

# ADVERTISING BEST PRACTICES IN A MULTI-PLATFORM WORLD GETTING THE MOST FROM PRINT, DIGITAL REPLICAS AND INTERACTIVE APP ADVERTISING

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## 1. Introduction

Tablets, smartphones, e-readers and other emerging platforms are rapidly reshaping today’s media landscape.

Consider that, in the past year alone smartphone ownership has risen by almost double (to nearly half of all US online consumers), ownership of e-readers has quadrupled, and ownership of tablets has increased by a factor of five (see Fig 1). And as device prices continue to fall, consumer adoption of digital content will dramatically expand the marketplace for publishers and marketers alike.

Fig 1. Growth in Digital Platforms, 2010 to 2011

	Spring 2010	Fall 2010	Spring 2011
Own a...			
smartphone	26%	34%	47%
e-reader	3%	6%	13%
tablet	2%	4%	10%

Source: LMX (Longitudinal Media eXperience) by Ipsos OTX MediaCT. Sample of 7,500 US online consumers per wave

Despite the growing adoption of new devices, relatively little is known about how consumers perceive and interact with advertising on these platforms, or about the best practices that can maximize an advertiser’s impact. Advertising on these digital devices obviously has the potential for delivering more content, more interactivity, and more personalization. But these characteristics of advertisements are features, not benefits. And relatively little is known about which of these capabilities can translate into benefits that consumers’ value, which in turn could drive the outcomes that advertisers desire: greater engagement, recall, word-of-mouth, purchasing, and so on. In addition, little is known about how advertising on new digital platforms compares on these crucial ROI-related dimensions to advertising in traditional print publications.

This paper aims to help advertisers leverage the benefits of each delivery format – print, digital replica and interactive apps within the context of national magazine titles – through specially commissioned research that looks at the recall of and response to advertising in each one.

## 2. Methodology: Testing Advertisements Across Delivery Formats and Titles

To help ensure that the results of the study were not specific to a particular title or genre, two distinct magazine titles were selected: Food Network Magazine (FNM), which has a predominately female target audience and Esquire, which has a predominately male target audience.

Our original aim was to evaluate a number of advertisers who were running the same creative across all three delivery formats at the same time. For print and digital replicas this is straightforward as the two formats are identical in terms of content and advertisers, and the publication dates are broadly the same. For the interactive apps this is more challenging as both the publication date and advertisers are markedly different from the print/digital replica versions of the title. This variation is an inevitable consequence of attempting to evaluate the interactive iPad apps as an advertising delivery format so early in its lifecycle.

Our solution was to evaluate the September 2011 print/digital replica of the above two titles (which go on-sale in August) and to use the Summer app edition of FNM and the June/July app for Esquire. In doing so we identified two advertisers which appeared across all delivery formats and six other advertisers from the same categories (meat-based products, condiments and footwear/apparel). In total, our analysis is based on nine advertisers, as shown in fig 2.

Fig 2. Advertisers used in this test

	<b>FNM: Print</b>	<b>FNM: Digital Replica</b>	<b>FNM: Interactive App</b>	<b>Esquire: Print</b>	<b>Esquire: Digital Replica</b>	<b>Esquire: Interactive App</b>
Infiniti (automotive)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kohl's (retail)	X	X	X			
Crisco Olive Oil (condiments)			X			
Heinz Sauce (condiments)	X	X				
Sperry Topsider (apparel)						X
Allen Edmonds (apparel)				X	X	
Ballpark Franks (meat products)			X			
Johnsonville (meat products)	X	X				
Amex (financial services)						X

We spoke to a total of 883 respondents, split into six monadic cells (see fig 3).

Fig 3. Sample size per cell

	<b>FNM: Print</b>	<b>FNM: Digital Replica</b>	<b>FNM: Interactive App</b>	<b>Esquire: Print</b>	<b>Esquire: Digital Replica</b>	<b>Esquire: Interactive App</b>
Sample size	169	185	139	111	154	125

The sample of print and digital replica subscribers was drawn from Hearst's subscriber database. No subscriber database exists for app readers of either of these titles therefore we recruited a sample of iPad owners from the Ipsos I-Say online panel (a panel of approximately 600,000 households in the USA). Following a number of screening questions to ascertain that they met the target audience for either title, we asked them to download the relevant app from iTunes. Some days later we recontacted them and asked them to complete a short survey.

All surveys were conducted online, with subscribers to the print/digital replica editions invited to take part via an email containing a unique link to the survey. We communicated with the Ipsos I-Say in the same way. Before asking a respondent to complete the survey, we asked a screening question to ensure that they had read the relevant issue of FNM or Esquire before proceeding with any further questions. Anyone who had not done so was thanked, but turned away.

