

**RECIPROCAL REWARDS:
BRINGING READER'S DIGEST MAGAZINE
BRANDS AND CONTENT TO
CANADIAN WEB PORTALS**

by

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B.A. Communication, Simon Fraser University, 2009

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the requirements for the degree of*

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Abstract

This report examines the online partnerships that Reader's Digest Canada's established with web portals for its magazines and digital properties: *Best Health* magazine and PlaisirsSante.ca with Sympatico.ca; and *Reader's Digest Canada* and *Sélection du Reader's Digest* with MSN.ca. When Besthealthmag.ca became Sympatico.ca's health and fitness channel in 2009, the website's audience grew exponentially, proving the value of investing in online and digital publishing.

This paper presents the marketing, web editorial, and business strategies for the publisher's web properties. The histories of web portals and Reader's Digest's web strategy, with an examination of how and why the publisher's partnerships with portals were established, are covered. As well, the impact of the partnerships on brand awareness and audience growth is discussed.

Finally, the implications of partnerships with web portals for the greater Canadian magazine publishing community, particularly conglomerate magazine publishers, are considered.

Keywords: magazine publishing; online publishing; publishing business models; Canadian magazines; online communities; online partnerships

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Glossary: Metrics Definitions

Reader's Digest Canada's web publishing uses the following metrics from comScore and Google Analytics to measure its performance online:

Comparable Sites	Other website in the same category. At comScore, every website belongs to a primary category. For example, Best Health is in the Health category. Other relevant categories would include Lifestyles, Family & Parenting, and Home categories.
Entries/Entrances	The number of entrances to a website. With content pages, entries will indicate the number of times a particular page served as an entrance to the website.
Exits	The number of exits from a website. ComScore refers to sites that visitors go to after as "losses."
Impressions	In advertising, the number and quality of page impressions is used to gauge the value of a website or page. Interchangeable with "page view."
Open Rate	Percentage of messages delivered in an email campaign that are confirmed as having been opened by the recipient.
Page View (PV)	A request to load a single page of a website.
Time Spent	The time a visitor spends a website.
Time on Page	How long a visitor spent on a particular page or set of pages.
Total Audience	The size of the complete Canadian population that uses the Internet as calculated by comScore by extrapolated data gathered from random "digital" phone calling.
Unique Visitors (UV)	A unit of online traffic to a website, counting each visitor only once in the time frame of the report. This statistic is relevant to site publishers and advertisers as a measure of a site's true audience size, equivalent to the term "reach" used in other media.
Visitor	A user of a website site.
Visits	The number of unique sessions initiated by all your visitors.

Chapter One

Introduction

Canadian magazines have been online since 1996.¹ In the 1990s, as excitement and anxiety built around translating print products and brands for digital platforms, many magazines went online without a strategy for online editorial or revenue development. Like other media businesses that depend on ad revenue, including television and radio broadcasters, magazines struggled to navigate the world online. What would be their business strategy? How would they find funding to invest in technological development and programming? For smaller, non-profit magazines, which make up much of the landscape in Canada, building a functional website was simply not within their means.

One of the largest struggles for Canadian magazine websites is one that the country's publishers are familiar with: the lack of economies of scale. In publishing print magazines, a smaller audience has always meant fewer subscriptions and single-copy sales, and cautious advertisers; fewer readers makes it more difficult to offset the costs of producing a magazine—such as printing, editorial, design, and rights. Though federal cultural policy has stepped in to help address these economic obstacles, digital publishing has yet to be adequately handled in the same way. As well, Canadian magazine websites are in direct competition with international magazine websites. This challenge is further compounded by the fact that online, all content creators—whether their main business is newspaper publishing, television broadcasting, or blogging—are direct competitors and jockey for the same audiences and advertisers.

In order to attract lucrative advertising accounts, websites must have a substantial number of unique visitors who are engaged with the content. This is no small task to be sure, particularly for magazines. For example, editorial for print and the web are different, in so far as the latter needs to be “read” by search engines and appeal to audiences who generally scan content, rather than read it.²

¹ The first Canadian magazine website was *Shift*, a digital culture magazine founded in 1991, and which folded in 2003. Its website was in operation from 1996 to 2004 (Quin, 2003)

² Conventional wisdom holds that online content should be written and edited to cater to short attention spans. However, websites are finding that certain readers are interested in long-form journalism online and that the longest pieces can actually drive the most amount of traffic: *New York Times Magazine* editor Gerry Marzorati's claimed, “Contrary to conventional wisdom, it's our longest pieces that attract the most online traffic” (Garber, 2010).

Producing an engaging magazine website requires editors to re-imagine their magazine brands in terms of content and form. And, for the first time in magazine history, publishers can and must show their advertisers how well their ads are performing. It is possible to know how many people clicked on an ad, or how many “eyeballs” saw the creative. As a result, the definition of “successful editorial” and the ability to sell advertising becomes all about the analytics.

With the help of a strong research department and its many years of expertise, Reader’s Digest Magazines Canada, one of the country’s largest multi-title publishers, is forging ahead into the world of digital publishing. Reader’s Digest uses its strengths and an innovative publishing model to capture large but targeted audiences online, and thereby provide attractive environments for its advertisers. The Reader’s Digest Canada magazines websites are Readersdigest.ca, Selection.ca, Plaisirssante.ca, Besthealthmag.ca and Ourcanada.ca.

In 2008, Reader’s Digest Canada launched *Best Health*, a Canadian women’s health magazine.³ *Best Health* was extremely successful from the start; it earned \$1.9 million in advertising revenue in its first year. The success of the print product, however, was only the beginning. The launch of the magazine was in fact the launch of a multi-platform brand: The magazine’s website, Besthealthmag.ca, became an integral part of the Best Health product. Previous to the launch of the magazine, 55 percent of an Internet research panel said they were “extremely interested” or “very interested” in an integrated web component for the soon-to-be-launched title (Boullard, 2008, p. 17). Accordingly, the team behind Best Health engaged the brand’s audience on multiple platforms early on. Today, Besthealthmag.ca attracts approximately half a million unique visitors a month; that’s 1.7 percent of the total Canadian audience online (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010). Best Health on Twitter (@besthealthmag) has more than 86,000 followers, making it the most “followed” Canadian magazine brand on the social networking application by leaps and bounds (Twitter, 2010).⁴

How Reader’s Digest Magazines Canada found phenomenal success in digital publishing

³ The launch of *Best Health* is extensively covered in Lise Hélène Boullard’s project report, “Finding Out What Women Want” (2008).

⁴ To compare, *Maclean’s* magazine (@macleansmag) has 8,030 followers, *Canadian Living* (@canadian_living) has 4,806 followers, and *Chatelaine* (@chatelainemag) has 4,553 followers (November 8, 2010).

with the *Best Health* brand is the primary subject of this report. In the summer of 2009, shortly after the launch of *Best Health* magazine and Besthealthmag.ca, Reader's Digest established a partnership with the web portal, Sympatico.ca. The portal—which split from its partner MSN on September 1, 2009, to become an independent portal separate from the former Sympatico.msn.ca—adopted Besthealthmag.ca as its Health and Fitness section, or “channel.” From there, traffic to Besthealthmag.ca grew exponentially. The partnership with Sympatico.ca is the heart of Best Health's online business. The editorial and production processes that come with working with an online general interest portal are further explored in this report.

To establish the context in which Reader's Digest Canada launched its various digital initiatives, the first chapter of this report examines the history of Canadian magazines online, and explores the economics of publishing online. This chapter also presents the history of web portals in Canada, followed by a discussion of the publishing activities of Reader's Digest Magazines Canada.

Chapter two describes the business strategies and mechanics involved in the Best Health-Sympatico.ca partnership. This section of the report details how the partnership with Sympatico.ca was established, the mechanics of producing content for a general interest portal, the impact on the Reader's Digest websites, the websites' successes and challenges, and the unique editorial strategies employed. The introduction of the Plaisirs Santé brand, the French-Canadian counterpart to Best Health, is also discussed.

Next, the report describes a different approach to online partnerships for Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca. The development of a partnership with MSN.ca was partly modelled on the company's success with Sympatico.ca, but has different goals and parameters. In this chapter, decision makers and editors forecast the partnership's potential impact on the website in terms of editorial and production, and new advertising opportunities as a result of the expected influx of traffic.

The final chapter assesses the implications of Reader's Digest Canada's success for other multi-title publishers. There are possibilities for other Canadian magazines to repurpose their material for general interest portals, but how widely applicable is this business model? And considering the changing demands and realities of readers and the media industries, what is the long-term viability of this strategy? There are no conclusive answers; however, the value of

publishers' expertise in building communities, brands, and content is definite.

A Note on Research Method and Analysis

The web analytics presented in this report are based on custom reports from comScore, a web-research company internationally recognized as the standard for digital market intelligence for the Internet's largest sites. Reader's Digest is a customer of comScore, Inc. Canada. Although the publisher's web department uses Google Analytics internally, most corporate advertisers prefer comScore's data due to their recognized impartiality.

ComScore's intelligence is based on data gathered from a random panel. Very roughly speaking, comScore is to Internet audience data as Nielsen's ratings are to television: Unlike Google Analytics, which captures data on a website's server, comScore installs proxy-technology software on the computers of panel members. The software captures information about panel members' behaviour click-by-click, second-by-second. ComScore's Canadian panel is composed of roughly 50,000 users (comScore, Inc., 2010); globally, the company estimates that its panel comprises two million users (comScore, Inc. website, 2010b).

ComScore determines its clients' audience reach based on a figure it calls "total audience"; it represents the complete Canadian population that uses the Internet. The company calculates the number of people in the total audience by conducting phone surveys of a random sample group: "Respondents are asked a variety of questions about their Internet use [such as, Do you use the Internet?], and descriptive information about their households is collected" (comScore, Inc. website, 2010a). These data are extrapolated to establish the total audience number, as well as other demographic details about the Canadian online audience. By combining the total audience data with information gathered from panel members, comScore is able to produce an up-to-date picture of online audience behaviour.

This method, which comScore calls "panel audience measurement," has some limitations. While the software precisely records panel members' Internet usage, panel members and phone-survey respondents self-report demographic information; this can result in imprecise findings. Another shortcoming of the panel-sample method is that it favours popular websites since there is a

higher probability that the panel members will visit them. Conversely, comScore cannot account for smaller websites if no panel members land on the site. In short, when the data are extrapolated, the method can inflate the number of visitors to larger sites and overlook traffic to smaller sites.

In the interest of protecting Reader's Digest Magazine Canada's proprietary information, this report mostly uses comScore's data. Although this information is public, access to purchased comScore products (including comparative analyses and demographic information) was granted on the basis of my status as an employee of Reader's Digest Magazines Canada.⁵ The data presented show the scale of the partnership's impact on the Reader's Digest Canada websites, but are not an exact or up-to-date representation of the websites' performance metrics.

ComScore's data support the discussion of Reader's Digest's web strategy. Using information gathered from extensive in-person interviews with the digital media executives, and the online marketing and web editorial teams, this report serves as a comprehensive picture of how this major Canadian publisher is building targeted audiences online and grooming those audiences for advertisers.

Please see page *ix* for a glossary of web analytics terms.

Canadian Magazines Online

The decline of magazines has been predicted since the start of the twentieth century, when film was introduced (Quin, 2003, p. 3). Historically, whenever a new medium for entertainment and information emerges, critics and naysayers speculate that the end of the magazine (or other existing media) is nearing. This was absolutely true at the advent of the Internet.⁶ Since its introduction, the Internet has forcefully reshaped the media landscape. Its influence was—and is—so great that predictions of the magazine publishing industry's imminent demise seemed more likely than ever.

⁵ I interned at Reader's Digest Canada in the summer of 2010. I worked on four of the publisher's magazines and provided production and editorial assistance for two of its websites: Readersdigest.ca and Besthealthmag.ca. This report partly draws on my experiences during that time.

⁶ Anicka Quin (2003) posits 1994 as the approximate introduction of the web to the general public in North America (p.1).

In response to the speculation, and making sure not be left in the dust, many magazines publishers launched websites for their titles in the late 1990s.

Theoretically, magazine publishers were well-positioned to take advantage of the features of the new medium, as they already had arresting editorial to offer. A website had the potential to attract new readers and subscribers by offering content (either from the magazine or exclusively online) in a format that was convenient and accessible for readers. However, publishers (and most everyone else) lacked knowledge or expertise about how audiences behaved online, and how to translate magazine content or brands for online audiences. Quin (2003) notes, “By 1996, many magazines were launching sites that were mirror versions of their print products” (p. 8). Early magazine websites were wanting in overall “stickiness” (the quality that makes a user stay on a site, engage with the content, and tell others about it) because without tailoring it for the web, print-magazine content lacks timeliness, interactivity, searchability, and personalization.

There were other challenges, too. For example, monitoring, updating, and editing a magazine website required additional resources in terms of time and money; it often increased editors’ workloads. Most magazine editors were not accustomed to producing daily updates, since they traditionally worked on monthly or weekly production schedules. With smaller staffs and operating budgets than their American counterparts, the vast majority of Canadian magazines did not have the capacity to build and maintain functional websites, market them, cultivate regular audiences, and engage with the audiences in a meaningful way. Another obstacle was gaining rights and permissions for previously published work, since older contracts for writers did not address digital formats. There was always the question, too, of whether making a magazine’s content available online would cannibalize its print operations. Ultimately, without the infrastructure, market research, or knowledge to produce effective online spaces, magazine websites struggled to find audiences and make a profit.

