

THE COMMUNICATION POWER OF CUSTOMER MAGAZINES

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Summary

In this paper the role of customer magazines is described. The World Network of Custom Publishers (WNCP) decided in 2000 to start an extensive research trajectory, beginning with desk research concerning strong and weak points of customer magazines as a medium type, including as many studies of the last twenty years as possible. The main conclusion is that the strong points can be described as the quintuple A model. The five A's are: audience, attention, attitude to the brand, adherence, active experience. Each A couples prominent research results with interesting themes and future developments. Based on the literature in which recent research findings are described, a rosy future for customer magazines can be predicted.

1. Introduction

In the past nine Readership Research Symposia little attention has been paid to customer magazines. Especially because of their increasing importance in the new individualized marketing strategies (one-to-one marketing, database marketing, loyalty programs), we think it is important to illustrate this role with the help of interesting recent research. Still another illustration of the increasing role of customer magazines: at the moment, we are doing research for developing customer magazines for internet providers to create a better 'we-feeling'. If someone had predicted this three years ago, people would have laughed. The World Network of Custom Publishers (WNCP) decided last year to start an extensive research trajectory, that consists of two parts:

- (a) desk research concerning strong and weak points of customer magazines as a medium type, including as many recent studies as possible;
- (b) use of the input of the desk research results to develop a standard international measurement tool for customer magazines.

Veldkamp was commissioned to carry out both parts. The results of the desk research study are presented in this paper.

2. Why an extensive customer magazine study?

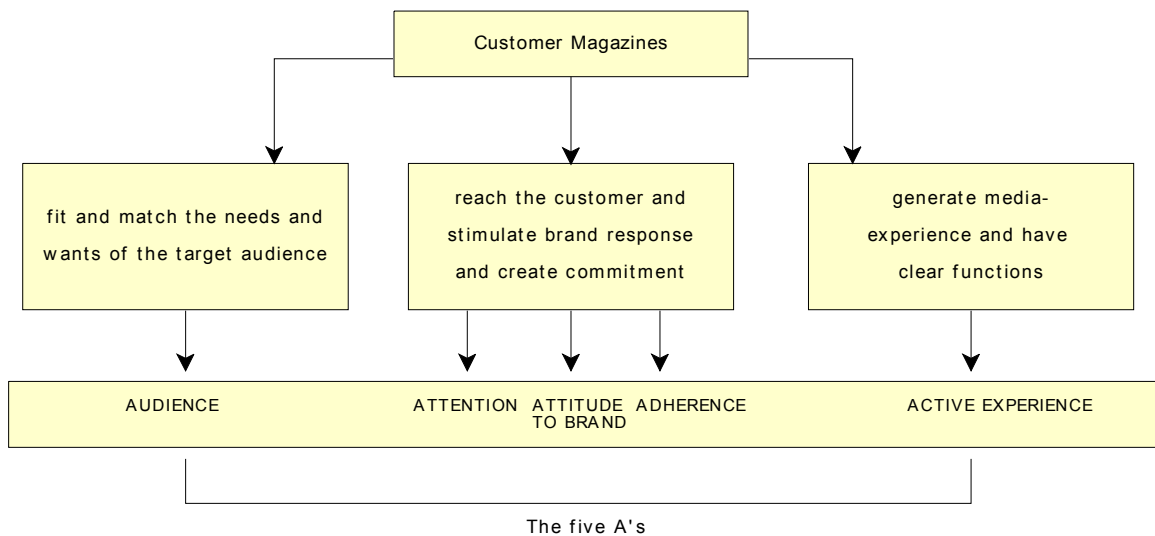
Research into customer magazines has been going on for about twenty years. Time to sum up the results! And there were also some specific reasons for this overview: (a) presenting conclusions about the medium type as a whole; (b) there are increasing demands for accountability across the marketing arena and customer magazines might be wise to generate some evidence that they are delivering the (right) goods; and (c) having a good overview of the findings to date can prove useful to the researcher of today and tomorrow.