To control for any timing effects with regard to recency of exposure to the advertising, we invited print/digital replica subscribers to take the survey approximately five to seven days after they would have received the September 2011 issue. For the iPad app sample, the recontact survey took place a similar time after they had been recruited to the survey and downloaded the app to their iPad.

We controlled for any brand user effect across format by weighting the number of users of each advertised brand across cells. We also weighted for recency of reading the title. No weights were applied for age, gender, income etc as the profile of each cell broadly reflected the known profile of readers of this title via this delivery format (see Fig 4).

Fig 4. Sample profile of each cell

	<b>FNM: Print</b>	<b>FNM: Digital Replica</b>	<b>FNM: Interactive App</b>	<b>Esquire: Print</b>	<b>Esquire: Digital Replica</b>	<b>Esquire: Interactive App</b>
Sample size	169	185	139	111	154	125
Males	16%	23%	31%	89%	97%	100%
Females	84%	77%	69%	11%	3%	0
Average annual h'hold income (000s)	\$96.8	\$95.0	\$98.1	\$88.7	\$128.0	\$97.6

Respondents were not aware that the survey was about advertising and the initial questions asked them for their views on this issue of the magazine. There followed questions which covered unaided recall of advertisers, brand image/message take-away and aided recognition of the advertising. Later in the survey, respondents were shown a number of the advertisements and asked for their reactions to each one. We ended by finding out how they felt each ad had impacted their perceptions of the advertised brand.

The data in this paper has been stats tested at both a 95% and 90% confidence interval. Differences have been highlighted using letters that correspond to those shown in the header for each table. Capital letters are used for the 95% interval, lower case for 90%. If no letter is shown then it signifies that any difference between groups is not significant at a recognized level.

Note: within digital replicas we covered two delivery formats, Nook and Zinio.

### 3. Key Findings

#### 3.1 Ad Recall & Recognition

It is important to provide some context for this section. Print advertising (and to a degree, digital replica which contains the same advertisements as the print edition) is an established, widely used delivery format; in-app advertising is clearly in its infancy. This means that currently the number of advertisements in the print issue is about 20-fold the number in the app edition. In the case of Esquire, the September 2011 print edition had 84 ads, the app had three; for FNM the comparative figures are 72 and four. Other things being equal we would fully expect to see higher unaided recall of advertisements among our iPad app sample.

That proved to be the case when looking at the averaged scores across all the advertisers included in this test by delivery format (fig 5). The difference however, is not 20-fold and while the iPad app currently has an advantage on this metric, ad breakthrough on print and digital replica is strong with on average, around 1 in 2 readers able to recognize each advertiser included in this test.

Fig 5. Unaided ad recall and ad recognition for print vs iPad App (based on average scores for the advertisers in this test)

	Print (a)	iPad App(b)
Sample size	280	264
Unaided recall	3%	13% A
Recognize the ad (once prompted with the actual ad)	48%	76% A

It should also be noted that the above scores are averages across all advertisers included in this test, and that this difference between delivery formats is not consistent across all advertisers. Notably, Kohl’s achieved higher recall in the print edition than the iPad app version; we offer a viewpoint on the factors behind this difference later in this paper.

Two other findings are worthy of comment for this metric.

Firstly, while we see differences in ad recall and recognition by title for both print and digital replicas – reflecting each title’s different audience profile, nature of content and advertising environment – we don’t see these differences between title for the interactive iPad app samples, despite the marked differences in their demographic profiles and advertising environments (see fig 6). This suggests that there currently exists a tablet “delivery format effect” which has a stronger impact than any title effect. This is an important finding for advertisers of mass market brands as it implies that they can expect the same advertisement to perform in a similar way across all magazine apps, regardless of title. The most important consideration for advertisers therefore is to optimize the creative to take full advantage of what the format can offer.

Fig 6. Unaided ad recall and ad recognition for print vs iPad App (based on average scores for the advertisers in this test)

	Print: FNM (a)	Print: Esquire (b)	iPad App: FNM (c)	iPad App: Esquire (d)
Sample size	169	111	139	125
Unaided recall	4%	1%	12% AB	15% AB
Recognize the ad (once prompted with the actual ad)	52% B	37%	76% AB	76% AB

Secondly, there are very few differences in the scores for ad recall and recognition between the print and digital replica samples within each title (see fig 7). In this case, the advertisements and content are the same across delivery format, however

any concern among advertisers that the difference in the reading experience may impact on these metrics is not borne out by these findings. In short, advertising (in terms of recall and recognition) performs the same on the digital replica and printed editions; such that the increasing numbers of people who choose to read a magazine on a digital replica does not dilute print title’s power for advertisers. Directionally, the data for Esquire suggests the digital replica format is slightly stronger than print for ad breakthrough, but the difference is not significant.

