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READING DAYS AND BRAND RECALL

Two media research companies closed operations in the last two months. They were short lived, and normally short lived media research operations live out their destinies unnoticed and unloved, and their passing goes unmourned.

That is not the case with two members of our community, AGB & R D Percy. During their business tenure in the States they raised the consciousness of the advertising community concerning media research matters to levels that had not been seen in decades.

AGB, a British Company, came to America in 1987 with its peplemeter technology – and with it introduced new knowledge that heretofore was unavailable in research. For the first time, there was overnight persons ratings, VCR playback ratings, syndicated ratings and commercial audience ratings. But maybe the most important new information we got from AGB was the audience flow. In print, that translates into turnover offering us real insights into the viewing behaviour of the audience.

An American company, R D Percy, gave us information on audience viewing of a commercial, the programme viewing. A boon to the advertisers, and oddly enough it proved a boon to magazines, because it called attention to the measurement of commercial message.

As Jim Guthrie, the Marketing Director of the Magazine Publishers Association said recently, “Magazines which over the past decade have placed a distant second to television in generating excitement, are now at the forefront...with people at agencies eager to be working on magazine advertising. And why not? Magazine advertising has hit the five billion dollar mark, and shows promising signs of continued growth”.

Since the mid 1950's our industry has sought to maximise and measure the unique benefits for advertisers in magazine reading behaviour – multiple exposure opportunities to advertising. This measurement, depending on the research source, may be composed of three parts: reading days, number of issues read, and percentage of the issue read, or page exposure. It is the latter that worries us. The measurement of advertising page exposure denotes a magazine's performance in placing open pages of advertising before the open eyes of its readers. Whether the advertising is then perceived and produces an effect, depends on the power of the ad itself. Research into multiple readings, and ad page exposure is not new. Over 20 years ago, in 1966 Politz measured 12 publications in person using a Through-the-Book technique.

Politz set his goals and accomplished them, to measure the number of days the average issue of a magazine was read. He found that the average issue of a monthly magazine gets about four to five issue exposures per reader, unlike the average weekly or bi-weekly which has about one to two issue exposures. A new measurement was born, reading days, and the monthly magazines could now show that their average number of issue exposures was far greater than the competition. In order to measure reading days respondents were asked about their yesterday habits, and multiple reading habits. And to determine page openings, six of the twelve magazines that Politz measured in 1966 were carried in each interview on a rotation basis. Each person noted the pages that he opened in that issue yesterday. To accomplish this task, the questions were very specific.

“Now speaking only about yesterday, I would like you to show me all the pages you saw or even opened and the order in which you opened these pages.”

Then the next question. "That is, regardless of whether you remember seeing anything on the page, I want you to try as best you can to show me every page that was fully opened, even if only for a split second. The only pages I do not want are those you opened only part-way just to look at the page number in the corner."

And finally. "The first time you opened this issue yesterday, please show me the first page that happened to fall open." "After that, did you turn to the page before or the page after, or did you skip over a group of pages all at once?" "How about these pages – do you think you might have opened them yesterday, if only for a split second?"

But, that was when, with only twelve magazines, you could ask these questions. Bear in mind that in 1966 there were no questions on television viewing, cable TV, newspaper or radio. In other words, this interview only measured what it set out to do, magazines audiences and multiple exposures.

Table 1 illustrates the data for the twelve magazines measured in 1966. For issues exposed, or reading days, the range is a low of 1.5 for *Life* magazine to a high of 3.9 for *Woman's Day*, more than double the exposures. The page exposure measurement discriminates only slightly less from a 1.2 for *Life* to 2.4 for *Woman's Day*. Both *Look* and *Life* were picture magazines and were read differently. What range to expect was never hypothesised by Politz. But with different publication frequency as well as this editorial diversity, one expects to see differences in exposures, both issue and advertising. Politz gave us an expansive understanding, but of a limited number of magazines.

In 1978 Simmons expanded on the Politz theory and introduced it at an Advertising Research Foundation, known as the ARF. We combined reading days and percent pages opened to estimate magazine page exposure, commonly

Table 1

People aged 18 and over

	Issue – exposures	Advertising page exposures
Better Homes & Gardens	3.8	2.2
Family Circle	3.7	2.3
Good Housekeeping	3.4	1.8
Ladies' Home Journal	3.5	2.1
Life	1.5	1.2
Look	1.7	1.3
McCall's	3.4	2.0
Reader's Digest	5.3	1.8
Redbook	3.7	1.9
Saturday Evening Post	1.8	1.8
Time	2.0	1.4
Woman's Day	3.9	2.4

known as MPX. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we should be flattered. Our competitor latched on to this approach some years later and has been offering MPX estimates by our old technique.

