazine – and therefore maintaining its relevance as a newsweekly – and still be a collectible publication, as it aspires to be. “One of the secrets of the magazine is that it is very intelligently balanced”, says Anjos, referring to the delicate task of keeping the proportion between soft and light themes, and long and brief formats.

One of the clear aims behind *Única*'s project is to amuse readers, a common feature for many magazines but relatively neglected by most news outlets – almost as if it were irreconcilable with any ambition to seriousness. Pursuing this purpose, *Única* pays special attention to the use of pictures, the design of pages, references to literature, and writing style. These efforts to be recognizable reflects, according to Anjos, the compromise of the newsmagazine to meet readers' expectation towards the publication. “*Expresso* is a newspaper focused on an elite of readers and they expect something superior from us”, he affirms.

The next challenge for the newsmagazine is to have an online presence. Up until now, it does not have its own website or a dedicated section at *Expresso*'s web page. The absence is not perceived as an immediate problem by Anjos: “The magazine's articles

have a presence in *Expresso's* website but it is the brand of the newspaper that is used, not the one of the magazine. We must reinforce *Expresso's* brand because the magazine goes to news-stands within the paper”.

There are at least three other reasons why the newsmagazine decided to stay behind the digital world: insufficient human resources, the current stage of development of the newspaper's website and the lack of an online payment model.

As to the first obstacle, the newsroom is constituted by a very limited number of people: the editor, one assistant editor, a producer and eight journalists, including one intern. Besides producing content for print, this team is responsible for updating the *Life & Style* channel of the website, created in October 2009, in which some of *Única's* articles are published. “Not everything published in *Única* goes to the channel, since the newsmagazine is much more than *Life & Style*, but our team produces more content to be published online only”, explains the editor.

“The internet channel is very new and we all are learning to do it, but our idea is to be multiplatform. I am the editor of the magazine and the website and I decide what is going on in print and online”, describes Anjos, who designated one member of the team to be responsible for the each day of the week. “It is very difficult, though, to coordinate a team to work on different platforms at the same time. There are more experienced people who have lots of resistance to writing online, they think it is superficial and less prestigious to write content for the website everyday”.

The second obstacle to a more effective online presence is to produce, within the current *Expresso's* website, a section that could translate online what is the magazine in print. “If we had a website for *Única*, it should follow the approach of the magazine, keeping its uniqueness”, says Anjos, referring to the newsmagazine's worries towards design, picture and writing style. “I think we currently prefer keeping the brand *Expresso* instead of using *Única's* because we would not be able to do online something of the same standard as we do in print”.

The last reason why the newsmagazine decided to delay its entrance into the internet world was the lack of an online payment model established by the newspaper. Nowadays, there is no paywall in *Expresso's* website and it remains a question whether publishing

Única's content online for free would have a negative impact in the readership of the newspaper that sells, on average, 113,000 copies per week.

***Politico* – The way from web to print**

While they are trying to find a new payment model for news online, the traditional media companies have also to decide what to do or not do with their print products. It has proven impracticable to abandon paper and ink – and its costs –, as was suggested in the beginning of the development of the internet. It is not possible, though, to simply withdraw from the digital world and its millions of readers from everywhere in the world because advertisements are failing to pay the bills. Every media outlet must deal, no excuses, with both platforms and other ones too, such as the iPad and the mobile phones, and with the implications they may bring, such as the kind of content produced and who is the audience.

In this context, it is worthwhile to look at cases such as *Politico*, the American website focused on national politics created in January 2007 by Albritton Communications, a company that owns also WJLA, an ABC affiliate, and the twenty-four-hour News Channel 8. Besides being a newswebsite, *Politico* is also a print publication with 32,000 copies freely distributed in Washington D.C. to a public especially interested in American politics: senior government officials, staff, lobbyists and political professionals.

Although not a newsmagazine, the main focus of this research, *Politico* and its successful work with different platforms can serve as example for many media outlets, including newsmagazines. It is among the very few web enterprises doing serious journalism online and making money at the same time. In its third year of existence, it registered profits for the first time, of about US\$ 1 million. The major part of the revenues, 60%, came from the print product and its advertisements, and reinforces the idea that ink and paper can still make a living. But the online participation in the revenues is rapidly increasing from only 10%, in 2007; to 30%, in 2008; and 40%, in 2009. It may be that, in 2010, the website's seven million unique visitors per month may make the same money as the 32 thousand print copies distributed three times a week when Congress is in session and weekly otherwise.

The most interesting point is that John Harris, editor-in-chief of *Politico* and one of the founders of the enterprise along with Jim VandeHei, is not worried that the online readership may kill its print edition, as other publishers are. “[*Print and online*] do not feel very redundant to us. Our applications of print and online have pretty distinct editorial

personalities and pretty distinct audiences. To me it is not a concern. I think we can keep them going in a non-redundant fashion for the indefinite future”, says Harris.

The editor explains what the differences are between *Politico* in print and online: “Every article that runs in the print edition of *Politico* also appears online and needless to say that lots of articles that are published online never get to the print edition. The print edition has a very specific editorial focus. It is aimed very narrowly at people in Washington who make their living from politics. Capital hill, members of Congress, aides to law makers, lobbyists, White House staff, these are our primary readers. The print edition has a pretty distinct focus that is targeting pretty closely what happens in Congress. The stories that we run on the front page of our print edition would not necessarily be as prominent on the website. The opposite is true: there are stories that are very prominent in the website that do not go to the front page of print. The sense of editorial priority is different.”