The early 2000s were especially dismal. In his 2002 book *Bamboozled at the Revolution: How Big Media Lost Billions in the Battle for the Internet*, technology journalist and media critic John Matovalli revealed how powerhouse media companies such as Time Warner lost millions in early Internet ventures (Sumner and Rhoades, 2006, p. 118). An essay from Slate.com in 2008, argued that even turning household names, such as *Vogue* and *Esquire*, into profitable web properties was

“probably not possible, at least not right away,” since advertisers were not willing to pay for online audiences (Blume, 2008). A media expert quoted in the Slate.com essay estimated that “online CPM is worth between one-seventh and one-tenth of a print CPM” (Blume); in short, the online-advertising model looked bleak for everyone, not just small- and medium-sized magazines. In July 2009, Kat Tancock, who is also the author of the blog *Magazines Online*,⁷ wrote, “The debate is still on (and for good reason) about how the media can make money with their online properties. Readership is certainly there, but display advertising isn’t bringing in enough revenue and most readers are unwilling to pay to read articles online”⁸ (2009a). Only very savvy publishers could realistically expect to make a profit from sponsorships and advertising online—and a small one at that.

Faced with this reality, publishers were forced to reevaluate their web properties and thus, redefine their goals and measures of success. While most magazine websites were not likely to sell a fair amount of ads in the near future, they could exploit the equity in the brands. Readers invest trust in magazine brands, and looking at the magazine as a brand created more opportunities to increase visibility and revenue. By extending their brands online, through other media, and in-person, publishers could sell subscriptions and increase single-copy sales, and apply the brands to other media, products, and events. Popular magazines lent their brands to television shows, special interest publications, and merchandise, such as T-shirts, books, and calendars (MacKay, 2006, p. 198). For large media companies with resources and experience to maximize vertical and horizontal integration, this transformation was a familiar evolution.⁹ A 2003 survey of the leading magazine publishers in the UK showed that more than half thought of themselves as multimedia publishers and communicators, and not just publishers (Dear in MacKay, p. 213).

⁷ Magazinesonline.wordpress.com

⁸ Various websites have implemented “paywalls” over the years but with little success. With the notable exception of the *Wall Street Journal*, charging for online content is an outmoded practice in 2010.

⁹ Brand extension in the magazine publishing industry is just as prevalent today: Robert Sauerberg, president of Condé Nast, told the *New York Times* “he and his staff had been working on creating what he called “12-course content meals”—package deals that would include access to multiple Condé Nast magazines delivered in multiple ways, like print, tablet, mobile, and Internet, as well as invitations to magazine-sponsored events. Tom Harty, lead of Meredith’s magazines division said he would be expanding the company’s licensed products (Peters, 2010, November 28, 2010).

Online, some magazine websites became hubs for the communities around the brands. Members of the communities went to the websites to interact with editors and each other (MacKay, 2006, p. 153). In the web *and* print formats, a magazine represents the centre of a community.¹⁰ As noted in Rowland Lorimer's 2008 study of Alberta Magazines, "Magazines Alberta: Vibrancy, Growth, Interactive Community Leadership," "...magazines take their lead from their communities of readers, serving their needs and desires, and in doing so, they emerge as significant and distinctive voices in their communities" (Lorimer 2008, key findings). The formation of a community was especially key for *Chatelaine*, one of Canada's most popular magazines. In her research in the magazine's archives, Valerie Korinek looked at correspondence from readers and discovered that magazines and discussion about magazines "fostered a sense of identity or membership in a community" (Korinek in MacKay, 2006, p. 154). This dynamic is dramatically enhanced by the possibilities of online networking on magazine websites. Says McKay, "the community aspect of a magazine is indeed one of the form's important traits and a prime requirement for [online] success" (p. 154). Recently, publishers have found their web properties with established and engaged online communities are desirable environments for advertisers.

In 2010, the importance of a having a thoughtful online presence is impossible to ignore. As CEO of Meredith Corporation (publisher of *Ladies Home Journal*, *MORE*, and *Fitness*), William Kerr, notes:

The Internet is your friend. Once viewed as a threat, the Internet is a medium that magazines are using as a growth catalyst on many fronts. For our editors, it allows us a more frequent dialogue with readers. For our marketers, it provides another source of potential revenue generation. For our circulation professionals, it provides a low-cost alternative for generating magazine subscriptions. And it is growing at a phenomenal rate (Sumner and Rhoades, 2006, p. 118).

As more and more readers read online in their leisure time, an increasing number of publishers are establishing devoted web editorial and ad sales teams. The user experience has also improved as best practices for producing content online have also emerged: search-engine optimizing content, creating more interactive features, and integrating ways for readers to talk back. And publishers that nurture

¹⁰ In the midst of the financial maelstrom of 2008 and 2009, some magazines, including *Cosmogirl* and *Gourmet*, shut down their print operations and now exclusively serve their online community (Blume 2008)

the communities around their magazines have more engaged online readerships to entice advertisers with. Publishers are also adopting social networking, blogs, email newsletters, and RSS feeds as part of their web strategies. There are also new digital spaces for magazine brands to cultivate audiences, including mobile applications and digital editions. Today, the largest Canadian magazine publishers are looking beyond breaking even. Though small- and medium-sized magazines still struggle to get a return on their investment in online publishing, multi-title publishers are managing to leverage their web properties into money-makers. One way of doing this, as Reader's Digest Magazines Canada has found, is to partner with a web portal.

Web Portals in Canada

“Web portal” loosely describes any website that aggregates links from diverse sources and presents them in a unified and organized way. General interest web portals curate links to news, stock prices, entertainment gossip, and weather forecasts. Much like a newspaper, portals provide value in aggregating this information in one place. Similarly, portals present their content, gathered from syndicates such as Reuters and the Associated Press, in a consistent look and feel. Some web portals produce some content in-house but all portals have editorial teams gathering content from outside sources, including magazine websites. Web-portal editors analyze which articles, slideshows, services and interactive features perform best and choose the next day's content accordingly. Many major web portals also host search and email services.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, web portals were important pieces of online real estate because they were daily destinations for users—often they were the first pages users visited before going elsewhere on the web. Internet service providers (ISP) and web portals often formed partnerships: When a user purchased access to Internet from an ISP, his or her browser would be programmed with the partner portal site as their home page.¹¹ Similarly, users of Yahoo! Mail or Hotmail were directed to the service's partner portal site upon logout.¹² Accordingly, portals

¹¹ Today, this trend persists when less tech-savvy users retain the home page that was programmed on their Internet browser when they purchased their computer.

¹² In Canada, Yahoo! Canada and Sympatico.msn.ca, respectively.

generated substantial traffic. Additionally, before Google, portals' search engines were a popular way to locate relevant information.

Globally, MSNBC, Go.com, Netscape, Lycos, AOL, and Yahoo! dominated the web-portal market during the dot-com boom in the late 1990s. While some of these portals went out of business when the bubble burst around 2000, Yahoo! and MSNBC continued to find success. These companies also launched international portals to serve the demand for regional and local content. Yahoo! Canada, MSN.ca, and Sympatico.ca (owned by Bell Canada Enterprises) were established as dedicated services for the Canadian audience. Other Canadian portals include Canoe.ca (which is particularly popular in French Canada), AOL Canada, Canada.com, and myTELUS.com.

In 2003, Bell and Microsoft Canada merged their portal websites into the co-branded portal Sympatico.msn.ca (Canadian Press, 2003). According to Kevin Crull, president of residential services at Bell, "We wanted [Microsoft's] development capabilities. They wanted our audience" (Avery, 2009). The joint portal combined the large audiences that used MSN's Hotmail service and those that purchased Bell's Internet service and/or were readers of Sympatico.ca. At the time, Canada's online advertising market had an estimated worth of just over \$350 million¹³ (Lloyd, 2009); accordingly rather than selling consumers to advertisers, the portal's primary business model was based on selling services to consumers. The partnership allowed MSN to generate additional revenue by offering premium subscription services, developed by Microsoft, to Bell's customer base (Lloyd). Bell hoped to use Microsoft's technology to add value to Sympatico.ca.

Over the next five years, Sympatico.msn.ca, which offered content for English speakers and Francophones, became one of the country's most visited websites and *the* major Canadian portal, with 18.5 million unique views a month (Lloyd, 2009).

Nonetheless, in the summer of 2009, MSN and Bell realized the partnership was no longer optimally serving either company. The rise of "freeconomics"—an online-business model where basic services are offered for free and revenues are generated from advertising or selling value-added services—lowered the value of Microsoft's "premium level" services, such as email, and made it

¹³ According to eMarketer Digital Intelligence, total ad spending in Canada will reach CAD \$11.55 billion in 2010 (<http://bit.ly/8YtYkc>)

necessary to sell advertising to support those services. The companies divorced and re-established their individual (bilingual) portal sites: MSN.ca and Sympatico.ca, and improved their inventory of display-advertising spaces by developing video players as part of their advertising services (Lloyd, 2009). Currently, an ongoing task for Bell and Microsoft is restructuring the portals to operate without the content and technology resources previously afforded by having a joint, co-branded portal.

Today, portal sites are still major online destinations, but the number of visitors, page views, and time spent by users is declining. Microsoft Canada and Bell are engaged in a three-year agreement to exchange traffic, but neither portal site has been able to amass an audience as large as the former readership of Sympatico.msn.ca (Reynolds, interview, August 9, 2010). Meanwhile, engagement on social media sites is rising (Stableford, 2010). Users are turning to Twitter and Facebook for a more personalized experience. Some users are turning to social media first to get the news, and to tap into what their friends are reading and watching. Due to the ebbing popularity of portal sites, advertisers and agencies are taking their ad dollars to Facebook for more ad impressions¹⁴ (Oreskovic, 2010; Walsh, 2010). AOL, MSN, and Yahoo! are responding to this development by offering new customization options, such as personalized home pages. But more importantly, web portals are investing in quality content and thoughtful presentation. In order to become competitive content providers, portals—particularly MSN.ca—are turning to experts in publishing and journalism, including magazines (Stableford, 2010; Microsoft Canada, 2009).

Canadian magazines have a relatively long history of providing content to portal sites. In 1995, *Maclean's* partnered with CompuServe Canada, a popular Internet service provider. At the time, CompuServe had three million Canadian subscribers. The partnership gave CompuServe subscribers—who were also the audience for the ISP's portal—exclusive access to *Maclean's* articles before they hit the newsstand (Quin, 2003, p. 9). In exchange, CompuServe drove traffic to the magazine's online forum, where readers could discuss articles or talk to the writers and editors.

¹⁴ “Nearly one of every four graphical, online display ads viewed in the United States in the third quarter [of 2010] was on [Facebook], according to a new report by comScore... Facebook racked-up more ad impressions in the third quarter than the next four companies combined, which includes Yahoo, Microsoft Corp, News Corporation's Fox Interactive Media and Google Inc... Analysts note that Facebook ads sell at a significant discount to display ads sold on traditional Web portals like Yahoo.” (Oreskovic, November 8, 2010)

Other magazines have sold content from their websites to portals. Selling daily music news from their website, Chartattack.com, to Sympatico.ca was a major revenue source for *Chart* magazine's publishers in the early 2000s (Quin, p. 48).

When portals link to and publish magazine content, they gain content to draw and engage visitors, as well as the authority and credibility of an established magazine brand. A 2010 study by the Online Publishers Association (OPA) (Smith, 2010) and a 2008 study by Dynamic Logic (Lakin, 2008) concluded that branded content sites, such as magazine websites, had a greater impact on customer awareness and purchase intent than non-branded websites. Customers and advertisers also positively associated media sites with trust and quality. The OPA survey of 3,000 people found:

Eighty percent of people who said they had purchased brands as a result of online advertising described themselves as having a strong, positive connection to the sites where the ads ran. In most questions regarding trust and ad responsiveness, the branded media sites came out on top.

On the question of which content they are most likely to trust, respondents said: media sites first (72%), then portals (60%), and social media (23%).

Audiences also felt that advertisers were more likely to be of high quality and reputable on media sites (24%) rather than portals (20%), or social media (8%) (Smith).

By partnering with magazine brands, portals can provide advertisers environments where consumers are more trusting and receptive. Ultimately, portals' burgeoning traffic troubles are creating ripe opportunities for magazine publishers.

Publisher Profile: Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited

The Reader's Digest Association, Inc. (RDA) is an international company with offices in 43 countries (Reader's Digest Association, Inc. website, 2009). Founded in 1922 by DeWitt and Lila Wallace, the company's flagship publication, *Reader's Digest*—known for providing practical and useful information, is the largest independently published magazine in the world with 50 international editions (Sumner and Rhoades, 2006, p. 144). The company is also famous for its sweepstakes and contests—both of which are effective marketing and name-gathering techniques and

thus, important parts of the RDA business. Its large customer base and database of prospective customers is possibly *the* most important asset to the company.

Although it has been slower than others in embracing digital services and products, RDA has always been a multi-brand, multi-media company. It produces and markets hundreds of media products. Annually, the company sells approximately 40 million books, music, and video products around the world (Reader's Digest Association, Inc. website, 2009). Over the years, RDA has generated a wealth of content, which it can economically repurpose as digital products. For example, contents from the Reader's Digest book *Extraordinary Uses for Ordinary Things*¹⁵ are the source material for the popular series "5 Things to Do with..." series on Readersdigest.ca. RDA owns and operates 78 branded websites. The crown jewel in the company's digital properties is AllRecipes.com, the world's largest online food community, with 15 localized websites, including one for Quebec.

