



Making the most of magazines

Andrew Green, Ipsos, takes a look at how magazine audiences are measured and evaluated

FOR MANY YEARS, television and newspapers have dominated marketing campaigns worldwide, with magazines playing third fiddle. According to ZenithOptimedia's March 2007 forecasts, \$56 billion will have been spent in the medium in 2007 - about 12% of major media ad spend globally.

For many niche marketers, however, magazines are a primary means of talking to their customers.

They are amongst the most fragmented of communications channels; in the United States, for example, no fewer than 19,419 titles were published in 2006. Some sell more than 10 million copies per issue; others just a few hundred (r).

Yet arguably magazines are under less threat from new ad avoidance technologies than their rivals. Readers have always been able to turn the page when they are no longer interested in something; it is a new experience for them with intrusive media like TV (2).

Magazine characteristics

Magazines enjoy a number of characteristics attractive to publishers; evidence for this has been assembled by organisations such as the Magazine Publishers of America (3) and the Periodical Publishers Association in the UK (4). These include: high audience engagement; ability to target narrowly; cost-effective reach build; complementary to television; high production values; sympathetic editorial environment; non-intrusive; long life; and long shelf life.

Magazine audience measurement

At the last count, there were at least 95 major readership surveys operating in 72 countries, as well as countless other surveys of more specialist titles such as those targeting doctors, businessmen or IT professionals (5).

The vast majority of these surveys use a broad definition of 'reading', which counts all readers of a publication, whether they have read it thoroughly or simply glanced through.

One drawback of these industry surveys is that they can only ever capture data

on the very largest magazines (usually between 100-300 titles). Almost all the surveys are conducted face-to-face, which limits how much can be asked.

A further weakness is that exposure to a magazine is not the same as exposure to an advertisement within it - yet only the former is measured.

A third issue arises from the time it takes a publication to reach all its readers. Many people pass magazines along to others when they have finished reading them. Others may see quite old issues while sitting in a doctor's waiting room.

A key challenge for the medium now and in the future is how it can be properly represented in the market mix models now in common usage by marketers looking to measure ROI.

It is relatively simple to feed such models with television schedules and associated audiences for each commercial.

Magazines offer no such granularity without some important adjustments being made to the audience estimates.

Issue-specific readership

One step forward was taken in the US recently with MRI's launch of a groundbreaking 'companion' study to its official readership survey in 2007 (6).

The companion study is conducted online and allows users to compute indices of variation in the readership of specific issues of every magazine versus the official readership number reported in the main study.

The media multiplier

The media multiplier argument states that a mix of both magazines and television will reach more people and will communicate a message more powerfully than a campaign with the same budget spent in either medium alone (7).

Three broad planks to the argument exist. First, using two or more media generally results in a higher total number of people being reached, as (for example) lighter viewers not exposed to a TV commercial are reached by magazines instead.

Second, video and print advertising impact different parts of the brain,

resulting in more rounded communication (8,9).

Third, evidence from several studies demonstrates incremental sales effects from moving some money from a solus television campaign to magazines (ro, n).l

Audience accumulation

Work by Millward Brown in the early 1990s showed that the effectiveness of magazine advertising could be seriously under-estimated simply because attention was not being given to the time magazines took to build their readership (12). A monthly magazine could, for example, take as long as three months to reach the total number of readers reported as reading an 'average' issue by industry readership surveys.

This is a problem if a marketer is trying to model the relative impact of his magazine advertising against sales and makes the false assumption that all readership falls into the month of issue. When the model shows very little sales impact occurring in that month, erroneous conclusions may be drawn as to a title's effectiveness.

Further studies into audience accumulation have been carried out in the UK and US, and linked to the official readership survey data, allowing planners to incorporate the time dimension into their schedules (13,14).

Creative considerations

Many studies have examined the relative impact of decisions such as what size of advertisement to run, the position to run it in the magazine, and so on (15).

Amongst these, the stop/watch report from Belgium (16), summarising nine years of research findings, concluded that: > the bigger the ad, the greater the impact - but this difference is not as great as the difference in size (specifically, a page is 55% - not 100% - more effective than a half page)

> covers are more effective than ordinary pages; late covers are better

^ 'creative' formats are more impactful than standard 'flat' advertising; these include such devices as gatefolds, inserts, pop-ups, scent samples, and so on.

^ the difference between left- and right-hand positions is negligible

^ position in the magazine makes almost no difference to impact.

Starch in the United States has conducted studies of magazine ad recall for many years and occasionally produces summaries of its findings (17). For example, looking at 'ad noting' (the % of readers who say they have seen any part of an ad) the company concluded:

>• there is little difference between left and right-hand positions

» the impact of size varies by product category; for example, the differential impact of a DPS over a page is greater for toiletries than for financial services

^ position in magazines has almost no impact on ad noting.

Readership and engagement

Media planners will use their own experience and judgement in moving beyond raw readership data. But hard numbers are often required on marketing plans for accountability purposes. This suggests research will continue to be needed to guide and support media placement decisions.

