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ABSTRACT

Prompted by an awareness of nostalgic trends during the 1960s and 1970s in movies, television programming, fashion, interior design, and architecture, a study compared such trends in graphic design in both magazine articles and magazine advertisements. Specifically, it noted the frequency of occurrence of nostalgia in the two graphic design areas of artwork and display typography and compared them with the use of nostalgic motifs in headlines. The study included 12 magazines representing fashion and design-oriented publications--both general interest and design trade magazines--published from 1959 through 1979, and focused on a total of 11,816 advertisements and 2,511 articles. Findings showed that nostalgic motifs seemed to be used more in designer publications than in consumer publications and that nostalgic themes were used more often in articles than in advertisements. In terms of use in headlines, art, or type, graphic design was more likely to display nostalgic motifs than were the headlines of the article or advertisement. More specifically, type was more likely to be the indicator of nostalgia than was art. The most favored style for nostalgic treatment was the Victorian period. The level of nostalgia also seemed to vary with historical events and periods as evidenced by a visible increase in nostalgia during and following periods of economic recession, as well as following periods of social and civil unrest. (HOD)

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A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF NOSTALGIA

by

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A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF NOSTALGIA

During the 1960's and 1970's nostalgic trends have been noted in movies, television programming, fashion, interior design, and architecture. Observers of the graphic design scene also have noted that in the 1960's there seems to have been an increased use of nostalgia as a major creative strategy. (1, 7, 25).

This study compares nostalgic trends in graphic design in both magazine articles and in magazine advertisements. Specifically it notes the frequency of occurrence of nostalgia in the two graphic design areas of artwork and display typography and compares them with the use of nostalgic motifs in headlines.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

A number of research questions guided the design of this study. Is there any difference in the incidence of nostalgia between designer-oriented publications and consumer publications? Where is nostalgia most visible--in the art, the type or the headline? Is there any difference in the incidence of nostalgic themes between advertisements and the editorial side of a magazine. And finally, in terms of a trend analysis, are there significant dates where nostalgia will predictably increase?

The following are the working hypotheses that were developed for this study:

1. Conventional wisdom suggests design-oriented publications would be more inclined to follow fads and fashions, and therefore a nostalgic trend would probably show up first and highest in design-oriented publications.

2. Likewise it is thought that advertising is more responsive to changes in fashion and therefore advertising would use nostalgia themes first and more often than the editorial side of a magazine.
3. Frankly it was difficult to predict which dimension would be used as a marker for nostalgia. It could just as easily be art, type, or the headline. For the purpose of this study, it seems likely that nostalgia will occur first and more frequently in the art since illustration typically functions to establish mood.
4. The hypotheses guiding the trend analysis evolve from the question of whether nostalgia motifs are used more often in periods of crisis and disenchantment. These periods could be recessionary times and periods of public resistance or concern over such issues as war or civil rights. Particular events may incite nostalgia such as the distribution of major trend setting movies like Bonnie and Clyde and the preparation for the Bicentennial. The hypotheses relating to these benchmark events are as follows:
 - a. Nostalgia will increase during and following the officially identified recessionary periods in 1960, 1970 and 1974 (as defined by the National Bureau of Economic Research). (23)
 - b. Nostalgic incidences will increase during the period of the Civil Rights Movement particularly during 1963 and 1964 with the highly visible sit ins, marches, and voter registration drives and during the urban riots of 1967 and 1968. (1,3,4,25)
 - c. Nostalgia will follow the appearance of a trend setting event such as the Bonnie and Clyde movie in 1967. (7)
 - d. Nostalgia will build during the Vietnam resistance periods and will be particularly strong during such major crises as the Kent State protest and shootings in May, 1970. (1,3,4,25)
 - e. Nostalgia will build to a peak preceding a planned public celebration such as the Bicentennial. (26)

Table 1 summarizes the chronology of these major nostalgia related events.

Table 1 goes near here

THE STUDY

The study included 12 magazines representing fashion and design-oriented publications--both general interest and design trade magazines. The magazines analyzed were:

General interest: New York Times Magazine, Esquire, McCalls, New Yorker, Holiday, Vogue.

Designer: Advertising Age, Communication Arts, American Home, Architectural Record, Art Direction, Print.

The fashion-oriented publications were chosen because it was assumed they would be leaders in creative trends in graphic design. The design-oriented publications included those serving the graphic arts and advertising fields as well as several oriented toward architects and interior designers. Once again it was assumed that these publications would be trendsetters professionally.

The 21-year frame extended from 1959 through 1979. The study included a total of 11,816 advertisements and 2,511 articles. The year 1959 was used as a departure point for several reasons. First, the 21-year time frame is long enough to allow trend analysis. Another reason is because, esthetically, 1959 represents the culmination of the acquisitive, materialistic, technologic period identified as the Fifties.(1) It seems to be the end of a period in more ways than just the coincidental ending of a decade and, as such, it provides a benchmark.

