

“NOW YOU SEE ME, NOW YOU DON’T! DOES AD POSITIONING MATTER?”

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Introduction

In the last year, the print industry has spent a significant amount of time talking about ways to measure the value of a reader. Unlike TV, consumer magazine planning and buying uses two currencies. Syndicated research is used to optimize reach potential and audited circulation statements to guarantee issue delivery.

The challenge with using the existing currencies is that they do not provide us with the granularity that is needed to quantify how receptive, involved or engaged the consumer is with the medium and more importantly the commercial messages that appear within. The audit statements only provide a measurement of issue delivery or newsstand placement and for readership we have issue exposure rather than ad exposure.

Recent attempts to estimate the valued reader indirectly have included using aspects of the new ABC statements and the syndicated qualitative variables to augment the current measurements. For example, arguments have been made to use the average price paid as a surrogate for reader “value” - the theory being that the more one spends on a subscription, the more “committed” one is to the publication. However the value of a magazine's subscriptions can not be determined by price alone. The value of the average price paid only quantifies the economics of the circulation not the value of the reader.

Over the last few years there have been various theories on how to augment the existing data so that we come closer to an actual ad exposure audience.¹ Theories exist that if we could get to a more involved reader, we have the propensity to reach a more targeted/efficient audience.² This paper is not intended to dispute or refute these approaches, rather to provide a different perspective on the print planning process. After all in a print environment which primarily relies on audience circulation and average issue readership as surrogates for advertising exposure the effect of actual ad placement within a publication is left woefully unmeasured, unquantified and unaccountable.

Background

It is received wisdom in the print world that positioning does affect recall but there has been no recent definitive study that measured the variances by position and title and analyzed the impact of environment and macro campaign related variables.

In 2002 the Starcom US Insights and Analytics team fielded a large scale proprietary study to measure and quantify the impact positioning had on reader recall of magazine print advertising. The objective was to create a tool from the results that evaluates the impact positioning has on a schedule.

Study Methodology

Knowledge Networks was commissioned to field the study. They offer a nationally representative web-TV based continuous consumer panel of 24,000 households and were selected based on their exhaustive print readership measurement validation.³ Knowledge Networks offered the ability to measure subscribers and single copy sales readers. The Web TV platform allowed the presentation of full color digitized magazine covers and ads in a real world in-home environment.

The 4 week study measured a total of 494 ads across 15 magazines producing an overall in tab of 7,835 respondents with an 80% response rate. The 15 magazines were selected to represent the following categories: African American, Business, Entertainment, Epicurean, Parenting, Sports, Weekly and Women’s Service.

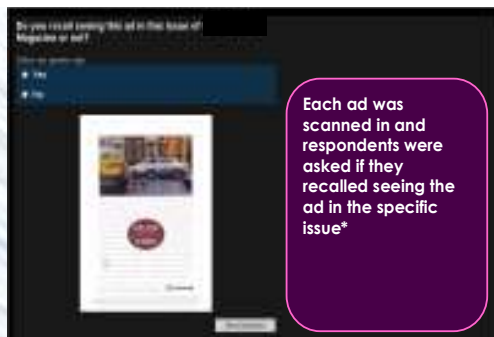
¹ Erwin Epron *Counting Calories* April 2, 2002

² Involvement Alliance’s Involvement Index, 2002-03

³ Mattlin & Goerlich "Measuring magazine reading via the internet: Testing the effect of number of titles and other questionnaire design issues." 10th Worldwide Readership Symposium 2001, Venice Italy.

Core magazine readers were screened in based on last 3 month readership and prompted with covers of the last 2 monthlies and 3 weeklies to establish specific issue readership. Each respondent was then presented with a series of magazine print ads and asked if they recalled them. [Figure 1].

Figure 1



The following positions were selected to be measured for the study based on their premium status and common use. There was a limit on the number of magazines and number of positions we could cover without impacting response rates and respondent fatigue.

