

IN THE CALM LIES THE POWER ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS ON SUNDAY

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Some background information

The purpose of the study which will be presented here was to demonstrate whether - and if so to what extend - the special "qualities" of the Sunday imply a better effectiveness of ads in a Sunday paper compared to magazines which are published on workdays. Are there differences in the conditions of reception in terms of place of reading, source of copy, mood, stress vs. relaxation? And what is the effect of these differences with regard to ad awareness?

The sponsor of the study is "Bild am Sonntag". "Bild am Sonntag" claims to be "Germany's fastest magazine". It has an average issue readership of 17% and a broadest audience of one third of the population. It has a nearly monopolistic position on Sunday.

The methodological framework of the survey

The survey was done by CAPI. It was based on a random sample of the German speaking population 14 years and older in the FRG.

The fieldwork started at Monday, September 3rd 2001, was interrupted for one week after September 11th in order to avoid including severely biased readership patterns, and was terminated at Saturday, October 6th. The interviews were equally spread over the weeks and the workdays of the fieldwork period.

The average length of the interviews was about 50 minutes. 20 masthead cards of weeklies were shown on the laptop screen to prompt the questions of recent reading. In addition we presented for 8 weekly magazines the respective most actual 4 front covers which were renewed on Monday and Thursday every week. By this we could establish the readers of the recent issue in the publication interval for the following 8 magazines:

- Bild am Sonntag
- Focus
- Spiegel
- Stern
- Bunte
- Gala
- Neue Revue
- Super Illu

The maximum readership of each magazine was asked about reading frequencies, experiences etc. in general; with regard to the latest read issue the readers were asked about the place of reading, the source of the copy, the number of days they read in this title, the reading time, and the specific mood and situation they were in during reading the magazine.

Finally we conducted a copytest of 12 ads per copy for those issues of Bild am Sonntag, Focus, Spiegel, Stern and Bunte which had been completely read in between the last seven days before the interview. Note: This was not obligatory the latest issue!

In order to guarantee the "normal" copy testing procedure the interviewers had to have with them the two latest issues of "Bild am Sonntag" as well as the three latest issues of the other four titles under investigation (all together 14 copies). To avoid overload of the interviewees (and of the interviewers!) nobody had to do more than two "copytests" per interview and more than one copytest per title. In case of the eligibility of more than two issues/titles a random selection was done with the help of the computer.

The ads which had to be tested were selected in order to represent the most important advertising industries and the relevant ad sizes.

Finally the results of the survey of 1503 persons were transformed and weighted according to the sociodemographic structure shown by the "official" actual AG.MA readership survey. For comparative analyses of the readership of "Bild am Sonntag" and its competitors the sociodemographic structure of the respective readership has been adjusted to the AIR-structure according to the AG.MA-survey.

Some Hypotheses and what we found

A. "Bild am Sonntag is Germany's fastest magazine" - confirmed

With respect to reading the latest issue in the last seven days and the number of days having read this issue our survey produced the following results:

Base: Readers of ... in the last 7 days	... have read the latest issue %	... have read at 1 or 2 days, not more %
Bild am Sonntag	88	86
Spiegel	66	70
Focus	64	68
Bunte	55	76
Stern	53	81

We can confirm the "Bild-am-Sonntag"-claim: It's the most actually read magazine with the fastest turnover of readership.

B. "The attention for advertisements is independent of the weekday when a magazine is read" – not yet rejected

In a first approach to test this hypothesis we found the following average attention scores per weekday over all five tested magazines:

	Total	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
(Base: exposed ads in copytests)	4572	1550	1114	592	635	611	440	1644
"Have seen this advertisement in this issue" in %	69	71	67	67	64	69	67	71

It seems as if Sunday and Monday are particularly good days to advertise. But the following tab shows that there is an intervening factor: The publication date of the respective magazine:

	Total	Bild am Sonntag		Focus/Spiegel		Stern/Bunte	
		read on Sunday	not read on Sunday	read on Monday	not read on Monday	read on Thursday or Friday	not read on Thursday or Friday
(Base: exposed ads in copytests)	4572	1239	167	941	594	675	956
"Have seen this advertisement in this issue" in %	69	75	64	72	62	69	63

This clearly shows that the attention to ads is better at the publication date compared to the other days of the week: "Fresh is better".

