

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED? THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENGAGEMENT BASED PLANNING APPROACH IN PRINT

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Back in 2003 when Starcom presented the results of our print positioning research at the Worldwide Readership Symposium in Boston we laid out the path for future research. We stated our intention to take the ad recall work a stage further, focusing on understanding the consumers' readership experience and specifically their engagement with commercial messages.

This path is by no means complete and like any journey it has consisted of a series of steps. The genesis of our print engagement work can be traced back to the Starcom Print Positioning Study which we carried out in 2002. The insights gleaned from this research fueled our desire to define, measure and quantify print engagement more comprehensivelyⁱ.

But measurement in and of itself is only part of the challenge; we also had to make our engagement insights actionable and accountable within the agency planning process. While the path has not been completed, we are well on our way and recognize that more work needs to be done.

The media landscape – consumers' perspective

Engaging our target audience in an ever fragmenting media landscape is crucial. We know that consumers have more choices and more control over these choices than ever before. As an illustration of this, the chart below compares today's media landscape with that of the 1980s:ⁱⁱ

	<u>1980's</u>	<u>2004-05</u>
# Commercial TV Stations	700	1,345
Avg. # TV Sets per home	1.8	2.6
Avg. # Channels Available Per TV HH 11	102.6	
3-Network Primetime HH Share	75%	36%
Cable Penetration (+ADS)	40%	92%
VCR Penetration	1%	87%
Remote Control Penetration	50%	95%+*
# Radio Stations	8,748	13,838
Home Computer Penetration	5%	66%
# Consumer Magazines	1,500	5,340*
# Place-Based Media Options	-	Infinite

*2003 most current data available

With so much choice and clutter, mere exposure to commercial messages is no longer enough unless we also engage the consumers at the point of this exposure. We feel that print is a unique platform in the new media landscape. The print media is in a unique to exploit this new reality, it provides an engagement based environment and one in which consumers build deep and involved relationships with.

So why engagement?

Engagement by definition is a complex and dynamic state but we have to strive to incorporate this new metric into our communications planning process, creating a metric or metrics that address the unique relationship between a consumer, the medium and the message.

The first step down our path to engagement based planning took seed in the Starcom Print Positioning studyⁱⁱⁱ, a study that was driven by the need to understand how key magazine positions affected ad recall. The data allowed us to analyze recall by title, position and demographics.

We identified two key insights;

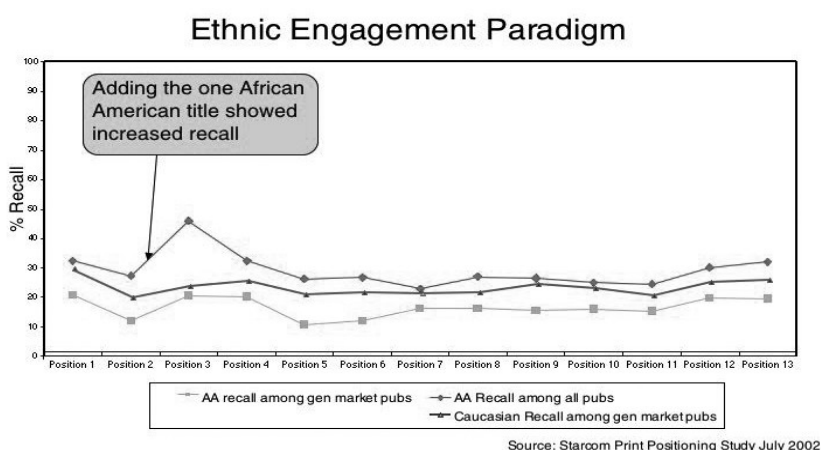
1. There was a clear reality gap between perceived exposure and ad recall; clearly exposure did not equal engagement
2. We also noticed that ad recall was significantly higher within an "engaged" environment.

According to our study, the consumers' perception is that they read most print ads. In fact, 81% of respondents told us they are likely to look at ads in magazines. However, the reality was slightly different. When respondents were asked to recall specific creative there was significant variability among titles, positions and by ethnicity. Average per title scores dropped to as little as 18% and the lowest average position score was just 6.5%.

The second insight, as illustrated in diagram 1, identified a significant lift in the data that was our first indication that "engagement" really does matter within print.

Our study focused on 15 publications: 14 general market titles and 1 African American title. We found a significant increase in recall scores across all positions when we analyzed the data from the African American title. Clearly something was going on with the relationship this target had with the publication and the creative contained therein that caused the elevated recall scores. Although this example was based on just one title we knew it was significant and warranted further exploration.

Diagram 1



As mentioned before engagement is a complex and dynamic state and one of our greatest challenges has been to be able to dimensionalize it so that it can be measured and applied to the planning process, after all you cannot manage what you cannot measure.