Fig 7. Unaided ad recall and ad recognition for print vs digital replica (based on average scores for the advertisers in this test)

	Print: FNM (a)	Digital Replica: FNM (b)	Print: Esquire (c)	Digital Replica: Esquire (d)
Sample size	169	185	111	154
Unaided recall	4%	4%	1%	1%
Recognize the ad (once prompted with the actual ad)	52% C	52% C	37%	46%

### 3.2 Ad Engagement

We prefaced the last section with a comment on the difference between in-app and print/digital replica advertising environments and it is important to do the same here. All of the in-app advertisements included in this test featured interactive elements, allowing the reader to see more of the advertised product and find out more information about it. In contrast, print is a format that relies on catching the reader’s eye and getting its message across in a very short space of time, rather than engaging them over a longer time frame. Other things being equal, we would expect to see consumers engage with in-app advertising more strongly than print advertisements.

As before, our expectations turned out to be correct, but again the differences are not as marked as might be expected given the contrast in interactivity (see fig 8). Overall we see high levels of engagement with ads on all delivery formats.

Fig 8. ‘Liking’ of each advertisement by delivery format (based on average scores for the advertisers in this test)

	Print (a)	Digital Replica (b)	iPad App (c)
Sample size	280	339	264
Like a lot	22%	18%	36% AB
Like a lot/Like	74%	73%	89% AB

In part, this may be because not all in-app advertisers are making the most of this delivery format. It is also likely to be the case that with years of experience of using print, a lot of advertisers are very effective at leveraging the benefits this format has to offer. A good example of the latter is Allen Edmonds, an ad that appeared in the September 2011 print/digital replica issue of Esquire. This used a simple headline – “Roughing it, Redefined.” – and a striking image of the product, together with a small amount of copy extolling its virtues. The resulting scores are above the average for this test for ‘like the ad a lot’ as well as for “unique look or feel” (see fig 10).

In general when we look more closely at the attributes of the advertisements (see Fig 9), we see that in all formats they score highly for “eye catching”. The scores for “unique look or feel” are also closely matched, suggesting that across all delivery formats advertisers are adept at creating breakthrough with their creative.

Where we see bigger differences is in the scores between in-app and print/digital replica advertisements for the attributes “entertaining”, “clever”, “memorable”, “surprising”, “useful” and, in particular, “informative”. In all cases, the in-app advertisements outscore their print equivalents by a factor of around two or more. The additional content that can be provided in the app version is likely to be the major driver behind this difference. Moreover, the novelty factor of: a) using a tablet, b) reading a magazine on a tablet and c) seeing an ad that makes use of the functionality of the delivery format in a magazine on a tablet, is likely to further drive engagement and a willingness to interact with an ad. Over time, these ‘halo’ factors may diminish, but now would seem to be something of a golden age for advertisers that are using this format.

Fig 9. Attributes (prompted) of each advertisement by format (based on average scores for the advertisers in this test)

	Print (a)	Digital Replica (b)	iPad App (c)
Sample size	280	339	264
Clever	10%	14%	21% AB
Entertaining	6%	5%	21% AB
Eye Catching	51%	46%	45%
Unique look or feel	27%	25%	29%
Interesting	23%	27%	31% A
Memorable	12%	10%	24% AB
Surprising	2%	2%	17% AB
Informative	18%	17%	45% AB
Useful	14%	13%	26% AB
Boring	13%	16%	12%

That’s not to say that all app ads take full advantage of the benefits that the tablet has to offer and we see some variation in the scores between different advertisements in this format. An example of a highly effective piece of in-app creative is the ad for Infiniti that appeared in the June/July iPad app of Esquire. This advertisement had a number of interactive elements that allowed the reader to see more of the inside and outside of the car, and to better understand its features and benefits – all delivered in a striking, stylish visual style. It rewarded the reader with more content the more they interacted with it, resulting in 53% of readers saying that they ‘liked it a lot’ vs an average of 36% for in-app advertisements in this test (see Fig 10). The creative scored above the average for many of the ad attributes, in particular for: “unique look or feel”, “informative”, “interesting” and “useful”.