Variables

The dependent variable for this study was frequency of occurrence coded on three dimensions: Content or theme as expressed in the headline, artwork or illustration, and display typography. A pretest found that traces of nostalgia can show up in any one of the three dimensions without appearing in the others.

In coding content, there are fairly specific cues and they are usually expressed in the headline. Such expressions as "remember when," "it used to be," "the good old days," "the golden age," and "old fashioned" suggest that a nostalgic theme may be developing. (21,22,25,26,27) In art and type the cues are stylistic. The art and/or the type may be contemporary creations, but the way they are used creates a mood or feeling reminiscent of times past.

When coding was completed the frequency of occurrence was converted to a percentage using the total number of advertisements or articles in that particular year as the base. The total number per year was noted separately for both general and trade publications. The percentage represents an index by year across publication category.

Styles

The occurrence was also coded in terms of the style or period represented. Some 16 possible categories were identified by studying articles in nostalgia and histories of design. (1,4,6,8,9,14,18,28) The results of the pretest indicated that seven major categories were represented by nostalgic traces. As a result of the pretest analysis, some of the categories were combined in those cases where they were originally broken out of a major category. Others were dropped from the study if the occurrence was so infrequent (a minimum level of .01) as to be imperceptible in analysis.

The following are the seven general categories of style used in this study: Renaissance (European from 14th to 16th Century), Colonial, Victorian, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, International (Including Bauhaus, Mondrian, Swiss), and miscellaneous "Old Fashioned", (indeterminate period).

FINDINGS

Period. Analyzing the data first by style, it is obvious that the Victorian Period is the most preferred. Table 2 summarizes all the data in terms of period for both consumer and designer magazine categories as well as for advertisements and articles. In all four categories the leader in nostalgic influences is the Victorian period.

Table 2 Goes
Near Here

It is also possible from this same summary table to estimate a frequency of occurrence of nostalgia in advertisements and articles in both types of magazines. The totals at the bottom of each column represent the number of incidents of nostalgic traces but remember that this figure is totaled across the three dimensions of art, type and content. Those totals are given below with an adjusted percentage:

	f	%	Index
Consumer Ads:	694	9.98	3.33
Designer Ads:	628	12.66	4.22
Total Ads:	1322	22.63	7.54
Consumer Articles:	176	11.73	3.91
Designer Articles:	234	22.98	7.66
Total Articles:	410	34.62	11.54

The index is an adjusted percentage computed by dividing by three to average the occurrences across the three dimensions. The resulting index is a more accurate estimate of the amount of nostalgic influences in advertisements and articles. It's obvious that the designer publications are more inclined to use nostalgic motifs with an index of 4.2 for advertisements (compared to 3.3 for consumer ads) and 7.7 for articles (compared to 3.9 for consumer articles) thus supporting the first hypothesis. In general, advertising with an index of 7.5 was lower in level of nostalgia than the editorial side with its index of 11.5, which is contrary to the second hypothesis.

Dimension. In addition to nostalgic period, the data can also be summarized in terms of its usage in either headline, art, or type. Table 3 summarizes this data for both types of magazines. In advertisements the leading nostalgic indicator was type with an index of 3.84 for consumer magazines and 6.21 for designer magazines. This compares to 3.61 for art in

Table 3 Goes
Near Here

consumer magazines and 5.33 for art in designer magazines. For both types of publications, the frequency of occurrence in the headlines was considerably lower. The use of nostalgic motifs in art and type in the articles was much closer with art slightly ahead in frequency. In consumer articles art had an index of 4.81 (compared to 4.74 for type) and in designer publications art was 9.72 (compared to 9.13 for type).

Overall, however, when the frequencies are totaled across magazine category, the total index is higher for type than it is for art, the dimension hypothesized to be highest. Adding the articles and advertisements together, the consumer magazines have an index for type of 8.58 (compared to 8.42 for art) and the designer magazines have an index for type of 15.35 (compared to 15.05) for art. Overall type has a grand total index of 23.93 compared to 23.47 for art and 10.24 for headlines.

Trend Analysis

Table 4 represents the indices of nostalgic motifs throughout the 20-year period from 1959 to 1979. The two advertising and editorial columns are summations of the indices noted in those two categories in both consumer and designer oriented magazines. (see Tables 5 and 6) Note: the index was computed by figuring the percentage of the total number of ads or articles observed and then dividing that number by three, since each ad was coded separately for art, type, and headline. Once the data are summarized beyond the level of the art, type and headline dimensions, then the frequency is more accurately described as an index than an incidence.

Table 4 goes near here

Figure 1 depicts the data represented in Table 4. First the indices for advertising and editorial use of nostalgia in both consumer and designer magazines were plotted, then a solid line was added which represents the summation of the two categories. The solid line might be thought of as the overall nostalgia index for the 20-year period. An analysis of Figure 1 shows clearly that there is proportionately more nostalgic motifs in editorial than in advertising.

