
Print is not dead: digitisation in the 21st century Dutch independent magazine market

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Abstract

English

The independent magazine industry is a global niche market that thrives in its individuality and internationality. Magazines represent many cultural, economic, political, and social values in its pages. They signal to the historical development of society, one that relied on the commercialisation of information. Since the invention of the mechanical printing press, magazines differentiated from other printed media with its distinct combinations of funding mechanisms, content, and form. The technological changes in communications of the new millennium threaten the magazine industry's dominant advertising revenue business model as digital platforms compete for their readers' attention. As such, this thesis evaluates the economic advantages of digitisation, the adoption of digital-ready devices and software, through a sociological qualitative lens in an academically unresearched segment of the industry: independent magazines. The histories from two magazine makers from Amsterdam, *Fantastic Man* and *MacGuffin*, and three specialised retailers, NAI Booksellers in Rotterdam, Athenaeum Boekhandel in Amsterdam, and Stack Magazines in London, converge as case study examples of independent magazine publishing in the Netherlands. They all are in the business of selling long-lasting publications that epitomise creative freedom in the careful design of texts and visuals that is printed in unique paper experimentations. The case study confirms that the subjects recognise digitisation's socio-economic values across their industrial organisation and creation and distribution value chains. Independent magazine editors hold minimal digital ambitions as they are passionate for crafting a magazine as a tangible object for a global niche audience that is scattered around the world. Meanwhile this transnational community of readers is made possible by the e-commerce capabilities of specialised retailers, as such, these are more susceptible to the digitisation of their market operations even if the delivery still depends on postal services and transporting labour. It is in this digital turn that the magazine form has undergone interdisciplinary inquiry to predict its future, this case study concludes that the print form continues to be the dominant core for the independent magazine market in the Netherlands.

Keywords: digitisation, independent magazines, indies, material culture, print media, creative industries, magazines, magazine editors.

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In between the two times I got run over by a car while riding my bike in Rotterdam, I went to see the German movie *Freiheit* (Freedom) at Cinerama. As the movie ended, I was surprised to reflect on the emancipatory value that print magazines can have for transnational communities. It increased my commitment to investigate the evolution of the (independent) magazine industry for my thesis.

This master's thesis would have not been possible without the everlasting support of my family. My mother Maribel has been an example of resilience, and I thank her for all the personal foundations that she invested in me. My father Salvador has given us life challenges that came with an early understanding of the world, and for that I am eternally grateful. My brother Gustavo is a trailblazer, he opened the floodgates to the world with his unique personality. My sister Salma is an angel, her warmth always arrives in the simplest yet most beautiful of ways. I love my family, and this thesis is for them. I also thank Wesley for his heart and endless generosity.

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Fake it till you become it.

With pride and thought, Carlos Zepeda.

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“If you don’t have a budget, get yourself a point of view.”

- Tina Brown

1. Framing magazine publishing research

1.1 Introduction

Magazines are emblematic of *glocal*: a local good that has become a global commodity that is charged with historical, socio-economic, and political interlinkages. It is also a vehicle for economic development in the creative industries and can serve as a cultural time capsule for specific communities, events, and interests. Magazine choices range from topic – business, sports, fashion, food, travel, technology, culture, lifestyle – to audiences – women, men, children, teens – and minorities – sexual orientation, gender, race; there’s a magazine for everyone. Magazines, as a publishing medium, abound in genres at a similar scale of other creative industries such as films, music, and books. Television and radio are early examples of two-sided markets that connected advertisers with viewers, their platforms brought entertainment and advertising to households after the post-war era.¹ The fixed broadcasting hardware is threatened by the rise of new business models that operate through interconnected portable devices. Streaming platforms such as Netflix and Spotify have redefined the global distribution that public television and local radio stations dominated for decades. Self-publishing has also disrupted the traditional book publishing model by reducing the role of intermediaries through portable devices known as e-readers that opened a digital market known as e-books.² Digital platforms such as websites and social media allow for an accessible creation and dissemination of content that lower barriers to entry permitting an instant exchange of content across the world.

Some creative industries have seen their goods digitised, and their organisation challenged by online platforms that offer products through digital services of media consumption.³ There are initiatives for digital tools to replace human artists, curators in museums and editors in publishing.⁴ As such, magazines share these contemporary transformations within its industry. As broadcasting

¹ Jean-Charles Rochet and Jean Tirole, "Two-Sided Markets: A Progress Report," *The RAND Journal of Economics* 37, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 645.

² Ruth Towse, "Economics of Book Publishing," in *A textbook of cultural economics* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, New Delhi and Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 608; Joel Waldfogel and Imke Reimers, "Storming the gatekeepers: Digital disintermediation in the market for books," *Information Economics and Policy* 31 (February 2015): 48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infoecopol.2015.02.001>.

³ The term "online platform" is used interchangeably with "digital platform," they are considered places that offer digital solutions to users via interconnected devices with Internet.

⁴ "Big Tech is replacing human artists with AI," *The Intrinsic Perspective*, 2021, accessed May 15, 2022, <https://erikhoel.substack.com/p/big-tech-is-replacing-human-artists?s=r>; Vivian van Saaze, Claartje Rasterhoff, and Karen Archey, "Imagining the Future of Digital Archives and Collections - Editorial," *Stedelijk Studies* 10 (2020), <https://stedelijkstudies.com/journal/editorial-issue-10/>.

media, magazines are two-sided platforms that connect their readers with advertisers.⁵ Some digital platforms are in the advertising business, and as competing two-sided markets, they have caused a migration of revenues away from traditional analogue media since their inception. Digitisation, the adoption of digital-ready devices and systems, forces a restructuring of revenue models that has seen print magazines turned into multimedia brands that offer additional digital products and services. Under this complex development, magazine publishing has generally had a slower “digital disruption” than other publishing industries attributed to the lack of a global standard or device for digital magazine publishing.⁶

Magazines are objects that have seen scholars from multiple disciplines – (media/cultural) sociologists, historians, and (cultural) economists – analysing their content with a wide range of methodological approaches. In the last decade, pioneering works reinforced the multidisciplinary of magazine research. *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research* has outlined 20 years of magazine analysis from industrial organisation to its visual and textual communications.⁷ *The Handbook of Magazine Studies* summarises the past, present, and future of magazine publishing with its careful selection of case studies.⁸ Here, social scientist Megan Le Masurier presented the slow journalism practice as an alternative that can co-exist with instant mass media (digital) communications. According to Le Masurier, independent magazines are *slow* print media that thrives with a narrow industrial organisation catered to a “global niche” market, a specialised audience with access to an international distribution via digital platforms.⁹ This theoretical/practical approach challenges the contemporary view of print magazines transforming into digital multimedia brands. As such this master’s thesis accepts the invitation of scholars to uncover how the print (independent) magazine industry endures in face of an evolving digital era.¹⁰

⁵ Ulrich Kaiser and Julian Wright, "Price structure in two-sided markets: Evidence from the magazine industry," *International Journal of Industrial Organization* 24, no. 1 (2006): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijindorg.2005.06.002>; David S. Evans Evans and Richard Schmalensee, "The Industrial Organization of Markets with Two-Sided Platforms," *Competition Policy International* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 155.

⁶ Daniel Nylén, Jonny Holmström, and Kalle Lyytinen, "Oscillating Between Four Orders of Design: The Case of Digital Magazines," *Design Issues* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 68, https://doi.org/10.1162/DESI_a_00278; Dora Santos Silva, "The Future of Digital Magazine Publishing," *Information Services & Use* 31, no. 3-4 (July 2011): 310, <https://doi.org/10.3233/ISU-2012-0661>.

⁷ *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research: the Future of the Magazine Form*, ed. David Abrahamson, Marcia R. Prior-Miller, and Bill Emmott, Routledge handbooks, (New York and London: Routledge, 2017, 2017), passim.

⁸ *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes, Handbooks in Communication and Media, (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020, 2020), passim.

⁹ Megan Le Masurier, "Slow Magazines: The New Indies in Print," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 93.

¹⁰ The following authors have recently called for research on digital influences in the print magazine media landscape: Tim Holmes and Liz Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, ed. Martin Conboy, David Finkelstein, and Bob Franklin, Journalism Studies: Key Texts, (London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2012), 34-35, 47, 157, 62-65; Tim Holmes, "Case Study: Porter Magazine: A Case Study in Hybridity," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 159-60; Berkley Hudson and Elizabeth A. Lance, "Photography and Illustration: The Power and Promise of the Image," in *The Routledge handbook of magazine research: the future of the magazine form*, ed. David Abrahamson, Marcia R. Prior-Miller, and Bill Emmott (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 420; Berkley Hudson and Carol B. Schwalbe, "Social Scientific Approaches to Magazine Research," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena

Historically, magazines have undergone diverse funding mechanisms from the state or church patronage until publishers found comfort in advertisers. Its editorial contents are representative of its funders, early modern printed media communicated political or religious developments with some commercial trade information to build nation states. Their content later presented intellectual and mass-market information due to economic ambitions from independent publishers during the First Industrial Revolution. After local markets became saturated, magazines became specialised to cater to specific audiences and their interests. Technological changes in the printing press during these transformations maintained the magazine form in print, but the developments in telecommunications since the 1980s have influenced their omnipresence through digital formats in online platforms.

Accordingly, this research aims to analyse the impact of digitisation in the creation and retail strategies for independent magazine publishers in the Netherlands with a case study of two magazine editors and three retailers. The magazines – *Fantastic Man* and *MacGuffin* - represent an independent publishing dichotomy in Amsterdam with different funding mechanisms (private and public) and content (specialised and intellectual). Another binary selection is also presented at the retailer level, two have a hybrid physical-online shop (NAi Booksellers in Rotterdam, Athenaeum Spui in Amsterdam) and the other has exclusively online operations (Stack Magazines in London). The general magazine evolution in funding, content and form are relevant to understand independent magazines today. With its many forms, low print runs and capital-city office locations, it becomes difficult to measure the size of the independent magazine market in the international economy. The research investigates an understudied phenomenon that holds interdisciplinary ambitions through the voices of experienced individuals and by analysing the pages of these magazines. The selection of these subjects is founded on defining independent magazines and in executing a contrasting analysis of how digitisation has influenced changes in the Dutch market in the last two decades.

Sternadori and Tim Holmes, *Handbooks in Communication and Media* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 43; Joy Jenkins, "Magazines' Construction of Life Markers: From Youth to Old Age," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 246; Thomas Koch, Nora Denner, and Benedikt Gutheil, "Customer Magazines as Hybrids of Journalism and PR," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 142; Andrea McDonnell, "Gatekeepers and Gal Pals: The Narrative Strategies of Celebrity Magazines," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 212; Chelsea Reynolds, "The 'Woke' Sex Discourse: Sexuality and Gender in Online Consumer Magazines," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes, *Handbooks in Communication and Media* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 193-94; Leara D. Rhodes, "International Magazine Publishing: The Transformative Power of Globalization," in *The Routledge handbook of magazine research: the future of the magazine form*, ed. David Abrahamson, Marcia R. Prior-Miller, and Bill Emmott (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 143; John Sinclair, "Magazines and Advertising in the Digital Age," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 105; Ken Waters, "Religious Magazines: Keeping the Faith," in *The Routledge handbook of magazine research: the future of the magazine form*, ed. David Abrahamson, Marcia R. Prior-Miller, and Bill Emmott (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 316; Kenton T. Wilkinson and Cristóbal Benavides Almarza, "Magazines in Spanish and Portuguese America," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 412; Matthew Yeomans, "American Magazines as Champions of Environmental and Corporate Sustainability," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 380; Dan Zhang and Paul Dwyer, "An Extraordinary Duckling: B2B Magazines as Information and Networking Tools for Professionals," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 130-31.

1.2 Research Question(s)

Central to the research is the following two-part main inquiry whose answers shall inform of both positive benefits and the negative externalities of integrating digital devices and systems within creation and retail processes in a local independent magazine industry that has a global reach:

(1.1) Which effects has digitisation influenced on the independent magazine market in the Netherlands from 2000-2022? (1.2) And which elements are more or less inclined to adopt digitisation?

To support the main research question, three sub-research questions frame the historiographical review of the magazine industry to uncover magazines' differentiating characteristics from other printed media. It additionally attempts to uncover the present reading habits of the country under analysis to validate the research framing:

(2.1) What differentiates magazines from other printed media that developed in parallel after the Middle Ages? (2.2) And how do they manifest themselves in the twenty-first century Netherlands?

(3) How has the public's interest in reading print magazines evolved in the Netherlands during the twenty-first century?

(4.1) What general characteristics, if any, make independent magazines independent? (4.2) And how do these manifest themselves in the Netherlands?

1.3 Research Design

To answer the main and sub-research questions about the independent magazine market in the Netherlands, insights are required on two levels: creation/publishing and retail/distribution.¹¹ Independent magazine editors shall expand on the philosophies behind their magazines and the interpersonal relationships they hold. Online and hybrid (online-offline) retailers help evaluate how they function as promoters and gatekeepers of the market. In line with the exploratory ambitions of this master's thesis, the research methodology is grounded on the case study approach with mixed (quantitative and qualitative) methods design for substantial data collection whose analysis helps evaluate the research questions. Under embedded-case studies, both groups of stakeholders help explain how digitisation influences a global niche market for print independent magazines in a time when magazine publishing is digitally feasible.

¹¹ Given the narrow industrial organisation of independent magazines that is explained in Section 2.4.3, the first level is blurred into one.

1.3.1 Methodology

The exploratory research case study is selected as it is commonly used in the social sciences where focus on contemporary phenomena is central.¹² This type of case study permits a holistic and authentic immersion on real-life cases of individuals and communities.¹³ Two embedded multi-case studies [Figure 1.1] are performed: the first contextualizes independent magazines with two units of analysis, and the second contrasts three units of analysis categorised as specialised retailers.¹⁴ The selection of contributors offers an unexploited breadth of knowledge about the print independent magazine industry in the Netherlands. Multiple case studies permit a robust theoretical replication that strengthens and/or contrasts the findings where a single-case study design remains vulnerable to insufficient evidence.¹⁵ Each unit receives equal empirical treatment within its embedded multi-case study to arrive to findings and conclusions across units and cases. The case studies presented here are to be interpreted as examples rather than absolute representatives of what independent magazines are in the Dutch context.

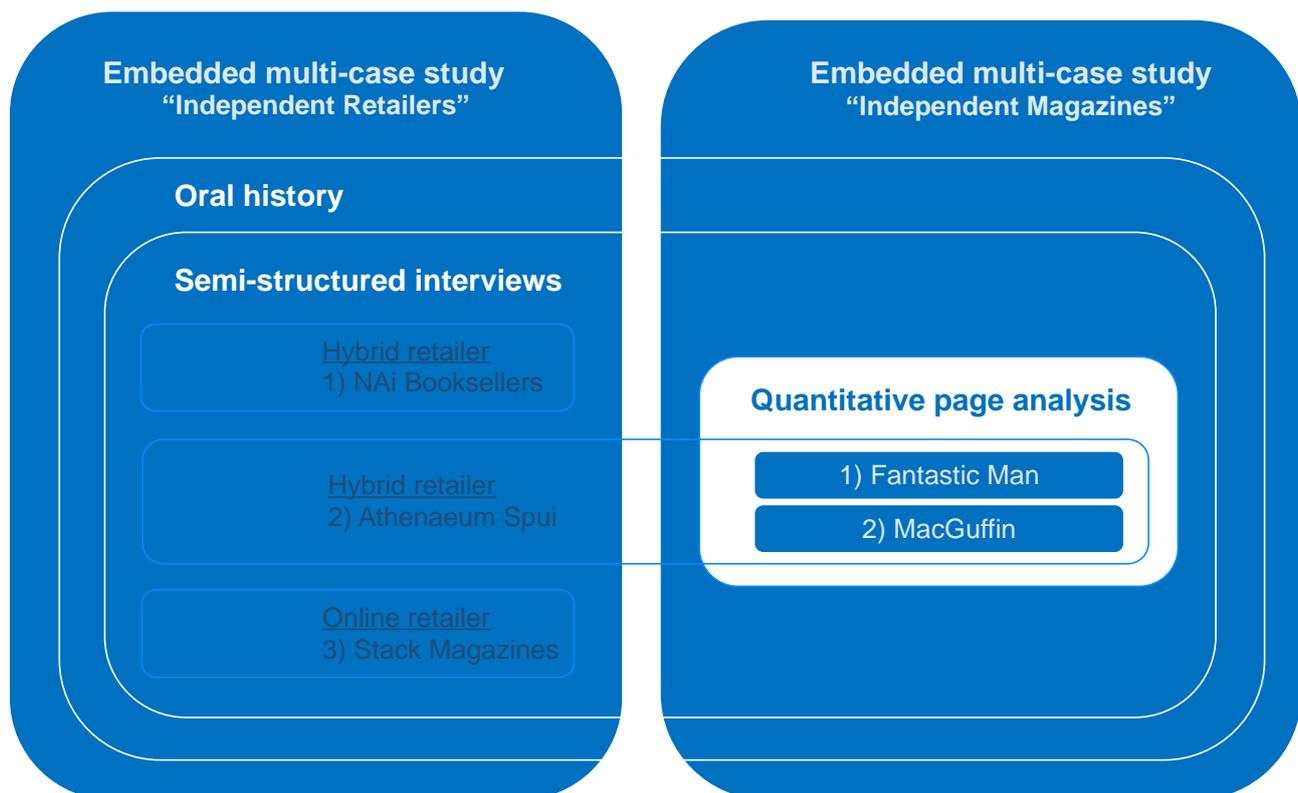


Figure 1.1. Research design including embedded multi-case study types with a mixed methods approach.

¹² Robert K. Yin, *Case study research and applications : design and methods*, 6th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018), 32.

¹³ Yin, *Case study research*, 35.

¹⁴ A case study can be singular or multiple depending on how many contexts are evaluated; it is categorised as holistic when there is a single unit per context, but it becomes embedded when there are multiple units of analysis for a given context, see Yin, *Case study research*, 84.

¹⁵ Yin, *Case study research*, 96-98.

1.3.2 Methods

The embedded multi-case studies begin with a historiographical review of the print media industry in the European and Dutch context. The literature review is a dynamic process that helps frame the theoretical framework through a historical account of the political, economic, and technological changes the magazine industry has evolved through. It is followed by qualitative and quantitative research methods that support the sociological framing.

For qualitative research, semi-structured interviews are paired with oral history. Oral history is a tool that opens a two-directional narrative space where the subjects can express (about) themselves while the researcher acquires relevant first-hand knowledge for the project.¹⁶ It is understood that this method is limited to personal accounts and experiences, however, since lack of access to the magazine industry has been cited as a roadblock to research it represents an opportunity to investigate the Dutch context.¹⁷ Semi-structured interviews are paired with oral history's dialogical attributes to define predetermined questions for the participants. The questions of the semi-structured interviews are open-ended to permit a flexible thematic control based on the interviewee's responsiveness.¹⁸ The interviews serve as an extractive yet collaborative strategy to inform about the past while reporting from the present directly from experience.¹⁹ It becomes an opportunity to acquire original qualitative data to understand the industrial organisation, practices, and motivations with an end-to-end view (from creation to sales) of the industry. The close reading from the interviews serves as a preservation of the participants' experiences on three levels: their first contact with magazines, contemporary practices in their field (editor-magazine/buyer-retail), and the impact of digitisation in their chronicled development.²⁰

Additionally, empirical data from organisations is analysed, and a magazine page analysis is executed for quantitative research. International and Dutch organisations that measure consumer and media behaviours provide data to uncover magazine circulation, reading times and advertising spending. Content analysis has been the dominant research method for decades by (magazine) media sociologists as it aims to analyse magazines objectively rather than its commonly studied subjective quality.²¹ However, measuring the desired material and symbolic values of the independent

¹⁶ Alessandro Portelli, "Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience," *The Oral History Review* 45, no. 2 (August 2018): 240, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohy030>.

¹⁷ Megan Le Masurier and Rebecca Johnke, 'Magazine Studies: Pedagogy and Practice in a Nascent Field', *TEXT*, 29 April 2014, 2, <https://doi.org/10.52086/001c.27569>.

¹⁸ Lisa M. Given, "Semi-Structured Interview," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), 811.

¹⁹ Portelli, "Living Voices," 245.

²⁰ For a full detail of the themes and interview questions see Appendix 7.4, and for interview transcripts see Appendix 7.5.

²¹ Hudson and Schwalbe, "Social Scientific Approaches," 40; Kathleen L. Endres, "Methodological Studies: Interdisciplinarity Is the Key," in *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research: The Future of the Magazine Form*, ed. David Abrahamson and

magazines falls out of the scope of quantifying the frequency or sociologically coupling specific text, visual and aural concepts. A simple quantitative page analysis is executed that considers the magazines as a physical artifact as a source of evidence.²² Its pages are quantified under three variables: type of paper (glossy/matter), editorial/advertising content and textual-visual elements in editorial content.²³ The measurement of these variables ensues in both a longitudinal case and a comparative analysis that evaluates the characteristics of independent magazine by scholarly research.²⁴

1.4 Significance of Research

The behind-the-scenes overview from independent magazine editors, publishers, distributors, and retailers in the Netherlands has not been explicitly explored previously. Research has largely focused on the magazine as an object with the use of economic analysis in its price-circulation relationship, industrial organisation of mainstream magazines, or the content analysis within its pages to uncover cultural and social influences of print. This project presents an initial conceptual definition, industrial organisation model besides the Anglo-Saxon countries that dominate magazine research contexts. Plus, it evaluates the digital influences that independent print professionals experience that magazine scholars have actively and recently recommended for research. By placing independent print magazines not only as objects of research, but also as a creative industry for research, it attempts to create a space for the validation of the print medium in the digital era. The magazine industry is in constant transformation, and after stepping inside the independent magazines market, theories are tested with authentic insights on the influence of history and technology in printed media in a market that has an international readership.

Marcia R. Prior-Miller (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2015), 51-52; Reynolds, "The "Woke" Sex Discourse: Sexuality and Gender in Online Consumer Magazines," 194.

²² Yin, *Case study research*, 169.

²³ For a complete review of the quantitative page analysis method see Appendix 7.2.

²⁴ Many thanks to Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam's magazine collection available for review at their Library, including MacGuffin issues 1-10 and Fantastic Man issues 1-17 and 19. Also thanks to Gert Jonkers for the access to the Fantastic Man archives at the magazine's headquarters in Amsterdam, including Fantastic Man issues 18 and 20-35.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This master's thesis is grounded in the social adoption of technology and how global digitisation standards have evolved and been adopted. Digitisation challenges long-standing businesses by democratising access to the creation and distribution of transnational cultural capital. It is the aim of this thesis to evaluate evolutionary economists' conclusions through the sociological lens of the creative industries, namely, the media industry of independent magazine making.

The notion of technological change is instrumental to the historiographical review of the magazine industry as we can uncover the differentiation of magazines from other print media such as newspapers and books through technology diffusions. The doctoral work of cultural economist Christian Handke in the recording industry brings clear its definition: "technological change is the diffusion of new products and production processes."²⁵ These new products and process are the application of knowledge related to the production and organisation of goods and services. Handke argues that innovation processes are tied to technological change, and the market achieves consolidation when dominant designs are adopted through common shared standards.²⁶ Magazines are representative of product innovations that developed converging forms based in technological developments from the printing press and telecommunications.

The adoption of technological changes is credited to have democratised access to participate in content-driven (creative) industries. Economist Joel Waldfogel has extensively used digitisation theory to explain how technological developments have disrupted media industries during the turn of the millennium with positive and negative effects for emerging creators, incumbents, and consumers alike.²⁷ For creators, there are near zero marginal costs of production, distribution, and consumption that reduce barriers to entry.²⁸ For consumers, there are consumption behaviour changes that demand free goods and services that were once private goods.²⁹ For industry incumbents, while they can benefit from the same advantages as creators, their once quality-certifying gatekeeping role is challenged in three fronts: rebuilding revenue streams, increased competition from independent

²⁵ Christian Handke, "The Creative Destruction of Copyright - Innovation in the Record Industry and Digital Copying" (PhD dissertation, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2010), 194.

²⁶ Handke, "The Creative Destruction of Copyright," 196, 203.

²⁷ Waldfogel and Reimers, "Storming the gatekeepers," 48; Joel Waldfogel, "How Digitization Has Created a Golden Age of Music, Movies, Books, and Television," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 196, <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.3.195>; Joel Waldfogel, "Digitization in the cultural industries," in *Handbook of Cultural Economics*, ed. Ruth Towse and Trilce Navarrete Hernández (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020), 235.

²⁸ Waldfogel and Reimers, "Storming the gatekeepers," 48; Waldfogel, "How Digitization Has Created a Golden Age," 195, 98 and 200.

²⁹ Waldfogel, "How Digitization Has Created a Golden Age," 196.

creators, and new digital gatekeepers in a process Waldfogel labelled as “unfiltered production.”³⁰ For all of them though, digitisation brings a cost of discovery/attention challenge and piracy due to the increased utilities of information and connectivity.³¹ Any losses in market share for established businesses would be attributed to the failure to adapt and innovate in times of technological change.³²

The value of digitisation relies on the increase of creative activity as some outputs would have not seen the market under the established institutions/systems before considerable digital transformations. The magazine industry has been left out of these scholars’ academic scope since they focused on other creative industries with multimedia (music, movies, television) and printed media (books and newspapers) products. The book industry, for instance, provides some insights into the diffusion of technological changes in the print industry. For the diffusion of digital books (e-books), there was a need for a new product (e-reader) and information systems (websites, blogs) that permitted self-publishing from authors without the traditional intermediaries.³³ It is estimated that e-books represented only 7% of the global book market in 2013, and that figure increased to 13% in 2021.³⁴ However optimistic the adoption of e-books, a public demanding analogue experiences through reading papers endures at a global level. Print magazines also significantly dominate over digital magazines since the latter represents only one-fifth of the total global magazine revenues in 2021.³⁵ Attempts in the magazine industry to adopt digital devices (i.e., iPad) as a global standard have stalled even when new sets of digital intermediaries have emerged. Most importantly, both cultural economists vaguely address the evident: independent creators are their subjects of analysis. Data on magazine output or usage by time/year are not systematically available, but information on magazine practices through international organisations and case studies can be obtained. Digitisation theory guides the understanding on how the democratisation of access to information impacts magazine creators and retailers.

³⁰ Waldfogel, "How Digitization Has Created a Golden Age," 197; Waldfogel and Reimers, "Storming the gatekeepers," 48.

³¹ Waldfogel, "How Digitization Has Created a Golden Age," 209; Waldfogel, "Digitization in the cultural industries," 235.

³² Handke, "The Creative Destruction of Copyright," 196.

³³ Waldfogel and Reimers, "Storming the gatekeepers," 48.

³⁴ Marc Lhermitte, Bruno Perrin, and Solenne Blanc, *Cultural times: the first global map of cultural and creative industries*, CISAC - International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (London: Ernst & Young Global Limited, December 2015), 24; "Books - Worldwide," Statista, 2022, accessed June 01, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/amo/media/books/worldwide>.

³⁵ "Newspapers & Magazines - Worldwide," Statista, 2022, accessed June 01, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/amo/media/newspapers-magazines/worldwide>; "Print Newspapers & Magazines - Worldwide," Statista, 2022, accessed June 01, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/amo/media/newspapers-magazines/print-newspapers-magazines/worldwide>; "Digital Newspapers & Magazines - Worldwide," Statista, 2022, accessed June 01, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/amo/media/newspapers-magazines/digital-newspapers-magazines/worldwide>.

2.2. The Omnipresence of Magazines

The story of magazine invention is a history embedded in print publishing, a history that newspapers and books also share. The word magazine has its etymological origin in Arabic, from the word *makhzan* (pl. *makzhin*) meaning a storehouse for goods, mainly of a military nature.³⁶ Using *magazine* for publishing means a “generic title for collections of heterogeneous items of interest and use to particular reader-sets.”³⁷ Its origin and use is representative of its constant evolution, an evolution that is reviewed in this chapter through four periods (early modern, late modern, post-war, and new millennium) that couple the diverse technological developments, industrial organisation changes, and forms in which magazines differentiated from other printed media to become a global industry. Thus, this chapter evaluates the sub-research question, (2.1) *what differentiates magazines from other printed media that developed in parallel after the Middle Ages?*

The story begins in the sixteenth century where political and religious patronage influenced the content published in printed media. Developments in a decentralised Dutch Republic induced freedom of publishing that led to a collaborative industry between a business and academic press that took in European intellectuals. German sociologist Jürgen Habermas points to the commercial direction of print media underpinned by technological, economic, and social changes that generated a participatory public sphere free from nation-state control.³⁸ Daily newspapers concentrated on reporting news to a national audience while the first glossy magazines focused on general interest topics that targeted specific social groups in the mid-nineteenth century with declining costs from technological and mail distribution improvements.³⁹ The magazine form differentiated with its close relationship to its readers and its aesthetics due to photography’s inception at the dawn of the twentieth-century. Since magazines later expanded internationally due to saturated domestic markets; the mid-twentieth century saw the consolidation of magazine titles as portfolios of media multinational companies across multiple countries. Therefore, the chapter also explores (2.2) *how do magazines manifest themselves in the twenty-first century Dutch market?* The deployment of once corporate infrastructures such as computer hardware and network communications to the public ensued in a simplified magazine-making and distribution process accessible to an online society. The adoption of a new global standard of communications powered by mobile interconnected devices led

³⁶ John Hartley, "Reading Magazines: Taking Death Cab for Cutie from Shed to Dalston," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 20.

³⁷ Hartley, "Reading Magazines," 20. In some European languages, the word refers to a store (French *magasin*, Italian *magazzino*) so other words were used for these periodical publications (Spanish and Catalan *revista*, French *périodique*, Italian *rivista*) while others clearly include its temporal element (Dutch *tijdschrift*, Swedish *tidskrift*, German *Zeitschrift*).

³⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 188.

³⁹ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 3-4; Howard Cox and Simon Mowatt, "Vogue in Britain: Authenticity and the creation of competitive advantage in the UK magazine industry," *Business History* 54, no. 1 (February 2012): 69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2011.617209>.

to the emergence of digital platforms that challenge the print form between publishing its digital versions or evolving into international magazine brands that would sooner or later surrender its print form.

2.2.1 Early modern: the rise of an intellectual storehouse

The Middle Ages was witness to the development of cities with the earliest forms of socio-economic structures such as government, culture, and trade. Access to information during this time was limited to the communication of the spoken word in large gatherings in religious houses.⁴⁰ The engraving of woodblocks was used as the main technique for printing manuscripts before the inception of Johannes Gutenberg's mechanical printing press and movable type in Germany in 1439.⁴¹ Though Dutch inventor Laurens Janszoon Coster from Haarlem has been credited for inventing the printing press one decade before Gutenberg to a limited extent.⁴² The simultaneous trans-local development of new printing techniques underlines the motivation for the communication of information besides spoken word to an expanding domestic public. The mechanical printing press was initially used for daily newspapers, but publishers also developed the first books, along with irregular print runs of brochures, pamphlets, and almanacs. Newspapers and these irregular outputs foreshadowed the contemporary magazine form; contemporary printed forms are difficult to differentiate because they all used the same printing mechanisms.

The early modern European printing press demanded a funding mechanism that became dichotomous between minimal private investments or advanced payments from the church or state. The recurrent high investments for sourcing and production led to a high/low-end print culture in which entrepreneurs could remain financially afloat with the printing of low-cost, wide audience pamphlets and brochures while the periodical publications sponsored by the church or state strengthened their legitimacy through exclusive commercial reports with ideological censorship.⁴³ It is recognised that the Dutch Republic there had more freedom, yet the authorities maintained a close relationship with printers for the control of regular flows of information.⁴⁴ The industrial organisation of printing presses substituted scribes and craftspeople that copied manuscripts for a new division of

⁴⁰ Ann Blair, "Information in Early Modern Europe," in *Information: A Historical Companion*, ed. Ann Blair et al. (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 62-64.

⁴¹ Blair, "Information in Early Modern Europe," 62; Holmes, "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?," 4.

⁴² Blair, "Information in Early Modern Europe," 67.

⁴³ Blair, "Information in Early Modern Europe," 70.

⁴⁴ Arthur der Weduwen, "The Politics of Print in the Dutch Golden Age: The Ommelander Troubles (c. 1630–1680)," in *Print and Power in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. Nina Lamal, Jamie Cumby, and Helmer J. Helmers, Library of the written word. (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2021), 152.

labour that included type compositors and illustrators.⁴⁵ Additionally, the editorial function emerged as a new internal organisation function that managed the publishing of information.⁴⁶ The undergoing of publication practices was made possible not only by these structures, but also by the subscription of readers interested in maintaining a timely and credible communication source.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, publications backed by public funds would eventually see their editors yielding (but not completely erasing) its editorial function to the nation state building ambitions from the authorities.⁴⁸

The public communications in the early modern were a mixture of city hall proclamations, town cries and printed placards that maintained the citizens daily informed.⁴⁹ The business press emerged in Europe to disseminate information of interest to merchants and politicians such as prices of goods and ship movements. Commodity price, exchange rate, and stock-exchange *couranten* emerged as print formats to periodically inform on local and foreign trade and news. These sixteenth century publications have been credited as an early model for newspapers, magazines, and journals.⁵⁰ In 1585, Amsterdam had printed its first commodity price *courante* [Figure 2.1] that became an international benchmark for European commerce as it was published weekly in four languages: Dutch, English, French and Italian.⁵¹ The development of a postal system in Europe also supported the commercial integration and overall communication between partners in cities. By the late sixteenth century, the postal services and the barge services serviced the distribution of print throughout the Dutch provinces from north to south.⁵² Publishing maintained a close relationship with postal distribution as the collection and distribution of information depended on timely delivery to coffeehouses and private addresses.⁵³ The availability of information transformed from exclusively oral to internationally accessible multi-lingual printed communications.

Additional to entrepreneurs, church and state funding, the Dutch provinces saw the role of another finance mechanism with the foundation of universities. The western Dutch provinces became the centre for European books with highly specialised cities that complemented an international print market dominated by the business press. Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Leiden had the highest

⁴⁵ Blair, "Information in Early Modern Europe," 66-67, 71.

⁴⁶ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 182.

⁴⁷ Will Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information in the Early Modern Era," in *Information: A Historical Companion*, ed. Ann Blair et al. (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 133.

⁴⁸ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 182.

⁴⁹ der Weduwen, "The Politics of Print," 153; Helmer Helmers, "Public Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe," *Media History* 22, no. 3-4 (2016/10/01 2016): 407, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2016.1174570>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2016.1174570>.

⁵⁰ Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 132.

⁵¹ Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 132.

⁵² Laura Cruz, "The Secrets of Success: Microinventions and Bookselling in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands," *Book History* 10 (2007): 7; Jan de Vries, *Barges and Capitalism: Passenger Transportation in the Dutch Economy: 1632–1839.*, vol. 21 (A. G. Bijdragen, 1978), 393-98; Bert van Selm, *Een menighe treffelijcke Boecken: Nederlandse boekhandelscatalogi in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw* (Utrecht: Hes Uitgevers, 1987), 46.

⁵³ Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 130.

concentration of printers in the Dutch Republic in the early seventeenth century.⁵⁴ Leiden dominated the second-hand international academic markets while Amsterdam and Rotterdam maintained their readership to domestic merchants and immigrants, plus, The Hague was responsible for printing the governments and the courts communications.⁵⁵ The printers, publishers and readers benefited from a decentralised republic that was information-intensive and open to the free exchange of ideas.⁵⁶ In the northern province of Groningen, the printers secured their financial and commercial safety with the printing of broadsheets and pamphlets for the authorities, and perhaps unknowingly to them, opposition groups would also benefit from the economies of scale that the local printers achieved with printing official and academic records to distribute anonymous and fabricated accounts.⁵⁷ Frequently, the authorities would reinforce their reputations by holding close relationships with the printers as demonstrated by government-induced fee-paying quality checks in books printed in Leiden and political news leakages trusted to select Groningen newspapers.⁵⁸ Politics and the economy became increasingly tied to the business of print, and print became bonded to the development of the nation-state.

During the seventeenth century, print commenced to have a commodification stemmed from the increasing demand of communication between transoceanic territories. In consequence, the themes on print added diversified interests in commerce, literature, and sciences to established publications with religious, political, or military developments. Printed pages in the mechanical press now permitted more words per page than manuscripts, and intellectuals raised their first concerns that an excessive amount of information became available for the public to process, a sense of information overload. This anachronistic juxtaposition was not unfounded, yet ironically, the same intellectuals used the printing press to communicate their critiques and thoughts adding to an endless knowledge economy from private and public sources alike.⁵⁹ The relationships between cities were two-directional as the printers in Leiden would purchase advertisements in the newspapers in Amsterdam to promote their book sales and auctions, later these advertisements promoted novel goods and services around the 1650s.⁶⁰ European publications continued to be actively controlled by the church or state to maintain political neutrality and topic censorship, however, as Habermas has noted the

⁵⁴ Cruz, "The Secrets of Success," 5.

⁵⁵ Cruz, "The Secrets of Success," 2-5.

⁵⁶ der Weduwen, "The Politics of Print," 151; Clé Lesger, "Amsterdam als centrum van informatievoorziening," in *Handel in Amsterdam ten tijde van de Opstand: kooplieden, commerciële expansie en veranderingen in de ruimtelijke economie van Nederlanden ca. 1550-ca.1630*, ed. Cle Lesger (Amsterdam: Verloren, 2002), 220-21.

⁵⁷ der Weduwen, "The Politics of Print," 171-74.

⁵⁸ Cruz, "The Secrets of Success," 17; der Weduwen, "The Politics of Print," 154.

⁵⁹ Blair, "Information in Early Modern Europe," 74-5; *Information: A Historical Companion*, ed. Ann Blair et al. (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 836.

⁶⁰ Cruz, "The Secrets of Success," 22.; Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 143.

boundaries between the authority's public sphere began to become blurred when individuals were eager to exchange ideas.⁶¹ This knowledge-sharing intellectuals resorted to independent print media for the publishing and communication of their thoughts.

The second half of the seventeenth century saw the creation and publishing of the earliest magazine forms in Europe. It becomes difficult to find a standard magazine definition for its form, function and content since the material values and the symbolic values evolved with similar themes in synchrony for all printed media. The first literary magazines [Figures 2.2-2.6] reportedly emerged with the monthly German *Erbauliche Monaths-Unterredungen* in 1663, the French *Journal des Savants* in 1665, the British *Philosophical Transactions* in 1665, the Italian *Giomale de'letterati* in 1668, or the French-language *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* printed in 1684 in Amsterdam.⁶² According to the Royal Library of the Netherlands, the oldest Dutch-language magazine printed was titled *Boekzaal van Europa* in 1692 [Figure 2.7].⁶³ Most of the aforementioned titles were printed weekly and encouraged diversified intellectual point of views with converging aesthetic values in typeface, symbols, layout and linen as material. As the business press, the intellectual periodicals were embedded in postal networks and became accessible to the merchant and political elites that frequented coffeehouses, in contrast, the wider local audiences remained systemically disadvantaged from access to this knowledge discourse.⁶⁴

A shift from exclusively intellectual to audience-driven general-interest publications that narrowly resemble contemporary magazines in its advertising and journalistic principles emerged towards the end of the century. In France, *Le Mercure Galant* [Figure 2.8] was the first to offer entertainment content to readers in a magazine-like format in 1672. It collected a combination of "literary and cultural news, court gossip, discussion of etiquette and fashion, obituaries, and other material."⁶⁵ In Britain, two different types of reader-based publications emerged: the *Athenian Mercury* covered a range of subjects in a question-and-answer format from its readers in 1690 while dailies such as *Tatler* since 1709 and *Spectator* since 1711 accepted reader submissions in essay-based publications that discussed public and private sphere affairs.⁶⁶ These contributions signal to the close relationship between reader and magazine while also underlying some editorial gatekeeping

⁶¹ Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 132; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 181.

⁶² Antony Davis, *Magazine Journalism Today* (London: Focal, 1988), 4; John Morrish, *Magazine Editing, How to Develop and Manage a Successful Publication* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 6; Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 139; Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 4.

⁶³ "300 tijdschriften: inleiding en titelindex," Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2022, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://www.kb.nl/themas/boekgeschiedenis/300-tijdschriften-inleiding-en-titelindex>.

⁶⁴ Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 140.

⁶⁵ Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 140.

⁶⁶ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 3; Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 140-41.

from the publishers. The first time the word *magazine* was used in the publication was in *The Gentleman's Magazine* [Figure 2.9] from London in 1731, it is renowned as an entrepreneurial venture blueprint of an “independent periodical issuing its own, distinct content” where the editor was also the publisher.⁶⁷ During this period, magazines had a brief circulation period because they were “limited by too few readers with leisure time to read, high costs of publishing, and expensive distribution systems.”⁶⁸ These same expenses in addition to labour costs, government taxation in the form of stamps and duties, and revolutions are attributable to an irregular development of a converging magazine form.⁶⁹ Advertising and subscriptions were considered essential sources of revenue for publishers while the audiences remained a privileged segment of society that had access to periodical information that ranged from political developments to novel intellectual viewpoints.



Figure 2.1 "Title Page of Courant Uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &C.". National Library of the Netherlands. Amsterdam: Caspar van Hilten, November 23, 1618. Digitised publication.



Figure 2.2 "Title Page of Erbauliche Monats-Unterredungen, No. 1." Public domain. Germany, 1663. Digitised publication.

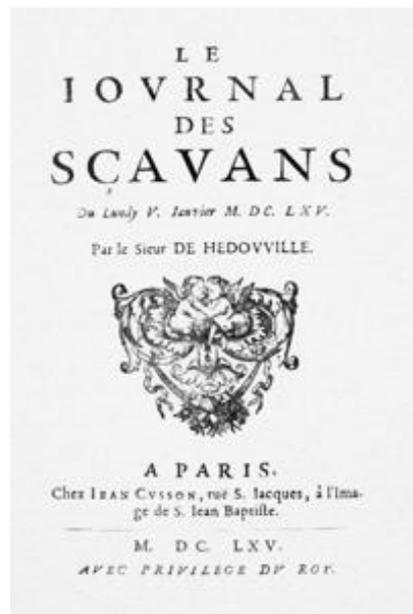


Figure 2.3 "Title Page of Journal des Scavans, No. 1." Public domain. Paris: Sir of Hédouville, January 05, 1665. Digitised publication.

⁶⁷ Kathryn Shevelov, *Women and Print Culture* (London: Routledge, 1989), 174. Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 11-12.
⁶⁸ Joseph D. Straubhaar, Robert LaRose, and Lucinda Davenport, *Media now: understanding media, culture, and technology*, 10th ed. (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2018), passim.
⁶⁹ Slauter, "Periodicals and the Commercialization of Information," 145-49.

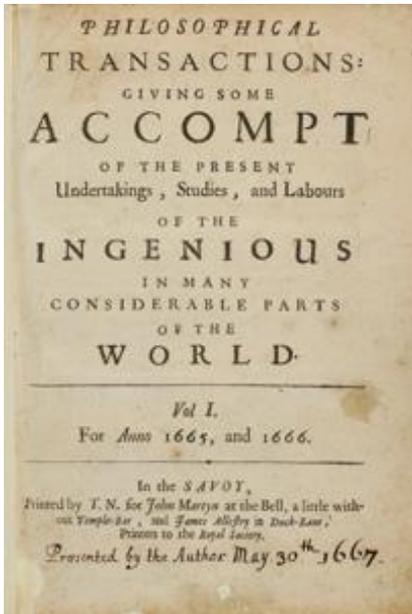


Figure 2.4 "Title Page of Philosophical Transactions, Volume 1." In *Royal Society*, Public domain. Great Britain: Henry Oldenburg, November 28, 1666. Digitised publication.

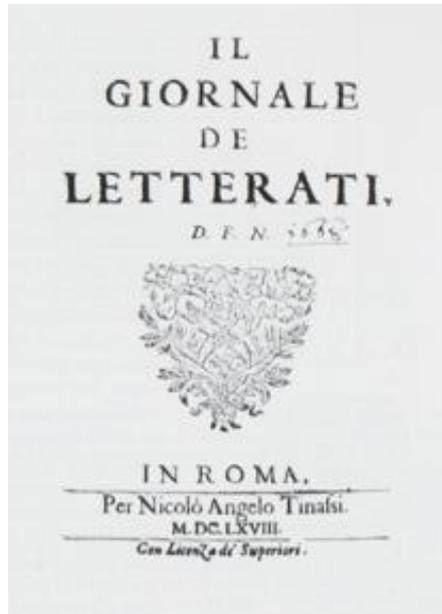


Figure 2.5 "Title Page of Giornale De' Letterati ". Aurelio Magistà. Rome: Nicolò Angelo Tinassi, 1668. Digitised publication.

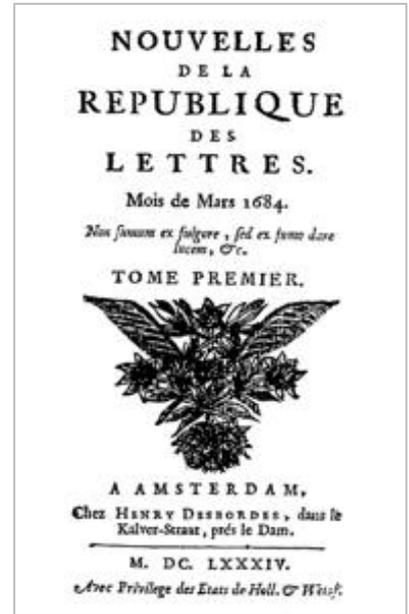


Figure 2.6 "Title Page of Nouvelles De La République Des Lettres, No. 1." Public domain. Amsterdam : Pierre Bayle, March 1684. Digitised publication.

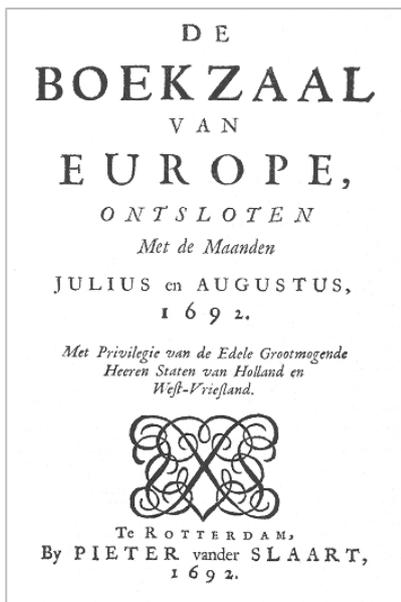


Figure 2.7 "Title Page De Boekzaal Van Europe, No. 1." In *Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren*. Rotterdam: Pieter van der Slaart, July and August 1692. Digitised publication.

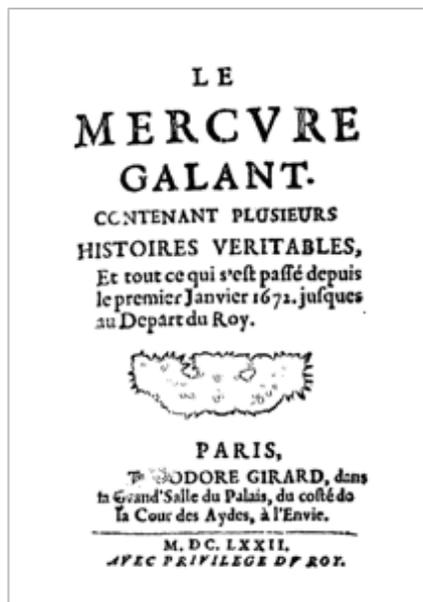


Figure 2.8 "Title Page Le Mercure Galant, No. 1." In *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. Paris, 1672. Digitised publication.

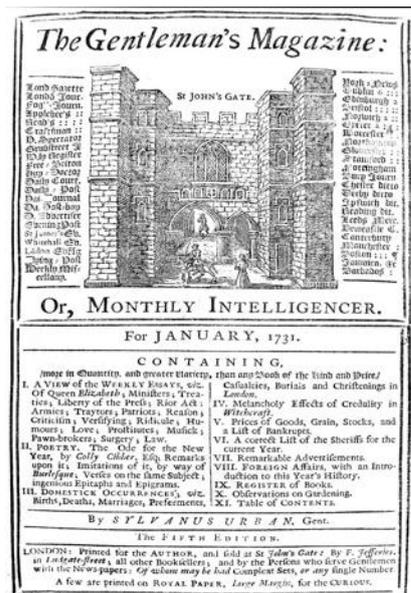


Figure 2.9 "Front Page of the Gentleman's Magazine ". In Creative Commons. London: Edmund Cave, January 1731. Digitised photograph.

2.2.2 Late modern: commercial differentiation of a mass-market vehicle

Technological inventions and organisational transformations generated from the Industrial Revolution overhauled production processes across industries. Developments such as the high-speed printing press, an incremental innovation from the then four centuries old mechanical press, permitted a reduction of production times and an increase in printed copies per day.⁷⁰ Inventors also developed improvements within the communications and paper industries that influenced the industrial organisation within a magazine. For instance, the first instant communications were made available via electronic communication with the telegraph which was adopted as a common practice sometime in the 1860s, 30 years after its invention.⁷¹ The value of the telegraph relies on the premise that messages no longer must be carried in space, paralleling to the present communication speed of digital mediums. Likewise, photography permitted access to view the world across multiple locations across time as a “visual iconography for collective recognition.”⁷² Multiple inventions related to photography, its creation, reproduction, and printing, gave rise to experimenting with the visual aesthetics of the magazine (and advertising) industries. Changes in paper from linen textiles to chemical wood pulp in 1867 presaged the material for the first colour photographs with the earliest halftone printing and linotype processes also adopted by magazines in the nineteenth century.⁷³ These developments ensued in another iteration of industrial re-organisation as some professions as illustrators became redundant with the rise of photographers and the printing process became less human and time intensive. Communication technologies simplified the journalistic process, and the inclusion of new raw materials and production methods in photography differentiated the aesthetics of magazines from other printed media that remain used today.

The Age of Industrialisation served as both the vehicle for concentrating magazine production and the subject matter presented in its pages. The early modern’s “restricted” public sphere slowly evolved into an affluent class with financial and cultural capital.⁷⁴ The transformation of the public sphere was a natural response to an expanding public of individuals with distinct tastes. Mid-nineteenth century was characterised by increases of supply and demand about public administration

⁷⁰ "Timeline: a history of magazines," Magforum, 2022, accessed January 09, 2022, <http://www.magforum.com/time.htm>.

⁷¹ Lisa Gitelman and Thomas S. Mullaney, "Nineteenth Century Media Technologies," in *Information: A Historical Companion*, ed. Ann Blair et al. (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 176-77.

⁷² Gitelman and Mullaney, "Nineteenth Century Media Technologies," 183.

⁷³ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 16; Jeremy Adelman, "Networking: Information Circles the Modern World," in *Information: A Historical Companion*, ed. Ann Blair et al. (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 193; Leslie, "Timeline: a history of magazines."

⁷⁴ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 183; Gitelman and Mullaney, "Nineteenth Century Media Technologies," 175; Richard L. Florida, *Cities and the creative class* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 36-37.

and social events, and for said information to become a public good free from government policy, in a process regularly referred to as “press freedom.”⁷⁵ The magazine industry continued to rely on the strong magazine-reader bond as differentiating from newspapers even as it shifted to entertainment elements from intellectual themes.⁷⁶ Women’s magazines [Figure 2.10] expanded in the continent with the female interpretation of their at-home expectations, but mass-interest titles [Figure 2.11] and other identity-building content oriented also developed other social constructs.⁷⁷



Figure 2.10. "Women's Magazine Harper's Bazaar: A Repository of Fashion, Pleasure, and Instruction Vol. 1, No. 1." New York: Harper & Brothers, November 02, 1867. Digitised publication.



Figure 2.11. "Cycling Magazine De Kampioen, No. 19." In ANWB, Algemeenen Nederlandsche Wielrijdersbond, October 1885. Digitised photograph.

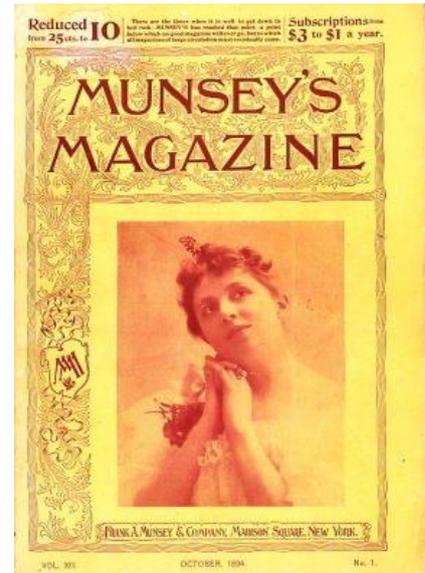


Figure 2.12. "General Interest Munsey's Magazine." Public domain. London and New York: Frank A. Munsey & Company, October 1894. Digitised publication.

The emergence of branding from mass production ensued in the search for a communication channel between products and consumers. Through advertising, magazines benefited from an additional and profitable revenue source. Noted by economists, sociologists, and historians alike, magazines became a two-sided platform with two sets of customers: readers who sought entertainment and brands that bought promotion space targeted to the readers.⁷⁸ English independent publishers [Figure 2.12] have been credited for introducing advertising as the dominant source of revenue after experimenting with lower prices of single copies and subscriptions that increased the

⁷⁵ Adelman, "Networking," 192; Blair, "Information in Early Modern Europe," 85.

⁷⁶ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 8.

⁷⁷ Cox and Mowatt, "Vogue in Britain," 69; Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 123.

⁷⁸ Cox and Mowatt, "Vogue in Britain," 68; Jacco Hakfoort and Jürgen Weigand, *Magazine Publishing - A Quiet Life? The Dutch Market for Consumer Magazines*, CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (The Hague, 2000), 5; David Abrahamson, *Magazine-made America: the cultural transformation of the postwar periodical*, The Hampton Press communication series, (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1996), 28.

circulation of their independent titles around 1893.⁷⁹ However, the deployment of print advertisements in periodicals can be traced back to the Amsterdam *couranten* that promoted book auction sales. Regardless, advertising revenues subsided the costs of production and allowed for lower sale prices.⁸⁰ Economists Jacco Hackfoort and Jürgen Weigand confirmed that the advertisers reduce total actual costs and increases the circulation (number of copies printed) for a given title in a sample of 71 magazines published in the Netherlands.⁸¹ The trichotomy of magazine revenues was completed with the sale of single copies from newsstands, subscriptions for the devoted reader and advertising from companies.⁸² Since then, magazine publishers benefited from a reciprocal relationship with advertisers to continue its publishing operations and reach “mass market” audiences.

