DELVING INTO THE OPPORTUNITY FOR TABLET MAGAZINE ADVERTISING – AN ANALYSIS OF THE GFK STARCH DATA

Michal Galin, Jana Slaten, Valerie Veith, GfK MRI
Britta Cleveland, Meredith Corporation

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since 2009, the print industry has been undergoing a second digital revolution brought upon by the introduction and growth of mobile devices such as the Apple iPad, the Amazon Kindle, the Barnes & Noble Nook, and more recently the Samsung Galaxy and other devices. This digital diversification within the print space has impacted markets throughout the world. And, this change is manifested in new platforms on which print – magazine and newspaper – readers can consume and engage with their content. It has also introduced new challenges in the area of measurement. Concurrently, advertisers and agencies are being challenged to make investment decisions across ever growing opportunities.

A January 25, 2013 *Publishing Executive* blog post attempted to answer the question – how many magazine titles are sold on tablets? Not surprisingly, the author of this post, Thea Selby, found that there are a different number of titles available through different devices – 446 on the Nexus Google Play magazine store, 744 through Amazon Kindle and 2954 through the iPad.[1]

GfK MRI, too, has tracked the growth of digital editions vis à vis the roughly 200+ print magazines measured in its National survey. Over the last few years, the marketplace message has been growth. By end of 2009, GfK MRI measured 116 digital editions, whereas by April 2013 the figure had close to doubled to 208 editions (out of 230 measured titles in total).
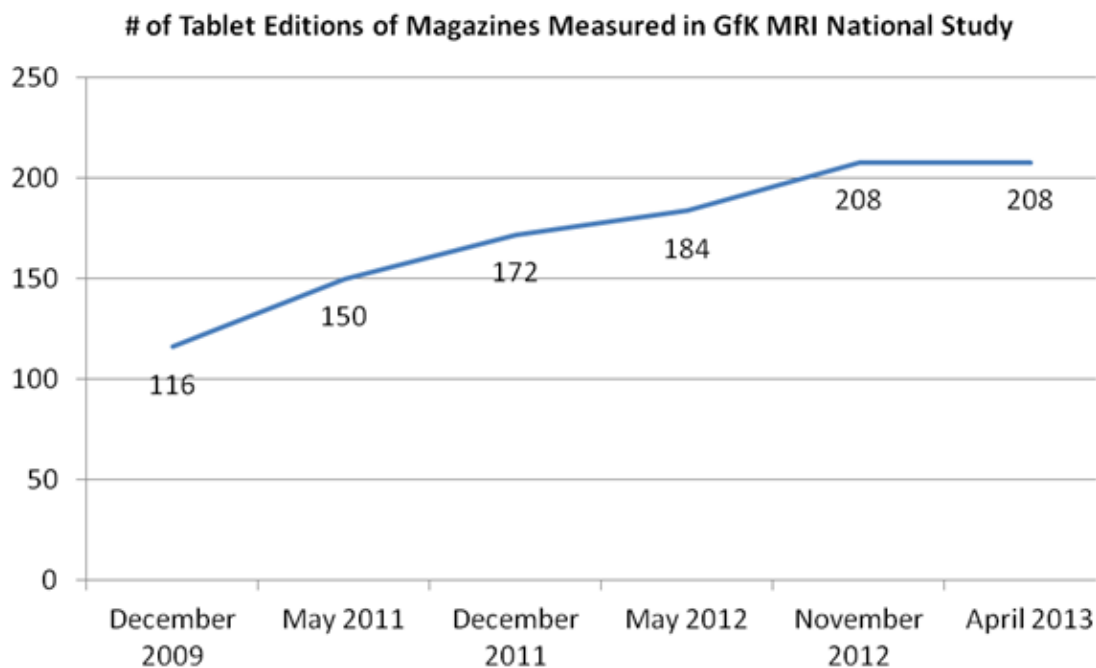
Not only has the number of titles available on digital devices grown, but the incidence of reading magazines on these devices has as well. In its Spring 2012 report, GfK MRI published that 14.8% of iPad owners had read or looked into a magazine on a digital device. By the Spring 2013 report, that readership figure had risen to 17.5%. Publishers have approached the growth of the brand's digital circulation through various means employing authentication[2] models in some cases and separate subscription models in other cases.

---

[1] Selby, Thea. *Publishing Executive* (blog). http://www.pubexec.com/blog/how-many-magazines-being-sold-tablets. January 25, 2013 post.
[2] Authentication = verification of a reader's print subscription for free or discounted access to the digital edition of that title. Authentication is usually achieved by entering subscription or account information into a digital edition's app or a digital newsstand's website.