Figure 1 goes near here

Looking at the solid line it is possible to compare the level of nostalgia with the benchmark dates identified in the hypotheses. In all cases of 1960, 1970, and 1974 the recessionary periods are followed by an increase in the use of nostalgic themes. The date of 1967 which is both the distribution of Bonnie and Clyde and a period of urban riot is clearly marked by a

subsequent increase in the level of nostalgia. Finally the two years preceding the Bicentennial are periods of increased use of nostalgic themes followed by a marked decrease in the level of nostalgia after 1976. In terms of the use of nostalgia by the creative teams developing the advertising and editorial material in magazines, the level and direction of nostalgia tends to support the hypotheses.

Trend Analysis by Dimension and Category. The data in Table 4 and depicted in Figure 1 was developed by totaling all of the dimensions individually in this study. Tables 5 and 6 present the data broken down by category and dimension.

Table 5 summarizes the editorial use of nostalgia in both the designer and consumer categories and includes the breakdowns by dimensions of headline, art and type. Table 6 presents the same information for the use of nostalgia in advertising.

Tables 5 and 6 go near here

The index values (computed by dividing the total of copy, art, and type responses by three) for editorial and advertising nostalgia in both consumer and designer magazines are depicted in Figures 2 and 3.

Figures 2 and 3 go near here

Editorial nostalgia is the focus of Figure 2 and it is clear from this illustration that designer magazines tend to be higher in their level of use of nostalgia and more extreme in their pattern. It also appears that designer magazines tend to precede consumer magazines in the use of nostalgia as an editorial strategy.

Figure 3 looks at advertising and its use of nostalgia. Essentially the same pattern appears with the designer magazines using more nostalgia and displaying more variation in the pattern of use. Advertising, in contrast to the editorial side, tends to see more agreement in use of nostalgia between the consumer and designer publications. Also the level of nostalgia is lower overall proportionately for advertising than it was for editorial.

Trend Analysis by Styles. The data in Table 7 trace the nostalgic trends across the 20-year period in terms of dominant styles. Of the seven design periods identified in this study, the four highest in frequency of occurrence are Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Victorian and Colonial. Those four periods are depicted in the Figure 4.

This Figure clearly shows the dominance of the Victorian period. It is also obvious that, while the level may vary, the overall pattern of highs and lows, tends to be similar for all four periods. There are some minor differences, of course, but the parallels are surprising.

Generally there is a steady increase in the level of nostalgia from 1959 through 1977-78 with a major decline in frequency in 1979.

After the Bonnie and Clyde movie, Art Deco increases as would be expected, but so do the other three periods which suggests nostalgia is an overriding theme rather than just a fascination with a certain period. The same pattern occurs before the Bicentennial in 1976. Colonial increases but so do Victoria and Art Nouveau. Only Art Deco fails to show any major increase preceding the Bicentennial.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, nostalgic motifs seem to be used more in designer publications than in consumer publications, nostalgia themes are used more often in articles than in advertisements. Graphic design is more likely to use nostalgic motifs than is the headline of the article or advertisement. More specifically, type is more likely to be the indicator of nostalgia than art. The most favored style to be chosen for a nostalgic treatment is the Victorian Period.

The level of nostalgia does seem to vary with historical events and periods. In fact, there seems to be a visible increase in nostalgia during and following periods of economic recession as well as following periods of social and civil unrest. The Bonnie and Clyde movie, which occurred at the same time as a period of major civil rights agitation, marked a period of major increase in the level of nostalgia. The same pattern can be observed prior to the Bicentennial.

Americans have traditionally been optimistic, forward looking, and futuristic. Since Colonial days this society has been supremely confident that, given American inventiveness, the future will be bright. If there is an observable nostalgic trend in mass communication, does that mean there might also be a subtle shift in American attitudes resulting in a population that now tends to find more of its inspiration in the past rather than in the future? Mass communication is only a mirroring medium and this study doesn't attempt to evaluate public response, but there might be reason to believe such creative strategies are both reflecting and reinforcing this type of attitude change. If so, and that needs to be the subject of additional research, this study has identified a rather major change in the orientation of the designers of mass communication and, one might theorize, the receivers of the communication as well.