The corporation's relatively recent but rapid expansion into the digital world is part of its strategy to grow by "creating multi-platform communities based on branded content" (Reader's Digest Association, Inc. website, 2009). RDA also leverages national successes and expands those brands internationally. In 2006, Reader's Digest Australia launched *HealthSmart* magazine, a health and lifestyle magazine for women ages 30 to 50 years old. It is now the leading women's health magazine in Australia and spawned a New Zealand edition in 2009. In 2008, the editorial formula was imported to Canada; with a few tweaks, it became *Best Health* magazine. And in 2009, the US offices announced the launch of *BestYou* magazine.¹⁶

The Canadian offices of *Reader's Digest* were established in 1947. The first Canadian edition of Reader's Digest, *Sélection du Reader's Digest*, appeared in 1948; it was, of course, the French-language edition for Canada. Currently, *Reader's Digest Canada* is the largest circulation consumer magazine in Canada¹⁷ (Print Measurement Bureau, 2010) and is also recognized as the most trusted and influential magazine in the country conducted by Ropers Reports (in 2009) and *Masthead*

¹⁵ 2004, Reader's Digest Association

¹⁶ In September 2009, Reader's Digest closed the magazine after the short test launch.

¹⁷ Three professional and association magazines, *What's Cookin'*, *CAA*, and *Westworld*, have larger circulations (Print Measurement Bureau, 2010).

magazine (in January/February 2008) (Ludgate, interview, 2010). The Canadian editorial offices are located in downtown Montreal, Quebec, and advertising sales are headquartered in the business district of Toronto, Ontario. The Montreal office has approximately 170 Reader's Digest Canada staff members in the finance, editorial, marketing services, promotions, communications, human resources, sales, and administration departments. Reader's Digest Magazines Canada publishes five magazines: *Best Health*, *Reader's Digest Canada*, *Sélection*, *Our Canada*, and *More of Our Canada*. The magazine division also publishes special interest publications (SIPs) and produces custom publications for companies such as RONA.

Web Strategy

In Canada, Reader's Digest has been online since 1998, the year Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca were launched as online extensions of the magazines. At the time, isolated but dramatic success stories from Silicon Valley created the illusion that e-commerce was the new "Klondike." However, it was not a simple task to transform two well-established print magazine brands into competitive players in the digital publishing landscape. Reader's Digest Canada and *Sélection* initially struggled to define their brands and voices online, and without a clear and considered strategy, the Reader's Digest Canada magazine websites floundered.

At the time, neither Readersdigest.ca nor Selection.ca had a dedicated editor or a content management system. The websites were updated monthly, mostly with repurposed magazine content. When taken directly from the magazine, the articles did not appeal to the audience of Readersdigest.ca: Many of the features published in *Reader's Digest Canada* and *Sélection* are examples of extended investigative reporting or long-form journalism, but, as the company later found, the online audience was more interested in shorter, more practical food, home, and lifestyle content. As well, the magazine articles, their headlines, and their descriptions made little to no impact on search engines because the text lacked keywords; this made it unlikely that the latent online audience would find the articles by way of search. To make matters more difficult for the provisional web team, Reader's Digest did not have the digital rights for some of its previously published content.

After the dot-com bust, online businesses adopted more realistic expectations about what they could achieve. As a provisional solution, the Reader's Digest Canada websites were made into online stores for the company's books, music and video products, and magazine subscriptions. Meanwhile, the new-business-development team introduced the famous Reader's Digest sweepstakes program to the magazine websites. This important addition—which cost relatively little to establish—helped the company to build a large database of customers' email addresses and to draw visitors to the sites daily. The online sweepstakes made Readersdigest.ca one of the top three Canadian magazine websites online, just behind Canadianliving.com. The “sweeps” program was the bread and butter of the company's online business; in 2003, it made up 70 percent of Reader's Digest Canada's online traffic and an even larger percentage in the earlier years.

However, advertisers were interested in putting their products in front of readers who were engaged with content, and therefore could be influenced about their purchasing decisions. The quality of the magazine's readership is something Reader's Digest Canada wanted to offer to its online advertisers, too. Fittingly, the publisher has always boasted the quality of its readers. According to vice-president of digital media and strategic partnerships, Yann Paquet, the readers of *Reader's Digest Canada* spend 90 minutes a month with the magazine, on average, and the magazine's readers highly trust the brand (interview, August 11, 2010). Accordingly, Reader's Digest moved towards producing websites for content, not contests. The company needed to develop online audiences large enough to be worthwhile for advertisers, but specific enough that demographically, they matched advertisers' targets.

It was time to set new goals for the Canadian Reader's Digest web properties: The first was to generate revenue with the company's existing assets—its brands, customers, prospects, and most importantly, content. In 2008, the company hired a dedicated web editor, Jennifer Reynolds, as part of its initiative to makeover the website. Reynolds focused on developing an identity for the websites that was separate from the magazines. As such, the House and Home, Food, and Health “affinities”¹⁸ were launched. Furthermore, content was written and edited to be more “web-

¹⁸ On Selection.ca, the main affinities were *Bien Manger*, *Maison*, and *Santé*.

friendly”¹⁹ without straying from the Reader’s Digest brand: Articles were generally shorter and geared towards providing practical, everyday lifestyle advice. As well, user-generated content (UGC) features, such as photo galleries, were introduced. In short, Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca were transformed into “content-rich sites” with community interaction (Goyette, interview, July 16, 2010). The change was in-line with the Reader’s Digest brand and produced a more targeted and desirable audience for advertisers. At the same time, the Reader’s Digest Association started an international initiative to digitize its content and build an e-library accessible to its offices around the world, which gave the web editor more content to offer to the readers of Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca.

The second goal for Reader’s Digest Canada’s digital business was to expand traffic beyond sweeps visitors, and increase the loyal and trusting audience they had begun to establish. To fast-track the growth of its online audience, Reader’s Digest launched e-newsletters, which are major traffic drivers and a service to their readers. The company also developed cross-promotional partnerships with websites such as Divine.ca and Yahoo! Canada, sometimes running co-branded contests, or cross-promoting content.

The next step in audience development was to establish relationships with national, general interest web portals to give Reader’s Digest content more exposure. Reader’s Digest considered three different partnership models they could pursue with portals: 1) content for traffic, 2) content for dollars, or 3) content for technology. The first model is what Reader’s Digest ultimately found success with (This is covered in extensive detail in the following chapters). The second, in which the publisher licenses its content, was ruled out because although it would be beneficial to the company’s cash flow, the advantages would be limited in respect to traffic/audience development and advertising. The third model was used for Ourcanada.ca.

The launch of *Our Canada* magazine in 2004 is considered one of the most successful introductions of a magazine in Canadian history. The bi-monthly publication is made entirely out of submissions from readers about their experiences of Canada. The magazine’s editors receive hundreds of written and photographic submissions each month, which are compiled, edited, and

¹⁹ See Footnote 2 on pg. 1.

produced into a glossy, fully illustrated print publication. Within two years, *Our Canada* gathered 238,000 subscribers. The magazine was so popular Reader's Digest launched *More of Our Canada* in 2008 so that subscribers could opt to receive 12 issues of *Our Canada* content a year.

When conceiving an online space for the *Our Canada* brand, Reader's Digest knew it needed a website that would facilitate UGC, by allowing users to upload photos, connect in forums, and publish their own blogs. However, developing that technology alone would be costly and risky. Meanwhile, Canoe.ca was looking to expand in the English-language market and had created online tools for community building. The two parties established a mutually beneficial relationship where both could leverage the considerable *Our Canada* readership and the associated travel and lifestyle content. Beginning in 2009, *Our Canada* has been hosted on Canoe.ca and uses the portal's social-networking platform.

In the next five years, Reader's Digest Canada hopes to grow its digital businesses in terms of advertising dollars, product sales, and revenue generated through renting its e-database of customer names and information²⁰ (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2010c). While expanding into mobile downloads and multimedia—an area of growing importance—Reader's Digest is also focused on enhancing reader engagement. The managers and web editors are cultivating return users by building “community-focused websites,” which integrate social media and other avenues for readers to shape content and generate dialogue. As Kat Tancock told Masthead Online, “Reader's Digest has always been a community-focused company. [It was a] natural extension to get into social media and let readers contribute to how they see the brand” (Masthead Online, 2010).

. . .

In the years since Canadian magazines first went online, Reader's Digest Magazines Canada has had successes and disappointments in experimenting with business and editorial models for digital publishing. Taking the lessons learned from the early days of the web, Reader's Digest has a wealth of knowledge and resources to draw upon in this time of flux in the publishing industry.

²⁰ Reader's Digest also offers its some of its advertisers the use of its reader database to distribute direct mail campaigns, samples and custom publications such as *The Magazine RONA* (Bailey and Tcholakian 2009).

Of course, the business of online magazines is never static, just as users' behaviours, demands, and desires are inherently dynamic. For instance, in the 1990s, web portals were formidable features in the online landscape but today their status has diminished due to the success of Google and Facebook. Nonetheless, changing realities also mean new opportunities.

Since digital publishing took hold in Canada, Reader's Digest's roster of magazine brands has grown new audiences in new environments. Best Health—the magazine, website, and brand—is a successful confluence of the company's traditional expertise in brand extension, content production, audience development and engagement, and its new online-business strategies.

Chapter Two

Case Study: Best Health, Plaisirs Santé, and Sympatico.ca

In March 2008, Reader's Digest Canada launched Best Health. The mission of the Best Health brand is to be the "Canadian authority on enhancing the health of women's minds, bodies and spirits" by providing information about how to "Look Great," "Eat Well," "Embrace Life," and "Get Healthy." Under these four editorial "pillars," the brand aims to cater to the interests and aspirations of its audience, and respect their challenges and realities by providing eye-catching design and trusted, practical healthy lifestyle information (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2009b). Best Health's target demographic is women 35 to 55 years old, and skews slightly younger online. To Reader's Digest, Best Health represents new territory and its success extended the publisher's audience reach in the Canadian market. (The subsequent launch of Plaisirs Santé increased that reach into French-language market for women's health content.)

In the past year, the magazine has been a major Canadian industry mover and shaker. According to *Masthead's* report on "The Top 50" magazines in 2009,²¹ *Best Health* posted a positive 102-percent change in revenue from 2008-2009, leaping from 53rd place in the previous year to number 37 (Masthead, 2010). Its current paid circulation is 100,000. Its success has revealed there is still demand in the competitive genre of women's magazines. Lynn Chambers, group publisher of *Canadian Living* and *Homemakers*, observed, "From an advertiser's point-of-view, magazines are still highly relevant with this target group...What I'd love to see is a continued strengthening of the magazine category as a great way to reach women" (Masthead Online, 2008).

Best Health magazine is published seven times a year but encourages its readership to be a part of its online activities 365 days a year. Best Health uses a "multi-channel branded approach [to reach its audience], including...media, events, seminars and products" and "keep[s] community building at the centre of everything [it does]" (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2009b).

²¹ Masthead Top 50 Methodology: Advertising revenue was supplied by Nielsen Leading National Advertisers. Subscription and newsstand revenues are calculated using data from the Audit Bureau of Circulations and Canadian Circulations Audit Bureau and available in CARD. The survey takes into account discounts applied across the board. Revenue from special interest publications, websites, events, government grants and other ancillary products is not included (Masthead 2010).

Readers' contributions in tips and personal stories are regular features in the magazine. As Boullard notes, reader involvement breeds loyalty because participants are more likely to feel they played a role in developing the magazine (2008, p. 8). The brand's focus on connecting and supporting women has resulted in a coveted readership: They are deeply engaged, trusting, and devoted. To advertisers across a broad spectrum, this audience is highly valuable.

Besthealthmag.ca

Besthealthmag.ca was launched in tandem with the print magazine in March 2008. The website was designed as a "women's healthy lifestyle [online] community" (Reader's Digest Canada Magazines Limited, 2010c). Editorial on Besthealthmag.ca is organized into the same four editorial pillars as the magazine. The content takes shape in the form of slideshows, articles (most are original articles but some are from the magazine or repurposed from Reader's Digest books), recipes, and quizzes. The website is updated several times a day with at least two new stories and one blog post a day. Besthealthmag.ca also features a multi-author blog, commenting and rating capabilities, forums, and interactive online tools. The website is complemented by accounts on Facebook and Twitter, which allow the web editors and readers to personally engage with one another. Readers are a part of creating and shaping the content on Besthealthmag.ca by commenting and rating stories, contributing to forums, or writing their own blogs. Readers can also preview and/or subscribe to the magazine online, and purchase Best Health branded products through the Reader's Digest Canada online store.

The Best Health web team started small with one dedicated web editor, Kat Tancock. In less than a year, Tancock increased the number of unique visitors by more than 600 percent: There were 15,000 unique visitors in June 2008 and 100,000 in May 2009²² (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2010d). Reynolds attributes the dramatic growth to Tancock's launch of several popular e-newsletters that provided multiple "clickable" links back to the site, and optimizing content for search (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2010d). Any content that was

²² According to comScore, the number of unique visitors was roughly 79,000

previously published in the magazine was edited for the web by strategically incorporating keywords into headlines and subheads. By making it easier to find Best Health articles through Google, search traffic increased. The detailed data from Google Analytics allowed Tancock to determine which headlines, keywords, and tags produced the most clicks and highest open rates.

By the summer of 2009, Reader's Digest Canada had a desirable web property in its hands and an editor with an intimate knowledge of Best Health's online community. As well, as web editor, Tancock was very successful in building a community of readers, who were enthusiastic about interacting online (Paquet, interview, August 11, 2010). In order to increase the value of the Best Health website and brand to its advertisers, and increase company's list of customers and prospects, the Reader's Digest's digital media executives knew they needed new users and readers. Moreover, substantial online audiences could be found on web portals. Initially, Reader's Digest sought a partnership between a high-traffic portal and Readersdigest.ca and/or Selection.ca, but a ripe opportunity arose for Besthealthmag.ca with Sympatico.ca.