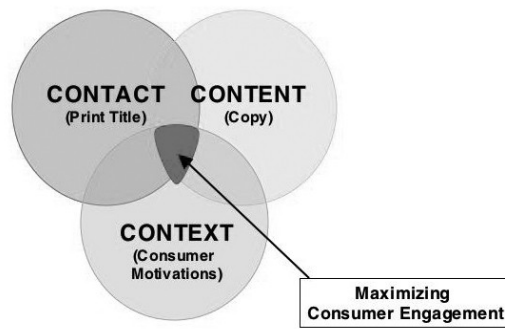
Defining Engagement

The first step in defining engagement is setting its parameters and to this end we see the engagement construct made up of three key variables, the first two have historically been where the majority of print research has been focused;

CONTACT, in this case the print title, the medium or environment in which the message is delivered to the consumer

CONTENT, the print ad copy itself, the message that is directed at the target

And finally CONTEXT, defined as consumer motivations at point of contact with the medium and the message, this is the vital missing piece of the puzzle. Key questions here are: what brand and category relevant motivations does the consumer have? What is the consumers' relationship with the title? How well does the message resonate with the target within the context of the publication?



We recognize that the relative importance and influence of these three parameters will vary depending on each given situation. However, there is one constant and that is that consumer engagement is maximized when all three work in concert, seamlessly blending together to enhance the consumers’ experience.

All good research starts with solid assumptions and based on the engagement definition we have just described, along with the data we had seen from the print positioning research, we developed the following hypothesis;

Higher levels of engagement are achieved with:

- a) Stronger audience attachments to print titles and
- b) More effectively integrated brand messages

In short, we believe that the stronger the engagement for any given audience, the more receptive that audience would be to the brand messaging. We then went back to our engagement construct to outline our study design.

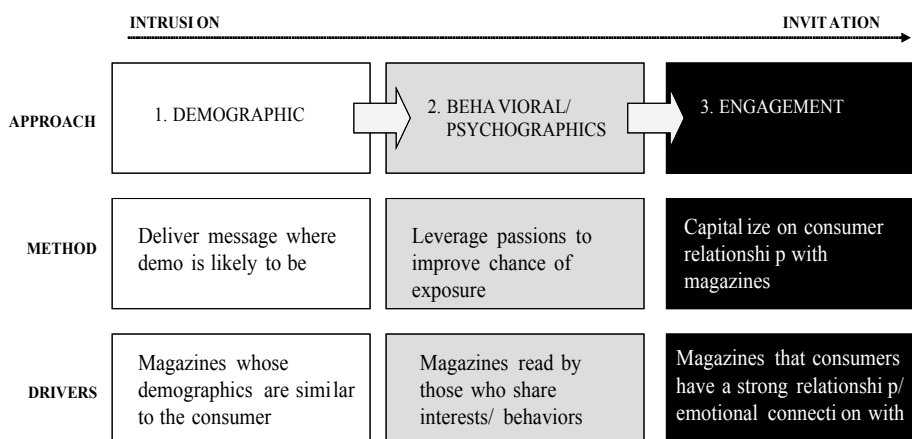
Evolution of print planning process

Before we describe how we executed our study, we believe it is useful to understand the evolution of print planning in the US and how these new engagement insights fit within the engagement process.

If we think about the development of print planning in terms of a continuum moving from “intrusion” to “invitation” we can trace the development across three key stages. The first stage is demographic based planning which seeks to deliver the message where most of the target will be and is predicated on the premise that the magazines demographics are similar that of the targets.

To build upon demographics the second stage utilizes behavioral based factors to link a target’s passions and shared interests with the magazine environment.

The final stage is engagement based planning, which does not replace the previous approaches but rather builds on everything we know about the target, its behaviors, passions and connections with publications and blends the three Cs (Contact, Content and Context) to ensure we maximize the consumers experience when they are exposed to the message.



Industry Efforts

In the past it has been very difficult to quantify engagement, essentially because it hasn't, until now, been measured. Currently syndicated sources provide only circulation and estimated readership data.

Historically, we have relied on our own expertise and intuition to strategically find the best fit to deliver the message to the target audience. The Starcom engagement study provides our planners with the ability to quantify relevance and editorial fit via empirical research.

Starcom has not been on this path alone, over the past few years the US print community has created a number of surrogate metrics that sought to move beyond the exposure-based model.