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TABLE 1
NOSTALGIA BENCHMARKS

59	
60]	Recession: last 3 quarters
61	
62	
63	
64]	Civil Rights: Sit ins, Marches, Voter Registration
65]	
66	
67]	Bonnie and Clyde
68]	Civil Rights: Urban Riots
69	
70]	Recession: Last quarter of 69, first 3 quarters of 70
71	
72	
73]	
74]	Recession: Last quarter of 73, all of 74 and into the first quarter of 75
75	
76]	Bicentennial
77	
78	
79	

TABLE 2
NOSTALGIC MOTIFS BY PERIOD

PERIOD	ADVERTISEMENTS					ARTICLES				
	CONSUMER n=6972		DESIGNER n=4844		TOTAL %	CONSUMER n=1497		DESIGNER n=1019		TOTAL %
	f	%	f	%		f	%	f	%	
DECO	43	.62	57	1.18	1.80	30	2.01	15	1.48	3.49
INTERNATIONAL	6	.08	44	.91	.99	1	.07	8	.78	.85
NOUVEAU	62	.89	62	1.28	2.17	14	.93	33	3.24	4.17
VICTORIAN	258	3.70	295	6.10	9.80	91	6.06	118	11.58	17.64
COLONIAL	145	2.08	86	1.47	3.55	21	1.39	27	2.66	4.05
RENAISSANCE	86	1.24	51	1.05	2.29	17	1.14	24	2.36	3.41
OLD-FASHIONED	94	1.36	33	.67	2.03	2	.13	9	.88	1.01
TOTALS	694	9.98	628	12.66	22.63	176	11.73	234	22.98	34.62

TABLE 3
NOSTALGIC MOTIFS BY DIMENSION

I. CONSUMER MAGAZINES	ADVERTISEMENTS (n=6972)						ARTICLES (n=1497)						TOTAL					
	HEAD		ART		TYPE		HEAD		ART		TYPE		HEAD		ART		TYPE	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
DECO	11	.16	14	.20	18	.26	4	.27	12	.80	14	.94	15	.43	26	1.00	32	1.20
INTNTL.	1	.01	5	.07	0	0	0	0	1	.07	0	0	1	.01	6	.14	0	0
NOUV.	9	.13	32	.46	21	.30	4	.27	6	.40	4	.26	13	.40	38	.86	25	.56
VICT.	47	.67	78	1.12	133	1.91	10	.66	36	2.40	45	3.00	57	1.33	114	3.52	178	4.91
COLON.	40	.57	59	.85	46	.66	8	.53	8	.53	5	.33	48	1.10	67	1.38	51	.99
RENSC.	33	.48	42	.60	11	.16	7	.47	9	.60	1	.07	40	.95	51	1.20	12	.23
O.F.	33	.48	22	.32	39	.56	0	0	0	0	2	.13	33	.48	22	.32	41	.69
SUBTOTAL	174	2.50	252	3.61	268	3.84	33	2.20	72	4.81	71	4.74	207	4.70	324	8.42	339	8.58

II. DESIGNER MAGAZINES	ADVERTISEMENTS (n=4844)						ARTICLES (n=1019)						TOTAL					
	HEAD		ART		TYPE		HEAD		ART		TYPE		HEAD		ART		TYPE	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
DECO	1	.02	30	.62	26	.54	0	0	8	.79	7	.69	1	.02	38	1.41	33	1.23
INTNTL.	2	.04	26	.54	16	.33	1	.10	4	.39	3	.29	3	.14	30	.93	19	.62
NOUV.	4	.08	29	.60	29	.60	3	.29	18	1.77	12	1.18	7	.37	47	2.37	41	1.78
VICT.	25	.52	105	2.17	165	3.41	18	1.77	46	4.51	54	5.30	43	2.29	151	6.68	219	8.71
COLON.	20	.41	37	.76	29	.60	8	.79	12	1.18	7	.69	28	1.20	49	1.94	36	1.29
RENSC.	8	.16	26	.54	17	.35	7	.69	11	1.08	6	.59	15	.85	37	1.62	23	.94
O.F.	9	.18	5	.10	19	.39	5	.49	0	0	4	.39	14	.67	5	.10	23	.78
SUBTOTAL	69	1.42	258	5.33	301	6.21	42	4.12	99	9.72	93	9.13	111	5.54	357	15.05	394	15.35
TOTAL	243	3.92	510	8.94	569	10.05	75	6.32	171	14.53	164	13.87	318	10.24	681	23.47	733	23.93

TABLE 4
LEVELS OF NOSTALGIA

	Advertising	Editorial	Total
59	.05	.03	.08
60	.07	.07	.14
61	.05	.09	.14
62	.06	.12	.18
63	.08	.08	.16
64	.09	.01	.10
65	.14	.06	.20
66	.03	.08	.11
67	.08	.02	.10
68	.06	.16	.22
69	.06	.14	.20
70	.08	.08	.16
71	.10	.16	.26
72	.15	.20	.35
73	.07	.15	.22
74	.10	.15	.25
75	.10	.27	.37
76	.18	.20	.38
77	.10	.20	.30
78	.14	.19	.33
79	.11	.10	.21