Sympatico.ca

Sympatico.ca is a web portal owned by Bell Canada. Within the Sympatico.ca network, there are 23 websites, otherwise known as "online properties." According to its advertising information, the Sympatico.ca network captures 85 percent of the Canadian online audience, with more than 17 million unique visitors each month²³ (Sympatico.ca Advertising website, 2010).

When Sympatico.ca and MSN.ca parted ways, many members of the joint portal's sales staff—and thus its national advertising accounts—remained with Sympatico.ca. Bell also retained advertisers with its strong hold on mobile marketing (Bell claims Sympatico.ca has the largest mobile advertising network in the country), which it could leverage in combination with its television and Internet platforms (Bell Canada Enterprises, 2009). Sympatico.ca also continued to offer display-advertising inventory on Windows Live Hotmail and Windows Messenger (its instant message software) to its advertisers (Bell Canada Enterprises, 2009).

²³ The Sympatico.ca home page has approximately 8 million visitors a month (Sympatico.ca Advertising website, 2010).

In 1995, when the portal first launched, Sympatico.ca established a commitment to offering Canadian content in both official languages. The portal has separate editorial teams for English and French content, instead of just translating content to minimize costs. Sympatico.ca aims to produce content for Canadian users that authentically “reflects their voice and culture” (Sympatico.ca Advertising website, 2010).

As part of offering quality content to attract readers, the portal’s editors and managers developed the popular channels Celebedge.ca (celebrity news and gossip), Fashionism.ca (fashion and red-carpet looks; the portal’s most popular channel), InMusic.ca (music news and videos), Sync.ca (technology), and Push.ca (skateboard and snowboarding). According to comScore, approximately 6.8 million Canadians visited Sympatico.ca’s portals channels in 2009 (Bell Canada Enterprises, 2009). These channels are easier to market to users than the portal as whole because they are conceptually concrete as products. Style-savvy readers may have a relationship with Fashionism.ca but little recognition of or loyalty towards the Sympatico.ca brand, for example. And while the overall portal’s audience numbers are substantial, advertisers are more interested targeting the niche audiences who visit branded channels within the portal. The branded channels were a part of the former joint portal but they stayed on Sympatico.ca after the split.

On its own, Sympatico.ca gained greater editorial flexibility, which its editors and managers used to develop additional branded channels. Most of the content for these channels would be sourced from what Kevin Crull, president of residential services at Bell, called “top content providers” (Avery, 2009). In August 2009, Sympatico.ca announced four new channels: InMovies.ca, Autos, YourMoney.ca, and its new health and fitness channel, Best Health.

The Partnership

Behind the scenes of the MSN-Sympatico.ca split, Sympatico.ca and Reader’s Digest Canada were establishing the details of a partnership, and the timing was right for such a deal. As previously noted, both Reader’s Digest and Bell were seeking out opportunities to develop new business: Reader’s Digest needed more exposure for its up-and-coming brand in the marketplace and Sympatico.ca’s management was seeking high-quality content. Both parties saw a demand in the marketplace for health and fitness content, particularly in the sought-after demographic of women

35 to 55. Additionally, diet and fitness was an editorial niche that MSN (with content from Transcontinental) fulfilled in the former joint portal and Sympatico.ca needed to replace it after the split. So, the companies began to look into the possibility of a partnership to make Best Health the portal's Health and Fitness channel. First, Bell and Reader's Digest Canada investigated the potential benefits of working together.

As one of the three largest magazine publishers in the country, Reader's Digest offers expertise in organizing content, building community, managing editorial, and developing brands (Paquet, interview, August 11, 2010). Best Health would be an asset to Sympatico.ca because of its wealth of quality health and lifestyle content. And since Best Health's dedicated and specialized web editorial staff would produce this content, the need for Sympatico.ca to hire its own health-and-fitness editors would be eliminated. Also, Besthealthmag.ca offered an attractive amount of reader engagement and commenting on articles; by making Besthealthmag.ca its health and wellness channel, the portal could carve out a niche in its broad audience.

Perhaps one of the most important draws for Sympatico.ca was the cachet of a Reader's Digest-developed brand, which had already been quickly established over its first year (Tancock, email interview, July 7, 2010). The general principle behind branding is that "a recognizable brand will more easily attract and retain customers than an unrecognizable one" (Bellamy and Traudt in Blevins, 2004, p. 250). Although a prominent brand name does not guarantee success, it can help lower barriers to entry (Blevins, p. 250). Moreover, a magazine brand imbues an inherent level of trustworthiness in the content, as illustrated by the OPA and Dynamic Logic studies discussed earlier.

On the other hand, partnering with Sympatico.ca would assist Reader's Digest in its efforts to create what Tony Cioffi, President and CEO of Reader's Digest, calls "multi-platform communities based on branded content" (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada, 2009a). While Best Health's website had already established the brand and its community on an online platform, the potential partnership would be a way to expand its presence; a partnership with Sympatico.ca would provide daily opportunities for Best Health's editors to engage with a new audience (Reynolds, interview, August 9, 2010).

The most important advantage for Reader's Digest in the potential partnership was an increase in traffic. While the number of visits to Besthealthmag.ca was respectable for a magazine website in its first year, and the site's traffic from search and organic traffic (either through word of mouth or driven from callouts in the magazine) was significant, having Best Health content featured on a portal would multiply that traffic exponentially. A partnership with Sympatico.ca would offer Best Health a dedicated channel, meaning users seeking health and fitness content on the portal would be directed only to Besthealthmag.ca. This arrangement would virtually guarantee more readers for Best Health's articles. Ultimately, a larger audience would present new sponsorship opportunities, more revenue, and eventually, it could justify hiring more members for the website's editorial staff.

To definitively determine if there would be an increase in traffic for both parties, the companies consulted an Internet audience measurement agency to determine the size of the audience if a partnership were established. By combining the number of people who visit "Site A" (e.g. Besthealthmag.ca) and "Site B" (e.g. Sympatico.ca), and subtracting how many visit both, the size of the combined audience can be projected.²⁴ At comScore, the combined audience is called the "audience duplication number." If the audience of either site is comparable to the audience duplication number—or, in other words, there is a large overlap between the audiences—then a partnership would be effectively futile. Conversely, if a strong overlap is not evident, then there is opportunity for growth through forming a partnership. The calculations showed that both websites would gain traffic.

The benefits of a partnership were clear to both parties. As identified by Zahra Young, the director of marketing, e-commerce, partnerships, new magazines & series, Reader's Digest four main goals/opportunities in establishing the partnership were to:

- Generate advertising sales revenue [via increasing site traffic]
- Increase brand awareness
- Generate subscriptions and product sales

²⁴ In this case, Bell could offer only approximate numbers for their "individual site traffic," as Sympatico.ca did not yet exist.

- Generate new prospective customers [via email gathering]

(Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2010b)

Now came time to establish the details. Targets for traffic were set. Sympatico.ca would be responsible for directing traffic to Besthealthmag.ca and highlighting Best Health content on its home page. Best Health gained a tab on the portal's navigation (see figure 1). When hovered over, the button revealed the four Best Health editorial categories and the "Health News" newswire. All of these links took the user to the corresponding section on Besthealthmag.ca. Best Health was also given a "brick" below the fold on the home page, to highlight articles chosen by Besthealthmag.ca's editors (see figure 2). Sympatico.ca would also direct traffic to Best Health articles by featuring them on the home-page viewer, which is the dominating feature on the home page. In return, Best Health would draw traffic to Sympatico.ca by linking to the portal's home page and helping to cultivate a regular readership by offering clickable and inviting content.

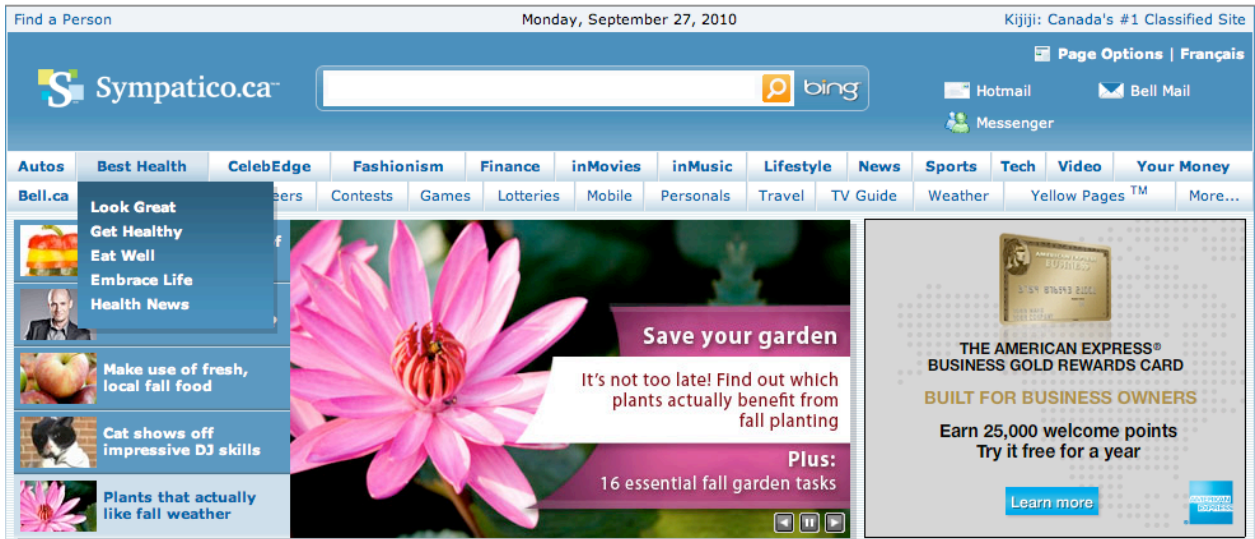


Figure 1. Sympatico.ca Home Page, Best Health dropdown menu. Each of the portal's channels has a dropdown menu on the home page. NB: The Sympatico.ca homepage was redesigned in November 2010. In the new design, the Best Health "brick" is located just below the fold.



Figure 2. The Sympatico.ca Home Page prior to November 2010.

A unique aspect of the partnership is its revenue-sharing model: In this agreement, the companies' sales teams work collaboratively to sell their shared online display-advertising inventory. Both parties are motivated to support traffic to Besthealthmag.ca and Sympatico.ca because if Besthealthmag.ca's traffic sags, so do Sympatico.ca's revenues, and vice versa. Under the partnership, two groups sell ads for the health and fitness channel: the Reader's Digest media sales team, which sells integrated, cross-platform (print and online) advertising, and the Sympatico.ca sales team, which sells online advertising only. The Reader's Digest media sales team lends Sympatico.ca's team know-how in building, pitching and selling multimedia brands.

A final synergy established through the deal was the possibility of running co-branded contests. Best Health's digital marketing department could produce the contest creative (i.e. display ads, entry pages, etc.), and source the prizes. The contests could be promoted on the websites' home pages, contest hubs, newsletters, banners, and in *Best Health*, increasing the exposure of both brands (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2010b). More importantly, however, contests are simple ways for Sympatico.ca and Best Health to gather names, emails and other customer data. For

Best Health, a contest is an opportunity to acquire a new subscriber: special subscription offers on contest entry forms (see figure 3) can create new customers. The online entry forms also offer Best Health an easy way to build the readership of its free e- newsletters: Entrants need only to check off a box on the form.

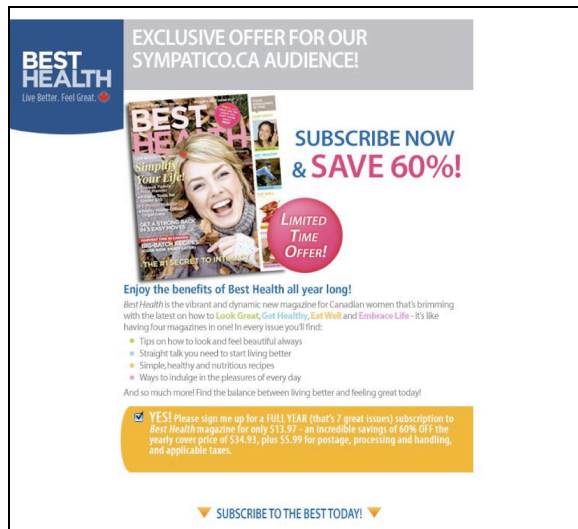


Figure 3. Sympatico.ca audience subscription offer.

Best Health began working with Sympatico.ca at the beginning of August 2009,²⁵ as it progressively integrated its content on to Sympatico.ca's existing health and wellness channel. The official launch on September 1, 2009, was supported by a public-relations campaign to raise awareness of the partnership in the public, as well as the industry. In the first three weeks of integration, the website drew over 1.5 million visits—approximately ten times the number of users before the partnership²⁶ (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010; Bailey and Tcholakian, 2009). This increase in traffic meant new visitors, and countless additional opportunities to build lasting relationships with readers.

The partnership was the first of its kind in Canada (Paquet, interview, August 11, 2010). The making of a magazine brand into the channel of a high-traffic web portal was unprecedented. The partnership was effectively a merging of Besthealthmag.ca into Sympatico.ca. To any outsider,

²⁵ The partnership was made official and widely announced on September 1, the date Sympatico.ca and MSN.ca launched their independent portals.

²⁶ According to comScore, Besthealthmag.ca had approximately 62,000 unique users in July 2009, and 857,000 in August 2009 (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010)

Besthealthmag.ca is just another of Sympatico.ca’s branded channels, except it offers other branded products, such as the magazine. Says Jennifer Goldberg, web editor of Besthealthmag.ca, some of the comments left on the website indicate that some users believe that the content is produced and published by Sympatico.ca (interview, July 21, 2010). Like Fashionism (fashionism.ca), Best Health has its own domain, but its relationship as a property under the Sympatico.ca umbrella is patent. Now a part of a web portal, Best Health was transforming itself into a media brand, and not just a print magazine. Furthermore, this partnership demonstrated how it was possible for a Canadian magazine brand to build a readership large enough to attract major national advertisers.