1. **Wantedness** - When the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) included "Average Price Paid" on its Pink Sheets^{iv} a couple of years ago it provided us with a new dataset to explore. A school of thought then developed that equated "wantedness" (how much you coveted/desired a magazine) with the price you paid for it. However, when we analyzed the data we were in agreement with other agencies, publishers and the Magazine Publishers of America (MPA) readership study when we found no direct correlation with price paid and other measures of reader involvement. The price you pay maybe one factor in the equation but it is by no means the only or dominant one, especially when the majority of readers do not even know how much they paid for their magazines.
2. **The Involvement Index** - This study, by the Involvement Collation^v, was a good start and we applaud the efforts of the alliance in focusing attention on a broader set of measures, average time spent, frequency of reading & one of my favorites. However, the Involvement Index was too restrictive in nature, as we have already discussed, engagement is a multi-faceted dynamic and any index that doesn't incorporate ad receptivity or brand fit factors is not completing the picture.
3. **The Northwestern/MPA study** – This was a solid and credible study that provided us with good general insights about reader's experiences with publications but unfortunately it did not provide the granularity we needed to analyze the data at the individual title level.

All these approaches had their individual merits. However, we felt that they did not provide the granular title level insights that enabled our planners to make informed planning decisions.

Our qualitative approach

To understand how consumer engagement as a whole was maximized we first needed to understand the dynamics of the inter-dependent variables. We sought to:

1. Understand the relationship between the contact and content. What were the effects of blending the message within the publications' DNA?
2. Determine the effect that the readers' attachment to the title had on their receptivity to the brand messaging.
3. Identify the factors that led to reader attachments with the titles they read.
4. And finally, explore the fit of the brands' imagery and messaging within the publication's brand essence.

We then executed this research design in two distinct phases;

1. Qualitative research to deep dive into the dynamics of the engagement construct
2. A large scale quantitative study to validate the qualitative findings and to create an engagement planning tool capable of being applied at the title level.

What did the qualitative research tell us?

So that we did not bias the results of the qualitative phase, it was important to start from a zero-based approach. We did not bring any of our preconceived notions of how consumers interacted with magazines and, more importantly commercial messages. We needed to understand the fundamentals of why and how consumers read magazines and which parts of the content they were truly engaged in.

We design the qualitative survey to better understand engagement within one group – with the intent to duplicate the study among other key targets in the future. The qualitative design concentrated on females. We interviewed three groups: female teens, women with children and working female singles without children in Chicago, Illinois and Charlotte, North Carolina in their homes to insure a more natural print readership environment.

We screened households identifying one female within our three segment groups. We called these women the “host respondent” – as we would use their home to conduct the interviews. Each respondent was screened on core (3+ out of 4 issues) readership of 40 titles across genres and across publication frequency. We then asked each host respondent to identify two friends or family members that would participate in our in-home mini-groups. We contacted the friends/family and screened the invited teens/women on their readership of the same 40 titles.

As a pre-exercise, a week prior to the interviews, we sent each of respondents one of the issues they had screened in on over the phone. We selected the specific title to insure that we had a variety of magazines by editorial content and publication frequency. We asked each person to pull the ten pages that conveyed the essence of the magazine and the one page that did not “fit” the magazine and we asked them to bring those pages to the mini-groups.

We started each group by asking the respondents to tell us about the magazines from the pre-exercise. Specifically, why they read it, their relationship with the title, how the title compared to other magazines they read. We then asked them to tell us about the pages they had selected.

We consistently found across all of the groups that print ads are part of the experience and were not considered an intrusion. And significantly, of those pages that represented the essence of the magazines one-third were advertisements. If a similar exercise was conducted for primetime TV, it is unlikely that respondents would have the same opinion of the broadcast commercials.

After synthesizing the insights gleaned from the groups we isolated six drivers that helped explain the readers’ experience and varied levels of engagement. These drivers were the readers’ relationship with the publication, their reason for reading, how they read the magazine, the magazines brand image, the integration of the creative within the publication, and the consumers’ receptivity to that brand message.

We found that respondents had no problem explaining their relationship with the magazines they read. And not surprisingly, we found that engagement was stronger among readers who selected those magazines for personal fulfillment, a passion or interest.

Quantifying our qualitative learnings

The six engagement drivers identified earlier (e.g. Reasons for Reading, Brand Imagery etc.) were translated into a battery of questions which were administered in the Fall 2004 and 2005 MRI re-contact study^{vi} to approximately 25,000 respondents. On average, response rates are over 30%. The total sample for the re-contact is about 7,500 Adults 18+.

The data displayed statistically significant internal validity, across both males and females, even though the original drivers had been derived from female-only qualitative research. Factor and cluster analysis demonstrated that the drivers correlated extremely well to the appropriate magazine title readership.

Therefore we are confident that this data will be able to facilitate engagement based planning based on large sample quantitative datasets;

1. Providing planners with the ability to drive engagement by quantifying relevance and editorial fit
2. Enabling planners to customize their approach for each client based on target audience and plan objectives

Applying engagement based planning

To illustrate our process we want to share two case studies.