TABLE 5

EDITORIAL NOSTALGIA

	Designer Mags				Consumer Mags			
	Copy	Art	Type	Index	Copy	Art	Type	Index
59	0	0	0	0	.03	.045	0	.03
60	.044	.092	.044	.06	.013	.013	0	.01
61	.072	.096	.072	.08	0	.014	.014	.01
62	.078	.129	.052	.09	.028	.041	.027	.03
63	.051	.068	.068	.06	.014	.028	.014	.02
64	0	.016	.016	.01	0	0	0	0
65	.019	.057	.058	.05	0	.016	0	.01
66	.033	.063	.028	.04	.045	.045	.015	.04
67	0	0	0	0	.017	.017	.017	.02
68	.044	.109	.153	.10	.01	.04	.121	.06
69	.073	.171	.046	.10	.032	.032	.048	.04
70	.019	.019	.056	.03	.041	.068	.041	.05
71	.044	.11	.088	.08	.034	.116	.083	.08
72	.025	.025	.05	.18	0	.032	.032	.02
73	.015	.151	.181	.12	.014	.041	.027	.03
74	.042	.084	.146	.09	.026	.089	.064	.06
75	.105	.383	.277	.26	.072	.12	.108	.01
76	.056	.028	.084	.06	.092	.211	.118	.14
77	.081	.131	.15	.12	.044	.088	.122	.08
78	.157	.259	.173	.16	.01	.04	.04	.03
79	-	.116	.029	.05	0	.094	.062	.05