Impact on Traffic

To say that the traffic to Besthealthmag.ca increased in August 2009 is a gross understatement. Reader’s Digest’s Google Analytics data for Besthealthmag.ca illustrates the enormous impact of the partnership:

Average Monthly Traffic to Besthealthmag.ca				
	May 2009	→	May 2010	% difference
Unique visitors	100,000		700,000	+600
Visits	130,000		1,100,000	+750
Page Views	400,000		5,800,000	+1350

Source: Best Health/Sympatico.ca Partnership Update, prepared by Zahra Young (Reader’s Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2010a)

It is understood at Reader’s Digest that the scale of the audience’s growth simply would not be possible without a partnership like this (Tancock, email interview, July 7, 2010). Though dramatic, the increase in users matched Reader’s Digest and Sympatico.ca’s expectations for Besthealthmag.ca, which were based on traffic to the portal’s previous health and fitness section. ComScore measured 465,000 unique visitors to the site in July 2010, and 976,000 total visits or “entries.” Three hundred and seventy-one (371,000) unique visitors (80 percent) and 676,000 visits (69 percent) were directed from a Sympatico.ca property (see “Traffic Sources and Losses,” p. 55). As well, the website gained tens of thousands of Best Health newsletter subscribers (Reader’s Digest Magazines

Canada Limited, 2010a).

Notably, the partnership also increased the website's male readership. Aside from the occasional "Male Call" article or a small tidbit in *Best Health's* front-of-book section, "New and Now," content in the magazine is primarily directed at women. A similar editorial makeup was initially adopted for the website; however, a higher proportion of Sympatico.ca's readership is male. To better serve the portal's readership, Besthealthmag.ca included a "Men's Health" category in its "Get Healthy" section online and tailored more of its content to be gender neutral. Currently, over a third (37.3 percent) of the website's readership is male (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010).

Since Besthealthmag.ca directs traffic back to the Sympatico.ca websites, there have been gains for Sympatico.ca, as well, in terms of traffic: In July 2010, 214,000 unique visitors (46 percent) clicked to another site in the Sympatico.ca network after visiting the Best Health channel (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010). The partnership also boosted Sympatico.ca's Health and Fitness channel into the number seven spot in the "Health" category, as defined by comScore. Aside from About.com's Health channel and Health.com, the Sympatico.ca Health and Fitness channel performs better in Canada than any other portal or media site in the same category,²⁷ including MSN Health (Rank 26), CNN Health (Rank 25), and Canoe Health (Rank 8) (comScore, Inc. Canada).

As a result of the partnership, the sales teams for Reader's Digest and Sympatico.ca can offer their advertisers improved ways to reach more consumers. For example, an advertiser may sponsor a section on Best Health's site and purchase ad space anywhere on the Sympatico.ca network (also known as "run-of-site advertising") at a discounted rate. Obviously, the partnership produced another important incentive for advertisers: the website's increased readership. The larger audience was an important selling point for companies such as Becel, Shredded Wheat, and Splenda, who have sponsored entire categories of content (Heart Health, Simple Living, and Diabetes, respectively). Most notably, VICHY, the international skincare brand, partnered with Best Health to

²⁷ The following websites rank higher than Besthealthmag.ca in the health category: 1) WebMD Health, 2) Everyday Health (<http://www.everydayhealth.com>), 3) About.com Health (<http://www.about.com/health>), 4) LIVESTRONG - eHow Health (<http://www.livestrong.com>), 5) Health.com, and 6) Shoppersdrugmart.ca (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010)

launch its own dedicated micro-site, the VICHY Best Health Challenge, “an invitation to women across Canada to dare themselves to Look Great, Get Healthy, Eat Well and Embrace Life” (Best Health 2010b). An initiative of this size simply could not be launched or sustained by Best Health without the sponsorship of VICHY—which would not be possible without the partnership with Sympatico.ca.

Impact on Brand Awareness and Product Sales

Like being on the newsstand, being on a web portal works as a powerful marketing and promotion tool for a magazine and its brand. Sometimes, it makes the first impression, setting the tone for the reader’s future interactions with the brand. Partly because there is no simple way gauge this change, there are no available data to indicate that *Best Health* magazine or brand are more well-known since partnering with Sympatico.ca.²⁸ However, it is safe to venture that by simply being on Sympatico.ca’s home page, the network’s most popular property, more Canadians are aware that Best Health exists since its visibility has increased.

Reaching Sympatico.ca’s audience means more people interact with Best Health and may develop a positive perception of the brand. Accordingly, this strategic partnership offers Reader’s Digest an opportunity to substantially grow the online brand community. In the framework for analyzing online brand communities put forward by Madupu and Cooley (2010), online brand communities exist because their members seek “information, self-discovery, social integration, social enhancement, and entertainment” (p.127). When those needs are served and members feel integrated into the community, they recommend the brand to outsiders out of a felt responsibility to contribute to the success and longevity of the brand (Madupu and Cooley, p.141). The more active participants (those that create content or offer their opinions) there are in such a community, the larger the force is to convert first-time visitors into return visitors. The formidable online community Best Health brought into its partnership with Sympatico.ca worked powerfully to its advantage: Readers who were introduced to Besthealthmag.ca through Sympatico.ca were “welcomed”

²⁸ *Best Health* magazine isn't yet measured in PMB.

by the existing brand community and the community “wardens” (in this case, the publisher and the web editorial team).

Perhaps due to the strength of the online brand community, the percentage of traffic to Besthealthmag.ca from Sympatico.ca’s position is diminishing since the partnership began (Google Analytics report, September-November 2010). Besthealthmag.ca is becoming a regular destination for more users, who are bookmarking the website and landing there directly, rather than arriving via Sympatico.ca properties. This development illustrates growing audience loyalty and brand recognition for Best Health.

Does this brand awareness and community engagement translate to magazine sales? Traditionally, one of the primary goals for a magazine website was to sell subscriptions (Sumner and Rhoades, 2006, p. 79). However, anecdotal evidence does not suggest that a larger online readership translates into increased subscriptions or newsstand sales²⁹ (Goldberg, interview, July 21, 2010; McAuley, interview, July 28, 2010). Even if one were to assume that the entire readership of *Best Health* magazine is part of the website’s audience, the overlap between the print and online audiences would be small compared to the actual number of monthly unique visitors. Furthermore, if most of the traffic is from a Sympatico.ca property, rather than direct traffic, then it is highly probable that most readers do not interact with Best Health in magazine form. It is especially telling that the number of visitors on articles, slideshows, and blog content dwarfs the traffic to pages about the magazine, such as the table of contents, the magazine preview, or pages where readers can buy a subscription (Google Analytics report, 2010).

Even still, the web designers and editors endeavour to support the magazine and make it visible to its online readers. Above the fold on the Besthealthmag.ca home page, there are multiple calls to action to subscribe and a tab in the main navigation for content related to the current issue of the magazine (see figure 4). Additionally, a subscription form appears at the bottom of the right-hand column of every page; the digital marketing team sometimes sweetens the deal with a chance to win a \$50,000 car, for example, if you subscribe (Best Health, 2010a). Magazine subscriptions are

²⁹ The conversion rate—the rate in which a company converts casual visitors into paying customers—is not measured within the web editorial department.

also promoted in the weekly and daily e-newsletters, and the editorial team reminds readers to subscribe by appending articles originally published in the magazine with the note:

This article was originally titled “[Name of the article in the magazine]” in the [**September 2010**] issue of Best Health. **Subscribe today** to get the full Best Health experience—and never miss an issue!—and make sure to check out what's new in the **latest issue of Best Health**

(Best Health, 2010a; emphasis in original).

Continuing to support the magazine online is important to the Reader's Digest media sales team, as they sell cross-platform advertising; to effectively sell the Best Health audience, the strength of the print readership needs to be maintained—for as long as people are interested in print magazines.

A brand can adapt to different media as readers' attitudes and preferences shift. A brand can have a life beyond the print magazine, as is the case with *Gourmet* magazine. A significant goal for the company's digital and social media strategies was to raise awareness of the Best Health brand among Canadians. Building platform-agnostic relationships between community members and the brand is the first step in creating additional revenue streams—including digital services, such as mobile apps and SMS subscriptions; in-person events, and books—out of a magazine brand.

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Figure 4. A screenshot of Besthealthmag.ca, with calls to subscribe highlighted. NB: the middle area of the page was omitted.

The Launch of Plaisirs Santé

Even before the launch of the partnership with Sympatico.ca, Reader's Digest began to investigate the viability of launching a French-language version of the brand. When preparing for the launch of Best Health, the company published Special Interest Publications ("SIPs" or "newsstand specials") called *No Fail Weight Loss* under the Best Health brand. These digest-sized magazines, which are sold on newsstands, include recipes, workout programs, and weight-loss and nutrition advice. SIPs are a cost-effective way to try out content, design and branding in the market.³⁰ Accordingly, Reader's Digest published a French edition of *No Fail Weight Loss* (*Maigrir Sans Faute*) under the Plaisirs Santé (meaning "Best Health" or "Healthy Pleasures") brand, to test the appeal of women's health and fitness content in the French Canadian market. The publisher also tested the content in the lifestyle section of *Sélection du Reader's Digest* and created a channel for the brand on Selection.ca.³¹

The market research showed there was a positive response from advertisers and readers, but the projected profit and losses showed the publisher that the timing was not right to launch a print magazine. However, Reader's Digest could build a large and desirable readership online—through a partnership with Sympatico.ca, which it secured for the launch of the website.

Plaisirssante.ca debuted on Sympatico.ca in January 2010. Within its first month online, Plaisirssante.ca drew 300,000 visitors and 1.5 million page views (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2010d). Additional traffic is driven to the website through promotion on the main navigation and in the health section of Selection.ca, and in print in *Sélection*.

Directed at readers in Quebec, content on Plaisirssante.ca is more localized and "less conservative," says its web editor, Stéphanie Letourneau (email interview, August 16, 2010). Its target demographic skews slightly younger as well (women 25-50). While the English audience generally looks for more "newsy" stories, the French editors find that their readers click more on content related to sex and weight-loss (Letourneau). But overall, like Besthealthmag.ca,

³⁰ *No Fail Weight Loss* is still published on a quarterly basis and is an additional revenue stream for Reader's Digest.

³¹ The initial incarnations of the website did not have any of the community and social media tools it has today.

Plaisirssante.ca's focus is to deliver "healthy lifestyle information that's inspiring, attainable, and fun" (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2009b). The French website is also organized into four parallel editorial pillars: "Mon Look," "Ma Santé," "Mon Assiette," and "Ma Vie."³²

For Reader's Digest Canada, Plaisirs Santé was a landmark initiative: the launch of a brand that started online, rather than in print. Not only does the success of Plaisirs Santé mark significant progress in the company's overall efforts to move into digital publishing, but in the short term, it also means move revenues, and fuller exploitation of the market interested in health and fitness content. The stake in the French market presents improved opportunities for the Sympatico.ca and Reader's Digest media sales teams. With Plaisirs Santé as part of the Sympatico.ca family, Sympatico.ca and Reader's Digest may offer national advertisers tremendous flexibility and reach with this bilingual, cross-platform brand.

Web Editorial for Portals

Best Health's web editors are responsible for producing content that works for advertisers, the Sympatico.ca home-page editors, and both websites' readers. The content on Besthealthmag.ca evolves according to the changing needs of these stakeholders. This section discusses the editorial practices and strategies unique to Besthealthmag.ca, which have developed out of its partnership with a national general interest portal.

Editorial Staff

The Besthealthmag.ca editorial team has changed substantially as the website has grown. Besthealthmag.ca is primarily managed by web editor Jennifer Goldberg and assistant web editor Alicia McAuley.³³ Goldberg and McAuley plan and assign content, oversee production, and manage and contribute to the Best Health blog. The editors also respond to comments from readers and are responsible for posting on Facebook and Twitter. Aside from a handful of freelancers and the senior

³² My Look, My Health, My Diet, My Life

³³ At Plaisirs Santé, there is just one web editor, and a part-time editorial assistant

web editor (Tancock, who manages editorial on all the Reader's Digest Canada magazine websites), the two editors compose the entire web team for the audience of over half a million users.

On a Canadian scale, the Best Health web editorial team is quite big. Many magazines rely on just one dedicated editor (or, in many cases, volunteers). In comparison, Self.com, the website for a comparable U.S. publication—with a print circulation of over one million (Condé Nast, 2010), employs a web team of four members.

According to web editor, Jennifer Goldberg, the Besthealthmag.ca editorial team is an agile operation, whose small size works to its advantage. Although there are limitations to having just three editors—such as how much they can produce and cover—Best Health's web team discusses ideas easily and efficiently. This ease of communication makes it simple to make changes as requested by the portal site. Without the managerial bureaucracy that exists with publishers that license content from many of their magazine brands, "a small team of flexible and creative editors probably works better as a partner for a portal than a larger team that may work more slowly," says Goldberg (email interview, October 26, 2010). For example, without a lot of lead-time, Sympatico.ca can coordinate special projects with the Best Health web editorial team, as they are more adaptable and work closely with one another.

Shaping Content

While working with Sympatico.ca brings Best Health content to a larger audience, there are also increased demands on the online editorial and production staff. The partnership requires coordination and extensive planning on the part of the Best Health web editors to plan upcoming content with the home-page editors for Sympatico.ca.