The 80 journalists who currently work for the branch write both for print and online, indistinctly. And the different paces of content production are not a problem in organizing the newsroom: “We solved this problem by reacting quickly and getting the information up on the web. In the print edition it tends to be more enterprise and less breaking news”, affirms Harris.

The online dictates the rhythm, imposing the challenge of being quick and, still, accurate. “It does put a burden on us to try to maintain the quality. For the most of stories, the common stuff of daily political conversation, to have extra time may not be as necessary as the reporter might think. If you get a choice of publishing something in four hours or 24 hours, you would be surprised from how much you could get it done in four hours and how much value that story would have. It might not be as good as the one you did in 24 hours, but the trade off would simply not be worthy. It is far better to get something out now. It has got to be accurate, fair, and informed by traditional journalistic values, though”. Whereas in the newspapers some stories may be sitting around for days and even weeks, in *Politico*, this is unthinkable. “That just doesn't happen here and I don't think it is a luxury that is affordable any more in the modern news market”, affirms Harris.

Besides publishing the stories in print or online, *Politico's* reporters are also entitled to promote their job going to cable television to talk about their stories. *Politico* is always trying to share its stories with other websites, to establish relationships with major blogs

and aggregation sites so they are aware of its stories. "Promotion is critical. You cannot just wait for your audience to build organically, or you will wait for a lot of time and may never come", stress Harris.

The editor-in-chief admits that there are some kinds of articles that cannot be done in some hours and need "sustained and long term reporting" -something that *Politico* is not doing now. "It is my ambition for *Politico* that, over the long haul, we will develop some of our resources to do that", Harris says. A former political reporter at the *Washington Post*, Harris praises the value of investigative journalism: "The branded journalism we practised at the *Washington Post* is something that I am quite proud of and was often outstanding".

Having worked in the *Washington Post* for 21 years, leaving it and its journalistic standards was, for Harris, a significant life decision. He says that the traditional organizations, the *Post* included, were not reacting to the changes brought by the internet quickly or creatively enough and that it was necessary to build an organization that could cope with the new news consumption habits. The advantage was that, in the online world, a new media outlet would not have to wait years, even decades, to build up its reputation with readers, sources, and advertisers. In the fluid online environment, one can instantly compete with other major publications.

Despite the common sense that people are not interested in politics, Harris bet that exclusive stories about the Congress would attract enough audience and advertisers, and he is proving right. "My experience at the *Washington Post* which lead me to create *Politico* was that stories about politics are interesting, they broke news, they have something original to say, and there is a very robust and intense readership for it".

FLYP – A new perspective for newsmagazines

After looking at the world of ink and paper to find examples of how newsmagazines are dealing with the current challenges of internet and other digital platforms, this work tried to find innovative examples that operate only in the digital world or have its origin in it. One of the cases is FLYP, self described as “more than a magazine”. Without a periodicity – although it announces itself as a bi-weekly –, a consistent editorial line or a relevant number of readers, what makes FLYP worth discussing is the way it presented its content. “FLYP is an experiment with digital storytelling and it is not what a newsmagazine aims to be. But I believe that its form is adaptable to newsmagazines. More than to attempt to create the magazine of the future, FLYP is being the storytelling experience of the future”¹.

The concept behind the enterprise, which could be described as a multimedia lab rather than a magazine, is that the traditional media outlets are not taking the full potential of the digital world in telling stories. Jim Gaines, editor-in-chief of the publication, describes as following the scope of his attempts: “I started from the premise that print does engage readers. People spend time with it, they sit in an easy chair to consume stories that are in a magazine or in a book. We are looking for the same kind of engagement [*in the digital environment*]. It differs from the experience of the web because it has been used primarily as a utility. When you want some information, you know that you could find it quickly on the web through search engines and links. What we are trying to create is an experience more like reading, but the device will be the one that you hold in your hand rather than the one that is sitting in your desktop. And it will be more passive than utilitarian”. The editor is referring to the creation of tablets or e-readers such as the iPad, which is going to be released by Apple in April 2010, and how these new devices are going to impact readers’ experience of the content.

Acclaimed by many a media mogul as a salvation for publishing companies – as it may allow them to successfully charge for content –, the tablets, for Gaines, are a powerful tool of storytelling and a reason for excitement.

A former manager editor at *Time*, *Life* and *People*, at Time Inc., he left the newsrooms 10

¹ As an experiment, FLYP was sustained by investors, with no business model. In late April, one month after this paper was completed, the end of the enterprise was announced. It is still worthwhile, though, to look at its attempt to recreate journalism online.

years ago to work as a media consultant and, in 2008, joined Hypermedia team, the company which owns FLYP. "When I saw FLYP I realized that there was a place for me to come back to the world of publishing. Not ink, but digital publishing. Because the tools that FLYP employs allow you to tell a story of the same kind I used to tell in print."

According to the editor, the elements of storytelling are the same in the sense that the content has to carry suspense, dialogue, but using multiple media at once. "A lot of the work that a writer had to do when the media was ink and paper is done now by the video, by the audio, by the information graph. The job of the writer has changed into something more like a navigator, facilitator and guide rather than the principal provider of basic information", says Gaines.

The articles published by FLYP follow the basic principle that the more media, the better. In FLYP, the content is created by a multi-skilled team. Instead of an editor and a reporter, there are a specialist in video, an expert in audio, another one in animation, another one in info-graphics as well as a writer/journalist.

Rather than an impoverishment process, Gaines argues that going digital is a way of keeping brands alive improving the quality of journalism they do and cutting costs of ink, paper, and distribution – a considerable burden of as much as 60% on balance sheets. "I do not see the web as putting anybody out of the business. I see it as a way of saving brands and allowing them being actually better in what they do than in print", says the editor.