To add flavor to the story still, content – ads and edit – can be produced in varying degrees of similarity from that which is published through their print siblings. This variety in content representation has ushered in a new lexicon for distinguishing between the various versions. Terms such as *straight from print* (SFP), *enhanced for print* (EFT) and *designed for tablet* (DFT) to name the primary distinctions have been introduced by the MPA Tablet Task Force.

And in the midst of all of this change and complexity, certain key questions resound throughout the industry – should advertisers be investing dollars to place ads in digital editions of print brands? Are digital print ads effective? Is there a difference between the effectiveness of content in print versus digital representations of print brands? Are there best practices for advertising in digital editions of print brands? What are the opportunities for advertisers in digital editions? This paper will begin to address some of these questions through the lens of the Starch Digital database produced by GfK MRI starting in the beginning of 2012.

GfK STARCH DIGITAL – EXTENDING THE EXPLORATION OF AD EFFECTIVENESS

Not surprisingly, the evolution of ad effectiveness measurement by Starch has mirrored the evolution of print brands – more recently expanding into the digital ad effectiveness space. Currently, GfK Starch Digital measures all of the digital ads in 44 digital print brands, all of which have print counterparts. Similar to the measurement of print ads, Starch Digital uses four online panel companies for sample. Given initial (*but growing*) low incidences of digital title readership, these digital brand surveys obtain 75 completed surveys for every group of 25 ads running in the issue.[3]

The survey routine has undergone some modifications as the state of digital editions has not been stable. More recently, starting in 2013, the digital survey was device driven – that is, screening readers of the titles first for the actual device they use to read the issue. This device screener allows the survey to represent the ads as closely to the way that they are shown on the device itself.

The questions in the Starch Digital survey are very similar to those used in the measurement of print ads – at the core are the noted, associated, read any/most and actions taken metrics. Digital Starch also asks respondents about their engagement with interactive features found within specific ads. A total of 27,162 tablet (Apple iPad) ads measured between March 2012 and May 2013 were used in this paper. Table 1 lists the interactive features that are available within the Starch Digital survey with their corresponding incidence. The features are sorted from those that can be found more often to those that have not yet been found in any ad measured in Starch Digital. Surprisingly, of the 27,162 tablet ads, 14,570 (almost 54%) included no interactive features, and only 50% took advantage of the opportunity to add a link to the advertised brand's website.

Table 1: Interactive Features Measured in Starch Digital

Interactive Feature	% of Ads With This Feature Incorporated	# of ads
Accessed a website through the ad	50.1	13,600
Touched/clicked the ad to expand or rotate[4]	50.0	13,570
Accessed a social network through the ad	3.9	1,045
Watched a video or commercial	1.3	346
Viewed multiple pages of advertising content	1.1	293
Downloaded an app	0.5	134
Touched/clicked the ad for more information	0.5	141
Viewed a gallery	0.4	109
Interacted with the ad by moving/turning/shaking the device	0.2	48
Played a game	0.1	29
Checked-in with a geo-location service	0	0
Registered within the ad	0	0
Voted in a poll	0	0

RESULTS

As mentioned above, a total of 14,570 tablet ads with one or more interactive features measured between March 2012 and May 2013 were used for the analysis guiding much of this paper. Some of the analyses are based on total tablet ads and some isolate only those ads that include at least one interactive feature. Additionally, there are some analyses in which the authors excluded the feature *touched/clicked the ad to expand or rotate*. Isolating different groupings of digital ads allows for general explorations of the performance of ads available through iPad magazine editions versus analysis of just those ads that utilize the interactivity afforded by digital platforms.

---

[3] GfK MRI plans to increase the number of completes for each group of 25 ads per issue to 125 in the fall of 2013 (in line with the print version of the Starch study).
[4] Note: this feature is more a function of the device rather than an element of the ad itself.

Comparison of Print vs. Digital Ad Performance

Probably the first question that publishers, agencies and advertisers have regarding digital editions of print brands is how do they perform vis à vis their printed cousins. Starch data can be used to answer that question on two levels – on a topline performance level and on a more granular, ad-by-ad level. Table 2 presents the topline findings to this question.

Table 2: Overall Comparison of Print and Digital Ads

Platform	Number of Measured Issues	Number of Measured Ads	Average Noted %	Average Any Action Taken[5] %
Print (all)[6]	4088	154,100	52	60
Print (44 titles)	1212	52,103	51	57
Digital (44 titles)	1061	32,480	53	72

Overall the findings show that ads found in digital magazines versus printed magazines have virtually the same rate of reader recall of the ad (noted score) – 53% versus 51%.