New editorial strategies emerge when needing to consider two audiences *and* the expectations and predilections of an additional editorial team. Sympatico.ca's home-page editors select their content based on what they think will engage visitors and increase their time on the site; accordingly, content providers, such as Best Health, must design content strategically to get optimal placement on

the portal's home page.³⁴ The articles, blogs and slideshows Best Health's web editors offer to their readers need to be interesting, valuable, and informative to a broad audience—it has to be the kind of content that will be the most “clickable.” This is what Halligan and Shan (2010) call “remarkable content”:

Remarkable content attracts links from other web sites pointing to your web site....Every one of these links (remarks)...send[s] you qualified visitors, and they signal to Google that your website is worthy of ranking for important keywords in your market.... remarkable content is easily and quickly spread on social media sites.

Ultimately, the high-level goal for the web editorial team is to produce content that performs. In the past, search engine optimizing content was a vital editorial practice for Besthealthmag.ca. Today, search traffic makes up less than five percent of the site's total traffic (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010). Accordingly, Best Health's editorial is meant to appeal to an audience that does not actively seek out health and fitness content but will be exposed to it on the portal site. One primary method to generate traffic from the portal audience is incorporating topics, titles, and descriptions that grab the attention of online readers. Not unlike any other website, analytics are a helpful resource in determining what sorts of subjects, keywords, and—speaking more generally—ideas are relevant and compelling. The web team has found that historically, articles related to the following topics are highly likely to gather an audience and be promoted in a strong position on the Sympatico.ca home page:

- **Weight loss** (This topic performs particularly well on Mondays, after readers have had indulgent weekends)
- **Sleep** (Articles on this topic especially grabs readers on Fridays, as they are likely to have lost sleep over the week)
- **Diabetes**
- **Food** (Articles on healthy eating, dieting and nutrition, as well as recipes, are generally successful)

The web editorial team has also found that articles with a “negative” spin perform well (Goldberg,

³⁴ An item's position on the page can dramatically influence its success. For example, placement on a “slider,” a tab on the home-page viewer (see figure 1), gives stories more visibility and clicks. Since it occupies prime real estate on the page (i.e. it is a large box in the centre of the page, above the fold), articles featured on the viewer become the most popular on Besthealthmag.ca, without fail.

interview, July 21, 2010; McAuley, interview, July 28, 2010). For example, “The worst Halloween treats you can eat”³⁵ and “Top 10 weight-loss mistakes”³⁶ are titles written with the understanding that readers are curious about how they could be harming their health (or their waistline). Words such as *weird*, *strange*, *easy*, *tips*, *surprising*, and *unusual*, and titles with numbers (e.g. “7 things that are secretly making you gain weight”³⁷) also work well to bring readers to Best Health’s website from Sympatico.ca (Goldberg; McAuley). Articles with numbered titles are often made into slideshows, which increase page views and time spent on site—and thus, the number of impressions for advertisements.

Reader engagement is also integral to the editorial strategy for Besthealthmag.ca, as community and dialogue are central to the brand. Readers are always invited to comment and join in the conversation, particularly on blog posts on “newsy” or controversial topics. Similarly, the web editors use Facebook and Twitter to draw the Best Health social media community to the site. For instance, in October 2010, the editors asked Best Health’s Facebook fans, “Have you had laser eye surgery? What was it like?” and linked to their story “Is laser eye surgery right for you?”³⁸ (Facebook, 2010³⁹). The editors also use social networks to produce user-generated content. In another Facebook post, the Best Health editors wrote, “Happy Friday, everyone! Office party today for our soon-to-be-married associate web editor. What are your best tips for a happy, healthy marriage? (Let us know and we may feature them on our site!)” (Facebook⁴⁰) The responses from readers were used to produce the slideshow “The best advice for a healthy relationship.”⁴¹ Essentially, Facebook and Twitter are two additional avenues to expose readers to the brand and content, and increase the dialogue around health issues for women.

The use of social media to promote Best Health content does not mean that Besthealthmag.ca is an insular community or a “walled garden.” Aufderheide (in Blevins, 2004) notes that only linking to one’s own content “structure[s] the user as a consumer of branded

³⁵ <http://www.besthealthmag.ca/eat-well/healthy-eating/the-worst-halloween-treats-you-can-eat>

³⁶ <http://www.besthealthmag.ca/get-healthy/weight-loss/top-10-weight-loss-mistakes>

³⁷ <http://www.besthealthmag.ca/get-healthy/weight-loss/7-things-that-are-secretly-making-you-gain-weight>

³⁸ <http://www.besthealthmag.ca/get-healthy/health/is-laser-eye-surgery-right-for-you>

³⁹ <http://www.facebook.com/besthealth#!/besthealth/posts/124272757629437>

⁴⁰ <http://www.facebook.com/besthealth#!/besthealth/posts/124272757629437>

⁴¹ <http://www.besthealthmag.ca/embrace-life/relationships/the-best-advice-for-a-healthy-relationship>

services”—and not trust-worthy reporting (p. 248). The practice of linking to sources and resources “is the key gesture to being a citizen of the web and not just a product on the web” (Sholin, 2009). In order to increase the credibility of the content and brand, Best Health links out to research studies, health stories by other media websites, and blog posts. This connects Best Health with the larger community of health and fitness websites, and increases the likelihood that other websites will link back to Besthealthmag.ca (and increase its ranking within Google). Making more quality content (regardless of the brand) available to the user has multiple benefits, including improving user experience. After all, the quality of the user and their satisfaction is much more valuable to the publisher and the advertiser:

By adding links out to stories...readers will find interesting, [websites are] extending their brands: Not only do they create content for their readers, they're presenting themselves as the experts in those content areas, giving their subscribers even more value. And you can make a lot more money off a newsletter subscriber than off a click (Tancock, 2009b).

The best practices presented above are at the foundation of the success Besthealthmag.ca has found since partnering Sympatico.ca. Using these techniques, the editorial team manages to create articles that grab the attention of daily readers on a crowded portal page—and on Besthealthmag.ca, which itself is densely populated with a growing archive of useful and interesting content. Quality content is the foundation for building a quality readership and community—the elements of a website that produce an appealing environment for advertisers.

Brand

One of the challenges of being a part of a web portal is working with at least two brands (in this case, Best Health and Sympatico.ca), and dozens of advertising brands. When the editorial team plans lineups of content, it creates stories around the Best Health brand while remaining “very mindful of the Sympatico.ca audience” (Tancock, email interview, July 7, 2010).

The Best Health brand has four editorial pillars but content under “Look Great” and “Embrace Life” does not necessarily fit Sympatico.ca’s editorial mandate for its health and fitness channel. Moreover, Sympatico.ca already publishes fashion and beauty content under the

Fashionism channel, and has a separate lifestyle channel. Since Sympatico.ca features only Best Health's health and fitness articles on its home page, "Get Healthy" and "Eat Well" stories generate the most page views for Besthealthmag.ca.

Nonetheless, beauty and lifestyle content are integral parts of the Best Health brand, and for some readers who come directly to Besthealthmag.ca, it may be the content they are looking for. To maintain the brand's editorial voice, the editorial team tries to produce an equal number of articles for each pillar, even though "Look Great" and "Embrace Life" life articles are usually not pitched to Sympatico.ca.

Additionally, the editors need to consider the communities associated with each brand. For Sympatico.ca, they aim to produce items that are not specifically aimed at women because the portal has a broader audience than Best Health. While this is a departure from the Best Health brand, it is beneficial for Besthealthmag.ca's traffic: Tancock has found that stories that appeal to men and women—such as articles related to fitness, weight loss and healthy eating—produce more clicks (Tancock, email interview, July 7, 2010). At the same time, the web editorial team still publishes more gender-specific, serious issue-oriented, or news-related stories (which have a narrower appeal) on Besthealthmag.ca as a way of keeping Best Health content informative, authoritative and insightful—in other words, true to the brand.

Current Activities

A highly trafficked website with the right audience can draw coveted advertisers, who demand unique and prominent ways to showcase their products. This was true for Besthealthmag.ca. However, the original website (launched in March 2008) was not designed with the partnership with Sympatico.ca in mind. In the summer of 2010, Besthealthmag.ca and Plaisirsante.ca were given makeovers (Masthead Online, 2010). The redesign lends the websites a different colour scheme and allows for many more points of entry into Best Health's (and the Reader's Digest Association's) vast bank of health content. Overall, the site was made more functional, usable, and "sticky."

The redesign also shows that Best Health is part of the Sympatico.ca media family more overtly by visually integrating the two brands. Since links to health and fitness content on the Sympatico.ca portal take the reader directly to Besthealthmag.ca, arriving at the old website was sometimes jarring for the first-time user. In the redesign, the Sympatico.ca logo is prominently featured in the upper right-hand corner of the website to signal the connection between the two properties. On most pages, Besthealthmag.ca also features links to lifestyle content from Sympatico.ca, increasing brand awareness for the portal amongst visitors.

Additionally, the new design allows Best Health's advertisers to do more with the larger audience: "One of the challenges with the old site was it didn't always allow for the flexibility with advertisers," Tancock told *Masthead Online* (Masthead Online, 2010).

The first custom-built program for the new site was the previously mentioned VICHY Best Health Challenge, where participants "pick a [health or fitness] goal and reach it, with help and support from the Best Health community of women" (Best Health, 2010b). The VICHY Best Health Challenge is a multi-platform content and advertising program sponsored by the international skincare company. Each issue of the print magazine includes Challenge-based content. Online, registered participants (called "Challengers") can set goals, take part in daily challenges, discuss and ask questions in the forums, and write about their experiences on their blogs. The micro-site has its own branding and exclusive content from beauty, fitness, and nutrition experts, and a life coach. The Challenge is also supported by a weekly newsletter, which features new content and forum discussions, and promotes online-community engagement. Best Health's Editor-in-Chief Bonnie Munday notes, "The Challenge enabled us to create a unique setting for women to empower and inspire one another...Plus, the response to our call for participation in the program was tremendous" (Reader's Digest Magazines Canada Limited, 2010a).

Since the program is targeted at a specific audience that may or may not have been readers of Besthealthmag.ca or of Sympatico.ca, the Challenge has the potential to introduce a new audience to the web portal; community members who visit the Challenge website directly (perhaps having been prompted by the magazine), also see Sympatico.ca's branding and links to its content. With the Best Health Challenge, the partnership is further evolving into a symbiosis where both media brands

support each other in brand awareness and traffic driving, and ultimately, shared advertising revenue.

Chapter Three

Case Study: Readersdigest.ca, Selection.ca, and MSN.ca

The success of the Best Health and Sympatico.ca partnership proved that Reader's Digest Canada could leverage its content and brands online to produce advertiser-friendly environments. With this in mind, Reader's Digest Canada sought out another formidable online partner for its flagship magazine websites, Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca, with the hope of replicating the audience growth that came out of the first partnership. MSN.ca had an audience large enough to appeal to Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca's potential and existing advertisers; and Reader's Digest Canada had content, experience and a trusted brand to offer the portal. A partnership was finalized late in the summer of 2010. After months of planning and negotiation, in October 2010, content from Selection.ca was published on MSN.ca.⁴²

Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca

Readersdigest.ca has five content "affinities": Health, Food, Home and Garden, Pets (which premiered in October 2009), and Travel (which was added in April 2010). The website is updated with two to three new articles daily, and offers readers practical home and lifestyle content that they can use to improve their everyday lives. Readersdigest.ca also offers special content features such as a Halloween Guide for October and an Outdoor Entertaining section in the summer months. Overall, the website mirrors the "RD Living" section of the magazine: It is a collection of consumer-oriented articles and tips, written in a casual and friendly voice. The content is comparable to that found in the magazines *Canadian Living*, *Homemakers*, and U.S. brands such as Martha Stewart Living, Good Housekeeping, and Real Simple. The Readersdigest.ca readership—of approximately 378,000 unique visitors a month—is 66 percent female (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010). The average reader is over 35 years old, and has a yearly household income of \$40,000-\$60,000

⁴² The article "Faites votre autobilan de santé" (<http://styledevie.ca.msn.com/sante-mieux-etre/selection-galeriedephotos.aspx?cp-documentid=25943804>) appeared in the portal's health section.

(comScore, Inc. Canada).⁴³

The English-language audience in Canada far outnumbers its French counterpart⁴⁴; as a result, the digital strategy at Reader's Digest Canada is very much oriented towards the English market. Readersdigest.ca has two full-time editors, while Selection.ca has just one part-time web editor and one of the magazine's print editors is responsible for a considerable portion of the website's upkeep. Still, the French Canadian readership is an integral part of the publisher's history, and Quebec is a market where a magazine can develop an exceptionally loyal readership partly because there are fewer competitors from the United States. For that reason, Selection.ca has found an audience with more ease and less marketing.

Selection.ca is geared towards younger readers (the lower age bracket of its target audience is 18-25 years old). There is a larger focus on consumer tips and product-oriented content on Selection.ca, instead of the instructional "how-to" articles that appear on the English site (Barillaro, interview, July 8, 2010). The four Selection.ca affinities are *Bien Manger*, *Maison*, *Santé*, and *Animaux*.⁴⁵ And like Plaisirssante.ca, Selection.ca produces more local content to appeal to readers in Quebec, who make up most of the French-language audience in Canada (approximately 90 percent) (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010).

For Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca, one of the publisher's primary goals is to build community engagement. Both websites have a substantial number of return users, and the websites have cultivated a nascent sense of community (Paquet, interview, August 11, 2010). However, there is potential to foster more "active users." Currently, Readersdigest.ca has interactive features such as polls and "Join the Debate," a feature that invites users to discuss a topic featured in the magazine⁴⁶. The websites' editors are also using social media to encourage more interaction. In the summer of 2010, Readersdigest.ca re-established its presence on Facebook⁴⁷; since then, it has been using similar practices to Besthealthmag.ca (i.e. linking to recent articles; asking questions to Facebook fans

⁴³ For more detailed information, see Audience Demographic Profile for Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca, p. 58.