The idea that the internet would free print outlets from costs of printing and distribution was actually the hope that drove newspapers and magazines to put all their content online for free to attract as many readers as they could in order to increase their advertisement revenues. The fact is that the print circulation has been declining and the online readership has been increasing, but the most important locations for online ads are the search engines, such as Google, and not the media websites. Across different newsrooms, print still drives the biggest revenues. Would it be possible, in this context, to keep a brand alive migrating to digital?

For Gaines, it is too soon to decree digital as a synonym of no profits. "The advertising model online will change as the media change. Right now more often than not the reason

why people use the web is to do something - for example, to find some piece of information, or to make a reservation. And by definition they are moving quickly from one environment to another. So it is a very poor environment for advertisements to work in. Once engaging activities become more characteristic on the web, and that will depend on the movement from desktop to hands, then rich media advertisements will be much more of a factor. Currently advertising on the web is like a commodity and as such, its price will be driven to zero”, predicts the editor.

While the changes in the media and the advertising marketing are taking place, FLYP is experimenting with digital storytelling, waiting for its business model. “If I could project ten years from now, FLYP could be a full service publishing company, doing magazines, newspapers, journals, scientific papers, technical manuals, all things, including books,” says Gaines.

Conclusions – Newsmagazines' lessons from the past and the present

The investigation about the birth and development of newsmagazines and the current state of some of the most important titles of the genre in this research paper has the important aim of examining the possible future scenarios of newsmagazines in terms of content and staff organization.

It is never a straightforward prediction or an easy recipe, but it is possible to draw some common lines among different challenges faced by newsmagazines in history and among successful experiences in various periods. The research showed that three common assumptions about newsmagazines are myths:

1. All newsweeklies are in crisis
2. There is no space for weekly newsmagazines in the 24/7 online world
3. There is one successful editorial formula

The twelve points developed under the title “Ways of surviving being a newsmagazine in the 21st century” debunk these myths and suggest essential approaches for thriving in the decades ahead.

Ways of surviving being a newsmagazine in the 21st century

1. Have a clear editorial formula

The editorial formula is an essential part of the personality of a newsmagazine, stating what sort of content is being produced and what readers can expect from it – and, ultimately, why they would buy it. Is the newsmagazine summarising or interpreting the week in the world? Is it presenting the various aspects of a certain concept? Is it giving heavily reported articles about the country?

In most cases, this formula is a result of the ideas of one person or a small group. Briton Hadden and Henry R. Luce founded *Time* with the idea of giving a summary of the most important facts and events of the week for the busy readers of 1923. They could catch up with an ever increasing number of pieces of information by reading *Time*'s short texts divided into very clear sections according to themes. This was *Time* when it first appeared and until most of the 1940s.

Reflecting the week continued to be one of the aims of the newsmagazine but, along the years, other functions, such as offering longer articles based on original newsgathering and interviews, were included in its pages. Despite the changes in content, *Time* has not officially redefined its formula and mission and it is currently pertinent to ask what readers can expect from it.

The same problem may have affected its main rival, *Newsweek*, that suffered from lack of a clear identity during many periods of its history and recently struggled to find a new formula. Under the editor Jon Meacham, it can be described as a magazine of ideas, with essays from “journospecialists” on some of the most important contemporary topics.

Única, the Portuguese periodical published as part of a weekly newspaper, faced the same kind of difficulty when there were no rules to differentiate its content from the one published by the newspaper *Expresso*. The internal competition ceased when *Única* adopted the proposal of “fusion journalism”, developing articles around the same concept, with careful texts and assuming the role of amusing readers, besides informing them.

The Week and *The Economist* are particular examples of very clear formulas, with established sections ranging around themes and regions at *The Week* and mainly around regions of the world at *The Economist*. The sections are self-explanatory – the reader does not need the editorial letter to understand them – and have been in use for a considerable time, helping to consolidate the image of the newsmagazine.

The identity crisis of *Time* and *Newsweek* is one possible interpretation of the ABC's circulation figures of newsmagazines in the United States during the last 20 years. The general assumption that has to be debunked is that newsmagazines, as a genre, are in crisis, stated previously as myth number 1.

Indeed, the total number of newsmagazines sold in the United States has decreased – from 11.1 million copies to 9.3 million copies, the sum of ABC figures for *The Atlantic*, *The Economist*, *The New Yorker*, *The Week*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report*. But the losses are due to a very particular type of newsmagazine: the traditional weeklies, represented by *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News*. Together, the “big three” fell from 9.9 million copies in 1989 to 6.5 million in December 2009. Together, *Newsweek* and *U.S.*

News were responsible for losses of up to 2.4 million copies – the sector shrunk 1.8 million copies in the period. *Time*, despite closing the period 1 million copies smaller, reached as low as 2.7 million copies in the middle of 2008, and ended 2009 with 3.3 million copies, which puts into doubt the doomsday predictions about its future.

The reverse trend occurred with non-traditional newsmagazines, such as *The Atlantic*, *The Week*, *The Economist*, and *The New Yorker*. They rose from 1.2 million copies in 1989 to 2,8 million copies last year.

Assuming that the internet has the potential to affect all the publications evenly, and observing that only a very distinct group of newsmagazines is struggling to survive, how is it possible to blame the web for the death of the genre? How is it possible to explain that the internet has not eroded the circulation of non-traditional newsmagazines?