Judgements need to be made on how attentively and how intensively people read, which will in turn be influenced by where and when they read, by the reading topic and by their 'relationship' with a magazine (is it, for example, a favourite they subscribe to or one they just picked up in a doctor's waiting room?).

The UK Quality of Reading Study, carried out both in 1997/98 and in 1999/2000, sought to measure a range of 'quality' indicators (18) including time spent reading, proportion of pages opened, agreement with certain attitude statements (for example, 'I look forward to reading it') and the likelihood they would take any actions as a result of reading a publication. Plenty of variation between magazine genres and titles was found in the research.

Some 68 of the 95 readership surveys examined in a recent global compilation (19) of print research contained qualitative measures of one sort or another on magazines, although the depth and extent of these varied considerably.

The US Magazine Involvement Alliance sought to discover whether a connection existed between key qualitative indicators and advertising recall (20). Its study concluded that the ad itself often correlated most strongly with recall, but that metrics like time spent reading were also important.

Affinity Research's VISTA Print Effectiveness Rating Service, also from the US, confirms a strong connection between reader involvement in a magazine (for example, 'it is one of my favourites') and both recall of advertising and propensity to 'take action' (21).



Key reading related to this article at

www.WARC.com

View the online version of this article at

www.WARC.com/bestpractice for easy access to the references below (* except items asterisked)

Core reading

1. **The Magazine Handbook 2007/08*. Magazine Publishers of America. www.mpa.org
2. E Ephron: The softer intrusion of print. *Admap* 462, June 2005.
3. *W Eadie: Return on engagement – quantifying the impact of reader engagement on ad effectiveness. Proceedings of the 13th Worldwide Readership Symposium, Vienna, October 2007.
4. *Take a Fresh Look at Print (2nd edn, 2002). Available from FIPP at www.fipp.com.
5. *E Meier: Summary of current readership research. Proceedings of the 13th Worldwide Readership Symposium, Vienna, October 2007.

Issue-specific audience measurement

6. *J Baim, M Frankel, M Galin, J Agresti and K Zarnitz: Measuring issue-specific audiences. Proceedings of the 13th Worldwide Readership Symposium, Vienna, October 2007.

Media multiplier

7. *B Beeftink: The IPA Touchpoints initiative – in practice. Proceedings of the 13th Worldwide Readership Symposium, Vienna, October 2007.
8. *W Havlena, M de Montigny, R Caradell and W Eadie: Measuring magazine advertising effectiveness and synergies. Proceedings of the 13th Worldwide Readership Symposium, Vienna, October 2007.
9. *D Miletto and D Ruttul: How magazines maximise ROI. Proceedings of the 13th Worldwide Readership Symposium, Vienna, October 2007.
10. G Consterdine: Magazines uncovered: sales uplift and ROI. *Admap* 467, December 2005.
11. *Measuring magazine effectiveness. Quantifying Advertising and Magazine Impact on Sales. Available from www.mpa.org.

Audience accumulation

12. A Smith: How campaign tracking studies and econometric modelling can undervalue advertising benefits. *International Journal of Advertising*, Vol 18, 2, 1999.
13. L Goldstein: Audience accumulation and advertising exposure in magazines. ESOMAR Print Audience Measurement, Los Angeles, June 2003.
14. G Consterdine: Distributing print exposure: a new planning tool. *Admap* 455, November 2004.

Creative considerations

15. A Green: What are the key factors contributing to the effectiveness of my print advertising? Media FAQ on www.WARC.com.
16. *Everything on the impact of advertisements in magazines. Stop/watch (2005). Available from FIPP at www.fipp.com.
17. *www.magazine.org/Advertising_and_PIB/Ad_Positioning_and_Guidelines/

Viewer behaviour

18. *See The Quality of Reading Survey, Ipsos-RSL (2000) for a full list of measures.
19. *E. Meier: Summary of current readership research. Proceedings of the 13th Worldwide Readership Symposium, Vienna, October 2007.
20. *B Ware, R Baron and J Edge: Identifying key metrics for magazine planning. Proceedings of the 12th Worldwide Readership Symposium, Prague, October 2005.
21. *Affinity Research (2004–2006) Fine Print I–VII. www.affinityresearch.net/pages/3/index.htm

Pre-testing

22. A Smith: How campaign tracking studies and econometric modelling can undervalue advertising benefits. *International Journal of Advertising*, Vol 18, 2, 1999.
23. G. Brown: The awareness problem. *Admap*, January 1994.
24. A Smith: More food for thought. *Admap*, February 1997.

For full Worldwide Readership Symposium coverage go to: www.readershipresearch.org

Pre-testing

It is worth pointing out, finally, that advertisements tend to wear out faster in magazines than they do in other media like television (22,23,24). Magazines are a medium where people can choose to spend as little or as much time as they want with individual advertisements - when they have taken a message on

board, therefore, they will arguably want to only spend limited time reading the same message again.

For these reasons planners may want to consider seriously whether running the same copy for long periods of time is effective and whether, indeed, running multiple copies in a single campaign would pay dividends. •