The market concentration of magazines was anticipated as increasingly capitalist magazine editors, printers and publishers could benefit from economies of scale through resource sharing that ensued in homogeneity trends amongst publications.⁸³ Both newspapers and magazines curated information for readers and advertisers, and new technologies gave way to new and more complex industrial organisations. Habermas also signals that the press became manipulable to private commercial interests by mid-nineteenth century due to the publishers’ concentration and centralisation that subjugated the journalistic role of the editors.⁸⁴ European governments exploited the magazines’ commercial power by permitting not a liberalisation of the market, but an oligopolistic competition of public or semi-public corporations rather than purely private enterprises as in the U.S.⁸⁵ This view is contested as scholars argue that advertisers influenced the role of the editor, while other editors remained committed to transparent reporting despite their funders’ opposing principles.⁸⁶ As Handke argues, technological developments led to the market concentration process that established dominant designs for the magazine industry that were highly susceptible to economic downturns as disposable income becomes scarce in times of financial crises.⁸⁷

During the World Wars, production and circulation of high-end magazines and other periodicals were irregular, and non-military technological developments were scarce in Europe.⁸⁸

⁷⁹ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 24-26.

⁸⁰ Holmes, "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?," 5; Richard M. Ohmann, *Selling culture: magazines, markets, and class at the turn of the century*, The Haymarket series, (London, New York: Verso, 1996, 1996), 25.

⁸¹ Hakfoort and Weigand, *Magazine Publishing*, 7.

⁸² Abrahamson, *Magazine-made America*, 28.

⁸³ Gitelman and Mullaney, "Nineteenth Century Media Technologies," 187.

⁸⁴ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 185-86.

⁸⁵ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 189.

⁸⁶ Angela McRobbie, *In the Culture Society: Art, Fashion and Popular Music* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, June 24, 1999), 59; James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without responsibility: the press, broadcasting, and the internet in Britain*, 7th ed. (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2010), 29-30; Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 23.

⁸⁷ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 190. Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 26.

⁸⁸ Adelman, "Networking," 199; Paul Duguid, "Communication, Computation, and Information," in *Information: A Historical Companion*, ed. Ann Blair et al. (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 239.

Some technological developments in photography such as the 1925 portable Leica camera with canisters of replaceable rolled film permitted the simplification of visual production for mass market/general interest magazines.⁸⁹ Consequently of the international conflicts and demand for instant information, the photo essay magazine genre emerged with illustrations and short text captions in lieu of hours-read reportage. *National Geographic* from 1888 [Figure 2.13] and Germany's *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* from 1892 [Figure 2.14] are note-worthy examples; the trend continued with competing international titles through the early twentieth century like *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, *Life*, *Vu* [Figure 2.15], *¡Hola!*, and *Paris Match*; other print magazines from Anglo-Saxon countries also utilised this visual medium to report on their readers' interests at the time such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Radio Times*, *Time*, and *The New Yorker* [Figures 2.16-2.18].⁹⁰ Likewise, the electrified printing processes from the rotogravure and speedy gravure reduced the production times and increased the output of print runs even if slowly adopted by publishers.⁹¹ Magazines maintained a wide audience informed about local and international developments, but mainly, there were noticeable imitation practices between their covers and coverage.

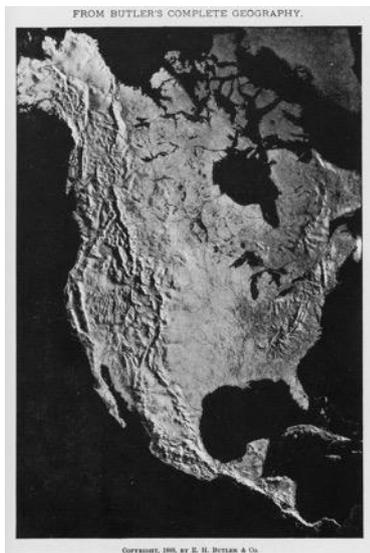


Figure 2.13. "American Illustrated Magazine *National Geographic*'s First Published Photo Using Halftone Photography". *National Geographic*, November 1889. Halftone photography.



Figure 2.14. "Cover Page of German Weekly Illustrated Magazine *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 29 Using 1925 Leica." In *International Centre of Photography*, Photograph by Martin Munkácsi. Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, July 21, 1929. Digitised publication.

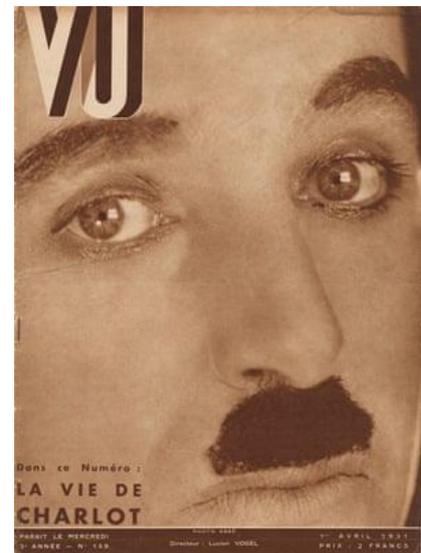


Figure 2.15. "Cover Page of French Illustrated Magazine *Vu*, No. 159". In *International Centre of Photography*, Photograph by James Abbe. Paris, April 01, 1931. Digitised publication.

⁸⁹ Adelman, "Networking," 201; Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva, *Magazines That Make History: Their Origins, Development, and Influence* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, June 30, 2004), passim.

⁹⁰ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 16-17; Adelman, "Networking," 203.

⁹¹ Leslie, "Timeline: a history of magazines."; Holmes, "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?," 5.

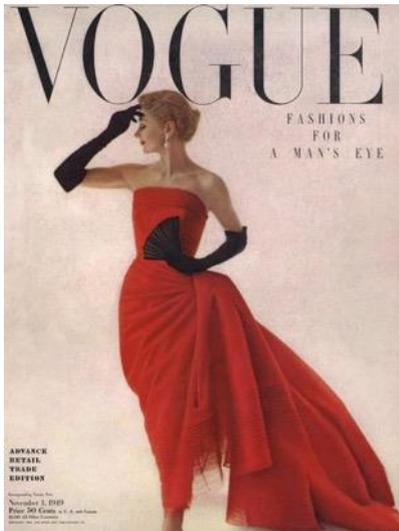


Figure 2.16. "Cover of Vogue Magazine: Fashion for a Man's Eye - Advanced Retail Trade Edition." In *Vogue Archive*. New York: Conde Nast, November 01, 1949. Digitised publication.



Figure 2.17. "Cover of Radio Times: Journal of the BBC - Remembrance Day." In *BBC Programme Index*. London: BBC, November 04, 1949. Digitised publication.

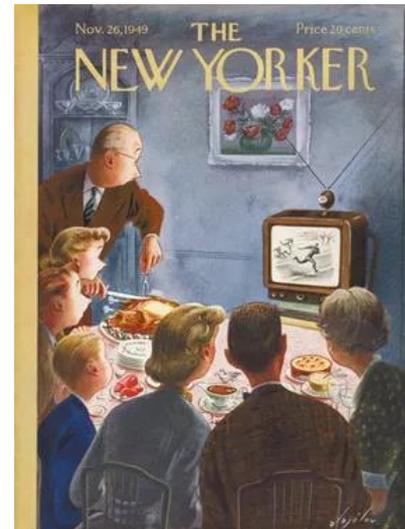


Figure 2.18. "Cover of the New Yorker." In *New Yorker.com*, Advance Publications, November 26, 1949. Digitised publication.

2.2.3 Post-war era: diversification and specialisation of print magazines

The inception of new technologies in the post-war period impacted the magazine industry in its economic core. After the diffusion of television during the 1950s, dominant advertising funds migrated from magazines and other printed media to audio-visual displays.⁹² Demand for around-the-clock coverage that television was able to provide was a characteristic that magazines could not replicate, and the reduction of advertising led to a consequent plunge of magazine circulation.⁹³ Advertisers and magazine editors recognised the potential to commodify magazines to specific audiences.⁹⁴ Women's glossies increased in popularity during the 1970s-1980s with its shiny pages, for example, *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Elle* [Figures 2.19-2.21] became influential because of its dynamic role in shaping women's role in society; other mainstream magazines outlined consumption patterns around the 1960s to expand capitalist interests.⁹⁵

⁹² Adelman, "Networking," 203; Joško Lozić, Ante Rončević, and Marin Milković, "Global media industry in postmodernism: Domination of broadcasting and the tradition of publishing," *Megatrend Revija* 12, no. 3 (2015 2015): 199, <https://doi.org/10.5937/MegRev1503197L>.

⁹³ Adelman, "Networking," 208.

⁹⁴ Holmes, "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?," 6.

⁹⁵ Peter Corrigan, "Women's Magazines," in *The Sociology of Consumption: An Introduction* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997), 4. Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 21.



Figure 2.19. "Cover of Vogue Magazine." In *Vogue Archive*. New York: Conde Nast, October 15, 1969. Digitised publication



Figure 2.20. "Cover of Cosmopolitan Magazine." United States, October 1969. Digitised publication.



Figure 2.21. "Cover of Elle Magazine." France, October 06, 1969. Digitised publication.

The war period also gave rise to government-funded research and development of technologies that optimised resource allocation across time and space.⁹⁶ These projects were rooted on interlinked devices and communications for military purposes that were later extended to banks and corporations. Semiconductors, the mainframe computer and its later simplified personal computers from the 1970s-80s were instrumental in creating the “desk office,” a compact and flexible workspace that most industries including magazine offices adopted.⁹⁷ Hardware - portable ink and laser printer – and the “holy trinity” software – QuarkXPress, Photoshop, and Illustrator – completed the desktop publishing for independent publishing around 1987.⁹⁸ After English computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee released the interconnected network known as the World Wide Web was released to the public domain in 1993, it permitted the display of pages and faster communication through these interconnected devices.⁹⁹ Systems varied in focus and scope, but the integration of communications augmented the speed in which information could be shared in an iteration of digitisation. E-mail also gave way to instant communications with online newsletters and bulletin boards for readers.¹⁰⁰ Word-processing and graphic design software blurred the value chain roles of magazine editors, graphic designers, and publishers alike as one person could enact all these roles.¹⁰¹ Costs for raw materials, printing, and distribution remained high since the inception of printed media,

⁹⁶ Mariana Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State*, Demos (London: Demos, 2011), 144-46.

⁹⁷ Holmes, "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?," 6; Klaus Schwab, *The fourth industrial revolution* (New York: Crown Business, 2016), 7.

⁹⁸ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 17-18. Leslie, "Timeline: a history of magazines."

⁹⁹ Duguid, "Communication, Computation, and Information," 254-55.

¹⁰⁰ Duguid, "Communication, Computation, and Information," 248.

¹⁰¹ Nylén, Holmström, and Lyytinen, "Oscillating Between Four Orders of Design," 55.

nevertheless, the value of desktop publishing is the increased speed of the creative process with more effective communication tools to envision new products and services.¹⁰² Desktop publishing lowered barriers to entry for independent creators and eased internal production processes in the magazine industry with highly homogenous goods that permitted an expanded connectivity and sociability amongst stakeholders.¹⁰³

The post-war period signified the concentration of magazine publishers into multimedia companies in the West. National agencies that audit the circulation of magazine subscriptions and copies are a testament of these capitalist ambitions. In the United States, the Association of Magazine Media (MPA) tracks the circulation and revenues of consumer magazines [Table 2.1]. In 2017, the top ten consumer magazine publishers amassed USD \$9.3 billion in revenues from which the top three companies – Time Inc., Hearst Magazines, and Condé Nast Publications – captured more than half (56%) the revenues.¹⁰⁴ In the United Kingdom, the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) tracks magazines in terms of circulation for the British market [Table 2.2]. In 2020, three companies – Bauer Media, Immediate Media Company, and Future Plc – controlled an estimated 49% of market share in (print and digital) circulation.¹⁰⁵ In these Anglo-Saxon countries, initial consolidations occurred through mergers and acquisitions, or purchasing of magazine titles which date to the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁰⁶ There are also traces of similar media corporate mergers strategies in France with the fusion of Hachette Filipacchi Médias, and its later acquisition by media conglomerate Lagardère Group, and when RTL Deutschland acquired Gruner + Jahr in Germany. The United States, United Kingdom and Sweden have also been successful in expanding their print magazines into international brands in global markets through licensing agreements in Latin America, or with joint ventures in more state-controlled media countries such as China and India.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Holmes, "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?," 7.

¹⁰³ Duguid, "Communication, Computation, and Information," 239,45.

¹⁰⁴ "Top 12 US consumer magazine publishers: circulation & advertising revenue," 2017, accessed February 03, 2022, <https://www.spyglassintel.com/visualization-of-circulation-revenue-for-the-top-12-us-consumer-magazine-publishers/> (Data source: The Association of Magazine Media (MPA) in New York.).

¹⁰⁵ "UK magazine industry charted: Biggest publishers and changing marketing share," Press Gazette, 2021, accessed March 03, 2022, <https://pressgazette.co.uk/biggest-magazine-publishers-uk-2021/> (Data source: Audit Bureau of Circulations in Berkhamsted, UK.).

¹⁰⁶ As recent as 2018, Meredith Corporation acquired Time Inc. in a takeover deal in the U.S. For a comprehensive timeline of mergers and acquisitions of European media companies that publish magazines see Leslie, "Timeline: a history of magazines."

¹⁰⁷ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 31.

Table 2.1 Market share based on total 2017 revenues of consumer magazine titles for all major US publishers in USD millions. Source: Spyglass Intel and MPA, 2017.¹⁰⁸

Company name	Circulation-subscription	Circulation-single copy	Advertising	Total company revenue	Revenue market share
Time Inc.	\$1,179.00	\$450.00	\$1,019.00	\$2,648.00	27%
Hearst Corporation	\$499.00	\$252.00	\$816.00	\$1,567.00	16%
Condé Nast International	\$390.00	\$149.00	\$694.00	\$1,233.00	13%
Meredith	\$412.00	\$57.00	\$539.00	\$1,008.00	10%
American Media	\$213.00	\$403.00	\$164.00	\$780.00	8%
Wenner Media	\$210.00	\$169.00	\$139.00	\$518.00	5%
RD Ass	\$356.00	\$27.00	\$62.00	\$445.00	5%
Bauer pUB	\$19.00	\$371.00	\$42.00	\$432.00	4%
Bonnier	\$163.00	\$24.00	\$176.00	\$363.00	4%
Rodale	\$140.00	\$59.00	\$125.00	\$324.00	3%
NatGeo Society	\$157.00	\$13.00	\$32.00	\$202.00	2%
Martha Stewart	\$77.00	\$26.00	\$60.00	\$163.00	2%
Total per revenue stream	3,815	2,000	3,868	9,683	100%
Share per revenue stream	39%	21%	40%	100%	

Table 2.2 Market share (%) based on combined annual circulation of consumer magazine titles for all major UK publishers in 2021. Source: Press Gazette and ABC, 2021.¹⁰⁹

Company name	Circulation total (millions)	Number of consumer titles	Circulation market share
Bauer Media	126.08	36	28%
Immediate Media Company	50.79	51	11%
Future Publishing Ltd	44.63	30	10%
Hearst UK	23.09	16	5%
Cedar Communications Limited	21.18	1	5%
The Economist Newspaper Ltd	20.75	5	5%
Dennis Publishing Limited	18.34	11	4%
DC Thomson Media	14.56	5	3%
John Brown	10.78	4	2%
Hello! Ltd	9.12	2	2%
Others	115.74	101	25%
Totals	455.06	262	100%

¹⁰⁸ Spyglass Intelligence LLC, "Top 12 US consumer magazine publishers: circulation & advertising revenue."¹⁰⁹ Press Gazette, "Uk Magazine Industry Charted."



Figure 2.22. "Cover of Kampioen, Vol. 104, No. 10." In *Google Books*. Amsterdam: Algemeenen Nederlandsche Wielrijders-bond, October 1984. Digitised publication.



Figure 2.23. "Cover of Libelle." Photograph by Benny Proot. Netherlands, October 1984. Digitised publication.



Figure 2.24. "Cover of Vrij Nederland: Boekenbijlage." In *Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren*. Amsterdam: Stichting Vrij Nederland, October 1984. Digitised publication

In the Netherlands, there is a similar market concentration starting in the 1960s. The Nationaal Onderzoek Multimedia (NOM - National Multimedia Research) is the organisation responsible for measuring and certifying the national readership currency for magazines and other print publications for 39 magazine publishers, around 90% of the Dutch market [Table 2.3]. Two publishers, ANWB Media and DPG Media, concentrate more than half of the magazine market in the Netherlands. ANWB Media publishes *Kampioen* [Figure 2.22] the largest circulation magazine with close to 3.7 million in circulation. DPG Media's origins can be traced back to the resistance paper *Het Parool* created in 1941 and the daily newspaper *de Volkskrant* from 1919. After consolidating regional and national newspapers, DPG Media expanded to online services with videos companies and healthcare platforms due to digital advertising's growth. In 2020, the multimedia company acquired competitor Sanoma Media's portfolio of to capture a quarter of the mainstream titles available in the market which included magazines such as *Donald Duck* and *Libelle* [Figure 2.23].¹¹⁰ Hearst Netherlands is the second multimedia company with the most magazine titles in the market as they publish Hearst Corporation and Condé Nast's magazine titles through licensing agreements. Some of the publications under them include the country-versions of *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Elle*,

¹¹⁰ "ACM clears acquisition of publishing company Sanoma Media by rival publisher DPG Media," Authority for Consumers and Markets, 2020, accessed February 14, 2022, <https://www.acm.nl/en/publications/acm-clears-acquisition-publishing-company-sanoma-media-rival-publisher-dpg-media>.

*National Geographic, Runner's, Men's Health and Women's Health.*¹¹¹ The impact of digitisation on magazines becomes evident as Hearst declares that “media have not only become multimedia, but in addition to content, it is increasingly about services.”¹¹² Yet they expect to maintain their gatekeeping role as “authority and relevance are becoming increasingly important in a world where information can be found in abundance.”¹¹³

Table 2.3. Paid and total circulation of magazines in the Netherlands by magazine publisher in 2021. Source: NOM.¹¹⁴

Magazine Publisher	Number of magazines	Magazine titles (% share)	Paid circulation	Paid circulation (% share)	Total circulation	Total circulation (% share)
ANWB Media	2	1.64%	3,721,741	37.42%	3,721,956	23.43%
DPG Media	32	26.23%	1,564,080	15.72%	2,905,275	18.29%
Media Partners Group	1	0.82%	0	0.00%	1,780,648	11.21%
C.I.V. Superunie B.A.	1	0.82%	0	0.00%	1,617,869	10.19%
Vereniging Eigen Huis	1	0.82%	815,259	8.20%	815,259	5.13%
Hearst Netherlands	16	13.11%	438,051	4.40%	652,063	4.11%
Bindinc.	8	6.56%	588,207	5.91%	607,236	3.82%
Mediahuis	4	3.28%	131,735	1.32%	522,166	3.29%
Roularta Media Nederland B.V.	3	2.46%	438,345	4.41%	449,794	2.83%
Audax Publishing bv	7	5.74%	264,978	2.66%	283,824	1.79%
Talpa Network	2	1.64%	246,146	2.47%	249,279	1.57%
Max Media Producties BV	1	0.82%	213,430	2.15%	240,607	1.51%
Hilversumse Media Compagnie C.V.	3	2.46%	218,273	2.19%	222,692	1.40%
Weekbladpers Media	4	3.28%	201,004	2.02%	206,678	1.30%
New Skool Media	9	7.38%	178,524	1.79%	191,110	1.20%
Wij Special Media	1	0.82%	0	0.00%	152,832	0.96%
Publiciteitsonderneming Vranken Salvino B.V.	1	0.82%	0	0.00%	148,737	0.94%
Omroepvereniging VPRO	1	0.82%	132,532	1.33%	133,047	0.84%
Omroepvereniging BNN-VARA	1	0.82%	127,628	1.28%	129,942	0.82%
Vereniging VvAA	1	0.82%	105,152	1.06%	105,152	0.66%
Vereniging Evangelische Omroep	2	1.64%	95,668	0.96%	96,072	0.60%
Zwop Media B.V.	1	0.82%	0	0.00%	84,926	0.53%
ANBO	1	0.82%	68,555	0.69%	68,611	0.43%
Het Financieele Dagblad BV	1	0.82%	0	0.00%	65,151	0.41%
Pijper Media B.V.	3	2.46%	62,912	0.63%	62,976	0.40%
ONE Business	2	1.64%	53,756	0.54%	54,943	0.35%
Kon. NKBV	1	0.82%	38,795	0.39%	39,339	0.25%
&C Media B.V.	1	0.82%	36,369	0.37%	38,010	0.24%
Digital Enterprises	1	0.82%	37,668	0.38%	37,986	0.24%
Groei & Bloei Media BV	1	0.82%	36,208	0.36%	36,641	0.23%
Helden Magazine B.V.	1	0.82%	30,538	0.31%	31,234	0.20%
VDS Magazines BV	1	0.82%	27,192	0.27%	28,010	0.18%
N.V. Weekblad De Groene Amsterdammer	1	0.82%	27,480	0.28%	27,796	0.17%
Erdee Media BV	1	0.82%	18,634	0.19%	19,793	0.12%
Chapeau Magazine BV	1	0.82%	3,728	0.04%	19,136	0.12%
Gottmer Uitgevers Groep	1	0.82%	12,813	0.13%	13,266	0.08%
HB Media B.V.	1	0.82%	808	0.01%	11,164	0.07%
DSV Media B.V.	1	0.82%	10,332	0.10%	10,397	0.07%
Goodwill Media b.v.	1	0.82%	0	0.00%	2,007	0.01%
Totals	122	100%	9,946,541	100%	15,883,624	100%

¹¹¹ *Dutch Vogue* was under Hearst Nederland for nine years, until it stopped for eight months and later was picked up by a collaboration between Blooming Publishing and *Linda* women's magazine to re-release it. "Vogue Nederland keert terug met hulp van Linda," Fashion United, 2021, accessed April 28, 2022, <https://fashionunited.nl/nieuws/cultuur/vogue-nederland-keert-terug-met-hulp-van-linda/2021100751278>.

¹¹² "Over Hearst," Hearst Nederland, updated 2021, 2021, accessed February 17, 2022, <https://www.hearst.com/magazines/hearst-magazines-international>.

¹¹³ Hearst Nederland, "Over Hearst."

¹¹⁴ "NOM Dashboard - Magazines," Nationaal Onderzoek Media 2022, accessed March 07, 2022, <https://dundasbi.reports.nl/NOM>.

Weekbladpers (WPG) Media emerged during the Second World War as its origins in the foundation of *Vrij Nederland* in 1940, an illegal newspaper supported by the Dutch resistance. In 2015, after decades of acquisitions, transfers and segmentations that saw *Vrij Nederland* turned into an opinion weekly [Figure 2.24] and an expansion into Belgium, the company decided to adopt a multimedia strategy that was not exclusive to printed newspapers and magazines.¹¹⁵ Mediahuis, the owner of the highest-circulation women's glossy *Vrouw*, started as a multimedia joint venture that published daily newspapers, managed digital marketplaces, and broadcasted radio and television programmes in 2014. It has expanded transnationally with acquisitions of digital and media companies in Republic of Ireland and Luxembourg.¹¹⁶ National distribution and retail availability still becomes a problem where only the high grossing media conglomerates have bargaining power.¹¹⁷ The consolidation and evolution of magazine publishers into international multimedia companies with global appeal has augmented towards the end of the 1990s in the Dutch context, and it continues in the new millennium with competing magazine titles within the same company portfolios that benefit from economies of scale and scope for their readers and advertisers. Interestingly, 10% of published magazines in the Netherlands remain untracked because they are not part of this market concentration, perhaps magazine titles that are not concerned in circulation numbers.

2.2.4 New Millennium era: the disruption of the global/digital magazine brand

Whereas the changes in previous centuries represented mostly mechanical improvements, the twenty-first century is characterised by algorithm-driven digital systems known as social media platforms and smartphone devices that influenced a shift in socio-economic conditions for the magazine industry. Digital platforms, such as magazines, also have an interest in consumers searching for information and in targeting their specific identities to cater (and sometimes even shape) subcultures.¹¹⁸ The industrial organisation of print was once again redrawn when migration of capital to digital channels directly impacted the advertising revenue model that television threatened before. Digital platforms use sophisticated algorithms to sell users' data and increase the effectiveness of advertising in a business model called *freemium* that maintains users increasingly connected.¹¹⁹ The magazine industry becomes influenced not only by economic downturns, but also by technological

¹¹⁵ "Uitgever WPG splitst deel boekentak af: Bezige Bij blijft," Business Insider, n.d., accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.businessinsider.nl/uitgever-wpg-splitst-deel-boekentak-af-bezige-bij-blijft-461687/>; "Over WPG," WPG Media, 2022, accessed February 04, 2022, <https://www.wpg.nl/over-wpg>.

¹¹⁶ "Over ons," Mediahuis Nederland, 2022, accessed February 14, 2022, <https://www.mediahuis.com/nl/over-ons/>.

¹¹⁷ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 32.

¹¹⁸ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 140-43.

¹¹⁹ Nikos Smyrniotis, "L'effet GAFAM : stratégies et logiques de l'oligopole de l'internet," *Communication & langages* N° 188, no. 2 (2016): 76-78, <https://doi.org/10.3917/comla.188.0061>.

changes as seen through the diffusion of telecommunications such as the Internet that brought along new competitors and business models that function across space and time.

Since the 1980s, global advertising spending [Figure 2.25] increased year-on-year for printed media, including magazines and newspapers. In 2007, advertising spending in magazines peaked close to USD \$50 billion; it has not gained the revenue levels of pre-2008 financial crisis. Online mediums have had the sharpest growth in advertising spending for social media, online video, and e-commerce since then. In 2020, global print and online advertising expenditure [Figure 2.26] increased from \$456 billion in 2010 to \$590 billion in 2020 – a 23% increase. The total online advertising spending in relation to total advertising expenditure also significantly increased to 58% from 14% in the 2010s. The migration of ad revenues from print to online directly endangers the revenue models of print magazines. It also threatens their role as industry gatekeepers because information becomes freely available online. It is not surprising that print magazines have adopted online channels that threaten their survival to transcend from print-only to multimedia magazine brand to diversify its revenues in thriving digital options.

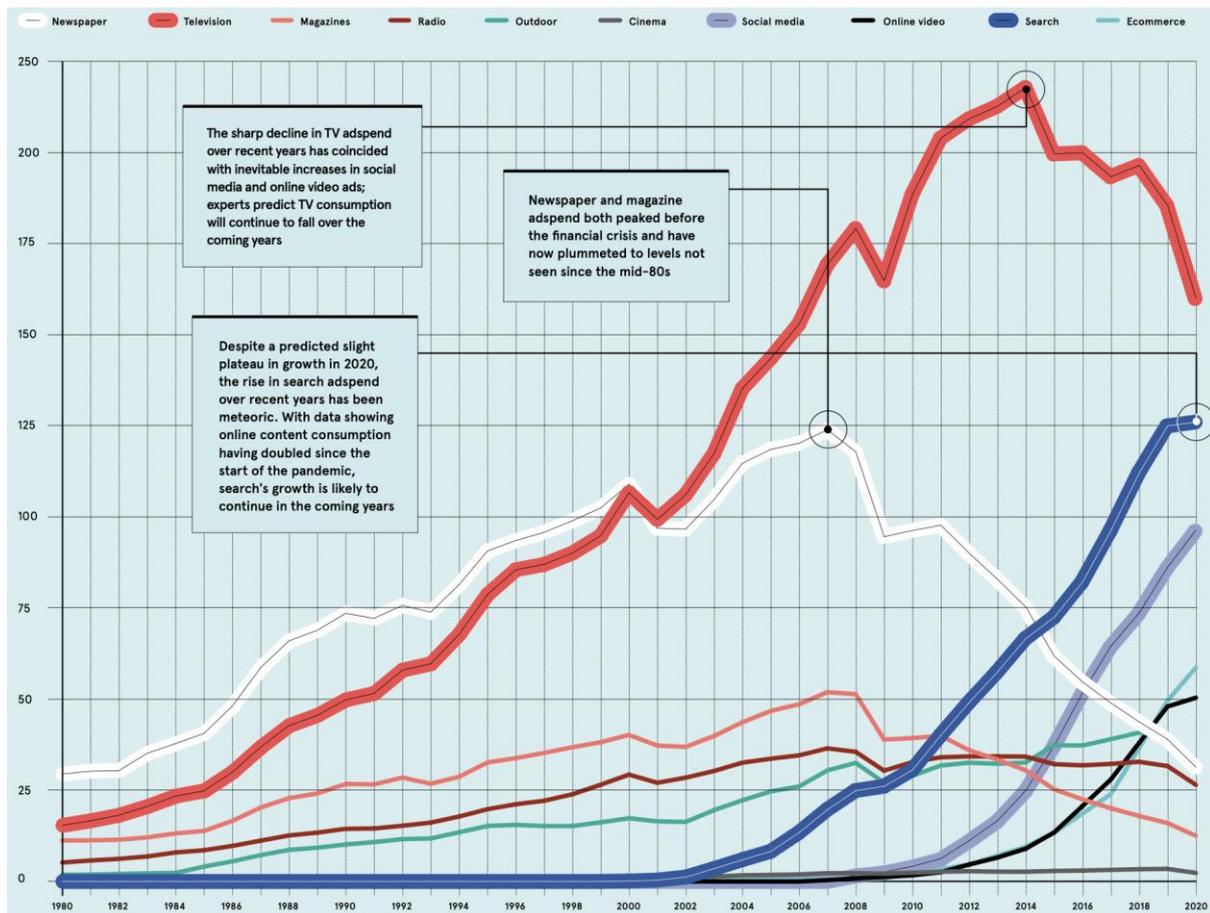


Figure 2.25 Global advertising spending (\$USD billions, current prices) from 1980-2020 by medium.
Source : Raconteur via WARC Data.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ "Ad Evolution," Raconteur - Content for business decision-makers, Raconteur, 2021, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.raconteur.net/infographics/ad-evolution/>.

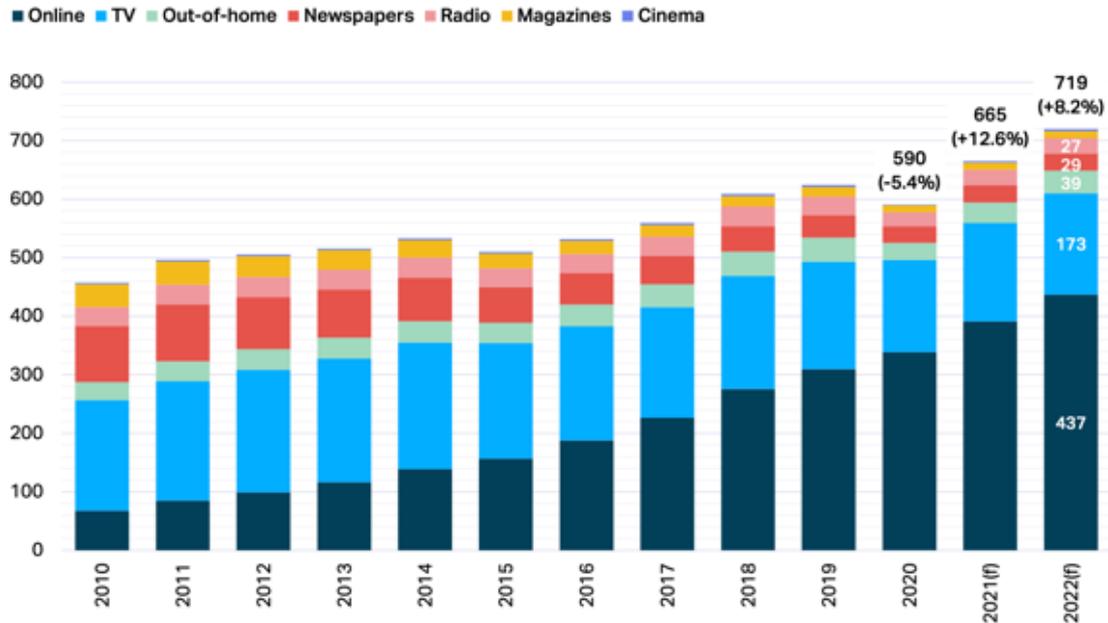


Figure 2.26 Global advertising investment year-on-year % change (nominal in \$USD billions) by media category. Note: Data are net of discounts, include agency commission and exclude production costs. Global figures encompass research from 100 markets. Source: WARC Data.¹²¹

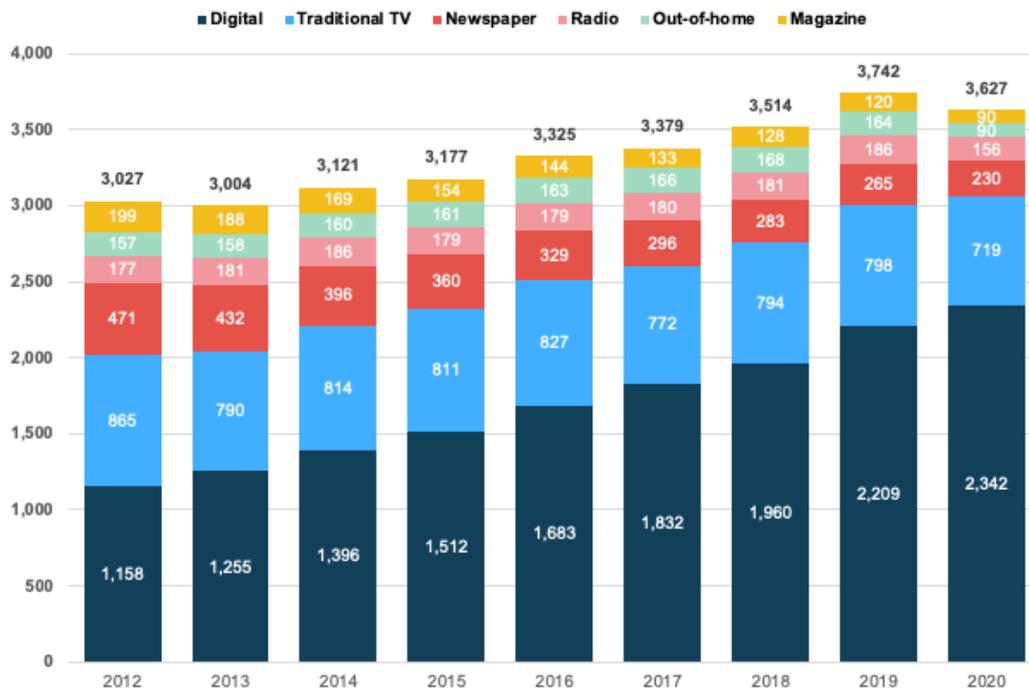


Figure 2.27 Net advertising market in the Netherlands (€ millions) by media category from 2012 to 2020. Source: Deloitte.¹²²

¹²¹ WARC Data, *Global Ad Trends: Ad Investment 2021/22*, WARC Data (London, July 2021), 5.

¹²² Deloitte, *IAB Report on Online Advertising Spend: The Netherlands 2013*, Deloitte and IAB Nederland (Amsterdam: Deloitte, 2014), 8; Deloitte, *IAB Report on Online Advertising Spend: The Netherlands 2014*, Deloitte and IAB Nederland (Amsterdam: Deloitte, 2015), 8; Deloitte, *IAB Report on Online Advertising Spend: The Netherlands 2015*, Deloitte and IAB Nederland (Amsterdam: Deloitte, 2016), 9; Deloitte, *IAB Report on Online Advertising Spend: The Netherlands 2016*, Deloitte and IAB Nederland (Amsterdam: Deloitte, 2017), 8; Deloitte, *IAB Report on 2017 Digital Advertising Spend: The Netherlands*, Deloitte and IAB Nederland (Amsterdam: Deloitte, 2018), 8; Deloitte, *Digital Advertising Spend 2019: The Netherlands*, Deloitte and IAB Nederland (Amsterdam: Deloitte, 2020), 9; Deloitte, *Digital Advertising Spend 2020: The Netherlands*, Deloitte and VIA (Amsterdam: Deloitte, 2021), 8.

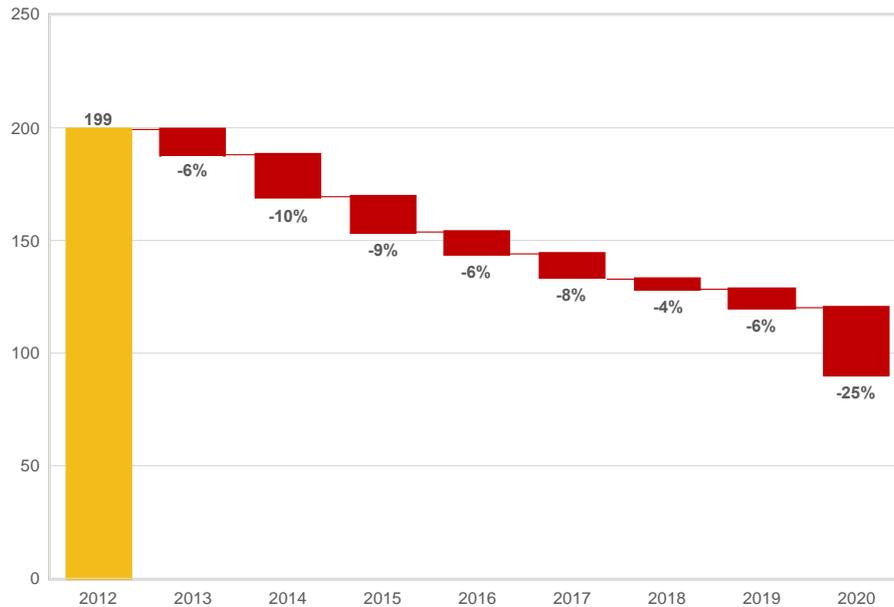


Figure 2.28 Total magazine advertising market in the Netherlands (€ millions) from 2012 to 2020, year over year spending comparison in percentages. Source: Deloitte.¹²³

Empirical data confirms that the magazine advertising revenues have been reduced globally, meanwhile in the Dutch context a similar trend can be noted. Deloitte, in collaboration with VIA, have been reporting on advertising spending by analysing financial data from leading companies in the Dutch digital media ecosystem since 2012.¹²⁴ In the report “Digital Advertising Spend 2020 – The Netherlands”, there’s two noticeable trends [Figure 2.27 and Figure 2.28]: non-digital market share is shrinking vis-à-vis digital advertising that increases every year, and printed media advertising spending has reduced every year.¹²⁵ Deloitte and VIA confirm that even when the total advertising spending increased on average 2% per year, the only medium that saw yearly increases was digital advertising. In 2020, magazine advertising had an estimated one-quarter spending decrease to €90 million.¹²⁶ These results reveal a disappearing advertising market that narrows the funding for magazines in the Dutch market that could ensue in a reduced supply of magazine titles across the country. However, as magazine brands venture into the digital realm it becomes difficult to measure

¹²³ Deloitte, *IAB Report on Online Advertising Spend: The Netherlands 2013*, 8; Deloitte, *IAB Report on Online Advertising Spend: The Netherlands 2014*, 8; Deloitte, *IAB Report on Online Advertising Spend: The Netherlands 2015*, 9; Deloitte, *IAB Report on Online Advertising Spend: The Netherlands 2016*, 8; Deloitte, *IAB Report on 2017 Digital Advertising Spend: The Netherlands*, 8; Deloitte, *Digital Advertising Spend 2019: The Netherlands*, 9; Deloitte, *Digital Advertising Spend 2020: The Netherlands*, 8.

¹²⁴ VIA is the new marketing trade association created from the merger of two former marketing associations VEA and IAB Nederland on January 1, 2021. VIA is a network of around 250 members that connect the marketing chain with knowledge and technology transfers. The list of companies varies year-on-year, for a list of the 36 companies (media agencies, ad tech companies, and publishers) that participated in the 2020 report. See Deloitte, *Digital Advertising Spend 2020: The Netherlands*, 34.

¹²⁵ Deloitte, *Digital Advertising Spend 2020: The Netherlands*, 8.

¹²⁶ It remains to be seen if the Deloitte and VIA reports advertising spending increases in 2021, plus, if the global print advertising would bounce back to pre-pandemic levels. Any of these two outcomes would challenge the reported instability of the magazine advertising market as of publishing of this research.

their position without cross-media analysis. Magazines become both the supporter and the generator of digital advertising revenue with their own websites, e-commerce initiatives, and social media strategies. In this sense, magazine brands reinforce the role of digital not as its replacement, but rather as a complement to their print magazine.¹²⁷

As a result of digital developments, some factors became changed across the magazines' industrial organisation. Digital reduces barrier to entry by lowering the costs of production, distribution and consumption for magazine editors, publishers, and its customers alike.¹²⁸ This has been theorised by (cultural) economists studying the effects of digitisation in the cultural and creative industries [Section 2.1]. Electronic or digital magazines have been expected to replace print, but it remains questionable if digital devices can encapsulate the sensorial experience that characterizes print magazines.¹²⁹ The director of the Magazine Innovation Centre, Samir Husni (also known as Mr. Magazine) argues that a magazine is only a magazine if it is printed on paper.¹³⁰ It is in this digital turn that the magazine form has once again undergone interdisciplinary inquiry to predict its future.

Optimism amongst scholars has been high, magazine journalism scholars Tim Holmes and Liz Nice expect global standards for mobile devices that simplify online production and consumption of electronic magazines to displace print.¹³¹ Online platforms such as Zinio, Ceros, Issuu and Olive permit for the free upload of digital magazines, while larger-than-smartphone tablet devices such as the iPad have permitted the sale of single magazine copies and subscriptions in digital-portable newsstands. However, the digital magazine has been limited to being facsimile copies of their print counterparts with the page-turning action that magazine readers are accustomed to for centuries. Scholars have recorded other attempts to improve the digital output of magazines with interactive and community initiatives.¹³² As such, some print magazines have extended their publications into new business models in what Holmes has defined as a *megazine*, a printed magazine that turns into a brand.¹³³ For example, *Vice* was founded in Montréal in 1994 as an independent (and free) printed magazine that expanded into a multimedia brand with 19 country editions.¹³⁴ Holmes expects that the magazine is not necessarily a product, but it could also exist as a *metazine* "which is both a metaphor for a magazine and a meta-representation of the form," an opinion that is shared with the

¹²⁷ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 21.

¹²⁸ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 19.

¹²⁹ A simple search of "print is dead" in google gives about 3.900.000.000 results in June 2022.

¹³⁰ "So, What is a Magazine, Really?," 2010, accessed January 18, 2021, <https://mrmagazine.wordpress.com/2010/06/11/so-what-is-a-magazine-really-read-on/>.

¹³¹ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 45-47.

¹³² For a review of digital magazine forms see Nylén, Holmström, and Lyytinen, "Oscillating Between Four Orders of Design," 65-68; Santos Silva, "The Future of Digital Magazine Publishing," 135-39.

¹³³ Holmes, "Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?," 12.

¹³⁴ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 34.

interconnected electronic communications that give rise to a global village.¹³⁵ Magazines economic and cultural globalisation in the twenty-first century is extended between print and digital mediums.

Likewise, these socio-cultural shifts grounded in technological macro-adoption have caused the prediction that magazine publishing will concentrate at the top and bottom end of the markets, where glossies will dominate the pulpy magazines and “special” titles. The special titles description is abrupt, but it exemplifies “an independent title that played with different qualities of paper and binding as part of its aesthetics.”¹³⁶ German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies agrees to print magazines’ limitation to a dichotomous partition based on relationships: personal and social relationships will lead to small-scale publications while economic relationships ensue in corporate and impersonal publishing.¹³⁷ Magazine research, markets and measurements have largely concentrated in magazines catered to specialised audiences. Independent magazines have, for extended time, been neglected by academic research and national audit bureaus as they have a brief lifetime and unregistered circulations. Historically, most of the commercial magazines today began as independents: titles owned, edited, and printed by its entrepreneurial owners. Their later concentration in multinational media companies erases their history in favour of targeting audiences in an ever-augmenting capitalist ideology. It becomes fundamental to identify what significance independent magazines have in a global market that is dominated by magazine brands in overlapping political, commercial, and cultural spheres of influence.

In summary, and through a careful pairing of historic developments in the European continent, the previous synthesis contextualised the magazine industry’s past and presents the evolution of its form through a review of technological changes that welcomed new products and influenced production processes. The timeline commenced on the sixteenth century to define the different types of funding mechanisms where the church and the government backed and regulated the printing press to their religious, political, and economic advantage. The search for a platform to share critical thinking led to the differentiation of print content to intellectual thought during the Enlightenment. The decentralised Dutch Republic had a thriving production of intellectual publishing paired with an international business press. The magazine form is difficult to differentiate during these periods, but the Industrial Revolution saw magazine and newspaper publishers adopt a revenue source that redefined the public sphere prolongedly controlled by the church and state. Mass production ambitions manifested in the publishing of general interest magazines and mechanical press

¹³⁵ Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg galaxy: the making of typographic man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 31; Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding media: the extensions of man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 21; Holmes, “Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?,” 13.

¹³⁶ Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 47.

¹³⁷ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft [Community and civil society]*, trans. José Harris and Margaret Hollis, ed. José Harris, Cambridge texts in the history of political thought, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 18-19.

innovations reduced production times and increased the number of printed copies. Advertisers made magazines self-sustaining as two-sided markets that connected its readers to products and services. The new funding mechanism resulted in a shift from intellectual discussions to commercially packaged information that targeted specific socio-demographic audiences during and after the turn to the twentieth century. The war period saw the publication of resistance magazines and newspapers in the Netherlands, but the once independently founded printed media became concentrated in media corporations that globalised their economies of scale with licensing or joint venture agreements that imitated the same features internationally. Digitisation from desktop publishing and the Internet in the 1980s first induced increased competition in printed magazines. The twenty-first century platforms influence the transformation of magazines into digital brands as they replicate magazine's two-sided market with digital advertising that offers "free" services to their readers. The omnipresence of magazines remains unchallenged in either print or digital formats, but digitisation facilitates competition and challenges incumbents in the market.

2.3 The Reading Public in the Netherlands

In this section, the consumption habits of the Dutch population as magazine readers are analysed under the sub-research question, (3) *how has the public's interest in reading print magazines evolved in the Netherlands in the twenty-first century?* The timeframe is relevant to understand how the growth of digital advertising/mediums have influenced reading patterns in the last two decades. With 333 million printed magazine copies in 2021, each inhabitant of the Netherlands could read 18 magazines in a year and there would still be unread copies available.¹³⁸ And considering that formal reading and writing begins at age of six, there would be 20 copies per reader in a country with a literacy rate of 99% when Statistics Netherlands data is followed.¹³⁹

De Mediafederatie is the organisation that promotes the social and economic interests of publishers and media companies for more than 90% of the Dutch media market.¹⁴⁰ It was created in 2018 to reflect the transition of magazines from publishers to multimedia companies. It is comprised of five organisations from which the Magazine Media Associatie (MMA) handles the trade of multimedia magazine brands. In collaboration with Amsterdam-based market research company Growth from Knowledge (GFK), the MMA publishes yearly trends and data about digital media in the Netherlands. The calculations from Statistics Netherlands are confirmed by the MMA, as they reported that magazine readers that read an average of 22 magazines per year represented 70% of the total population in 2021.¹⁴¹

According to the MMA, the total reading time of magazine media [Figure 2.29] has remained steady with an average of 94 minutes per week until 2020. The share of paper reading time decreased in the last decade, but it plateaued to an average of 55 minutes per week since 2016. In its 2021 annual report, total magazine reading time (print and digital) increased to 121 minutes per week; printed magazines returned to 2013-levels of engagement with 71 minutes of paper reading over digital.¹⁴² Even with these favourable outcomes there are some pitfalls within the magazine industry, for

¹³⁸ Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2022*, Magazine Media Associatie (Amsterdam: Magazine Media Associatie, February 24 2022), 4. The population in the Netherlands was forecasted at 17,666,489 inhabitants, see: "Population dashboard: How many people live in the Netherlands?," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, updated May 13, 2022 at 09:26:10 CET 2022, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/visualisations/dashboard-population>.

¹³⁹ "Age distribution: What is the age structure of the Dutch population?," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/visualisations/dashboard-population/age/age-distribution>; "Population; sex, age, generation and migration background, 1 January," StatLine, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, updated 17 September 2021, 2021, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/en/dataset/37325eng/table?ts=1652427855152>.

¹⁴⁰ "Over de Mediafederatie," De Mediafederatie, 2022, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://mediafederatie.nl/over-de-mediafederatie/>.

¹⁴¹ Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2022*, 3,5.

¹⁴² Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2022*, 8. "Leestijd in minuten per week magazine media," Magazine Media Associatie, 2022, accessed March 03, 2022, <https://mma.nl/branche-informatie/cijfers/tijdsbestedingen/>.

instance, the yearly printed magazine copies fell 50% since 2006 from 679 to 333 million.¹⁴³ Between 2018 and 2021, average magazines read per year also reduced from 28 to 22, and there was a loss of one million readers from 78% to 70% of the total Dutch population.¹⁴⁴ In their 2021 assessment, the MMA also detailed that magazines reading in digital devices has remained marginal in the last three years with 5% of smartphone users and 9% of tablet users reportedly using them for this specific purposes.¹⁴⁵ These results confirm that there is an audience that spends more time reading magazines on paper than on digital devices in the Netherlands.

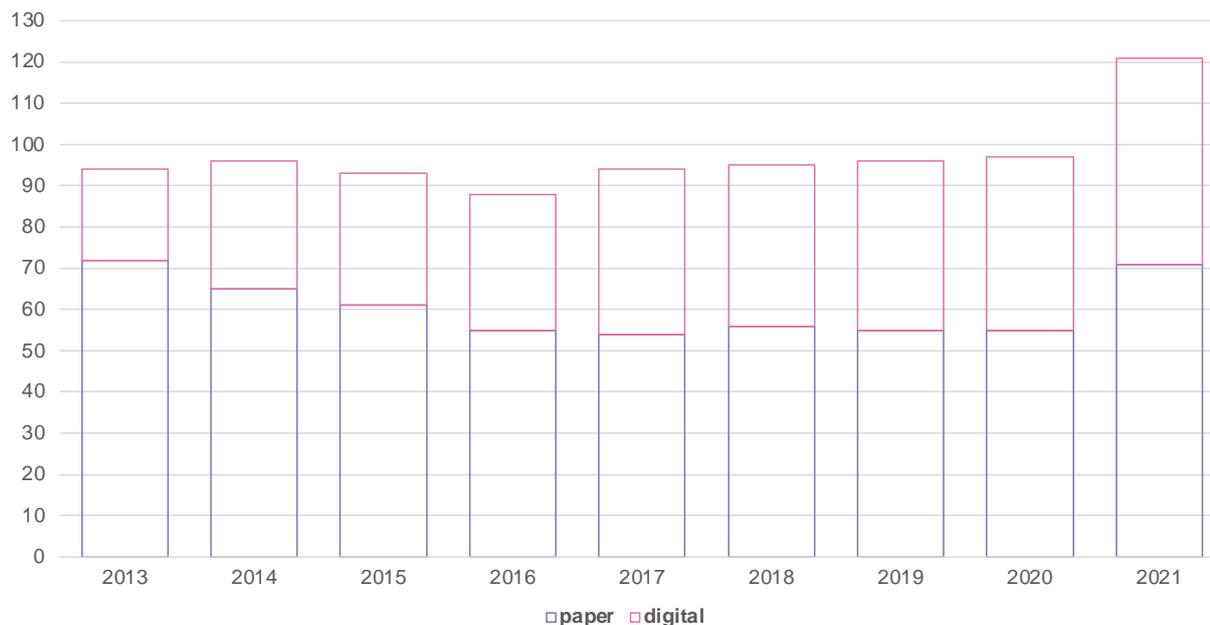


Figure 2.29 Total reading time in minutes per week of magazine media consumption in the Netherlands 2013-2021. Source: Magazine Media Associate.¹⁴⁶

The *Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau* (SCP – the Netherlands Institute for Social Research) is the interdepartmental organisation that analyses media consumption about the reading public in the Netherlands from a scientific rather than market-oriented approach. The SCP measures media engagement for media activities such as listening, watching, reading, communicating and gaming in online/offline mediums such as paper format, fixed artifacts, or mobile devices; it depends on the

¹⁴³ Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2022*, 4; "Dit is Waroom Oplages van Tijdschriften Blijven Dalen," *Bladendokter*, 2020, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.bladendokter.nl/dit-is-waarom-oplages-van-tijdschriften-blijven-dalen/>.

¹⁴⁴ Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2018*, Magazine Media Associatie (Amsterdam: Magazine Media Associatie, 2019), 3-5; Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2019*, Magazine Media Associatie (Amsterdam: Magazine Media Associatie, 2020), 3-5; Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2020*, Magazine Media Associatie (Amsterdam: Magazine Media Associatie, 2021), 3-5; Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2021*, Magazine Media Associatie (Amsterdam: Magazine Media Associatie, 2022), 3-5; Magazine Media Associatie, *Bits en bites magazine media anno 2022*, 3-5.

¹⁴⁵ Growth from Knowledge, *Trends in Digitale Media: Onderzoek van GfK in samenwerking met KVB-SMB, MMA, NDP, Nieuwsmedia, PMA en Screenforce*, Magazine Media Associatie (Amsterdam: Growth from Knowledge, February 3 2021), 5-6.

¹⁴⁶ Magazine Media Associatie, "Leestijd in minuten per week magazine media."

NOM for data on reading.¹⁴⁷ According to the SCP's *Media:Tijd 2018* report, media consumption is the second largest activity residents in the Netherlands spent their time in after sleeping, it represents around 14% of their daily time.¹⁴⁸ Reading stands as the fourth most frequented media activity behind watching, listening, and communicating. In 2018, reading had an average of 42 minutes per day; it reduced one minute from 2015 and four minutes from 2013.¹⁴⁹ By target groups, men and older generations consume more mass media and read more by gender and age, respectively. The older generations might have a higher media consumption than younger generations mostly due to time invested in studying not considered as a reading category.

Paper remains the dominant medium for reading as two-thirds of the public preferred it over digital in 2018, however, there has been a small reduction of 12% for paper reading since 2013.¹⁵⁰ The SCP report titled *Trends in Media:Tijd* updated reading times and segments digital in computers/laptops, smartphones/tablets, and e-readers as of December 2019. In this updated time spending report [Figure 2.30], the share of paper reading is more positive with around 82% of preference over digital mediums in 2018 which is a narrow reduction from the 90% preference from 2013.¹⁵¹ The SCP confirms that paper is preferred by all genders, but women read more books and magazines while men consult news sites or apps more often.

¹⁴⁷ Since 1975 and every five years, the SCP leads the *tijdsbestedingsonderzoek* (TBO), a time use survey where participants are asked to register their activities in 10-minute slots for a full week diary. "Tijdsbestedingsonderzoek (TBO)," Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2022, accessed March 07, 2022, <https://www.scp.nl/over-scp/data-en-methoden/onderzoeksbeschrijvingen/tijdsbestedingsonderzoek-tbo>.