As clearly stated by the State of the News Media 2009 report, the question of survival is not addressed to the entire genre:

The most obvious question is whether the cutbacks are a signal of the long-predicted end of the mass market news magazine – the publications invented in the 1920s and 1930s to offer Americans a weekly summary of events in the world – or whether they signal something else, the smart realignment of these periodicals into smaller, leaner, thought-leader publications, a kind of hybrid of opinion and news magazines.

The doubts about the role of the traditional newsmagazines started much earlier than the arrival of the internet, as shows the following article published in June 1988, by *The New York Times*:

Time, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* are immersed in an effort to answer a question that all three view as critical: what should a news magazine be in the 1990's.

Some editors and writers at each of the magazines believe their very survival is at stake as they battle such new rivals as cable television news, national newspapers and a growing number of specialty magazines.

Although circulation at all three news magazines has never been higher, the essential problem for each of them is how to retain, or perhaps expand, their audience and hence their advertising base over the next decade.

The circulation was not a concrete problem back then – it was in its peak –, but there were worries if some internal problems could cost the life of the title in the future:

At *Newsweek*, the perennial No. 2 news magazine, with a circulation of 3.2 million, the identity problem is most acute and the solution most radical and risky. *Newsweek's* vision is to be very broad and unpredictable in its definition of news and reporting.

"The clarity of the vision is knowing you have many weapons in the arsenal," said Richard M. Smith, *Newsweek's* editor in chief.

The result is a magazine whose reporting ranges from dispassionate balance to strong advocacy, with some articles reflecting the point of view of the writers. Some who follow the news media believe, however, that such non-traditional journalism jeopardizes the magazine's overall credibility.

In the article, *The New York Times* highlights one important factor that is ignored by the broad analysis of ups and downs in circulation: the situation inside the newsroom, the internal problems of identity and leadership. It may well be that the contemporaneous internet will be blamed in case *Newsweek* dies, as some critics predict, but its history of constant changes in editorship and editorial line may have played an important role that, for the sake of generalization, history will forget.

The transformation of *U. S. News* from a newsweekly to a monthly focused on “news you can use” has also been delineated long before the internet, as the 1989 article describes:

U.S. News has long separated itself from the others by devoting its back-of-the-book pages to service features ("news you can use") rather than to movie, theater or book reviews.

A similar case may have happened with *The Saturday Evening Post*, an alleged victim of television. The number of advertisement pages has been shrinking since the Great Depression and losing its most famous editor-in-chief, George Horace Lorimer, who died in 1937, did not help the publication. With ups and downs through the next decades, it committed a big mistake in 1963, by publishing a denunciatory piece against the football coach Paul Bryant, from the University of Alabama, and the director Wally Butts, from Georgia Athletics, accusing both of fixing the result of a game in 1962. Sued by Bryant and Butts, the newsmagazine lost all the legal battles in the Supreme Court, spent lots of

money on the process and, most importantly, lost a great part of its credibility. By all historical accounts, TV has killed *The Saturday Evening Post*, but it may have the help of an accomplice: the magazine itself.

At the other extreme of *Newsweek* and *U.S. News*, all the figures favour one title, *The Economist*, regarded as currently the most successful newsmagazine. Is it possible, then, to declare its editorial formula as a role model and try to reproduce its model? What seems now to be the ultimate model was not much so until a few years ago.

When in the 1970s, *Time* and *Newsweek* were enjoying multimillion sales, *The Economist* was a quite modest publication selling 100,000 copies worldwide. It was not until 2004 that the British title reached the 1 million figure. In 2009, selling 1.4 million copies, it is still far behind *Time's* 3.4 million copies – and may never reach it. The question is if it is possible for *The Economist* to reach *Time's* figures still being *The Economist*. Would reaching *Time's* figures be considered a success if *The Economist* decides to change its own formula? The same question could be posed to *The New Yorker* and *The Week*, which have been enjoying increasing readership in the last 20 years.

Would they have had the same current results had they decided to follow the path of other publications? Probably not. Instead of trying to follow what seems to be the latest trend, the history of newsmagazines points to the value of having original ideas and sticking to them.

Having guaranteed its survival through a significant audience, newsmagazines may focus on the quality of its content, rather than on maximizing its public. Reflecting on the journalism for the masses practised by newspapers in the nineteenth century, Muhlmann writes:

In the eloquent metaphor used by one media specialist to describe these changes [*professionalization of journalism*], “The press no longer gave voice, or less so. It relayed. The newspaper had been a voice. It became an echo”. Unlike the “voice”, which comes from a particular place and is heard within a limited perimeter, the “echo” comes from the immensity of the universe and reaches the most far-distant ears. (2004, 1)

By aiming at the masses – and I would add, imitating a popular model – , newsmagazines are running the risk of turning their distinguished voices into echoes.

Therefore, there is no one successful editorial formula, but several original ways of surviving being a newsmagazine.

2. Have a strong editorial culture

Many a newsmagazine started at the initiative of one editor or a group of editors. This is the case of *The Economist*, founded by James Wilson, and *Time*, created by Briton Hadden and Henry R. Luce. Others received a father soon after birth, like *Der Spiegel* and its editor for more almost five decades, Rudolf Augstein.

Those editors, besides conceptualizing the editorial formula of these titles, transmitted to the newsroom the values of the journalism practised by the publication. They spread their views about what should and should not be included in the pages, the methods for gathering information, the writing style and other aspects that define the culture of the publication. The “pursuit of reason” of *The Economist*; the detailed but short narrative of the first version of *Time*; and the investigative attitude of *Der Spiegel* are examples of that.

Augstein lived by his journalistic values when he was arrested for 103 days by the German government in 1962, after a piece on *Der Spiegel* exposed the deplorable state of the German Army after the Second World War. His esteem for digging the news and his critical position towards the government are still present in the ethos of the newsmagazine, which is well known for its scoops.