We on the other hand as time went on recognised the serious shortcomings in this measurement. For eight years we abandoned part of it – the percent pages opened – but as interest grew in the broadcast arena for more commercial measurements, a similar focus evolved in magazine research.

Since 1986 Simmons has been experimenting with questions on page exposure, specifically asking the respondent what percentage of the

Table 2

	Total adults			Total adults	
	100% opened	10% opened		100% opened	10% opened
In home readership			Out of home readership		
1 Day Read	41.06	7.73	1 Day Read	7.93	8.55
2 Days	39.45	4.95	2 Days	20.48	8.29
3 Days	34.67	5.28	3 Days	35.37	6.05
4 Days	35.15	5.52	4 Days	31.26	4.98
5 Days	41.15	7.67	5 Days	27.05	5.78
6 Days	43.63	7.84	6 Days	21.29	1.98
7 Days	40.50	10.06	7 Days	26.09	2.61
8 Days	54.69	5.95	8 Days	84.00	.00
9 Days	61.84	.00	9 Days	71.43	.00
10 Days	48.12	9.24	10 Days	41.26	1.79
11 + Days	50.69	11.64	11 + Days	23.73	32.20

issue was looked at or read. We have asked the question a number of different ways because the results we tabulate still fall short of expectations. Table 2 represents all magazines in the aggregate with responses to both questions we ask: number of days read and percentage of pages opened.

These figures shown here for both in-home and out-of-home really do not show too much. First let us look at in-home. To make a point we have divided our page exposure responses into two groups – those who opened a 100% of the magazine and those who only opened 10%. There is no meaningful relationship between number of days read and percentage of magazine read. The percentages are flat across the

board. The same holds true for out-of-home reading, but for reading days the results are discriminating. Over a third of our respondents read magazines over a four day period (see Table 3). In the extreme, 2% read in 11 days.

In 1989, we simplified our multiple choice responses to “the entire issue or 100%, about three quarters or seventy five percent” and so on, hoping this will provide better results. But in spite of our disappointing results, one benefit emerged, the reading days measurement is valuable. But as we said before, this is not a new discovery. About the same time Politz was researching ad page exposure, in the 60’s, three companies, Compton Advertising, Procter & Gamble, and *McCall’s Magazine* joined forces

Table 3

Total adults Reading days			
1 Day	57.03	7 Days	13.07
2 Days	44.62	8 Days	1.98
3 Days	34.35	9 Days	.35
4 Days	34.35	10 Days	3.18
5 Days	12.46	11 Days	2.30
6 Days	7.70	Don't Know	0

to look into the direct effects of multiple magazine exposure, or reading days. In light of the findings of Politz they specifically wanted to answer these questions:

- (1) What effect do multiple exposures have on advertising recall?
- (2) To what extent do repeat exposures generate increased ad recall?
- (3) Do repeat exposures influence the persistence of the ad message?
- (4) What is the relationship between ad recall and issue exposure of a monthly magazine?

Subscribers to an issue of *McCall's* were selected as the sampling frame, and in effect became a panel for this test. The test was conducted over one month and used an October issue of the magazine. The research design involved the selection of three separate samples: the enlisted, the 30 day and the three day. First, the sample called the enlisted sample, the largest, was drawn during the first few days after the October issue went on-sale. Some 6,800 female subscribers agreed to cooperate in an experiment for the 'National Readership Council', a dummy corporation set up only for this test. Each respondent in this

sample was sent a card to be attached to the *McCall's* cover in order to record daily reading days throughout the entire month.

Approximately 275 women from this enlisted sample were interviewed every day by phone to measure the recall of five Procter & Gamble ads, regardless of whether they read the magazine that day or not. Then by checking the dates the respondent recorded on the card, their reading days could be determined. 80% of the respondents kept a faithful record.

The second sample, known as the 30 day sample had two purposes. One was to see the effects cooperation or lack of it might have on results, then how elapsed time would effect both ad and reading days recall for that month. 'Today' readers of *McCall's* were selected and that day became day one. Only half of these 'today' readers were asked to cooperate, upfront. The other half were not. The entire group was re-interviewed 30 days later. These two groups determined the effects of cooperation on advertising recall and reading day behaviour.