¹⁴⁸ Sophie F. Waterloo, Annemarie Wennekers, and Peter R. Wiegman, *Media:Tijd 2018*, NOM, NLO, SKO, PMA en SCP. (Amsterdam/Den Haag: DPN Rikken Print, 2019), 5, <https://digitaal.scp.nl/trends-in-mediatijsd/lezen>; Annemarie Wennekers, Dunya M. M. van Troost, and Peter R. Wiegman, *Media:Tijd 2015*, NLO, NOM, SKO, BRO en SCP (Amsterdam/Den Haag: DPN Weurt, 2016), 5, <https://digitaal.scp.nl/trends-in-mediatijsd/lezen>; Nathalie Sonck, Sjoerd Pennekamp, and Frans Kok, *Media:Tijd 2013*, NLO, NOM, SKO, BRO en SCP (Amsterdam/Den Haag: DPN Weurt, 2014), 7, <https://digitaal.scp.nl/trends-in-mediatijsd/lezen>.

¹⁴⁹ Waterloo, Wennekers, and Wiegman, *Media:Tijd 2018*, 7; Wennekers, van Troost, and Wiegman, *Media:Tijd 2015*, 13; Sonck, Pennekamp, and Kok, *Media:Tijd 2013*, 10.

¹⁵⁰ Waterloo, Wennekers, and Wiegman, *Media:Tijd 2018*, 11, 17.

¹⁵¹ In this updated reading format data, there seems to be a loss of minutes per year that is unexplained by the researchers. See the printed report Joep Schaper, Annemarie Wennekers, and Jos de Haan, *Trends in media: Tijd* (Den Haag: Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, 2019), 61; Joep Schaper, Annemarie Wennekers, and Jos de Haan, *Lezen | Trends in Media:Tijd* (December 19 2019), <https://digitaal.scp.nl/trends-in-mediatijsd/lezen>.

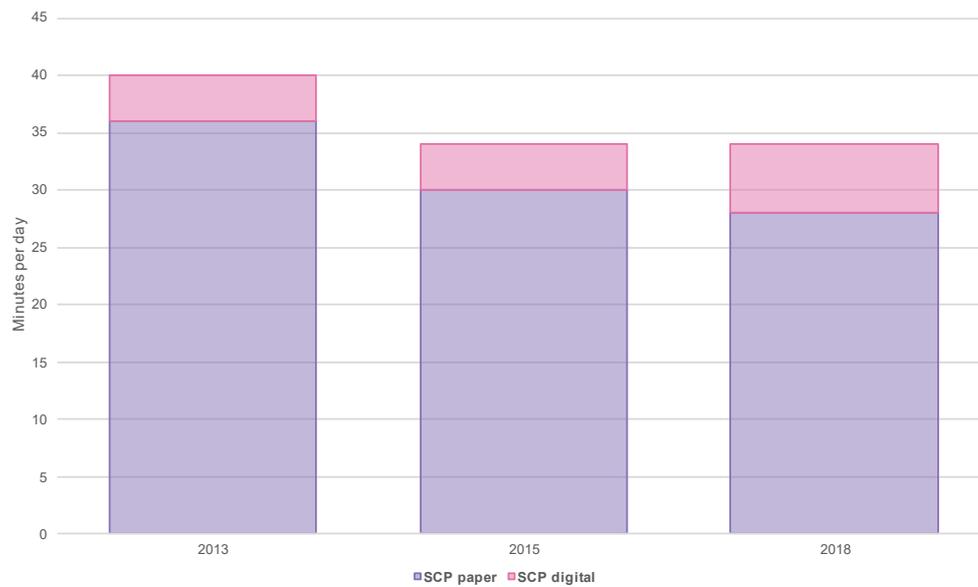


Figure 2.30 Total reading time in minutes per day of reading consumption per day in the Netherlands 2013-2018.
Source: SCP.¹⁵²

The SCP also specifies the reading habits related to magazine consumption in the Netherlands. They estimated that the share of weekly magazine readers halved from 50% to 23% from 2006 to 2011 and then fell further to 16% in 2016.¹⁵³ The SCP calculates two reading times: an average population represents the entire population while the survey respondents average time is exclusive to reported readers.¹⁵⁴ The MMA estimates that the reading time of magazines per week is at a maximum of 121 minutes for 2021 in contrast to the SCP’s latest calculation of 28 minutes (average population) and 385 minutes (reading population) per week in 2018. These big differences between both organisations make it difficult to arrive to a mutually inclusive threshold. However, their measurements signal that time spent in magazine reading decrease at the start of the 2010s and it has an upward trend since 2017.

Measurements by national organisations signal that even with a local market threatened by digital platforms there is still a flourishing reading public in the Netherlands. Though the number of printed copies, the average magazines read per year, and the share of the population that reads magazines have constantly fallen each year, the increase in reading time signals a devoted public interested in the analogue experience and information that print magazines supply. The media consumption habits of the Dutch population in its magazine reading time have increased in 2021, and it is the print format which remains dominant for magazine readers. As the context framing is validated, it becomes insightful to evaluate a distinct type of magazine that safeguards the print form.

¹⁵² Schaper, Wennekers, and de Haan, *Trends in media*.

¹⁵³ Annemarie Wennekers, Frank Huysmans, and Jos de Haan, *Lees: Tijd. Lezen in Nederland*, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, January 2018), 36.

¹⁵⁴ In contrast to MMA, the SCP results are published in minutes per day rather than minutes per week, as such the SCP results are converted to their weekly totals.

2.4. Independent Magazines

In its general view, independent or *indie* represents an ethos, a countermovement of creative freedom against the mainstream. The independent mindset has been applied in the creative industries as genres (films, music) or publishing processes (books). These independent outputs are characterised by their autonomy in the upstream and downstream creation value chains. However, they are no strangers to the commercialisation of their work to gather a share (even if marginal) of the capitalist market they participate in. History demonstrates that daily publications were made possible by self-funded entrepreneurs around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Plus, legacy magazine titles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth commenced as independent magazines before being acquired and consolidated as mainstream magazines in multimedia companies' portfolios. The magazine industry has its own independent market, they are produced locally and sold globally in a common language. They practice the slow journalism ideology which permits abundant time for the creation, publication and selling of their editorial vision. In this section, the third sub-research question is analysed, (4.1) *what general characteristics (origins, themes), if any, make independent magazines independent?* The main characteristics and practices outlined by independent magazine scholars are presented on four-levels: material/symbolic values, economic attributes, industrial organisation, and community.

2.4.1 Slow journalism practice

In the new millennium, information and communication technologies have pervaded all aspects of life from the personal to the communal, from the organisational to the institutional, and from the local to the global. Because of the fast adoption of new technology, economic conditions have been re-evaluated, business models have been reconstructed, and new markets have emerged across multiples industries. Digitisation has increased the amount and accessibility of information, yet online channels have also fostered imitation practices at the expense of content diversity.¹⁵⁵ *Slow journalism* emerged in the mid-1990s as a subversive social trend that questioned the instant speed in which information is universally shared by mainstream media.¹⁵⁶ The term was first used by publishing researcher Susan Greenberg in *Prospect Magazine* where she called for a high-end journalism practice that respects temporality, diversity and quality narrative as she identified an

¹⁵⁵ Pablo J. Boczkowski, *News at work: imitation in an age of information abundance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3.

¹⁵⁶ Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig, *Slow living* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2006), 2-3.

information problem with an abundant online low-end and a declining print middle.¹⁵⁷ Megan Le Masurier, previous magazine journalist, has become a leading academic voice for slow journalism in Australia. She agrees that it as a “critical orientation to the effect of speed on the practice of journalism.”¹⁵⁸ Independent magazine publishing is representative of slow journalism as its temporality allows the time to capture a small audience with visual and textual storytelling that is diverse and distinctive.

2.4.2 Creative independence

The “indie” ideology has been researched in the creative industries, namely music and film, and has prolongedly been designated as an alternative kind of creative output. Cultural anthropologist Wendy Fonarow argues about ownership as an independent in the music industry is one whose creators have a commitment and control of their artistic expression.¹⁵⁹ While media sociologist Michael Newman defines its aesthetics and identity as a challenge to the mainstream for the U.S independent film cinema.¹⁶⁰ Both scholars underscore the difficulty to define the indie ideology, however, it is its dynamic differentiation where a self-identified community clusters and entrepreneurship ventures can commercially thrive that makes a creative output *independent*.¹⁶¹ Independent magazines follow these theoretical proposals, individuals start a local publication where content is originally created and aesthetics are carefully designed to challenge the mainstream as defined by consumer magazine titles. There are two paradoxes that emerge from within independent magazine publishing from within these theories. Firstly, independent magazines use print as their publishing medium, but they use digital tools throughout its value chain for its production, publishing, printing, and distribution. However, independent magazines validate the materiality and experience of print in face of online information overload.¹⁶² Secondly, the independent ideology opposes capitalist mass-consumption cultures yet (perhaps knowingly) *indie* magazines produce a new magazine segment embedded in a global niche audience.¹⁶³ *Indie* ideologies underline the differential creative processes in contrast to the mainstream, yet independent magazines entrepreneurs still aim

¹⁵⁷Susan Greenberg, "Slow journalism: Why doesn't Britain have a culture of serious non-fiction journalism like the US?," *Prospect Magazine*, 2007, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/slowjournalism>. The high and low-ends of magazine publishing have also been predicted by magazine scholars for the next decade, see Holmes and Nice, *Magazine Journalism*, 151.

¹⁵⁸ Megan Le Masurier, "What is Slow Journalism?," *Journalism Practice* 9, no. 2 (2015): 143, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.916471>, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17512786.2014.916471>.

¹⁵⁹ Wendy Fonarow, *Empire of dirt: the aesthetics and rituals of British indie music*, Music/culture series, (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 51.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Z. Newman, "Indie Culture: In Pursuit of the Authentic Autonomous Alternative," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 3 (2009): 48, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.0.0112>.

¹⁶¹ Fonarow, *Empire of dirt*, 51; Newman, "Indie Culture," 48.

¹⁶² Megan Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 15, no. 4 (2012): 385, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877911432059>, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1367877911432059>.

¹⁶³ Sumin Zhao, "Selling the "Indie Taste" A social semiotic analysis of frankie magazine," *Critical Multimodal Studies of Popular Discourse* (2013): 143, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781136249020>.

for a share of the magazine market. These paradoxes are important outlines for the research at hand as they position independent magazines in contrast to technocratic (and digital) structures that emerged in the new millennium.

2.4.3 Independent magazine characteristics

Material and symbolic values

Independents use print, with all its experimental formats and materials, to physically manifest their editorial philosophy. According to periodical studies scholars, independent magazines are semiotic-imaginary artifacts that thrive in print with two features: *printyness* and *hybridness*.¹⁶⁴ Printyness relates to the sensorial manipulation of paper as medium to bring about visuals, tactility, and scents. Social scientist Sumin Zhao similarly agrees on the independents' preference for "tactile texture" through the combination of semi-glossy and matte paper, in contrast, to the exclusively glossy paper from consumer magazines.¹⁶⁵ Hybridness refers to the experimentation with available images, inks, typographies and paper between graphic designers and publishers. It is this later feature where the indie aesthetics are defined as a low-sensory visual modality that captures everyday reality.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, this feature permits the freedom of formats regarding size, shape, and binding.¹⁶⁷ Independents validate the materiality of print as the medium for which they detach their audiences from online channels in favour of a carefully curated selection of content that speaks to an individual and communal level. Independent magazines create and value their community of readers as much as commercial magazines have done in past centuries, however, their main differentiator is the experimentation of materials and stories presented their printed objects.

Economic attributes

Independents are made for trade as their high price tags are indicative of their limited circulation, minimal advertising, and extended shelf-life. Contrary to mainstream magazines high share of advertising, these magazines have small budgets and rarely make a profit with print. Some revenue-raising methods such as cover price charges and selective advertising follow traditional consumer magazine models. Independents confirm the magazine circulation's economic condition as minimal advertising increases the cover price, and lower circulation remains tied to high price tags.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Natasha Anderson, Sabina Fazli, and Oliver Schieding, "Independent Magazines Today," *Journal of European Periodical Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 6-8, <https://doi.org/10.21825/jeps.v5i2.17028>, <https://ojs.ugent.be/jeps/article/view/17028>.

¹⁶⁵ Zhao, "Selling the Indie Taste," 147.

¹⁶⁶ Zhao, "Selling the Indie Taste," 147-48.

¹⁶⁷ Anderson, Fazli, and Schieding, "Independent Magazines Today," 9; Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," 394.

¹⁶⁸ Hakfoort and Weigand, *Magazine Publishing*, 7.

Higher retail price for single issues and low-print runs become intrinsic characteristics for independent publishers as a micro-business that hopes to continue funding subsequent issues. In their “print renaissance” argument, media company *Business of Fashion* reports that their retail price starts with covering all operational costs at minimum.¹⁶⁹ Minimal advertising subsidises the costs of content production, and free labour is frequently present in these self-funded projects. However, it becomes contradictory to the indie ethos to place outsider commercial interests over their editorial philosophies.¹⁷⁰ Self-funding and external funding such as donations from readers are common, plus, online social networks help centralise crowdfunding efforts.¹⁷¹ More successful independent magazines have additional revenues from hosting public events, offering private creative services, or e-commerce platforms to offer branded content or sell single back issues.¹⁷² These are all activities that support what Holmes described as a magazine brand, or *megazine*. Technology has enabled both the small-scale organisation of editors and graphic designers with alternative revenue methods that can power the long-term sustainability of an independent magazine.

Industrial organisation

Independent magazines are crafted, published, and printed by their owners. The owner is regularly the long-term editor-in-chief since the publication’s initial launch. There is a symbiotic relationship between editors and art directors, that gives the founder(s) total creative control of the magazine’s design.¹⁷³ Graphic design is central to underline independents’ differentiated material and symbolic values from the mainstream. In contrast to zines, independents do not construe the study of self rather they showcase the talent and passion from multiple contributors.¹⁷⁴ The editorial philosophy is autonomous from market forces as they depend on their passions, interests, and the network of people related to them to complete their magazines. The collated editorial contributions are solicited from writers, photographers, and graphic designers. As noted by Le Masurier, this represents a power imbalance between editors and contributors where selected contributions enforce a “closed expert system” that aligns with an editorial philosophy.¹⁷⁵ For entrepreneurs, there is a high dependence on contributions and support from its informal networks when a new venture begins.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ "How Do Independent Magazines Make Money?," *Business of Fashion*, 2015, accessed January 09, 2022, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/finance/how-independent-magazines-make-money/>.

¹⁷⁰ Fonarow, *Empire of dirt*, 58.

¹⁷¹ Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," 391; Anderson, Fazli, and Schieding, "Independent Magazines Today," 5-7.

¹⁷² *Business of Fashion*, "How Do Independent Magazines Make Money?."

¹⁷³ Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," 389; Anderson, Fazli, and Schieding, "Independent Magazines Today," 9.

¹⁷⁴ For a lengthier definition of zines, see Annex 8.1. Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," 387.

¹⁷⁵ Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," 388; Anderson, Fazli, and Schieding, "Independent Magazines Today," 2.

¹⁷⁶ Leonardo Mazzone and Luciana Lazzeretti, "In search of creative entrepreneurship: an exploratory analysis," in *Creative Industries and Entrepreneurship* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018), 62.

They are not published in a monthly frequency, but rather opt for quarterly or biannual print runs. Independent publishing has thrived in a mutually beneficial relationship with technological change as they have adopted digital technologies for its product creation, market exposure and retail distribution. There is space and desire for both readers and gatekeepers alike to actively perform their capitalist roles and preserve a culture for collective recognition. It is in these online platforms where international readers can find single copies of back issues to complete a sustainable practice of no waste.

Transnational community

Without the consideration of the obvious raw materials (paper, ink, energy), once the issues are printed, they are sold through hybrid distribution networks, one that integrates online and offline retailers. Traditional retailers such as newsstands and supermarkets sell consumer magazines, so independents depend on inner-city bookstores, galleries, and specialist magazine stores for its physical sales.¹⁷⁷ Concomitantly, distribution is made possible by postal services for third-party retailers or owned-and-operated sites regardless of their online or offline presence.¹⁷⁸ To have its global niche audience, independent magazines are shipped to selected international locations with the caveat these are frequented by the audiences the magazine is aimed for. Thus, the urban geography of most independent magazines would be in “creative cities” or “global cities.”¹⁷⁹ These cities permit the rise of an international independent magazine market – a narrow local group of individuals who purchase a carefully curated independent magazine that converges distinct cultures, disciplines and interests.¹⁸⁰ Though the location of magazines headquarters around the world varies, independent magazines share a common language: English. As a result, independents co-exist in the wider magazine market because they are aimed to a specialised transnational audience leading to produce a new market segment known as the “global niche”.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," 390.

¹⁷⁸ Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," 390; Anderson, Fazli, and Schieding, "Independent Magazines Today," 8; Business of Fashion, "How Do Independent Magazines Make Money?."

¹⁷⁹ Saskia Sassen, "Locating cities on global circuits," *Environment & Urbanization* 14, no. 1 (2002); Florida, *Cities and the creative class*.

¹⁸⁰ "The rise and rise of independent magazines," Abitare, 2011, accessed January 09, 2022, <https://www.abitare.it/en/design-en/2011/06/16/the-rise-and-rise-of-independent-magazines>. Le Masurier, "Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print," 391; Anderson, Fazli, and Schieding, "Independent Magazines Today," 4.

¹⁸¹ Caroline Hamilton, "By the book? : contemporary publishing in Australia," in *Publishing*, ed. Emmett Stinson (Huntingdale, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2013), 44.

In summary, it is in this global niche market that independent magazines find a commercially viable business with specialised retailers and readers. In the digital era, the magazine can live online for free or be sold through digital newsstands where anyone can make and upload their own publications. However, it is the experimental combinations of tactile and sensorial elements with paper, graphic design, and editorial content that construct an analogue experience for a reading community that independent magazines enforce. The independent ideology characteristics of autonomy and creative freedom makes them different from magazines owned by media corporations or that are distributed freely (online magazines and zines). Independent magazines as independent products in other creative industries thrive on the control and publication of their artistic vision to a niche audience that are also representative of a slow print movement against instant online accessibility. The outlined economic characteristics makes them a higher-priced magazine upon purchase, but its biannual temporality stretches the value for money to a larger timespan than mainstream monthly magazines. The ideologies of independent and slow journalism, in addition to digitisation, serve as the guiding themes for the case study analysis of a narrow system of producers that have an international scope.

3. Independent Magazines: The Case Studies

Two groups of subjects for the embedded-multi case studies are presented: two independent magazine editors and three specialised magazine retailers. In this presentation, the second part of the last sub-question is evaluated, (4.2) *how do independent magazines manifest themselves in the Netherlands?* The two selected independent magazines are compatible with dichotomous attributes that magazines have historically validated in its funding mechanisms, editorial content, and form. *Fantastic Man* and *MacGuffin* are two magazines that are made in Amsterdam and distributed internationally. The selection of the two subjects represents a public-private funding dichotomy of creative entrepreneurship projects: *Fantastic Man* is privately funded and presents people, objects, and places under the lens of fashion while *MacGuffin* is publicly funded as a research-based magazine that publishes multidisciplinary stories about the production and usage of anthropocentric objects. Both subjects allow for a contrasting analysis of their funding mechanisms and editorial philosophies paired with the digital influences experienced by print magazines. Specialised retailers also have commercial interests on these printed objects; they construct global niche audiences as their operations confirm the presence of an international public acquiring locally crafted goods. Three specialised magazine retailers from three cities are presented.¹⁸² In the Netherlands, NAI Booksellers in Rotterdam and Athenaeum Boekhandel in Amsterdam commenced as bricks-and-mortar stores that have adopted digital elements such as websites with web shops for an end-to-end shopping experience. In London, Stack Magazines is a digital native company that also has a web shop, but they offer a new business model: a subscription to receive an independent magazine each month. Stack's selection is emblematic of how digital technologies can replace traditional incumbents in the retail sector.¹⁸³ This section uses the data collected from interviews to present the subjects of the case studies with their brief oral history and the locations of the retailers.

3.1 Creators/Publishers: private in public

3.1.1 Fantastic Man

Gert Jonkers had a family upbringing where he was surrounded by print media, his father subscribed to multiple newspapers and bought magazines on a regular basis.¹⁸⁴ His academic and professional interests were diverse as he started a Dutch literature degree before producing music,

¹⁸² These retailers are an example of the many international locations that sell independent magazines around the world, for a list of other specialised retailers that are also recommended for further research see Table 7.7 in Annex 7.7.

¹⁸³ Stack Magazines is headquartered in London and it would fall out of the geographical scope of the Netherlands for this master's thesis. However, the value of including Stack relies on the premise that it is the first magazine retailer to develop a business model that is exclusively digital in its operations and user experience. Stack, as well as NAI Boekverkopers and Athenaeum Boekhandel sell the two magazine subjects.

¹⁸⁴ Gert Jonkers, "Gert Jonkers, transcribed April 6 2022," interview by Carlos Zepeda, April 1 2022, 01:51.

then moved to photography and later began his first experience as a writer at COC's magazine. His constant curiosity and self-learned journalistic approach ensued first in a writing position at Dutch monthly magazine *BLVD* (1993-2007) which saw him helming the role of editor before he left.¹⁸⁵ *BLVD* is now a defunct cultural and lifestyle magazine where Jonkers met graphic designer Jop van Bennekom in 1997. Van Bennekom has previously stated the influence of British independent magazines such as *The Face*, *i-D*, and *NME* as defining in his developing years.¹⁸⁶ Both clearly understand the *indie* ideology throughout their entrepreneurial projects as it was their dissatisfaction with monthly magazine content that led them to co-found a series of independent magazines in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The first of these publications is *BUTT* (2001-2011, revived 2022), a quarterly independent magazine about male homosexual culture published and printed in Amsterdam.¹⁸⁷ It thrived in its unapologetic philosophy to embrace homosexuality in all its diversity, as their submission guidelines read: "It's very simple. We don't have any. We very much welcome surprises."¹⁸⁸ After the entrepreneurial success of *BUTT*, Jonkers and van Bennekom decided to launch another title in 2005, *Fantastic Man* [Figures 4.1, 4.2]. This is a biannual independent magazine about men's lifestyle focusing on fantastic men and the cultures, fashions, and foods they experience through profiles, interviews, and photography features. Jonkers serves as the editor-in-chief while van Bennekom oversees the art direction of the publication. In *Interview Magazine*, the founders have stated that *Fantastic Man* "doesn't talk to you as a consumer but as a reader" and tries to "ask interesting questions."¹⁸⁹ It is biannually published in Amsterdam, and it is stock listed and available in at least 39 cities around the world.¹⁹⁰ Five years later, the pair launched London-based magazines *The Gentlewoman* focused on women's lifestyle. These independent magazines, plus the quarterly literature magazine *The Happy Reader* come together under TOP Publishers, the publishing company that Jonkers and van Bennekom own in Amsterdam. Gert Jonkers has been a leader of independent magazine publishing in the Netherlands for more than two decades and provides insight into the Dutch market.

¹⁸⁵ "Blvd," Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2021, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.kb.nl/themas/tijdschriften/blvd>.

¹⁸⁶ "No muscles, no tattoos," Eye Magazine, 2006, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/no-muscles-no-tattoos>.

¹⁸⁷ Jonkers, interview., 01:51, 26:00.

¹⁸⁸ "About BUTT," BUTT, 2008, accessed January 08, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080526072403/http://www.buttmagazine.com/?p=259>.

¹⁸⁹ "Fantastic Man," Interview Magazine, 2009, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/fantastic-man>.

¹⁹⁰ The Managing Editor for *Fantastic Man* provided a list of "key" stockists that only includes what the company considers the most relevant retailers for the magazine. It is available in more locations around the world that are not quantified here.

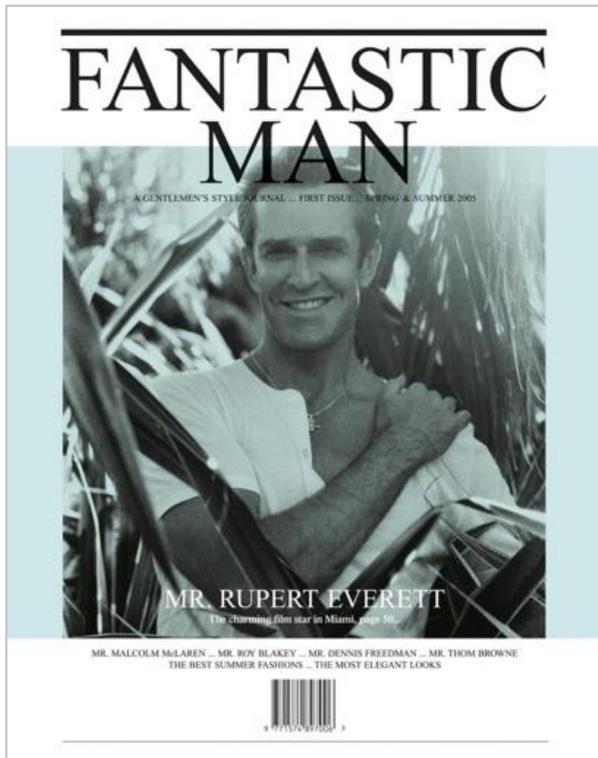


Figure 4.1. Fantastic Man cover. *Issue N° 1 Spring & Summer 2005.* Amsterdam: TOP Publishers BV, 2005.

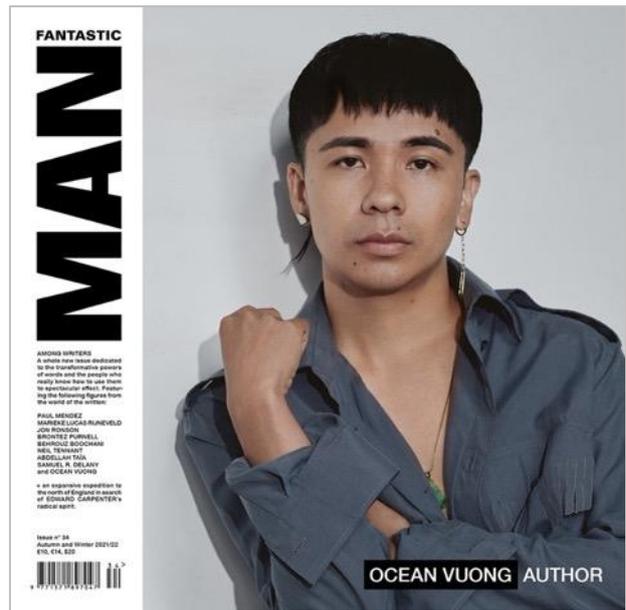


Figure 4.2. Fantastic Man cover. *Issue N° 35 Spring & Summer 2022.* Amsterdam: TOP Publishers BV, 2022.

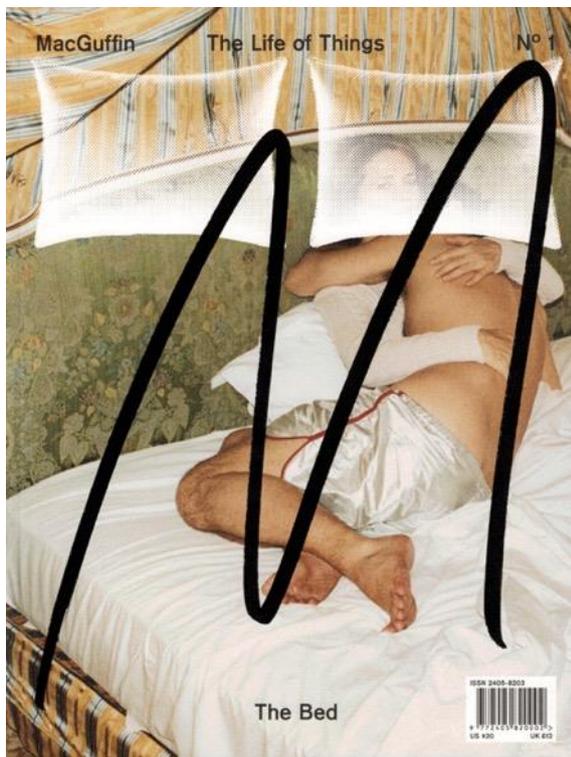


Figure 4.3. MacGuffin cover. *Issue N° 1 the Bed: Spring 2015.* Amsterdam: MacGuffin, 2015.



Figure 4.4. MacGuffin cover. *Issue N° 10 the Bottle: Autumn/Winter 2021.* Amsterdam: MacGuffin, 2021.

3.1.2 MacGuffin

Kristen Algera and Ernst van der Hoeven intertwine their broad professional experiences and networks at *MacGuffin Magazine*. Algera remembers her avid interest in interdisciplinarity in print and constant graphic design experimentation from the music magazines she read during her teens, describing them as “a portal to another world.”¹⁹¹ Algera studied art and architecture history at the University of Amsterdam while Van de Hoeven studied aesthetic landscape architecture in Politecnico di Milano. They both experienced the roles of art directors and curators at different organisations before founding *MacGuffin* [Figures 4.3, 4.4] together and being co-editors-in-chief since 2015. Their entrepreneurial venture was secured on their experiences as Van de Hoeven was the founder of independent magazine *Club Donny* (2008-2012), while Kristen wrote for magazines herself.¹⁹² Their editorial and artistic strengths are consecrated in every issue of *MacGuffin* as a conceptual magazine focused on “backstage information about the life of things.”¹⁹³ It showcases the extraordinary relationships people have with the objects, spaces or materials that surrounds them through captivating storytelling. It uses Alfred Hitchcock’s MacGuffin technique to contextualise the symbolic value and utility of an object beyond its aesthetics. For instance, its latest issue, n°10, analyses the bottle’s utility as a design object. In words of Algera for creative platform *It’s Nice That*, it is “a design magazine that is not about design... [because of a] desire to combine in-depth research and visual appeal.”¹⁹⁴

It has been supported by the Dutch government’s Creative Industries Fund since its inception because of its exemplary innovative approach to see the world contexts around a simple object.¹⁹⁵ This fund commenced in 2013 with a €15 million annual budget to support the national cultural policy and focuses on an interdisciplinary crossover between architecture, design, and digital culture within its social and economic domains to build a “culture and knowledge-driven creative economy” in the Netherlands.¹⁹⁶ In 2021, it awarded €23.6 million to 1,037 requesters described as makers, designers and cultural institutions.¹⁹⁷ *MacGuffin* has been a fund recipient under the design category for the “preliminary research and the realization of the content” for the magazine, but also other funds for

¹⁹¹ Kirsten Algera, "Kirsten Algera, transcribed March 13 2022," interview by Carlos Zepeda, March 10 2022, 02:28., 02:28.

¹⁹² Algera, interview., 02:28.

¹⁹³ "About," *MacGuffin*, 2021, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.macguffinmagazine.com/about>.

¹⁹⁴ "Kirsten Algera on running *MacGuffin*, “a design magazine that is not about design”, *It’s Nice That*, 2019, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/nicer-tuesdays-may-2019-kirsten-algera-macguffin-publication-120619>.

¹⁹⁵ Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, *MacGuffin 2022*, Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie (Rotterdam, 2022), 1, https://content.stimuleringsfonds.nl/files/pro/i_7042/macguffin2022.pdf.

¹⁹⁶ "Creative Industries Fund NL," Dutch Culture, 2022, accessed June 17, 2022, <https://dutchculture.nl/en/location/creative-industries-fund-nl>.

¹⁹⁷ "Terugblik 2021," Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, 2022, accessed June 19, 2022, <https://terugblik.stimuleringsfonds.nl/2021/>; Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, *Jaarverantwoording 2021*, Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie (Rotterdam: Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, 2022), 17, <https://terugblik.stimuleringsfonds.nl/2021/>.

art installations and presentations.¹⁹⁸ Most recently, the Creative Industries Fund green-lit two year-long funds that total €153,360 for the publication of four more issues with its creative output including essays, photographs, podcasts, exhibitions and an online archive for 2021 and 2022.¹⁹⁹ The magazine is biannually published in Amsterdam, and it is stock listed and available in 88 cities around the world as of 2022.²⁰⁰ MacGuffin is an unstudied case of independent publishing that is supported by public funds, and its research-based content also contrasts with *Fantastic Man's* journalistic approach to magazine making.

3.2 Retailers: independent for independent

3.2.1 NAI Booksellers

When Joost Degenkamp was a bachelor student of urbanism, he began working part-time at the NAI Booksellers store.²⁰¹ In Rotterdam, the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) was the home of the shop since 1993. NAI merged with other cultural organisations to create Het Nieuwe Instituut in January 2013.²⁰² Degenkamp became the manager of the store before the merger, and he has been the owner of the independent bookshop since 2012.²⁰³ At first it would seem that his store is a museum shop, but his operations are completely independent from the museum though the latter still holds certain limitations and guidelines.²⁰⁴ NAI Booksellers is a store where visitors look “for inspiration and information in the field of architecture, urbanism, landscape and design.”²⁰⁵ A walk through the bookshop underlines the diverse selection of books, monographs, and magazines from Dutch and international publishers. NAI Booksellers has an online shop, from which three-quarters of the 1,418 available magazines in store are published in English.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁸ MacGuffin previously received grants of €22.421 for its second issue from the Design Grant Scheme in 2015, €5.278 for an installation from the Internationalisation of the Design Sector Grant Scheme in 2014, and €5.000 for the presentation of their fourth issue in Milan. See "macguffin no 2: the window," Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, 2015, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en/grants-issued/macguffin-no-2-the-window-2>; "salone del mobile 2015 | macguffin installation," Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, 2014, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en/grants-issued/salone-del-mobile-2015-macguffin-installation>; "the sink," Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, 2017, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en/grants-issued/the-sink>.

¹⁹⁹ Details of past funding are not easily available in the Creative Industries NL Fund's annual reports or grants issued website section; therefore, no funding empirical data is systematically evaluated in this area for any of the magazine subjects. See Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, *MacGuffin 2021*, Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie (Rotterdam, 2021), 1, https://content.stimuleringsfonds.nl/files/pro/i_6336/adviesmacguffin.pdf; Stichting Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, *MacGuffin 2022*, 50.

²⁰⁰ MacGuffin, 'About'.

²⁰¹ Joost Degenkamp, "Joost Degenkamp, transcribed March 2 2022," interview by Carlos Zepeda, February 28 2022., 00:26.

²⁰² "About NAI Boekverkopers," NAI Boekverkopers, 2022, accessed February 27, 2022,

https://www.naibooksellers.nl/about_nai/.

²⁰³ Degenkamp, interview., 00:26.

²⁰⁴ Degenkamp, interview., 41:37.

²⁰⁵ "NAI Boekverkopers: the bookstore for designers," NAI Boekverkopers, 2022, accessed February 27, 2022,

<https://www.naibooksellers.nl>.

²⁰⁶ "Magazines - NAI Boekverkopers," NAI Boekverkopers, updated 13 May, 2022, accessed February 27, 2022,

<https://www.naibooksellers.nl/magazines.html>.

3.2.2 Athenaeum Boekhandel

Anneke Reijnders is a self-defined specialist with almost four decades of experience in the Dutch independent magazine market. She went to art school in Gerrit Rietveld Academie Amsterdam where she studied and applied graphic design with her interest in typography and magazine-making.²⁰⁷ She began working at a gay bookstore where she had her first direct contact with zines and independents, this line of work led her to become the specialist buyer of independent magazines at Athenaeum Boekhandel where she was a frequent customer of their Nieuwscentrum in Spui.²⁰⁸ Athenaeum is an Amsterdam-based independent bookshop that was founded in 1966 by Johan Polak and Rob van Gennen. It is a retailer with a wide offering of local and international independent magazines that is as famous as it is unparalleled with around 2,000 titles.²⁰⁹ They previously published a WordPress blog, and since the inclusion of an e-commerce platform on their website, it is relevant to explore how the traditional bookshop businesses have adapted to a hybrid online/offline retail model that has a constant stream of customers in their locations and websites.

3.2.3 Stack Magazines

Steve Watson studied an English language bachelor at the University of Cambridge, during that time he wrote for his university paper and worked at his first magazine office in *FHM* London.²¹⁰ Before graduating, he continued freelance writing and later became editor of in-flight magazines. He decided to launch an online independent magazines market after sensing shifts in journalistic practices in the late 2000s due to digitisation.²¹¹ In 2008, he launched Stack Magazines as an online platform for international independent magazine trade. It is the first online “magazine club,” a subscription that selects the best independent magazine and delivers it to its subscribers for £8 (or €9.40) per month.²¹² He hosted the Stack Awards, a yearly ceremony that ran from 2015 to 2019 to recognise the best of independent magazines.²¹³ Both selected magazines have been awarded and shortlisted before: *MacGuffin* won Editor of the Year in 2017 and 2019, Art Director of the Year in 2017, Magazine of the Year in 2016, and was shortlisted in 2019 for Magazine of the Year, Cover of the

²⁰⁷ Anneke Reijnders, "Anneke Reijnders, transcribed March 16 2022," interview by Carlos Zepeda, March 10 2022, 01:27.

²⁰⁸ Reijnders, interview., 01:27.

²⁰⁹ Reijnders, interview., 38:19.

²¹⁰ Steve Watson, "Steve Watson, transcribed March 14 2022," interview by Carlos Zepeda, March 14 2022, 02:10., 02:10.

²¹¹ Watson, interview., 02:10.

²¹² Stack Magazines, 'About the Stack Magazines Subscription Services', website, Stack Magazines, 2021, <https://www.stackmagazines.com/about-stack/>.

²¹³ "Five Years of the Stack Awards," Stack Magazines, 2015, accessed January 26, 2022,

<https://www.stackmagazines.com/awards/>. For additional context, the eleven categories of the fifth Stack Awards celebrated the editorial and artistic strengths of the market: Magazine of the Year, Launch of the Year, Editor of the Year, Art Director of the Year, Cover of the Year, Best Use of Photography, Best Use of Illustration, Best Original Non-Fiction, Best Original Fiction, Student Magazine of the Year, and Subscribers' Choice.

Year, and Subscriber's Choice; *Fantastic Man* was shortlisted for Magazine of the Year in 2019.²¹⁴ In 2018, Stack expanded its subscription service to an e-commerce shop where single issues are available for sale, plus, it started a multimedia strategy that includes video reviews, podcast interviews and magazine samples. Stack Magazines founder and director shares his experience on how the independent magazines' global niche market manages with a digital-first retail strategy.

The five units of analysis presented in this chapter are representative of the Dutch independent magazine industry. The selection of these subjects brings forth the attributes that have been present in magazine historiography. Magazine subjects, *Fantastic Man* and *MacGuffin*, personify a contrasting balance between funding mechanisms (private versus public) and content (specialised versus intellectual). The editors of these magazines have a lengthy experience in the industry in the Netherlands and can provide an understanding and confirmation of theoretical propositions. Specialised retailers converge as privately funded and independent enterprises that sell all types of print media. Le Masurier suggests that the global niche magazine audience arises from transnational locations, as such, the magazine buyers are professionals that are responsible for building an international market. All the subjects are in the business of trading a single media form: the printed independent magazine. The oral history from two independent magazine editors and three specialised retailers brings a sound understanding of the people behind these entrepreneurial businesses before they are analysed under the case study methodology.

²¹⁴ "Stack Awards 2015," Stack Magazines, 2015, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.stackmagazines.com/awards-2015/>; "Stack Awards 2016," Stack Magazines, 2016, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.stackmagazines.com/awards-2016/>; "Stack Awards 2017," Stack Magazines, 2017, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.stackmagazines.com/awards-2017/>; "Stack Awards 2018," Stack Magazines, 2018, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.stackmagazines.com/awards-2018/>; "Stack Awards 2019," Stack Magazines, 2019, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.stackmagazines.com/awards-2019/>.

4. Results and Findings

After a close reading of more than five hours of transcripts and almost 11,000 magazine pages, this section summarises the findings from the mixed methods approach. The data collected from semi-structured interviews is analysed to uncover qualitative definitions and motivations of the independent magazine market, while the page analysis quantifies independent magazine characteristics from the Netherlands. Digitisation has influenced paradigmatic shifts across the creative industries, mostly the restructuring of revenue models and the increase of competition. But the most noteworthy aspect is the digitisation of formats as music, films and books have seen their outputs converted and sold on streaming platforms and online shops. Attempts to digitise the print form have been done, but magazine makers and sellers understand that there is an active public interested in these objects. In this section, the main research question is addressed, *(1.1) which effects has digitisation influenced on the independent magazine market in the Netherlands from 2000-2022?* The findings inform on the definition and characteristics of independent magazines that scholars have introduced [Section 2.4], but more so, it presents an insider view on how digitisation is perceived by the independent magazine makers and sellers. Therefore, the evaluation of the main research question first offers a contextualised industry in the Netherlands with conceptual definitions and organisational practices at an editorial and retail level. The second part of the main question is: *(1.2) which elements are more or less inclined to adopt digitisation?* It is analysed with a review of the challenges and opportunities that digitisation has originated for the case study subjects. The contrasting structures of the subjects make a contemporary evaluation of evolutionary ambitions possible to determine how digitisation impacts this creative industry.

4.1 Conceptualising independent magazines

The definition of “independent” has always been difficult to define for different creative industries. The responses to the definition of independent magazine from interview participants are mixed with some focusing on the question of ownership while others explore the ideas, feelings, or principles that the magazines evoke. Independent bookshop owner Joost Degenkamp was prompt to state his uninterest in defining what an independent magazine is for his bookshop.²¹⁵ This can be attributed to his business being more tuned with architecture and design books and monographs. Defined by ownership, editor-in-chief of *MacGuffin* Kristen Algera and Stack founder Steve Watson share a similar definition that these magazines are owned by the makers themselves.²¹⁶ This definition

²¹⁵ Degenkamp, interview., 06:25.

²¹⁶ Algera, interview., 06:14; Watson, interview., 06:11.

has been presented at Indiecon, an independent magazine conference hosted in Hamburg. Kirsten is certain that no publisher should be behind these types of magazines, otherwise they become part of the mainstream magazines tier.²¹⁷ Yet Steve asserts that this robust definition becomes imperfect and re-definition constantly ensues. This same challenge is shared by editor-in-chief of *Fantastic Man* Gert Jonkers during his contemplative response of what a “dependent” magazine would actually be.²¹⁸ While he examines that it is organisationally independent from a boss, is not part of a multimedia group, and has minimal advertising, the value of an independent magazine is also a feeling of freedom where “we can do whatever we want to do.”²¹⁹ Watson extends the narrow Indiecon definition to explain that indies create communities, are driven by passionate people, and have more flexibility than commercial magazines.²²⁰ Independent magazine buyer Anneke Reijnders was prompt to confirm that the editorial choices made between the two covers makes a magazine “bearers of meaning and culture” and as such deserve the attention.²²¹ The two magazines selected for the case study, plus a few more that were mentioned during the interviews are published in the English language which becomes a common practice to reach a wider public.²²²

Under an evolutionary lens, some independent magazine typologies have also been put forward by the magazine makers and retailers.²²³ The first of these is a small business where the independent magazine thrives on its global niche customer-base to sell a printed magazine. It is produced locally and is sold globally through online or offline channels. *MacGuffin* is representative of this example although it signals a transformation to the second typology in 2022. “Magazine turned company” is the second category when the independent magazine that originated as a printed output has extended its reach to other economic activities that are not exclusive to printing. This trend was introduced in Montréal by *VICE* magazine when it turned into VICE Media. Other examples are film magazine *Little White Lies* turning into creative agency TCO London, *Dazed & Confused* turned into a multimedia company DAZED Media, and typography magazine *Slanted* extended to multimedia company Slanted Publishers in Berlin. As for the Netherlands, TOP Publishers publishes four magazines made by Dutch creators-owners: *Fantastic Man*, *the Gentlewoman*, *the Happy Reader*, and the recently revived *BUTT*. The third typology occurs when the “company turns into magazine,”

²¹⁷ Algera, interview., 06:14.

²¹⁸ Jonkers, interview., 12:49.

²¹⁹ Jonkers, interview., 16:25.

²²⁰ Watson, interview., 02:10, 07:40, 11:11.

²²¹ Reijnders, interview., 04:32.

²²² Some other independent magazines mentioned in interviews are in Barcelona: Apartamento; Paris: The Funambulist, Tools; Amsterdam: VINYL, Nest, Club Donny; London: The Face, i-D, The Gentlewoman, Migrant Journal, Little White Lies, Weapons of Reason, Eye Magazine, Sabat, The Happy Reader; Moscow: Strelka Mag; United States: Kinfolk; Taipei: Oneness. Other monthly commercial magazines mentioned include Elle, Vogue, GQ, FHM, and BLVD.

²²³ Watson, interview., 16:17; Jonkers, interview., 09:27; Algera, interview., 06:14

an independent magazine emerges from the need of a creative output. In the United Kingdom, the creative agency Human After All began publishing *Weapons of Reason* as a print response to its operations. This typology is yet to be identified in the Netherlands by this research. Finally, there is a final typology where the magazine makers have “no interest in business” as the independent magazine is published out of a passion for sharing ideas with no economic ambitions. Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam’s independent title *Szine* falls in this category as it is “published irregularly – and only when we have something to say.”²²⁴ *Migrant Journal* from London is another publication that limited its release to only six editions to complete its editorial and commercial ambitions. These typologies are not static, there is not one magazine model for independents as they shape their economic aspirations between their individual specificity (editorial philosophy) and how they inspire their audiences.

Table 4.1. Independent magazine case study general information, characteristics, and digital footprint as of May 23, 2022.
*Limited information available.

	FANTASTIC MAN	MACGUFFIN
GENERAL		
<i>Foundation year</i>	2005	2015
<i>Location</i>	Amsterdam	Amsterdam
<i>Editors-in-Chief</i>	Gert Jonkers	Kristen Algera Ernst van der Hoevel
<i>Creative Directors</i>	Joop van Benekom	Sandra Kassenaar
<i>Other Editors</i>	Eliot Haworth, Jamie MacRae, Seb Emina, and Willy Ndatira	Billy Nolan
MAGAZINE		
<i>Funding</i>	Private, advertising	Public, advertising
<i>Advertising, % average</i>	26%	3%
<i>Paper type</i>	Glossy	Matte and glossy
<i>Theme</i>	Interesting men, objects, places, cultures; themed issues	Multidisciplinary themed issues around an object
<i>Issues; Circulation</i>	35; 80,000	10; >10,000*
<i>Frequency</i>	Biannual	Biannual
<i>Stocklist locations</i>	19 countries, 39 cities, 61 locations*	32 countries, 88 cities, 146 locations
DIGITAL		
<i>Website, monthly visitors</i>	4,113 (fantasticman.com)	1,800 (macguffinmagazine.com)
<i>Facebook</i>	73,931 (@fantasticman)	3,554 (@macguffinmagazine)
<i>Twitter</i>	24,100 (@fantasticman)	570 (@macguffinmag)
<i>Instagram</i>	66,100 (@manfantastic)	19,200 (@macguffinmagazine)
<i>Google Search</i>	715,000,000	9,060,000

²²⁴ Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, "Szine #1: Future Origins," *Szine*, 2021, 30.

4.2 Editorial practices

To create an independent magazine there are small, fixed teams in charge of carefully planning the editorial and visual components of the issue. The editor and art director relationship are highlighted by scholars as an important characteristic for independent magazines. At *MacGuffin*, the core team is comprised of four people that have an unspoken understanding to share their strengths where the art director is considered part of the two-people editorial team plus the final editor at *MacGuffin*.²²⁵ In every issue they present one object in multiple contexts that enable their interdisciplinary “stories about ordinary things” vision.²²⁶ The editorial process consists of four steps: the selection of the object as a central theme; uncovering the contexts, networks, and relationships of the object with everyday life; drafting the editorial model with multiple chapters where one chapter represents one specific context; and then the search for the relevant collaborators to photograph, write and complete the creative activities.²²⁷ Even with this clear guideline, Algera reiterates that the process is “hard to describe and not straight as it takes weeks.”²²⁸ The editorial vision of *MacGuffin* comes alive with a carefully built multi-layered experience where there is a sensibility of the content, and an adequate rhythm between the text and the images.²²⁹ To achieve such experience, the biannual release fits with their planning of research, creative and administrative activities as it is a periodical that serves as a timeless information source.²³⁰ For Algera, a magazine comes together as a “portable exhibition” as every page or chapter guides the reader to discover their texts and photography.

Fantastic Man also understands that the synergetic relation between editorial and art direction will ensue in an expert balance of textual and visual elements.²³¹ However, there has been discussion of including a third “core” member at the helm of the financial and managerial aspects of the business. As for the planning, it’s a non-linear process that requires meticulous planning due to low operational budgets. Advertising is the main income of *Fantastic Man*, and as such, it does not permit the “cutting” of stories, a standard outcome he understands happens in mainstream fashion magazines such as *Vogue*.²³² The roles of deputy editor, junior editor, and contributing editor help in the deployment of an organic and democratic process of co-creation and selection of content.²³³ The main

²²⁵ Algera, interview., 24:33

²²⁶ MacGuffin, "About."

²²⁷ Algera, interview., 08:04.

²²⁸ Algera, interview., 17:41.

²²⁹ Algera, interview., 17:41, 48:32.

²³⁰ Algera, interview., 29:05.

²³¹ Jonkers, interview., 28:28

²³² Jonkers, interview., 38:11.

²³³ Jonkers, interview., 43:19.

editorial philosophy is to learn about unexpected people with a pre-defined fashion angle though with a narrow interest on selling products.²³⁴ The planning of a biannual issue takes months, and the co-creation process begins after taking a break of publishing the most recent issue. When the team gets back together, they have a white canvas where they constantly are “looking for that one other thing that is not there yet.”²³⁵ In recent years, the magazine has shifted from a subject-centric approach to thematic issues. Gert Jonkers suggests that after fourteen years the magazine was becoming repetitive and that themes enabled a renewal of the magazine.²³⁶ This renewal is manifested in the re-design of the magazine from a portrait to a square format along with changes of paper (from matte/glossy to only glossy), typographies and graphic design that renovated their material and symbolic values, and even non-published material was used even though they aim to maintain originality in each issue.

While *Fantastic Man* began as a subject-based publication and its later adoption of a thematic vision might be a coincidence, Algera understands that the trend of theme-based magazines reflects a “sign of the times.”²³⁷ For instance, Parisian magazine *Tools* selects and explores the relationship of tools with society in their annual publication. Jonkers was also critical on the inspiration *Fantastic Man*’s art direction had on other independent magazines abroad. During his interview, he presented a copy of *Oneness* from Taiwan which looks like a carbon copy of their third issue.²³⁸ There are also some recognisable trends in the magazine industry by retailers: Steve Watson considers there remains a diverse visual output, yet whitespace has become a signature aesthetic for independents since the 2010s.²³⁹ An aesthetic that *Fantastic Man* practiced since its launch.²⁴⁰ Anneke Reijnders agrees on visual design trends but considers that cyclical directions in the editorial content that shift from the political to the commercial are also common.²⁴¹

The most significant difference in magazine characteristics [Table 4.1] between these two magazines is their funding mechanism. *MacGuffin* is funded by public funds through the cooperation of Creative Industries Fund Nederland and other organisations.²⁴² Algera suggests that the public funds are research-based grants that cover salaries, contributors’ fees, and not explicitly supports the

²³⁴ Jonkers, interview., 17:29, 19:43.

²³⁵ Jonkers, interview., 38:11.

²³⁶ Jonkers, interview., 23:49.

²³⁷ Algera, interview., 52:08.

²³⁸ For a visual representation of this comparison, see Figure 7.6 in Appendix 7.6.

²³⁹ Watson, interview., 01:03:33.

²⁴⁰ For a review of the *Fantastic Man* cover archive, see Figure 7.2 in Appendix 7.6.

²⁴¹ Reijnders, interview., 37:49.

²⁴² In addition to Creative Industries Fund Nederland, *MacGuffin* has received additional support from partners that they have both advertised or participated in its events: Issue 01 by Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst, Fonds 21; Issue 02 by Design Miami/Basel; Issue 03 Design Miami/Basel; Issue 04 by Design Miami/Basel, Edenspiekermann and Fedrigoni; Issue 05 by Design Miami/Basel, Edenspiekermann and Fedrigoni; Issue 06 by Fonds21, Fedrigoni and Design Miami/Basel; Issue 07 by Fedrigoni, G-Star Raw and Design Miami/Basel; Issue 08 by Fedrigoni, Forbo, and Design Miami/Basel; Issue 09 by De Gijsselaar-Hintzenfonds; Issue 10 by De Gijsselaar-Hintzenfonds and RG Berlin

magazine in its raw materials and printing costs.²⁴³ These statements are confirmed by the published reports by the Creative Industries Fund NL as the approved grants to the magazine are directed to the multimedia outputs for the preliminary research. Even though the advertising market has narrowed for magazines in the Netherlands [Section 2.2.4], both magazines are still presented with a revenue trade-off between accepting whatever advertising they can get and rejecting it because it fails to align with their editorial philosophy. *Fantastic Man* is self-aware that they don't want the magazine to become a platform for advertisers as their pages have a fashion-centric affinity.²⁴⁴ The pages of *MacGuffin* include some advertisements, they are welcomed because it can pay some of the bills, but it is not a necessity thanks to the support of the government.²⁴⁵ *MacGuffin* tries to get an advertiser that is related to the issue's object, for instance, Heineken was an advertiser for the bottle issue (#10) and fashion brand Raf Simons advertised in the trousers issue (#7). In their comparison, *Fantastic Man* has a larger print circulation and online following across all online platforms than *MacGuffin*.

The quantitative page analysis of all 45 magazine issues (10,850 pages) published between 2005 and 2022 provides insight into the practice of each subject's editorial philosophy in its material and symbolic values. The pages were subject to three binary variables of analysis: *paper* to compare the use of glossy or matte types, *magazine content* to uncover the shares of advertising and editorial from the total pages, and *editorial content* which considers only the pages of editorial content categorised as either textual or visual information. The types of paper [Figure 4.5] are representative of a material experimentation of the print form, both subjects have used glossy and matte paper since their first issues. *Fantastic Man* commenced with 65% matte pages but has slowly reduced it to have 100% glossy paper since its re-design in 2019.²⁴⁶ On average, it has had a higher usage of glossy (68%) over matte paper (32%). *MacGuffin* also started with a high share of matte paper (75%), but its usage has remained stable with an average of 80% matte over glossy. The magazines provide a differentiated tactile experience for their readers.

The magazine content [Figure 4.6] aims to evaluate the presence of advertising within the pages of independent magazines. Privately funded *Fantastic Man* has a higher average of advertising than publicly funded *MacGuffin*, 26% and 3% respectively. This confirms the former's high dependence on advertising for its revenue model that saw the highest share (40%) in its tenth anniversary issue. Since 2020, *Fantastic Man's* advertising has a downward trend that is below its total average due to budget cuts from its advertisers. In contrast, *MacGuffin* continues to have

²⁴³ Algera, interview., 31:01.