3. Results: the five A's of customer magazines

Based on the results of the desk research study we developed the quintuple A model: the five A's of contract (customer) magazines. The five A's are not an a priori hypothesis but are based on a deduction of the main topics and findings in the literature search. They are a research finding as well as a way of structuring the presentation of results.

The literature about customer magazines distinguishes between three main themes (see scheme 1). These in turn are broken down into five separate components, which we call the five A's. Each A can be linked to research results and an interesting theme, and future developments.

The scheme below shows how the five A's fit together, followed by a description of the main points for each A. In this section, we map out the general framework. The subsequent sections discuss the findings from the literature in relation to each A.



scheme 1 - The quintuple A model of customer magazines

Audience One trend of the future will be database publishing. An organisation increasingly enters into a dialogue with the customer. This information is stored in a database (audience segmentation) and paves the way for customized communication.

Attention Because of information overload it is becoming increasingly difficult to penetrate the attention threshold. Customer magazines do succeed in reaching the target group, as can be shown by a broad variety of studies.

Attitude to brand Under the third A research results will be presented which show that customer magazines contribute to the increase in (a) brand awareness, (b) brand knowledge, (c) brand image.

Adherence Customer magazines create adherence, commitment, 'we-feeling', attitudinal loyalty and can be used within customer loyalty programs.

Active experience Customer magazines have several experience functions, namely instrumental, expressive, amusing.

In our study, we will not focus on behavioural effects in terms of 'hard' response. Behavioural effects are the consequence of all four of the classic marketing Ps, while this study focuses solely on a component of a single P. Furthermore, influencing attitude precedes behavioural effects. "Today's attitudes drive tomorrow's sales", is a well known quote in marketing.

Now that we have examined the scope of this project, the five A's are explained in detail below. Of course desk research generates a lot of references and research findings. For this paper we made an abstract of the most important findings (see for the full report Bronner, van Rooy, 2000).

4.1 Audience, the first A

In a number of studies, various experts predict that the trend of the future is database publishing (e.g. Luijk, 2000). The literature illustrates how communication between client and customer is no longer a one-way street. An organisation increasingly enters into a dialogue with the customer. As a result of this intensifying interaction, the organisation increasingly receives more information about its customers. This information is stored in a database and paves the way for customised communication. Customer magazines serve as a good tool in this process. The use of databases ensures that mailings are tailored efficiently and effectively to target groups with more precisely described characteristics. Luijk (2000, p. 20) also points out that the creators of contract media no longer see themselves as magazine makers but as marketers and strategists. Database marketing centres on a database of customer information. A distinction is made between tactical and strategic database marketing (Verhoef et al., 1998). *Tactical database marketing* focuses mainly on the creation of short-term effects, with the spotlight on the transaction with the consumer and activities concentrating on generating more sales, such as the creation of trials. *Strategic database marketing* is characterised by its long-term focus, with importance placed on building and maintaining a relationship with the consumer. Concrete goals revolve around establishing brand name recognition, brand preference and brand loyalty. Additionally, attention is paid to the image of the organisation and/or the brand.

The literature indicates that database technology opens many doors for the future of customer magazines. The near future is especially promising for working with variants per segment. Van Ginkel (1999) cites insert modules, Bergsma et al. (1998) discuss selective sections and conclude, based on a survey among database marketers in the financial and insurance field:

"If the appropriate information is selected from the database, then the magazine can be personalised to a greater degree by the use of selective sections. But on an average, selective sections are seldom used: 11% of the respondents always use selective sections; 8% of the respondents reported using selective sections occasionally; 15% of the respondents said they rarely use selective sections; 61% of the respondents said they never use selective sections."

So, practice shows that at the moment, this goes too far for most clients, who mainly limit their activities to using address data and the demographic data for their company's customers (Bergsma et al., 1998:7). "This is a missed opportunity. They can still approach clients in ways other than these variables."

We conclude with a quote from Van Ginkel (1999) to illustrate the future possibilities of database marketing and customer magazines: "One trend is that the customer magazine is increasingly tailor made, and of course this highlights the relevance of qualitative reader research. It's not completely unlikely that, in a few years, the target group will be divided into a number of subgroups that receive their own insert module based on a general blueprint for the entire target group. Consequently, database management will be extremely important in the future in order to deliver the right information to the right individual. Therefore, it is relevant to map accurate target group specifications."

