PRINT WEAROUT REVISITED

Karen Ring, Dr. Julian Baim, Dr. Martin Frankel, Dr. Michal Galin, GfK MRI Britta Cleveland, Meredith Corporation

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

How long should a creative execution run before being replaced by another one? This is one of the most often asked questions in media planning and relates to the nature of advertising wearout.

Wearout is defined as the point at which an advertisement begins to lose the ability to achieve its communication objectives and generate a response. Wearout theory holds that repetitive exposure to the same advertising execution will cause the advertising level of effectiveness to go down. The concept is based on learning theory which is founded in the idea that communication of a message requires repeated exposure up to the threshold point beyond which no new learning takes place. Going beyond that level may even provoke a negative effect. Consumers may become irritated by excessive exposure and formulate a negative impression of the ad and advertiser. Therefore, it may be more accurate to think of the *consumer's* response wearing out, rather than the ad itself.

There exists over 50 major explorations of wearout, most of which are centered around television commercial wearout. Across this body of research many effectiveness criteria have been studied (Wicken and Scott, 1998):

- Attention
- Reminder potential
- Persuasion
- Awareness
- Attitude change
- Reinforcement
- Purchase intent
- Likeability
- Competitive imagery
- Sales/behavior
- Electronic responses

Wearout has been difficult to measure: Factors such as frequency of exposure, time frame, creative quality, context, and positioning are difficult to control for and must be consistent over time in order to achieve conclusive results.

The Nature of Wearout

Wearout is a function frequency, flighting, and messaging of a single creative. Because of these variables, there are many factors that can influence the rate of wearout. Everything from the creative execution itself to media scheduling and competition can have an impact. Creatively, advertisements perceived by the consumer to be confusing, annoying or of poor quality are likely to wearout quickly. The consumer becomes turned off and inattentive to future exposures. Conversely, messaging that is extremely compelling (free car!!) may need limited frequency. Competitive advertising activity also can affect the freshness with which consumers see an ad, and of course, the media schedule weight is obviously an important factor. Since clearly an ad cannot start to wearout until someone sees it, the lower the frequency of exposure, the longer the execution will last. Wearout is also dependent on exposure frequency over a specified timeframe. For a single execution, a frequency of ten over the course of a year would likely produce very different results in a wearout analysis than a frequency of one a day for ten days.

Since every advertising campaign has its own unique qualities, there are no firm rules that dictate the point when the consumer becomes inattentive to a commercial message. There are, however, both strategic and quantitative considerations that are of assistance when addressing the wearout issue for a specific campaign. First, strategically, the following will summarize several important points learned from the many research studies conducted on this topic over the past 50 years. Remember, however, that most of these studies were specifically geared towards television commercial wearout, and while many of the points make sense as guidelines for the print media, they may not, in fact, be completely applicable.

- Repetition aids learning. However, too much too soon may be counter-productive. Scheduling heavy media weight
 at the start of a new campaign may wearout the new message faster. Delay between exposures within a time period
 slows down wearout.
- The possible negative effects of high frequency campaigns can be lessened by varying the execution of the same theme.

- Given the same frequency of exposure, a single execution will wearout faster than a pool of executions.
- · Wearout occurs more quickly for heavy consumers of a given media than for light media consumers.
- After the first ad flight is complete, it can be removed and brought back at a later date. However, because some viewers will recall the earlier flight, the second flight can be expected to wearout more quickly than the first.

The guidelines above that relate to print are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1	
FACTORS IMPACTING RATE OF WEAROUT	
ACCELERATE WEAROUT	RETARD WEAROUT
Continuity flighting	Hiatus between flights
Single creative execution	Pool of ads for product
Simple copy points	Multiple copy points
Low entertainment value	High entertainment value
Concentrated time frame	Broad timeframe

Print Wearout

While there has been much research devoted to understanding television commercial wearout, very little work has been done in the area of print wearout. In print, wearout is usually phrased in terms of how many times a reader is exposed to the same creative execution before it loses its ability to generate a response, historically measured in term of ad awareness or recall. Speculation abounds as to the nature of how wearout occurs in television relative to print. Some of the reasons for these differences can be attributed to the following:

Print is an active medium in which the reader controls their experience. The reader actively chooses an ad if it is
relevant for them and absorbs the message within their own timeframe. TV advertising messages must be learned in
30 second or 15 second increments and thus may require higher levels of frequency to fully communicate a
message.