²⁴⁴ Jonkers, interview., 58:20.

²⁴⁵ Algera, interview., 32:35, 36:17.

²⁴⁶ The 33rd issue of *Fantastic Man* has a "republished/unpublished" section printed on deadstock Colorado paper, a type of paper matte. If this editorial content is ignored, it can be confirmed that the magazine turned into a full glossy since autumn 2019.

marginal yet stable advertising presence as it prioritises the editorial content which represents 97% of its total pages. Finally, the binary selection of editorial content [Figure 4.7] is also dynamic for both subjects. Both magazine subjects started to have a balance of around 40% textual/60% visual in its editorial content, but later diverged to showcase their editorial visions. *Fantastic Man* has increased its visual appeal to an average of 64% of images, and this photography component has remained above average since 2015 (their last 14 issues). *MacGuffin* has strived for an equal balance in the editorial content, and this is confirmed as their total average represents 48% textual and 52% visual elements. *Fantastic Man* has a downward trend in its journalistic content that emphasises images while *MacGuffin* presents an upward trend in the same textual variable to achieve an equal balance with photography. These results offer a contrasting view of independent magazines made in Amsterdam, not only are they differentiated by their typologies, but also by the diverging trends in the three analysed categories. *Fantastic Man* is now a glossy magazine with high presence of advertisers that support their increasingly visual output while *MacGuffin* is a pulpier publication with minimal advertising and a balance between textual and visual elements.



Figure 4.5 Comparative quantitative analysis of types of paper used in magazine subjects.
Source: own calculations, see Appendix 7.2 and 7.3.

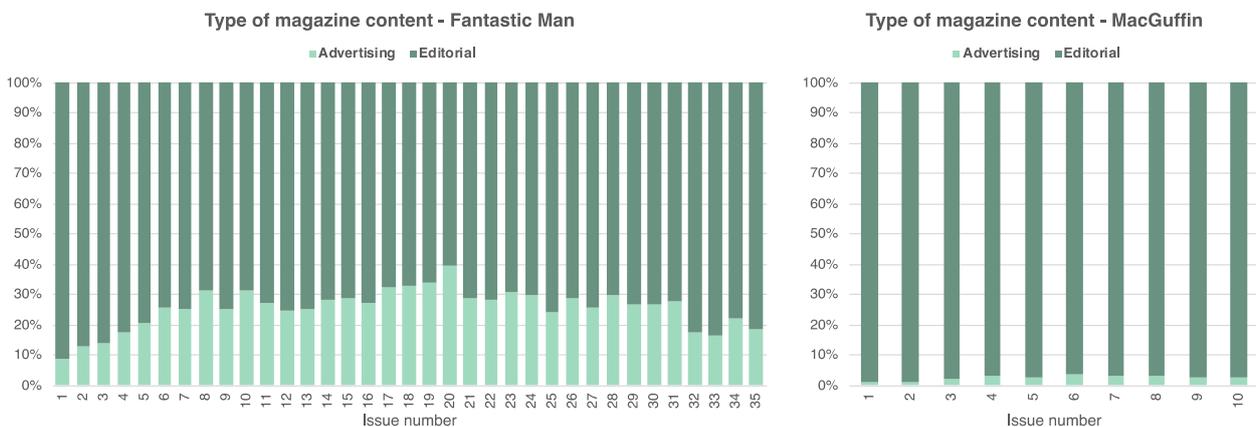


Figure 4.6 Comparative quantitative analysis of types of magazine content presented within the subjects' pages.
Source: own calculations, see Appendix 7.2 and 7.3.

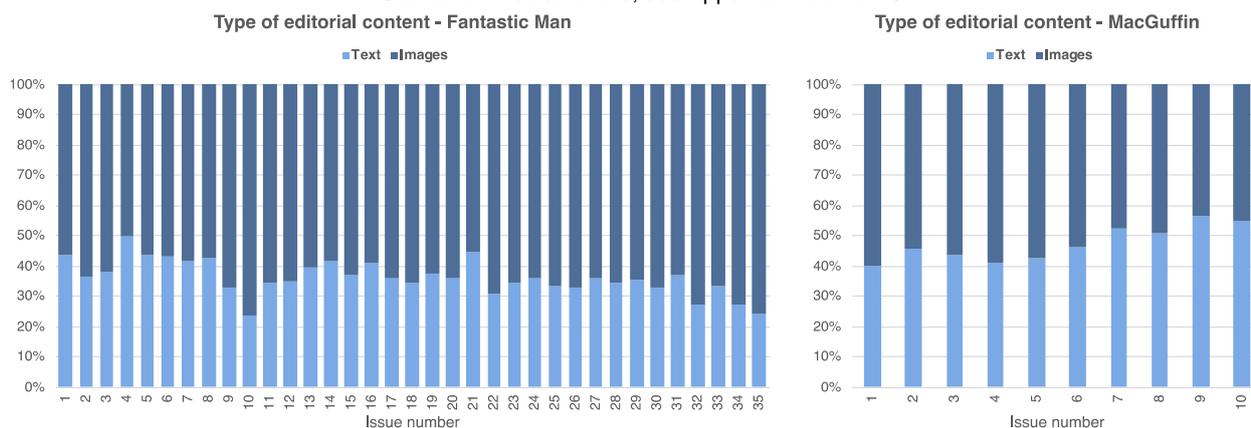


Figure 4.7 Comparative quantitative analysis of types of editorial content presented within the subjects' pages.
Source: own calculations, see Appendix 7.2 and 7.3.

4.3 Retail practices

The three selected retailers [Table 4.2] are independently owned and specialised in the international trade of independent magazines. For these shops, there are two dominant strategies for distribution: consignment with small publishers or buying from large distributors to either own the stock or have return rights. NAI Booksellers has a tight name-basis network of publishers where the owner prefers to buy and own the stock to reduce any future administrative processes post-delivery.²⁴⁷ The selection of the magazines is based on the owner's personal inspiration, the support of an editorial team, or the programme of the museum.²⁴⁸ Athenaeum Spui is known for its diverse offering of international books, newspapers, and magazines, the magazine buyer mentions that "one doesn't move without the other."²⁴⁹ These publications, while commercially differentiated, have been historically and economically interlinked as evidenced in Spui. Athenaeum prefers dealing with large distributors as intermediaries, but it makes administrative exceptions to support local creators in Amsterdam; other non-local creators are passed on to the distributors for potential trading.²⁵⁰ The support for locals is not automatic, as Anneke must ensure that the editorial content is of distinctive value and the creators request a fair price for the content.²⁵¹ Both bricks-and-mortar shops are driven by the stocking of commercial successes that have longevity as both buyers confirm that the readers continuously ask for back issues from decades past, thus strengthening and confirming the

²⁴⁷ Degenkamp, interview., 3:23, 12:47.

²⁴⁸ Degenkamp, interview., 18:25.

²⁴⁹ Reijnders, interview., 24:21.

²⁵⁰ Reijnders, interview., 14:19.

²⁵¹ Reijnders, interview., 18:25, 22:03.

sustainability of the market.²⁵² Both independent stores have adopted web shops platforms that permit transactions and deliveries to an international audience.

The digital native platform Stack Magazines has a different approach to distribution. The Stack founder is contacted by many editors daily, and as the sole person responsible for magazine selection he is “never looking for any specific thing.”²⁵³ In the back end, Stack shares similar distribution techniques under two business models: monthly subscriptions and sales through the web shop. User subscriptions are the main revenue source, they help determine a fixed amount of stock that is purchased directly with the publishers.²⁵⁴ For the web shop, consignment agreements are reported with distributors.²⁵⁵ The subscribers ask to be surprised each month, but since the subscription is limited to 12 magazines a year, the web shop provides Stack with a broader revenue and discovery scope. The problem of distribution for independent magazines is one of the principal reasons Watson founded Stack. Magazine editors also cited distribution as a difficult obstacle, for example, *Fantastic Man* only works with two distributors to solve the problems of global trade while *MacGuffin* knows small distributors as personal contacts to achieve its worldwide ambitions.²⁵⁶ However, Reijnders at Athenaeum concludes that it is not a system problem, but a knowledge problem as independent publishers fail to plan post-printing phase.²⁵⁷ The main difference for Stack lies on the careful curation and balance of themes, texts, and visuals presented by the most recent magazine issues selected throughout the years.²⁵⁸

In the Netherlands, Bruil & van den Stijl is a web shop where independent magazine subscriptions and back issues are sold. *Fantastic Man* and *MacGuffin* outsource their online subscriptions and sales to Bruil as noted in their websites’ online shopping redirections.²⁵⁹ Their reasoning is not unfounded as profits shrink with costs incurred on international shipping and the back-office activities becomes time consuming to do it with a small team.²⁶⁰ All retailers, however, agree that the building of interpersonal connection in a post-lockdown era are necessary. The location of NAI Booksellers at the museum Het Nieuwe Instituut influences the shop in three ways: museum curators create a dynamic environment to experiment with new publications, visitors have an open

²⁵² Degenkamp, interview., 10:14. ; Reijnders, interview., 16:05, 16:24.

²⁵³ Watson, interview., 23:40; quote 33:57.

²⁵⁴ Watson, interview., 23:41, 42:50.

²⁵⁵ Watson, interview., 23:41.

²⁵⁶ Jonkers, interview., 01:03:03, 01:07:20; Algera, interview., 39:20.

²⁵⁷ Reijnders, interview., 19:41.

²⁵⁸ For a review of the 152 different issues of independent magazines that Stack has sent out to their subscribers, see "Magazine Archive," Stack Magazines, 2022, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.stackmagazines.com/the-magazines/>.

²⁵⁹ The latest issue of *Fantastic Man* is available for sale in e-commerce website for €22 with an annual subscription of €40. *MacGuffin* is also available for sale in their website for €20 with an annual subscription of €39.

²⁶⁰ Algera, interview., 41:48, 54:34.

information and inspiration mindset, and hosting in-person lectures supports the bookshop.²⁶¹ Athenaeum is known for participating in festivals, conferences and exhibition throughout the Netherlands and Europe such as the biennale independent magazine festival *Facing Pages* that ran from 2010 to 2014 in Arnhem.²⁶² Stack hosted the Stack Awards for five years until 2019 to meet and recognise the talent in independent publishing, and Watson is a main advisor for Indiecon Hamburg and hosts the Independent Magazine Fair among other events in London.

Table 4.2. Specialised retailers case study general information, retail characteristics, and digital footprint as of May 23, 2022.

	NAI BOEKVERKOPERS	ATHENAEUM SPUI	STACK MAGAZINES
GENERAL			
<i>Foundation year</i>	1993	1966	2008
<i>Location</i>	Rotterdam	Amsterdam	London
<i>Owner</i>	Joost Degenkamp	-	Steve Watson
<i>Buyers</i>	Joost Degenkamp	Anneke Reijnders	Steve Watson
RETAIL			
<i>Retail type</i>	Hybrid (bricks-and-mortar and web shop)	Hybrid (bricks-and-mortar and web shop)	Online (subscription and web shop)
<i>No. mags</i>	around 1,418 issues	around 2,500 issues	271 magazines, 444 issues
<i>Sells Back issues</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
DIGITAL			
<i>Website, monthly visitors</i>	9,500 (naibooksellers.nl)	74,500 (athenaeum.nl)	13,600 (stackmagazines.com)
<i>Facebook</i>	4,939 (@nai.booksellers)	13,740 (@athenaeum.boekhandels)	17,219 (@stackmagazines)
<i>Twitter</i>	1,698 (@naibooksellers)	11,900 (@athenaeum)	23,000 (@stackmagazines)
<i>Instagram</i>	5,262 (@naibooksellers)	6,251 (athenaeumboekhandel)	63,200 (@stackmagazines)
<i>Google Search</i>	132,000	4,580,000	106,000,000
<i>Other social media</i>	Youtube, LinkedIn	LinkedIn, defunct blog	Vimeo, The Dots, LinkedIn

4.4 Digital opportunities and challenges

For magazine editors, digital is not in competition but in combination with print. Technological changes that shifted political economies since the advent of the mechanical printing press have facilitated communications and reduced operational times. Developments such as graphic design software, computers, photography, lithography are credited by Algera for the aesthetic values

²⁶¹ Degenkamp, interview., 03:23, 35:45, 43:01.

²⁶² Reijnders, interview., 06:33; "O.K. Festival," *It's Nice That*, 2010, accessed February 01, 2022, <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/2616-ok-festival?split=1&time=1486292920>; "Facing Pages: three days of independent magazines," *Items Magazine*, 2012, accessed February 01, 2022, <https://itemsmagazine.com/2012/4/2/facing-pages/>; "Facing Pages Festival 2014," *OPA Nederland*, 2012, accessed February 01, 2022, <https://o-p-a.nl/nl/artikelen/facing-pages-festival-2014>.

of *MacGuffin*.²⁶³ Faster communications through online meetings (Zoom) have generated generous savings in accommodation, travel expenses and office rent; communication developments have reduced phone bill amounts (roaming) and eliminated other expenses (from post stamps to e-mails).²⁶⁴ Both magazines emphasise that their digital ambitions are minimal as they are focused on making an analogue *object* that interests their public.²⁶⁵ The focus on print is evident as only short previews of the magazine content are shared in their owned-and-operated websites. *MacGuffin* has shared a total of eleven stories featured across its ten issues in their website.²⁶⁶ Even then, they seek to increase their digital footprint with two projects: multimedia content (podcasts and video) on the website and a pilot digital archive for unused research for every issue.²⁶⁷ On the other side, *Fantastic Man* shared only one full article and 48 pages of thumbnails as preview in their website for their most recent issue (N °35) upon launch.

Even with narrow website previews, the magazines use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The editors agree that Instagram is the best fit and that people can access their niche content via online platforms.²⁶⁸ The Internet represents a triple-challenge for magazine makers as it shifted how information is consumed. First, information becomes freely accessible online while magazines' limited number of pages has a more condensed and temporal knowledge.²⁶⁹ Second, portable devices also threaten the survival of print as they demand and capture the attention of magazine readers.²⁷⁰ Poignantly, there's a fear of technological development on digital advertising becoming the global standard and forever terminating their revenue model.²⁷¹ Third, resources such as human capital and financial capital are scarce to implement digital initiatives.²⁷² This is indicative of outsourcing their subscription and e-commerce operations to a digital platform such as Bruil & van den Stijl. The focus for the editors is to create the magazine as an object, a sensorial experience in print, and such creative process will have some activities that have a digital component. Both editors agree that digital is more of a complement rather than an opposing force to print, and they use digital services to their advantage.²⁷³ The digital platforms bring an authenticity and differentiation to a material object – the printed magazine.

²⁶³ Algera, interview., 45:41.

²⁶⁴ Jonkers, interview., 01:24:10.

²⁶⁵ Algera, interview., 47:14; Jonkers, interview., 36:31.

²⁶⁶ "Stories," *MacGuffin*, 2022, accessed March 13, 2022, <https://www.macguffinmagazine.com/macguffin-stories> where there are two stories for issue 5, one for issue 6, three for issue 7, three for issue 8, and two for issue 9, totalling the eleven stories posted online.

²⁶⁷ Algera, interview., 58:26.

²⁶⁸ Algera, interview., 50:48; Jonkers, interview., 01:11:52 and 01:21:31.

²⁶⁹ Jonkers, interview., 01:30:41.

²⁷⁰ Jonkers, interview., 59:25.

²⁷¹ Jonkers, interview., 01:16:10.

²⁷² Algera, interview., 01:01:19.

²⁷³ Jonkers, interview., 59:25; Algera, interview., 01:01:19.

Specialised magazine distributors also share similar reflections as magazine editors about digitisation. There is a high dependence on computers and information systems to manage all their business processes, plus its discovery opportunities. The shift towards a digital shop is recognised by Degenkamp as there is “less and less physical contacts in the chain of making, selling, buying... it’s more database driven.”²⁷⁴ Degenkamp and Reijnders expect that their customers to favour a physical shop experience while maintaining their attention with online efforts.²⁷⁵ This is not the case for a digital native platform such as Stack, where Watson uses five information systems plus social media to run his business exclusively online.²⁷⁶ He recognises that the digital systems facilitate administration, but more so their portability induces nomadic working conditions. In comparison to the hybrid retailers, Stack Magazines holds the highest following in all social media platforms with the ironic exception of Athenaeum having five times more monthly website visitors.

Reijnders suggests that an “invisible thread” exists between independent magazine retailers, an activity that depends on observing the digital publications from similar businesses and independent publishers on social media.²⁷⁷ Besides their web shops, these subjects have multiple social media accounts, but Instagram is the preferred medium to digitally interact with consumers due to its visual affinity. It serves as a two-directional information source where distributors share their products while constructing/examining the independent magazine community. Stack receives instant feedback from Instagram, Twitter and their newsletter e-mails.²⁷⁸ Reijnders is somewhat critical of Instagram being a “fleeting medium” but Athenaeum still has an increasing online following.²⁷⁹ At NAI Booksellers it has been common that social media postings cause customers to ask for the publication in the shop, some can buy on the spot or can later shop online.²⁸⁰ The hybrid strategy clearly helps securing sales with an all-encompassing experience that “locks” magazine readers. Plus, the online shops stimulated the visibility of the stores with an upsurge of online orders of their regular and international visitors while in lockdown times.²⁸¹ After lockdowns, all distributors expect to refocus to physical events where interpersonal exchanges would promote emerging independent magazine and connect the trading business. The essence of hosting these events relies on the practical value of the printed

²⁷⁴ Degenkamp, interview., 20:58.

²⁷⁵ Degenkamp, interview., 20:58, 38:05; Reijnders, interview., 27:27.

²⁷⁶ Watson, interview., 51:53, 56:13. The software used are the website manager WordPress, the subscription manager Chargebee, the web shop manager Shopify, credit card payment Stripe and direct debit GoCardless.

²⁷⁷ Reijnders, interview., 11:23.

²⁷⁸ Watson, interview., 24:11, 51:53.

²⁷⁹ Reijnders, interview., 31:45.

²⁸⁰ Degenkamp, interview., 38:06.

²⁸¹ Reijnders, interview., 31:45; Degenkamp, interview., 25:41.

magazine, it “offers a break from the screen” plus two of the retailers mention that magazine readers continue to demand a sensorial experience that digital options lack.²⁸²

The adoption of digital devices and systems does not come without its challenges. All interviewees agreed that human and financial capital plus knowledge and security limit the scope of digital activities. Magazine editors confirm that tight budgets limit digital activities, however, their passion relies in magazine making not social media posting. Degenkamp voiced his concern for the security for third-party software as he has had hacking experiences that turned operations back to paper for some weeks.²⁸³ Watson agrees that there is an inherent and uncertain hazard that should emerge from universally using the same services to run professional businesses and do personal communications.²⁸⁴ Diversifying economic security through digital upskilling was a motivator to start entrepreneurial projects such as Stack, overcoming a knowledge barrier for digital businesses that digitisation itself facilitated.²⁸⁵ The available time and the amount of people and their responsibilities at the stores limit the digital ambitions in physical stores.²⁸⁶ The financial capital to acquire computers and implement software also becomes an obstacle. For example, NAI Booksellers experienced a failed web shop update that incurred a costly investment.²⁸⁷ Digital communication mediums such as websites and social media are disruptive and at times unconsciously used, they serve as a complement to offline experiences that aim to build a community of magazine lovers/buyers. Online success seems to be surprising given their small resources and lack of clear multi-platform brand strategy.

In summary, this section reviewed how technological change has influenced their operations in the last two decades with the adoption of digital devices and systems. Most of the findings converge in that the definition of independent magazines is in continuous development with its many questions about ownership, feelings, and economic aspirations. The small teams of editors and buyers benefit from a reduction of operational and transactional costs when they pair their activities with digital devices and systems although they are passionate for making and selling magazines. The free access of information that digital platforms produce is both an advantage for reader discovery and a threat for their businesses. For instance, buyers review competing retailers’ social media to update their offerings, but these open information sources harm their economic ambitions with price-competitive distributors. The magazine editors converge in similar editorial practices where they agree that while some digital elements are used and have facilitated their creative processes and communication with contributors, their main objective is to print a beautiful magazine that has a point

²⁸² Watson, interview., quote 56:13; Reijnders, interview., 33:04, 35:09.

²⁸³ Degenkamp, interview., 25:41.

²⁸⁴ Watson, interview., 56:13.

²⁸⁵ Watson, interview., 02:10.

²⁸⁶ Degenkamp, interview., 27:59; Reijnders, interview., 27:27.

²⁸⁷ Degenkamp, interview., 27:59.

of view that differentiates from the mainstream. The retailers have a more digitised value chain with the adoption of web shops in their operations. Both physical and online shops depend on the postal system and distributors for trade, but one retailer is a paramount example of how physical stores can be replaced by digital-only experiences. It is again in this digital turn, that magazines and its retailers found a reduction in costs at the expense of limited capital for its deployment. They all agree that limitations on human resources, digital knowledge and internet security restrict their aspirations, nevertheless, retailers have easily adopted web shops that facilitate their international discovery.

5. Independent Conclusions

This thesis set out to research independent magazines as a creative industry through the professionals that shape the industry; and to uncover how digitisation produces a paradoxical outcome that underpins their creative value chains even under decreased magazine circulations and advertising revenues. In this section, the research questions [Section 1.2] are revisited and paired with the literature review and case study analysis to confirm, but also add on new empirical material to the study of independent magazines. To thoroughly examine the main research question, sub-questions were addressed throughout. The first of the sub-questions is focused on the historiography of the magazine industry by asking, *what differentiates magazines from other printed media that developed in parallel since the Middle Ages? And how does it manifest itself in the twenty-first century Dutch market?* Historically, magazines have been tied to other printed media due to the narrow differentiation in its form attributed to the slow diffusion of printing press machinery and the chemical replication of raw materials such as paper. The historiographical literature review [Section 2.2] provides a clear timeline of the magazine industry since the sixteenth century until today. The main differentiation of the magazines became clear in three categories of insights that framed the research and case studies: funding, content, and form.

The funding mechanisms of the print industry started with public patronage from the state, the church, or the universities. In the Netherlands, printed media thrived with its business press and the *couranten* that aimed to inform merchants about commercial and political developments in coffee houses during the Dutch Golden Age. The Enlightenment was a global movement eager to share knowledge rather than simply entertain or inform the public of war developments and shipping updates, magazine content turned academic and intellectual during this period. Universities profited from the open information society in the Dutch Republic as it attracted intellectuals from across the continent to publish their thoughts in addition to the already established political and religious publications. The shift to general interest content was paired with the rise of branding from mass production of products and services, and magazines became an exceptional platform to connect

producers and consumers. The Industrial Revolution is credited for turning the magazine into a vehicle of mass-market ambitions, yet the magazine as an industry itself benefited from an independence of public funding to achieve a sustainable revenue model based on three pillars: sales, subscriptions, and advertising that can be traced back to the business press of the Dutch Republic. The advertising of these magazines regularly matches its content as they act as intermediaries, two-sided markets, between a specific set of readers that companies wish to sell products to.

As magazine markets became saturated locally during the twentieth century because of market concentration in publishing groups, magazines had a specialisation effect where their content was catered to specific audiences and their interests. This led to the international expansion of magazines with country versions of their titles where the market supply became exploited by a handful of media multinationals. After the New Millennium generated advances in communications supported by the Internet and the World Wide Web, companies migrated their advertising spending from print to digital, thus, the magazine industry was challenged with a redefinition of its triad of revenues. The print form began to be questioned by the rise of digital devices and systems that permit the same portability with more practical and beneficial economic conditions. In consequence, print magazines have turned to digital systems and devices for its survival ensuing in what Tim Holmes defines as the *megazine* – when a print magazine becomes a magazine brand with a multimedia (print and digital) strategy. The 30 publishing houses and 120 magazines brands that are members of the MMA in the Netherlands are evidence of the digital-first knowledge-sharing support to increase media brands on the national consumer market. However, other magazine scholars such as Samir Husni remain sceptical to this premise and define magazines only as printed media. Nevertheless, the shifts in the funding, content and form make the case for dynamic product differentiation based on targeting specific audiences with advertising, while new multimedia magazine forms emerge that attempt to recover revenues with digital solutions.

As outlined by the retailers in the case study, the publication (and commercial success) of independent magazines depends on its readership. It becomes impossible to measure the transnational transactions without cross-country quantitative information of every magazine sale. And since magazine scholars argue that the magazine form is between exclusively print and somewhat digital, then an analysis of the magazine consumption interests of the local context was instinctive. This leads us to the next sub-question, *how has the public's interest in reading print magazines evolved in the Netherlands in the twenty-first century?* Two Dutch organisations analyse the media time spent by the population with their own market-based approach (MMA) and scientific research (SCP). The magazine market is shrinking in the Netherlands as the total number of copies, the magazines read per year, and the amount of magazine readers has reduced every year. However, the organisations

validate the research framing as they both report increases in the total magazine reading time in 2021 and a stable consumption of around two-thirds more on paper over digital formats. The independent magazine industry benefits from a consumer society that actively and growingly reads on paper.

The empirical analysis signals to a new millennium public interested in printed magazines that have evolved throughout the centuries. In between these histories and reports, independent magazines are not explicitly mentioned, but their socio-economic values are undeniably represented. Magazines that were self-funded in the sixteenth century are early examples of entrepreneurial ventures by independent publishers that later gave in to advertising for its production. Even legacy magazines titles that commenced during the nineteenth century and have turned into multimedia brands for multinational corporations had their start with independent publishing (*Vogue*, *Vrij Nederland*). These findings lead to explore the final sub-question of *what general characteristics (origins, themes), if any, make independent magazines independent? And how do these manifest themselves in the Netherlands?* Susan Greenberg's slow journalism theory transpires in the magazine industry with its independent publications. The case study subjects' creation and production processes are grounded in the slow movement's characteristics of *temporality* as there are published biannually, *diversity* as they present an antithetical vision to mainstream magazine publishing, and their *quality narrative* comes alive through the close interpersonal relationships between contributors, art directors and editors. Megan Le Masurier's characteristics are confirmed as the editorial teams are closed expert systems that have a critical orientation to the speed of information. In line with Michael Newman's analysis of the film industry in the U.S., the interviewees have clearly stated that the reason they began their publications was due to the dissatisfaction of the mainstream magazines for men's fashion (*Fantastic Man*) and design (*MacGuffin*). This discontent has been manifested in a careful control of their editorial philosophy with a freedom to experiment and where advertisers have a minimal influence besides being a source of revenue. The authority and control they exercise within their pages align with Wendy Fonarow's ethnographical review of creative expressions in the independent music industry in Britain. The ideological basis uncovered from other creative industries is also present in independent magazine publishing as the interviewees responded that their creative freedom and independence from multimedia groups are foundational characteristics of these ever-shifting publications.

According to more specific magazine characteristics [Section 2.4.3], the independent magazine revenues depend on the sale of their high-priced products, minimal advertising, and ad-hoc activities. *Fantastic Man* and *MacGuffin* moderately follow some of these characteristics. These magazines have a retail price of €14 and €18, respectively, higher when comparted versus a single copy sale of a mainstream magazine, but lower if extended across six months. As such, they follow

the economic standards presented by Jacco Hakfoort and Jürgen Weigand – their high-price and minimal advertising leads to a lower yearly circulation between the hundreds of thousands for independents in contrast to an estimated 300 million copies for mainstream magazines. The scholarship suggests that they have negligible advertisements, but in the case study there is a juxtaposition of responses. The quantitative page analysis confirms how flexible magazine funding can be as *Fantastic Man* depends more on advertising funding than *MacGuffin* with an average advertising of 24% versus 3%. *MacGuffin* also incorporates an unexplored funding structure to the independent magazine literature that was used in the earliest print media: the state support. The discovery of public funding complements the commercially driven funding mechanisms for magazine makers that remains rooted in advertising and confirm how state-sponsored media can still thrive in an open information society such as the Netherlands. However, the public funding indicates support for research and creative activities, the information that makes an issue, and not the printing processes. Both subjects also enact in additional activities to enlarge their revenue sources, the editors of *MacGuffin* curate exhibitions in art museums under their magazine trademark while *Fantastic Man* holds events when a new issue is launched. Retailers also support in-person magazine-related events that happen in cities outside of their headquarters. Distribution was identified as a common problem, but selling is no issue as around 179 retail locations that span 107 cities in 35 countries signals to what Le Masurier described as a transnational independent magazine community. The three participant retailers come from some of these cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and London. The list of stockists from both magazines also corroborate an international footprint of specialised retailers, or rather what Caroline Hamilton described as a “global niche” market where commercial performance is sustained by a geographically scattered public. These locations also serve to create the readership community that the literature suggests as a main characteristic of independent publishing, a literature that remains without a clear direction on how the community is shaped.

For the twenty-first century Dutch market, independent magazines are a dynamic concept that aligns with most of the definitions put forward by scholars. They are, but not exclusively, owned by makers, editors are the publishers and they are not part of any large media companies (although one magazine is part of a larger publishing group owned by the editor); evoke a feeling of creative freedom driven by passionate individuals; build close relationships internally (editor-art director) and externally (magazine-readers); have some advertising; encapsulate the cultural zeitgeist differently from mainstream magazines; printed-on paper and experimented-with diverse material and symbolic values; eventually transition to other activities, but print remains its core; and written in the English language. All subjects align with Samir Husni’s definition of a magazine – one that only exists if it is exclusively in print form. Furthermore, the subjects confirmed this *ethos*, as there was no interest in

selling digital versions of their print magazines. It is indeed the material and aesthetic freedom for experimenting in different sizes and shapes that the tactile textures in paper and visual modalities of everyday reality comes alive as Sumin Zhao described in her social semiotic analysis of independent magazines and confirmed by the participants in the case studies.

At this point, the answers from the sub-questions come together to evaluate the main research question, *which effects has digitisation influenced on the independent magazine market in the Netherlands from 2000-2022?* Through the theoretical framework of digitisation, cultural economists such as Christian Handke, Joel Waldfogel and Ruth Towse have proposed positive and negative externalities for creative industries that transform their products into digital forms. Here, their arguments are confirmed to a certain extent. The publishers of *Fantastic Man* commenced their multiple publishing ventures in 2001 while *MacGuffin* editors had previous experiences in writing and editing before they printed their first issue together in 2015. Assessing the willingness of independent magazines to evolve from print to what Tim Holmes describes as *megazines* (or even *metazines*) relies on the ambitions of the producers and the retailers. The typologies of independent magazines reveal that there is a possible expansion into becoming brands that offer creative services or have a multimedia strategy that relies on their individual network effects and their respective editorial offerings. However, the subjects of the case study are determined to make print as relevant and as beautiful before and during the digital era. In the Netherlands, it is noticeable that the independent magazine industry has benefited from the 1980s holy trinity of desktop publishing and interconnected communication devices to contact contributors through e-mails in a speedy digital era. Promotion through social media platforms also permits near zero marginal costs in the communication strategies to their audiences, an attribute that Waldfogel highlighted. However, it is not clear if the use of these digital services reduces the barriers to entry due to the narrow selection of subjects. Digitisation also has two effects on these two-sided platforms: digital advertising is capturing the magazine revenues sources since 2012 and total reading time as media consumption has reduced. Advertising has remained the dominant revenue source, but digital advertising threatens its revenue model not only in the Netherlands, but also globally. It is the free digital access to information that magazine makers experience as both a benefit and a disadvantage, as their discovery is amplified by search engines and algorithms, but the attention demanded by the reader is reduced with the *unfiltered production* from competing platforms and publications.

The independent magazine case study confirms that magazine makers are aware of the digitisation of their industry, however, they strongly believe in the crafting of an object – a printed magazine. The argument that their transnational communities are fostered through digital platforms is questionable in the Netherlands as the subjects have owned-and-operated websites with limited

content and regular posts on social media without a clear strategy. Retailers also use e-mail for direct feedback and social media to track their followers' interests and competitors' stock, but all agree that Instagram is their preferred online medium. The digital "invisible thread" between retailers validates the close networks that cement their gatekeeping (and imitating) roles in physical and digital spaces. These insights are further evaluated in the second part of the main research question, *which elements are more or less inclined to adopt digitisation?* It is digitisation processes that question how much longer the print form can survive in an environment where the transformation of analogue experiences into digital services has been inevitable. The magazine characteristics that are less inclined to adopt digitisation are the practical-theoretical practices in magazine making: the independent ideology present in creative industries and the slow principles in journalism. The editors of these magazines believe that their magazines are committed to their editorial philosophies and continue to differentiate from the mainstream magazine market even when they depend on design and videotelephony software during their value creation processes or social media for the promotion of their publications. At *MacGuffin* there seems to be a more active interest in extending their magazine into digital media than *Fantastic Man* as plans to publish podcasts and an online archive is noted in their funding applications to the Creative Industries Fund Netherlands. The most inclined characteristics to adopt digitisation are the promotion and retailing, though promotion is not entirely digital. Promotion in the twenty-first century has been pervaded by social media publications that are free to use for business and readers alike, but physical artifacts maintain their individual visibilities in shops. The case study retailers have adopted hybrid operations where their once physical-only distribution turned to e-commerce platforms to compete with an end-to-end shopping experience. Full digitisation of retail is evidenced by the creation of new business models such as Stack's online subscription service. Since retailing depends on the trading of physical objects, the distributors and postal services maintain these physically intensive tasks to sustain this global niche industry. The diffusion of digital systems and their accompanying devices have reduced operational and transactional costs for independent publishers, even if qualitatively presented here, confirming what cultural economists suggest are consequences of a digital renaissance in the creative industries. Independent magazine entrepreneurs are living in a golden age powered by digitisation, an age where digital reinforces the value of print, an analogue experience whose creators and retailers thrive in a global niche market that maintains pride in creating/selling a magazine as a beautiful object with marginal interest in digital activities.

5.1 Limitations and future research

The two embedded case studies for this research provide an insider view into the evolution of magazines, but also to the developing independent magazine industry in the Netherlands. The participants in this project were actively interested in documenting their histories and industry after a first-time approach, so access to the industry can be disregarded as a limitation. The selection of the magazines and retailers was based on (online) ethnographic methods to know popular subjects for research from the Dutch context. These magazines were purchased, and locations were visited by the researcher before the thesis framing was completed. Magazine research was narrowed to the analysis of its pages as access to the subjects' user and finance data was restricted. As such, this thesis would benefit from contacting more magazine editors or retailers in the Netherlands for a broader local case study, or international subjects for a transnational case study. A list of independent magazines and specialised retailers are presented in Annex 7.7 for further research. Some limitations include the gauging of consumer behaviour that could be scrutinised via semiotic analysis of reader submissions, or text mining from online forums and social media posts. Additionally, the historical contemporary perspective of the industry relies on human memory which might present biased perspectives through the lens of the speaker. The subjects of these magazines are acquaintances, as such, an expanded selection of emerging and/or POC participants is welcomed and much needed.

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7. Appendix

7.1 Zines: not “independent” magazines

Zines, also known as fanzines, are a type of magazine that while self-published are not regarded as independent, however, most follow the indie ideology. With the advent of desktop publishing in the 1980s, self-publishing became a practical and economical method to publish any print format [Section 2.2.3]. A narrow part of them were adopted for mass consumption, but they were entrepreneurial projects that challenged mainstream media content. In her study of women-led zines in the U.S., Alison Piepmeier described zines as having an unprofessional appearance that uses different formats, materials (paper, glitter, glue), hand-coloured drawings to create a hand-made stapled and folded pamphlet.²⁸⁸ The zine master would be photocopied, or offset printed for free distribution in venues where its target audience (fandoms or subcultures) encountered. Unfinished, hand-made layouts [Figure 8.1] are characteristics of zines, plus, they are made with minimal resources and distributed for free to share its content. The main difference of zines with independent magazines relies in its one-person team, and its non-commercial aspirations.



Figure 7.1 Zine: 'I'm So Fucking Beautiful #2', originally published in 1991 by Nomy Lamm. Source: Tumblr²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Alison Piepmeier, "Why Zines Matter: Materiality and the Creation of Embodied Community," *American Periodicals* 18, no. 2 (2008 2008): 213, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41219799>.

²⁸⁹ Nomy Lamm, "I'm So Fucking Beautiful #2," in *Tumblr* (90s Punk Rock Feminism, 1994 2014), Scanned image. <https://90spunkrockfeminism.tumblr.com/post/85182867677/im-so-fucking-beautiful-by-nomy-lamm>.

7.2 Quantitative page analysis method

The method of quantitative page analysis consisted in the counting and categorising of magazine pages on four-levels. First, the total number of pages includes both sides of the front and back covers of each issue, foldouts are considered only one page and supplements are added to the issue’s total. Second, there are two options for the type of paper: glossy or matte. The supplements are also considered for the total page categorisation, both paper types add up to the total pages. Third, the magazine content is separated in two categories: advertising and editorial. Advertising is considered anything that explicitly promotes a product or service (including the magazine itself). Advertorials, editorials funded by advertisers are also considered under advertising. Editorial is all the journalistic, research or photography material that sums up the content of the magazine. Fourthly, the editorial content is categorised as either text or images. Text is any page that was made for reading, and if a story starts with an image extended across two pages it is considered one text page and one image page. Images are any non-advertising pages that have photography, drawings, colour block or visual elements including the pages that have images only with captions.

7.3 Quantitative page analysis results

Table 7.1 Quantitative page analysis of Fantastic Man issues 1-10 (2005-2009).

		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
FANTASTIC MAN		Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	Issue 4	Issue 5	Issue 6	Issue 7	Issue 8	Issue 9	Issue 10
Content	Text	51	45	48	58	51	53	47	63	48	37
	Images	65	78	77	58	66	69	65	84	98	120
Editorial		116	123	125	116	117	122	112	147	146	157
Advertising		11	18	20	25	31	42	38	67	49	72
Paper	Glossy	45	43	35	41	59	75	83	119	153	142
	Matte	82	98	110	100	89	89	67	95	42	87
Total		127	141	145	141	148	164	150	214	195	229

Table 7.2 Quantitative page analysis of Fantastic Man issues 11-20 (2010-2014).

		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
FANTASTIC MAN		Issue 11	Issue 12	Issue 13	Issue 14	Issue 15	Issue 16	Issue 17	Issue 18	Issue 19	Issue 20
Content	Text	47	60	73	81	65	89	62		72	
	Images	90	111	112	112	111	126	109	132	120	102
Editorial		137	171	185	193	176	215	171		192	
Advertising		52	56	62	76	72	82	82	98	99	105
Paper	Glossy	121	153	176	177	166	219	166	203	186	161
	Matte	68	74	71	92	82	78	87		105	
Total		189	227	247	269	248	297	253	299	291	265

Table 7.3 Quantitative page analysis of Fantastic Man issues 21-29 (2015-2019).

		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
FANTASTIC MAN		Issue 21	Issue 22	Issue 23	Issue 24	Issue 25	Issue 26	Issue 27	Issue 28	Issue 29	Issue 30
Content	Text	108	75	70	78	78	74	80	65	76	67
	Images	134	167	134	137	155	149	141	124	137	137
Editorial		242	242	204	215	233	223	221	189	213	204
Advertising		98	95	91	92	74	90	78	80	79	75
Paper	Glossy	322	234	227	219	219	237	175	175	212	279
	Matte	18	103	68	88	88	76	124	94	80	0
Total		340	337	295	307	307	313	299	269	292	279

Table 7.4 Quantitative page analysis of Fantastic Man issues 30-35 (2020-2022).

		2020		2021		2022	
FANTASTIC MAN		Issue 31	Issue 32	Issue 33	Issue 34	Issue 35	
Content	Text	71	58	78	52	56	
	Images	121	155	154	137	174	
Editorial		192	213	232	189	230	
Advertising		75	46	47	54	53	
Paper	Glossy	267	259	255	243	283	
	Matte	0	0	24	0	0	
Total		267	259	279	243	283	

Table 7.5 Quantitative page analysis of MacGuffin issues 1-10 (2015-2021).

		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
MACGUFFIN		Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	Issue 4	Issue 5	Issue 6	Issue 7	Issue 8	Issue 9	Issue 10				
Content	Text	89	102	96	87	97	104	106	103	129	124				
	Images	133	120	124	123	129	120	96	99	98	102				
Editorial		222	222	220	210	226	224	202	202	227	226				
Advertising		3	3	5	7	7	9	7	7	6	7				
Paper	Glossy	56	48	48	48	48	40	32	40	32	48				
	Matte	169	177	177	169	185	193	177	169	201	185				
Total		225	225	225	217	233	233	209	209	233	233				

7.4 Interview questions

7.4.1 Independent magazine editors

Interviewer introduction

State your name

Explain legal rights

Explain how interview will be used

Explain that they can choose what questions to answer and that the recording can be turned off at any time.

Interviewee introduction

State interviewee's name. What is your full name? And age if you would like to share?

The date and the location:

Recording

Do I have permission to record this interview?

Do you consent to having this interview submitted to Erasmus University Rotterdam? *Yes/No*

Part I: Early beginnings

1. Describe what an independent print magazine is for you. Is it because of ownership/creative process/publishing?
2. Tell me about your early relationship with (independent) magazines?
3. What makes the people working in the magazine editing come together?
4. Who was in the network of people that help establish [the magazine]?
5. What experience did you have when launching your magazine? How did you learn?
6. Is the material value (design, size, paper) or symbolic value (content, features, point of view) more important for independents? Why?
7. When/what is an independent magazine "successful/sustainable"?

Part II: Editorial practice

8. Describe your editorial philosophy. What are your guidelines to select content?
9. What is your role/responsibility as the gatekeeper in content selection (topic, theories, diversity, quality, fact-checking)?
10. What is the importance of the relationship between an editor-in-chief and artistic director? Are there other relationships that are equally relevant?
11. How does temporality of independents impact on the creative process?
12. Where's the business (model) in all this? Profit, costs, **funding**?
13. Is it only for vocation (art/creativity/identity) or also for business?
14. What is your role in matching advertising to editorial content?
15. Who is the consumer? Is it a "global niche" market? Do you have a specific audience in mind? Why English?

Part III: Digital changes

16. Describe the main roadblocks to have a successful independent magazine?
17. Has globalisation/digitisation influenced the creative process? What about the discovery? What about competitors? Have others (commercial) been "influenced" by your ideas?
18. How important is the partnership with physical distributors? And online distributors?
19. What digital tools/elements (software, computers, portable devices) have you incorporated in your business operations? And why? > *MacGuffin has a shop, projects*
20. Why print in an era that is influenced by digital platforms and user-generated content? Why not sell a digital copy of the magazine?
21. What are the top three opportunities from digitisation?
22. What are the top three current challenges of digitisation?
23. Is there anything you would like to add to the interview?

Thank you for participating in this oral history project.

7.4.2 Independent magazine retailers

Interviewer introduction

State your name

Explain legal rights

Explain how interview will be used

Explain that they can choose what questions to answer and that the recording can be turned off at any time.

Interviewee introduction

State interviewee's name. What is your full name? And age if you would like to share?

The date and the location:

Recording

Do I have permission to record this interview?

Do you consent to having this interview submitted to Erasmus University Rotterdam? *Yes/No*

Part I: Early beginnings

1. What is an independent print magazine for you? Is it because of ownership/creative process/publishing?
2. Tell me about your early relationship with (independent) magazines.
3. Was there a network of people that help establish your supply chain?
4. Is the material value (design, size, paper) or symbolic value (content, features, point of view) an inherent characteristic?
5. Has globalisation/digitisation helped with an increase cross-border trade of independents?
6. What differentiates between a sustainable business model for independents?

Part II: Distribution practices

7. Who is responsible for selecting the independent magazine titles?
8. What are the guidelines to select an independent?
9. How does the temporality of slow print affect your business?
10. Do publishers/editors contact you directly to distribute their magazine?
11. Describe the main roadblocks with distribution of independent magazines?
12. Are there any distribution alternatives besides bricks-and-mortar stores?
13. What is your role/responsibility as the gatekeeper/intermediary in distribution?
14. How many magazines are available in your store currently? From which cities/countries?
15. Where's the business (model) in all this? Where is the profit? And what are the costs?
16. Who is the consumer? Is it a "global niche" market? One audience per title, or one audience per all independent?

Part III: Digital changes

17. How do you improve independent magazine distribution problems?
18. What digital tools/elements have you incorporated in your business operations? And why?
19. How has a digitisation/multimedia strategy helped in growing your online presence?
20. What were the top three opportunities/lessons from digitisation?
21. What are the top three current challenges of digitisation?
22. Is there variety in topics, or do you see a converging aesthetic (typeface, paper, graphic design, photographs) with independent titles?
23. Is there anything you would like to add to the interview?

Thank you for participating in this oral history project.

7.5 Interview transcripts

Total time: 05:20:42

Interview 1: transcript

Interviewer: Carlos Zepeda Aguilar

Interviewee: Joost Degenkamp

Date of interview: February 28, 2022

Location of interview: Museumpark 25, 3015 CB Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Transcribed: March 2, 2022

Duration: 00:47:30

Carlos Zepeda 0:00

With that it starts recording. But let me just remove the notifications. Put it between us too. So I did want to know about early beginnings and just tell me your relationship with independent magazines. Do you have any relationship with that when you started? Or how did you end up with NAI Boekverkopers?

Joost Degenkamp 0:26

Okay, well, I started here when I was still studying in Delft, because studying urbanism. And I needed some money. So I started working here in the bookstore, which was still part of the museum. It was called NAI books boekverkopers booksellers. And, yeah, I was working here, selling books, magazines, mostly in the physical store. Again, of course, internet also started to grow. So we started our own website together with the NAI publishers, the publishing house, which was also in this building. And well, kind of got very happy of this. This is working in the working with people with books. And my studies got less and less attractive. So one day, I decided, well, let's not, let's do a career change to stop my studies and work here. So I became the manager was a bit of the store and then and back then, of course, the books store had grown as well as the publishing house had grown, publishing house publishing book for, for instance, for Boijmans, but also for the Stedelijk in Amsterdam or Groningen Museum. So there were a lot of people involved, but also a lot of money. And then NAI, the museum, said "Let's put you, let start your activities in a different organisation", which also Stichting Stichting, NAI publishers and booksellers. And then, of course, then there was, of course, you had a financial crisis hit. And of course, the story I just told you about changing and NAI changing into the Het Nieuwe Instituut, the people had publisher said, Okay, well, there's a lot of changing going on changes going on in the book. In the book market, I think we should focus on making books instead of selling books. And then so they wanted to get rid of the bookstore. And then the director of the Nieuwe Instituut said, Well, it's nice, we, of course, we, we want to stimulate continue in the bookstore, but we don't not want to be part innovate. So somebody has to do it independently. So and then, when I was still employed, I said, Okay, I'll take the risk. I believe in this bookstore. I'm going to buy it. So that's what I did eight years ago.

Carlos Zepeda 2:57

Yeah. So then right now, you are completely independent.

Joost Degenkamp 3:01

Yeah. So I rent out this space. And in the basement, we have some storage. I have some, I have four people helping me. Yep.

Carlos Zepeda 3:09

And then which year was this when you bought?

Joost Degenkamp 3:12

It was April 1st, eight years ago.

Carlos Zepeda 3:15

Eight years ago? Yeah. Okay. And then how do you do your selection of content? Because you have books, magazines

Joost Degenkamp 3:23

Yeah, it's, of course, it's a very dynamic process. It's not static. So of course, you check out what publishers add to their collection of books. But also you listen very carefully to people visiting the bookstore or at the people who make exhibitions here. They also inspired so they I asked them, what, what was your inspiration? Or what books do you buy? And then we try out things. That's also a benefit of being so specialised that most of the publishers I work with, I know them not by name by name, but I have. I have a lot of contacts. So when I want to try something, it's usually possible. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 4:08

About the magazine section because this is the magazine section

Joost Degenkamp 4:10

Yeah. So initially, we had a lot of magazines. But also, because of the change from Architectural Institute into more design institute, less and less architects visited the museum. And yeah, magazines are easily are sold here in a physical store and online. I'd say. Also, although that's not really true. Some magazines especially those from Asia are easily sold not well. Depends in the reader. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 4:48

In the customer, but if you see those magazines, do you are you inspired by those magazines? Do you go through the magazine says yeah, I want to sell that. Or do you say or do they come to you? And they say, Oh, can you solve this in your location?

Joost Degenkamp 5:03

I get a lot of information sent by email to new new initiatives and ads. Yes. Sometimes I'm not in the mood for this. I say, Okay, I've spent too much money already. I'm fine like it is I have not an unlimited amount of space. So this is this section. But also, yeah, when I feel that there's another lot of people are asking for something, are we trying at the moment, we are more moving towards graphic design all of a sudden, so yeah, let's try and explore this area. We did the same with photography. And that ended up not very successful, but it might also have to do with the fact that there's the Fotomuseum in this in this city.

Carlos Zepeda 5:41

So it goes back to the specialisation.

Joost Degenkamp 5:44

Yeah, yeah. Or the interests of the customers. Or it might even be a good, very good show in the building, which is a nice occasion to display something which was not there before. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 5:55

And so I noticed that some of the titles are what they call independent magazine. Do you? Well, how would you describe an independent magazine? Do you think it's because of it's owned by the editor? Or the creative director? Or is it more like, because they do, because they could be owned by the editor, but then printer in a big company, publisher? Yeah. Do they need to have like complete independence? Also, in the printing?

Joost Degenkamp 6:25

Now? It doesn't really matter to me. No.

Carlos Zepeda 6:28

Okay. Okay.

Joost Degenkamp 6:29

No. So independent magazines can be very attractive, also, because yeah, it has this appeal to it. But yeah the negative side of it is that all of a sudden they get stopped? Because there's no continuity. The editor has something else to do, or lack of funding, or I'm not sure so and then are published everywhere, irregularly.

Carlos Zepeda 6:50

Yeah, that was going to be one of the questions later on because there's this. There's the magazine, it can be very good, very strong. Two years, but then they disappear. Yep. And have you noticed that there's, I mean, you already mentioned it, but in your site, on your perspective, as the bookshop. Have you noticed that there's, like a sustainable way for them to do this, because I see that sometimes they are various specialists into a very, very, like niche audience market. And I mean, those people are still there. But how can it be like a sustainable business model? Because there's consumer magazines that you don't handle any consumer magazines, you know, like the likes of Vrouw or Donald Duck?

Joost Degenkamp 7:35

Mmmmm, no, no. But, for instance, Wendy's was in the beginning of the new institute, the director, we who has a very good connection with the fashion world, he said, let's turn this museum into a contemporary or temporary fashion museum. The Netherlands doesn't have a museum, which focuses on fashion. So let's do that for now for half a year, and then we had all these Elle. All these really. Yeah, yeah. That's, it's no, that was not very, very successful, I shouldn't.

Carlos Zepeda 8:14

Okay. Like the magazines that you can see in Albert Heijn or... And comparing those magazines, with the ones that you have, right now in stock, do you notice any differences between, for example, what it's called the material value? So material like materiality? Is there a difference in how it looks visually? Like, is it because sometimes I noticed that they're focused more on the graphic design on the cover. And when you go inside, those who use different types of paper, you'll notice that there's this difference between a commercial magazine and independent magazine?

Joost Degenkamp 8:50

I would say an independent magazine, usually has more focus on that aspect as well. So the physical aspect of, of a magazine, but I can also tell you that there are a lot of examples, which are not dealing with this are purely there for the content. So it's feels like average newspaper, wherever. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 9:11

And what about the advertisements? Do you see most advertisements in independent titles as well? Or?

Joost Degenkamp 9:20

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. But it really Yeah, also that really depends, of course, I know. For instance, what is it called the MacGuffin magazine, which is kind of independent or it's very independent. Yeah. I know that they don't exist because of the sales of the magazine. They have this. And they have this feeling to it, which some brands really love. So they spend a lot of advertisement on this. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 9:53

Yeah. What I've noticed about MacGuffin specifically because I'm planning on interviewing, as well. Is that the magazine well it's publish two days, two times a year.

Joost Degenkamp 10:01

Yeah, they try. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 10:03

Yeah. And the that they were also funded by public funds. So by Gemeente Amsterdam.

Joost Degenkamp 10:10

Yeah, I think this this institute also helped him out, either with promotion or whatever.

Carlos Zepeda 10:16

Yeah, there could be that maybe an event or a launch? Yeah. Yeah. Okay. And then when we talk about the symbolic value, you already mentioned, the content, the pictures, point

of view. In the independent magazines. Do you think that there's this? Because in what I'm trying to portray is that the magazines themselves as independent because they have more space or more time to analyse, to write, to photograph? Its content more? It's called Slow journalism. Is their content more analysed than the consumer magazine? Because of difference between, you know, this fast paced? Yeah,

Joost Degenkamp 11:00

Yeah. But at the same time, they have less financial power to invest in a very good journalistic team. So it's usually one person who was really triggered by a topic and they they are asked to, to publish an article. But if yeah, if there's, if compared to a very commercial magazine? I'm not sure if this is the same quality. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 11:30

Yeah. Because what I've seen by reading that, that commercial magazines have this big, big marketing team, that they really analyse trends and whatnot, and they adjust their content based on online tracking. Independent magazine kind of takes a more philosophical point of view where, okay, this is what I want to portray. And this is why I will show and you know, what, I don't care what anybody else thinks I would just publish it, because this is that now this is what I want to this is what I want to send out to the world.

Joost Degenkamp 12:00

Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 12:00

And if there's an audience, they will support it. If not, then maybe that's why they, they don't become sustainable in any favourite independent magazines that you have right at the moment.

Joost Degenkamp 12:14

Oh, no, no, no, sorry.

Carlos Zepeda 12:19

Okay. And now I'm going to switch to the topic a little bit more about the distribution aspect. So in this case, you are the one that is responsible for selecting what is in the shop. Okay, and how does that work? Do you have like, talking about pricing? For example? Do you buy a certain quantity of the magazines and then sell them and you own that stock? Or... what's your..

Joost Degenkamp 12:47

Yeah, I prefer I prefer to buy and own it, instead of trying, of course, we have these experiments, then I say, Okay, let's try it and do some financial stuff later, after we've seen if it's a successful thing or not, but there's a lot of administration to this. So yeah, I think it's better to just buy it and sell it.

Carlos Zepeda 13:15

Any particular guidelines that you follow for selecting what you have in the shop?

Joost Degenkamp 13:22

What what do you mean, in what term

Carlos Zepeda 13:24

Guidelines. Yeah. It's like, for example, you receive a request, and then you're like, Okay, let me take a look. They need to send you a copy first, and then you go through it.

Joost Degenkamp 13:36

Sometimes people send us copies. Sometimes, of course, I've seen them in another shop. Or that's,

Carlos Zepeda 13:43

in a way it can be like you actively contacting them to sell like to buy from them, and then sell them. And then or the other way that they come for. It's quite balanced, you would say.