4.2 Attention, the second A

The Amsterdam professor of media research Van Cuilenburg has focused a great deal of attention on the enormous growth in the supply of information and communication products and the increasing discrepancy between supply and demand. In other words, amidst such a glut of information, how can we still manage to capture the consumer's attention?

Van Cuilenburg, Neijens, Scholten (1999, p. 5) describe the information overload with an apt quote from Nobel Prize winner Herbert Simon: "What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it."

To what degree do customer magazines succeed in reaching the consumer despite this information overload? A great deal of attention research has been conducted at title level. Several authors have examined these studies and reached conclusions on a more generic level. One example is Van Raaij (1989, p. 276): "Several reader surveys conducted individually by companies seem to uphold the conclusion that customer magazines are kept much longer and referred to more often than folders and brochures. The recipient is less likely to throw the publication in the recycling bin especially if the house magazine is glossy. This applies to an even greater degree if the editorial content and design have created a certain loyalty with the magazine." Later, he adds (p. 279): "In general, most companies individually measure the degree to which their house magazine is read and appreciated via reader surveys. So far, however, the results of these surveys have seldom been made public. The few surveys that have been published indicate that the magazines in question rate fairly high for readability: 65% to more than 70%." Exactly ten years later, Puttemans (1999, p. 27) summarised the attention figures: his average of 68% falls exactly in the 65% to 70% range previously mentioned by Van Raaij.

Overall, an average attention score of about two-thirds per issue seems plausible. In other words, two out of three recipients read an issue of a customer magazine. This figure also conforms to results from various ad hoc studies VELDKAMP carried out.

What is the status of research on attention internationally? In the UK, Mintel and BMRB conduct a survey every two years for APA and Royal Mail. Attention is measured according to type, not title, level. The exact question asks: "Thinking about customer magazines, either supplied free or bought; do you get, or have you seen any customer magazines produced by these types of companies in the last 12 months?" Between 1996 and 1998 the ranking remained broadly the same - topped by retailer's own magazines. One difference in the listing of awareness of customer magazines is the position of motoring organisations' publications which has replaced those from financial institutions to take fourth place.

	1996	1998	% point change
Base: adults	1,517	1,565	
	%	%	
Retail – supermarkets	48	50	+2
Travel (e.g. airlines, ferries)	33	26	-7
Retail – other stores (e.g. Marks & Spencer)	29	25	-4
Motoring organisation	24	22	-2
Financial (e.g. bank, building society)	27	19	-8
Leisure (e.g. hotel group)	23	18	-5
Car manufacturer	20	16	-4
Any other	11	8	-3
None of these	23	30	+7
Don't know	8	1	-7

Source: BMRB/Mintel

Table 1 - Customer magazines received or seen, by type, 1996 and 1998, UK results

The main conclusion is: “As the market grows, awareness of customer magazines among consumers is high.” Or, as Puttemans said (1999, p. 27): “A customer magazine virtually guarantees significant attention.”

4.3 Attitude to brand, the third A

After attention, the next step is to touch and affect the recipient. Reading the magazine influences in a hierarchical sequence:
 level 1: brand awareness (spontaneous, aided name recognition)
 level 2: brand knowledge (what you know about a brand, the products and services)
 level 3: brand image (perception of a brand based on a number of image aspects).

In the literature, generating effects on brand awareness, brand knowledge and brand image are often indicated by one term, namely branding. It appears that customer magazines are ideal for use in branding. One expert in the Luijk study (2000, p. 38) offered an example: “What you see at the bank, for example. Years ago, you went to the bank once a week, now it’s once a month, and perhaps in the future not at all. Banks are closing their offices en masse. Machines are taking over traditional functions. The way for a bank to satisfactorily distinguish itself to its customers and maintain relationships is to establish something for personal contact that gives the brand sufficient meaning. This is where the customer magazine plays a role.”