Finally the third sample, called the three day sample was only concerned with yesterday readers. There was no record keeping nor any timeframe for this group.

By using only a three day time frame, brand recall results in a three day period could be compared with those from a 30 day period. The four ads that were selected were four different brands: Comet Cleanser, Duncan Hines Cake Mix, Ivory Soap and Tide Detergent. With the exception of the Ivory Soap ad which ran on the backcover, all ads were rotated within the magazine using three regional editions of *McCall's*. The objectives of the McCall/Compton/Procter & Gamble study were threefold: to measure the effects of reading days on brand recall, the effects of forgetfulness, and the effects of cooperation in advance to determine bias.

Table 4

Related recall after 30 days

	30 Day Samples	
	Not enlisted	Enlisted
Average number of exposures	6.5	6.6
Duncan Hines	21	24
Ivory Bar	12	22
Comet	2	6
Tide	5	10

Let us look at the effects, if any, of cooperation on issue exposure recall and brand recall. In Table 4 we can see that the cooperators and

non cooperators had virtually the same average number of exposures. 6.5 and 6.6. In one respect however, the enlisted do behave somewhat differently from the others in that they produced consistently higher recall scores. Looking at their results in a little more detail we see that all of the recall scores were higher within multiple exposures for the enlisted sample, except for Duncan Hines at the 6+ exposure level (Table 5).

Using the non-enlisted 30 sample once again, let us compare these results with the three day sample (Table 6). This comparison illustrates how recent recall of events differs from recall after 30 days. The three day group had a higher brand recall than the 30 day. But once again both samples show increased recall with increased reading days. Finally, we look at the enlisted sample, the one where reading days

Table 5

Comparison of enlisted and non-enlisted readers

	Enlisted 30 day readers				Non-enlisted 30 day readers		
	All 30 day readers	Total	1 to 5 issue exp	6 or more issue exp	Total	1 to 5 issue exp	6 or more issue exp
	478 = 100	216 = 100%	95 = 100%	118 = 100%	262 = 100%	128 = 100%	113 = 100%
Comet	4	6	5	7	2	1	4
Duncan Hines	22	24	22	25	21	16	27
Ivory Bar	16	22	20	22	12	9	17
Tide	7	10	7	11	5	5	4

and brand recall were tracked daily (Table 7). Among the respondents the increase in reading days correlates to a higher brand recall. Comet increased 60% from one or two exposures to five or more; Duncan Hines 44%, Ivory 31% and Tide 75%. Obviously, the ad itself also contributes to the variation in recall. For each sample and in each example, multiple reading days is highly correlated to brand name recall.

This landmark study that established the relationship between reading days and ad recall is equally relevant today as it was 20 years ago.

Procter & Gamble, one of the world's largest advertisers participated in the study to analyse the potential of a magazine to deliver the sales message. Their hypothesis that the multiple exposure capabilities or reading days was proven. Empirically, we at Simmons believe this promise still holds true today. But we are research professionals and a belief has no validity; it must be proven. So now it is time for us to do another test to prove the old hypothesis in the climate of the 80's.

Politz in the 60's had a well formulated research study. He used these in-depth questions on page exposure for 12 magazines. Today Simmons measures 20 magazines and others measure double. There is no way that current questions on page exposure can produce the Politz results.

We do not need research on what advertisers and publishers want from magazine measurements. At Simmons we too want the same answers – but we want honest answers, meaningful answers. Of quality, to paraphrase Leo Bogart at a recent conference of the Association of National Advertisers we do not need techniques to measure, we need to deliver better understanding.

We at Simmons feel that the power of reading days must be proven – but it must be proven in a current environment.

At Simmons we are committed to spearhead tomorrow's reading days study – but we cannot do it alone. We are hopefully and actively seeking a publisher to team with us. We would make a major contribution to the industry.

Table 6

	All first 3 day readers	Number of issue exposures		
		1	2	3 Or more
	1,106 = 100% %	631 = 100% %	301 = 100% %	174 = 100% %
Comet	9	7	11	10
Duncan Hines	21	20	22	23
Ivory Bar	20	18	21	29
Tide	6	4	8	6

Table 7

	All enlisted readers	Number of issue exposures		
		1 & 2	3 & 4	5 or more
N=	6,845 = 100% %	2,217 = 100% %	722 = 100 %	1,867 = 100% %
Comet	6	5	7	8
Duncan Hines	19	16	21	23
Ivory Bar	19	16	20	21
Tide	6	4	6	7