Joost Degenkamp 13:56

Yeah. Also last year, we noticed, we were looking for some new magazines, we noticed a new distributor in the UK. And since we didn't know them, they send us some extra free magazines to just be getting inspired. So that's also how it works. Yeah, yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 14:19

Would you say that there was so you said that you started quite early in the bookshop? Now you own it. Do you think that there have been some roadblocks in the distribution of these type of magazines specifically, for example, that people wanted to access them, but they were not available in the supermarket, or here in the Netherlands I haven't seen kiosks in the street.

Joost Degenkamp 14:43

oh, we have less kiosks. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 14:45

So if there's less physical space, do think what type of roadblocks to distribution, if any, have you heard of any have has the people that publish these magazines had.

Joost Degenkamp 15:00

I think Logistics is the most is the biggest roadblock there is. Okay. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 15:05

There it is by mail or by posts that you receive the magazines

Joost Degenkamp 15:10

Yeah, they send us by posts. Yeah, yeah. And of course, for instance, now importing things from the UK after Brexit is kind of a mess. Yeah. So you never know, when you're going to get things or approximately, you know, you're you hope, you know. But you're also facing a lot of how long the shipping costs went up. And of course, the import errors that have been introduced. So that's waiting doesn't really make it. very lucrative thing. So either you have to buy more to to get this smaller percentage of the whole price as a as a shipping costs. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 15:55

After you buy the magazines, is there a markup that you have?

Joost Degenkamp 16:00

Yeah, sometimes. Yeah, it really depends on what margin the magazine offers us. If the margin is too small, then of course, we we add a markup. Yeah, but it also can also be different. We used to sell or we are we used to buy Apartamento magazine through a local distributor

Carlos Zepeda 16:22

This is the one from Barcelona, right?

Joost Degenkamp 16:24

Yeah. Yeah. We used to buy it from distributor. Bruil & van de Staaïj here in the Netherlands, they have a lot of the I noticed they, they prefer to sell subscriptions instead of single issues. But yeah, sometimes an issue is more popular than another so I don't with some magazine, I say okay, let's like a subscription shall need three or four copies. Whenever a publisher whenever an issue is published, or sometimes you and you want to reorder, that's also a thing we, we we like magazines, which have a certain quality or lot which lasts longer than the recently published or the published to the one we've published before. So for instance, for the Funambulist, which is a Paris based magazine, we sell it still sell issues from four or five years ago, the same for a while as a magazine. We even sell magazines, which were issues were published 15 years ago. So

either people find the article still interesting, or the design of the magazine, that's also a reason, for instance, that was a magazine was designed by Karel Martens. Initially, it was only published in Dutch. Still people from South Korea ordered Dutch copies from us, just because of the design of the magazine. Yeah

Carlos Zepeda 17:54

So then talking about this customer base. So it's not only the Dutch customer, so no, I mean, the physical space, maybe you again, it's limited to the Netherlands coming into Rotterdam, visit your bookstore and get a copy of a book of a magazine. But then when you have this online platform, which is your webshop. How does your customer base look like is it a spread all over the world? And like with this, yeah, yeah. Okay. And yeah. When you so

Joost Degenkamp 18:25

We import worldwide. When it's possible, sometimes it's not. And we export? Yeah, yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 18:35

Okay, okay. Now, there's one word that I don't know, you've heard about it called gatekeeper, or intermediary. So a gatekeeper would be, for example, in this case, you are the one that owns the bookstore, you have a certain space where you can showcase books, magazines, all the articles that you sell. But the gatekeeper is someone that has the power or the authority to decide what to sell or what to show. So in this case, like, what do you think is? What is like your responsibility as a gatekeeper? Do you think that you carry a responsibility of, you know, showcasing diversity or showcasing publications from the Netherlands? i What do you think is is there a responsibility that you like have like, placed on yourself because of the bookstore.

Joost Degenkamp 19:34

I guess so. It doesn't...

Carlos Zepeda 19:37

Very philosophical, no?

Joost Degenkamp 19:38

Yeah. Yeah. And there's several aspects of course which help make make this decision. Yeah. Can even be very personal thing when I when I really believe that the editorial team or the person who initiated like okay, let's try to make it successful. Yeah. That's how it works.

Carlos Zepeda 20:03

In this case, you mean like someone that contacts you and yeah.

Joost Degenkamp 20:08

Or to support somebody. Yeah. Yeah. Or can even be the relation you you you get with representative. Okay. Yeah, for instance, publisher Actar from Spain, a were popular they went, it was sometimes it was one day they had some financial financial problems. But now there's this lady and she really has a lot of enthusiasm. She has said, Okay, well, let's make this successful successful again, when there is a new publication. We put it also on Instagram. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 20:42

Okay. Yeah, I would like to meet her. Yeah, we're good. Then she has this drive for independent magazine publications as well.

Joost Degenkamp 20:49

Yeah they don't do they don't. They don't do magazines at home.

Carlos Zepeda 20:54

Okay, but it's like the books as well. The architecture of any books that you carry.

Joost Degenkamp 20:58

Okay, okay. The same was there and MIT Press had a very nice representative. You mean, yeah, you that's why you see more and more, or less and less physical contacts in the chain of making, selling, buying. It's all it's more and more database driven. But I still believe where I noticed that it's essential to have this physical contact as well in the chain.

Carlos Zepeda 21:29

When the customers come into the shop today. Do they ask you for recommendations?

Joost Degenkamp 21:34

Yeah, they do. Yeah. Which is sometimes very, very hard. Because sometimes they just yeah, oh, what's new? And then okay, then you can say, Okay, this hadn't really been published. But to them, what's new means what has been published in the last year? So yeah. And sometimes people just, they just say, Okay, I want to have a book on architecture. Can you be more specific? No, just about architecture. Well, there's a whole shop.

Carlos Zepeda 22:06

Yeah, okay. Yeah, I know what you mean. Yeah.

Joost Degenkamp 22:09

Or people really ask for, for a nice selection, then it turns out they only want to spend 10 euros. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 22:19

Yeah. Do you feel that this type of books, or specifically that magazines. Is their price higher? For like, for example, I really don't know the price of a magazine in like the shops. I bought some international magazines in the Netherlands. And they start 10 euros, something imported from France or something imported from from Italy. But the regular consumer magazine, I really not a consumer of them. Do you know, the price more or less?

Joost Degenkamp 22:54

I think when you go to the supermarket or a kiosk, and I have a nice selection of magazines, which are below 10 euros in our shop, there is hardly any magazine in that price range. But also the same for books when you're when you're used to lead novels. Instead of buying a design book, people really think we're way too expensive. You have these people who are here, just culturally interested. And they notice that we have a bookstore and they start browsing, they really get enthusiastic. And then they see the price of the book, which is a fair price, according to me. But these Yeah,

Carlos Zepeda 23:34

Because I think that they're from 20. Above. That's what I've seen from them, in a way because of how often they publish. But also because sometimes they carry this advertising, they need to they don't they're not subsidised by advertising. So they need to raise the cover price just to cover their minimum operational costs. So most of the magazines are on that and a higher price. Okay. Okay. And then from the people that you see know that they asked you about the content that you're having your bookshop when they come and visit. Have you noticed that there's one audience for one magazine, or is it a more homogeneous audience that can really read of anything?

I think I think there's not a specific group of people related to a certain magazine. No. No, although, this bookstore itself has a selection of visitors there. Yeah.

And that is part of the gatekeeping. That it's some idea, that it's limited. Yeah, something. Yeah, that's what gets shown. Yeah. Okay. Now I'm going to move a little bit to the digitalization. So do you think that with any will first of all, what type of digital tools have you incorporated in your operations? So like in the last 20 years or so? Have you included like the use of computers? The use of mobile phones, iPads, some specialised software to to your warehouse? You know, the storage, the webshop. I know about the webshop. But about this, talking about devices and systems? What what does your digital tools... What are they? Or what do use?

Joost Degenkamp 25:41

Yeah, we, at the moment who cannot exist, of course, without without computers. Yeah. We noticed this, when was it? Last? Last November, our software, the software company who has this tool or this programme to connect the database of your customers to your database of your books? Yeah, they were hacked. They were hacked. So, and about I think almost half of the bookstores in the Netherlands use this software. So then for a week, we had no access at all. So we in blind books were coming in which you did not know was this this is a book for a customer? So then you really so um, but of course, you know, a little you know, some things and we're writing we're making lists again, of course, but to really order instead of doing it in the computer. And then then you notice how dependent you are from this modern technology. Yeah, so we use computers, we have a web shop, a lot of reordering and a lot of information comes to us through internet. We use, of course internet to promote things, not just the books, but also activities related to books we were promoting. We were part of a lecture last week, not organised by us, but by partner organisational authors to do the selling of the book, but also in a promotion went online. Yeah. And of course, last year, when the museum itself had to close its doors for more than a half a year. Fortunately, fortunately, we're able to survive online. Yeah, yeah. So a lot of our physical customers wanted to support us and really are still looking for nice books or inspiration. So they found us online.

Carlos Zepeda 27:52

By online, you mean just the website? Or do you also do Instagram? Twitter? Facebook?

Joost Degenkamp 27:59

Yeah, so Yeah, the thing is that at the moment, we have a small team. So we want to do more, but we're yet limited in time and of course in in financial power. But I think last year, yes, it was chaos. I really had us. So until then, I was determined to send out a newsletter every two weeks or every month at least now I haven't done this for six months already. I think I don't have the time to to do this. But we started promoting via Instagram. So that's kind of alternate. And we also do did a lot of Twitter. We used Facebook, somehow that. Yeah, yeah, you have left to find this new structure for this, what to do, what not to do with web club, what platform but also this is not a very good excuse, but the webshop we use at the moment is kind of outdated. And three years ago I decided to invest in a new web shop. And for unfortunately, that one was a big disaster. So it never went live. It cost me a lot of money. And yeah, then Corona came so I the new savings I had for the new website went into surviving. So yeah, but I'm I'm thinking of to have a new website. Hopefully later this year again. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 29:43

And when you mentioned that the multiple book shops were hard using, or like the company was hacked, using the same system, is there a, like a collective? Or do you know other people in bookshops that you can exchange? You know, oh, I'm using this system or I do operations this way.

Joost Degenkamp 30:03

No, no, no. So we I really the programme, which was hacked, I want to get rid of this. So I think it's more efficient to have a good webshop and a good financial boekhoudpakket, if they if they really can communicate in the way I want. And right now, there's this in between, there's this third database system, which was hacked. And there. So if I can get rid of this and invest in a better website, and then the better financial, that should be the solution. Yeah. So and then I tried to find out how other bookstores and I got terrible stories. Yeah, so and a lot of bookstores still have separated databases for what what they sell in their physical store as to their online store, which would only result in more mess, I would say,

Carlos Zepeda 31:02

Well, I personally worked in systems. It was a very centralised system. And sometimes it was so so fixed, that people were very unhappy about it. But there's a reason we've been that fixed to solve most of these misunderstandings. And what I did was, there was a company that had maybe 10 systems, each system for a different thing. And then we had to

centralise everything. So I also understand the effort that it takes to stop operations, move all of the data and then move back on. Yeah, so it is a process it is an experience as well to move to a new software system, but sometimes it is the best decision. That can be made. Yeah. And in a way, it's not surprising, because there's a lot of companies that start with a software system, and then they keep on going because they have a specialised person in IT. And they just follow that same update and update. And rather than looking at what can be like as you get bigger, what, what is better for your organisation, but that's more like my experience. So I think that if you decide to centralise your system, you would be better off.

Joost Degenkamp 32:14

Yes. I've had many conversations already with people who can make the best website ever they claim that as I Okay, can you make a good interface with financial this area? That's possible. When I talk to people from the financial. I said, this is what I want. Can you make good interface with the webshop? Yeah, so I asked them: Can you can you give me examples? What companies do work with the system? No, none. We know I think, yeah. So I, yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 32:48

They always need an expert on the team.

Joost Degenkamp 32:51

So everybody has tells you great stories, what they're able, but it's to do but it's

Carlos Zepeda 32:58

Basically starting from zero not from something that you already have.

Joost Degenkamp 33:01

Yeah. But it's kind of risky. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 33:04

It can be, imagine data loss or something goes wrong. Yeah, I have my stories.

Joost Degenkamp 33:10

It's an ongoing process. Of course, new orders come in, you cannot start from scratch again, you have to import all the old data and continue working with it. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 33:19

I noticed also in YouTube, that there's a YouTube channel where you have the magazines. I think they call it like video review or something like that, where you just like, like, move the pages to just show what's inside very briefly.

Joost Degenkamp 33:33

Yeah, we do that twice a year or something like this. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 33:38

Do you think? Because I think I noticed there's one online platform that is a subscription service for independent magazines exclusively, and they do this type of magazine video reviews for people to purchase single issues. Is that something that you would try to interviewer saying, you know, it's something like tried and tested, you know, it's like, okay, I'm doing all of these videos, but I don't even know it was watching it. So maybe I should focus on the newsletter or the Facebook posts. Like what's like, do you actively experiment with social as it comes up? You know, like Tik Tok.

Joost Degenkamp 34:17

Yeah. The BookTok, the book related Tik Tok now. But it is mostly. Yeah. Also, some bookstores now discovered they have tables which you really have to topic BookTok. So people, readers discuss about these books. They read rediscovered books from the 90s. So all these teenagers but that's not in this field. It's really hot now.

Carlos Zepeda 34:45

Yeah, I don't know about Booktalk. Yeah. Another master thesis topic, I guess. So yeah, we already talked about this kind of multimedia strategy. Has it really? Do you think in your opinion has it help you? Growing your online presence in maintaining the business?

Joost Degenkamp 35:02

Yeah. I think so. I think so. We're not there, where we want to be. But yeah. With all the experience. Yeah, I think if we knew we would not have done it the way we did, we would not have survived the Corona crisis. So apparently, we're doing something.

Carlos Zepeda 35:22

Something right. So do you think it helps be specialised? People already know. Because when sometimes when I walked into a bookshop, I'm lost. There's all of these types of genres and then in to me, it turns me off a little bit. And then I ended up not buying anything. But when I go come here, like, okay, like, I see this. And it stood out.

Joost Degenkamp 35:45

I think what helps is, of course, that we're located in a museum. So people are more at ease, they're open for new information, inspiration. It feels like a small holiday or whatever. You know, we're, like, really close, people are relaxed in a good mood, instead of when you have to do your groceries at the big bookstore, you have to get a book for my aunt, or my step, well, whatever. So you have a limited amount of time, and you have a budget, and you buy it. But here, you see people sit also in a cafe. Because in the corona crisis, the cafe, the people in the cafe got fired. So we went on with the bookstore without the cafe. And you really felt the atmosphere was less and less so people were also buying less books. Okay. So it's really a concept.

Carlos Zepeda 36:37

Yeah, it's a two way relationship.

Joost Degenkamp 36:39

Yeah, it also with the institute itself, they organise lectures, although it has nothing to do with books or whatever. The Thursday night, and they are now one of to do to embrace new initiatives. Yeah. So.

Carlos Zepeda 36:52

Thursday night live is when the museum closes at eight. Right?

Joost Degenkamp 36:56

Nine. Yeah. So it started out last week again. So after, I think after five-ish, people do not have to pay for an entry ticket, you can visit the museum, have a good drink, go to a lecture or debate or even a workshop when there are. Yeah. And this is also something which is going to take, I think it's going to evolve into perhaps not even not only a Thursday night goes or something in the weekends or whatever.

Carlos Zepeda 37:30

And when I introduced myself, maybe three weeks ago that we were having a school visit Bente mentioned that they're going to build a stage.

Joost Degenkamp 37:40

Yes. Yes. Yeah. Today, yeah. Today was the press release of this event. Okay, yeah. So it's gonna happen.

Carlos Zepeda 37:48

I will take a look at that. Yeah. Okay. So now, what we have talked and do like, what are your like, top three opportunities, or top three lessons of digitalization. So acquiring these digital tools? Like what are the lessons that you can get from there?

Joost Degenkamp 38:05

Oh, I think Lesson number one is you have to do it not very rapidly, you have to own it. So make it yourself. And then you have to start growing from there, I think. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 38:20

So in a way, authenticity, try to keep that personality translating into those posts.

Joost Degenkamp 38:26

Yeah, and have a have a kind of the online experience should be connected to the physical experience. So is the exchange what what I see is that when I posts put something in on Instagram, people, some days later, show me their mobile say, I want to I want to see this book. So and they want to feel it, they want to touch it. But also people when they're here, they say, oh, let's think about it. Perhaps I don't have the money now. But then two weeks later, they buy it online. So it's all it's more and more an interaction. The physical and online world. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 39:07

That's the number two. Challenges top three current challenges that you're faced with digitalization. Do you think that in a way, like, like digital only competition is going to displace you? Like they're your competition, like some other website or some big bookshop that handles all? Yeah, like Amazon, for example? Do you think that you can compete? What are the challenges you face with digital?

Joost Degenkamp 39:33

I can't compete. Yeah, there's of course, we noticed it, of course, that people are looking in your bookstore for nice books, they find one and they say, Oh, well, what's the price on Amazon? And they grab their mobile and say, Oh, it's five euros less. Let's leave the book here and order it at home. That's, that's what happened. We also used to have some computers in the store to have more the relation online and physical. But we move those pieces because on these computers, people were actually looking at Amazon. So yeah, that's a no.

Carlos Zepeda 40:12

That's one of the biggest challenges. You got a multinational competitor that has price competition.

Joost Degenkamp 40:20

Yeah, yeah. And also, of course, we have a, we have a strong relationship with local offices, architectural office, architects are our main customers still. They have a better relation with books they write, they're used to write books, read books get inspired, and they have to budget for the library, or at least some subscriptions or whatever. But so when you get to know for instance, an architect, and he's really inspired, but as he becomes more and more, he becomes busy, more busy. So he has his assistant, I want to buy buy me this book. And the assistant is not known to our bookstore, he only knows Bruil or Amazon's. So then, all of a sudden, this customer is gone. Yeah. So that's why also you have to find a way to get these people as busy as they are also to visit the store or the institute itself.

Carlos Zepeda 41:16

I remember the first time that I visited, I saw the bookstore, but I thought that it was the gift shop. Yeah, so I got the assumption. Okay, this is a gift shop and I didn't even take a look. But then when I learned that this was an independent bookstore, it completely changed my mindset about Okay, let's see, let's explore.

Joost Degenkamp 41:37

Yeah, yeah. So when when I when I bought the bookstore, eight years ago, people will still meet, you really have to be proud of it. Profiling just shelves, the owner, that was not very hard. Not very easy to do, because the institute's said okay, so you want to be remain as NAI booksellers we're no longer to any AI. So you're not allowed to brand yourself as NAI booksellers. Of course, you can keep this name and put it on your briefpapier stationary, but there's no possibility to have logos on by bags or whatever. And yeah, so. And I'm not personally I'm not. I'm not somebody who really. I'm Yeah, I am not the people, not the person who wants to be interviewed and just, this is this is this okay, but okay, no, I'm not gonna stand in front of the recording.

Do you know what I mean?

Carlos Zepeda 42:37

I understand what you mean that in a way you want it to be natural.

Joost Degenkamp 42:41

It's I think it's more it's not about me, it's about the bookstore.

Carlos Zepeda 42:44

Exactly. Like a natural experience. It's like the customer with the book and not you being like, I don't know, like, the celebrity or the Tiktoker "oh read this book".

Joost Degenkamp 42:54

Of course, I'm fascinated by this as well. And it's not just my personality. No,

Carlos Zepeda 42:58

Yeah, I understand that.

Joost Degenkamp 43:01

So when I organise a lecture, I also have to introduce it and I'm always terribly nervous.

Carlos Zepeda 43:07

Do you have any other thoughts on like digitalization, for example, is it a positive thing, but I think we've already seen positives and negatives.

Joost Degenkamp 43:18

It is, it is a strange thing that the book market itself or the magazine market, or the way that there's they really distinguish the digital product with a physical product when I talk to a representative of a publishing house, and they show me wonderful plans. And they say, oh, yeah, it's also available as an e book. And I say, Okay, what if I would tried to sell this ebook? No, that's not really possible. I don't know. I'm just selling you physical books. That's another department or whatever. Yeah. So there's these are separate worlds. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 43:54

Okay. But this world of the world of publishing and so like they are the ones that decide like, the gatekeepers.

Joost Degenkamp 44:00

Yeah. Yeah. So I have experience with selling ebooks from NAI. Since although we're separate organisation we work very closely yet we are related to each other still. So I have experience with selling ebooks as and, and physical books with the same content. And I noticed that eBooks are way, way less popular in this segment of books.

Carlos Zepeda 44:27

And anything on digital magazines because these are here printed. Yeah, that that was that I've seen. I haven't seen an option available to get them online. Have you had any experience We're trying to get a magazine and there's like, oh, there's a digital version of that?

Joost Degenkamp 44:47

I'm not. What we did try is the for instance, there's this institution in Moscow: Strelka. And they have had a lot of print on demand titles. I said, Okay, why don't you provide us the file and we printed here. So, to save logistics. But that didn't happen. Unfortunately.

Carlos Zepeda 45:10

Some type of copyright protection.

Joost Degenkamp 45:13

Yeah, yeah. But I think that could also be especially when books when it's textbooks that can can be a solution to reduce costs.

Carlos Zepeda 45:27

Yeah. Okay. And I think we just must final question. Have you heard of concept, globalisation,

Joost Degenkamp 45:34

The concept globalisation, it's happening over everywhere.

Carlos Zepeda 45:39

Oh, my God, I like that this is your reaction? Do you think that like globalisation, you know, in terms of trade? Has this okay, because globalisation as how I've studied it, we have financial globalisation, economic globalisation, cultural globalisation. So when talking about the magazine's, in terms of cultural globalisation, you think that they have like a convergent aesthetic, like do they do they kind of look the same? No, they try to portray themselves as an independent, and therefore, they have a specific way that they just look because the cover is the first thing that you see, you don't see the content, the articles might be different. But when they present themselves to see maybe like similar type faces, similar ways of you know, filtering or editing pictures, or

Joost Degenkamp 46:35

No, no, no, no, I know, of course, that there are some publishers who, for instance, we have C3 magazine, which is a Korean magazine, I know that they also make other publications, which are only for Asian or Korean market, they look different, they feel different, their quality is somehow less because people over there used to read a magazine and throw it away instead of keeping it in their bookshelf. So but we do not have access to this, these this part of their publishing. So yeah, of course, I only see the things which are out there here in the Western market. Okay. Yeah. Okay.

Carlos Zepeda 47:19

I think I've covered all my questions do. Would you like to add anything, or?

Joost Degenkamp 47:26

No, not really. I wish you the best of luck. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 47:29

And I thank you very much. I will stop the recording now.

Interview 2: transcript

Interviewer: Carlos Zepeda Aguilar

Interviewee: Kirsten Algera and Ernst van der Hoeven

Date of interview: March 10, 2022

Location of interview: Singel 76, 1015 AC Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Transcribed: March 13, 2022

Duration: 01:03:35

Carlos Zepeda 0:09

Here's my ID, like, just in case. Carlos Zepeda. Yeah, that's me. So um, Carlos Zepeda. I come from the Erasmus University. I'm doing my research for independent publishing in the Netherlands and specifically, both Dutch editors and Dutch distributors, so I'm looking at both the creative and the distribution side of the magazine. And at any moment in the interview, if you don't want to answer any questions, feel free to say so. And if you also have any questions during the recording, just let me know. So I would just like to state your name, like where we are, just for the purposes of the recording and the like the university's principles.

Kirsten Algera 0:55

Yeah. Well, you're at the MacGuffin magazine office in Amsterdam. And I'm Kirsten Algera, I'm one of the two editors-in-chief, and one of the founders as well. So I found it the magazine together with Ernst van der Hoeven. And we did that in 2015. We publish a biannual. And it's number 11 we're working on right now.

Carlos Zepeda 1:31

Those were the deadlines that you were mentioning. Again, in our last email.

Kirsten Algera 1:35

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And some other stuff. But mainly about the magazine. It's a lot of work.

Carlos Zepeda 1:44

Yes. And we're going to go through that because I will like this was my first, you're the first editor-in-chief that I meet that does a magazine like this, or any magazine in general. So I'm very interested in how you do your creative process. So I do have some questions. I split them in three parts. So first of all, I would like to know what what was your like, when you grew up in the Netherlands? Or where did you grew up in? And what was your first contact with magazines? Is there's something about doing this magazine now. And you look back in your own history? And you say, oh, yeah, I collected magazines, for example, or something related to that.

Kirsten Algera 2:28

Yes, I really have to dive into my past for this. But I know that when I was a teenager, I grew up in the north of Holland, in a very, very small place called [CITY], and there was nothing there. And I had to bike to a city Groningen for 25 kilometres, I think. And I was really into, like, culture and new wave music. Punk music and there wasn't much to do about that in in the place where I lived, that there was this magazine, and it was called VINYL. And it was, Well, later it was compared to like, maybe this is the Dutch i-D, you know, something like that. So it was, or The Face, so it was a magazine that combined progressive music, culture, arts, etc. And I know that I biked all the way to Groningen every two weeks, I think it was to get the magazine because it was for me it was really like a portal to another world. And also, I liked the fact very much that it combined different disciplines. And then in the middle of the magazine, there was always this floppy disk. So it was a single with music from a new band. So, it was always very exciting. And that was in 1985 I think six something like that. I don't know if I've got the years right because it's a long time ago. And also the special thing about VINYL was that, this is something I learned afterwards, is that they've had a graphic designer Max Kisman, he's a Dutch designer and he redid the whole layout every issue so he even made new logos and typefaces for each. So everything was in every issue was like new, fresh, and it was in the days before the computer in a way, just before computers arrived. So it was also, I guess, a lot of work to make it that way. But that was very exciting. And

then later on, but that was already in the 90s we started buying Nest, I don't if you know that magazine. I think Nest: a Quarterly of Interiors magazine, something like that. And it was like a project of, of an artist in the 90s. And for the first time he considered interior, not something as you see on the Salone del Mobile in Milan or something, but really the interior of homes as they are. So homes of indigenous people, prisons, homes, etc, etc. And it was also made in a very broad way. So it was like a sort of hysterical, perfect design with lots of photo series. And yeah, that was quite an impressive magazine as well.

Carlos Zepeda 5:46

When you mentioned VINYL, you mentioned that you were going every two weeks, was it that frequently published,

Kirsten Algera 5:55

I think so, or maybe every month. I don't remember. I mean, I was like, 14? I think something.

Carlos Zepeda 6:03

And now talking about independent magazines. So you mentioned The Face, i-D. How would you describe an independent magazine?

Kirsten Algera 6:14

I won't describe it as The Face or i-D? I don't think I mean, I think for me, they're more commercial magazines. But I mean, maybe they have their roots in the independent magazine world, but right now there's hundreds, thousands of independent magazines. And I think the most important thing about an independent magazine, of course, is that it's independent. So there's no publisher behind it. It's made by makers. And sometimes, an independent magazine, for example, The Gentleman or Fantastic Man can grow and become a mainstream magazine in a very special way. So there's all sorts of in-between magazines, I guess, as well.

Carlos Zepeda 7:05

So when you say the makers make them, would you say that it's the co founders or the editors-in-chief are the owners of the title? And therefore, they could classify it as an independent magazine for you?

Kirsten Algera 7:18

Yeah, that's how I would consider it. Because I think the subject, or the contributors could be anybody. But the main thing is that it's independent. So there's no external influences. And so you can do whatever you like in graphic design, and in content.

Carlos Zepeda 7:37

Okay. And talking about the collaborators, or the contributors, graphic design, all the people that are working in a magazine, how do you think that they come together? Is there a common interest? For example, in MacGuffin is there a common interest of people collaborating in the magazine? What drives them together? Do they know each other beforehand? Do they study together? What's the relationship?

Kirsten Algera 8:04

Well, the the thing that relates them is, Ernst and me, because we are the editors, and we select contributions. But the way we work is that we first come up with a theme, of course, because it's every issue, it's got an object as the theme. And from there, we're starting on research, trying to look at, okay, what is this object? What are the relations that it is making, or in what kind of network is it? What are the perspectives that we can have on this object? And from there, we try to make a sort of editorial model. In our case, it's like three, four or five chapters, that all are, you could say, like, different parts of the object or different contextes of the object. And then so we try to fill it in and then it's more that we define what kind of topics and subjects we want to have in a magazine and then go looking for the best people to photograph it or write it or illustrate it, etc. So every issue has got a collection of contributions that is really research related. But sometimes the funny thing is like in the first issue, we work

together with a professor from Glasgow, a professor in [animal] architecture, and there also was a an artist from Iceland in the issue and eventually they met each other. I don't know how, and they start working together. Anyway. So there is sometimes connections come after the magazines is produced, we are the one. We are putting everything together.

Carlos Zepeda 10:02

You actively search. And is there an option also for people to reach out to you directly? And then from there?

Kirsten Algera 10:10

No, almost never I mean, we never work with pitches, unless somebody comes in and it's like really good. Sometimes. I mean, we had one contribution at a desk, I remember from a student who came to us and said, I've such a good idea. And it was a good idea. For this issue as well. So sometimes it works. But I think like 90%, 99%, we try to find ourselves.

Carlos Zepeda 10:37

And before launching MacGuffin, do you really have any experience in editing, in graphic design, in the magazine industry itself? If you did, or if you did not, how did you continue learning about?

Kirsten Algera 10:55

Yeah, I think Ernst and I both have different experiences. Ernst had a magazine before this one was called Club Donny was about nature in the city. Our subtitle was way longer. I don't remember it by heart, Ernst maybe. And so he had some real magazine experience, and my experience was more in writing for magazines. But then I think the funny thing was that Ernst and I both come from really diverse backgrounds, we did a lot of things. I mean, I studied art and art history and aesthetic landscape architecture, and art and architecture history. And then we did, I was an art director and Ernst was an art director, and made exhibitions, so we did lots of things. And we I always had the feeling like I'm maybe I'm what I'm doing is to split up, you know, and but now in a magazine everything comes together in a way, but we had some experience before but not really like making such a magazine as this one.

Carlos Zepeda 12:00

Okay. You're describing the website that MacGuffin is a platform. Can you expand a little bit more on that?

Kirsten Algera 12:08

Yeah, I think starting from the sink issue, that was the fourth issue, I think, we were asked to make some presentations for the magazine. And the first one we did in Milan, the Salone, which was a bit in the mouth of the lion, you could say. And so we made a small exhibition presentation during a really short time. And after that, we were asked to make a bigerg exhibition in Rotterdam in Het Nieuwe Instituut and in other places. So it acted as a sort of flywheel the magazine to do other activities. So many exhibitions, but also workshops and presentations and other catalogues and articles, we made an exhibition in Sweden about migration of objects, so we made a selection from their collection. So in time, it has evolved not only as a magazine, but more as a platform for other things as well.

Carlos Zepeda 13:07

Who were the people that were attending this workshop or this event? Was it the reader of MacGuffin? Or did you see more variety of people coming into your events?

Kirsten Algera 13:17

Oh, there's lots of things. Yeah. So we did. I did something in London in November that was for like a general public. But then sometimes we do things for the Design Academy in Eindhoven. Or, we did something for [Ecal] in Switzerland, a design school. We did something for "Disarming Design" in Palestine, which is more of the only design organisation in Palestine. So yeah, lots of places.

Carlos Zepeda 13:49

And now when talking about the magazine, like for my master's thesis, I'm researching the material and symbolic values. So when I see the magazine and ties that I have here is when I see that the type of page, like the paper changes quality. And when I take a look, I see for example, this glossy type of paper has more image so you're more focused on the image itself. And then in this more paper, kind of traditional to the newspaper type and it's more text so you get you know, those type of semiotics with the touch and how you're related to a certain object. For independents, do you think that that influences your final product, like the type of materials that you choose when we talk about the design, the paper? Or is the symbolic value which is the content itself is more important, or is there a balance between both of them or is one on top of the other?

Kirsten Algera 14:52

Yeah, I think it's really good that you notice because that is exactly what we try to make it into to a sort of "portable exhibition" that you can carry with you. And that part is in the contents and in the images and part is also in the tactility. I think of the magazine and if anything is because this is here, because I showed you, there were some students here yesterday, like, these are all the dummies we made when we started. So we did a lot of paper research and finding out okay, what is the the touch and feel of the magazine? And also, how does it work, if you like here have gloss in between and how much glossy you want. And so yeah, that was a very intense process we did with the graphic designer and some of the customer. And I think, yeah, so like, the choice for having two different paper qualities is something that gives the tactility and like you say, I think gloss is more apt for photography most of the time. Because yeah, photos look really good. And also it divides because we didn't want it to be too bookish. You know, it's, it's already almost a book.

Carlos Zepeda 16:17

It gives you a pause as well. Right? Give you a pause. Okay, like, I'm going to a new experience. I'm going into a new experience, and also the colours and the typography, that also plays a role in that you're moving into a new part of exhibition.

Kirsten Algera 16:33

Yeah, exactly. And then it all comes together. But it's always like a really nice puzzle that we make, like, where do you put gloss? And how's the rhythm? And so for every issue, I always make a flat plan. And I draw it and it's like, really detailed because you want to see where do you have a photo series. And then when there's text. And how is the flow going, and how was it content wise, but also, how does it inform and colour and touch.

Carlos Zepeda 16:55

Good, good. And when you do this is flat plan? And you're seeing all of your content, is there any particular guidelines that you follow as your editorial philosophy? What's guidance do you follow yourself to arrange the content? Or select the content as well? When you say, okay, maybe this doesn't fit with the topic or where we want to portray this issue. How does that what is your process.

Kirsten Algera 17:41

That's really hard to describe because there's always a lot coming together. And also in not in one moment, you know, you take a couple of weeks for that. But I'll show you because I made a flat plan yesterday for a new issue. So this is like the very, very first sketch. So here, we're just draw how it could be. And yeah, the first thing we always do is like, make the chapters. So that's how we work. So we've got three, four chapters. And you know, that the first chapter you want to open with something that is, like staging the issue and the object, you know, so so you don't start with something very abstract or something like in this one, we have a sort of glossary of the bottle.

So just there's like more logical stuff in in making this puzzle. But it's also yeah, looking at how forms combine. I mean, if you have a photo series of eight pages, then after that, you don't want to have a lot of photo series. So it has a certain rhythm. And then also I mean, I wouldn't put the next issue is going to be themed "the chain", which is really nice, but also difficult subject because it's like a lifestyle side in jewellery,

but it also has like a very dark side, of course, and then you won't don't want to put the chain as a sex symbol next to liberation movements and [Katy Kelty], you know, so it's also making sensible decisions about that. But it's also a puzzle because of course, if you use gloss and matte paper, you have to be concerned of 8 or 16 page that you use. So gloss can only be 8 pages or 16. And then if you have a photo series of six, then you have a problem you know. Yeah, you need to make mediate. So that's also it was and then graphic designers to look at it if this is all feasible.

Carlos Zepeda 20:18

Good. And also talking about when you are putting the flatplan, I describe or in psychology, there's this concept of a gatekeeper. So a gatekeeper for the magazine industry would be someone as an editor, for example, that you are the one that selects the content. So do you think that you have? Or has a responsibility been reflected you, do I need to do my content selection to as wide as it can be to portray maybe an identity or when you have like one object, you can have multiple, like things or topics that you can cover within one object. So what do you think would be like your responsibility as a gatekeeper of when you're filtering what needs to be shown? Because you have a limited number of pages? And what do you think? Like, it's, I know, it's a very, I don't like the word gatekeeper. But it has been described as that in the academic literature that magazines are gatekeeping knows this shows a certain reality. And then people can be influenced by that. So do you think that there's such a role in MacGuffin? Or do you feel it's more liberated, more free?

Kirsten Algera 21:49

Yeah, I think has a bit of both. I mean, I hope it has that in a way because the reason we started the magazine is because we, we weren't too satisfied with the design world as it was, and with the existing platforms and magazines, because most of them in the time that we started, were about new things and innovation and like new chairs, new vases, new tables, and we weren't interested in that we were interested in how objects can make or maintain relationships with people and how they are used. So what is their afterlife? Or what is backstage, you know, we're about is, and also more the contextual and critical side? What? What problems? Are there with objects? You know, that's also a part of it. So yeah, I hope some of that is in the magazine. And I think people are looking for that, because yeah, otherwise, we couldn't sell it as good as we do right now. I hope so. So but, I mean, I think part of it is that it's it's got content that people relate to, but also, of course, that it looks really good, and that it is a portable exhibition that you want to keep. So in that sense, I think I don't know if that is what you mean, with gatekeeper.

Carlos Zepeda 23:16

I think that answers my question is when you mentioned the process of how you know, the content gets, you get go to the content, you search for the content. In a way, it explains that there is a gatekeeping role in that you still hold the position of selecting the content, and you still do the research. So it's not, this goes into the commercial magazine sector that they do their marketing research, then based on that, they make a selection of the content.

Kirsten Algera 23:45

Yeah, so that's, yeah, no, that's, I think, another story. But of course, yeah, but what we do try because that's the other thing, we don't want to make this heavy, heavy design research magazine, that is very academic, or very tight or very... so what we try to do is have a certain certain tone of voice in images as well as in text that makes it very relatable. And also, yeah, open.

Carlos Zepeda 24:21

And when it's about this process, like you said, you mentioned that you send the flat plan to the graphic designer.

Kirsten Algera 24:28

Yeah, we just discuss it. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 24:31

How important do you think is that relationship between the editor-in-chief and the artistic director or the graphic designer?

Kirsten Algera 24:33

Yeah. For us. It's super important. Yeah. I think she's part of the editorial team in a way and, and the other way around. I mean, we act as art directors. So yeah, we are very close. And I think that yeah, everything in the magazine is discussed with the three of us from the beginning, you know, because there's also of course, magazines where the graphic designer gets in the last weeks or something, but we really work together. And I think that's the only way for us anyway that it can combine these things.

Carlos Zepeda 25:13

And is there any other relationship that you think is relevant as well, besides the graphic designer? Yes.

Kirsten Algera 25:21

Yeah, I think our final editor is really important as well. First of all, because he's English. And we're not, so we need that. But also because we're really lucky with him. He's, he's got the tone of voice that we want for the magazine. So and that is so difficult to find somebody because it's hard to explain, you know, what you want with text and with editing texts. But he just, we're totally on same level. And he has been with us from the start. So yeah, that's really important. He was he was on holiday with the last issue. And it was a bit complicated. And I noticed that we just can't do it without him. It's like, yeah, he's also part of the team, I think.

Carlos Zepeda 26:06

Yeah. And when you mentioned about this final editor being English. The magazine itself, is in English and something that I've noticed, as well is that most independent magazines, regardless of where they are published they use English as their publishing language. So is there a reason that you decided to do the magazine in English that is made and published in The Netherlands?

Kirsten Algera 26:35

Yeah, it's very simple, just to make it as wide, internationally readable as possible. Yeah. And so yeah, so there was I don't think I even think we thought about doing it in Dutch. Because yeah, the market is so small.

Carlos Zepeda 26:51

Yeah, yeah. Because another other things that I'm trying to understand about the independent magazine market. I will focus on another part as a whole. It's that it's called a global niche market, that maybe you have, like 1000 people in Amsterdam, 1000 people in Mexico City, 1000 people in Sao Paulo, 1000 people in New York, 1000 people in Bangkok. And then the addition of all of those people that are interested in the magazine makes your audience. So do you think that's like what I just described like a global niche audience or a global niche market? Is that something that you would relate to McGuffin?

Kirsten Algera 27:34

Yeah, certainly, I think so. And the funny thing is that we didn't know that when we started. So we came from design world, and we thought we're going to make design music magazine, are also focused on crafts. But I think we have a big part of our audience is not the design audience, of course, that culturally interested, but it's a magazine audience. And there's, I think, like this big global magazine, community, independent magazine community, I would say, with its own platforms, also, especially in England, but also in other places in Asia. And it's a very interested and loyal community in a way. And we didn't know that when we started, and it was really nice to be invited, for instance, to magazine conferences, etc, etc. So yeah, I think it's like a global niche public.

Carlos Zepeda 28:36

Fantastic. And in the process of editing, publishing the magazine, it's published two times a year. Do you think that having that space to research, contact people? Does that benefit the magazine compared to magazines that are published monthly as the regular commercial magazines? Do you think there's a benefit to that? Or could you speak of that? In your, in your experience?

Kirsten Algera 29:05

Yeah, I think it works two ways is that I think it's quite timeless what we make in a way Yeah, and that is not a good word in English, but you know probably what I mean. But we also, I mean, we sell the back issues years after so it's a different kind of magazine than news magazines. And yeah, so I think we need that because we do a lot of research, we need that time. And we need that time also to make photo series and write checks, etc. And now I forgot what your question was.

Carlos Zepeda 29:51

So if it's beneficial to have more time to research and do your publication rather than commercial magazines, that by month they need to be a certain target.

Kirsten Algera 30:00

Yeah, of course, I bet it's also the other way around. I mean, we can't make it but at this time, because it's so time consuming to do it.

Carlos Zepeda 30:11

Thank you for answering the question. And now I, when I was researching the magazine, and I also noticed that here in credits that you have the support of Creative Industries Fund NL and De Gijsselaar-Hintzenfonds. So you were like the recipient of some award from the Creative Industries Fund NL. So I think what I want to learn more about the magazine, we already know that there is an audience, and there's a price tag as well in the publication. Does having the support of these public funds, does it give you more creative freedom?

Kristen Algera 31:01

Yeah, certainly, I think if we wouldn't have that it wouldn't be here, the magazine at all, we wouldn't have started. Because, like I said, it's really time consuming. It's a lot of research. We don't even pay ourselves a lot. I mean, really, sometimes, maybe. But we do want to pay all the contributors because it's free. And it's also I mean, it's like cultural code governance code, I think, did you just pay your contributors decently? But and printing is really expensive, papers is really expensive. So yeah, we were really happy with the support from the Fund. And its, it's support for the activities that we do. Because they don't have grants for magazines, making magazines, it's for the activities and part for the research.

Carlos Zepeda 32:00

And in the magazine industry, at large, there's this business model that they depend on advertising, to fund or to pay its contributors to, you know, pay for the paper for the printing, I noticed that you have this advertising section here. But I really didn't see much advertising in the issue. I think, like, it's just the first few pages. Yeah, I don't know if this last one is also an advertisement. But I think that's everything that I saw.

Kristen Algera 32:35

There's not a lot. it's, but it's really, advertising is really hard in this business. I mean, if you're not in fashion, I mean, fashion is a different story. I think. If you look at Fantastic, Man, yeah, they've got lots of ads, of course, or Vogue or whatever. First, it's more difficult. Also, because, yeah, in the design world, there's a couple of big brands, and they most of the time, they work with agents who have like their main, big copy run magazines. But, yeah, we try to get what we can in terms of advertising.

Carlos Zepeda 33:20

And do you think that having that support from the Fund, does that also help in a way, like not worrying about that aspect of being funded by advertisers?

Kristen Algera 33:28

Yeah, certainly. Yeah. Now, of course, we would love to have advertisements because yeah, it pays the bills. But yeah, we're certainly less vulnerable because of the grant of the creative industries fund.

Carlos Zepeda 33:46

And do you think that the price tag as well as I get justifies or it helps you cover the expenses plus have some profit to reinvest for the next issues, or is it breakeven?

Kristen Algera 34:00

I think right now we would everything certainly included we break even so yeah, it is ended, but that's for the first time after 10 issues. So yeah, it's really hard to do that. But I think and probably if you see how many magazines are being made in the Netherlands, there has to be a relation with the fact that there's subsidies. So that gives you like you say, the creative freedom to do things and, and also to be maybe more critical than you normally could be

Carlos Zepeda 34:40

Yeah because I don't know if I'm correct. I might need to check this but the magazines, books don't have VAT. In the Netherlands, right?

Kristen Algera 34:52

Yes, there's VAT. Yeah, okay.

Carlos Zepeda 34:54

Yeah. Okay. That's clear

Kristen Algera 34:56

But it's the lower. So you've got the high tariff and you've got long term. Okay, yeah. So it's the low tariff.

Carlos Zepeda 35:04

Okay. And for the few advertisements that you have... do you think that's like, how did they reach out? Did they reach out to you? Or was it? Because we have different... Design Miami Basel.

Kristen Algera 35:21

Yeah, they reach out to us. And we reached out to [CCFP] and Heineken because we always try to get the back of the company that is related to the objects, as you can see with the magazine, of course, yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 35:37

This is so beautiful. So, yeah, there's like that is, in a way, like a role of matching the advertising because there's this advertorials. You know, that's an ad, like an advert that looks like an editorial. And I don't know if you did the editing on this one.

Kristen Algera 35:57

Yeah, we did some editing. Yeah. Because, yeah, I think differently when they suggested it. Like, maybe we can tweak a little bit.

Carlos Zepeda 36:07

Yeah, because in a way looks like part of the magazine. Yes. Still advertising. Yeah. So it really it still has that visual appeal that I think that the magazine wants to represent.

Kristen Algera 36:17

Yeah. So I think that's for us. That's important. I even think that it was in one of the first issues that we once refused an ad because it was so not connected to the magazine or what the magazine wanted to be. We thought this is not a good idea.

Carlos Zepeda 36:35

And that would be like, the editing more like that gatekeepers. Like this is the the vision. Yeah, so I want to have something that aligns with that vision.

Kristen Algera 36:44

Yeah, especially for the back cover. I mean, if you if you look at it as a portable exhibition, and you want it to be complete thing that works on all sides.

Carlos Zepeda 36:54

Okay, now, I'm going to move on to the last section of the interview. And it's talking a little bit more about the impact of digital tools within the industry. So I noticed that here the flatplan, you're doing it by sketch. Is there any reason that it works better to have it like on paper, rather than doing, you know, a storyboard online on one of these new platforms? You know, like, Miro or, I don't know, like a presentation. What do you think it's the value of?

Kristen Algera 37:28

I just like to draw, that's it.

Carlos Zepeda 37:31

So it's more personal then?

Kristen Algera 37:32

I think it's personal. Yeah. I think like some graphic designer will do it in InDesign more. But yeah, I like it. And also that I can get it away again, and then start all over, you know, so yeah, I like to draw a bit. But that I think that's very personal. But maybe it's also that we're we're doing everything sometimes very manual, and sometimes very digital. We're not a really digitally oriented magazine. Of course, we have a website.

Carlos Zepeda 38:10

Yeah. And about the main roadblocks for an independent magazine, have you know that you are in the industry doing a very successful publication... is there, you know, have people within the industry also talked about, oh, there's a common problem. Because one of them that I, I reviewed Stack Magazines. And the founder, Steve Watson, what he was mentioning, is that all the problem like in Britain was the distribution. So that's why he came up with Stack Magazine and its subscription model. Would you agree that there was maybe a distribution problem is, is it a distribution problem? Because when you walk into a shop, or a supermarket, you would see commercial titles, but you woudn't see MacGuffin. Or you wouldn't see Fantastic Man. And would that be like distribution, one of them? And would you think of any other that you think could be a problem or a main roadblock for magazines today?

Kristen Algera 39:20

Yeah, I think distribution is one of the difficult sides of the independent magazine market. And I mean, we chose from the start to work with worldwide distribution. Because we thought we want to be from Taipei to Toronto in a way. But we paid a lot for that, because it's so expensive. And you get such a little percentage often of the retail price if you do it like that. But yeah, I would say we're very mixed about it because there are some really good distributors When we work, for instance, with Antenne Books and Idea Books. And we love them. I mean, they're really connected and sympathetic. You know, we're very personal contacts. So we know what they do. But then we also had this distributors in the past, one of them went bankrupt, by the way, which wasn't good as well, but who were working on a totally different base, you know, much more commercially oriented. With this contract or without, yeah, having a good feeling, I think of what the magazine is or where it can be. So on one hand, I would say we really rely on a couple of very small distributors. But that also means that you're in very specific bookshops, and museum stores, etc.

Carlos Zepeda 40:52

Is this only in the Netherlands or also international?

Kristen Algera 40:55
It's also international. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 40:57
Is that the stock list that you have on the website?

Kristen Algera 41:00
I think it's in the back of the issues as well, yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 41:02
Yeah, because I think what I've read about is that there's like some booksellers or bookshops. Some of them decide to buy directly from you. So they now own it, and then they resell it. And then when you were talking about these retail deals, is it that they that you keep the copy or you send the magazines to them? Yeah, but they don't own them. They just kind of rent to the space. Yeah. And then when they sell them, you receive part of that sale?

Kristen Algera 41:31
No, no, we don't didn't do it like that. So we just shipped to the distribution channels. And, but we do have with one of them, we do have an agreement that we get the magazines back that aren't sold. Okay, but we have to pay for that. For the shipping. Yeah. Okay.

Carlos Zepeda 41:52
But you don't rent the space, you just send them and then they show them in their space?

Kristen Algera 41:58
Well, they actually they buy, the distributors, they buy magazines, and then they resell them to bookstores. Yes. So that's that's the end of course, yeah, that is strange, in a way, because there are sort of middlemen in between bookstores and the makers. And, yeah, that's because it's just too difficult to do it yourself. And it takes too much time. And but it, it costs you a lot of money. So for a lot of independent magazines, it isn't worthwhile to do it that way. And I know that there were examples in the past like "Works that Work" was a Dutch design. And he, he had this very sympathetic but not working idea. And he had a website on which you could tell where you were flying that week, and how many luggage space you had left. And then you could buy for a distribution price, you could buy the magazine ticket with you, and bring it to a bookstore that you liked or in your living place or whatever. So it was kind of a way to try to move around distributors. But yeah, it was very complicated. Didn't work out in the end.

Carlos Zepeda 43:21
Yeah. And you know, where there's also some type of expertise or dominance from distributors that makes it even more appealing to send it to them. And then they will do, you know, the transaction side or the selling point. But are the selections that you made for these locations? Also, because you're not the audience's that the magazine is intended for go to those places? Do you think that would be the case?

Kristen Algera 43:51
So you mean if if we have the right...

Carlos Zepeda 43:53
Yeah, so the distributors, yes. In the distributors that you've selected, where they strategically selected? Let's say, because it is frequented by the audience's that the magazine is intended for?

Kristen Algera 44:08
Yeah. When we started, yes. Yes, because we wanted to have the distributor that is in contact with the bookstores that wouldd sell it. But now I think it's more the other way around. The people contact the distributors or bookstores contact them: "can we have the MacGuffin?". So yeah, but that was a good thing for us in the beginning, I think, that we chose for a lot of different distributors that had a very fine, nice network.

Carlos Zepeda 44:39

Yes. Like, narrow and closed as well. Now talking about digitalization, which can include anything from using computers to using software, do you think anything of that has influenced the creative process or when you do the magazine? Because when we started the interview you mentioned like when you were younger, you had the magazines that had like the floppy disk. And also magazines that had like had CDs. But then we also saw a shift of magazines that are normally printed, sold as PDF, or sold in this digital store, and you can read it on your iPad or on your phone. Sometimes they charge, sometimes they're free. So just talking about all of that, like, first in what we have said influence the creative process, has it helped reduce costs or reduce time and sharing and communicating?

Kristen Algera 45:41

Yeah, yeah, of course, it helps in a lot of ways. I mean, that there wouldn't be any graphic design here without the computer. I think we would do like two years about pasting it all together. So yeah, graphic design. Certainly also photography, lithography. Also communicating with lots of people, of course. I mean, it's so much quicker, of course, if you if you can zoom or mail or whatever. So yeah, those are like the normal basic digital tools. I guess. We don't have, I think, for us, the most important thing is that it's an object, the magazine. I mean, that's even why we made this cover, like we always try to to make something 3D on it. The first issue was about the bed and had two cushions on it. So we really make it as an object. And I think that's the appeal. So we also we have two or three articles of every issue on the on the website. But that's about it. Because yeah, this is something different and people to buy in.

Carlos Zepeda 46:54

Yeah, no. And I wanted to ask about that strategy, because this is a print product. And there's not a digital version of it. You may own a digital manuscript to print it. But that's not available to the public. Is there still a reason to do a print magazine?

Kristen Algera 47:14

Yeah, for us there is. Yeah, content wise, but also, because yeah, we like to sell it, of course, and the big issues keep on selling. So it's like, yeah, it's really like an object that you want.

Carlos Zepeda 47:29

And another thing like talking about digitalization is also, if I'm on my phone, I have access to so much information. And I can just change really fast without actually being in the moment. And something that I've read and that I've noticed myself is that when I'm with a magazine, which is something similar, like when I'm with a book that I am, like, I'm just with it, yeah, there's no distraction.

Kristen Algera 47:57

You are in a connected bubble.

Carlos Zepeda 47:59

Yeah, exactly. I am in my bubble. So that in a way also contradicts digitalization, right. There's still an audience that really wants to disconnect from having those digital connections. And having this type of analogue experience where you still like someone else, someone's did the work over these, and then you actually go through the pages and have the experience. Yeah. So like, that's just a comment from my end. I don't know if you have anything to add on that.

Kristen Algera 48:32

Yeah, I think that may be part of the quality. And we noticed that in Corona times it kept on selling very well. I mean, so also, it's like something that you want to have and hold and have close. But I think also part of the success is that it's, you can read it on a lot of different levels. This magazine, it's always what I like if you go to Insta Stories, or then somebody just looking at the images or somebody is reading the articles or five months later, somebody noticed that there's a short story in it that so yeah, there's a lot of different ways to dive into the magazine.

Carlos Zepeda 49:13

And even for the Dutch public, at least what I've researched was the Magazine Media Associatie team that does this research about the reading public, but also the Sociaal en Cultuur Planbureau. And they, there's the reading, they've concluded that their reading time has been reduced for a couple of minutes. On a day, I think it's at 37 minutes if I'm not mistaken. But still two thirds of the people that are reading take that reading time for reading print. And should I at least the trend for last year is that the print share was increasing over digital so I think that that really speaks of like the interest of the Dutch public, and might also be as part of the international audience, but I don't have numbers on that.

Kristen Algera 50:08

And also, I think the funny thing is that sometimes we get, like this data from either Instagram or distributors that are public is quite young. I mean, I think like 75 to 80% is below 30. So it's also not like the older generation that is only buying print is like, yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 50:31

And talking about digitalization, you have a website. Yeah. I think you also have a couple of social media platforms. Do you think that helps in the discovery aspect? Is it easier for an international audience to discover MacGuffin?

Kristen Algera 50:48

Yeah, I think Insta does. Yeah. We don't do a lot on Facebook. Practically nothing at all. Or Twitter. So it's only Insta for us, and websites. Yeah. The Instagram community, of course, is a huge community. And also for us, always really good. I mean, we're not like, top followers list. But yeah, it's like 20 or something.