4.3.1 The third A from a client perspective

We find an important role of customer magazines in relation to branding throughout the entire research history in this context. In 1988, Schuttel interviewed 22 companies that had a customer magazine. She demonstrated in her study that customer magazines had a clear image-building function.

In a 1993 British survey asking clients of customer magazine publishers about the functions of their medium, "projecting the company’s image" topped the list (see table 2). "Respondents were asked to rate different functions that the publication can provide: they were given the choice in degrees from ‘very good’ to ‘very poor’."

	Quality rating (<i>out of 100</i>)
<i>aspect of performing</i>	
Projecting the company’s image	91
Creating goodwill	86
Informing customers about NEW products and services	84
Generating customer loyalty	80
Improving awareness of EXISTING products and services	79
Stimulating customer response	69
Contributing to database generation	62

Table 2 – Main functions of customer magazines in the eyes of clients, UK

The table above illustrates that clients of customer magazines believe that this medium is an excellent means by which to enhance a company’s image.

Apparently, how clients view customer magazines does not differ significantly in Western Europe. According to a Dutch study (Bergsma et. al, p. 36), customer magazines are also useful in promoting image (table 3):

	Quality rating
Promoting image	4.3*
Building customer relations	4.1
Advancing name recognition of our products	4.0
Informing about new products	3.9
Informing about mergers / acquisitions	3.5
Stimulating reactions	2.6
* average score on a five-point scale, with 5 = agree completely, 1 = disagree completely	

Table 3 – Main functions of customer magazines in the eyes of clients, The Netherlands

In a pan-European study (1994, p. 40), Ko reached the conclusion that marketing managers rate customer magazines highly in the areas of name recognition, corporate image and target group loyalty. This supports our earlier conclusion that European results are comparable.

4.3.2 The third A from a reader perspective

Up to now, we covered several studies in different countries that looked at the branding function from the customer / client perspective. Let's present results from a study commissioned by the APA / Royal Mail from the consumer / reader perspective. A Millward Brown study from 1999 surveyed 1,000 readers and 300 non-readers of customer magazines. The matched random sampling made non-readers the control group.

	Consumer	Business
<i>Regular readers agree that...</i>		
• a customer magazine is a better way for a company to tell you about its products and services than other forms of media	85%	84%
• you are more likely to read the magazine and respond to offers if the magazine is personally addressed to you	53%	63%
• you are more likely to trust advertising or special offers in the magazine	44%	42%
• you are more likely to purchase products featured in the magazine	60%	51%

Table 4 – Attitudes of readers towards customer magazines, UK

In their commentary, the authors ponder the question: do customer magazines increase and improve brand image and brand awareness? "It has long been assumed that these softer aims lie at the heart of all client publications and, indeed, project findings reveal quite staggering levels of support for magazines as brand enhancers. A mighty 77 per cent of both consumer and business readers think magazines are a better way than other forms of marketing for clients to tell them about their products and services. These endorsements increase to 85 per cent of regular consumer and 84 per cent of regular business readers (see table 4). Even non-readers agree. Sixty-five per cent of consumer and 77 per cent of business non-readers concur that customer magazines are a better way for companies to tell you about their products and services, than other forms of marketing. These figures suggest the market is nowhere near saturation and further publishing opportunities abound. Saliency of brand name is higher among readers of customer magazines than among non-readers and, while brand image and top-of-mind awareness are high among all those surveyed, those exposed to customer magazines have a better image of the companies producing the publications than non-readers. In particular, 82 percent of consumer readers agree that such companies can be trusted (as opposed to 69 percent of non-readers), 80 percent say they look after their customers (65 percent of non-readers), 78 percent that they are constantly improving their products and services (62 percent) and 76 percent that they offer good value for money (61 percent)."

In conclusion: these studies show that customer magazines increase brand awareness and enhance image, from the consumer perspective (the Millward Brown study) and the client perspective (several studies in different countries).

4.4 Adherence, the fourth A

The first surveys that compiled more data about customers dealt mainly with measuring customer satisfaction. However, this concept proved unreliable for predicting behaviour. Dissatisfied customers often remain loyal to a supplier out of habit, while satisfied customers sometimes opt for the competition. This behaviour appears in a range of situations, such as a marriage or work.