Another example is Wilson's *The Economist*. Having edited the paper for a relatively short period, 13 years, he managed to create a culture that persisted through his 15 successors. He turned the magazine into a sort of institution. As an institution, *The Economist* does not have bylines, except for rare occasions, such as special contributors or special reports from correspondents. The reason is explained by the newsmagazine in its self-descriptive section in the website: “It is written anonymously, because it is a paper whose collective voice and personality matter more than the identities of individual journalists. This ensures a continuity of tradition and view which few other publications have matched”.

Newsweek is by far the most unstable title in terms of editorial culture. And its constant changes of editorship – there were six only from 1972 to 1984 – was one of the main reasons. The successive new commands hired to topple *Time* leadership brought difficulties for cementing a culture. The main result has been the lack of a clear identity for

the magazine, a crucial characteristic, as Johnson and Prijatel observes: "Like people, successful magazines have personalities that reflect their philosophies, energy, and wit." (1999, 17)

The question of having a clear editorial formula and a strong editorial culture seems to be so essential for newsmagazines that it should also be applicable to the newsmagazines' websites, mobile applications, tablet versions or any other sort of digital platform that may come to existence.

3. Make sure you have at least one outstanding characteristic

Magazines that have a little of everything but specialize in little are not where the growth in readership seems to be. Magazines that are more serious, like *The New Yorker*, or more strictly entertainment-oriented, like *In Style*, are hotter. And magazines of ideas – and of opposition – seem to endure in having a place at the table.

The excerpt above, from the report *State of the News Media 2004*, highlights the importance of having a speciality or a distinguishable characteristic. It can be related to a witty writing style, as it is the case of *The Week*, or to the comprehensiveness, as *The Economist*, or the presence of fiction, as *The New Yorker*. It has to be present in every issue and, in the case of writing style, in almost every article in order to be recognizable. Being half way to any of these characteristics, either style, range of coverage, and kind of content does not seem to work. One hypothesis is that, being not clear enough, these characteristics do not add to the identity of the magazine.

As William Underhill, contributing editor of *Newsweek*, pointed out in his interview, the risk of staying in the middle is, for some newsmagazines, ending up as "too general for a particular audience; and too particular for a general audience". It seems that one of the main questions for a successful newsmagazine is to be broad enough and, still, preserve its own character.

4. Decide the number of pages according to your editorial aim

The first issue of *Time* magazine had less than 30 pages. Created to be a summary of the news of the week, it could not have had many more. Its editorial formula was based also on its brevity – otherwise the readers could end up as frustrated with the magazine as they were with the newspapers they did not have enough time to read.

With a similar formula as the original *Time*, *The Week* wisely limited its number of pages to 36. Every journalist or editor may have wanted more pages at a certain week when, for example, there was a tragic earthquake in Haiti. Having a closed magazine structure may affect the coverage in those extraordinary cases, limiting its space, but it may help the staff to keep in mind its main task of sifting content.

One of the main difficulties to have this sort of closed structure is the uneven demand for advertisements through the year. Huge in the end and modest in the beginning, and during economic crises, advertisers demand has dictated the size of many newsmagazines, creating drastic changes in size issue by issue.

The idea that one week can be such more newsworthy than the previous to deserve double the editorial pages could imperil the basic idea of summarizing the news of the week. *The Week's* decision to limit the number of editorial and advertisement pages in its issues had an advantage also for advertisers: the certainty that one ad would not be lost in the middle of other dozens of them. With less ad pages, the newsmagazine found a reason to charge more for them.

But the same closed structure could not work for *Der Spiegel*, and its tradition of longer issues and in-depth reportage. Despite reflecting the most important themes of the week, *Der Spiegel* is not compromised with being short. On the contrary it is expected to have the best coverage, no matter the length of its articles. In order to keep this huge structure over the year, *Der Spiegel* relies more on subscriptions than on advertisements.

Relying mainly on advertisements, the American *Time* and *Newsweek* saw their number of pages shrink during the economic crisis, affecting also their editorial formula. *Time*, for example, has not been publishing the section *Life*, focused on health, society and such, in every issue. What has come first: the editorial decision or economic pressure? It seems to be a good idea to try to guarantee the continuity of the editorial formula – and the number of pages – no matter what the economic context.

5. Be authoritative

But it is obvious that not all periodicals are equally authoritative; nor is a single periodical equally authoritative under different managements; nor are two articles in the same issue of a

given periodical necessarily of equal authority. This question of authority is, of course, one of the chief difficulties which a magazine researcher meets. (Mott 1938, 4)

As stated by Mott, the question of authority is one of the main points in the study of magazines. It is neither evenly distributed among the individuals of the genre nor among the articles of one issue, but it should be a constant concern for editors.

Assuming that newsmagazines need a clear editorial formula and personality to survive, they necessarily represent a limited perspective of the world - limited in the sense that it expresses the visions and beliefs of a certain group, and that it filters, to a certain extent, the reality, pointing what is important and leaving some parts of it behind.

Having this clear point of view or personality, despite being essential for a newsmagazine, also brings some drawbacks. The most important one is how to be relevant and, still, particular; and how to be trusted as a content producer and curator, selecting what is important for readers.