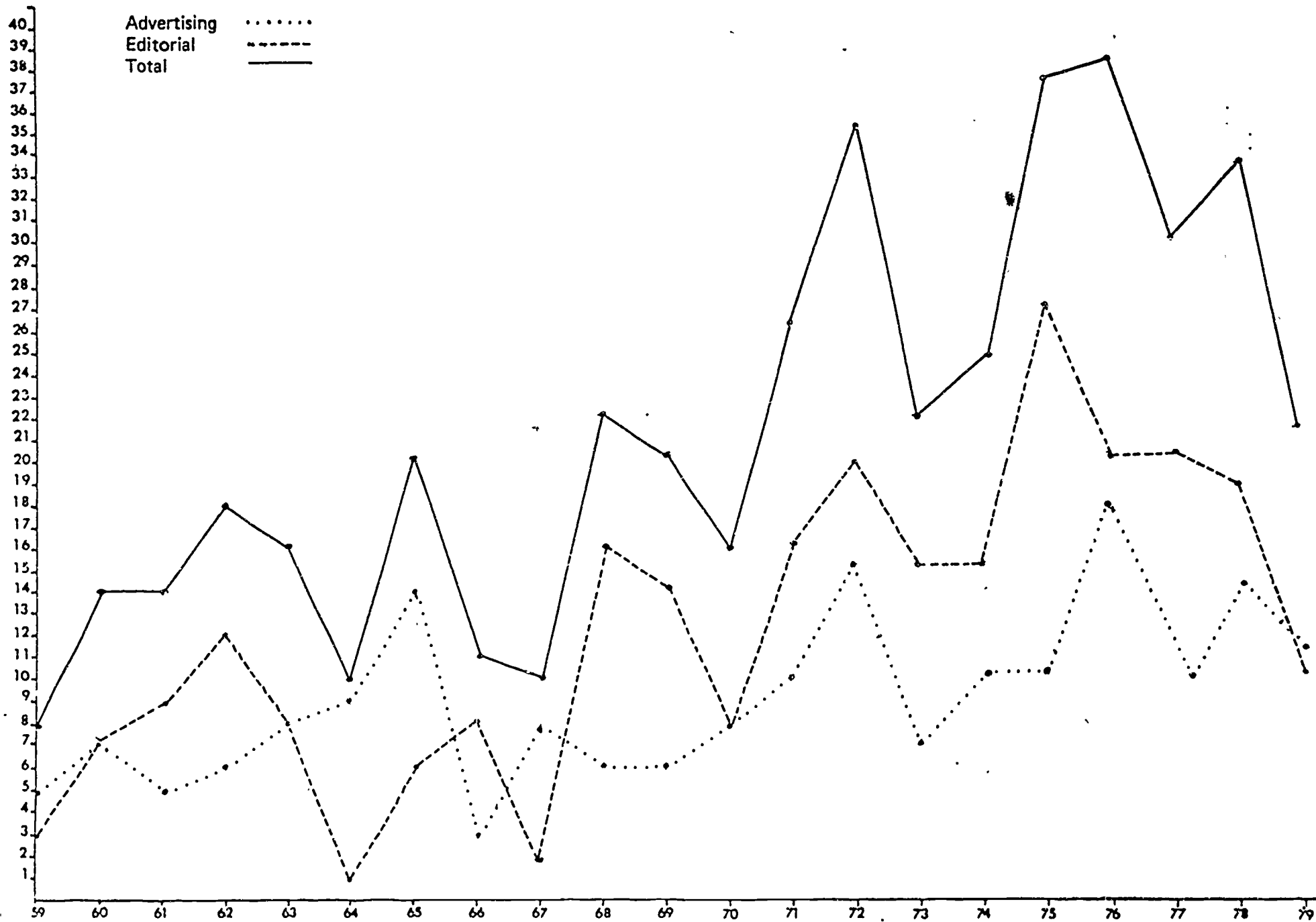
TABLE 6
ADVERTISING NOSTALGIA

	Designer Mags				Consumer Mags			
	Copy	Art	Type	Index	Copy	Art	Type	Index
59	0	.049	.033	.03	.009	.021	.023	.02
60	.033	.017	.044	.03	.043	.054	.019	.04
61	.01	.033	.023	.02	.031	.039	.028	.03
62	.004	.033	.022	.02	.023	.038	.028	.03
63	0	.028	.024	.04	.066	.031	.019	.04
64	.005	.134	.029	.06	.024	.026	.037	.03
65	0	.096	.23	.11	.028	.043	.025	.03
66	.003	.03	.06	.03	.008	.032	.043	.03
67	.006	.058	.063	.04	.073	.023	.032	.04
68	.021	.024	.036	.03	.009	.024	.049	.03
69	.004	.037	.033	.03	.02	.034	.026	.03
70	.004	.054	.069	.04	.029	.044	.047	.04
71	.065	.035	.085	.06	.015	.029	.077	.04
72	.039	.092	.133	.09	.05	.059	.065	.06
73	.014	.088	.011	.04	.076	.034	.044	.03
74	.015	.048	.042	.04	.08	.052	.044	.06
75	.018	.036	.0154	.04	.044	.069	.068	.06
76	.069	.13	.152	.12	.059	.042	.082	.06
77	.029	.073	.1	.07	.019	.041	.031	.03
78	.021	.094	.171	.10	.018	.033	.054	.04
79	.01	.067	.035	.04	.0	.061	.135	.07

TABLE 7

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING COMBINED

	Deco	Nouveau	Victorian	Colonial
59	0	.002	.031	.012
60	0	.029	.058	.007
61	.002	0	.057	.018
62	0	.021	.056	.047
63	0	0	.077	.005
64	0	0	.034	.006
65	.002	.035	.129	.009
66	.004	.028	.080	.016
67	.001	.007	.050	.009
68	.016	.035	.112	.015
69	.028	.088	.016	.037
70	.004	.016	.061	.014
71	.007	.039	.110	.026
72	.019	.015	.088	.033
73	.052	.029	.112	.025
74	.037	.031	.099	.029
75	.039	.074	.207	.081
76	.038	.008	.152	.055
77	.055	.02	.118	.033
78	.029	.038	.088	.097
79	.037	.043	.03	.009