Brand A identified that users of their product were trendsetters. They keep up with the latest fashion trends and are early adopters on items that improved their image and style.

We knew that print was a unique contact point for this audience. Unlike other media, magazines were trusted source for information on the most current trends in fashion and beauty. Our goal was to be able to increase reach of our commercial message by building awareness across the key target audience.

We translated these key insights within the construct of our proprietary engagement questions in the MRI re-contact study. We then came up with a list of titles spanning fashion and beauty, lifestyle, ethnic and general women’s publications. The engagement tool allowed us to select and quantify the magazines that married the commercial message to the editorial content of the magazine.

The results from our analysis of the return on objectives showed an increase in total impressions of 7% and increased overall delivery goals by 12%.

Brand B is a product that we wanted to reach mothers with children. The product had a unique offering. In this case, television was the primary medium to reach the target. However, magazines were tactically used to provide more in-depth information on the product.

We selected several engagement factors that helped us quantify placement in publications providing advice and also concentrating on parental issues. Among all the titles on the plan, we evaluated the titles engagement indices and corresponding accountability metric as measured in a syndicated service here in the US called Vista^{viii}.

In tracking the magazines that were measured to date in Vista, we have found our overall engagement indices indexed at 122 on action taken of the magazines that had the highest engagement scores from the MRI re-contact study.

In summary

As mentioned before, we feel that the print medium is in a unique position to leverage and engagement-based planning approach. Our research identified six key drivers that dimensionalize the readership experience. We developed a tool and a process that allows our print planners to infuse engagement-based metrics into their existing approach. Initial results have been very encouraging, as evidenced by the case studies we have shared. We will continue to refine and develop our planning process as we close the loop with the output-based accountability metrics that the Vista data provides us with.

Our approach will develop over time, as we continue to learn more about how consumers engage with print. We are working with industry executives to develop currencies for engagement based planning. Starcom Mediavest Group is also involved with the American Association of Advertising Agencies, Advertising Research Foundation and Association of National Advertisers to establish an engagement metric across media.

In the meantime, we are working with magazine publishers on web-based studies to better understand engagement on a title level. Our objectives for these studies are to continue our exploration of how women engage with print and to extend our learnings to men. We also have embarked on an initiative to understand how engagement differs for business-to-business categories.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Jason Patterson for the countless hours spent helping with the data collection and analyses. The Starcom Print Investments Groups for their partnership in evolving our engagement based planning process. And a special thanks to Helen Katz and Kate Sirkin for their support.

SOURCE

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ⁱ Starcom Print Positioning Study, Boston Worldwide Readership Symposium 2003

ⁱⁱ TV Dimensions, 2005, Arbitron, 2005 Radio Today and Magazine Dimensions, 2003

ⁱⁱⁱ Starcom Print Positioning Study, Boston WWRS 2003

^{iv} Pink sheets or Publisher circulation statements are released by the Audit Bureau of Circulation on a six month basis. These statements are declarations, not audited statements, of total circulation by Publishers for the individual magazines. Audits on the statement typically take twelve to eighteen months to be released. Pink statements reflect circulation across all distribution outlets (e.g. for single copy sales, subscription and public placed). Statements provide the average price paid starting with the July 2003 statements.

^v Involvement Collation was represented by Reader's Digest, National Geographic, FamilyFun, (now defunct) Victoria, Family Handyman, Smithsonian Magazine and Guidepost.

^{vi} Source MRI, re-contact study questions are proprietary to each participant. Starcom questions are proprietary to Starcom Mediavest Group. From MRI technical guide for re-contact studies: Survey methodology is: an advance postcard was mailed to all survey participants. MRI mailed to each selected name a questionnaire "packet" consisting of a twelve-page questionnaire, a hand stamped return envelope addressed to Mediamark Research Inc., and a covering letter from the CEO and President of MRI, Kathi Love, emphasizing the need for cooperation and prompt attention to completing the questionnaire. In addition, an incentive of \$10 was included in the packet. Each "packet" was mailed in a hand-stamped MRI envelope with typewritten names and addresses. In addition, each Omnibus respondent's name was entered in a drawing to win one of eight cash prizes (two \$1,000 prizes, two \$500 prizes or four \$250 prizes). A follow-up mailing was made to those who had not responded to the initial mailing and, once again, each Omnibus respondent's name was entered in a drawing to win one of eight cash prizes (two \$1,000 prizes, two \$500 prizes or four \$250 prizes). Questionnaires were accepted for processing until a specific date (April 20, 2004 for the 2004 study, April 18, 2005 for the 2005 study).

^{vii} Vista is a syndicated study fielded by Affinity Research. Fieldwork collected from an internet panel of issue readers. Vista measures over 55 magazine titles.