Clearly not all in-app advertisements achieved this level of endorsement. What appeared to separate the great from the good was a willingness to offer the reader a high level of interactivity and to clearly signpost the interactive elements. In addition, the more they looked like advertisements, rather than advertorial, the stronger the scores.

We highlighted Kohl’s earlier (an advertiser that used all three delivery formats) as an ad that achieved above average scores in the print/digital replica editions for ad recall; scores that were unique in being higher than those for the in-app ad. The creative for Kohl’s has elements of an advertorial style, such that in the context of FNM it is perhaps not immediately obvious it is an ad. This is very effective in the print/digital replica editions of the magazine with the scores for ‘like a lot’ some way ahead of the average for this test (see Fig 10). As an in-app ad however this approach dilutes its stand-out and in particular it scores some way below the average for “eye catching”. At closer inspection, readers do recognize that it is an ad and given the high score for “informative” (relative to the print version of this ad and to other in-app ads) clearly interact with it. The impact of the in-app advertisement however, may be optimized by making it more obviously an ad to readers of the app. On the evidence from this study, app readers are accepting of relevant advertisers and there is no harm in trying to stand-out from the content pages.

Fig 10, Individual ad scores for liking and ad attributes

	Print (average)	Allen Edmonds (print, Esquire)	Kohl’s (print, iPad FNM)	App Infiniti (iPad Esquire) (average)	Kohl’s (iPad App, App, FNM)
Sample size	280	78	84	264	83
‘Like ad a lot’	22%	26%	43%	36%	53%
Clever	10%	10%	12%	21%	29%
Entertaining	6%	1%	8%	21%	25%
Eye Catching	51%	49%	70%	45%	53%
Unique look or feel	27%	49%	17%	29%	41%
Interesting	23%	26%	26%	31%	43%
Memorable	12%	12%	14%	24%	28%
Surprising	2%	2%	1%	17%	19%
Informative	18%	16%	25%	45%	51%
Useful	14%	14%	29%	26%	37%
Boring	13%	8%	5%	12%	11%

This view is further supported by findings Hearst uncovered when conducting over 100 usability labs across a variety of magazine apps. Respondents were quoted as saying:

“There’s a place for ads [in magazine apps]. They’re good for keeping you updated”.

“I do not think ads are negative; it is more about how it is presented”.

“I’d like to see more ads [in magazine apps] as long as they are spread out”.

Source: Usability Labs conducted at Catalyst Group Lab in NYC

### 3.3 Brand Messaging

As part of the survey we included a section that explored perceptions of the advertised brands using brand statements that reflected the message of the advertisement, such that we could see if one or more of the delivery formats is particularly effective in shaping perceptions.

Overall, while we see few differences between the delivery formats (see Fig 11), there is no uniform pattern and without a control cell it is difficult to know if any variation between format is due to in-going differences in perceptions of each brand or due to another, format-led factor (note, we weighted the data for brand users across all cells but this may not adequately control for brand affinity). The only conclusion we can draw from this element of the study is that none of the delivery formats stands out from the others in its potential to shape brand perceptions, although directionally in-app advertising is best placed to do so.

Fig 11 Brand perceptions for selected advertisers by delivery format

	Print (a)	Digital Replica (b)	iPad App(c)
Kohl’s (FNM)	150	178	137
Average agreement with brand statements	84%	86%	92% AB
Infiniti (Esquire)	99	139	123
Average agreement with brand statements	85% B	70%	86% B

### 3.4 Impact of the Advertisements

With any media effectiveness research, the key question to answer is what is the impact of the ad or campaign on how the target audience feels about the advertised brand?

Within this study we included a question that asked respondents if they felt more positive, less positive or no different about the advertised brand as a result of seeing the advertisement. The higher scores for ad engagement for the in-app advertisers meant that they achieved the highest scores for this metric. Overall however, all delivery formats were effective in ‘moving the dial’ for the brand in question; in each case achieving double digit scores for “feel more positive” and 5% or less saying “feel less positive” (see fig 12).

Fig 12 Advertising impact by format

	Print (a)	Digital Replica (b)	iPad App(c)
Sample size	280	339	264
More positive	25%	26%	56% AB
Less positive	3%	3%	5%
No difference	72% C	71% C	39%

Pinpointing the factors which lead to the most impactful print and digital replica ads is somewhat of the Holy Grail for advertising research; the reality is that a complex combination of factors is behind the consumers’ response to a piece of creative. In an effort to dig deeper into the most crucial and persuasive elements of advertising, we conducted a series of correlational and regression analyses on these data to identify which specific elements of an ad are most strongly correlated with overall liking for that ad.