Again there is an advantage for "Bild am Sonntag", because this magazine has the by far biggest share of "readers at the publication date":

	Base: Got read an issue the last 7 days (abs.)	Readers at date of publication	Readers at other weekdays
Bild am Sonntag (Sunday)	289	88%	12%
Focus (Monday)	162	54%	46%
Spiegel (Monday)	152	60%	40%
Stern (Thursday/Friday)	157	69%	31%
Bunte (Thursday/Friday)	112	67%	33%

But note: "Readers at the publication date" may pick up the magazine a second or even a third time at one of the following days - this makes it difficult to separate the effects of the different reading days. We should have a much bigger data base to definitely reject or confirm our above mentioned hypothesis. But there are some results which strongly support the speculation that the Sunday is the best day to get attention for an advertisement.

C. "People are in a better mood on Sunday" - confirmed

I'm pleased to present you here some results which may shake some of your cherished prejudices about Germans. We have asked people in our survey about their mood yesterday respectively last Sunday. Surprisingly we found that even on working days Germans - the majority of them - aren't old grouchs, stubborn, cool, narrow minded. Or at least this is not the way they see themselves. And we found that on Sundays they are even more well-balanced, good humoured, interested, relaxed, and light hearted:

Base: 1294 readers of weekly magazines	Mood on last (two top boxes of a 5-point-profile)	
	workday %	Sunday %
well-balanced	62	74
in a good mood	63	73
interested	68	72
open-minded	63	71
relaxed	50	68
light-hearted	47	65

Our hypothesis can clearly be confirmed: People are in a better mood on Sunday.

D. "The better the mood the higher the attentiveness to advertisements" - confirmed

This hypothesis may include some dynamite with regard to the editorial content of magazines. Supposed it could be confirmed: How could news magazines survive as advertising media in these times?

But our focus here is not on the mood which may be created by the magazine itself but on the more basic state of mind when reading the particular issue of the magazine of which we conducted the copytest: "When reading this issue of ... what was your state, how did you feel?"

In fact we found a strong relationship between the mood when reading a magazine and the attentiveness to ads:

Base: 4103 ratings of 4c-1/1 ads in BamS, Spiegel, Focus, Stern, Bunte	relaxed		in peace		in a moment of leisure	in a hurry
	yes (2 top boxes)	no (2 bottom boxes)	yes (2 top boxes)	no (2 bottom boxes)		
"Have seen this advertisement in this issue" in %	73	57	73	60	72	45

Our hypothesis can be confirmed: "The better the reader's mood the better the attentiveness to advertisements".

But which magazine benefits most of this effect? You may be not too much surprised of the answer (and this is another example of how carefully the study was designed):

The reader's mood when reading the copytest issue (two top boxes)	Bild am Sonntag	Focus	Spiegel	Stern	Bunte
Base (abs.)	(289)	(162)	(152)	(157)	(112)
relaxed in %	86	67	67	60	65
in peace in %	82	68	71	65	68
in a moment of leisure in %	84	70	68	50	70

Bild am Sonntag is most often read on Sunday. Sunday is the day when people are in better mood. Better mood means better attentiveness to ads. Where should you insert your ads?

E. "People withdraw on Sunday, they are dull and drowsy at weekend" - rejected

This hypothesis is aimed at the other side of the relaxation on Sunday. We have asked people in our survey with the help of a 5-point-profile about yesterday respectively the last Sunday whether they were sociable or unsociable, lively or tired, communicative or taciturn, active or passive, starved for or sated with information. We found that we have to reject our hypothesis:

Base: 1294 readers of weekly magazines	Level of activity on last (two top boxes of 5-point-profile)	
	workday %	Sunday %
sociable	60	69
lively	50	67
communicative	54	66
active	55	61
starved for information	41	48

People feel well when active. They relax socializing. Communicating they find their balance. Only "starved for information" is not true for the majority on Sunday: A clear clue for entertaining elements in the Sunday papers. This is where Bild am Sonntag is already positioned as well as Stern and Bunte.