Through history, newsmagazines have employed different strategies in the search for authority. *Time's* obsession for a narrative rich in details played a role in this search, as describes Baughman:

With “facts” and “surroundings of facts” *Time* stories were not only summaries of weekly events, shaped around personalities, but shared an all-knowing air. The inclusion of the irrelevant, the physical features of a player or setting, partly achieved this effect. So did the vigorous editorial consistency, which made the magazine appear to be the product of a single intelligence. Time, a Chicago-based-writer observed, “often reads as though it were all written by the same person”. Luce himself acknowledged in 1934, “Time is conceived of as written by one man, not any man you can see, but a sort of superman – the sum of the very men (perhaps sometimes only three or four) who really 'make it'”. (2001, 46)

Describing even the weather at a certain political meeting, *Time* was, in an indirect way, saying it witnessed the fact – even though its texts relied only on newspapers' reports at that time. Another characteristic that contributed to its authority was the anonymity and uniform writing style, as stated above. The anonymity still serves *The Economist* and *The Week*, giving them the tone of an institution, or of a “superman”, as Luce preferred it.

As for *The Economist*, it could be said that its systematic coverage of the world – every week, in the same sections – contributes to its authority. Another important factor is the frequent anonymity of its sources of information. The readers have to trust that the newsmagazine listened to the best sources of information – whoever they are – to base the article and that the anonymity of the source only makes the information more trustworthy, since there will be no personal interest or constraints related to publishing the name of the source.

The opposite strategy has been used by other publications, mainly *Time* and *Newsweek*, with the same intention: publishing the names of the specialists, preferentially highly accredited people in their fields, in the articles, because by openly stating one's opinion, they are publicly standing for it and, thus, it should be trustworthy.

The strategies vary over time and among newsmagazines and as the role of authority in the success of newsmagazines has not been studied in detail, it would benefit from further comparative research.

6. Be comprehensive

Now, if you want to get a very good sense of what happened all around the world, last week, the major events, unfortunately, you are not going to get that on *Time* or *Newsweek*. But you do still get it on *The Economist*. Some people would argue that it should be the premise, but the fact is that it now cannot be the case simply because the newsmagazines do not have the resources to be comprehensive in the way they used to be.

The thoughts above, stated by one of the interviewees, are a reflection over the changes in editorial content of the two traditional American newsmagazines in the last decades. The interviewee points that *Time* and *Newsweek* became a somewhat random collection of important facts rather than a systematic coverage of the past seven days. By doing that, those newsmagazines are risking their relevance by offering a content similar to what many news websites are publishing on a daily basis.

Being comprehensive or reflecting on the whole range of facts was, arguably, an essential characteristic of modern newsmagazines, one of their *raison d'être*. Being comprehensive and, still, investing in original news gathering, was extremely expensive but viable thanks to the massive circulations the titles achieved. With shrinking revenues both on the side of

advertisers and readers, keeping the two characteristics became difficult to achieve. And so the two publications chose to stick to newsgathering and let the comprehensiveness go. Jon Meacham clearly stated this choice in his editorial letter explaining the new *Newsweek*:

Will we cover breaking news? Yes, we will, but with a rigorous standard in mind: Are we truly adding to the conversation? When violence erupts in the Middle East, are we saying something original about it? Are our photographs and design values exceptional? If the answers are yes, then we are in business.

Original newsgathering has a high value and it has never been more necessary in the age of endless content reproduction online, but, without the ambition of comprehensiveness, it is necessary to find another formula capable of drawing all the content together. A good example of how it is possible to stand out without doing that is *Única*. Assuming that the weekly newspaper is going to deal with the week, it frees itself to explore other kinds of content brought together by one concept.

Being comprehensive is less a matter of having a big staff than having it clearly as an editorial formula. *The Week*, with its 20 people at the British newsroom, and *The Economist*, with 100 personnel scattered worldwide, have less staff than *Time*, with its 140 journalistic staff.

7. Pay more attention to writing style

Up until the beginning of the twentieth century, the magazines – newsmagazines included – had a closer link with literature, even publishing fiction pieces. With the development of the genre, the relationship with the arts – including the visual arts – became more distant and the quality of text lost importance on the way towards news.

Being a long or short reading, newsmagazines are, no doubt, an additional reading, after newspapers, TV and, today, the internet. As a secondary source of information, newsmagazines should also bring other values, and the aesthetic is one of them. As Johnson and Prijatel describes:

A reader is drawn to a magazine's content and appearance for a variety of reasons: aesthetic, pragmatic, whimsical, sensational, or ideological. (1999, 55)

As to the aesthetic reason, apart from the work of design with pictures and illustrations, there is the quality of text itself. The witty tone and premeditated simplicity of *The Week's* texts are one case of how the values of literature can be used in the service of journalism. The constant references to literature at *The Economist* and *Única* are another.

In the fast pace of internet, it is difficult to find this kind of consciousness about the format and it may be that the aesthetic qualities of newsmagazines – in text or design – will play an increasingly important role of keeping the readers' interest also in the online world. The values of it were stated long ago:

In a 1945 speech, Frederick Lewis Allen, then editor of *Harper's*, outlined what he considered to be the function of a magazine in America. It should be interesting, of course, and provide news more wisely and selectively conceived than the daily press. There should be discussion and interpretation of important issues, again more completely than the newspapers but less intensively than books. Magazines, Allen said, should offer a forum for original thinkers who were not representing institutions or organizations and should also offer an outlet for “artists and literature”. (Tebbel and Zuckerman 1991, 199)

8. Do not forget the “news” part in your name

It may be true that some themes such as celebrities, sports and life & style have the potential to attract an incomparably bigger readership. But it is not clear whether these concessions do more good or harm to newsmagazines' circulation.