"Magazine advertising is typically more informative than it is entertaining, and it is learned semantically. The magazine reader actively chooses to read the ad, and deliberately evaluates the relevance of the message to his/her needs; the information immediately becomes something that the consumer "knows" about the brand, and ceases to exist as a memory of an "advertisement." (Scott and Zack, 1999)

- Frequency of exposure to a magazine ad is far lower than for TV commercials. Average frequency of exposure to a magazine ad is roughly three, and is consumed over a longer time period than TV. It isn't likely that a reader will be exposed to the same ad within a concentrated timeframe in the same way that a television viewer is. The longer time lag between magazine exposures means that a certain amount of "forgetting" of the ad message will occur before the next exposure, thus readers will be less likely to tire of an ad over time.
- Magazine messaging is more targeted than TV. Work done by Millward Brown in the early 90's found that on
 average, ad awareness response from the first exposure to print ads is 1.8 times higher than TV. Thus the initial
 efficiency of a typical magazine ad is greater than the initial efficiency of the typical TV ad. (Wicken and Solomon,
 1998)

The core difference between print versus TV wearout is that readers have more control over the ads they are reading than the ads they are viewing. They actively choose what they are going to read and an ad that is relevant for the reader at that point in time will hold their attention and thus be more memorable than a television ad that may require more repetition for the message to be remembered.

Historical Perspective

The subject of wearout has long interested advertising practioners, researchers, and theorists. Research exists dating back to the 1960's on the effects of repeat exposure on consumers and brands. The bulk of this historical research has explored these effects within the television environment because the nature of TV advertising is built upon a framework of multiple message exposure within a relatively short of amount of time. It is quite common for a consumer to be exposed to the same television commercial multiple times within a week or even a day for heavy viewers

The first major study was conducted by the Schwerin Research Corporation in 1966 and concluded that there was evidence that TV advertising did wear out. Val Appel's seminal 1971 paper, *On Advertising Wearout*, furthered the understanding of wearout by looking at whether different kinds of ads wearout at different rates. He found that TV commercials that were highly memorable had a different wearout pattern than less memorable ads. He concluded, "Unlike the low scoring commercials, successive exposures of the high scoring commercials initially produced significantly higher levels of recall, indicating increased learning of the advertising message. In the case of the low scoring commercials, wearout appears to begin immediately, with successive advertising exposures resulting in decreasing recall levels." (Appel, 1971) His data suggested that good commercials wearout, whereas poorly done ads fade so fast from memory that they don't even have a chance to wearout.

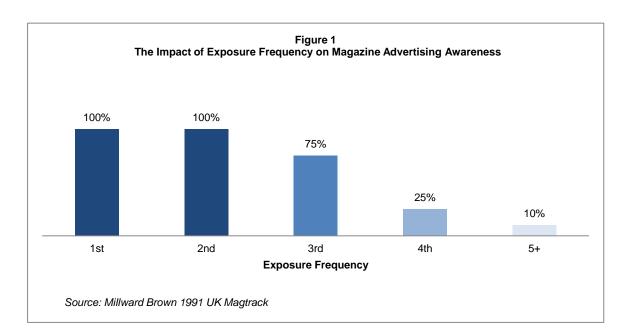
Although there have been well over 50 major studies and explorations of television wearout published over the past 50 years, there still exists no consensus on the exposure level when it begins, or the timeframe for when it occurs. Synthesizing the results of many of these studies show wearout for television occurring anywhere within a frequency range of 3-18 exposures, and within timeframes ranging from 1-18 months. (Wicken and Solomon, 1998)

Although wearout has been thought to be a phenomenon of television, there has been some exploration of this on print throughout the 70's and 80's by companies such as Starch, McGraw-Hill, and the now defunct Industrial Advertising Research Institute. Interestingly, many of these studies focused on wearout within trade publications.