- 2nd Cover
- 3rd Cover
- 4th Cover
- Opposite Table of Contents
- Editorial Adjacency
- Beginning of Adwell (Multiple ads in a row placement varies by publication)
- Front Half of Book (First 50% of pages)
- Back Half of Book (Last 50% of pages)
- Across from feature edit
- Opposite Letters to Editor
- Adjacent to Masthead
- Advertorial
- Special Unit (e.g. fragrances, coupons, heavy stock, peel of samples)

Validation

The following results were independently validated using Starch and client proprietary studies: Left-hand versus right hand page, increase of 2nd cover recall, use of 4-color. We had assumed that the recall scores would be comparable to Starch’s noted scores. However our results were more closely correlated to Starch’s “read some or most of the ad”. After an exhaustive analysis it was determined that the variance was due to difference in study objectives and methodology.

Summary of Study Results

The general perception is that respondents read most print advertisements. 81% of respondents in our study said they are unlikely to flip past advertisements without looking at them. However, when it came to actual recall data average scores by title ranged from 18% to 35%.

Advertising recall scores varied by title and genre with each magazine displaying different ad recognition distributions. Demographic differences were also apparent. Women were more likely to recall ads than men. Surprisingly younger demographics were more likely to recall ads than older demos. And with a few exceptions, recall varied depending on household income. [Figure 2]

Figure 2

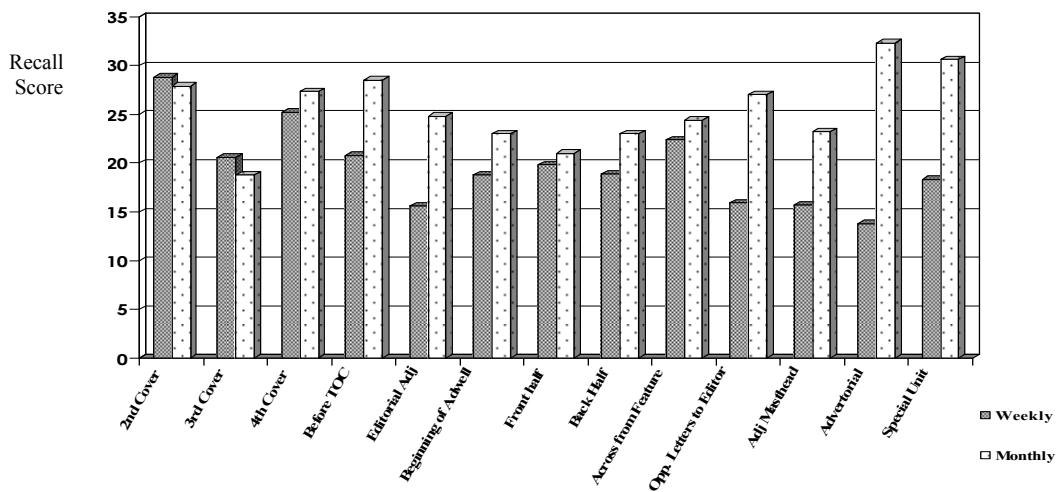
	Household Income (Index: Against Total Adults)			
	<\$35k	\$35-49k	\$50-99k	\$100k+
2 nd Cover	111	88	103	79
3 rd Cover	107	91	104	84
4 th Cover	110	89	102	84
Opp. TOC	106	98	98	91
Editorial Adj.	100	98	106	86
Beg. of Adwell	91	100	103	121
Front Half	104	106	92	105
Back Half	87	109	107	98
Across from Feature	96	101	104	93
Opp. Letters to	99	109	102	76
Adj. to Masthead	117	98	92	80
Advertorial	95	92	109	101
Special Unit	109	97	97	92

Demographic differences can be explained by the respondents being in market for products and services and as a result they were receptive to the message and more likely to recall the ad.