As a result, attention has shifted to more general concepts such as consumer adherence (loyalty) (Peelen, 1990; Hoekstra, 1993), relationship strength (Schijns, 1999; Schijns, 2000, 2000b), and commitment (Rice & Hofmeyer, 1998).

Loyalty and customer programmes were developed and elaborated upon in a series of relationship-enhancing measures to increase the strength of the relationship. These types of programmes have a behavioural aspect (stimulating repeat buying) and a more attitudinal, emotional or affinity aspect (feeling of loyalty and belonging). Customer magazines play a significant role in these loyalty programmes (Blijenberg et al. 1997). Schijns (2000, p. 23/24) wrote: "These programmes are referred to as loyalty programmes, given their primary focus on forging a social bond between supplier and customer. Newsletters, brochures, customer magazines and a variety of product-oriented magazines, most of which are free, contribute to informing, appreciating and recognising the customer and creating the social bond." Trust, as a marketing ideal, is the heart of all customer loyalty stories.

Our literature survey shows that creating adherence is one goal that can be realised by applying a contract medium. Luijk (2000, p. 38) quoted one expert surveyed: "The magazine grants you the room to tell your story. The room to do this is much more limited in a commercial or mailing. You can vividly express the marketing concept and the corporate philosophy in text and graphics. This helps create adherence with the customer, who trusts the organisation and feels at home in it. This creates a certain 'club feeling'." Luijk also stated in her study: "Depending on the existing differences and editorial function, contract media can contribute to establishing emotional loyalty."

A German study (for Forum Corporate Publishing, 1999/2000, article by Bender and Siegfried) recently showed that this type of magazines "is better suited to client adherence than an advertisement." Later, the study also revealed branding in a central position again: "The appropriate testimony is likewise crucial for the company image."

To conclude this section, let us briefly examine recent research conducted by Van Praag and Ruigrok (1999). These results are based on a survey of direct marketers following a survey among experts. On page 29 they asserted: "The majority of respondents (63%) believe that contract media makes a positive contribution to the loyalty and emotional adherence to a company. A number of respondents indicated that a contract medium must be a quality product: 'It depends on whether it's on target' and: 'Not necessarily by definition, as long as it's done well.' Only six respondents (12%) said that contract media and customer loyalty have nothing to do with each other."

4.5 Active experience, the fifth A

The last A in the series is that of active experience. How does the consumer experience reading a customer magazine? What experience factors play a role at the moment of consumption? The first author who paid significant attention to this was Yuen (1993) in a thesis titled "The functions of the customer magazine for the reader – a refinement of reader functions."

This author explains that the customer magazine fills the following functions for the reader (p. 21/22):

- an instrumental function;
- an expressive function;
- an amusement function.

"For the *instrumental* function, practical information must be considered (facts, opinions, advice), that readers can use to function more effectively in their job, hobby, profession, sport, interests or social contacts. In particular, this function relates to increasing the reader's knowledge and skills.

The *expressive* value that a customer magazine can give to the reader concerns the expression of a certain lifestyle. The expressive function of the magazine relates to the demonstrative value of the magazine for the reader in relation to others. Or, in other words, developing your own identity and expressing yourself. The expressive function relates primarily to the improvement of the self-concept and image of the consumer.

The *amusement* function relates to entertainment, relaxation and transformation (being temporarily drawn into another world). The reader wants to be amused, to relax with an exciting story or attractive photo layout to temporarily forget about the worries of daily life." At a more detailed level, Yuen sums up (p. 59) the refined functions of customer magazines.

In practice, it seems that the expressive function of customer magazines receives does not receive sufficient attention, but it does feature prominently in the literature.

Van Raaij (1989, p. 275) defines this theme in terms of a 'club' feeling: "Some of these magazines have a certain exclusivity and prestige. It is a privilege to belong to the 'club' – the magazine is also displayed prominently on the consumer's coffee table so that friends and neighbours can't miss it."