⁴⁴ According to comScore, there were 381,000 unique visitors to Readersdigest.ca vs. 90,000 unique visitors to Selection.ca (comScore, Inc. Canada, 2010).

⁴⁵ Good Eating, Home, Health, and Pets

⁴⁶ Only the former is a part of Selection.ca.

⁴⁷ The Facebook page had been stagnant for more than a year.

to spark discussions) to engage its audience and promote fresh content. A partnership with a portal is another mechanism to stimulate more activity in the online community by drawing more traffic. Having a platform to invite new audiences into the Reader's Digest brand communities is one of the most important opportunities in working with MSN.ca.

MSN.ca

When MSN Canada and Sympatico.ca ended their partnership, the former emerged as the stronger of the two portal sites (Reynolds, interview, August 9, 2010). Microsoft also claims it is the number one home-page portal in Canada, with 10 million unique visitors a month (Microsoft Advertising website, 2010b). To prepare for the newly reestablished MSN.ca, Microsoft added about 60 advertising and editorial staff (Avery, 2009). Though Sympatico.ca staff had close relationships with Canadian brands, international campaigns drifted towards MSN.ca and its international sales team (Lloyd, 2009). Furthermore, during the relaunch, Microsoft Canada executives announced they would seek out Canadian advertising accounts for MSN.ca by offering Canadian content on the portal.

However, MSN.ca also lost many of its content providers in the split. Microsoft Canada planned to offer the same channels on the new MSN.ca as the former joint portal did (Lloyd, 2009). So, content was sourced from MSNBC, BBC, Delish, CBC/Radio-Canada, Chatelaine and Protégez-vous to populate the portal (Microsoft Canada, 2009). Today, the English-language site has 15 channels, including one that is branded—Delish, its food and recipe channel (Microsoft Advertising website, 2010a). The majority of content published on MSN.ca is from third parties. MSN.ca's largest content partnership is with Rogers Media, which provides content to the portal site under numerous magazines brands. Reader's Digest Canada is the second largest Canadian media company to partner with MSN.ca.⁴⁸ Establishing a partnership with Reader's Digest reflects MSN.ca's efforts to compete with Sympatico.ca in providing Canadian content to its audience.

⁴⁸ For its French home page, MSN.ca also publishes content from Transcontinental.

The Partnership

Though Reader's Digest had already forged a partnership with a web portal, initiating another one would require the company to evaluate the details of a deal anew to negotiate the most beneficial (and profitable) arrangement for its websites. First off, the company needed to find the portal that could provide the optimal audience for Reader's Digest. Next, Reader's Digest and the portal would have to decide if money would be exchanged. They would also need to determine what kind of content Reader's Digest would provide and how the would portal link users back to Readersdigest.ca or Selection.ca. Advertising sales would be another point of discussion. In short, the partnership with Sympatico.ca could only serve as a scanty outline for how to create a successful partnership involving different magazine brands and a distinct web portal.

The finalized partnership gives MSN.ca access to Reader's Digest content from across Reader's Digest's affinities, with a focus on lifestyle and travel. Articles from Readersdigest.ca or Selection.ca are hosted on the portal site, thus making Reader's Digest content visible to many more readers; links in the articles to Readersdigest.ca or Selection.ca will drive traffic to the respective sites—if readers are inclined to click through. If the partnership is successful, Reader's Digest will gain additional and/or larger accounts based on the increased traffic sourced from the portal. Ideally, a presence on MSN.ca will also result in readers actively seeking out Readersdigest.ca or Selection.ca content independently, and/or increasing engagement with the brands through signing up for newsletters, purchasing products, entering contests or buying subscriptions.

Reader's Digest offered MSN.ca other editorial efficiencies besides a supply of original content. MSN.ca's home-page editors work with many content providers, and those that can simplify the process are at an advantage. Thus, due to its size and numerous magazine brands, Rogers Media's significant relationship with MSN.ca is likely a cumbersome one. Although Rogers offers a wealth of content and powerful brand names, the company's organizational structure offers limited flexibility. Conversely, Reader's Digest has only one contact person responsible for liaising with MSN.ca to deliver French and English content: Maria Barillaro, associate web editor for Readersdigest.ca. As Goldberg suggested when speaking about the benefits of working with the Best

Health editorial team, a smaller team means the process is streamlined but the content offered to the portal is still rich and varied (Goldberg, email interview, October 26, 2010).

In several ways, this partnership is very similar to the Besthealthmag.ca/Sympatico.ca deal: Again, Reader's Digest is offering its partner the benefit of a web editorial staff that is well-versed in creating quality content. Similarly, the publisher is leveraging its recognized media brands and content on digital platforms to seek new audiences; in turn, the portal can offer its audience an enriched experience. The salient differences of the partnership are in the details: Reader's Digest content will be published in thematic channels alongside content from other providers. The publisher's content will be simply branded with the display of a logo on MSN.ca. Thus, without dedicated channels for Reader's Digest's brands, it will be harder to establish a presence on the busy portal site and get readers to notice their stories. Furthermore, since MSN.ca is not relying only on Readersdigest.ca to supply content for their channels; accordingly, there are no guarantees that items from Reader's Digest will be published on MSN.ca, particularly if other content partners present stories that are more competitive. Furthermore, the popularity of story on MSN.ca will not directly translate into traffic for Reader's Digest's websites if the "related stories" or internal links are not appealing to readers.

Publishing Reader's Digest Content on MSN.ca

In the initial months of the partnership, the primary editorial challenge will be to build successful articles by creating content that will appeal to the MSN.ca editors, and draw people back to the Sélection or Reader's Digest websites, such as recipes, how-to articles, and slideshows. When preparing content with a portal audience in mind, there are new considerations. For example, at the most basic level, there is a different audience to cater to. As the editors of Besthealthmag.ca have found working in a portal environment, a key editorial responsibility in this type of partnership is producing the content that MSN.ca calls for (for its audience) while making sure to maintain the integrity of the Reader's Digest content and brands.

Keeping in mind what Reader's Digest can offer that is unique from the portal's other content providers, Barillaro designs a lineup of content for MSN.ca. For MSN.ca's French site,

Barillaro pitches items for the portal's *Maison, Vie Pratique, Cuisine, Amour et sexualité, Famille,* and *Mode et beauté*⁴⁹ channels. For the English site, Readersdigest.ca will provide content for the Lifestyle and Travel channels (Barillaro, interview, August 4, 2010). When offering articles to MSN.ca, it is important for the editor to show that there is an audience for each article or gallery. For example, when pitching "5 delicious low-fat Thanksgiving recipes," the editor would highlight the thousands of health-conscious homemakers who are planning holiday dinners. Producing original articles for MSN.ca will also be priority for Readersdigest.ca's editors, as it gives editors the ability to target the MSN.ca audience directly.

Along with additional administration and correspondence, the partnership creates new demands on the editorial teams for Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca. When MSN.ca publishes an article or gallery from either website, Barillaro must review and monitor the content on the portal. She moderates comments posted on the syndicated articles (and alerts an MSN.ca editor if there is an issue), and ensures that the content has been accurately reproduced on the portal site (i.e. all the images appear correctly, and all the links are functional). To improve the performance of Reader's Digest articles on the portal, the editor also notes patterns in the type of content MSN.ca has selected, and which stories or techniques successfully drive users back to the Reader's Digest websites. Another responsibility for the web editor is keeping an eye on competing content providers to stay abreast of successful practices and new trends.

At the moment, Barillaro is playing a game of "fill in the blanks," armed only with some basic clues about MSN.ca's readers and their behaviour. Each partnership has unique qualities that make creating successful content a dynamic and sometimes unpredictable process. For example, each portal designed differently—leading users' eyes in a different pattern on the home page—and each portal has a unique content delivery system, different content providers, and a distinctive audience. This is an intricate environment for a web editor to approach. As Barillaro observes how the audience and traffic patterns shift in the coming months, as a result of the partnership with MSN.ca, the most "clickable" words will be more apparent and a better understanding of what the Reader's

⁴⁹ Home, Living, Cooking, Love and sexuality, Family, and Fashion and beauty

Digest Canada and Sélection brands can offer to a broad audience of online Canadians will emerge.

Projected Outcomes

At this time, it is still too early to tell the exact impact on traffic and audience development this partnership will have, and whether the company's audience-growth and revenue goals will be met. The number of visitors to Readerdigest.ca or Selection.ca will increase; however, without a dedicated channel or a revenue-sharing model that Besthealthmag.ca has the advantage of, the audience growth will likely be less dramatic.

For multiple reasons, including taking advantage of the influx of traffic they expect from MSN.ca, Reader's Digest's digital media team is in the midst of redesigning of Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca. Like the redesign of Besthealthmag.ca, the new look will treat each page of the website like a "landing page," with multiple points of entry to other content on the site. By having fully branded pages, the design will signal to first-time visitors where they are as soon as they arrive from MSN.ca. Furthermore, at a time when there will be many new visitors, Reader's Digest is also introducing new games and humour affinities to the website to capitalize on those areas of content. Games and humour have already proven to be popular among the existing Readersdigest.ca audience, and having more of this type of content on the website is certain to increase the time spent on the website.

Overall, the publisher is forging ahead with confidence that the partnership will be hugely beneficial to its online business. The anticipated success of the partnership with MSN.ca is a significant part of the publisher's plan to expand its reach in the digital market and become the top Canadian magazine brand online. Reader's Digest is not widely known for offering cutting-edge technology or sophisticated web strategies, but already, the company has expanded into the largest publisher's digital network in Canada (Scott, 2010). If this second portal partnership does well, it will confirm the viability of the portal partnership strategy.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

If one is to accept the Best Health/Sympatico.ca partnership as a typical example of what a magazine publisher can accomplish by teaming with a portal, then it appears that Reader's Digest Canada has done the formerly impossible: It successfully attracted regular and targeted traffic to a Canadian magazine website—and made it profitable. This business model is not the *only* way for Canadian magazine companies to build an online audience; undoubtedly, other models and strategies have worked for other publishers. However, it shows tremendous promise. For Best Health, a presence on the Sympatico.ca home page continues to be its primary traffic driver; Reader's Digest simply could not have gathered the same size audience without a partnership of this sort, despite putting tremendous effort into search engine marketing, SEO, and newsletter campaigns. The portal is a crucial partner for revenue generation, name gathering, and audience development—and this will continue to be true as long as portals continue to be a destination for web users.

As such, there are opportunities for other established, multi-title magazine companies to leverage their content and publishing expertise to forge similar relationships with popular websites. Generally, a perennial problem for Canadian media companies is a lack of economies of scale. As stated in the introduction to this paper, this is a quandary online, too, as Canadian audiences are usually too small to generate sufficient ad sales—and those revenues are needed to support capable web editorial teams. However, large audiences are not entirely absent from Canadian websites. Major national portals such as MSN.ca and Sympatico.ca have substantial audiences and, fortunately for publishers and media companies, they need content but do not have the resources or experience to produce it. Meanwhile, the multi-title Canadian publishers—Transcontinental, Rogers Media, TVA, and St. Joseph's—have the know-how to build brands, produce content on a regular schedule, and market the brands properly. As well, large magazine publishers have vital, existing relationships with audiences, writers, photographers, and advertisers. Publishers can also provide

Canadian-specific content in place of international newsfeeds. Essentially, when viewed in broad strokes, the needs and strengths of portals and publishers are perfectly complimentary.⁵⁰

A potential challenge for Reader's Digest Canada in the coming years will be to find alternative revenue sources if the viability of this business model wanes. For several years, experts have been predicting the downfall of portals (Joel, 2010; Stableford, 2010). Even when the portals were popular web destinations a decade ago, there was only room for a handful of players. This led to huge losses for companies as formidable as NBC (with its portal, Snap) and ABC/Disney (with its Go! Network portal).

Web users have become savvier since the days of Go! And Snap. One of new media's salient characteristics is the decline of the media monolith. Today even the *New York Times* website can barely compete with online blog news sites like Gawker⁵¹ (part of the multi-site Gawker network) and the Huffington Post.⁵² Generally web-native users form their own "surfing patterns," picking and choosing where they get their information and entertainment, regardless of platform, and sometimes, production value. They curate their own content, according to their moods, tastes, and other preferences. Applications such as RSS-feed readers and applications for tablets such as Flipboard⁵³—which presents social media content from Facebook, Twitter and blogs, into a magazine-like form—are totems of this shift. Portals websites need to adapt to these new behaviours. They need to consider how they will provide value to a user who has an abundance of content at his or her disposal.

The future of the portal also depends on them not becoming "walled gardens," where most of the content and services offered are owned by the portal's parent company (Aufderheide in Blevins, 2004, p.248). Walled gardens offer owners attractive economic advantages but are a detriment to user experience. For example, according to Kerschbaumer, Go!'s downfall can be

⁵⁰ Smaller magazine brands such as *Geist* or *The Walrus* have niche audiences—and fewer resources—and will find it more difficult to establish relationships with portal sites.

⁵¹ <http://gawker.com/>

⁵² <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/>; While lean and immensely popular, sites such as Gawker and the Huffington Post have also garnered criticism for their use of content created by "old media" companies such as the New York Times. By regularly citing and repurposing content, such sites exploit reporting and other production costs other companies pay for.