In 2003, there was a clear tendency towards this kind of soft coverage, according to 2004 report of *The State of The News Media*:

Pages devoted to national affairs, for instance, dropped by 25 percent from 1980 to the first half of 2003, according to Hall's. There is less news on high culture such as museum reviews (13 percent in 1980 versus 10 percent in 2003), and, perhaps surprisingly, a smaller percent of pages devoted to business (11 percent versus 9 percent).

[\(...\)](#)

What subjects now take up the pages? The space devoted to entertainment and celebrity stories have roughly doubled since 1980 (and now account for 7 percent of the pages). Lifestyle coverage has grown from a scant 1 percent in 1980 to 4 percent in 2003. Health news, which often translates to news you can use rather than medical science, has more than quadrupled (from 2 percent in 1980 to 9 percent in 2003). The three news magazines, particularly *Time* and *Newsweek*, have added pages directly from the genres that have seen the largest rise in circulation.

(...)

The circulation numbers for the magazine industry make one thing clear: The news genre may not be dead, but growth and energy is outside the traditional big three news magazines.

Whether that is a permanent condition, or a reflection of their current hybrid format, is a question that cannot be answered here. But the attempts by these magazines to become younger by becoming lighter do not, according to the numbers, seem to be working.

Besides the already analysed trends in circulation, the strongest evidence about the importance of news is the low average age of *The Economist's* readers, regarded as one of the most “serious” newsmagazines. Its readers are, in the United States, 39,9 years old, whereas the average age of readers of all newsmagazines is 47.2 years old – the average age of the general American population is 44.8.

The perception of these results may have lead *Time* and *Newsweek* back to seriousness. The 2009 report of *The State of The News Media* highlights the changes:

At *Time*, coverage of national affairs grew by nearly a quarter (8 percentage points) to 35% of all editorial space during the year. Moreover, that was 22 percentage points more than any other topic, and led, in turn, to declines in nearly everything else. International news fell by nearly a fifth to 13% of editorial space, business by more than a third (to 5%) and culture news by a quarter to 10%.

The level of health coverage was basically unchanged in 2008.

At *Newsweek*, national affairs made up an even greater portion of the coverage, 39%. Business held at 7%, up a point, while team decreased nearly a third to 7% and international news dipped by nearly 11%.

The shift towards national affairs certainly reflects the national elections and it is still necessary to observe what happened in 2009 to draw more precise conclusions about the trends in the coverage of the two biggest weeklies.

It is possible to observe, though, that dumbing down the content of a newsmagazine is far from being the unique possible strategy to keeping a title alive. Sticking to the coverage of the most relevant issues on politics, economics, and international affairs have proved valid.

9. In making news summaries, be sure you add something to the plain fact

As mentioned above in items 1 and 2, the worries that newsmagazines would become obsolete and disappear started as early as in the beginning of the 20th century, with the rise of Sunday newspapers, and continued during the rise of TV, cable TV and the internet. Apart from the Sunday papers, the others are acclaimed responsible for speeding up the pace of news, making the content of newspapers and newsmagazines outdated.

While this assumption may be true for newspapers, it is questionable as to its application to newsmagazines. Newspapers, the first genre of print journalism, have heavily relied in straight forward reporting of current facts and events, although always mixed with other kinds of content, including in-depth reportage, features, and opinion pieces. As the second genre of print journalism, magazines have always faced newspapers' competition from newspapers and, therefore, have never relied on simply reporting the hard news.

Looking through history, the newsmagazines have pursued various different approaches to content, including mixing reportage with fiction, focusing on investigative journalism or reviewing and organizing the news newspapers had already published.

The addition of three new competitors – TV, cable TV and internet – posed more difficulties for magazines to find their singularity and space, but concluding that there is no room for newsmagazines in the world of 24/7 news, as stated in myth number 2, is ignoring the nature of newsmagazines, which though they are always linked to news, are never confined to it.

To say that newsweeklies are useless because they reflect the facts of the past days and, therefore, only tell people news they have already heard of, is being too simplistic in defining what is a news summary.

Indeed there are some digests that do not bring more to readers than automatic aggregators as Google and Yahoo!. But there are others and more interesting ways of doing a summary. The best example of it is *The Week*, which is entirely based on reporting the news others have reported. Their formula could show how, even in very short texts, it is possible to give more than the plain facts.

One of the tricks of doing that, explains Jeremy O'Grady, editor-in-chief of *The Week*, is

collecting the impressions and perspectives of a fact and writing them as if all the commentators were in the same room, having a debate. By doing that, the title guarantees its version will be richer than any content that readers may have seen before. Another strategy employed by *The Week* is its witty writing style, concise but relaxed with sprinkles of humour, for instance in headlines such as “Boring, but important”.

It is not as if every magazine should imitate *The Week's* formula, but the title proves possible to go further even in the tiny notes typical of the briefings sections.

10. Integrate print and online newsrooms

If we assume that having a clear identity and a strong editorial culture is essential for newsmagazines – being in print, on the web or in any digital platform, as exposed in items 1 and 3 –, having one single team producing content is a must.

It does not mean that every journalist will become a multimedia reporter or that every one inside the newsroom must be all the time in every media. Inside most of the integrated newsrooms, there is some sort of specialization or special time span of dedication to other media.

At FLYP, for example, a digital enterprise, journalists are required to understand what is possible to do with sound, video and graphs, but are not responsible for doing it. All the articles are done by a multi-discipline team formed by a specialist in video, an expert in audio, another in animation, another in info-graphics as well as a writer/journalist.

At *Time*, the main office in New York divides the task of editing the website with the two other bureaus, in London and Hong Kong, to guarantee that the operation will work on a 24/7 basis. All the staff, to a certain extent, have a print and an online presence, varying according their tasks in one or the other.