ERIC 1. Total Incidence of Notalgia by Year

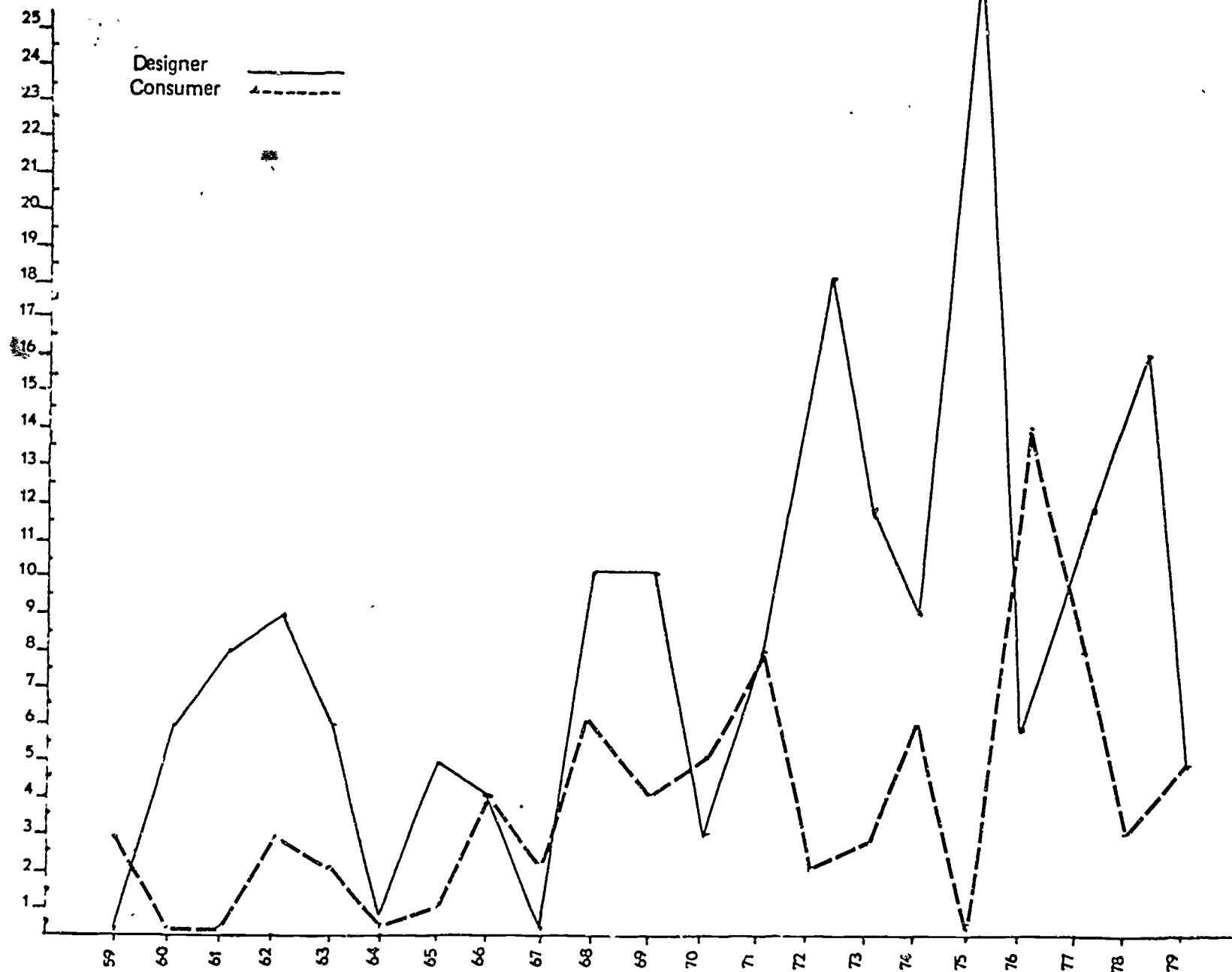


Figure 2: A Comparison of Editorial Nostalgia in Designer and Consumer Magazines

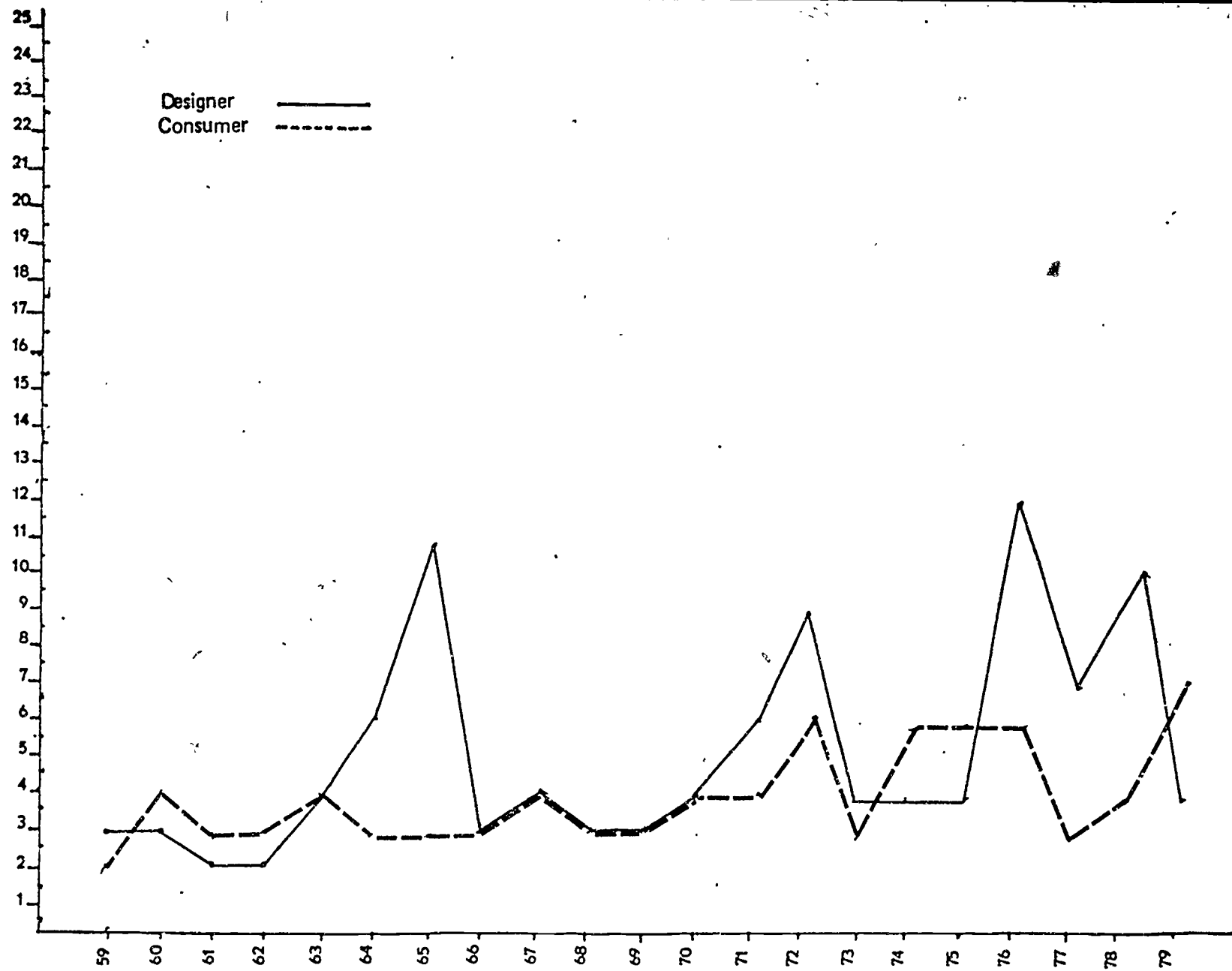