Carlos Zepeda 51:20

That already makes a business, if you can sell it to 20,000. And talking about other independent magazines. Do you think that the way that you have approached the editing, and the publishing and the graphic design, do you think that it has influenced because it's now six years? Seven years, seven years this year. Has it influenced or have you seen some type of, I don't want to say copying, but like inspiration that you see that that the typography that you use, how it looks, the type of material that is being used in the last seven years. Do you think that there's convergence for other independent magazines to follow my MacGuffin?

Kristen Algera 52:08

I don't know. But I saw a magazine the other day, and I thought, like, it looks like a copy of MacGuffin. I mean, it's like, sort of same size and not exactly, of course, but a lot of things and also it's about tools. So every issue is got a theme as well. But then I always think like that must be the sign of the times, you know, and you see it as a compliment if that's the case, and maybe they never heard of MacGuffin, sometimes things just pop up in the same period, because it's actually a Zeitgeist.

Carlos Zepeda 52:52

That is true. So that would be in independent magazines. But for commercial magazines, have you seen like any influences on graphic design? What changes? Like?

Kristen Algera 53:04

I have to say, I didn't make a study of this, because we're always so busy making our own.

Carlos Zepeda 53:09

Yeah, it's okay.

Kristen Algera 53:13

But now, no, I think there's more interest in like everyday life objects right now and the design of it. But I don't dare to say that were anything to do with me. It would be really, really arrogant, I think. Yeah. But yeah, maybe, I think the interest in design

has shifted. And the fact that we're selling more, and we're asked to make exhibitions in mainstream museums, does seem to hint to something.

Carlos Zepeda 53:51
Give you some type of credibility as well.

Kristen Algera 53:54
Right. Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 53:56
And then we're already talking about the physical distributors, but we're talking about digital. There's also some online distributors, I noticed. I don't have a name here. But there's an online distributor in the Netherlands where you can buy a MacGuffin subscription.

Kristen Algera 54:11
Oh yeah, Bruil.

Carlos Zepeda 54:13
Right. Yeah. And, I think also Stack Magazine in London, they also have some of those. Do you like do you think it's also an important partnership to have with online vendors as well, or just stick to the traditional model of okay, it's a print magazine with, you know, I can talk of another format then I sell them in a bookshop.

Kristen Algera 54:34
Yeah. Yeah, that's really complicated, because there's a lot of elements in that because we get asked a lot of times by online distributors, if we want to sell to them, and then most of the time, it's like, very little copies, or with high transport costs. And it's a lot of work. So we just said we want to focus on making the magazine and get the distribution to these five people and, and then Bruil, because you can buy it on our website as well, but it's handled by Bruil. And that works well for us. So if people want to buy it online, they just gonna go to web shop.

Carlos Zepeda 55:21
And with that, did you already know the people at Bruil, or was there, or did they reach out to you like, how did that connection?

Kristen Algera 55:32
Ah, I don't know. Ernst, [was X op en Bruil?]

Ernst van der Hoeven 55:36
What?

Kristen Algera 55:36
[Was X op en Bruil?]

Ernst van der Hoeven 55:38
Oh, no. Only Idea Books.

Kristen Algera 55:42
I don't know. How did we get by? [Dutch]

Ernst van der Hoeven 55:46
We just looked at the bigger distributors of other magazines, and then we found out that Bruil was the one that is mainly responsible for the subscriptions.

Kristen Algera 56:11
Yeah, they handled it very well.

Ernst van der Hoeven 56:14
So they're specialised.

Carlos Zepeda 56:19

Thank you Ernst Okay, we already talked about the shop the projects. So, I think I already asked this question, but I will just do it again, because I really like how it's phrased. So in an era that everything is digital, you know, and it's about digital platforms and user generated content, like, anybody could be a publisher, right? Why prints. I already asked that. But now I'm thinking also like, why publishing now? Why printing now?

Kristen Algera 57:03

I think I answered it already.

Carlos Zepeda 57:06

Yeah, I think we can move on. I just really like this type of, you know, contradiction like this. Like, because I feel like the magazine really contradicts everything that I've searched for. There's like no advertising, it's print. It's catered to a niche audience instead of like that mass market. So yeah, we kind of move past that, because I'm pretty sure like, because I'm going to do a reading of the interview and we already have that.

Kristen Algera 57:31

Yeah. Well, yeah, I think basically, what I said before is that for us, it works because we want to make a sort of portable exhibition with that is an object in itself. But it's also a container, of course, and a container on very, very different levels. It's very different and multi hybrid perspectives. And so you want to have images and texts and long reads and shorter pieces. And yeah, that mix, I think, and the fact that it's made beautifully. Is something that makes it interesting.

Carlos Zepeda 58:14

This would be the final questions. So with digitalization, what do you think are three opportunities that you have with digitalization, like in what way does it do you think that it benefits MacGuffin?

Kristen Algera 58:26

We're working right now on two things that are both digital. One is to expand website a bit with other activities that we do like making podcasts and videos and stuff like that, because it's now it's divided over Vimeo and want to do more on the website. Okay. And the other thing that we are experimenting with is how to use our research archive, because there's so much work going on in the research of one issue, and you don't see that at all. I mean, I mean, of course you see this but there's lots and lots more depth, image research, text research, interviews, etc. So we're thinking about how can we make that transparent and use that research or research in a way so we have, Ben, who has Corona right now but otherwise he would be in, to look at a model a website that we can put this archive in without too much work so that you can look up images but also PDFs and also books and also links.

Carlos Zepeda 59:45

All of this information to you have it already digitally scanned or in a process of digitisation.

Kristen Algera 59:56

Yeah, we're doing it right now as a pilot, so some of it is already digitalised because it's a PDF, or it's a link, whatever. And also we have to, but but we try to keep ourselves from fitting it in completely because that's too much work, we first want to look at, okay, how does this look? And does it work? And how much work is it? So we were doing it for this issue for the bottle. And if it works, then we are going to go public and do things as well to also be more transparent, because the funny thing is Stedelijk Museum, they came, and they want to buy all the magazines for the collection. So we're really honoured by that. And then they asked really good question like, can you also give us some more contextual information? And yeah, something that relates to research that you're doing? And then we said, Yeah, but that's all in our computer, you know, so how do we, how do we make that physical? I mean, I can give you my drive eventually, like, sorted

out, but that's not the way of course so. So yeah, that also goes well together, like thinking about what is your archive? And how transparent is it? How visible is it?

Carlos Zepeda 01:01:12

Good. And now the top three challenges with digitisation?

Kristen Algera 01:01:19

In general?

Carlos Zepeda 01:01:21

Yeah in general, or for the magazine approach. Do you think there is a challenge there's so many things online that you can't break through in the Internet. Or maybe you need to hire more people because you need someone to do the video editing, the website, etc. What would be one of the challenges of applying digital strategies impact your practice?

Kristen Algera 01:01:49

For us, the most challenging thing is time, actually. Because I think, how do you say that? Of course you want to expand things and doing things online, but it costs you a lot of time, and it's extra work. And it's already really hard for us to make the magazine so let alone other platform. And also if you are an independent magazine there is not a lot of money to hire everybody, and you want to pay everybody. So yeah for us, that is the most challenging thing. And secondly, we don't have any real digital ambitions. I mean, our main ambition is to make this magazine. And do the activities surrounding it, and sometimes they have digital components. And then we will have a look at it and see like, Ok do we need to hire somebody? But it's not like our core business.

Carlos Zepeda 01:02:56

Perfect, and the final question is if there is anything that you would like to add?

Kristen Algera 01:03:00

No, I think we always like to quote [Tina] Brown, a famous editor, "if you don't have a budget, have a point of view" and I think that's the main thing why independent niche magazines are so successful. Because they all have this very specific view that is not bought by any sort of commercial questions so yeah. That's really special, I think.

Carlos Zepeda 01:03:29

Well thank you very much Kristen for participating in my interview.

Kristen Algera 01:03:33

Well, thank you. I'm really curious what you're going to do.

Interview 3: transcript

Interviewer: Carlos Zepeda Aguilar

Interviewee: Anneke Reijnders

Date of interview: March 10, 2022

Location of interview: Spui 14-16, 1012 XA Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Transcribed: March 16, 2022

Duration: 00:39:34

Carlos Zepeda 0:04

Hello, I'm Carlos Zepeda. I'm a student at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I'm just stating my name. And I will also ask you to state your name and just tell us where we are at the moment of the interview.

Anneke Reijnders 0:18

I'm Annike my back name last name is Reijnders. We are at Spui in Amsterdam Central Square in the Old Town, where the big book store Athenaeum is standing since 1966. We're sitting in a brand new podcast studio

Carlos Zepeda 0:39

Perfect for an interview.

Anneke Reijnders 0:41

Sorry?

Carlos Zepeda 0:42

Perfect location for an interview. Well, thank you very much for taking the time. First of all, also, I will ask questions. And if anytime you don't want to answer or one of the questions you can say so. I will just move on to another question.

Anneke Reijnders 0:55

Maybe I just don't know if I can answer them.

Carlos Zepeda 0:58

Exactly, yes. So it's just based on your experience and what you know. And I have it divided in three parts. So first, just to know a little bit about you and how you arrived here. Then the second part on what how it's the business like here in Athenaeum. And then the third part talking about digitalization and how that's played a part. So first of all, just tell me about you. And when do you remember you had your first contact with a magazine?

Anneke Reijnders 1:27

Oh, in a magazine? Well, I used to be a customer of the News Centre Athenaeum was very well known. Also, always, if you live in Amsterdam, I live in Amsterdam since I was 20. I'm 63 now, so I was part of the [sports] movement. And in order to make money, I stumbled into a bookstore and started to work there. And that was also not in the Athenaeum, but another store a gay bookstore. And that's where I met my first magazines or szines handmade by people who brought them into the store. Maybe my thing is my interest is specialisation, also, and I do love magazines, but I also love to be a specialist in certain fields. So that's also a trader to be the best in one area and to know a lot about it. So that's also my interest in magazines. But I'm also an avid book reader.

Carlos Zepeda 2:36

So there was always a connection between your pastimes, your activities, and what you found in bookstores.

Anneke Reijnders 2:46

Yes. And I'm also a graphic designer, I did art school. So that's also interested in typography, you always must be interested in magazines and how they look and how they're made up. I used to make magazines.

Carlos Zepeda 3:05

And what is your roadmap here in Spui, you're the buyer, specialist buyer.

Anneke Reijnders 3:09

I'm the buyer, specialist buyer for independent magazines, foreign magazines. Basically, everything that isn't distributed by the Dutch players so to speak.

Carlos Zepeda 3:25

Okay, okay. So it's everything that's not shown in those big distribution channels.

Anneke Reijnders 3:30

Yeah. And it's divided in also in consignments and buying from two distributors, so you buy either to a distributor. But we also do consignments with little parties, people make their own magazines, mainly in Holland and Amsterdam. Okay. And that means we take them in, we see what we sell and we pay to make us afterwards. That's what consignment means.

Carlos Zepeda 4:02

Yes, I used to be a buyer, but I was a buyer of spare parts for a electric engineering company.

Anneke Reijnders 4:11

So maybe I have to explain for the audience what consignment is.

Carlos Zepeda 4:15

Yes, that is true. So now, when you talk about you specialised in independent or foreign magazines, if you were to describe them, what are they? How would you describe them?

Anneke Reijnders 4:32

They are bearers of meaning and culture. Bearers, not barriers, but they carry, I mean, for me, the main thing about good magazine is that is that it has content. Okay, and that is underlined by how it looks or what choices have been editorial choices have been made concerning the content of what's between two covers.

Carlos Zepeda 4:59

So you think that there's a balance between how it looks, the material value. So when you see the pages how you see that the typography is setup, the graphic design, but also on what's inside of it. So what's the article telling you? What's the image?

Anneke Reijnders 5:16

Because otherwise, yeah, it's a vehicle for advertisement. Once basically, the non independent magazines are there, which doesn't mean like MacGuffin, or the Butt or Fantastic Man. They still have advertisers, but they have a different relationship with them.

Carlos Zepeda 5:39

That editorial philosophy aligns less with advertisers, they still hold that, at least how I can describe it. Sometimes it's that the editors are the owners still of that titles so it's like not a publisher, but also they have the goal to keep their their ideas intact.

Anneke Reijnders 6:00

Yeah, but it's also advertorials. We used to give workshops here with some people work here, and we deconstructed a Vogue. Yeah, and then you in the end, you have 12 pages editorial left. With real content, the rest is all advertising or advertorial or how do you say that? Spin-off?

Carlos Zepeda 6:26

Yeah, some type of influence. Yeah. When were this workshops held just to get an idea.

Anneke Reijnders 6:33

Yeah, no, we did that in I think what? We had this what's it named "Printing Pages" was a festival for independent magazines. Yeah. So we were there with the shop everytime it

was. And we also did a workshop. I think we also did a workshop at "What Design Can Do" is also a big festival always in it will be again, in Amsterdam. But it's directed towards design and the world. But since we are were there with the store, we sometimes also gave a workshop or because we like to do that. Or we were in Arnhem was a big exhibition fashion exhibition, we had a pop up store there. So then we combine our presence with if somebody wants it, we give reading about magazines or independent magazines. We do the same with ANFI. Or we have colleague Mark who works in "Do You Read Me?" in Berlin at the moment? And he used to do a lot of that as well.

Carlos Zepeda 7:49

Okay, okay. What was the name?

Anneke Reijnders 7:53

Marc Robbmond.

Carlos Zepeda 7:59

Now, we're talking about independent magazines. I guess in the time that you've been here with Atheneum. You've seen some independent magazines come and go. What do you think? Has? Is there any distinction that you can say that, oh, maybe these magazines have survived for longer because of?

Anneke Reijnders 8:16

Yeah, they always come and go. And then so always, being an independent magazine often means you are an independent, independent editorial board. And, yeah, it's hard for people to last, you know, you do this out of fashion, or it's hard to keep up this passion for five years, basically, or 10 years. So either you turn it into a commercial success like kinfolk and change the editorial board over the years and change the whole thing. Or, like Fantastic Man, The Gentlewoman, but you are so successful, that you can live from it and you know, attract all kinds of you, you end up being the founding director. Like Jop and Gert are, yeah, or people get fed up with their own magazine, I mean, or have the feeling I've said everything I want to say and since it's a medium, I can also you know, understand you you go to another medium or a good example is Migrants Magazine, they just said in advance we're gonna make so many magazines and that's exactly what they did, which I think is a great concept because they, they made it easier on themselves in a way and they created their own success. And everybody knew where when were we where heading over the years and after three years it was finished.

Carlos Zepeda 9:58

They set their targets that other targets and then they came in with the next passion project.

Anneke Reijnders 10:03

And everybody's still asking about the magazine.

Carlos Zepeda 10:07

So you hold also, what's it called? Like back stock or back issues of these titles, of independent magazines?

Anneke Reijnders 10:14

They are sold out, but we we do we do carry Apartamento, Kinfolk. So it's a mix about, a bit MacGuffin. So those are magazines we like ourselves and we like to keep them available as long as possible. And it's also a commercial choice because there are sellers. Yes, we sell 100s of Apartamento's a year. So we're also a commercial. I mean, we have to live from what we do. It's not only sometimes it seems like it's only an idealistic thing.

Carlos Zepeda 10:56

Yeah, in the end it's still a business, right? It's a bookstore. Okay, so you are responsible for selecting all like, what comes in? For in? Or what is shown in the shop? Do you follow any particular guidelines to what you want? You know, the shoppers to see, do you see? Okay, this type of content is moving. So I'm going to see there's other magazines that have that type.

Anneke Reijnders 11:23

We try to keep track of the podcasts and Instagram accounts of other bookstores. I think there is some kind of invisible thread between the Magculture, Do you read me?, Lorem Ipsum, all the I can name all the independent magazine sellers in the world. It's not certainly you speak on a daily basis. But we know we look at what we are doing from each other and find inspiration there. And Magculture, of course, organises festivals. And so Jeremy is a big, big figure in this. Jeremy Leslie is a big picture figure in this. Yeah, and people bring new stuff, like Stack magazines where you can take a subscription. It's also a new so every once in a while somebody comes in with some totally new concepts. And in terms of printing yeah, I think I've seen everything pass by by now but I'm always astonished about the new combinations and I'm very personally very pleased that the accent is more and more on content and building communities. Magazines are now used as social media, are used more like [to Diem] or so with a clear political purpose. So there are always shifts in that sense, you know, Apartamento was was one of those things where that was new, we look into the house of known people but normal people so that that was the main move, the first 15 years that you moved away out of the glossy topics, were moved into the independent press. And now you see a move a bit more movement towards the political again, we go bit back to 40 years ago to the pamphlets and that kind of print and stencilling and using old techniques. At the same rate, we used to have a radio studio here 30 years ago, in the shop and now we have a podcast studio. So in a way we always of course, in culture after circle moments with slightly different accents, I think.

Carlos Zepeda 14:00

Yeah. So when you said that you see what others are like all other independent magazine shops or book shops are selling or promoting then is that where you also take inspiration from and then you say okay, you contact the creators and then buy the magazines from them.

Anneke Reijnders 14:19

Yeah, I get the creators or we tried to work as much as possible with distributors. Because the last year said we had to cut back because of the corona and buying all this individual buying individual magazines from individual people sent individual invoices. So if we like to, if we like a magazine, we try to promote it to the distributors, we know [ups and run only MMS], those kinds of shops and hope that they take it into their assortment. And we try to make an exception for people in Amsterdam, the makers. So in the old days, we used to also take it from Berlin and Africa. And that's not possible at the moment. Maybe when we back at the old level, but I mean, in the old days, if I would hear a nice, independent magazine in Mexico, I would write them, but at the moment that is too costly.

Carlos Zepeda 15:39

So you are at a bookstore to contact a distributor that which the distributor has gets those magazines from the creators themselves, and then, so to concentrate it, and then that's where you

Anneke Reijnders 15:53

Then everything comes in one invoice.

Carlos Zepeda 15:56

And so at the moment that they arrived with you, you're the owner of those magazine copies?

Anneke Reijnders 16:05

Yeah, but most of it is delivered with return right. So when there's a new issue, you report how many you sold? And then in the old days, you had to ship them back. But now you just photograph them, take the cover off, or give them a send out to students. More and more this whole system is based on trust, because we also want to be how do you say that sustainable. Yeah, just so you know, we used to ship whole boxes back around the world with magazines that we don't do anymore.

Carlos Zepeda 16:46

And talking about the current magazines, are those like, selling back issues? Or like stuff that you have? Do you think that there's any benefit of sometimes like they print two times in a year, or four times in a year? Because they're so slow in a way that they print? Is there any benefit for selling them, but there's like a longer books, book shelf life?

Anneke Reijnders 17:17

Too long a shelf life is never good. Okay, I wouldn't advise less than two times a year on the other end, I also always advise, don't know, you can buy the start with two and then do four and start with six and drop back to two. Because, yeah, people always underestimate how much work it is. But yeah, some magazine, after three months, you basically know if, if there is a life chance anyway, apart from pushing it, I mean, it's something that would have never lived chance in the eyes of anybody, and we would put our weight behind it might sell. But basically, that's a bit of the same something.

Carlos Zepeda 18:11

Do you have... when you mentioned about the exceptions to local base that you have to go pick them up? Or they can drop them off here? Can they contact you directly, and then you evaluate and then you decide.

Anneke Reijnders 18:25

Most people contact us directly or follow us on Instagram, and sometimes we see something, but mostly, it's the other way around, that they contact us and we invite them sure come by show me what you have. And it's hardly ever that we don't take it. Okay. So we don't have you know, we don't have so much criteria. Unless it's falling apart, or, you know, somebody wants 40 euros for something that you can sell for that price. We almost always give give it a try. But then it can happen, you know that after two issues. We stop again.

Carlos Zepeda 19:12

And you also mentioned Stack Magazines. And I know that like I've heard some interviews that the founder has done before. And he mentioned that one of the roadblocks for independent magazines was distribution. Do you agree with this? And also

Anneke Reijnders 19:32

One of the what? the?

Carlos Zepeda 19:34

One of the problems or roadblocks for publishers is distribution, how to get into the bookstores.

Anneke Reijnders 19:41

Now. Yeah. A roadblock for anybody who makes anything in themselves is that they have no idea. Most people don't think about it. What are they going to do when it's finished? How are they going to get it into any store? In that way I agree distribution is a problem, but not because it's a problem in itself. It's because people don't realise that if they make something, it still has to be distributed.

Carlos Zepeda 20:14

Yes, I like that insight. I do. I do I do. So that's one alternative: online distribution.

Anneke Reijnders 20:22

Yeah. So yeah, what he did with subscription system is, is an alternative, of course. I don't know if that's limited. But people, people I know, get poorer all the time. So and they have more and more subscriptions. So about Netflix, Amazon, you know, it piles up. So in that sense, for me, for instance, I, it's almost too expensive would be for me to make take such a subscription. But, yeah, if apparently there enough people can afford it. And I like it, that they made it their business model. On the other end, to me, I don't I'm not particularly interested in getting this surprise element. I think that's personal.

Carlos Zepeda 21:22

Yes, and talking about the, like your role here now, as a buyer, do you think that there's a responsibility on you to say, or to promote, like Dutch publications? Or know any type of theories or?

Anneke Reijnders 21:43

Yeah, like I said, normally, we would be two of them. I'm alone now, because we have this changes. But in the ideal situation, we've always been with two people who did the zines and the independent magazines.

Carlos Zepeda 21:58

Okay. So it was separated into zines and independent. Okay.

Anneke Reijnders 22:03

So Marc was more into the zines, but in general, yeah, I feel it. If my personal interests will be too, I would do my little bit more my best for things that have content and young people, then I run a bit harder for that, and all the way around for other stuff. And we choose for local because then yeah, then it's less costly, and we can still stimulate people and give them a place on the shelves.

Carlos Zepeda 22:38

So the so there's a publisher that come to you. And then you know, your customer, you know, who comes in the Athenaeum and what they get.

Anneke Reijnders 22:50

And then in other circumstances, we would be part of fairs or things that happened in Amsterdam. Due to Corona that hasn't been for three years now. But that's normally there's also a meeting place, or going to conferences, ourselves, and meeting colleagues, they're there. I mean, basically, the talk is always about magazines, then. So there is also when you pick up new stuff, or have you seen this or that, or when we are part of a fair somewhere there are other bookstores or other makers. So you make around and see things you want to, you know, you want to make context. So it's also very physical. And that we missed for some years now. Definitely. And normally, we organise events where when the same thing happens that people, you start to talk with people and from one thing comes the other.

Carlos Zepeda 23:55

And when you get all of those, you get material to sell those book fairs for some distribution deals. Once it's here, like talking about the bookstore in general, where's the it's magazines really representative? Or is it like one of them moneymakers that say for the for the bookstore at-large for Athenaeum?

Anneke Reijnders 24:21

We don't think like that. We think as one. We don't think about what's the moneymaker or not our philosophy of our Directorate is that it's all equal. Of course, we look at whether we make money or not, but we're not going to weigh books against magazines, or especially in this shop, which is considered the flag store more or less. The general agreement is that one doesn't move without the other. I mean, historically, we are so Athenaeum Spui so consists of books and magazines to add to that, I mean, when you close and you can't sell anything the zine department is not the department where the focus will be on then when you close, it doesn't make any money while other things get ordered online.

Carlos Zepeda 25:26

And now talking again about the consumer, do you see that specific magazine has one specific audience are with or do you see that there's like the same type of audiences just having like buying a different selection of magazines?

Anneke Reijnders 25:47

In general, you could say younger, younger people are more attracted to independent magazines than older people. Okay, in very general, but there are always exceptions that

say something but rules. But yeah also makers get older. I mean, being young. 15 years ago, there's people are 14 now too, so they're not still our customers. So it's a relative thing. But of course, yeah the Butt has another audience, then the Kinfolk.

Carlos Zepeda 26:29

Yeah. Yeah. Because what I've seen for magazines is that there's always one main topic. But what I'm trying to uncover with this is that there's especially from the editor side, or the distribution side is who is actually getting buying these magazines. So it's good to have that insight as well, because it's not one narrow audience that can be made for everybody.

Anneke Reijnders 26:54

Now MacGuffin is as big audience. Apartamento has a big audience, you will say from young to old. Some magazines have that. And then probably also the best magazines who have done that you could argue with friends, you can argue that the best magazines best. Okay, the best have this appeal from young to old because apparently there's something to be found for everybody. Although it's quite specific. So that's interesting.

Carlos Zepeda 27:27

Yeah, like when you really go into one magazine, you will uncover more. But if you stayed on a general level, I think that could be a fair conclusion as well. And now just moving to the digital part of like the last few years. Do you think that or what type of digital tools I think we're already talking about the podcasts. So it's something you do?

Anneke Reijnders 27:47

We don't do any magazine podcasts yet. We might do in the future. But that's really time. I think we will focus on the future more on content, on social media and podcast. And we might go we use, we started a blog, I think 10-15 years ago. And I think now would be a good time to start something like that, again, to go back to go beyond a bit just showing pictures but more content. But that's really, we really have to have more personnel for that. It's also a question of time. And we have a new webmaster manager of the web shop. So that's expanding more, and there's more attention to I expect things in the future. But I think there will always be this mix, I hope from online presence and in-shop experience, was that your question?

Carlos Zepeda 29:01

A hybrid model. It is good, because the, so in a way, you're talking about how there can be more awareness or more promotion on Atheneum in social media, in websites, how to get that track online. But on the other side, you also have the webshop. And then you also get you can also do purchases through there. And but also what I wanted to know about the history of how,, we've seen so many technological changes that like 20 years ago, we didn't have smartphones. So there but there was the internet, there were websites already. So there might be moments in time where you said okay, now ecommerce is a thing. So it's open the website, and now all people are using smartphones, so okay, maybe we should go to social media. And now I'm like the question also to get a little bit more on the history is if having computers, for example, just going back to the 90s, like having computers or having, you know, this type of software that helps you manage inventory. Does it connect well with the E-commerce shop? Like, has these, like digital technology incorporations helped the business and you to have better control of what you're selling? And who are you selling it for? And just have better control of what you have in the store, and how you show it.

Anneke Reijnders 29:53

So I think you have better control. I think we still were quite into it intuitively. And I think actually, for me, and I think my colleagues in the new centre, think we are, we are and have always been about building community. And I think that's our main goal. Apart from that, this people in the community also have to buy something every now and then. But for me, it's all a means to build a community. And I think we could be smarter in it and more knowledgeable. But the underlying motive is that we want to build a community of magazine lovers and magazine buyers, and these are all means to win a then still we we are always wondering, of course how we can reach I find it fantastic that

there is now this new generation of young kids to Tik Tok who read all this young adult books in English. Which I couldn't couldn't have predicted that.

Carlos Zepeda 31:12

So when you said that they are community you mean both online and off?

Anneke Reijnders 31:18

Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 31:18

Because I think, or this what I've seen on Instagram, is that you also post events, sometimes here.

Anneke Reijnders 31:25

Yeah, that's yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 31:28

Perfect. Now, what do you think are three like talking about digitalization? What do you think are three opportunities that like Athenaeum Boekhandel, talking about independent magazines, how can it benefit from it?

Anneke Reijnders 31:45

Yeah, I like I said, we use Instagram a lot. But yeah, it's also a very fleeting medium. So I would like to have something in between again, but I think it's all connected. So as soon as you can do events, again, you can also, you know, connect again to all these different media. I think it's yeah, of course, we have customers all over the world. If you look at our webshop, you can see where they come from. So of course, that improved greatly. And makes that some magazines are accessible for people all over the world, and we ship worldwide, but that's what I call [example] in London do as well.

Carlos Zepeda 32:40

And now talking about challenges of digitalization. So do you think that having all of these digital tools is going to is it replacing your practice of you know, people coming through and wanting to sell a print product? Instead of maybe because they could easily publish it for free online?

Anneke Reijnders 33:04

Yeah. People who buy zines are not particularly interested in online magazines. I haven't met one. I think we had a time that you made this digital. I thought I made something. And she went well sort of, you know, new magazines little mag. I don't know the programme anymore. The name of the programme. I designed the little magazine and you could download that and read it like a magazine but online. I made four issues and then then the issue were the new publications we had in store. For now then on it was digital, but for now that would be eternally slow already. Maybe even nostalgic, so maybe I can try it again. Now. Now. That'd be fun. But yeah, so you have to look at those tools over and over again.

Carlos Zepeda 34:04

They always come back.

Anneke Reijnders 34:06

Oh, yeah, we do what we have done in the beginning and still do on this stashes their little films have been doing that for 10 years. Yeah, no, the we have a stash of magazines and we show them.

Carlos Zepeda 34:21

Okay. Okay, having seen that, where can I find that?

Anneke Reijnders 34:25

They're on Instagram.

Carlos Zepeda 34:26

Okay, I will take a look.

Anneke Reijnders 34:27

But I also have them from 10 years ago, all those movies. So, I don't have time enough. But if I have time, one day, or again, for now, it would be fun again, to show them again, on social media. Like, look what we saw 10 years ago.

Carlos Zepeda 34:48

So it's like, it would be to have a conclusion that having the print magazines here are like, there's no, like the audiences are not expecting to buy a digital magazine, they want that print product. Also, because of an emotion.

Anneke Reijnders 35:09

You can never know totally, I cannot judge that. I don't know how many people do buy. That kind of magazines, I imagine it will be more like a magazine about special kind of kayaks in Canada, you can build yourself. And then it's nice to order it online, and you can read it like a magazine or something. You have a special goal. But the people come here, they want to sniff it and to feel it and to...

Carlos Zepeda 35:42

And, just, I suppose the magazines that you have at the moment. Are any of those available digitally?

Anneke Reijnders 35:51

Yeah, that's what I was thinking about. I have no idea. Okay, or no, no. Oh, it was called Issuu this programme. So, for a few years, five years ago, I think there were a lot of those magazines also on Issuu, but I must say I haven't looked for a few years. I have no idea.

Carlos Zepeda 36:15

I also haven't looked for a few years, so I can dive into that. And this will be my final question. So you've seen through the years that there's different magazines coming up, like going publishing, but right now at this moment: do you think that the magazines have some type of converging aesthetic? So they have similar typologies or they display products or images in a certain way? Is that are they converging?

Anneke Reijnders 36:45

That's always that's also one line going up and down, you go from matte paper to glossy to hyper glossy to stencils, stamped. Stitched and then you go up again, I think that's a movement like this, but the people get more knowledgeable on typography and and the way before on the other end like a magazine like Reagan, it's hard to imagine something totally revolutionary in terms of typography, because I have about seen everything. Yeah Reagan was really breaking with tradition of typography as we knew it. And now, of course, every now and then again, you see this development of unreadable typography or upside down.

Carlos Zepeda 37:49

All types of things.

Anneke Reijnders 37:49

All kinds of things, but I don't have like I said, the renewal comes more from contents than from form at the moment I think. But that's my, everything is my opinion.

Carlos Zepeda 38:08

Just I think this will be the final final question. Do you have, like a number now in your head of how many independent magazine titles you handle at Athenaeum?

Anneke Reijnders 38:19

How many we have now, titles? No, I think between 1500-2000.

Carlos Zepeda 38:28

Okay. That's it from me, do you like to add anything to the interview.

Anneke Reijnders 38:35
Sorry?

Carlos Zepeda 38:35
That's everything from me. Okay, if you want to add anything like

Anneke Reijnders 38:40
No, no. Okay, well, But if you have questions, you can always mail me.

Carlos Zepeda 38:44
Okay, well, thank you for your time.

Interview 4: transcript

Interviewer: Carlos Zepeda Aguilar

Interviewee: Steve Watson

Date of interview: March 14, 2022

Location of interview: London, England, United Kingdom

Transcribed: March 14, 2022

Duration: 01:09:35

Carlos Zepeda 0:00

I will just first briefly introduce myself so you know what my project is about because the first e-mail that I sent to you I think it's back some a few months ago. My full name is Carlos Alberto Zepeda Aguilar. I am studying a master's programme, at Erasmus University Rotterdam, which is about the creative industries. And it's a very multidisciplinary programme. So we take a view of the cultural and creative industries from a globalisation perspective, but also from our localization perspective. So, in this interview, you're just participating in my research project, which is about the independent magazine market at a global level, but I am localising it in the Netherlands. And in any moment of the interview, if you don't want to answer a question, or you don't feel comfortable, or just want to go to the next question, feel free to do so. And I think that would be all from my side. So from your side, I would just like to briefly introduce yourself, oh, what's your name, where are you located? And if I have your permission to record the interview?

Steve Watson 1:15

Okay. Yes. So I'm Steve Watson. I'm based here in London. And yes, you have my permission to record this meeting.

Carlos Zepeda 1:21

Perfect. Thank you. Now, I have divided the interview in three parts. The first part is a little bit about your history, where your early beginnings and your experience. The second section, we will talk a little bit more about Stack and its distribution practices. And the third section, we'll talk about digitalization, or what are these digital changes that we've seen recently. So first of all, I would like you to, and I've heard some of the interviews that you've already done, or your podcast as well, I followed some a little bit familiar already with your history. But just briefly, can you tell me your early relationship with magazines or with the magazine industry or independent magazines as well?

Steve Watson 2:10

Sure, so I, when I was at university, I studied English at university. And while I was in my second year, I think some of the second year. I got work experience placements at FHM in London, so at the time, that was like, the biggest men's magazine in the UK. And it was like, really exciting. It was my first time in London. And I just had like an amazing time. It was at the summer of the year 2000. And I'd been doing like little bits of sort of like writing for like my university, newspapers and stuff like that. And I edited a section on the university newspaper. But that was my first experience of like, an actual professional magazine office. And yeah, loved it, the you know, so like that, that kind of that sort of confirmed something to me that like, I think that maybe it'd be really fun to work in magazines. And so I went back finished university kept on writing for them freelance while I was doing my third year. And then when it came to get a job, I just like took the first job that came along that got me to London, and I ended up working in a pretty boring back content management job basically. So digital editorial stuff. And then like, as a result of some like changes that come through that then I ended up working for some inflight magazines and worked my way up to editing in flight magazine. And again, it was like sort of like it was kind of good. Because it's great, you get to a place like Rotterdam and like, you know, stay in nice hotel and all the rest of it. But it was also kind of soul destroying because those magazines run on advertising. And that means that you always have to be thinking about, you know, what the advertisers are seeing him. So basically, around that time, I started looking for other stuff to do and came across independent magazines and just loved them straightaway and started writing for a couple of them. And back then they were the sort of magazines that couldn't pay

people to write for them. So instead, they would like answered at one magazine particular called Little White Lies, and they would throw a launch party for each new issue came out and all contributors would be invited along and like it was just like, it was really lovely. It was like sort of kind of big, extended family and met loads of great people doing that and also kind of discovered more independent magazines. And that was kind of my way into independent magazines. And so, you know, I've basically been, I went down to four days a week on my normal job, because I want to try and write more freelance for like The Guardian or something like that. And after a year of doing that wasn't really getting anywhere. And so I decided that I try and use that day a week to try and start a business. Because this is back when journalism was changing very fast, it's getting much harder to make your living as a journalist, I was kind of worried that all I could do is write and edit. And so I've tried to start a business to give myself like some other skills. And Stack is the first one that seems to make some sense. And so I launched that in December 2008. Just as the financial crash was happening, and that's a really. I've been running it, you know, sort of like, back then it was mainly evenings and weekends, plus that one day, that cut out my week. And it's gradually grown to something that is my my full time job for quite a while, but then employ some of the people as well.

Carlos Zepeda 6:11

And going back to basics, what, when you talk about independent magazines, you already talked about them creating a community. But just going to that very simple definition, how do you define an independent magazine?

Steve Watson 6:26

It is very difficult to define independent magazines. And you may have seen because it's various press on the sites, I use this, I call it like the "Indiecon" definition. So "Indiecon Festival that happens in Hamburg every year. And I was there for the first one. And the first one was titled ["Fastest indie"] and it was this like hold, like two days dedicated to trying to figure out what do we mean when we say independent publishing? And the best definition that I think came out of that is: the chiefs are the makers. So basically, the people who are financially responsible for the magazine and also directly involved in writing for it, or editing or taking pictures or designing. And I mean, it's an imperfect definition, because as soon as you say that, you start asking questions. Whoa, hang on. So is Monocle, an independent magazine, according to that definition, yes. But then there are some very obvious things that make Monocle not like an independent magazine. Anyway, all that to one side. I think that's the best definition. But you just have to take it with a pinch of salt and say, it is imperfect.

Carlos Zepeda 7:40

Exactly, that's something that has been quite common both in the academic literature that I've found, and the people that I've interviewed, but there seems to be an alignment of okay, maybe it's the ownership that has that independent value, but then there can be a convergence towards some years on, there's a convergence that they might become like those media companies or something that drives on advertising, but still like that independent could be the ownership itself. So thank you for that insight. And you already mentioned, I mean, since 2000, you already had your first experience with working in magazines, I suppose that you made a network of people. Those or that network of people, did that help you connect with people in the independent magazine market, in London, but also abroad? Internationally?

Steve Watson 8:34

I don't think so. Thinking back to those, like those best days at FHM that I have come across a couple of the guys from that world in independent magazine making, but it's pretty, it's pretty rare. Sure, thing is that was also like year 2000 was when there was still a lot of money in mainstream magazine publishing. And if you were to walk into, FHM doesn't exist anymore. But if you were to walk into, say, GQ, which I think is probably the biggest men's magazine in the UK at the moment, I imagine their office now looks very different to what the FHM office looked like back then, because these guys were just like, they were courted by PR the whole time. People actually cared about what they said and they were just sort of about living this like crazy rock and roll lifestyle of like, going to parties and like writing a funny little thing about you know, so ridiculous. The

people who I come across these days and independent magazine making much more likely to be someone who I mean, like they just care really passionately about this, like one particular thing and have come upon magazines, print magazines, as being a way to express that so actually is much more likely that. I mean, I come across lots of people who do I don't know, like, maybe I go to a conference or something. And three years later, we'll hear from someone who's like, Oh, hey, I chatted with you in the bar, like this thing, like three years ago, look, here's the magazine that I said I was gonna make, and they're like, you know, it's kind of like being rumbling along that whole time.

Carlos Zepeda 10:20

And for this, for all of the people that you've met. Well, I will dive in into that later on, when we talk about the distribution, I will now come in again to the independent magazines. So there's a value in how you see it, there's some material value in the graphic design in the sizes in the paper quality. But there's also some symbolic value in that content, how is it featured? What's the point of view? So do you have in your experience working in the industry... do you think that one: are the independent magazines, really differentiating from commercial magazines in those material and symbolic values? Or is it that they really depend on these just to be different?

Steve Watson 11:11

So I think that when you're making when you're making a magazine, because you're paid to make a magazine, it's your job, and I've, I've done this myself, you turn up or used to turn up to go to an office, I'm sure most people do it from home these days. But you know, you got to like, you've got to commission or write or edit your number of stories to fill the magazine, because the magazine has to come out by like this day, because you've got all your advertisers who are expecting magazines to come out then or in my case, but then also, the airline was expecting its magazine to come out. So it's really like a machine like the new a new kind of, you know, I was working on months when I finished. Which is like, pretty relentless. You know, you finish one magazine, as you as your magazine is printed to go off and like on the flights, you're almost done with the one that's coming up next, because then you've got to have leave to get that idea and your one, you're well on with the one for the month after as well. It's just sort of like, yeah, it's it's pretty full on. Independent magazines, I mean, I'm not saying that you can't make money from making independent magazines, because you can, but it's difficult is much more likely that you're making an independent magazine with a say because you've got something that you really passionately care about. And you say, you probably don't have advertising in the magazine, if you do, it probably doesn't pay a huge amount of money, these magazines tend to have high cover prices, because that's how that's how the magazines get made. The GQ can have a low cover price, it's got a tonne of advertising inside it. And that's where the money comes from. With an independent magazine, it's mainly the money that you pay when you buy the magazine. That means that I mean, you know, obviously, as a magazine maker, you try to have your magazine come out in time, because you're going to have some structure for your life. But ultimately, if it's not going to be ready, it doesn't come out the you know, you don't you don't have a lot of advertisers or like your corporate clients saying where's my magazine. And so there's that kind of like, there's that flexibility. And that means that because you're only releasing something when you're really happy with it, you will can keep on finessing it and like you know, sort by pouring your love and counts. And I think that this is what comes out when you pick the magazine up when you like turn a page, you can just see when a magazine has been made by people who care passionately about it and are having a great time and are like sort of meeting their heroes or like getting their favourite Illustrator to do something for us. That was amazing. I love it, compared to the magazine that's been made, and there's a hard deadline, and everyone's doing it as a job, they do the best they can with it and they still want to make a great product. But it doesn't have that kind of love flowing through it that you tend to find an independents so that so from that perspective, and the thing is that, you know, it's very easy to get into sort of binaries of like independent magazines or good mainstream magazines or bad I don't think that at all. There are plenty of independent magazines that are not very good. There are plenty of mainstream magazines that are great, but it's just like as a filter that you apply if you put in the filter of okay, you're only working on this magazine because you

love it. That's a pretty good filter for then saying like, right what comes out the other side is gonna be full of passion and kind of and love basically.

Carlos Zepeda 14:55

Yeah, and when we talk about this passion and something that you also mentioned a bit of the economics of the magazine industry itself. Because the way that commercial magazines are sustainable is because of the advertising that you already mentioned. And seeing, I am a collector of magazines myself, I don't have my collection of magazines here but something that I've seen in the last few years is that with a decrease of advertisers in commercial magazines, you're seeing a higher price in the higher cover price, which still is not the same as the price of independent magazines. But that's talking about the economics. But if we just focus on the independent magazines, and you thought that it's more of a passion project, then what do you think would be a sustainable business model for independents? Like how can they because some of the things that I've noticed, and that the other guests of the thesis have also mentioned is that there's something they they stay for four or five years, and then they disappear. And it could be because of funding, for example, but have you noticed that there's a different difference, or how independent magazines can be sustainable?

Steve Watson 16:17

I mean, it I guess there are some models that you see being applied. That's not to say that any of those models are universal. So basically, all of these different ways of doing it. Absolutely, critically, specific to the type of magazine you're making. So to give you an example, there's a magazine called Eye Magazine, which like a Graphic Design Magazine, it's been over the years, like, you know, 20 years or something. I wasn't independent for that whole time. But it's been independent, for least 10 years, more than 10 years of that. And basically, the guys who run that they've got, like, massive respect, you know, the people who read, I really care about what I said about graphic design, like the, you know, it's got this fantastic reputation, and quite rightly. So that means that, you know you've got a really loyal audience of graphic designers who want to read that magazine. There are a bunch of companies who work supplying those graphic designers, so type foundries is a really big one. And [she flips] it's a copy of a magazine, you'll see loads of advertising for type foundries. So it makes perfect sense. Like, there, you've got, like a bunch of people who want to read a magazine, you've got a bunch of companies who want to reach that specific segment of people put it together and that is like a small, sustainable business. They still have to really struggle and hustle to get the magazine made. And you know, it's like, it's not like they're kind of kicking back and counting their money, but they've found like a sustainable little way of doing it. If you look at a magazine, like Little White Lies, so the one that I mentioned earlier, that was an independent magazine that was made by a guy as a university project, and basically, it like sort of attracted a bunch of film lovers to it, because they just loved film. And so they're like, we're like, you know, making this awesome magazine totally based on passion, and that, you know, want to make it happen. As a result of that, because that was so good. Then they got corporate people coming to them and saying, like, Could you do something for us like [pleather] it's like make a magazine or a zine or like, do some design or like some logo stuff. And so basically, a whole creative agency was built off the back of that magazine. There's like a symbol that should try and think of an example of this now. Basically, there's like the same model with the other way around, where you get like, a creative agency is like, already working like they're doing their thing. And then as a kind of output from that creative agency, they decide to make a magazine because the magazine can be kind of their expression of what they care about believing. So the guy who I mentioned who set up Little White Lies, then went on to set up another company. So he set up a creative agency called Human After All, and they made a magazine called Weapons of Reason. Which is exactly that's kind of their expression of like who they are. And that might you know, it's the differentiator. So that these are like three models that you could have. And there's actually another one to check in of like, the people who make an independent magazine, who specifically absolutely do not want it to become a sustainable business, they don't want it to be their job. They want it to be a thing that has to sit on the side, because as soon as they start depending on that for making money, they have to start making all the same compromises that they're making their day to day life in a nine to five job. And they don't want to do that. So I get so wrapped for four

different models of where to doing things. But like, this is the problem with the whole question. You couldn't say to new magazine maker, oh, hey, great, you've got an idea for a magazine, use this model here. Because that would completely you know, if you took like the Eye Magazine model for someone who didn't have any idea of like, who their audience was, can't work literally can't do it. So it always has to be completely specific to the project and the circumstance.

Carlos Zepeda 20:58

I think your breakdown of these four models, even you were coming up, as you were speaking of them, and really speaks of how organic the process needs to be for the magazine to evolve into some on a higher level platform as well. So I really appreciate that, because it really makes me reflect on how, at least the magazines that I've selected for to have the point of view of the editor, how they're evolving over time. So that's something like that's so that I would have to think about how your models applied to them. But now I would like to

Steve Watson 21:44

[Hasten] to add those four models, just like plucked out off the top of my head. So don't like no answer that no one model for making a magazine is any better than any other one. And those four are just the first ones that came to me. So like, keep your mind as wide open as you can, when you come to that because it always has to come down to the individual specificity of what this magazine is doing and who it's trying to reach.

Carlos Zepeda 22:14

Thank you. I will. Now I like to talk about Stack. So to me, it's when I found the platform and I saw the website, I had lots of questions, because I said this is something that I love the idea of a magazine club, like because you always talk about or you heard about a book club or talking about a magazine club. I think that's a very, it has a lot of strength of talking about a magazine club us as it is via the Stack platform. And I also thought about and talking with like listening to your interviews or your podcast, that you said that during the time that you were working for, I think it was Church of London, if I'm correct, that you found or there was this, like, you've you noticed that a common problem was the distribution aspect. How can independent magazines have a better distribution, and maybe a better distribution means that we'll have more variety more access, regardless if it's local or an international level? So first of all, I would like to know, are you solely responsible for selecting independent magazines? Or do you have are you the one that has, you know, the, the decision making or the sensitivity to say, Okay, this is the independent magazine that we're going to deliver this month?

Steve Watson 23:40

Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 23:41

Okay. And now, when you have the also now, when you open the shop, you have some magazines also in stock, right? And that selection of magazines, can you explain to me why what's the process to have this? Like? How do you know which magazine to keep in stock? Is there any particular guidelines that you follow to select this independents, and then have them either for that subscription, or for the shop?

Steve Watson 24:11

So we get, we get feedback through like, various different channels. So Instagram is a really simple one. I've not posted on Instagram today, because as you know, I've been running around trying to get the next thing done. But at some point, I will. And that's just a great way of seeing like, you know, these are the this is the cover that people are interested in knowing more about. So that's just like a really simple bit of feedback that you get straight away. When we send magazine out on the Stack subscription. I always say email people to let them know the magazines coming. And just say like, if you've got anything to tell us just hit reply to this email, you can tell me and so people do reply and just tell me what they thought. Obviously, people tweet, people put their magazines up on Instagram when they arrive. So these are all like little bits of feedback that come through to us. In terms of the selection for the subscription, because we've always only

got 12 magazines that we can send out over the course of the year, which is nothing. I tried to make sure that we have, first of all, so the thing that people tell us when we survey them is that they want to be surprised. So one of my first things is I make sure that we have a real variety of subject matter when the light, you know, so as I'm like planning the magazines through the year, I tried to be about six months ahead. And so like, actually, this year is a really good example of that. We had a magazine drop out late last year, which meant that it was a bit of a scramble for putting the calendar together. And I ended up sending out sports magazine in January, and then a tennis magazine in February, and people were really unhappy. People, you know, there are a lot of people who subscribe to Stack who is not particularly into sport, fine. A comment that we got a few times was like, well enough sport magazine in January, I was like, Okay, I'll do something different next month, but then a tennis magazine came in February. And I'm like, Yeah, fair dues. I mean, both magazines are really great. And I totally stand by them. But we wouldn't ordinarily do that we, you know, if things were properly, we don't have like two thematically similar things together. So that's a really important point, also, we try to have a balance between if you've got something that's very text heavy, and then you'll try and send something that's a bit more visual. If you light it up, maybe we send a magazine from China, and so that I'm probably not going to send something from China for like, you know, for the rest of the year. Because you don't want people to start going like, Oh, stop that sort of descent with Chinese magazines like the you know, you try to sort of have all of these different kind of variables that you control. And honestly, by the time you've done that, taking into account everyone's frequency, because most of these magazines are like, maybe they come out twice a year. So it's really not very much the calendar kind of writes itself, you know, may decide so great, we can do that, then and that that then, and that's like a really sort of satisfying process. The shop is basically a response to the fact that we only have 12 magazines to send pay and subscription, because that's obviously really frustrating when there are so many more great magazines out there. So the shop is really just allowing us to do more. And it's, it means that if you come along as someone who's never heard of Stack before, I think, oh, yeah, it's great let's take a look at these magazines, you still might not be ready to just pay for a completely random selection of magazines. So the shop is good for people, I think to get a little bit of a taste of what we do. And then hopefully, if we can deliver them a few magazines that they like, that gives them a bit more confidence to then say, okay, great. Now go for the subscription. And so I mean, you know, in terms of the selection shop, it allows us to go a bit broader. With the Stack subscription, we'd have to be a bit careful about the fact that I mean, we're delivering magazines, to people who are all sorts of different people at all ages, or interests. So for example, I mean, there's like, there are some great cannabis magazines around at the moment. We are sort of like skirting around the idea of sending out one of these great cannabis magazines, but I just know that that will really upset some people. So whereas in the shop, you can just say it's the cannabis magazine. And if you don't like it, and people don't buy it, and so yeah, it gives us like that little bit of extra sort of breath.

Carlos Zepeda 29:20

Okay, I appreciate that you already talked about as well about the temporality, I call it slow print that they print maybe two times in a year, and that also in a way that you already alluded to it benefiting your calendar, like your calendar, because then you will be able to fit the magazines in, in a way that it makes sense for for the production and the your process of procuring and sending out. I was wondering, from one of the interviews that I've heard is that you mentioned that you have a certain number of subscribers, and then that will be the amount that you buy, and then just send to your subscribers. Now with the shop, do you also have to own some or buy some magazines directly from the publishers, and then you are owner of that stock?

Steve Watson 29:44

It depends. There are two main ways of doing it with the shop. One is seller-return. So and that you tend to do that when you're working with distributors. So obviously, with the subscription, we're talking about, like 1000s of copies of magazine. So that makes sense for us to be working directly with the publisher. For the shop, we're pretty good set, like 20 or 30 copies. So the publisher doesn't want to be happening like, a tonne

of email until it stocks out, but actually, some do. And so then we work with the publisher, more often we work with a distributor, so then you're working to the distributor's terms, and very often that is seller-return. So then, you know, basically we take 20 copies. And as we sell them, we pay for them. And also some distributors prefer to work [fan sale]. And again, like that's, that's fine, too. So we buy a number of magazines, and then they're ours. And then we just like, keep tapping until until they're gone. So that we tend to be led by the terms of the publisher or the distributor.

Carlos Zepeda 30:59

Perfect. And talking about the selection. When you say you made your calendar, do you always consider something new, something that's just recently come up? Or do you also think about, okay, there's some back issues that I've read, they have some really amazing editorial content, or writers, and then I'm going to send that as well, something that's maybe three years or five years ago, has that also been something that you have done?

Steve Watson 31:29

No, no, no. So there's at Stack. The magazines you send them the subscription are always the current issue. And as much as possible, we make sure it's a magazine that has just come out. And because obviously, if a magazine is sent out who's sitting in the shops, every day, it's on the shelf in the shops, that's another day where one of our subscribers could have gone and bought that magazine. And so then three weeks later, we send them a copy of the same magazine in the post. That's not an ideal experience. So yeah, we tried to make sure that it's as new as possible, but it's always the current issue.

Carlos Zepeda 32:10

And also you mentioned that there's previously in the previous session of questions that you someone reached out back to you after three years saying all right finally published by magazine. Does it happen often that the editors themselves contact you saying saying: Oh, you have this online platform that can really you know make it easier for me to sell my magazine or maybe if you like it you will send it to your subscribers and is it often that it happens that the editors contact you directly?

Steve Watson 32:46

Yeah, literally every day. I've had like two emails like that today.

Carlos Zepeda 32:51

And in that case, I would consider you and Stack as the sort of like the gatekeeper or well a gatekeeper and an intermediary because you connect the audiences and editors or publishers but also you have a power our responsibility to decide what is going to be sent out so have you bested on yourself a responsibility Okay, I want to showcase them we already mentioned for example that if something modern something contemporary that most recently published or have you also thought about okay I want to focus on you know, cultural diversity or sending out magazines from I don't know if your customer base right now their subscribers are based in the UK based in Europe and you would like to for them to know more about Southeast Asia. So let's send this magazine. What type of responsibilities do you think you have a gatekeeper in the selection of magazines?

Steve Watson 33:57

I'm never looking for any specific thing. There's there is no I mean, like to give you an example. Obviously, the invasion of Ukraine, the moment is something that is just dominating everyone's minds and in a sort of like eternity then like it's there it's there, there's a magazine that is published in Bucharest. And it's generally about being so like interested in Eastern Europe. And their next issue I know is going to be, like heavily influenced by the invasion of Ukraine and cannot not be. I think that would be really interesting when it comes out. So I'm really looking forward to seeing it coming out, but it's not like I then go, like, I'm now looking for independent magazines about the invasion of Ukraine, because that's just not how these magazines work, you know. They're not like, you know, they're not timely, like sort of news organisations that are responding to something in real time. Similarly, I mean, I find the independent publishing scene in China, totally fascinating, because I mean, independent publishing in China is banned, it is against the law, you need to have to have a state licence to be able to

publish. But they've obviously got loads of printers and factories where they're doing amazing stuff. So like, basically, there's this kind of like weird balance come up, where there's a bunch of people who've got something to say something they're very passionate about, it's against the law for them to say it. But if they are kind of clever about it, then they can just get the place down the road to print the magazine for them. I really want to get hold with many of those as possible and put them in front of a wider audience. But that doesn't mean that I'm then like, sort of going out on a mission to find more Chinese independent publishing. It always comes down to the idea for me, it's the age when you pick up a magazine. This one just happens to be next to me. This is a new architecture magazine. And you might be able to see.

Carlos Zepeda 36:26
I love the cover.

Steve Watson 36:29
Yeah, right. Yeah, it's kind of hard to look at. So this like, sort of weird thing here where the pages come up in my sort of triangle. How's that? That's really strange. Why? Why would they do that? That kind of like, that sort of thing that sparked my interest. And then I want to spend more time with that magazine and find out what's going on with it. Club Donny there you go. Very nice!