However, when comparing overall any actions taken scores one finds a different story – readers of digital editions seem to be taking action at a higher rate after seeing ads (72% versus 57%). This is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Table 3 reviews the information for the individual actions taken.

Table 3: Comparison of Individual Actions Taken

Action Taken Option	Average Any Action Taken (Print) %	Average Any Action Taken (Digital) %
Have a more favorable opinion about the advertiser	20	24
Visited the advertiser's website	11	19
Looked for more information about the product/service	14	21
Recommended the product/service	12	19
Considered purchasing the product	20	22
Purchased the product	9	13
Saved/bookmarked the ad	6	12

Most interesting are the actions related to looking for more information whether that involves going to the advertiser's website or some other activity. Reading on a tablet or other digital device allows for easier and more immediate connection to other information resources. Perhaps that digital immediacy has an impact on the overall actions that readers are taking as a result of seeing ads.

---

[5] The same actions taken options were offered as responses in both the print and digital surveys.
[6] Total print information is included in this table for context. Comparing the same 44 titles measured in print versus digital is a more apples-to-apples analysis.

Maybe not surprisingly, a review of the performance of digital versus print ads on an ad-by-ad basis yields more mixed results; that is, there are instances where the print ad performs better than the digital ad, sometimes the opposite is true and there are examples where the ads on the different platforms perform at the same levels (see examples from the July 2013 issue of Better Homes & Gardens below). It is important to note that the surveys are conducted with different samples of readers. Additionally, the comparisons do not take into account differences in the general experience of reading the content through different platforms - flipping through a physical copy of a magazine versus swiping through the pages of an app, for example.

Example 1: M&Ms
Same Creative in Print and Digital
Noted score = 69% on both platforms
In digital, this ad is static.

Example 2: Aveeno
Same Creative in Print and Digital
Print Noted = 83%
Digital Noted = 73%
In digital, this ad is static.

Example 3: Olay
Same Creative in Print and Digital
Print Noted = 49%
Digital Noted = 62%
In digital, this ad includes a link to the advertiser's website.

The examples above include examples where there is very little difference between the print and digital ad – the M&Ms and Aveeno ads are straight from print with no enhancements, whereas the Olay has only has an active website available in the digital ads versus none in the print ad (this different is very slight and does not make a difference at all in how the ad itself looks). Therefore, there is no consistent pattern of performance between print and digital representations of the same ad. A more in-depth look at the impact of interactive features in digital ads follows.

Comparing Transitional Creative vs. Non-Transitional Creative Ads

One aspect of reading a magazine digitally that has a potential impact on the experience of reading is the ability to turn/rotate some devices, most notably a tablet, from portrait to landscape and see different content. GfK Starch Digital uses the term "transitional" to describe digital ads that have been designed in such a way. In these cases, the ability for content to change with different orientations of a device has important implications for the measurement of consumption and engagement.

Starch Digital has adopted a procedure that for ads with transitional creative that depict very different content in portrait versus landscape, both images are shown to the respondent in the survey. In cases where there is little to no difference in the ad in different orientations, only one image – portrait – is shown to respondents (see Appendix 1 for an example). Table 4 compares scores for these different types of digital ads.

Table 4: Comparison of Data for Transitional Creative vs. Not Ads

	Number of Ads	Average Noted %	Average Any Actions Taken %
Ads that are transitional	1601	58	70
Ads that are not transitional	30777	53	72

The Starch Digital data indicate that those ads that change content with a shift in the orientation in the device perform overall better than those that do not change. More specifically, they seem to perform better in terms of overall recall (noted), but do not seem to impact actions taken as a result of seeing the ad. Given that we do not know how readers are reading in terms of orientation, and even if they alternate orientations in the midst of the reading event, it is not clear to what extent transitional creative could impact ad performance in total. However this information suggests that there is an impact to providing enhanced content with different orientations.

Introducing Interactivity!

Creating digital editions of print brands introduces the ability to add a dimension of interactivity into the experience. Readers can now watch trailers for movies, go directly to the advertiser's website, play a game and view the product from different angles while reading their magazine issue. The question is does interactivity enhance response to ads?

To date, Starch Digital displays fixed images for every ad measured – that is, no interactivity is incorporated into the survey. There are 2 reasons for this decision: (1) the ability to extract the image from the device with the interactivity is limited and complicated; and (2) incorporating interactivity into a survey taken by different people with varying computers potentially results in different survey experiences for different respondents. It has become painfully evident that measuring interactivity in our surveys is complicated. Nevertheless, Starch Digital surveys do ask readers about the access of each interactive feature found within an ad (see Table 1 above).