Figure 3: A Comparison of Advertising Nostalgia in Designer and Consumer Magazines

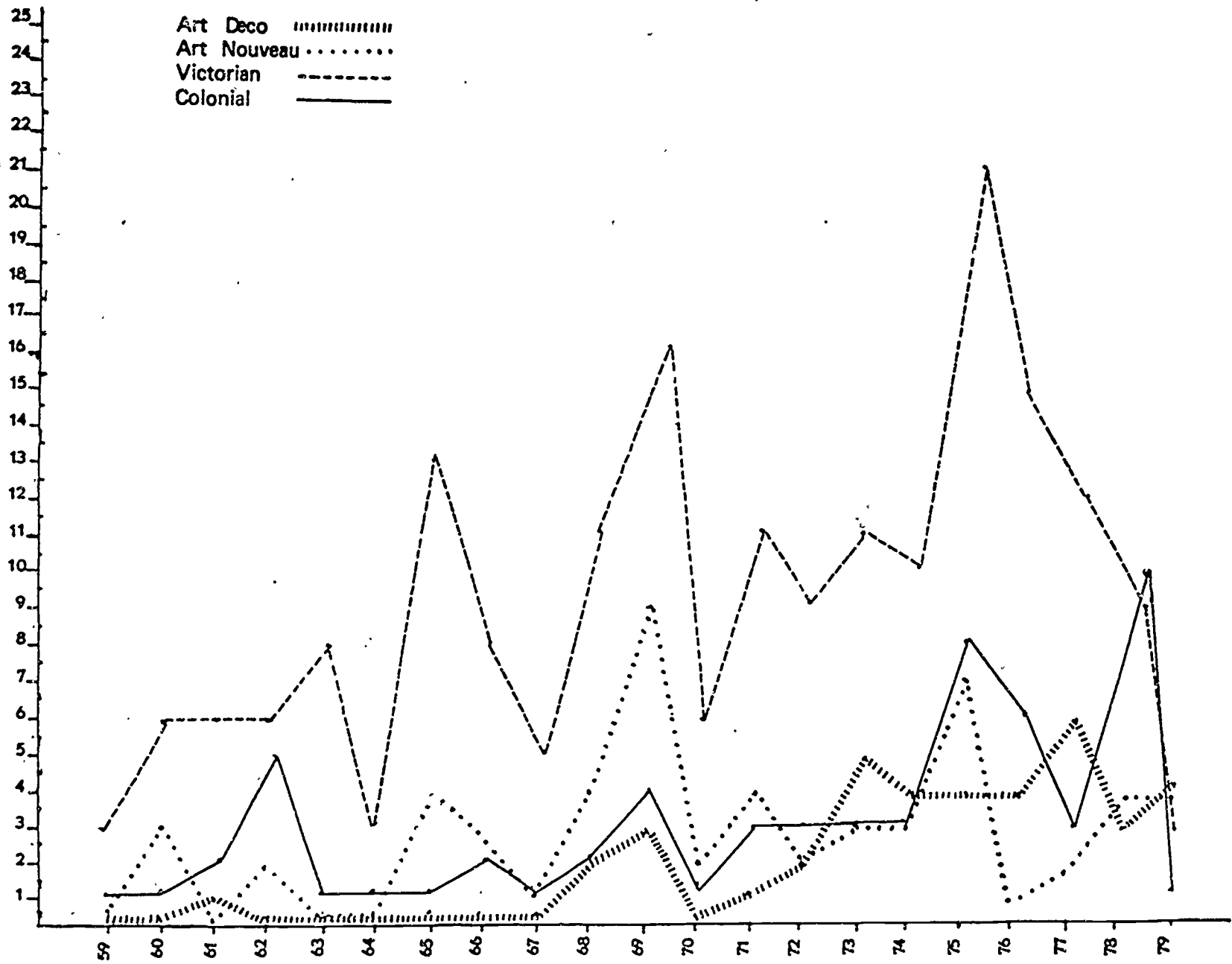


Figure 4: Total Incidence of Nostalgia by Period and by Year