In the same vein, Geertman & Spijkerman (1990, p. 92 and p. 96) introduce the term "coffee table effect" and position this within the uses and gratifications approach. They offer the following explanation (p.15): "The core of this trend rests on the idea that mass media has specific functions for the consumers, or, in the words of Stappers, meanings. Recipients use mass media and therefore magazines for relaxation and amusement, information (learning), social control, out of boredom, or, which is important for many promotional magazines, as a means of self-expression. However, it is important to keep in mind whether the content of a free and often not actively selected (promotional) magazine actually satisfies the needs of the readers. This will not be clear from the sales figures."

5. The future

According to the authors who have studied this subject in detail, the future of the customer magazine looks promising. In the previous sections, we used the five As to describe how different authors have gathered and analysed the research data. This description related to the state of affairs at the time the research took place. In addition to this empirical description, many of the authors also take a look into the future. This goes further than just gazing into a crystal ball, as these predictions often involve extrapolation based on the knowledge gained from the research. In this section, we will once again use the five As to briefly present this vision the future for customer magazines.

Audience and the future (first A)

Almost all of the authors in this literature study state that (a) in the future, the available information about customers will continue to increase in amount and specificity and (b) the use of this information will continue to grow. Personalised and customised media have a rosy future in this context. In other words, there will be an increase in number of magazines tailored even more specifically to consumers (see especially Bergsma et al., 1998 and Puttemans, 1999). In the coming years, database technology will undergo significant growth and will therefore be helpful and create the necessary conditions for this situation. However, publishers and clients will have to be willing to work more with selective sections, for example. The research of Bergsma et al. shows that the opportunities currently available are underused. They also conclude that, at present, there is too much reliance on name, address and place of residence data alone. In brief, the database technology developed will increase the opportunities for customer magazines, but those involved must also be willing to make the best possible use of this information.

Attention and the future (second A)

Because of the information overload and the growing discrepancy between the supply and demand of information, consumers will become more and more selective with regard to everything they are offered. Consumers will play a more active role in this situation: they will be the ones deciding what is read and what is not. Research shows that consumers are most likely to read information that is consistent with their own views. The customer magazine has a trump card in this situation (Puttemans, 1999, p. 36). This magazine is sent out based on an existing relationship, and thus the consumer already has a positive attitude towards the medium. Furthermore, the customer magazine also has a better chance of being read because it is personally addressed to the recipient if sent by mail, or is available in a store to which the consumer is loyal. The customer magazine therefore does not have to fight so hard in the midst of this oversupply of media messages that bombard consumers on a daily basis.

Attitude to brand and the future (third A)

According to Janssen & Kooi's 1991 study, customers identify the following as the most important functions of customer magazines:

- informing about products / services
- creating adherence with the target group
- further developing the image.

Branding only comes in third on this list. However, in the late 1990s, Bergsma concluded that the correct order should be:

- promoting the image
- creating relationships and adherence
- promoting the name recognition of our products.

Branding has climbed to the top of the list in recent years. Customers see the customer magazine as the best medium to promote the image of the company (Bergsma et al, 1998, p. 35). Brand associations (and primarily the more emotional) will become increasingly important in the coming years. We can assume on this basis that, in terms of importance, customer magazines will be riding in the slipstream.

Adherence and the future (fourth A)

To an increasing extent, companies are starting to understand the fact that it is better to spend more energy in maintaining existing customers than in recruiting new ones. In most cases, keeping an existing customer is less expensive than continuing to find new ones. The lifetime value of a customer can be very high; customer loyalty is therefore a hot topic in the marketing and advertising world. Because this customer loyalty has a behavioural facet as well as an attitudinal one, many companies are working hard on developing loyalty programmes.

Customer magazines play a major role within these loyalty programmes. In any case, there are few other alternatives. In a study by Bergsma et al. (1998, p. 32), the newsletter emerged as the only good alternative. In short, all the efforts involving customer loyalty also form a good "push" factor for customer magazines.