Table 5 shows a comparison of average scores for ads with any interactivity versus ads with no interactivity (static ads).

Table 5: Comparison of Data for Interactive vs. Non-Interactive Ads

	Number of Ads	Average Noted %	Average Any Actions Taken %
Ads with no interactivity	12592	55	73
Ads with one or more interactive feature	14570	52	71

The top line data indicates that the mere presence of interactive features in ads does not seem to influence the performance of the ad overall.

Delving a little deeper, one can also evaluate the impact of each individual type of interactive feature. Table 6 lists the interactive features with their corresponding Starch impact scores.

Table 6: Performance of Individual Interactive Actions

Interactive Feature	% of Ads With This Feature Incorporated	# of ads	Average Noted %	Average Interactive Action Taken %
Accessed a website through the ad	50.1	13,600	52	34
Touched/clicked the ad to expand or rotate[7]	50.0	13,570	51	27
Accessed a social network through the ad	3.9	1,045	55	24
Watched a video or commercial	1.3	346	58	30
Viewed multiple pages of advertising content	1.1	293	60	32
Downloaded an app	0.5	134	56	27
Touched/clicked the ad for more information	0.5	141	59	26
Viewed a gallery	0.4	109	63	30
Interacted with the ad by moving/turning/shaking the device	0.2	48	60	26
Played a game	0.1	29	57	16
Ads with one or more interactive feature		**14,570**	**52**	**71**

Interactive features such as viewed a gallery, viewed multiple pages of advertising content, interacted with the ad by moving/turning/shaking the device and even watched a video or commercial may impact the noting of an ad more so than other features. But looking at the average number of readers who took the interactive action – for example watched the video or commercial – is even more telling. In ads where a video or commercial was present, on average 30% of those who remembered seeing the ad watched the additional content. Therefore, interactive features can provoke more engagement with an ad.

---

[7] Note: this feature is more a function of the device rather than an element of the ad itself.

Additionally there are ads that include multiple interactive features. Do ads that include more interactivity perform better? Table 7 displays results for ads arrayed by the number of interactive features that they include.

Table 7: Performance of Ads By Number of Interactive Features

Number of Interactive Features Within Ad	# of Ads	Average Noted %
1 interactive feature	11,222	52
2 interactive features	8,218	55
3 interactive features	38	59
4 interactive features	103	59
5 interactive features	20	65

As the number of interactive features in the ad increases, the average noted score does as well. It seems that ads with more *bells and whistles* leave more of an impact in the reader's mind.

But is that the full story? Does incorporating interactivity into any/every ad make sense? Reviewing Starch Digital data by product category provides some interesting findings. Table 8 compares the data for 9 large product categories – the interactive features selected for the analysis are: video, gallery, game, poll, ad motion, non-photo gallery, sound (no video) and commercial. The data compares ads with any of these interactive features to static ads in terms of noted scores and any actions taken scores.

Table 8: Comparing Interactive Ads vs. Static Ads by Product Category
(Categories Sorted By Number of Interactive Ads)

Product Category	# of Ads		Average Noted %		Average Any Actions Taken %	
	Interactive	Static	Interactive	Static	Interactive	Static
Automobile	127	248	61	54	71	69
Finance	74	73	57	47	70	70
Candy & Mints[8]	54	143	61	64	77	76
Jewelry/Watches	19	149	66	53	73	72
Cereals	12	92	61	59	79	79
TV/Movies	11	331	61	53	70	72
Skin Care	7	399	59	56	77	75
Cosmetics	3	440	49	58	78	73
Apparel	1	112	61	55	78	70

---

[8] There was very little interactivity incorporated into the Candy & Mints category ads. The main feature was the ability to access social media through the ad.

What is interesting is that it seems that certain product categories – automotive and finance – seem to be taking advantage of interactivity more so than other product categories. Furthermore, there are certain categories that seem to benefit from the inclusion of interactivity in ads; that is, when the interactivity benefits the overall message or is consistent with the message, it tends to work better. Finance ads are a good example of this principle. The data shows that when interactivity is included in a finance ad, the ad performs better than when interactivity is not present – 57% noted vs. 47%. In the ad example below the TD Ameritrade ad running in the April 8, 2013 issue of Bloomberg Businessweek included a game. Sixty-five percent of the readers of this tablet issue remembered seeing the ad and 25% of those played the game. The ad included additional screens, but the example below depicts the game screen included in the ad.