F. "The more active the reader feels the higher his attentiveness to advertisements" - confirmed

Again we wanted to know whether high involvement and activity is good or bad with regard to the attentiveness to ads. The results of our analysis show that this hypothesis clearly can be confirmed:

Base: 4103 ratings of 4c-1/1 ads in BamS, Spiegel, Focus, Stern, Bunte	wide awake, lively	tired, drained	attentive yes (two top boxes)	no (two bottom boxes)
"Have seen this advertisement in this issue" in %	75	54	73	45

The higher the level of mental activity the better the attentiveness to ads. In the same way as with the dimension of relaxation we analyzed which magazine benefits most of this effect:

The reader's level of mental activity when reading the copytest issue (top two boxes)	Bild am Sonntag	Focus	Spiegel	Stern	Bunte
Base (abs.)	(289)	(162)	(152)	(157)	(112)
wide awake, lively in %	77	62	61	53	63
attentive in %	89	85	84	72	75

Bild am Sonntag is most often read on Sunday. Sunday is the day when people mentally are more active (which is a catastrophe for itself with regard to our economic situation). A higher level of mental activity means better attentiveness to ads. Where should you insert your ads?

G. "If people are highly absorbed in reading this will have negative effects regarding the attention to advertisements" - rejected

This is about "flow experience". To make the concept understandable we first asked: "Have you ever experienced this: You are completely absorbed in an activity so that all other things around you get meaningless and you do totally lose your time sense". About four of five interviewees do know this phenomenon, and about 50% report that they have this experience at least from time to time. Related to reading magazines about one third claims to experience this "flow" now and then. With respect to the magazines in copy-test we asked: "When you recently read this magazine: were you so absorbed in reading that you did forget almost completely all things around you including time?"

There are votes in the discussion about the variables which impact the advertising effectiveness saying that too much involvement in the editorial content may prevent the perception of ads (see hypothesis). We can not confirm this view, on the contrary:

Base: 4103 ratings of 4c-1/1 ads in BamS, Spiegel, Focus, Stern, Bunte	"flow experience" when reading this issue recently	
	yes	no
"Have seen this advertisement in this issue" in %	78	64

This is good news: The more fascinating an article is the better the chance of the advertisement next to it to be perceived! Advertisers get better return on investment by inserting in magazines with high quality editorial content. Or perhaps more exactly: magazines with editorial content which fascinates the readers of this particular publication.

And which sort of magazines - out of our five publications under investigation - benefits most of this effect of the flow phenomenon? In Germany the news magazines seem to benefit more than the popular Sunday paper, and far more than the more entertainment-oriented magazine with less demand of topicality.

	Bild am Sonntag	Focus	Spiegel	Stern	Bunte
Base (abs.)	(289)	(162)	(152)	(157)	(112)
readers with "flow experience" while reading recently in %	39	41	44	37	22

Some conclusions

- Based on a random selection of readers of recent issues of major German weekly magazines we found that there are differences between the magazines with respect to the attentiveness to advertisements. Taking only 4c-1/1 ads across several branches the average shares of readers having noticed the ads were:

readers of Bild am Sonntag	74%
readers of Focus	73%
readers of Bunte	67%
readers of Spiegel	63%
readers of Stern	64%

Similar results were found for "noticed the brand name and/or the logo" and "read at least parts of the text of the ad" (BamS 60%/48%, Focus 60%/47%, Bunte 48%/32%, Spiegel 49%/41%, Stern 50%/28%).

- The earlier an issue of a magazine is read the better the chance for the ads to be noticed: "Fresh is better". This turned out to be true for all five magazines for which an ad-copytest was conducted. Magazines with a fast turnover of the readership per issue deliver a special benefit to the advertisers.
- The Sunday has its particular qualities with respect to advertising effectiveness:
 - Consumers are in a better mood on Sundays compared to the other weekdays. And the ads of a magazine which is read in a relaxed, peaceful situation by well-feeling readers have a better chance to be noticed.
 - Consumers feel more lively, more attentive, more active on Sundays compared to the other weekdays. And the ads of magazines which are read by more active and less tired readers have a better chance to be noticed.

These results support strongly the hypothesis that Sunday is the best day to get attention for an advertisement.

- The more the reader is absorbed and fascinated by an article or report in a magazine the better the chances of the ads next to the editorial text to be noticed.