These predictive models were conducted separately for each of the advertisements included in this test, and the results reveal different patterns of predictors for different advertisements. Figure 13 below shows the top three predictors of overall liking of an advertisement (note that “negative predictors” are shown in italics – in other words, low scores on the “boring” dimension predict high scores on “overall liking”). For example, for Infiniti and Allen Edmonds, ratings of “eye-catching” are the strongest predictors of overall liking; but being “eye-catching” does not significantly predict overall liking for any of the other ads. The lack of a “one-size-fits-all” model reflects that different ads have different strengths and weaknesses that drive overall reactions. In other words, one ad might be rated highly overall because it is particularly innovative, while another might be rated highly because it is particularly informative.

Fig 13 Top predictors of “overall liking” of an advertisement (“negative” predictors in italics)

Infiniti	Kohl's	Crisco Olive Oil	Ballpark Franks	Heinz Sauce	57	Johnsonville Italian Sausage	Sperry Top-Sider	American Express	Allen Edmonds
Eye-catching	<i>Boring</i>	Memorable	Clever	<i>Boring</i>	<i>Boring</i>	Interesting	Unique look/feel	Eye-catching	
Informative	Interesting	<i>Boring</i>	<i>Boring</i>	<i>Confusing</i>	Memorable	Surprising	<i>Boring</i>	<i>Boring</i>	
<i>Boring</i>	<i>Ordinary</i>	Surprising	Surprising	Interesting	<i>Ordinary</i>	Memorable	Entertaining	<i>Ordinary</i>	

Despite the ad-specific nature of the drivers of “liking,” there was one attribute that was a consistently strong predictor of overall reactions. In fact, this attribute was one of the top predictors in a majority of the models run. That attribute: “boring”. It is, of course, a negative predictor – the more boring an ad, the less it is liked – but it is one of the strongest overall predictors nevertheless. In addition to regression analyses, we also examined the raw correlations between the predictor variables and overall liking, minimizing the statistical challenges that arise because of inter-correlations among the predictors (what statisticians call “multicollinearity”). Examining the raw correlations reveals a similar pattern of predictors. “Boring” correlates most strongly with overall liking ( $r=-0.45$ ); the three other items that correlate higher than  $r=0.30$  are, conceptually speaking, the “opposite” of boring (the items are “interesting,” “eye-catching,” and “has a unique look or feel”). The remaining items had significant, but much smaller, correlations with overall liking.

Conceptually, “boring” is something of a gatekeeper in the process of evaluating an ad – it is a quick, emotional reaction that can shut down any further examination of the ad by its presence, or invite deeper examination in its absence. And to the extent that any of the predictors in our regression equations could be considered second place finishers to “boring” in their overall impact, they would be “interesting” or “unique look and feel” – which obviously are conceptually related to “boring”.

#### 4. Summing Up – Suggested Best Practices in Print and Digital Advertising

Below is a summary of suggested best practice for each delivery format, starting with in-app advertising.

- I. **Advertising is welcomed.** In the interactive iPad app versions the most highly rated advertisements, regardless of title, stand out distinctly *as advertisements*. The take-away: Don’t hide from being an ad in the app version. Don’t try to disguise yourself as something else. Focus on being a good ad and on standing out from editorial content.
- II. **Signpost interactivity.** In-app ads should use clear and intuitive “signposting” by providing obvious interface cues that guide the user through the experience and provide a straightforward gateway to deeper content. In general, the least positively rated app ads were also the “least signposted”.
- III. **Inform and entertain.** The in-app format allows advertisers to link to a large amount of content, but the most impactful ads combine this additional content with an engaging, entertaining and ultimately, rewarding experience for the reader.
- IV. **Two formats in one.** To some, the digital replica may represent a unique delivery format but to the reader it’s still fundamentally a magazine. Same content, same advertising, different format leads to the same (positive) response to ads in both the print and digital replica designs.
- V. **Attract and inform.** The most impactful ads in print/digital replicas catch the reader’s eye and then provide them with information that is new, interesting, relevant, and above all, useful. Unlike the in-app version, they are not *expected* to entertain. They should not bore the reader either.

In summary, the best performing ads in this test, regardless of delivery format, share a combination of powerful imagery and powerful ideas. They stand out. They speak to fundamental consumer needs and motivations. They are often pithy, and convey a great deal of meaning in concise ways. They are well-tailored to the strengths and weaknesses of each format. This conclusion about the tremendous power of creative and content is admittedly qualitative and subjective, but the notion that creative and content matter in new media, just as they do in traditional media, suggests that the more things change, the more they remain the same.