⁵³ <http://www.flipboard.com>

attributed to the fact that the Disney portal primarily offered advertising and cross-promotion (for Disney, ESPN, and ABC), not expert content. Kerschbaumer adds, “Success in the portal game has hinged on the ability of the portal itself to be neutral. When visitors...do a search, they want to feel comfortable that they aren’t being pushed to certain sites” (in Blevins, 2004, p.266). In 2010, users feel entitled to choice because they have access to a glut of information and entertainment available to them online, as well as through traditional media, including radio, television, print, and film. Today, the idea of web portals generally brings to mind middling content packaged for the broadest possible audience—in other words, it represents many qualities that are antithetical to what audiences are accustomed to getting online. Google, on the other hand, serves as a platform that consistently presents the most relevant content for the user as decided by an objective algorithm.⁵⁴ Accordingly, it is the second most popular site in the world⁵⁵ (Arrington, 2010). Furthermore, portals offer information under the large umbrella of “general interest,” which can vary from breaking news to costume ideas for pets, but portals are not established as leaders or experts in most of the topics they cover.

Thus, offering quality, branded content is important to the survival of web portals. As an increasing number of users move towards personalizing their content streams, portals need to make themselves into destinations by narrowing their content down, and giving themselves a distinctive voice (or voices) so that users willingly return to the sites. Publishers can play a crucial role in this necessary evolution: If portals offer the appealing content from the media brands readers trust—such as magazine brands, they will visit regularly to read and to touch base with the online communities built around the sites’ channels. As well, partnerships with multiple publishers can provide a diversity of personalities, ideas, and views, which will prevent the “walled garden” predicament. In turn, portals will have “quality users” to offer to advertisers.

As illustrated by the online partnerships presented in this discussion, portals are already making moves to compete with branded blogs and branded news websites for audiences. In the late summer of 2010, AOL (America Online) hired Former Canwest Global Communications executive Graham Moysey to be the new general manager of AOL Canada (Beer, 2010). Moysey is

⁵⁴ Seemingly immune to corporate imperatives...

⁵⁵ Facebook is the most popular website in the world (Arrington, 2010).

part of AOL's "very bold and ambitious plan around quality and unique content creation." Part of that plan is to make use of its content assets such as Engadget, MapQuest, and AOL Health (Beer).

A decade ago, AOL bought out the world's largest media company, Time Warner. AOL's CEO, Stephen Case, championed the merger by arguing that media companies could be successful on digital platforms if their strategies were smart (Lohr, 2000). His predictions were entirely accurate—even when considering the fact that the AOL-Time Warner merger was called, "One of the biggest disasters that have occurred to our country" by Time Warner's major stockholder, Ted Turner (Arango, 2010). Case knew that the Internet would be the dominant medium for the years to come, but what audiences were seeking was not technology but content. The companies split in January 2010, and all the executives involved with the AOL-Time Warner transaction claim AOL was responsible for the merger's undoing because it did not meet the projections that were the basis of the deal. Conversely, Time Warner now has a formidable network of online content providers including the successful magazine-brand websites SportsIllustrated.com, People.com, Time.com, and EW.com,⁵⁶ and the hugely popular news website, CNN.com. Time Warner's CEO, Gerald Levin, told the *New York Times*, "AOL was the Google of its time. It was how you got to the Internet, but it was using some old media business ideas that were undone by the Internet itself, and that's why Google came along" (Arango, 2010).

Bell held a similarly precarious position in Canada, since it was primarily a technology service provider; however, in September 2010, the telecom bought a majority share in CTV Inc., giving Bell exclusive access to CTV programming. The deal typifies the growing consolidation of media and telecom carriers: Rogers, Quebecor's Vidéotron, and Shaw—all Internet service providers—have also invested in exclusive content deals to attract customers (Ladurantaye, 2010). This trend indicates a movement towards the walled-garden predicament, but also represents telecoms' valuation of content providers. So, will Canadian web portals, like AOL.com in the U.S., be a ball and chain to content creators, or are they a boon to media industries such as publishing? The answer is more likely the latter.

⁵⁶ The website for *Entertainment Weekly*.

Regardless of the fate of MSN.ca and Sympatico.ca in the coming years, Reader's Digest Canada and the country's web portals have found a way to satisfy some of their most essential needs at the moment: traffic and content, respectively. Publishers live by the maxim that "content is king," but, as Reader's Digest Canada recognizes, quality content alone is not sufficient to generate a valuable audience for a brand, particularly in a country where the audience is inherently small. Thus, magazine publishers' partnerships with web portals are not only effective but also necessary; they are borne out of Canadian media-industry realities. Developing a business model that makes Canadian magazine content profitable online is a landmark accomplishment for Reader's Digest Canada. With these partnerships, the publisher has shown that a traditional media company can adapt to the new-media landscape and successfully transfer its enduring strengths onto digital platforms.

Appendix

(Source: ComScore reports, generated September 2010)

1. Traffic sources and losses

“Sources” (below) represent where users come from immediately before Besthealthmag.ca and “Losses” (bottom) represents where they went to immediately after.

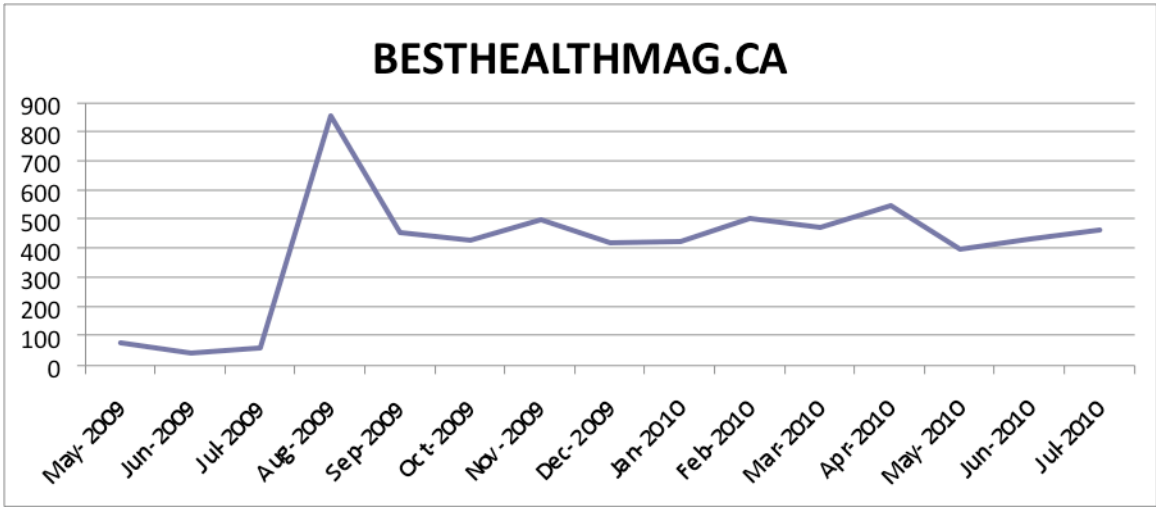
“Entries” or “Exits” represent the aggregate number of times that source or loss transition happened. E.g. 371,000 unique visitors came from a Sympatico.ca property. These 371,000 visitors made came from a Sympatico.ca property to Besthealthmag.ca 976,000 times.

		SOURCES		
		Total Unique Visitors (000)	Entries (000)	% of Entries
BESTHEALTHMAG.CA Sources of incoming traffic		465	976	100.0
1	Sympatico.ca Property	371	676	69.3
2	Microsoft Sites	60	82	8.4
3	Google Sites	37	41	4.2
4	Logon	28	33	3.3
5	Yahoo! Sites	9	11	1.1
6	Facebook.com	8	12	1.2
7	Reader's Digest Digital Network	8	8	0.9

		LOSSES		
		Total Unique Visitors (000)	Exits (000)	% of Exits
BESTHEALTHMAG.CA Outgoing traffic losses		465	976	100.0
1	Sympatico.ca Property	214	368	37.7
2	Logoff	114	174	17.8
3	Google Sites	86	115	11.8
4	Microsoft Sites	69	92	9.4
5	Facebook.com	22	27	2.8
6	Reader's Digest Digital Network	14	15	1.5
7	Yahoo! Sites	11	22	2.2

2. 15-month trend of traffic to Besthealthmag.ca

Unique visitors to Besthealthmag.ca (,000)														
May-2009	Jun-2009	Jul-2009	Aug-2009	Sep-2009	Oct-2009	Nov-2009	Dec-2009	Jan-2010	Feb-2010	Mar-2010	Apr-2010	May-2010	Jun-2010	Jul-2010
79	43	62	857	456	430	499	420	427	507	473	550	399	436	465



3. Audience demographic profile for Besthealthmag.ca

% **Composition Unique Visitors**: proportion of visitors from this demographic

Composition Index UV (Unique Visitors): relation to index for websites in Canada

% **Composition Pages**: proportion of page views from this demographic

% **Composition Minutes**: proportion of BH's minutes spend by this demographic

	Besthealthmag.ca			
	% Composition Unique Visitors	Composition Index UV	% Composition Pages	% Composition Minutes
Persons: 2-17	7.6	41	4.7	3.8
Persons: 18-24	6.7	75	3.5	4.1
Persons: 25-34	11.8	65	9.7	9.9
Persons: 35-44	22.6	122	25.8	28.9
Persons: 45-54	25.0	151	27.3	26.1
Persons: 55-64	18.0	150	20.4	20.0
Persons: 65+	8.4	116	8.6	7.3
Males - Age				
All Males	37.3	76	35.1	34.6
Male: 2-17	3.7	41	2.6	2.0
Male: 18-24	1.8	41	1.3	1.1
Males: 25-34	4.5	50	2.4	2.8
Males: 35-44	8.4	90	9.8	9.7
Male: 45-54	8.8	106	7.7	7.6
Males: 55-64	7.9	136	9.6	9.7
Males: 65+	2.2	64	1.6	1.8
Females - Age				
All Females	62.7	123	64.9	65.4
Female: 2-17	3.9	40	2.1	1.8
Female: 18-24	4.9	108	2.2	3.0
Females: 25-34	7.3	81	7.3	7.0
Females: 35-44	14.1	154	16.0	19.2
Female: 45-54	16.2	196	19.5	18.5
Females: 55-64	10.1	162	10.8	10.4
Females: 65+	6.1	164	7.0	5.6
HH Income (CA)				
HHI CAD: Less than 15,000	0.4	42	0.1	0.2
HHI CAD: 15,000 - 24,999	9.6	92	10.0	10.2
HHI CAD: 25,000 - 39,999	17.5	143	13.5	15.3
HHI CAD: 40,000 - 59,999	26.7	140	25.8	28.3
HHI CAD: 60,000 - 74,999	12.0	106	13.5	12.4
HHI CAD: 75,000 - 99,999	16.5	78	11.8	11.0
HHI CAD: 100,000 or more	17.3	69	25.4	22.7
Region (CA)				
Region CA: Atlantic	13.6	183	15.6	14.3
Region CA: Quebec	5.4	23	10.5	11.4
Region CA: Ontario	46.6	124	47.6	47.4
Region CA: Prairies	20.8	118	14.3	15.7
Region CA: British Columbia	13.6	99	12.1	11.2
Children				
Children: No	59.1	104	63.1	60.8
Children: Yes	40.9	94	36.9	39.2
Household (HH) Size				

HH Size: 1	11.0	83	10.0	10.8
HH Size: 2	33.8	108	38.1	35.5
HH Size: 3	21.1	103	19.1	19.9
HH Size: 4	15.9	78	14.2	14.0
HH Size: 5+	18.1	124	18.6	19.8
HH Size: 1-2	44.8	101	48.1	46.2
HH Size: 3+	55.2	99	51.9	53.8

4. 15-month trend of traffic to Readersdigest.ca

Unique visitors to readersdigest.ca (,000)														
May-2009	Jun-2009	Jul-2009	Aug-2009	Sep-2009	Oct-2009	Nov-2009	Dec-2009	Jan-2010	Feb-2010	Mar-2010	Apr-2010	May-2010	Jun-2010	Jul-2010
450	391	351	419	406	292	311	294	297	279	431	441	342	276	398

5. Audience demographic profile for Readersdigest.ca and Selection.ca

	Readersdigest.ca		Selection.ca	
	Target Audience (000)	% Composition Unique Visitors	Target Audience (000)	% Composition Unique Visitors
Persons - Age	381	100.0	90	100.0
2-17	28	7.3	8	8.4
18-24	11	2.8	4	4.8
25-34	39	10.2	11	12.7
35-44	61	16.0	18	19.6
45-54	79	20.7	21	23.0
55-64	83	21.8	21	23.2
65+	81	21.1		
Males - Age				
All Males	130	34.1	31	34.3
2-17	16	4.1		
18-24	5	1.2		
25-34	16	4.2	5	5.6
35-44	18	4.6		
45-54	21	5.5	10	10.8
55-64	30	7.9		
65+	25	6.6		
Females - Age				

All Females	252	65.9	59	65.7
2-17	12	3.2		
18-24	6	1.6	3	3.7
25-34	23	6.0	6	7.1
35-44	43	11.4	15	16.6
45-54	58	15.3	11	12.2
55-64	53	14.0	15	16.6
65+	56	14.6		
HH Income (CA)				
Less than 15,000				
15,000 - 24,999	44	11.5	9	10.5
25,000 - 39,999	61	16.1	11	12.7
40,000 - 59,999	87	22.9	22	24.8
60,000 - 74,999	64	16.8	11	12.6
75,000 - 99,999	67	17.7	13	14.8
100,000 or more	55	14.4	20	22.4
Region (CA)				
Atlantic	33	8.6		
Quebec	65	17.2	81	89.8
Ontario	122	31.9	5	5.6
Prairies	77	20.1		
British Columbia	85	22.2		

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