At *The Economist*, there are assistant editors dedicated to the website, but they are subordinated to the editors of the newsmagazine, and an increasing presence of the original print staff online.

At *Única*, even though the newsmagazine does not have its own website, its staff is

responsible for updating the channel *Life & Style of Espresso's* website and to guarantee its frequency, there is a kind of scale, in which each person of the team has one specific day on duty.

The most important reason why newsrooms should be integrated – and having the same editor-in-chief – is keeping the same identity and values. Being separated, the staffs may very easily end up with different editorial lines as a consequence of differences in status, salaries and command. The Columbia study about magazines' websites reveals that “print people still regard Web people as second-class citizens”, one trend that will not be reverted unless newsrooms become integrated.

The main reason for integrating is not cutting costs – since it may be that necessary to hire more professionals, such as video makers and developers –, but it is undeniable that having only one newsroom for every media offers a more efficient way of publishing, since from one piece of original newsgathering it is possible to think about different contents.

The only studied case in which print and online are totally separate operations was *Der Spiegel*. The newsmagazine decided to focus on hard news competing with newspapers and broadcasters and became one of the most accessed German news websites. The strategy is sustainable for now because *Der Spiegel's* online newsroom employs 100 journalists – while the print version counts on 330 people in its journalistic staff.

Assuming that very few newsmagazines' newsrooms would be able to have that many workers, they will have to create, online, a different content, not the straightforward hard news, following a similar path they have gone down while at the same time trying to differentiate themselves from newspapers.

11. Different platform, different content

The current media discussions question whether it is possible to give all the print content for free online and still keep circulation. After an initial debate about the viability of building the pay-wall suggested by Rupert Murdoch's International News, the considerations moved towards which kind of content could companies charge for.

Evidence about what magazines are doing online may suggest that before thinking about charging or not, titles should reflect on which sort of content they have online. According to

the *Magazines and their web sites: A Columbia Journalism Review survey and report*, “only 5 percent [of the interviewed staff members] mentioned creating new or unique content as being integral to the site's mission, whereas 96 percent said they use content from the print magazine online”.

The current question whether newsmagazines' websites are causing the erosion of print readership would not be posed if the online versions had a different purpose rather than just reproducing the print content. According to the Columbia's study, many respondents said that their magazines are still trying to figure out what the mission of their websites is. What would it be? It is impossible to have one sole answer to cope with the variety of editorial formulas behind the titles, but it is probable that the path will go towards differentiation – from print and from other media outlets as well.

Some possible answers are emerging not only from the traditional publishers but also by the new digital enterprises, such as *Politico*. It would not be possible to reproduce it for newsmagazines with massive circulations, but its example shows that it is possible to have different content and different audiences using different platforms, a desirable aim for traditional publishers as well.

With a print version (32 thousand copies) freely distributed in Washington three times a week and a website freely accessible everywhere, both sustained by advertisements, *Politico* does not fear internal competition and rather focuses on its content, no matter if in print or online.

Another example of differentiating print from online is how *The Economist* is incorporating social tools to its website. Identified as a newsmagazine of ideas, *The Economist* publishes in every issue that its mission is: “to take part in 'a severe contest between intelligence, which presses forward, and an unworthy, timid ignorance obstructing our progress'.”

Instead of simply reproducing online the same content it does in print, the newsmagazine is turning its website into a place for this “severe contest” of ideas by inviting readers to comment on selected topics. The social media tools are going to help readers to follow one debate, one theme or other readers that may interest them. From the free space for interaction of any sort in social websites such as Facebook, *The Economist* is creating a

more controlled environment for debate that resonates with its historical editorial purpose.

Conscious that its digital presence should reflect its identity, *Única* decided not to use its name online until it reunites conditions to reflect, on the web, its uniqueness. Its particular situation among the other titles studied in this research – being sold together with a weekly newspaper, *Expresso*, in Portugal – gives it time to consolidate the idea of what it has to be online. It is a situation as privileged as rare and most of the others are trying to figure out what is the mission of the website – or mobile application or tablet version – of their publications.

12. Be sure you distribute your content in every possible digital way

With the release of the iPad by Apple in April 2010, print publishers are rushing to develop their own versions of the new device. The excitement around the gadget reflects the predictions that it is more probable that readers will pay for content in the new platform.

Publishers are going to be extra careful about pricing and are already negotiating the shares of the revenues, trying to guarantee they are going to recover on the iPad what they seemed to have lost online.

Hopefully, in the middle of these important arguments, there is going to be room for deciding how this new digital content will be and in what ways it could help publishers to do a better job whether informing, amusing and enlightening the audience. Jim Gaines, editor-in-chief of FLYP, a digital magazine that explores the frontiers of multimedia, describes as follows what is behind the idea of the tablet:

Someone said that it was not important what you put on the page. What is important is what readers take out of the page. What FLYP does is allow you to put much more on a page than words can possibly do by themselves. We use text significantly but we also use audiovisual media to make the point. What we are trying to do is capture various senses at one in the service of a single subject. So you are actually consuming much more than if you were only reading. And the trick of what we do is try to create an optimum combination of media so that they are not distracting from one another but actually working with one another in order to get more of the page than you can do only with print. If you allow interactivity, it must be well defined or you would encourage distraction. And the point is to get a certain subject or story out of the page to people's minds. Interactivity helps to compose their experience.

Although looking to the future, Gaines' comments are a reminder that the mission of journalism, including the one of newsmagazines, is to be worried about the content, as also stated by Tebbel and Zuckerman:

“It is still the editorial content and purpose of magazines that are the primary factors in whether or not they become successful or stay so” (1991, 362)

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