Carlos Zepeda 36:54
Here it also has the triangle. I found this interesting as well.

Steve Watson 37:02
So anyway, that's the sort of thing that I'm looking for, rather than any kind of, there's no, there's no preconceived agenda of right, we're looking for this kind of thing. It's always the idea that's been expressed in this one needs to be unpacked and needs to reach a wider audience.

Carlos Zepeda 37:25
And talking about this Chinese publishers, for example, in what way do you think globalisation as, it's an economic process, it's a cultural process. How do you think has it helped increase cross border trade of independent magazines? In within Europe, for instance?

Steve Watson 37:49
I mean, I would imagine so yeah, yeah, of course. Yeah, I mean, the I suppose one of the one of the things I think is interesting about these magazines is when you compare it to the mainstream, so in the mainstream, you get, like territories. And so you say you've got like Vogue and then you've got Vogue Italia, got British Vogue, and that all these like individual Vogue looks like around the world. And that's for really good reasons like the look, these advertisers want to advertise in Vogue Italia. So that like [data], that's that thing there. There's no independent magazine that you get, like different, like sort of country versions of it. Because you make the magazine and then, I mean, thinking of like, there's a magazine called Sabbats, which is like sort of doesn't publish for years, but it's like a witchcraft magazine. That was made by a Norwegian woman who was living in the UK and was read by people all around the world because if you were someone who was interested in this like sort of meeting place of like, feminism and witchcraft, and like cool sort of Instagram styled stuff, that was the magazine for you didn't matter if you're in like Canada or wherever. So the national boundaries don't really mean anything to these magazines, particularly because they're largely sold on internet. So again, as you know, the internet, it doesn't matter where you are, I feel like if you can pay your packaging, then you can get hold of that magazine.

Carlos Zepeda 39:38
And at the moment to have an estimate of how many magazines are available currently in store in the Stack shop?

Steve Watson 39:48
Yeah. No idea. Hundreds.

Carlos Zepeda 39:54

If I don't know if it's possible, like if I could get a from you, if you would be willing to share just some data points of, you know, where did the magazines come from? Or, it doesn't need to be quite specific. But just to understand these...

Steve Watson 40:13

I think what we have available,

Carlos Zepeda 40:17

Because I call it a global niche market, which means that yes, you have the one output in one country, but your audience is spread all over the world. So you might have, like, hundreds of people in multiple cities around the world, but that really makes up your audience. And then really speaks of this example of the magazine that you just mentioned about the you said Norwegian living in the UK, or was it the other way around?

Steve Watson 40:44

Yes.

Carlos Zepeda 40:44

So it really speaks about, like, it's evidence of the having a global audience for our local made product.

Steve Watson 40:56

I'm just gonna, I'm just gonna look at the sheet that we use for for managing the shop. Okay, that like some of this will kind of not make any sense. Because by it's Excel, but basically what I'm looking at here is a sheet that's got the name of the magazine, the issue number, the quantity, so how many we stock, the cost of the magazine. I mean, let me let me take a look at this after the end of the call. And I'll do like this I will strip out the columns, I think could be interesting for you. And then you can you can see, that will be all the magazines that we've ever had in the snapshot. It's just the lifelong side ones that we've got copies in stock at the moment.

Carlos Zepeda 41:47

Okay, yeah, I can send you an email as a reminder, because I know you have some other commitments. And it can be like in like, one week or two weeks from now. Sure, sure. Yeah. But it's good to like, even if it's the now to have this timestamp and say, Okay, today we have these maybe like in the future look, look at how it looks, how it has changed over time. And when you mentioned about the new, do you have the costs here. So you have sign in the shop, you have the subscription model? How's the where's the, like the business model for you? Do you make most of your profit from selling in the shop or from the subscriptions? And have you been able to like cover all of those costs? Because I, what I've heard from or what I've read about the distribution of independent magazine services is one of the roadblocks that I identified, you can help me uncover some additional ones that you've seen, but is the high price of postal service as well?

Steve Watson 42:50

Oh, yeah. Yeah. And that's actually it's getting worse. With the with the pandemic. Obviously, planes stopped flying. And I didn't realise I thought that like I thought that airmail or when on like special, like, Royal Mail, aeroplanes that flew in places, of course, that's not the case. So the Airmail just gets shoved down to any plane that's going to where it needs to go. And so when the plane stopped flying, and surcharges came in, made it much, much more expensive. A genuinely psyche is a real problem. So are you so in terms of the business, the business really runs on the subscriptions, and the larger the shop is. Fine, it's okay. But it's just that we don't sell anywhere near as many. You know, sort of like, we sell magazines through the shop. But with the subscription we've been going for, like 13 years, gathering people who keep on paying on a recurring basis, and that's the business and then the shop. The shop basically like pays for itself. And it's a really good thing to have. But if you had the subscriptions are really the core of the business.

Carlos Zepeda 44:09

Perfect thing, thank you for for sharing that. And I think I have a number here in one of the interviews that in 2016 there are 3500 subscribers. With the pandemic, have you seen those numbers rise or have they been stable?

Steve Watson 44:27

They rose and they fallen again. And so basically the in I mean, the pandemic was very, very good for us and in terms of selling new subscriptions and say magazines, it was very, very bad for us everybody for actually getting things to people. So we had this kind of perfect storm where we got way more customers than normal, at the same time that we couldn't send stuff to people. So we just ended up sending like, a replacement magazine, obviously at our cost, and it was awful, awful. But I mean, but that also is where running a subscription is a really useful thing. Because if you're somebody who has just come to Stack for the first time and bought a magazine, and the magazine doesn't turn up, and so you contact us and welcome sorry, they will send you another one. I mean, that's not great experience. If you're someone who's been subscribing to us for a few years, and you're used to getting your magazine every month, and then it doesn't turn up that you kind of know that that's because there's something weird happening rather than because we're just rubbish at doing what we're supposed to do. So having the sort of like core of subscribers has been really useful for the pandemic.

Carlos Zepeda 45:51

Perfect. And also well, about your customer base. Have you any insight if there's any Dutch consumers or consumer subscribers that are based in the Netherlands? Because I know that there you have the Stack awards, right?

Steve Watson 46:15

Not anymore. We don't.

Carlos Zepeda 46:17

Okay, well, or in the last edition of the Stack awards? Better said... was it 2018? I think so.

Steve Watson 46:23

2019. It was.

Carlos Zepeda 46:27

MacGuffin magazine and Fantastic Man, those are two that I identified from the there was a third one from the Netherlands in the nominations. And I don't know if you've met the editors or the publishers of these magazines. But do you have any opinions or any comments on the Dutch magazine market, independent magazine market in itself? Do you see some type of you know, differences between the UK or France or whichever countries you have some experience with?

Steve Watson 47:01

I would say that the I would say that the Amsterdam independent publishing scene is particularly strong. And I think it really helps that you got a shop like Athenaeum right in the heart of things, giving people like a really visible, maximal centre for these magazines. I think that it helps that the Dutch government support cultural things like this. I mean, in Britain, that's just doesn't really happen to people. But like, you know, for example, like, you know, like MacGuffin is as awesome as it is partly because it gets money from the Dutch government that allows them to do really great job. And so yeah, I'd say that's probably the two main things that jumped out, I think about the Dutch proficiency.

Carlos Zepeda 47:50

Perfect. And now we'll move to the final section with it, which is talking about digitalization and how this digital changes? Because first of all, from your experience, coming from the from studying from working in the magazine industry, and then you said earlier, oh, I don't didn't want to be just like copy editing or just a writer. Did you have this learning curve about digital tools to make the website? How was the experience

of, you know, adopting certain digital elements into well, creating a website, but also then in the going forwards? In the e-commerce as well. So do you think did you have a partner? Or did you do this learning by doing? Where did you get those inspirations from?

Steve Watson 48:42

So the Church of London made the first website for us, and a friend helped me come up with the name. Church of London did the branding, built the website. And the guy who was like sort of the tech guy at Church of London, gave me a book to read called "Don't make me think", which was published like in the 90s I think, like early like, you know, really the beginning of the internet, but it was all basically the message in the book is, anyone who's on your website is just looking for a reason to leave. So basically, don't give them the reasons to leave like don't make me think is the thing that make the whole thing so simple and like seamless and is genuinely a great book. And I bet it really stands up even like these days. And so in terms of like the original, like sort of building the thing, that's how we did it, it's all run on WordPress, shall we say, like, genuinely really simple to use. And then everything over the years has just been kind of like, added on. Like, as we've needed it, we took all of our payments through Pay Pal to start with, which also obviously has like its limitations. And like, you know, we added in so called direct debit, which was a bit of a mistake for a bit, and then we got better. And then it's all just been sort of like add in to as you go. To make the thing that we used to that.

Carlos Zepeda 50:13

I realised when you mentioned like everyone in your website is just looking for a way to leave. Or a reason to leave, because when I am in the Stack website, I just find myself opening and opening and opening. I'm being honest with you, I'm working for a Museum in Amsterdam, just to do their, to analyse their website and see it and the moment that I open it, I really don't know where I am. And that's what I'm trying to help them with. But something that really speaks of Stack is that it's a website that I can personally tell you like this is like one to one feedback that it just that I get I stay there, I stay there. In the in the time that you've been there. What other types of digital tools or elements, you know, talking about hardware or software? Have you included with changes? I mean, you're starting to working in the 2000s, your first magazine experience until now. There's been computer personal computers, and then the laptops, the iPad, the smartphone. So everything that's, you know, we have all of these selection of devices now, but also a selection or variety of digital resources, which are the social media, the websites, the platforms? In what ways do you think it has helped grow? Or which ones have you incorporated in your business operations? I mean, I suppose computers is the no-brainer. Bur are there some software's that you use at Stack that really is you say, okay, without these software's I couldn't be operating.

Steve Watson 51:53

Yeah, sure. And so we use a software called Chargebee, which is the subscriptions management software, we use Shopify to run the shop. We use Stripe to take card payments, we use GoCardless for direct debit payments, why can't I think has a direct debit to that. We use Vimeo for hosting our video. We use I mean, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. Like when we first when Stack first went on Facebook, and Twitter. Honestly, I didn't really know why we were going on there is sort of like what genuinely it was partly so that we could have the little Facebook icon and the Twitter icon on the website, because it made it look like a proper website, like the I mean, like honestly, being completely honest with you that's sort of how it was these days. I mean, personally, I don't use Facebook at all, and haven't for quite a long time. We do post stuff on Facebook, because obviously people are still there. But I don't put a huge amount of effort into it. Twitter, I'm much happier with as a platform and like it. And so put a bit more effort into that. And Instagram is the one that has like been the best for us and is still the one that I feel the most kind of affinity with I think.

Carlos Zepeda 53:30

Earlier you mentioned feedback coming from Instagram. In what way or form does this come from?

Steve Watson 53:40

People only tend to say nice things on Instagram, they don't tend to post something and say they're not very happy. But is that you know, when someone's magazine arrives, they take a picture of it and often with like their cat or their dog or like coffee or in bed or whatever. And it's really nice. It's a it's a really nice sort of illustration of the way that people see these magazines as kind of accessories to their lives. And because look at the end of the day when someone's posting that picture, or like story. It's kind of going like, look at the cool magazine that I've got here the like you don't have like, I mean, that's kind of like what it boils down to. But it's I do. I like seeing that kind of the way that people respond to it, and then use it as a kind of an extension of or reflection of themselves.

Carlos Zepeda 54:37

And then when you mentioned about the surveys that you sent out to you, are those sent out to your subscribers exclusively? Or newsletter?

Steve Watson 54:47

No, the last one that we did, and we did it in I think 2020. And the last one we did was to everybody. And basically, I just had the logic in there, so that you could split it. So that like we could see what, for example, our subscribers think about stuff compared to someone who just follows on Twitter. But yeah, I wanted to get as holistic view as possible to see if I can, yeah, exactly that to see the differences between how people view us.

Carlos Zepeda 55:20

And this was like the survey, do you remember the platform or the software that you're using for this?

Steve Watson 55:31

No. But I could I could look into it.

Carlos Zepeda 55:35

Yeah. And I was just wondering if it's like, you know, part of the Microsoft package or part of the Google package or something?

Steve Watson 55:41

Nah, it wasn't it wasn't either of those. It was one that I paid for, for a while to have the functionality.

Carlos Zepeda 55:47

Maybe Qualtrics?

Steve Watson 55:49

No.

Carlos Zepeda 55:50

Doesn't ring a bell. Okay. Nice. Okay. It's not like necessary to know. Just generally curious. Now leading to the last part of the interview, I would ask you, what do you think have been with digitalization, and what you've already mentioned, the top three opportunities that you have with digitalization?

Steve Watson 56:13

The top three opportunities. I mean, look, social media has clearly given everybody much, much better way of getting stuff out in front of people. I mean, the fact that the fact that these days, you know, I have WordPress, and I can run the whole website, just from my laptop, is also I think, really, really useful. And that you just talk you, basically, I think the problem to this is the sort of services that everyone uses these days, for various different reasons are just the same ones that that we use to run this business. So I think to be honest that whole list of software's that I gave you earlier, we use them all for different reasons. They're all good. I honestly, I wouldn't say there's one that stands out above the others as being like magnificent. And I think that all of them

to greater or lesser extents oversell what they can do. So I mean, the amount of time that I've spent and money on Facebook advertising, and it has never worked. And Facebook's response is effectively, well, you're not using it properly. If you were using it properly, you'd be getting these amazing response rates, all the rest of it, I'm sorry, that is just bullshit. It just doesn't work. And the thing is, like, they're, they're really, really good at getting a group of private people together to make something that sounds like it's amazing. That is completely idea: is it's amazing. But I think when you actually try to use it, you come up against the limitations. And I think that's pretty much the same for all of the software's that we use. But that's fine, because you just use them for the things that they can do. Like, you know, like so like Chargebee, which is the subscription management software. They're great. They're genuinely really good. But I've got an account manager who contacts me every now and then sending out all the new functionality I've got and stuff is like, I would literally have to employ a full time developer to be working on the integration with all this stuff. It's just like, that's just not the business that we are, you know, it's the you've got to make sure that they work for you rather than you trying to work for them.

Carlos Zepeda 59:09

Yes. Yeah. And what you mention about Facebook advertising at least is like unrelated to the interview but my parents also tried to set up a business and went With Facebook advertising. Never worked, like impossible to make it make sense. But now after talking about the opportunities, what do you think top three challenges with digitalization?

Steve Watson 59:25

I think the fact that. Well, let me let me do another opportunity. Because the so one, one of the things that people say repeatedly about prints is that it offers a break from the screen. And so I think that while you know, can't insert, like screens of like come to dominate our lives, that also does present an opportunity for someone who works with print magazines, because people want that as like a counterbalance. I think so that said, thinking about the threats. I mean, the fact that like, literally everything is on my phone is obviously a threat. I mean, the you know, when people feel that, they can get everything that they need, like the news and everything else through their phone, that just sort of takes you away from from looking at something else. And particularly that whole idea that, you know, if you want to read something, when you're on the bus, you need to put that thing in your back, so you can read it. And it's so easy to get out of the habit of that. And then you're sitting on the bus and you've got your phone in your pocket, and I'll find artists like that, you know, read the news, or whatever it is. So I did that. I mean, that's obviously definitely a threat. What other threats that we face because of digital? I don't I don't have I think the thing is that, like, I genuinely don't see print and digital in opposition to each other. I think it's just a question of, kind of like the softwares like, how do you use what is there in a way that makes sense for you, rather than trying to kind of like crowbar yourself into it. So like, I mean, lots of magazine companies spend a fair amount of money, putting their print magazine into a digital format that someone can read on their phone, or an iPad or whatever. And I just don't get it, I just don't understand why you would do it. Because it's sort of like, it's just not made for that is the like, you know, the layout of this page here is meant to be read at this size. And, you know, kind of like on this format. I just think it's crazy that, that people think that you can take that and squish it down into like a little Chinese screen. Anyway.

Carlos Zepeda 01:02:08

So you just answered like the two questions that I was going to ask last. Like one of them was why prin? And you already mentioned that. And also this, when you mentioned, you know, there's no competition, you just use the platforms, these social media platforms, or whichever digital tools to, in the case of independent magazines, to sell the print product, because the print product is the output. It's what is shown and there is real value in having the experience of the good in your hands, right? But I would just I came up with a final question. For in the years that you've been being the founder of Stack and selecting the magazines, with with digitization or with we there's this theory that there's convergence, like everything looks the same. Everybody wants to do the same in

these social media platforms. So do you think this has become the same for independent magazines in how you see them aesthetically so that they use a similar type typeface, or they try to you know, have similar photography, similar editing, they, you know, get the same writers, they use similar paper or, you know, similar colour combinations. Have you seen some of these aesthetics converge in the independent magazine industry?

Steve Watson 01:03:33

You definitely get trends you definitely get. I mean, a while ago, a few years ago, there was a big trend for whitespace and the likeliness I guess like Kinfolk was probably in a sort of the standard bearer. Cereal then did a really good job of it. And then a bunch of others came along that tried to do it as well and it just didn't do quite as well. So you so yes, you get trends like that you get trends in terms of the people covered, what's his name Hans Ulrich Obrist is like, man, he gets around an independent magazine. So like the I say, everybody's got an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist in their independent magazine. So you get trends with the kind of people featured. But I would say that while those trends exist, the greater characteristic is of variety and diversity. And it's almost like, you know, once somebody uses this typeface, then the other magazines that are and actually the one interesting thing is a lot. When you speak to independent magazine makers, a lot of them don't really read a lot of independent magazines, they're not really kind of going like, they're not looking at what each are doing so much. They're more interested in like, their output, their thing. But yeah, once you get something like, you know, particular typeface has been used, and not just in magazines, but like, it could be on like, TV, or like, you know, film or wherever, is there an appetite for something different? Or something that like, fits this particular project? That, like I said before, it all comes down to the idea of this particular project and what you're trying to express. And that's completely antithetical to any idea that you would follow, like a trend or something that, like, it's been done elsewhere. And again, this is like, you know, it's what is one of the things that I really appreciate about this magazine. So I want to keep seeing new stuff coming through.

Carlos Zepeda 01:05:51

Yeah, and, you know, I've told you before, I've been a magazine collector, since I was eight, maybe younger, I had my National Geographic subscription coming from the US, I was from the north of Mexico. So there's this service. And I got, like, tuned out of the whole industry. But now coming into my research project, and seeing the amazing content that's coming in from just one city. I just, for one, I can imagine, you know, the scale that it actually has at the international level, for me as an ambition, you know, to study it, but also just the cultural capital that it also creates, for each of my, for whoever, you know, they make it locally, but it reaches a wider audience, thanks to all these digital tools or globalisation, whatever it may be, it reaches the right audiences. And I think that's one of the goals of your platform.

Steve Watson 01:06:48

Yeah, totally.

Carlos Zepeda 01:06:49

So final question. Is there anything else that you'd like to add to this interview?

Steve Watson 01:06:44

I'd say, well, one thing just came up, pops into my mind is, I don't know if you're planning to already, but you should definitely go to Indiecon this September. Because this is like, it's exactly it brings together these people who, like you know, whose magazines we'll be talking about. I think that would be worth it.

Carlos Zepeda 01:07:15

I think. Yeah, I noticed that in Arnhem, in the Netherlands, they had this biannual festival, independent magazine festival. I think that the last one was running 2016.

Steve Watson 01:07:32

And that's quite a long time ago, I think yeah. Indiecon have, they've announced that they're doing it this year. Got a meeting in a week or two, to help them decide who

they're going to have come along. So yeah. Okay, sorry excuse me. Hey love. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Okay. All right. Sorry about that.

Carlos Zepeda 01:08:05

I will definitely consider Indicone, my research project is due before that. But this is something that I'm really interested now. Like, now that I've seen it, you know, my, like how I grew up, you know, reading all types of magazines. And then seeing that there's, there's still an appetite for print. So I'm rediscovering myself in a way but also rediscovering everything that it has to offer. So I would just have to thank you for participating in my research project. Thank you for answering to my emails. And yeah, I'm just very thankful and I hope that if there if it's Indiecon, maybe some time that I got to London, that I can meet you in person, I think that will be really fantastic.

Steve Watson 01:08:49

Sounds good.

Interview 5: transcript

Interviewer: Carlos Zepeda Aguilar

Interviewee: Gert Jonkers

Date of interview: April 1, 2022

Location of interview: Czaar Peterstraat Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Transcribed: April 1, 2022

Duration: 01:40:28

Carlos Zepeda 0:00

I'm just going to put this between here. So hopefully that's good.

Gert Jonkers 0:09

Should be fine.

Carlos Zepeda 0:10

Perfect. So we're just in like for the sake of the recording, I would just introduce myself. My name is full name Carlos Alberto Zubaydah come from Mexico and I'm studying at Erasmus University Rotterdam. This an interview, part of my master thesis, let me remove as part of my master thesis project that will be delivered in June, early June. So I have a list of interview of it's a semi structured interview, it's divided into three parts. So first, it will be about your early beginnings, or your first contact with magazines, then talking about your editorial practice for Fantastic Man. And then like the impact of digital, like the digital era, this past 20 years in your publishing practices. So I would like you to just introduce yourself your full name, where we are and if I have your permission to record this interview.

Gert Jonkers 1:11

Okay, I'm Gert Jonkers. I'm the editor in chief of Fantastic Man. And I am involved in a few other magazines as well. I live in Amsterdam, we are in Amsterdam now, in our headquarters in Amsterdam East. Third floor. Old building. That's it. And yes, you have my permission.

Carlos Zepeda 1:36

Perfect. So let's start. So just tell me about you and your early relationships with magazines. When is like the first time that you remember having that first contact?

Gert Jonkers 1:51

I was always interested in writing. And I think I always liked newspapers and magazines, because we have a lot of media at home. My father subscribed to two newspapers per day. And I think about seven weekly magazines, which is kind of crazy. I mean, the only thing he did was read basically, he also had his room was a huge library. And, and so he you know, there were lots of magazines. And so, not that I will read them, of course as a child, but though but I sort of liked having them around. I when I when I finished high school, I studied Dutch literature, that's just for two years, I didn't finish it. And then I I was also interested in music. So I started making music. I was in a band as a singer. And from the age of 19, I think. And so I stopped studying and wanted to pursue a career in music. But after a year or five or so I kind of figured out that that wasn't going to happen. And also that I didn't that it ultimately didn't really suit me. I thought. I enjoyed being in studio, I didn't really like being on stage. And I thought I needed to like being on stage in order to make it as a musician. So anyway, I was also always interested in photography. And even as a I think a 14 year old, 15 year old 16 year old, I briefly thought about going to art school to study photography. But anyway, I didn't do that. But so when I needed something to make money with I decided to focus on photography. And so I was a photographer for a couple of years and started photographing for magazines. And at some point, there was one magazine that said, oh, oh, there was a magazine was looking for a new gay magazine that was starting in the Netherlands, sort of corporate from the from the COC, which is the gay sort of like Association, Action Group, not very action, actually. But they were starting a new magazine, and they advertised and they were looking for a photo editor and I thought, oh, you know, you know, I like I'm a photographer, and I like photography. So I'll send them a letter. And then they said, Oh, well, we just hired somebody already. But we liked your letters would

you like to write for us? And so I thought, Oh, well, you know, it's a job at least. Although maybe it was partly volunteer. But anyway, it was a first I was involved in a magazine. So I started writing for that magazine, and I sort of became sort of like, one of the editors of the magazine. So that was my contact with magazines. And then somebody said, like, oh, you know, I like the things you do. And do you want to write for this and this magazine maybe and so I sort of slowly started writing from other titles as well. And that became my job. So I didn't, I sort of stopped photography. And And from then on, I was a journalist, I guess. So I didn't study it. But I sort of rolled into it. And really enjoyed it. Because I, you know, I think the fun of journalism is that you can be interested in things that you're curious, it's, you know, you have to be curious, and you have to your curiosity is always fed in a way, because because, yeah, you just sort of like, you're allowed to ask people things. And you're just, you're, you just have to go out to sort of, like, find information. And so and so while I may be, personally, I always considered myself quite shy. But you know, as a journalist, you have to ask things, so well, as a person, I wouldn't really maybe ask certain things. But as a journalist, I do, for instance, as a, as a normal person, I wouldn't walk into every shop, but as a journalist, or especially when I later, you know, I mean, first, I was concentrating on music, and I got more and more interested in fashion and sort of started writing more about fashion. And, you know, but maybe at the time, or maybe still, but you know, at a time, I definitely didn't have the money to buy Gucci, but yet, I would walk into a Gucci store because I was interested. And then my boyfriend would be like, well, you know, we shouldn't be here. It's like, well, why now it's, you know, I'm a journalist, I want to try these things on. Whereas, you know, otherwise, we think, why would I go there and try these clothes on because I call it can't afford them or so. But anyway, so I think I think journalism is a great way to feed your curiosity and your interest in things. So that's, that's how magazines happened. And you know, after I wrote about music for a long time, for a couple of years, mostly about music, because that was my interest and my background. I became editor of a magazine called BLV. Spelled Blvd Blvd dot. And, and that was more focused on fashion. So I sort of like with an I became good friends with the fashion editor of the magazine. And she sort of like got me interested in the field of fashion. And that's also where I met Joop, who I was my colleague who I later on started BUTT with, and a few years later, Fantastic Man. And a few years later, The Gentlewoman

Carlos Zepeda 7:51

And what comes next. And what comes next. Like, it would be like more, as I see it, that you have, like, started with one topic. And you have the ability to talk about different topics in journalism. So you mentioned music, you mentioned fashion. You mentioned sexuality, like that gay magazine BUTT, and like, what comes next as well. Also The Gentlewoman, which is more at least what I read it online, that is the sister version of Fantastic Man.

Gert Jonkers 8:22

Yeah. Yeah. Although it's quite different. A lot of people when we started The Gentleman said, Oh, why don't you call this fantastic woman? Well, first of all, because we didn't want it to be the, the wife of Fantasic Man. And, and it wasn't a carbon copy. Indeed. So yeah, there's a you know, we make a magazine called The Happy Reader, which is a literature magazine.

Carlos Zepeda 8:50

It's also currently like you also work on that at the moment. Yeah. Happy Reader.

Gert Jonkers 8:53

Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 8:54

Okay. So talking about BUTT, Fantastic Man. I don't know. Blvd. Were was that also an independent magazine? Like, would you consider, for example, the magazine at COC an independent magazine?

Gert Jonkers 9:08

No. No, I mean, that was that was almost like an institutional magazine. Well, Blvd. you could say was a independent magazine. Yeah, I didn't, you know, I didn't own it. But I mean, it doesn't matter. Yeah, it was an independent magazine.

Carlos Zepeda 9:23

So how would you describe an independent magazine?

Gert Jonkers 9:27

Well, that's an interesting question that I actually I actually rarely use that term. Sometimes we do. The only the only time we use it is when we complain to advertisers that they're not paying. It's like, Hey, listen, you know, we're an independent magazine. But otherwise, I don't really know what independent means. I mean, yes, it's independent from a boss I guess. Is that it? But then, you know, Joop and I are the boss now. So I mean, there's always somebody publishing it. Independent means, I don't know, because because, and interestingly, sometimes people say, Oh, you're not an independent magazine anymore. Well, why? what changed? You know, we're still we still make the magazine with the same intention as 20 years ago, 15 years ago. What where do you go from independent to dependent? That's, I mean, are there dependent magazines? I don't know. That's, yeah, that's so there's also some people often say like, you're independent, if you're not depending on advertisement? Well, I mean, that's a bit of a strange, because a lot of people are dependent on advertisement. And, you know, I mean, in the dependent, sort of the opposite of independent is often seen as a sellout or so. But to what? I mean, I also think, is Dazed & Confused and independent magazine. Yeah, maybe, you know, but it's part of a huge group. And the owner is extremely rich, apparently, and good for him. You know, does, but does that mean they're not independent? So I don't know, is Vogue independent? Probably not? I mean, we don't consider Vogue an independent magazine. But why is? Do you know, do you have to do you have a definition for independent or not?

Carlos Zepeda 11:35

So the definition that I used for independent normally is about ownership, it goes into two variables, you could say, one is the ownership and also is who publishes it. So if you are the owner of the magazine, that I would classify as an independent magazine. And then if you are also there's no publishing conglomerate, such as, like DPG Media that has a portfolio of magazines that they just use, you know, economies of scale, to use the same resources to publish magazines. And they go. So it's also the, on the publishing side, that it's not part of this big media company that just publishes 10-15 titles, and even sometimes, those titles are competing between each other for the same target audiences. So that's what I would classify an independent magazine, like, one, it's owned by the editors themselves. And two, it's not published by a corporation, let's say, like, has ownership of other titles. Yeah, that's sort of the two that I said, I use,

Gert Jonkers 12:49

But it's still quite debatable, of course, because we make four magazines. Is that a portfolio of magazines? Yes, it is. You know, I mean, yes, Joop and I own the company, I think. But yeah, so I mean, it is it's quite, you know, I don't I don't know, I find it a difficult term independent. But, you know, I mean, it's sort of, I mean, the interesting thing is, we all have an idea immediately of oh yeah that's an independent magazine.

Carlos Zepeda 13:30

And when we talk about the idea of the independent magazine, there's other theories that go to that aspect of, okay, what's the principle of the magazine itself. So when you have more mainstream commercial magazine, there's always this group of people that make sure to make all the market analysis to make sure that their content fits their results. So another theories of the independent magazine, or what they call slow journalism, is the temporality of what is being printed like, this is printed two times a year, for example, not 12 times a year. And also the so it's the time that you take to produce it, and the type of content that you have inside. So normally, they call it a study of a community. So if we talk about something like BUTT, for example, you can say, okay, it's the gay community, and it's, you know, people contributing to this one magazine and everybody else supporting the magazine by consequence of them seeing themselves in that in those pages. So that's the other when we talk about the idea and the content itself, not about

you know, the, like the industrial organisation of it more about what it represents. This could be another definition that I can share, that the independent magazines are different from the commercial. So it's about community, and not about marketing.

Unknown Speaker 15:01

Because there are independent magazines that are extremely commercial, I think.

Carlos Zepeda 15:06

Then they tend to like, go commercial because there's a shift of business model towards advertising and that funding to continue that magazine for as long as they can.

Gert Jonkers 15:18

But and, for instance, The New Yorker is is extremely uncommercial. I think but it's probably not an independent magazine because it's part of Conde Nast. Yes. But then Conde Nast is owned by one family. So maybe the owner, there is an owner, anyway.

Carlos Zepeda 15:36

Yeah. I know what I mean. And it's, it's a very difficult term to define. And that's one of the main reasons why it's, it's one of my research questions, one of the first research questions that I intend to answer in my project is what it is. And I guess the then we can agree that there's not one specific definition. Because even when you say one definition that say ownership, and then you took a look at all different magazines are owned by the editors, you will see a very different variety of content as well, communities being addressed. So then that definition loses its value and then comes to the community. And it's always going to be quite a dynamic concept. But I think that's what it makes it interesting as well.

Unknown Speaker 16:25

Well, I think, I mean, feeling wise, I think we definitely feel independent, because we're not, you know, we can do whatever we want to do.

Carlos Zepeda 16:34

Yeah.

Gert Jonkers 16:35

If we want to come out? Well, if we want to come out, if we want to turn it into a newspaper, you know, we can, you know, I'm not sure if it'll be a success. But you know, we can, if we want to come out five times a year, or if we want to decide if you decide to stop for a year, we can do it because we are our own boss. So that makes makes you feel independent.

Carlos Zepeda 16:57

So when you mentioned that you first your first experience in this magazine COC, say, and now you have Fantastic Man, Gentlewoman, BUTT with the rerelease, and the Happy Reader. What do you think, like, from your perspective drives the people that are working in the magazine together? Why do they want to collaborate? Why do they want to work, but they want to photograph? What's what's in these magazines that calls them?

Unknown Speaker 17:29

I think what unites them is an interest in people. And I think that everybody wants to do the best they can. But I, that's a bit of a cliché to say, because I sort of I imagined that everybody does that always mean, I mean, who be depressing to think that somebody works, and they're not doing their best. So so everybody, but it but still, you know, I think I think what unites us, you know, the people are that we work with are ambitious, and want to be very good. But most of all, they're interested in people. And not so much interested in product. I mean, I think that's that always very sort of clear. And what we do is that it's, it's the people we're interested in, and it's not really the product we're interested in. So we are not another consumer magazine, you know, we're not sort of like telling people to buy things. We're just telling people to be interested in each other.

Carlos Zepeda 18:44

Yeah, in the latest issue of Fantastic Man it becomes quite clear that you want to highlight the writers, the authors. So there's one theme, and there is there's, I guess the collaborations come into place, because they have one driving topic. And in this case, you can say that is the story of this community of authors, right? So that really having these one overarching theme, like goes into who's the contributor, who's been shown in the pages, and also who is going to read as well. But I didn't like I don't have like the any of the other back issues. But I was wondering if it is something recurrent in the new editorial philosophy for Fantastic Man, or maybe you can speak of the other magazines as well, that you choose, like a theme for each issue that you publish?

Unknown Speaker 19:43

And we started doing that, I think, two or three years ago. Because before that, we sometimes had a little bit of a theme, but not really it was quite a sort of like the theme was sort of like maybe more abstract to us and we just still, you know, I mean, you wouldn't really, it wouldn't shout at you from the issue that this was a themed issue. And then three years ago, we changed the magazine, we changed it from the normal magazine format to a square format. And we also said, like, oh, let's, let's make it very themed. And so the first issue we met was about Greece, which was at the time when it was kind of possible that Greece would leave the EU. And we leave the euro. And, and we were kind of sad about that. Because because we think that the European Union is quite an important thing to for Europe. And it's a shame that Ukraine isn't part of it yet, etc. But so Greece, there was there was a lot of discussion about Greece. And we thought, well, what Greece is such a great country. And it's such an interesting country. So we did an issue about Greece. Then next, we did an issue about the countryside, together with Rem Koolhaas, which was simultaneous to the he was opening an exhibition at the Guggenheim about the countryside. So we worked with him on the issue, then we then lockdown happened, and we made an issue about hair. And then we made an issue about reuse. And then we made an issue about writers. So the themes can be very different. And the fun, it's actually fun working with it, because it's not like we're doing a different country every season, because that would be boring, like Greece, Japan, Italy, Iceland, Mexico. Yeah, then we've you become a bit of a travel magazine. Although the Greece one also wasn't really a travel magazine, but to sort of thinking it thinking is sort of specific way. And, you know, working with the writers was interesting, because, in a way writers aren't really glamorous. And so to sort of, to sort of treat writers as super glamorous, was kind of fun for us to have writers posing and to, to have writers talking. Not that they never pose or talk, but sort of it was really, I mean, it still is a you know, there's always a sort of fashion angle to Fantastic Man, because we're interested in what people wear or how they appear or how they perceive themselves or present themselves and we like clothes, you know, we're we're just interested in clothing.

Carlos Zepeda 22:46

Like a celebrity treatment.

Gert Jonkers 22:48

A little bit. Yeah. I don't think we particularly interested in the celebrity treatment for celebrities, you know, but you know, to sort of take the theme and sort of like try to I mean, the hair issue was also not really a hairdressers issue per se, but there, but there's a lot of interesting hair, people in it, or people with hair or so the themes have been, yeah, been a sort of fairly recent thing where we get into a different mindset every season, also to keep ourselves excited. Because that's part of the independence is that you can actually do what you want. And you can sort of like, oh, I don't find this exciting anymore. Let's do something else.

Carlos Zepeda 23:37

And but what does, how does it differ before you introduce the new format? How did this how did it differ? Like, what was there something that was calling you for this change? After a certain amount of years?

Gert Jonkers 23:49

Yeah. We just sort of like, I mean, you know, we did, we made the magazine for I guess, about 15 years or so. Was it? 15? Yeah. Because it's, it's 17 years old now. So for 14 years, and we, we just we sort of were at a point where we felt like, okay, it becomes a bit repetitive. You know, I mean, that is the nature of a magazine, because it's not completely different every season. But you just sort of find yourself in a we found ourselves sort of thinking about, okay, you know, the next issue well, you know, there has to be somebody famous in it, probably on the cover. But then we also want somebody unfamous in it. We want some younger people in it, maybe some older people and, you know, we've made sure that there's a diversity of people in it. And ultimately, you're sort of making the same issue every time. Not literally, but I felt, I think Joop felt that even more than I do. It's sort of like, another, here we go again, it's sort of like, because every season you sort of you start the season thinking Okay, you will have some interesting names, you know, and people come with a couple of names like, Okay, this musician and this actor, maybe this fashion designer, or maybe this I have a great baker around the corner that I'm super interested in. Or maybe there's a amazing carpenter somewhere. I mean, we sort of like always try to not go for the cliché and only think like, okay, who's the actor of the season, because I find that super boring. But still, there's always a sort of like you, you get together every six months. And like all that list of names again. So it was also a way to shake up ourselves. Not sure if we'll do it forever. But it was just a way to..

Carlos Zepeda 25:52
Experiment.

Yeah

Which is the freedom that you have. Independent Yeah, with independent publishing. Yeah. Okay. And do you have any, like, when you made so you were in BLVD. Boulevard. And this was something that you didn't own and then you launched BUTT in collaboration or like Co-editors in chief as I understand with Joop, and then Fantastic Man and the Gentlewoman. Do you think that the early experience that you got at a BLVD help you launch these magazines, like one: did it give you the knowledge that you needed to have to launch a magazine? Like regardless of if you didn't have the funds at the time?

Unknown Speaker 26:37

Yeah, yeah, no, but totally. Joop and I worked together for a year or so on BLVD. And, and yeah, I mean, I think there were a lot of things that we wanted to do that we couldn't do. Because it was a, you know, because we weren't the owners, and we weren't the publisher of the magazine. And, sure, I mean, we sort of like shared our interest in things that they you know, that will be fun to do what a shame we can't do that. So that definitely, like, turned into a desire to do our own thing.

Carlos Zepeda 27:16

And how did the first publication? Like, going back to what it was 2001, right? How did that come to be like, how did you? Was it used you when you're doing that one magazine? Or did you have external collaborators that help you with? Because I suppose you needed a graphic designer or layouts?

Gert Jonkers 27:37

No, that's what Joop does.

Carlos Zepeda 27:38

Okay, Joop does graphic design.

Gert Jonkers 27:40

So he's a graphic designer from from training and as a background,

Carlos Zepeda 27:45

Okay. So you have the writing, photography, editorial, he has the artistic direction. Yeah. Do you think that having those two, like elements for a magazine? I really don't know how to phrase this question. But at least what I've read is that the synergy between

the graphic design and the editor editors need to be a good collaboration, otherwise, there's no independent magazine. So do you think that having the security Okay, I have like an expert graphic designer, did that give you the confidence as well to go out to go through all of this?

Gert Jonkers 28:28

Yeah yeah yeah. I mean, first of all, I would have never made a magazine on my own, because I just don't know where to start. And maybe it's different for Joop because he actually, he graduated with a magazine that he made on his own. But I, you know, I definitely think that the collaboration is works well. And, you know, it's very often so that, even though we have opinions on everything, and so we talk about everything, I am the more textual person, and he's the more visual person of the magazine. And there's also people that do everything alone. And that's amazing if they can do that. But for us, it worked really well to have that and actually, how we started BUTT it was really sort of the two of us sitting in a bar and thinking, oh, let's do that, you know, let's let's do it. And we asked a few people, but we also did a lot of the first issue ourselves, I think we, you know, we asked some friends to sort of and people we admired and to work on the magazine and just thought like, oh, let's make I don't know, we printed 750 copies, I think because we said like, you know, I mean that's not gonna make us bankrupt and if nobody wants it, then we'll just in two years time throw them in a fire and then that was it. So. So, ya know, it's a, you know, it's important to have people that that do things that you can't, you know, for. And for a very long time, we've been looking for a third person, because we always thought like, Okay, well, you know, I'm text, he's visual, and we need money as a third or a certified financial interest. And we didn't really have a business interest. And, and so for a long time we look, and we couldn't find that person. Yes, we were working with people, of course, but the sort of fantasy was like, okay, you know, you really need a third person that is sort of like an equal partner in everything that is interested in the financial part of it, or the other structural part of it. So the, or the organising part of it. And so yeah, for years, we were looking for people and asking people and taking people for dinner to sort of see if they would be somebody who would be interested to do that. And we never found that. Oh, although, you know, ultimately, we're working with a lot of great people. But yeah, you sort of, it's also bit coincidence that you find somebody who is that.

Carlos Zepeda 29:28

Yeah, that shares your same, same interests.

Gert Jonkers 29:57

Yeah. That cherishes same interest that can cope with you, you know, I mean, so. And that sort of, you don't know if making one magazine will turn into making 100 magazines, you know, 100 issues of a magazine.

Carlos Zepeda 30:15

And now, going back to when you mentioned about, you're more of the textual, and Joop more about the visual. But then there's also the materiality, right, like that type of page, like this one is like more of the glossy type. But also, like going through it I experienced in the text, it also feels a little bit of a, like, I don't know how to say that.

Gert Jonkers 30:37

Does it?

Carlos Zepeda 30:39

Yeah, like I go, today, I was like, taking a look at that magazine today. And I didn't feel it, okay. But I swear, like, the first time, like, after I purchased it, and I got it, I felt even in the advertisements, sometimes, like where there were people, you could feel some I don't know, for me, talking about independent magazines, they read, they also care about the selection of the paper. So how its material, if it's a glossy, semi glossy, matte paper, or the type of paper, they think, like the newspaper type. And also, typography is another. So sorry, that's materiality are more symbolic, you have the type of like the typography, the how the text is presented, the images are presented, you

know, the numbers are presented. So do you think that there's one that it's more important than the other when you're doing your magazine? Or do you think that they need to be quite balanced? That? Or is what I'm trying to say is the content more important of how it looks like? Or is the other way around?

Gert Jonkers 31:50

Well, I think I think they're equally important. Or you're always asking the wrong people, because of course, I find the content very important as a as a writer, or as a sort of, like, as a, you know, originally a writer, I do think content is important, but I think I mean, the form and the shape is extremely important for what we do. And I know that because Joop is very concerned about that. And I mean, even at the beginning of the magazine, when we started working, so for the first issue of BUTT for instance, I was I was amazed to to see his way of working because, yes, he's obviously very concerned with the typeface and the way it looks and, and sort of, you know, we or he but also together, we're trying out a lot of things. And, you know, I'm interested in how a headline works or our headline works with any image and so on. But he's also extremely focused on the typeface, the size of the typeface. I mean, that's the sort of like, detail that I'm lost at a certain point. But he studied it, obviously. And, and he thinks about it a lot. And you know, if he worked with with another graphic designer, or with an assistant or so, I mean, they're printing out the same page, you know, 16 times, and it's like this tiny varieties of the typeface and there's looking at it forever. And I hardly see the difference. I mean, yes, sometimes I can see this, but the difference between 6.1 or 6.2, for the size of the of the typeface. But, but for him, it's extremely important. And, you know, the funny thing was that when, you know, the first time we were going to print BUTT, and he sort of contacted the printer, and the printer made a dummy, or just an empty one, you know, no content in it just, but just the paper and the bulk was so like, the exact 68 pages or something, that was the first issue. And he would come in, and he would sort of like, we would sort of sit and sort of like, flip through it. And listen. And he would sort of like, take the take the paper, two different ones made one where the paper was running like this, and the other one where the paper was running like this, and the sheet of paper, literally, you know, it's like a detail that is ridiculous. But the difference is that this magazine folds like this, but if you turn the paper, it goes a little bit like this. And so he would sort of like, check the difference forever. And sort of like with the tools. And, and sort of like, you know, feel the paper and smell the paper and so on. So, you know, it's extremely important, I think. And I think we have you seen older issues of Fantastic Man?

Carlos Zepeda 35:02

No.

Gert Jonkers 35:03

Because it was very different in that it was extremely tactile. It was extremely unglassy. Because we wanted it to be very warm and very touchy.

Carlos Zepeda 35:18

You have your whole archive there.

Gert Jonkers 35:20

Yes. I mean, so these are this is issue one and this is two. You just kind of sort of like you can feel it. It's sort of like a strange touchy paper.

Carlos Zepeda 35:30

It almost feels like a gel, no?

Gert Jonkers 35:32

Yeah, you can almost wipe it off.

Carlos Zepeda 35:33

Yeah exactly.

Gert Jonkers 35:34

And then this was all very sort of like newspaper-y almost.

Carlos Zepeda 35:39

You have like this is glossy for, and then you have matte paper.

Gert Jonkers 35:43

Exactly.

Carlos Zepeda 35:44

Like for the editorial is glossy, or images

Gert Jonkers 35:47

Sometimes for images is glossy, sometimes not.

Carlos Zepeda 35:50

You have this more like text like newspaper type.

Gert Jonkers 35:54

Yeah. Yeah, cause sometimes Joop was really disappointed about how this paper because this is the matte paper. And then he didn't like how colour images worked on a disk? Or sometimes he did. I think it's beautiful.

Carlos Zepeda 36:09

I really liked that how it looks as well, it gives it a certain historical like, feel as well.

Gert Jonkers 36:17

And this is almost it's almost like it's real size is.

Carlos Zepeda 36:20

Yes, it's true.

Gert Jonkers 36:21

So yes, the actual form of it. That's why I also don't think we'll ever be a digital publishing house because we're because our background is so rooted in published in printing. And, and our love for the object. That's, you know, again, you know, I don't mind reading a newspaper on my phone. But reading a magazine on my phone. I've not seen it yet. But, you know, be my guest. If somebody can do it well.

Carlos Zepeda 36:59

I've tried reading magazines on my smartphone, not the same, even on iPad, like, there's a certain feeling to just turning the page and be surprised. What's coming next, for me is what I really liked about magazines. And also, like I started collecting, mainly because of the covers, but when you see the content inside, that's when it really comes to life. And it's part of the experience as well. So just like talking now about editorial practices. So right now you have a theme for Fantastic Man. I suppose that you have people so coming to you with suggestions or that they want to collaborate, they want to maybe write a piece for the magazine. How does your role as editor how what guidance do you follow to select content? Do you try and you know, support, like diversity? Or do you have certain guidelines that you have to select what gets printed? Because I guess you have a limited number of pages, and you cannot choose everything now. So there needs to be an process where you cut some stories or some?

Gert Jonkers 38:11

Yeah, we don't really cut stories. I mean, that's always what you hear about Vogue for instance, they shoot twice as much and they throw half of it away. We can't really do that because you can't you can't you know, we you can't ask that from people to invest their time, and sometimes also their money in into it, you know, we don't have the, we don't have budget to sort of, like, give photographers and stylists like an endless bag of money. And so very often they also invest their time and money in it themselves to make it. And so, you know, we can't really say, we don't like it, or the or we didn't

have any pages left that well, you thought of, we should have thought of that beforehand. So, so no, we plan carefully. And, and that's, that that's the process of months of sort of like, trying to trying to find out, is this a good? Is are these 10 ideas together? Do that make a good issue? Does it make a good issue? Something drops out, all of a sudden, you're like, oh, you know, that was kind of the cornerstone of this issue. Now, sort of, like, if a really important story suddenly disappears, you're like, Okay, do I find something else that sort of replaces that. So it's, uh, you know, we want it to be good and exciting, and surprising. And, and so that that is the, you know, I mean, it's not called editor for nothing, because you edit and you sort of, like, of all the ideas that people come with, or that audit, or your own ideas, or your colleagues ideas, you just sort of like look at it, and say like, maybe that's a good one in this combination of things. You know, and it's sometimes literally, based on the fact that you look at it and think like, oh, everybody's 39 In this in this issue, that's also a bit boring, you know, unless you have a theme, that's 39. But you, but you're a bit like maybe it's nice if there's somebody a lot younger in it, and you know, maybe we should have an old person in it. Or sometimes you look at it and think like, oh, everybody's American in this issue. That's why we don't consider ourselves an American publishing company, or an American title, not at all, in fact, so. So then you sort of like think like, Oh, come on, guys, we need to find somebody here in Europe or somewhere else, or in Japan or in Africa or in, you know, we need the balance isn't right, I think that's what's that's, that's most of the time, then. You know, and that that's what makes it also very often difficult to work with other people's ideas. Because, you know, other, you know, freelancers, or people outside of the inner circle magazine, don't really know what we're struggling with at the moment. You know, maybe we have a sort of like a short list of people we want to feature, but we're really looking for that the one other thing that's not there yet. And then people come with an idea and say, like, hey, you know, I would like to do this person you'd like, well, that's in this list it's not really exciting. Is it a bad idea that they had not per se? You know, maybe, next issue that would be would be perfect. But, so we have to say no? 99 out of 100 times? Not because we're so arrogant. But because we're, it's not because the ideas aren't good. But just because you're like mmmm that, really?

Carlos Zepeda 41:59

There's a story to tell there's a storytelling that's already been thought of.

Gert Jonkers 42:03

Yeah. Yeah. You know, if you're sort of making a writers issue, and somebody said, like, oh, shall I do Bill Gates or so? You think like, I mean, sometimes Bill Gates maybe is a great idea. But for an issue full of writers, you're like, that's not really a good idea. But that's a shame, of course, because maybe somebody has access to Bill Gates. And maybe that's extremely interesting all of a sudden. And very often, you know, after after doing a writers issue, if somebody says, Look, I'll have great writer for the next issues, like, well, maybe not, because we've just done 10 writers.

Carlos Zepeda 42:41

Yeah that's make sense. And the way that these ideas, do these ideas, like come to you, like do you have a process with these ideas to say, Okay, this stop theme or you have a selection of themes for the next three years, and just do your thing they're called your deputy editors, like, do they come to you with okay, like, with this topic, I had these proposals or to also external people that you don't know have just come to you with Okay, like, this is something that I would like to do for you. So how does that idea developing like generate?

Gert Jonkers 43:19

Yeah, we don't we definitely don't have the ideas for the next season yet we have no idea of what we're going to do for the next time. I mean, we've made an issue that is being at the printer now. So we know what that is. But the next one we haven't talked about yet. Originally, when we started three years ago with doing theme issues. We said like, oh, yeah, let's put the themes for three issues, because that's so handy, because then you can already look and think, and all of a sudden, if you, if your next issue is going to be all about the colour orange, then you see something you think like, Oh, that would fit in it nicely. But the reality is that it doesn't work that way. And, you know, even

if we would have said, Oh, the theme for spring-summer 2023 is this and this and that, I'm sure that by the time we have to make it, we're not interested in it anymore. So, so the themes are not set. And then, you know, the ideas are, you just hope that you come up with a good idea. And you never know. I mean, it's just, and that's not for me to decide or for Joop to decide, it's for everybody to sort of I mean, we're quite a democratic team, I think. I can't say of course, maybe my colleagues don't think so. But yeah, it's sort of, you know, Elliot, the deputy editor, and Jamie, our junior editor. And Billy, who's a consulting editor, I think, contributing editor, consulting editor, we just, you know, at some point, okay, we've just finished an issue this week. Now, we're all taking a little bit of a break, Joop went on holiday for two weeks, I'm here, but I'm sort of like, sorting things out and throwing paper away, and sort of like, go to London next, not next week, but the week after. And then after that, I think at the end of April, we will get together, you know, either physically or in zoom and, and start talking. And that can be anything, you know, then we sort of, you know, press we try to find a theme, or we just say things, I mean, I I personally love that sort of like, editorial process of just being able to say anything, it's like, oh, shall we make a shall we make an issue, but kitchens or so? And other people say like, well, not terrible idea. Okay. Well, you know, I sort of, I liked the idea of just sort of like, throwing it out. Shall we make an issue about death? Oh, terrible idea. Okay, well, no. And at some point, you sort of, or somebody says something, and somebody else says, Oh, I thought of that as well. And so maybe sort of slowly get to an issue. And, and yeah, and then sort of you start building on things. And people come up with more ideas that sort of fit in that definitely doesn't come from only us. But it's just sort of people start bringing ideas and say like, oh, well, if we're doing that, maybe we should like, for instance, with the writers issue. We said like, oh, let's also ask Sam, who is the editor-in-chief of the Happy Reader, which is our literature magazine. Let's, let's ask him to sort of like come up with ideas. And as well, because, you know, he knows so much about, you know, you know, so many writers, and he knows a lot about what's going on. So we sometimes also find sort of specific goal, contributing editor to come up with more ideas. Okay. And yeah, then it sort of happens.

Carlos Zepeda 47:12

And do you think that the having the time of six months, or maybe shorter, like, well, like, let's say you publish it two times in a year, does that really help in developing this concept? Do you think that that's an advantage for your independent print in this case?

Gert Jonkers 47:28

Yeah. Yeah. No, I've noticed I mean, BLVD, again, I mean, this this is like 25 years ago that I was making their magazine was a monthly magazine, maybe 10 a year maybe they, you know, Christmas and summer was like two combined. But in theory monthly. That was terrible. I needed set the rhythm of monthly, it's super difficult I found. Because you're making the magazine, which actually should be making the next issue already. And you should be thinking about the one after the next one. And but you never have time because you're always worried about the urgent thing is making this issue and then by the time that was finished, you're like, fuck, you know, I'm actually too late for the next one. So that was continuous continuous stress. And the Happy Reader for a while we've made four times a year. That also is sort of like okay, well, this one's done. Oh, actually, the next deadline is next week already. Which is quite stressful I find, you know, of course, if your a monthly or a weekly or a new or a daily newspaper, first of all, you need a lot more people. And you need a really good sort of system, where everybody knows what they're doing and what their task is. And the monthly magazine, I found difficult because it's, it's not often enough to hire a lot of people. So you have a very small team, but it's too much work to do easily. And so six months works quite well for us. We've, you know, we've played with the idea of doing it four times a year for a while, not at the moment, but I think 10 years ago or so we said, like, oh, maybe it's nice to do Fantastic Man four times a year. But then we thought like, Okay, well, but then there's never a holiday. Yeah. Whereas now. Yeah, it's sort of it works quite well.

Carlos Zepeda 49:27

Which, in a way, it makes me think about the like, in fashion that he was, you know, spring-summer, fall-winter, they have these two like seasons, yeah, but then they cruise, pre-fall, and sometimes, like, resort, or whatever, all these pre collections. So it really gives you a perspective on like, how, like, you need to have your time for the creative process to be proud of like, at the end of what you deliver. To have some like a very finished product that really got its time in both the it the conception of the idea, but also in its execution.

Gert Jonkers 50:02
Yeah. Yeah.

Carlos Zepeda 50:05
Now about the editorial practices again. So you also have a role in, like the selection of the advertisement that appears in the magazine? Because in this first issue, I think there's a couple of advertisements, right? Are the advertisements, something that you would think that they need to align with what you're selecting as the content for the issue. Is there? Have you found it, like, conflicting to do certain advertising that says, oh, maybe that doesn't fit in with what we're trying to say in the magazine? Or does that really not play a role?