Example 4: TD Ameritrade
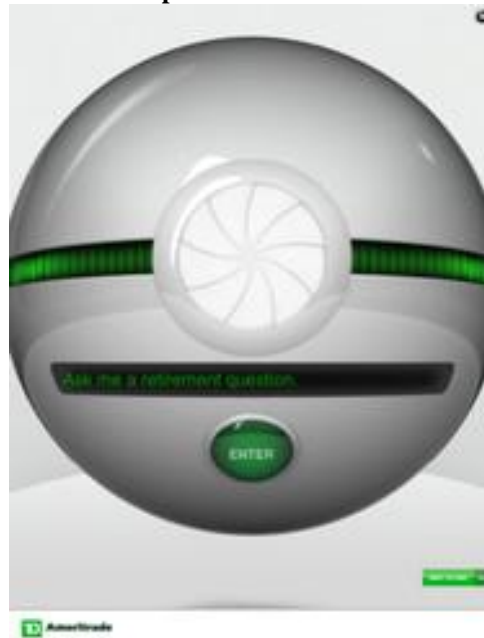
Even though there are not too many TV/movie ads that include interactivity (n=11), 9 out of the total include video. TV/movie ads in digital print can include video trailers and promos that enhance the overall experience of that ad. This is a good example of the medium – digital – enhancing the experience of the print brand. Of those who remembered seeing those 9 TV/movie ads in the issues where they ran, 35% went on to watch the video within the ad.

The automotive category is another that seems to benefit from the use of interactivity. In many of the ads for automotive products – cars and light trucks – the ability to include galleries and video allows the advertiser to provide additional information on the car itself. When one looks at the average interactive action taken score for this category, it is quite high as well – 61% – indicating that readers who remember these ads are actually accessing the interactive features within them at a high rate. In the ad example shown below, 82% of readers of the October 2012 tablet issue of Motor Trend remembered seeing this Chevy ad that included a gallery and video.

Example 5: Chevy

Interestingly, there are product categories such as cosmetics and apparel that do not seem to employ interactivity as a feature very often. Is there an opportunity for these ads to incorporate interactivity to enhance engagement?

CONCLUSIONS

A key benefit to the availability of the Starch Digital data is the ability to analyze the efficacy of digital ads vis à vis their print cousins. With this information one has metrics to evaluate the performance of ads in digital print brands and to make decisions about the appropriateness of the medium. What is clear is that digital ads work – especially when marketers take advantage of the interactive elements available to them. When reviewing noting and actions taken scores, one sees that digital ads have an impact at least on par with print ads and sometimes perform higher. The following three findings expand on this basic result:

(1) While readers note ads on tablets at the same rate as in print, it is clear that the digital platform makes it easier to take action as a result of seeing ads. This is demonstrated by the overall higher action taken scores in digital versus print. This may not be surprising, but the data give clear credence to this assumption.

(2) The functionality of digital devices – the ability to switch orientations – opens the door for transitional ads that provide the opportunity for an extension of the image/message. This is a creative enhancement for messaging that is unique to the digital environment.

(3) While there is great curiosity about the efficacy of interactivity, the inclusion of interactive features within ads is still at its infancy. Certain product categories seem to have come out of the gate quickly incorporating such features into their creative. Others have been slower to go in this direction. Those who have incorporated such features into their ads have seen some positive benefit.

NEXT STEPS

This paper and accompanying analysis scratch the surface of digital ad effectiveness and the opportunity for the future. In reviewing the findings for this paper, the authors are left with certain natural next steps to pursue. First, from a methodological perspective, there is great interest in parallel testing some examples of interactive ads with the interactivity built into the survey (rather than the current approach using static images). What is the potential impact to the survey experience (and, in particular, survey length)? What is the ultimate impact on the Starch scores?

Second, there is a clear desire to continue with an even deeper product category analysis as the Starch Digital database grows. What additional insights around interactivity within product category can we find in the data that can be used for decision-making? Are there best practices by product category? How can interactivity be leveraged to enhance ads within categories that have not fully explored this dimension?

Appendix 1: Example of Transitional Creative Ad in Starch Digital Survey
As described in the discussion above, in cases where the creative shifts in a noticeable way when turning a tablet from portrait to landscape, Starch shows two images in the survey to help trigger the respondent's memory. As you can see from the examples below, the level of difference between the portrait image and the landscape image can be quite dramatic. Given that we do not know in what orientation the reader is viewing the issue and/or the particular screen, we include both within the survey.