Setting the Benchmark: Millward Brown

In 1991, Millward Brown conducted what was to become landmark research on creative wearout in magazines, the results of which are some of the most often cited data on this topic.

The findings from their research in the UK revealed that there did appear to be some creative wearout in magazines. They observed that at the third exposure frequency level advertising awareness response begins to deteriorate, and drops significantly at the fourth exposure level, as illustrated in Figure 1. Subsequent exposures still register as a reminder of the brand message even though they do not contribute additional advertising awareness. They cautioned, however, that this benchmark would not necessarily apply to all categories, but in the absence of any proprietary data could serve as a starting point for optimizing a frequency strategy.



In 1998, Millward Brown undertook a study designed to determine if the findings of the UK study could be confirmed in the US. They concluded that the "findings from this analysis of US in-market tracking study data certainly appear to confirm the presence of wearout in creative contributions to magazine ad awareness as shown some time ago in the UK analysis. The general pattern of wearout noted in the US seems to broadly agree with the UK results." (Scott and Zack, 1999) The 1998 research also analyzed wearout of a creative pool of ads, producing the following insights:

• The overall "useful life" of the pool was longer with more ads. Ads running in the same pool should have different creative content in order to mute wearout effects.

• Media plans that minimize duplication between publications can extend message delivery over time. Media plans with high levels of duplication among publications should employ different ads to avert creative wearout and sustain the "useful life" of the pool.

This rule holds true across most categories, however luxury brands provide an important exception. Research made public by IPC Magazines in the UK showed that for prestigious, aspirational brands, such as upscale perfumes and leather goods, the wearout threshold is extended. The brand was the "hero" of the ad, and the message continued to resonate with readers beyond the 3+ OTS.

BETTER HOMES & GARDENS WEAROUT STUDY

Purpose

In 2012 GfK MRI Starch partnered with *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine (BHG) on a research study to address the question of wearout in magazines. The purpose of the study was to determine if wearout exists for print and if so, at which exposure level. There has been no significant piece of new research done on this topic in fifteen years, and with new technologies enabling new methodologies, we were now able to investigate wearout outside of a lab setting.

Meredith's client, Ken's Steak House Salad Dressings, provided an opportunity to serve as a case study for this project. This client was ideal for three reasons:

- 1. It was their first ever advertising campaign (in any media) so there was no previous awareness of the product due to advertising exposure.
- The print campaign ran exclusively in Meredith publications which facilitated measurement at specific exposure levels across multiple titles.
- 3. The campaign ran over a consecutive monthly time frame, which is critical in the wearout equation.

The Ken's Steak House Salad Dressing print campaign ran in the following Meredith publications from April 2012 – October 2012:

- Better Homes & Gardens: April, May, June, July, August, October 2012 (6x)
- Family Circle: April, May, June, July, August, October 2012 (6x)
- Ladies' Home Journal: April, May, June, July, August, September 2012 (6x)
- Parents: April, May, June, July, August, September 2012 (6x)

Study Design

The study was conducted from May 2012 – October 2012. An online survey was administered each month, excluding September, to a sample pool of 7,500 from the BHG Online Panel "BHG Neighbor Network", managed by Research Solutions, Inc (RSI). The sample quota was 500 completes per survey wave for a total sample of 2,500 respondents. Ken's did not run an ad in the BHG September issue, so there was no fieldwork that month.

It should be noted that exposure to the first Ken's ad running in the April issues was captured in the first survey wave that launched in May.

The surveys launched approximately four weeks after the BHG on-sale date. The following outlines the fieldwork dates and length of time in the field:

- May 2012 issue: May 23 May 27 (4 days)
- June 2012 issue: June 11 June 23 (12 days)
- July 2012 issue: July 19 July 24 (5 days)
- August 2012 issue: August 16 August 20 (4 days)
- October 2012 issue: October 18 October 24 (6 days)

The survey participation incentive was two \$500 American Express gift cards per study wave, for a total incentive cost of \$5,000.