Gert Jonkers 50:43
That doesn't really play a role. I mean, you know, we're an independent magazine, and we need the money that advertisement brings in to make the magazine. And so we, we can't really be selective, you know, we're not going to say no to many advertisements, because we that would be crazy. So, it's not a question of selecting advertisement, it's just sort of accepting what you can get. Okay. And, and I think we're, we're lucky with the advertisement that we have. And of course, yeah, I mean, we, you know, we have people working for us who sort of like contact brands and advertisers. And there are certain things that they don't contact because, you know, we're, we don't really want Primark as a as an advertiser, even if they would advertise, I don't think they do. But you know, that's not the kind of advertisement we're interested in. Sometimes we say no to an advertisement, because we hate them, or we don't. But in an ideal world, it sort of fits with each other. And I think it fits even if it doesn't fit. Exactly, yeah, I think it's what we really don't want to do is we don't want the magazine to be a complete platform for the advertisers. Very often, you see fashion magazines that sort of have advertisements and then the rest of the magazine has interviews with the designers from these advertisements. You think like, oh, okay, well, that's quite, that's quite one on one. It's like, okay, that brands are being advertised, that designer is being interviewed, and you can literally count it sort of like okay, you know, 15 advertisement, 14 interviews, maybe the other wasn't available. I don't think that makes for a very interesting magazine, because, you know, I can already tell you who's gonna be in the next issue who's probably the same people because yeah, because that's the concept so and I think advertisements are interested to be in our magazines because they liked the content and they actually also like, to a certain extent that the that there's other things in it then only the stuff from advertisers. Is that an answer to the question?

Carlos Zepeda 53:25
Yeah, it is answer to the question.

Gert Jonkers 53:27
But yeah, we don't really say no to advertisement. Sometimes you. I mean, there are of course exceptions. I mean, if it's really there are certain brands that you don't want. Nobody wants. And I mean, no, I remember in but though so but we started with like really small ads, you know, because we needed a little bit of money to print the magazine. And we asked like local shops and friends if they wanted to buy a page. And then, but then after a couple of issues, we thought him as a, you know, the magazine was growing. And it was going to cost us more money than we would get back from it. So we were like, Okay, we're not sure how long we can do this without a bigger advertiser. And so we sent the first three or four issues to Karl Lagerfeld because we knew that he read the magazine or knew about the magazine, and we sent them to Tom Ford from Gucci. And I've told this story 100 times before so maybe you know it already. And never heard back from Karl

Lagerfeld. But we did hear back from Tom Ford who called literally two days later. It's like, hello, it's Tom Ford. And he said like, Yeah, sure. I'll advertise in the magazine. So Gucci started advertising it, which was super weird, because it was that

Carlos Zepeda 54:58

This was like two thousand one?

Gert Jonkers 55:01

2003, 2004 or so.

Carlos Zepeda 55:04

Yeah. So it was okay. Yeah. But also like, it fits with the theme.

Gert Jonkers 55:08

Yeah, but still, it's still it was sort of like it was almost a porn magazine. You know, and it was a bit scruffy. And it was small, and it was black and white, or black and pink. And, but then, maybe not the first season, I think, or maybe they sent the ad for on the back of the magazine. And it was a woman holding a naked baby. And we were like this is a bit strange. This is a this is a male gay magazine. And there's a naked baby on the back. That's a bit weird. So we called them back saying, hey, you know, do you have any other artwork? Because, yeah, because you do, you know, I mean, sort of like thinking like, maybe this isn't such a good idea. And apparently, they were not very amused that we did turned down their artwork, but they I think they must have understood it. So they said something else. So sometimes you have to say, Hey, hello, you know, we're are. Or Fantastic Man. You know, sometimes we get a women's ad in it. I mean, if they want if people want to pay for it, they do. But you also call them saying Are you are you sure this is the right artwork? You know? I mean, wouldn't it be more interesting to put a man a male ad in the in this? Okay, sorry. Sometimes it's a mistake.

Carlos Zepeda 56:31

Yeah. In one question like that, I just thought about what was there a reason that you selected like pink paper for BUTT magazine?

Gert Jonkers 56:40

No, because pink is the colour the gay colour. You know, that was originally before the rainbow flag that was the pink triangle. And again, I think the, you know, when we started thinking about the magazine, and we started interviewing people and photo photographing, and we started sort of like, trying things out. The first sort of like, dummy, we made just ourselves, cutting and stapling was it was a white paper. And you're sort of like looking at all, there's something missing. You know, I don't mean I'm not sure if this is it. We have it I don't know where but it's quite funny to see because we have it somewhere. And it's like, it's not right yet. And yeah just like oh, maybe it should be pink paper. It was quite a good, good idea that he had and where it came from, I mean, the Corriere della Sera, I think or Gazzetta dello Sport. I think the Italian newspaper, I think has pink paper. The Financial Times and sort of like yellow-y, orange-y. So that's also where it came from a bit.

Carlos Zepeda 57:55

Yeah. Yeah. No, because I like that colour about, like, I like how it looks when you go through the pages. And just like, back to the advertisements when you will, like for BUTT magazine, you were looking for like a bigger advertiser to fund the magazine. This is like the commercial magazine business model that they have the advertisements to give them like the majority of the funds that they were able to pay their contributors, their photographers, printing and distribution. So do you think that this is a, how would you describe how would you describe the business model at the moment? Do you think that there's like a bit dependence on advertising? Or not really about the advertising? And more about you're still doing, like, putting the story out that you want to portray? Or do you need the advertisers to continue, like with the funding of magazine for like, for the next issues?

Gert Jonkers 58:20

Well, definitely, we need the advertisements to continue, because that's where the money comes from. Because distribution, you know, what people pay in the shop, or the or subscribers doesn't really make money, because it's sort of what it costs to print the magazine is what it sort of, like, pays back to sell it, which is nice. But, you know, that's not going to make any money for paying people's salaries or little office somewhere or travelling somewhere. So so yes, you know, I mean, the advertisement is the is the main income of the magazine. That doesn't mean that we're bound. We don't we don't feel very hindered, I would say is hinder a word? We don't we're very limited by, by advertisement. I think we're lucky that they advertisers treat us nicely and yes, you know, I mean, of course, there is, you know, in the kind of magazines we make, there is a tradition, that tradition, it's also kind of an unwritten law that you show some of the things that, you know, if you if you photograph of fashion series, and you don't use any advertisers, they're not gonna like that. Or, you know, if we're, if we're photographing somebody, and we dress them up, then it's nice to know. So there is, of course, a link to the advertisers and the clothes we choose. But, but we don't feel very limited by it, because we were actually also interested in fashion, and we're interested in clothes. And yes, sometimes you have to try a little harder to sort of make a brand that you don't find very easy to find something nice of, you just have to look harder until you find something nice in that collection and photograph it. But we're we don't we don't feel we don't feel obstructed by it. And we never forced people to wear it. You know, we're, it's funny how it works. Because, you know, sometimes you asked people recently, a couple of people for the for the issue we just made. We asked them if we could photograph you know, we wanted to take their photo. And so you said yeah, okay, then and then that's the idea. And then we said like, Okay, well, can you send us your sizes? And they were like, why? It's like, well, you know, for to bring some clothes was like, Oh, do I have to? I don't want to wear fashion, you know, so Okay, well, they're not, you know, fine. But there's, like, 50% of the people hate the idea of being dressed up and the other 50% love the idea of being dressed up. I mean, I actually would find it quite handy if I would show up to a photo studio and there's a giant rack of clothes that you can wear. Because then you don't have to sort of like stand in yours and look at your own wardrobe with him and all this old jumper or is that going to look nice in a picture? Washed it about 75 times. So you know, people, it's quite nice to have a good stylist, sort of like, look at you and think like, Oh, that's nice, but maybe you should wear this with it or so. So, you know, there's nothing wrong with the joy of dressing up. And there's nothing wrong with sort of like liking clothes. You know, and again, we never tell people that they should buy something because I think people should spend their money on whatever they want. But you still that doesn't mean that we can't show clothes that we like.

Unknown Speaker 01:02:14

Do you have any idea? How many issues I have the Fantastic Man do you print at the moment, like for the next? I think 35 I like a number of the circulation that it has?

Gert Jonkers 01:02:27

80,000.

Carlos Zepeda 01:02:28

18?

Gert Jonkers 01:02:29

Eight zero.

Carlos Zepeda 01:02:30

Eight zero thousand. And this magazine is distributed worldwide. Right? Do you do have an I got a list of your stock list or where it's kept everywhere in the world or not really?

Gert Jonkers 01:02:42

No.

Carlos Zepeda 01:02:43

No. Okay, okay, because some another thing about the independent magazines that we can add to our list of descriptions is also that they're in English. Most of the times regardless of where they're printed or where they made or makes them: the English language, but also that they are available in like very strategic places such I mean.

Gert Jonkers 01:03:03

I say no, but I mean, just because I mean, I don't think we have that list. But you know, I mean, maybe partly we do. Yep. For instance, BUTT we have just started, started up again. So for 10 years, we didn't make the magazine. And now we've made one again. So we're now looking into the distribution again. And so we work with two distributors. And they gave it a well one is not, it's a bit slow, but the other one of them gave a list of okay, it's in these 35 or 75, I don't know, shops. So sometimes we do have that list. And I think I don't think we have previously we probably had it for Fantastic Man or definitely for BUTT, online list of stores. But I'm not sure we have it anymore.

Carlos Zepeda 01:03:54

Yeah. I think online there's not. I think for BUTT there is. But for Fantastic Man, I think there is not. No but, I was just mentioning this because another definition is how the audiences that you're making this magazine in Amsterdam, but it can reach anywhere in the world because they can order it online, and they can get it delivered to their to their homes. And you can really make also an like your business, because you have an audience that maybe like in Amsterdam, you have 1000 people that read, 1000 people in Mexico City, 1000 people in Sydney. So the addition of all of those, they call it a global niche, like a global niche market. So the addition of all of these people all over the world, really make and sustain your magazine here in Amsterdam, and you can continue on publishing, because there was there was still people or people out there that are going to look for it and read it. And the other part is when you talk about the distributors that the back issues are also available for sale. I think I just saw some was it called Bruil, Bruil & van den Staaijn. And there's a bookshop in Rotterdam also that has them.

Gert Jonkers 01:03:54

Old issues of Fantastic Man?

Carlos Zepeda 01:04:20

Yeah.

Gert Jonkers 01:04:39

Oh, interesting.

Carlos Zepeda 01:04:42

I think that they are owners of like, they bought the magazine. So it's not there. But they sell back issues as well, because there's still people that are asking for them. And some other independent magazines that was that they have had for stock have they have run out and the magazine is no longer printing anymore. So I think they can also speak about the longevity, but also the sustainability that you could say of the business that you can keep on coming. But I just don't know, I don't remember if in the website, there's a shop. I know that there's a shop right in the website of Fantastic Man or not? Yeah, no, I think it redirects you to Bruil. Yeah, I was just thinking on the idea of this selling of back issues, but I think you normally outsource to Bruil. Do these distributors just buy from you. And then they, like they buy you like, a fixed amount of issues. But it's not like a strategy of return. And then they aren't owners.

Gert Jonkers 01:06:14

I mean, they probably can. Okay. But in the end they I mean, they don't buy thousands. I mean Bruil well, they'll buy as much as they know they will sell and then they keep reordering. Okay. Yeah, I mean, distributors usually can return if they if they want. And, you know, I mean, that sometimes happens, but although I think they hardly return, they probably just say like, oh, we sold X amount and the rest will destroy it. And you just have to believe them. So I mean, distribution is, is, I would say the most one of the most difficult things of the work we do. And also, personally, I find one of the least interesting. I mean, it's so tedious to deal with it. No, but it's very difficult.

I mean, as you say, you know, I'd love it. I'd be happy to sell back issues ourselves but then you how do you do that? You know, you hadn't you need to have somebody sitting here to some put them in an envelope. Deal with the lable. Exactly.

Carlos Zepeda 01:06:17
The customer service. Yeah.

Gert Jonkers 01:07:20
And they disappear in the mail. So they never arrived. You need to send another one. Yeah, it's you know, there's this. I mean, it's sort of like they're not. That's the difficulty of online shops. Of course. There are there are many companies that have started online shops that have stopped again because because it's just very difficult to do. Same with clothes, you know? I mean, just do. There are a couple of big ones Zalando and so on, they probably still lose money also, I don't know. Because I have friends who have like a nice shop for you in Amsterdam, and they started an online shop. And then after half a year, they were like, oh, fuck, this is the worst idea ever. Because, yes, you need to send it, you know, people order three, they try them on and they send to back or they send them all three back. And then they're either dirty or they you have to fold them again. Or maybe you can't sell them anymore. And it's just like a headache. So just know, and in a way distribution as well, we I noticed, you know, we we work with bigger, big distributors, that they again, work with smaller distributors. So we sent them all to well, Fantastic Man is by MMS, which is based in London, but they probably also have a warehouse in Paris. And they and work with the Spanish distributor and the Mexican, the American distributor. Because otherwise, we would have to deal with all that. And that okay, well, the, you know, the distributor in New Zealand wants 80 copies or so and then, you know, it just, we noticed it now, again, with BUTT that, yes, we work with two distributors, but then we got contacted by a distribution company in South Korea. He said like, Oh, can I order directly from you? Because I don't want to work with these two distributors that you have. And I would love the magazine to be in South Korea, that sort of send two boxes to South Korea. And then, I mean, we're very small company, you know, so and then I have to make an invoice and sort of like, I mean, sometimes you just I mean, distribution is a job in itself.

Carlos Zepeda 01:09:47
Yeah no it totally is. I mean, I worked supply chain, not distribution specifically. But thess logistics. And, like, I learned some things that helped me like grow in life. But it is a very not tedious, but you need to be like on point, like on time, because people will ask. And in the end, it's like customer service. Like it's just the thing that connects to customer service, like, towards the latter part. But yeah, in the context of the magazine industry and independent print here in the Netherlands, that's something that I heard quite often that even with the pandemic as well, it was better to work with distributors because then you get, like this big, like the order instead of like issuing more orders or just losing, like, those orders from those independent bookstores or the like, so you describe this distribution as one of the main roadblocks. But do you think like, in this digital changes, you know, for example, e-commerce, or just the way that you can post something on social media, and, you know, for example, the BUTT magazine in 2001, like, what was your strategy to get to know it? Where did it go? And then you stopped. And then it's the BUTT number 30, right? The latest one? Like, you see it 21 years afterwards? And then you're using social media to maybe announce the release, and it reaches the whole amount of people. Because it's already like, a legacy print. Yeah. So did you How do you see like the changes of strategies from like, 20 years ago till now? Like, do you think that it's not that it's like, unbelievable, but do you think that one is like, is it any benefit of having these social media platforms to promote? Like, does it help you? Or do people just found their own way going to the bookshop in person, maybe? Your take?

Gert Jonkers 01:11:52
I actually don't have the answer to that question. I, I mean, of course, social media works sort of like to get you noticed, because, you know, yes, we scroll on Instagram and we see something, it's like, oh, okay, this person has a new album out, or, I guess. But I romantically would like to think that it's still possible to not need social media per

se for it. I think. I mean, it's not really comparable, but 20-25 years ago, when I was at BLVD, we maybe maybe this example doesn't make sense at all. But we would have every Thursday morning or so, photographers could come by, or illustrators or something with their portfolio to so that we could see, you know, looking for new photographers, you know, you'd get a lot of requests of people saying, Can I show my book? And we said, like, okay, yeah, Thursday morning is that that's when we sort of like, see them all. And so, you know, every Thursday morning, there will be like, two or three or four. So maybe it wasn't every Thursday, but quite often. And then, you know, after a couple of months, when I started there, I said, like, why are we doing this? Because we never see anything that we like, there's, there's never a photographer that actually we use. Yeah. So. And then we started talking about it. And sort of, you know, people ask, like, what the, where do you find photographers then? And the way of course, we started working with a lot of new photographers, but that's because you've heard of them. Have you heard about them? Or are you see a photo in an exhibition or at a, at a graduation show or so it's hardly ever the people that come to you and sort of show their work. Although sometimes, you know, we've actually met a few people that, that, that they started working with a lot through those, but it was really less than 5% of what we were looking at. I think that's, that's possible with social media as well. I'm just surprised sometimes, like, I was writing about an artist today, and I looked her up and she's not on Instagram, you think like, wow, but you know, a painter, and she's young, you know, she's, she's the age of the Instagram user. Why is she not on Instagram? That apparently she doesn't use that, because she doesn't need that. So she thinks she doesn't need that. And I think that's good. You know, I'm happy to see that things that are not digital can still exist without it having a digital or Instagram component per se. That doesn't mean that, you know, it's great that that, BUTT as an Instagram account, we can sort of communicate things. I mean, I'm really not against the concept of communication. But I don't think it, the present needs it. I mean, we always have discussions, you know, like, does Fantastic Man should it be active on Instagram, or should not be active on Instagram? And we never know the answer, because we're magazine makers. Is Dries van Noten super active on Instagram? I don't think so. But still the brand has fans that wear it.

Carlos Zepeda 01:15:37
Yeah.

Gert Jonkers 01:15:39
You know, so that doesn't mean good, sometimes it's really exciting. People are really good on Instagram. You know, I think people who are good at it should do it, and people are not good they shouldn't do it.

Carlos Zepeda 01:15:50
Why would you think are the top three challenge or top challenges that you can think of with this digital era? For your magazines?

Gert Jonkers 01:16:10
Well, I mean, I'd love to find the perfect thing to do or a good thing to do on social media. Because I you know, I mean, it's again, it's a it's a platform that is completely legitimate. It's there. And, and I'd love to be good on it. But I don't think I am or we are. So I would love to find that. You know, and it's not, it's not super urgent. I don't need to solve it before Monday next week. But I still keep looking for it. I'm not desperate. But you know, I think I think it's a challenge too. But I you know, that goes for the magazine. That all goes also for me personally, you know, I I enjoy looking following people on Instagram that are really good at it. You know, do I want to be good on Instagram? Yeah, why not? You know, but I mean, is it is gonna make me super unhappy if I'm not? No, you know, maybe maybe it doesn't suit me. But I think it's a it is a challenge to be good at it. You know, for a long time, I have thought and I've also often said it's like the day that on the day that people solve the question of what advertisement should be on digital. If somebody finds a solution, we're screwed as a paper magazine. Because I think, but I've, you know, I'm sort of, I mean, I've never been that worried, but I've always thought like, oh, one day. In a way, you know, what happened to record labels? You know, there was one day that Apple figured out how to put music on the phone. And that was the end of the end of the record industry. Almost, I mean, yes, there still

but you know, label, the concept of labels, that concept of super rich record companies that could just sort of like, throw everybody or pay everything for their artists doesn't exist anymore, because streaming and and, you know, Apple with its MP3s, and you know, that have sort of like, successfully killed that in a way saying the streaming and television. So, you know, there is a worry that somebody will find the perfect solution for digital advertisement. And all the advertisers will decide that they will never need a paper print advertisement, ever again in their life. That will be difficult for us, because that's where we what makes it possible for us to make magazines or to print magazines. You know, that's a little bit the, the holy grail of the fashion field. You know, everybody knows what a good I mean, yes, we know what a good fashion photo is. Or at least, you know, over the years, there have been great photographers that for the era that they're working in, have made amazing fashion photography, whether it's Bruce Weber or whether it's Steichen or whether it's Helmut Newton, or whether it's Corinne Day, or Juergen Teller. But we don't really know what a good fashion film is, you know, because we're a long time was the Holy Grail. It's like, oh, you know, if you can have moving images, you know, if somebody and people are trying, and sometimes, especially films are two minutes, and sometimes they are 20 seconds, and sometimes they're an hour and 10 minutes. But I don't think anybody has made a really good one yet. The way that you can enjoy fashion photo, there's not really a way. I mean, you can sort of have that model move a little bit. But is that interesting? Not really.

Carlos Zepeda 01:20:34

No. And just thinking about that. No, no, go ahead. I guess speaking about the challenge of the, like, the advertising, like, these are the numbers that I've seen for the Dutch public is that even when the numbers were going down in the time of reading, reading magazines, but the share of people reading print has remained stable, and in the last year has actually increased. So there's still you know, some type of demand for a print title. But it also connects to this type of disconnecting from the digital world and, you know, immersing yourself in this print experience. So I can speak to that challenge that you just mentioned.

Gert Jonkers 01:21:24

Yeah, and of course, it's niche what we do. I mean, you know, we're not we're not a mainstream,

Carlos Zepeda 01:21:29

There's niche like all over the world.

Gert Jonkers 01:21:31

Yeah. No, I love that idea of, of worldwide niche. And it's, you know, and I think that's also, of course, the magic of the digital age is that the world has become much more people can be aware of, it's everywhere. That doesn't mean that everybody needs to start following you. But you know, yes, we're, like, culture is sort of, like worldwide more accessible. Nobody was Yeah, I mean, I think that BUTT was a good example of it, that it wasn't for everybody. But there were people everywhere that liked it. You know, the first time I arrived, finally, I've been once to Australia, but I was Melbourne is Australia? And I always I always forget it. I don't know why sort of Montreal and Melbourne the same for me, even though they're not. So I came to Melbourne. And I go to a bar and the bar men's wearing a BUTT t-shirt. And it's sort of like, oh, wow, you know, it's like literally on the other end of the world. Yeah. And, but if you if you asked 10 people on the streets of Melbourne, if they know BUTT magazine, they're probably gonna say no, but still, there are a couple of they're like maybe 500 people in the city that do know it. So so that's I find that very interesting.

Carlos Zepeda 01:23:00

Indeed and talking about the digitalization, so there's been 20 years, maybe even more than that of your career in the magazine industry in the Netherlands, well, it's also connected to the UK with printing in London. And do you feel like that, like the softwares, the digital tools for communication, have they helped, in any way with, like, reduction of costs, because at least what I've researched that the prices of, for example, posting or printing, like the prices of ink, prices of paper, prices of sending and delivering,

those prices have remained the same or even higher than 20 years ago. And that's what makes, like necessary to have the funding from advertising to cover those types of costs. So do you think that these digital tools, have they in any way I helped, like, reduce some transactional costs for your operations? Throughout the throughout the years?

Gert Jonkers 01:24:10

I mean, probably yes. I mean, if the best example is Zoom, of course, yes. Because yes. Before the pandemic, I would go to London twice a month on average, I would say, and I will be there, like three or four or five days or so. I mean, insane amount of travel. To an insanely expensive office in London. Well, we don't have the office anymore, because for a year, nobody could go to the office. So we thought, well, that doesn't make any sense. And I don't travel to London anymore. So you know that the train or the flight is always like 300-400 euros and you stay at a hotel there or an apartment. So it's super easy to do, you can do that digitally. And that, you know, there's a screen you can even see people. It's very it was it was quite weird to sort of, in the last couple of months, to see my close, close colleagues again, and say like, a while we haven't seen each other for two years. But it didn't feel like that because of course we saw each other every week, you know, because you're Zooming we were FaceTiming. So you have seen each other, but you actually realise you haven't been in the same room for a year and a half or two years. So yes. I guess that. I mean, it's not something you literally compare, because it's sort of every it's sort of like gradually changes, of course, I mean, 20 years ago, yeah, did we spent more money on stamps to sort of send letters to people maybe definitely bought, you know, I never make a phone call anymore. I used to have like quite serious phone bills, or you know, have a phone bill of like 110 or 120 euros a month or so I don't know, sometimes, especially if you if you were travelling, because roaming was super expensive for a while. So if you would go from London to here it will be expensive. I never look at my phone bill anymore. I don't even know if it exists. I mean, you know, it's it's the same every month because I never reached my limit. Because I never make a phone call. And I so so so of course of course, changed a lot. And, you know, also probably buy a lot less magazines. Because I see a lot of things online, you know, I mean, I don't need to buy everything anymore, or books, or Yeah, it used to be I remember at the time when I was writing about music a lot. So this is like the mid 90s or so. I would go to Athenaeum news centre, the good the best magazines shopping in Amsterdam. In Spui. I would go there every Friday because the NME and the Melody Maker would come out which is two English newspaper, music newspapers. And that would that would reserve a copy for me and so that I would have to go there every Friday to buy these two magazines because that was my way of keeping in touch with what was happening in pop music. You know, I never buy a music magazine anymore because I can read Pitchfork and I can

Carlos Zepeda 01:27:47

Mostly any, like there's always some website and you search and there's a category for fashion for culture.

Gert Jonkers 01:27:54

Exactly. It was I mean, I was shocked when, during the pandemic, during the lockdown magazine newsstands were closed in the Netherlands. You couldn't buy newspaper. I mean, I'm I sort of sometimes I quite slavishly read The Financial Times on Saturday because I think it's good. Yeah. And I couldn't read it first for six months. And the only solution was to take 85 euro per month digital subscription to the daily Financial Times, but I had no interest in the Financial Times on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. I just want to read it on Saturday. And I thought it was really shocking and it says a lot about the what's wrong with the Dutch culture. Dutch politics is that they didn't find media and news essential. You know, yes, coffee shops were essential. You know, people could still buy drugs. And you can, you know, sliders are open so you could buy wine and all kinds of alcohol, which I don't mind. You know, I also drink wine. But news, newspapers, you couldn't buy newspaper, you couldn't buy magazines. I find it shocking. So, as you Yes, great that there's digital and at least, you know, that's the way we managed to inform ourselves to read the Guardian the whole day, in the Financial and the New York Times, not the Financial Times. The New York Times and the Dutch newspapers. But yeah, it's, it just turns out that, you know, just shows that paper is important.

Carlos Zepeda 01:30:03

And I'm going to, this is my final question. Like, why print in the digital era?

Gert Jonkers 01:30:08

Well, because it's because it's beautiful. And it's an interesting object, and it really gives something different. Yes, it is strange to buy a magazine and put it on your table at home and then realise a month later that you've never opened it, you know, it's like, got the other magazines there. But then you open it one night, and then you read it, hopefully, and you look at it. It's a very, it's a very different thing.

Carlos Zepeda 01:30:38

You mean an element of surprise?

Gert Jonkers 01:30:41

Yeah, not element of surprise. It's also, you know, it's it's a different way of communicating information. I mean, the interesting thing about paper is also that you are limited to a certain amount of pages. I mean, at some point, you decide like, Okay, we're going to, we're going to print the print the magazine, and it's going to be 196 pages, or 268, or 314. But at least that's what it is. With digital or at least online. There's no limit, of course, and you can keep adding things to it. You can you can find everything online. And when you literally type in something and Google comes with 150,000 hits at least, or 50 million if it's Lady Gaga. Whereas if you buy a magazine, and there's the two pages only Lady Gaga, that that's what it is. So the, again, you know, what I said, it isn't called editor for nothing, because you edit things and you sort of just take certain decisions. So the magazine has made certain decisions for you, which Google really doesn't. Although, I mean, Google makes decisions for you, but they're, they're very debatable. So I think I also really don't see competition between digital and print to be honest. I think digital is great. I mean, one amazing invention, and great that I can sort of like read the latest news again in 10 minutes, but you know, they're not a competition. Cinema still exists because it's nice to sometimes see. I mean, I was reading about a film a documentary and I said to my boyfriend, oh, should we go it's a place at the cinema next week. And then he said, like, well, actually, that sounds like a great documentary to see on TV, but I'm not sure I want to see it in cinema, which it makes sense that we've, I've been to documentaries before in the cinema. We're like, another person sort of like talking, you know, just faces talking all the time just talking heads. So maybe it's, you know, it's actually great to go to the cinema and just be immersed in an amazing story. But documentaries are very often great on TV, but maybe not so nice in cinema. So you know, there's I love TV, and I love Netflix and streaming services, but also love going to the cinema. And I think that's what what print and digital. I don't I don't really feel a competition. The only Yeah, I mean, I guess it sort of changed print, of course. I mean, 20-25 years ago, we had a lot of weekly magazine journal, a lot of monthly magazines, they're all gone, the weekly magazines are completely in trouble. I mean, amazingly, The New Yorker still exists. But that is a very special publication, I think it goes against every grain and their stories are still 26 pages long. And there's no image with it. And it's super hardcore, but really good. At weekly magazines, in, in the Netherlands, they're all suffering. They used to have 160,000 copies a week, and now they're like 8,000 a week or so we like wow. Monthly magazines too, a magazine like Esquire or GQ is really struggling I think because it's, it's monthly, so it sort of pretends to be timely yet, yet, it cannot be sort of be timely, because it's monthly, so and do really, you know, in the same way that mainstream media print has disappeared, you know, I think you can, if you're very specific, there's a reason for you to be in print if you're trying to sort of like entertain a lot of people that's going to be difficult to in print.

Carlos Zepeda 01:34:54

And just something that also popped in my mind is the Fantastic Man has been now for 17 years. Have you seen other independent magazines trying to like or are inspired by your by your magazine? Like they try to have you know, similar fonts similar style that you can see that there's some type of homogeneity in independent print?

Gert Jonkers 01:35:24

Well yeah, of course. I mean, people look at each other. I think that's that was part of the reason that Joop also wanted to change the magazine into a square because he also felt that a lot of a lot of magazines were using matte paper at some point and a lot of magazines were going black and white and and we're using the sort of font that we are so there was a time when we were really annoyed about other sort of copies. But you know, it's also flattering. I was funny, I was sorting through a couple of piles of things and I sort of stumbled upon some of this which I thought was quite I mean that was sort of like very what we used to do.

Carlos Zepeda 01:36:30
With these with the line.

Gert Jonkers 01:36:31
Right? I mean and then it was one I found here sorry just died into a corner but.

Carlos Zepeda 01:36:41
I just noticed this is Mark Vanderloo right? And he is Dutch, and he is in a Dutch magazine Dutch model.

Gert Jonkers 01:36:54
This is one hilarious magazine. I hope I can find it. Somebody sent it to me once it's a I think it's a Taiwanese food magazine here.

Carlos Zepeda 01:37:31
Oh wow.

Gert Jonkers 01:37:38
And I think it's it really looked like this and then even look at look at the image and the sort of that and the line and the

Carlos Zepeda 01:37:52
Logo placement. Yeah but even the inside, this paper, the texts.

Gert Jonkers 01:38:05
I mean, that is totally

Carlos Zepeda 01:38:07
inspired.

Gert Jonkers 01:38:11
Did you know that? Yeah. I mean, it's not even inspired is literally copied.

Carlos Zepeda 01:38:16
Yeah, it was just a very politely, but yes. Yeah. No, this looks like quite a copy.

Gert Jonkers 01:38:25
Which is also funny.

Carlos Zepeda 01:38:26
No, but I just say it's also compliment, right? Yeah. I mean, it means that is reaching to other places. And that it's aspirational and inspirational at the same time. Yeah, but I think that would be all for my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add?

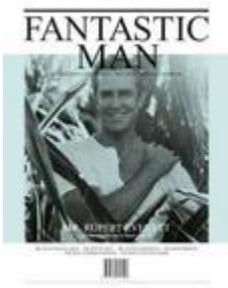
Gert Jonkers 01:38:43
No, no.

Carlos Zepeda 01:38:45
Perfect.

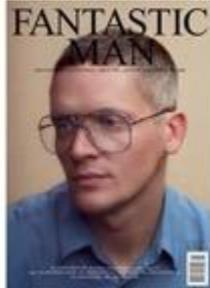
Gert Jonkers 01:38:46
Thank you for being interested.

7.6 Pictures

Figure 7.2. Fantastic Man magazine covers archive (2005-2022).



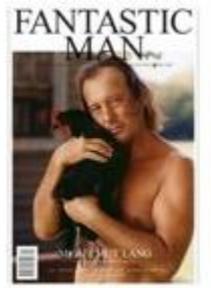
Issue N°1



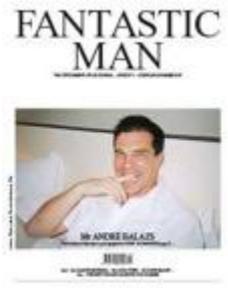
Issue N°2



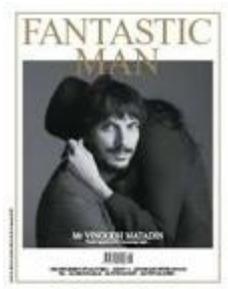
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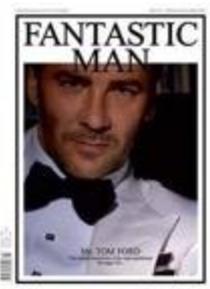
Issue N°4



Issue N°5



Issue N°6



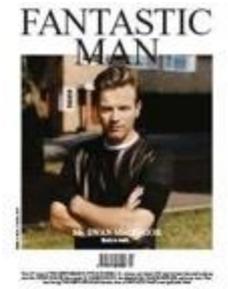
Issue N°7



Issue N°8



Issue N°9



Issue N°10



Issue N°11



Issue N°12



Issue N°13



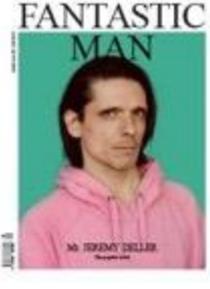
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Issue N°15



Issue N°16



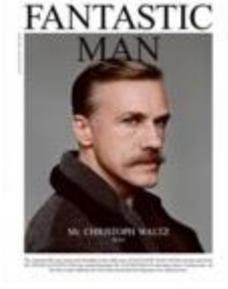
Issue N°17



Issue N°18



Issue N°19



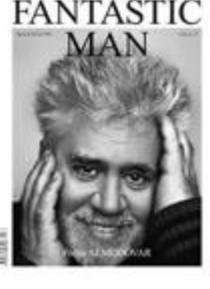
Issue N°20



Issue N°21



Issue N°22



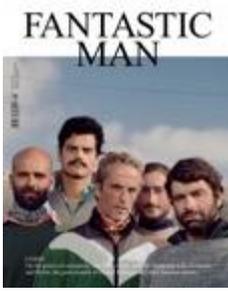
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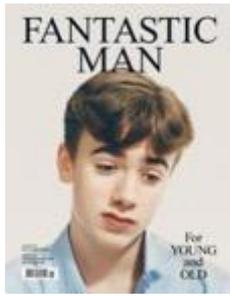
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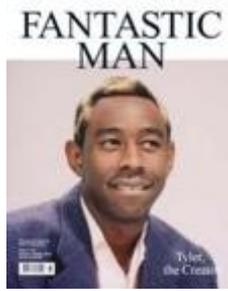
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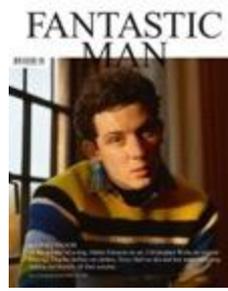
Issue N°26



Issue N°27



Issue N°28



Issue N°29



Issue N°30



Issue N°32



Issue N°32



Issue N°33



Issue N°34



Issue N°35

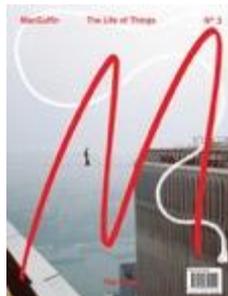
Figure 7.3. MacGuffin magazine covers archive (2015-2021).



Issue N°1



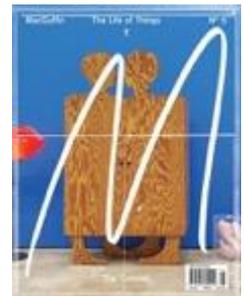
Issue N°2



Issue N°3



Issue N°4



Issue N°5



Issue N°6



Issue N°7



Issue N°8



Issue N°9



Issue N°10

Figure 7.4 Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam magazine collections of MacGuffin #01-09(left) and Fantastic Man #01-17, #19 (right) at Stedelijk Museum Library. Photograph by Carlos Zepeda.



Figure 7.5 TOP Publishers archive with Fantastic Man issues at the company's headquarters. Photograph by Carlos Zepeda.



Figure 7.6 Fantastic Man Issue N° 5 (left) compared with Taiwanese magazine Oneness. Photograph by Carlos Zepeda.

7.7 Tables

Table 7.6 Independent magazines for further research. Source: Stack Magazines.

Independent Magazine Title	Issues	Independent Magazine Title	Issues	Independent Magazine Title	Issues	Independent Magazine Title	Issues
212	2	Eye on Design	2	Nang	2	Soft Punk	4
1413	1	Fare	4	Nansen	1	Somesuch Stories	1
(Kajet) The Future of Nostalgia	1	Fast Food& Patents	1	New Philosopher	2	South London Review of Hand Dryers	1
Able Zine	1	Feeeeeels	1	Nice Outfit	1	South London Review of Hand Sanitizers	1
Ache	1	Foam	2	Nichons-Nous dans l'Internet	2	Spike Art	3
Akar Print	1	Food&	1	No Mas	1	Spiral	1
Al Hayya	1	Forward	1	Nobody	1	Still	1
Alla Carta	1	Fotograf	5	Noema	1	Straight No Chaser	1
American Chordata	2	Four & Sons	1	Nomad	1	Stuck	1
Amuseum	1	Fraulein	1	Nork	2	Superposition	1
Apartamento	2	Fukt	2	Now & Again	1	Swim	1
Archivio	2	Fulgurances	1	NU	1	Synchron	2
Are We Europe	6	Gal-dem	1	NXS	1	Te	1
Athleta	1	Gayletter	4	Oath	1	Terrible People	1
Athleta	1	Gaze	1	Objection	1	The Earth Issue	1
Atmos	2	Glue Society	1	ODDA	3	The Gentlewoman	3
Auslöser	1	Good Sport	1	Off	1	The Gourmand	2
Aww	2	Good Trouble	1	Offscreen	1	The Lifted Brow	1
Back Office	1	Gossamer	4	Oh So	4	The Light Observer	2
Backstage Talks	2	Gross	1	Oof	3	The Lissome	1
Balcony	2	Gym Class	1	Open Sesame	1	The Modemist	3
Batshit Times	1	Hamam	4	Openhouse	1	The Move	1
Benji Knewman	1	Happy Days	1	Orange Crush	1	The Native	1
Berlin Quarterly	2	Happy Days	1	Over	1	The Nib	7
Between Borders	1	Harvard Design Magazine	1	P PAL	1	The Plant	2
Bikevibe Helsinki	1	High Tide Zine	1	Paper Boy	1	The Point	1
Bloom	4	Homesick	1	PERFECT	2	The Preserve Journal	3
Borshch	2	Hometown	2	Pétala	1	The Queer Anthology of Healing	1
Boy Brother Friend	2	Huck	3	Pfeil	3	The Real Review	1
Bracket	1	I love Cous Cous	1	Phile	1	The Recorder	1
British Journal of Photography	1	Icarus Complex	1	Pit	1	The Republic	1
Broccoli	3	Indie	1	Plastikcomb	1	The Skirt Chronicles	2
Broccoli Book - A Weed is also a Flower	1	Inque	1	Pleasure Garden	1	The Stinging Fly	1
Buffalo Zine	4	Into (Made-land)	1	Primary Paper	2	The Unseasonal	3
BUM	4	Isolarii	3	Profane	4	The Victory Journal	3
Butt	1	Isolate	1	Puss Puss	1	The White Review	2
California Sunday	3	It's Freezing in LA	4	Racquet	5	Thiird	1
Cartography	1	Jezga	1	Real Review	1	This Orient	1
Cheese	1	Kajet	2	Record	3	Tinted Window	1
Cloakroom	2	Kaleidoscope	2	Revista Balam	2	Tissue	1
Club Sandwich	1	Kindling	2	Rocky	1	Total Pet	1
Code 52 (Shanghai)	1	Klima	1	Romance	1	Totals	1
Collection Issue	1	La Nueva Carne	2	Rubbish Famzine Book	1	Trebuchet	1
Contra	2	La Rampa	1	Safar	2	Twin	3
Critical Mass	1	Lay It On Thick	1	Sali e Tabacchi	2	Typeone	1
Cura	2	Le Petit Voyeur	1	Sand Journal	1	Uno-Due	1
Daibenkyo	1	Limbo	1	Scenario	1	Vague New World	1
Dead Slow	1	Lindsay	1	Scenic Views	1	Varoom	1
Delayed Gratification	6	Little Joe	1	Sculptorvox	1	Vestoj	2
Der Greif	7	Little Sound (Shanghai)	1	Season	1	Virtuogenix	1
Desired Landscapes	2	Little White Lies	5	Second Thoughts	1	Visions	1
Dirty	1	Lodestars Anthology	2	Secret Societies	1	We Jazz	1
Dirty Furniture	1	Lost	1	Seen	1	Weapons of Reason	5
Discontent	2	Lost in Veggies	1	Seisma	1	Weapons of Reason book	1
Disegno	1	Maize	1	Senet	2	Whalebone	1
Dispatches	2	Make Running	1	Sepp	1	Where the Leaves Fall	4
Dog+Human	1	Mal	1	Serviette	1	White Fungus	1
Drawn	1	Marvin	2	Sex	2	Wild Alchemy Journal (Fire edition)	1
Drift	4	Matto	2	Shelf Heroes	1	Worms	2
Dune	1	Meantime	2	Short Stories About (Animals)	1	Yana	1
Editorial	1	Mold	1	Short Stories about Apocalypse	1	Yardsale	1
Editorial Magazine	1	Monday OFF (Shanghai)	1	Shukyu	1	Year Zero	1
Elementum	1	Mono Kultur	1	Sick	2	Yep Yep	1
Elephant	3	Monument	2	Sidetracked	1	Yuca	1
Europe in Crisis	1	More or Less	2	Sindroms	2	Yuck	3
Extra Extra	5	Mother Tongue	1	Skateism	1	Zoetrope	1
Extra Teeth	3	Mousse	3	Sofa	1		
Eye	2	Mynah	1	Soft (Shanghai)	1		

Table 7.7 Specialised retailers for further research. Source: Fantastic Man and MacGuffin.

Name	Street	City	Country
A Flat Shop	Level 2, 25 Gresham St.	Adelaide	Australia
Readings Carlton	309 Lygon Street	Carlton	Australia
Magnation	269-321 Lonsdale Street, Shop LG-04	Melbourne	Australia
MetropolisBookshop	252 Swanston Street	Melbourne	Australia
Journals	2 Heeley St	Paddington	Australia
Kinokuniya Bookshop	500 George Street	Sydney	Australia
Perimeter Books	748 High Street	Thornbury	Australia
Lia Wolf Cabinet	Sonnenfelsgasse 3	Wien	Austria
CIVA Bookshop	55, Rue de l'Ermitage	Bruxelles	Belgium
Papyrus	Waalsekaai 2	Antwerpen	Belgium
Peinture Fraîche	10, Rue Du Tabellion	Bruxelles	Belgium
Copyright Bookshop	Jakobijnenstraat 8	Gent	Belgium
Volver	1947 Dundas Street West	Toronto,	Canada
No Morning Bookshop	5-1 Qinglianshang Road	Chengdu	China
Dorbeetle Studio	-	Hangzhou	China
Kubrick	3 Public Square St, Yau Ma Tei	HongKong	China
Closing Ceremony	5, Lane 15 Mid-Wulumuqi Rd.	Shanghai	China
One Half In	-	Zhoushan	China
One Half In	65 Dong Guan Miao Lane	Zhoushan	China
LMDs	1-1临 Tao Jiang Lu	-	China
Post Nothing Magazines	-	Bogotá	Colombia
Do you Read Me?	13 Aleksanterinkatu	Helsinki	Finland
Nide Kauppa	35 Fredrikinkatu	Helsinki	Finland
Nide / Kirjakauppa Bookstore	Fredrikinkatu 35	Helsinki	Finland
Galerie Yvon Lambert	14 Rue des Filles du Calvaire	Paris	France
Delpire & Co	13 rue de l'Abbaye	Paris	France
Ofr Bookshop	20, rue Dupetit-Thouars	Paris	France
La Librairie Volume	47, Rue Notre-dame De Nazareth	Paris	France
Nous	48, rue Cambon	Paris	France
Do You Read Me?	Auguststraße 28	Berlin	Germany
Rosa Wolf	Eberswalder Str. 32	Berlin	Germany
Westberlin	Friedrichstr. 215	Berlin	Germany
Soda Berlin	Weinbergsweg 1	Berlin	Germany
Pro QM	Almstadtstraße 48-50	Berlin	Germany
Gudberg Nerger	Poolstrasse 8	Hamburg	Germany
Coffee Table Mags	Wexstraße 28	Hamburg	Germany
Walter König	Ehrenstrasse 4	Köln	Germany
Funk Magazine	Krefelder Straße 7—9	Köln-Hansaring	Germany
Mzin	Kolonnadenstraße 20	Leipzig	Germany
Soda Munich	Rumfordstrasse 3	Munich	Germany
Hyper Hypo	10 Voreou	Athina	Greece
ISBN Books+Gallery	Vigutca 2	Budapest	Hungary
Paper Planes	Chuim Village Road	Mumbai	India
The Beautiful Pixels Store	A/2, Chincholi Bunder Rd.	Mumbai	India
Gucci Garden	10 Piazza della Signoria	Firenze	Italy
Reading Room	Via Mincio, 10	Milan	Italy
Serendipity	Corso di Porta Ticinese, 100	Milan	Italy
Libreria Verso	Corso di Porta Ticinese, 40	Milan	Italy
Edicola 518	Via Sant'Ercolano 42/A	Perugia	Italy
Libreria Erno	Piazza Americo Capponi	Roma	Italy
Luxemburg Bookstore	Via C. Battisti 7	Torino	Italy
Spazio Punch	Giudecca 800T	Venice	Italy
Kobe Design Center	3-1-16, Sannomiya-cho, Chuo-ku	Kobe	Japan
LVDB Books	3 Chome-9-11 Tanabe	Osaka	Japan
Post Books	2-10-3-1f Ebisuminami	Shibuya-ku	Japan
Daikanyama T site	17-5 Sarugakucho	Tokyo	Japan
Papercup	Agopian Building	Pharaoh	Lebanon
All Script	16, Jalan TP 3, Taman Perindustrian Sime UEP	Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia
Casa Bosques	Córdoba 25	Mexico City	Mexico
Scheltema	Rokin 9	Amsterdam	Netherlands
Athenaeum Newscentre	Spui 14-16	Amsterdam	Netherlands
Walther König Books	Stedelijk Museum, Museumplein 10	Amsterdam	Netherlands
Hijman Ongerijmd	Grote Oord 15	Amhem	Netherlands
Paagman	Frederik Hendrikslaan 217	Den Haag	Netherlands
Motta Art Books	Grote Berg 70	Eindhoven	Netherlands
Boekhandel Van de Velde	GroteMarkt 54-55	Groningen	Netherlands
Boekhandel Donner	Coolsingel 119	Rotterdam	Netherlands
NAI Booksellers	Museumpark 25	Rotterdam	Netherlands
BLZ Boekhandel	Ella Fitzgeraldplein 22	Utrecht	Netherlands
Mag Nation	63 Ponsonby Rd	Ponsonby -	New Zealand
Minerva	237 Cuba Street, Te Aro	Wellington	New Zealand
Super Salon	Chmiełna 10	Warszawa	Poland
Under The Cover	Rua Marquês Sá da Bandeira 88b	Lisbon	Portugal
In-Uteis Design	Av.Dr Antunes Guimaraes	Porto	Portugal
Materia Prima	Ruade Miguel Bombarda 127	Porto	Portugal

Name	Street	City	Country
Livraria Lello	R. das Carmelitas 144	Porto	Portugal
P-U-N-C-H	Piața Pache Protopopescu 13	Bucharest	Romania
Dispozitiv Books	Popa Tatu 20	Bucharest	Romania
Lebigmag	Ulitsa Pyatnitskaya 42	Moscow	Russia
Basheer Graphics	231 Bain St, #04-19	Singapore	Singapore
Books Actually	9 Yong Siak Street	Singapore	Singapore
Clarke's Bookshop	199 Long Street	CapeTown	South Africa
The Book Lounge	71 Roeland St.	CapeTown	South Africa
Love Books	53 Rustenburg Road	Johannesburg	South Africa
Not Only Books	Jung-gu	Daegu	South Korea
Post Poetics	Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu	Seoul	South Korea
World Magazines	75 Nonhyeon-ro 149-gil, Nonhyeon 1(il)-dong	Seoul	South Korea
Bandi & Luni's	19-3, Banpo-dong, Seocho-gu	Seoul	South Korea
Youngpoong Books	23, Yeoido-dong, Youngdeungpo-gu	Seoul	South Korea
Post Poetics	3f 240 Itaewonro Yongsangu	Seoul	South Korea
Odd Kiosk	222 Carrer de València	Barcelona	Spain
News & Coffee	carrer de la diputacio 288	Barcelona	Spain
Chandal	d'Allada Vermell 13	Barcelona	Spain
Free Times Revistas & Libras	Floridablanca 115	Barcelona	Spain
Cooperativa Jordi Capell	Plaça Nova, 5	Barcelona	Spain
Anti	Dos de Mayo 2	Bilbao	Spain
Ivory Press	Aviador Zorita 46-48	Madrid	Spain
Tambourine	www.playthetambourine.com	Madrid	Spain
Liberia Soriano	C/ de Xàtiva, 15	Valencia	Spain
Papercut	Krukmakargatan 24	Stockholm	Sweden
Konst'ig Books	Åsögatan 124	Stockholm	Sweden
c/o FLINT	Rindermarkt 17	Zurich	Switzerland
Lorem not ipsum	17 Rindermarkt	Zürich	Switzerland
Print Matters	9 Hohlstrasse	Zürich	Switzerland
Pon Ding	6, Ln. 53, Sec. 1, Zhongshan N. Rd.	Taipei	Taiwan
M Channel	6, Sung Chiang Rd.	Taipei	Taiwan
Tsutaya	8, Sec. 5, Zhongxiao E. Rd.	Taipei	Taiwan
CityCity Gallery	13/3 Sathorn 1, South Sathorn Rd.	Bangkok	Thailand
Readallion	Kyiv	Bangkok	Ukraine
Magalleria	22A Broad St	Bath	United Kingdom
Magazine Brighton	23 Trafalgar St	Brighton	United Kingdom
Amolfini Books	16 Narrow Quay	Bristol	United Kingdom
Papersmith	6A Boyce's Ave	Bristol	United Kingdom
V&A Dundee	1 Riverside Esplanade	Dundee City Council	United Kingdom
Stills Photographer Gallery	23 Cockburn St	Edinburgh	United Kingdom
Fruit Market	45 Market St	Edinburgh	United Kingdom
Delicate Rébellion	Arch 1121 East Market Street	Edinburgh	United Kingdom
Ripe Mags	Moncur Street	Glasgow City	United Kingdom
Shreeji News	14 Canonbury Place	Greater London	United Kingdom
Rare Mags	5 Lower Hillgate	Greater Manchester	United Kingdom
Village Bookstore	3 Thornton's Arcade	Leeds	United Kingdom
Colours May Vary	Munro House (unit 1A), Duke St	Leeds	United Kingdom
Magna	117-119 Clerkenwell Road	London	United Kingdom
Claire de Rouen Books	125 Charing Cross Road	London	United Kingdom
Artwords Bookshop	20-22 Broadway Market	London	United Kingdom
Design Museum	224-238 Kensington High St	London	United Kingdom
Jasper Morrison Shop	24b Kingland Road	London	United Kingdom
MagCulture	270 St John St	London	United Kingdom
Kioskafe	31 Norfolk Place	London	United Kingdom
Architectural Association	36 Bedford Square	London	United Kingdom
Ti Pi Tin	47 Stoke Newington High St	London	United Kingdom
Libreria Bookstore	65 Hanbury St	London	United Kingdom
Charlotte Street News	66 Charlotte St Fitzrovia	London	United Kingdom
Artwords Bookshop	69 Rivington St	London	United Kingdom
Donlon Books	75 Broadway Market	London	United Kingdom
Walther König Books Whitechapel Gallery	77-82 Whitechapel High St.	London	United Kingdom
Tate Modern	Bankside	London	United Kingdom
Walther König Books Serpentine Galleries	Kensington Gardens	London	United Kingdom
Somerset House	Strand	London	United Kingdom
Unique Magazines Limited	Sands Industrial Estate, Unit 2	Newcastle Upon Tyne	United Kingdom
Ideas On Paper	Unit 4b, Cobden Chambers	Nottingham	United Kingdom

Name	Street	City	Country
Modern Art Oxford	30 Pembroke St	Oxford	United Kingdom
Much Ado Books	8 West St, Afriston	Polegate	United Kingdom
Magazine Heaven	South Terrace unit A1b	Rushden	United Kingdom
La Biblioteka	Kommune, Castle House	Sheffield	United Kingdom
Rare Mags	17 Lower Hillgate	Stockport	United Kingdom
Hambleton	10 The Square	Winchester	United Kingdom
Book People	603 North Lamar Boulevard	Austin	United States
The Brooklyn Museum	200 Eastern Parkway	Brooklyn	United States
A/D/O	29 Norman Ave.	Brooklyn	United States
Space 519	200 East Chestnut Street	Chicago	United States
Quimby's	1854W North Ave	Chicago	United States
<u>Tenversix</u>	1511 Commerce St	Dallas	United States
MoMA PS1	22-25 Jackson Avenue	Long Island	United States
Skylight Books	1814N Vermont Ave.	Los Angeles	United States
MOCA Store	250 S. Grand Ave.	Los Angeles	United States
Artbook @ Hauser Wirth & Schimmel	917 E 3rd St	Los Angeles	United States
Ooga Booga	943 N. Broadway # 203	Los Angeles	United States
Centerfold	716 N Fairfax Ave	Los Angeles	United States
Century World News	10597 West Pico Boulevard	Los Angeles	United States
Hennessey +Ingalls	300 S. Santa Fe Ave., Suite M	Los Angeles	United States
Village Bookstore	131 Oldham St	Manchester	United States
Instituto Marangoni Miami	3704 Northeast 2nd Avenue	Miami	United States
Post Nothing Magazines	-	Miami	United States
Forage Modern Workshop	4023E Lake St	Minneapolis	United States
SOHO News International	186 Prince st. #A	New York	United States
McNally Jackson	52 Prince St.	New York	United States
Canal Iconic Magazines	385 Canal Street	New York	United States
Magazine Café	15 West 37th Street	New York	United States
Mulberry Iconic Magazines	188 Mulberry St.	New York	United States
Casa Magazines	228th Ave	New York	United States
MastBooks	72 Avenue A	New York	United States
Avril Fifty	North 50th Street	Philadelphia	United States
Ulises	31 E Columbia Ave	Philadelphia	United States
The City Reader	3050SE Division Str.	Portland	United States
Indent	3636N. Mississippi Ave.	Portland	United States
Juciy News SF	2181 Union Street	San Francisco	United States
Smoke Signals	2223 Polk Street	San Francisco	United States
Spoonbill & Sugartown Books	218 Bedford Ave	Williamsburg	United States