Active experience and the future (fifth A)

The literature shows that individuals are more likely to read customer magazines if their personal goals can be satisfied by the magazine (uses and gratifications), if multiple functions can be filled (instrumental, expressive, amusement), or if the experience of the media consumption moment is wide and varied (information, transformation, no alienation, time filler, stimulant, identification, social conversation topic, useable in practice). The magazine must inform, entertain and also offer opportunities for comparison and identification.

This last concept, identification, is described in the literature by a number of authors as the "coffee table function". If the editorial content is attuned to that which science and knowledge have brought to light about to the functions and experience of media, a rosy future for this point will be guaranteed as well.

And it is this exactly this experience component that could form a strong point in the future, in terms of interaction with the Web. Using a variety of different methods (desk research, interviews, analysis of a number of cases), Luijk (2000) conducted a study into the interaction between customer magazines and the Internet.

She draws several interesting conclusions from her research (p. 6, p. 43, p. 46, p. 49): "More and more companies have a Web site in addition to a customer magazine. The expectation is that the customer magazine will play an increasingly supporting role for the Web site. This will in turn cause a shift in information from the magazine to the Internet. In time, a customer magazine will contain only *nice to know* information, and one will find *need to know* information on the Web site." "Furthermore, it is expected that the magazine will be used more than it is now to create emotional adherence with the customer."

In this conclusion, we examine the role of the existing customer magazine as compared to new Web sites. But Luijk (2000, p. 36) also points out another trend that is actually the exact opposite. One of the experts she interviewed stated: "A trend you currently see is that Internet companies, the so-called dotcoms, which are only active on the Internet, are beginning to create customer magazines. The Internet remains their basis, but you will see more and more of these companies making a magazine that contains information about how to use the Web site."

In the future, the publisher's task will be to ensure that contract media will consist more of integral communication advice, including direct marketing, the Internet and contract media. In this way, the multi-channel communications approach will grow.

6. Conclusions

The June 1999 issue of Marketing Week contained an article about customer magazines titled: New Research Proves Customer Magazines Work. The conclusion of our literature study is in fact the same, but with two notes.

Note 1: The study to which Marketing Week refers is based on the results of a single study. In our research, we included a large number of studies from the past 20 years in our analysis.

Note 2: We broke down the information in *Customer Magazines Work* into five separate categories: the five As. The effect of customer magazines depends on these five components.

Below, using the five As, we first illustrate the main conclusion, followed by the future expectation associated with this A. As far as research results for the Netherlands and other Western European countries are comparable, these findings can be assumed to be consistent.

Audience

Now: customer magazines provide the opportunity to approach the target group in a manner tailored specifically to the particular audience
Future: database technology is developing and offering new opportunities; however, there must be a stronger desire within the world of the customer magazine to realise the potential of selective sections and other variants

Attention

Now: by being able to reach around two-third of the target group, customer magazines succeed in penetrating the attention threshold
Future: because of information overload less information will reach the target group, information consistent with your own beliefs will have a greater possibility to reach the consumer

Attitude to brand

Now: customer magazines are an excellent means of creating goodwill and sympathy; in the 1990s, clients saw promoting the brand image as an increasingly more important function of customer magazines
Future: brand associations, especially the more emotional ones, are becoming more and more important; customer magazines can create and strengthen these associations

Adherence

Now: customer magazines make a positive contribution to the loyalty and emotional adherence to an organisation
Future: customer loyalty and the accompanying loyalty programs are continuing to gain importance; customer magazines play an important role in this and the alternatives are few (a newsletter at most)

Active experience

Now: customer magazines fulfil an instrumental, expressive and amusement function
Future: to an increasing extent, there will more division of tasks between customer magazines and the related Web site; In time, a customer magazine will contain only *nice to know* information, and one will find *need to know* information on the Web site; the active experience aspects will therefore be crucial.

7. The next step

Based on this desk research we developed a standard international measurement tool for customer magazines. All A's were operationalized in several questions. In summer 2001 the questionnaire was developed and tested. In the second half of 2001 the first data will be gathered in several countries for a variety of customer magazines but in a comparable way, resulting in benchmarks and policy-directed recommendations. The customer magazines monitor will result in more and better insight in niche audiences.

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