Monthlies vs Weeklies

Monthlies recorded higher recall scores than weeklies. This plays counter to theories on weekly reach based planning. The thought being that we should plan on a minimum weekly rating goal. This could indicate that repeat exposure to a magazine issue is required for the ad to be recalled. [Figure 3]

Figure 3
Average Recall by Publication Frequency



The Motivated Reader

A significant finding worth noting was the correlation between the significantly higher recall scores across all positions within one particular title. Although the majority of magazines were general-market targeted, there was one ethnic publication included in the study. The recall scores across the other 14 general market titles' were 13% - 50% lower. After reviewing the ads and recall scores, we assumed that the elevated recall scores were due to specifically targeted advertising (4 out of 26 ads were considered general market ads). This area requires further investigation as the scores were only based on a single title however there was clearly some relationship between the level of reader involvement with this title and the elevated ad recall numbers.

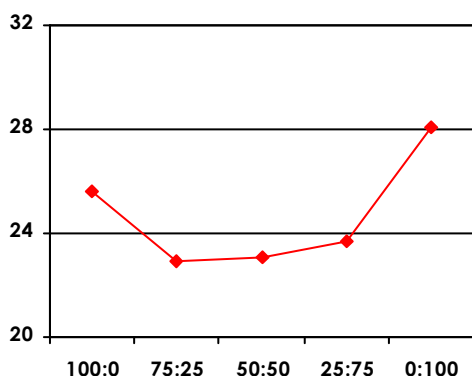
Environment, Copy and Campaign factors

In addition to analyzing the impact positioning had on advertising recall, we tagged each of the 494 ads to explore the recall impact of various environmental, copy and campaign elements. The following factors were added to our recall database.

- orientation of the ad (portrait vs landscape)
- layout of ad (text vs image)
- size of logo
- dollars supporting print initiative (within the same time period and YTD)
- dollars supporting TV initiative (within the same time period and YTD)
- multi-media support of campaign
- number of months in flight with print campaign
- ad/edit ratio
- right-hand vs left hand of page
- spreads vs special creative
- Color (b&w vs color)
- Creative messaging (humorous, informative etc)
- Old vs new creative
- Number of titles supporting effort
- Number of issues supporting effort
- Celebrity included in creative
- Weight of campaign (GRPs)

Via statistical analysis of variance (aNova) testing we were able to conclude the following. Elements as simple as 4-color, portrait orientation of ad, spreads and larger logos were significantly correlated with higher recall scores. Typically, planners avoid selecting publications that have high ad to edit ratios our results showed that publications that had 50% ad to edit ratio had recall scores 28% higher than in publications that had less than 50% ad to edit ratio.

Another interesting insight we found was that ads that were predominately text or image had a better chance of having a higher recall score.



Summary

The existing print research currency in the US is not about to change overnight, however we as an industry need to move beyond measurement of exposure to the magazine and to stop using the current sources to get to an “estimated” ad exposure. Our study confirms that not all print ad exposures are created equal. Positioning does have a significant impact on the recall of advertising.

Based on the study results Starcom created the Positioning Impact Evaluator tool (P.I.E.) to calculate and quantify the impact that placement has on the overall recall potential of a print plan. Our strategist and investment groups use the system to assess costs for premium positions, optimize the placement of ads in a schedule and evaluate the impact of positioning on plans that have run historically.

Longer term Starcom intends to take this research a step further. Engagement between the consumer and the message is the key and is how print communications planning has to evolve. Exposure on its own is no longer acceptable (it never really was) we have to understand the emotional connection that each reader has with the ad message and its ability to affect a desired behavior, that is true “**engagement**”. Reach based planning will evolve into engagement based planning.

In this study we have established that the average ad is recalled less than a third of the time. Our next step is to quantify the emotional connection that comes after that exposure and to appreciate how these two factors combine to effect a desired behavioral change. As an industry we can continue to look for ways to augment the current measurements or we can rise to the challenge of understanding how print advertising really works.

Acknowledgements

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SOURCE

All data sited from the Starcom Print Positioning study, copyright 2002.