The panel company, RSI, instituted lockouts for the first three waves. For waves 4 and 5 (August and October) panel members who received an invite to participate in waves 1, 2 or 3 but did not respond or click-through the sweepstakes pass-through screens were reinvited to participate.

Panelists were shown covers of the BHG test issues and asked about their readership of those issues. Readers were asked about their readership of the current issue, as well as their readership of prior BHG issues going back to April. For example, here is how the question appeared in the July survey wave:

Please look for a moment at the covers featured on <u>the paper version</u> of the April-July issues of Better Homes and Gardens.

If you read or looked into <u>the paper version</u> of <u>Better Homes and Gardens</u>, please select the cover or covers that you read, otherwise select "No, I did not read or look into either of these issues".

(Show April cover) Yes, I read or looked into this (Month) issue (Show May cover) Yes, I read or looked into this (Month) issue (Show June cover) Yes, I read or looked into this (Month) issue (Show July cover) Yes, I read or looked into this (Month) issue No, I did not read or look into the paper version of these issues

Using the same template as above, panelists were then asked about their readership of the other Meredith magazines carrying the Ken's Steak House ads: *Family Circle, Ladies Home Journal*, and *Parents*.

Collecting this additional readership data allowed us to segment the *BHG* exclusive readers from readers of multiple Meredith titles. From this we could examine ad exposure at the single title and multi-title levels. In addition, BHG panelists were asked to complete a modified version of the standard Starch survey for 10 advertisers running in that month's issue of *Better Homes & Gardens*. Panelists who indicated that they read the other Meredith titles, but were non-readers of the test issue of BHG were not asked the Ken's recall questions. Respondents were not asked about any Ken's ads which they may have seen in previous issues of BHG.

Analysis Framework

We arout is defined as the point at which an ad loses its effectiveness. To fit into the Starch paradigm, effectiveness was defined in the context of the following Starch metrics:

- Recall "Did you see or read any part of this ad when you first read the paper version of this issue?"
- Behavioral Response "As a result of seeing this ad, did you do any of the following?" Net of seven actions: Have a more favorable opinion about the advertiser, Visited the company's website, Looked for more information about the product/service, Recommended the product/service to someone, Considered purchasing the product/service, Purchased the product/service, Saved or bookmarked the ad.

Additionally, other Starch metrics were used for evaluation, including:

- How much of the ad was read: "How much of the written material did you read?" This is asked of respondents who noted an ad.
- Purchase Behavior: "Consider purchasing the product/service" and/or "Purchased the product/service." This question is included in the Actions Taken question that is asked of respondents who noted an ad
- Brand Awareness: "I'm unfamiliar with [the brand]." This question is asked prior to the ad recall questions.

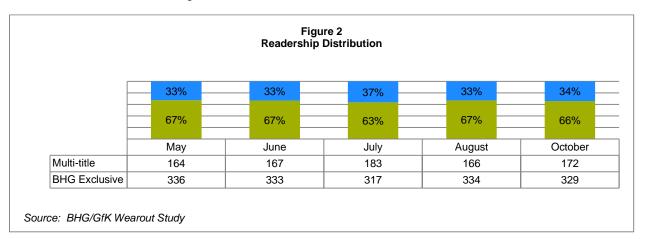
Respondents were split into two groups based on their potential exposure to the campaign:

- BHG Only: Readers of *Better Homes & Gardens* and none of the other three titles. These respondents had a maximum of six exposure opportunities.
- Multi-title Readers: Readers of *Better Homes & Gardens* and at least one of the other study titles. These respondents had a maximum of 24 exposure opportunities over the course of the campaign.

Results

Results were analyzed over two time dimensions: across the entire timeframe of the campaign test; and October 2012, which the last month of the campaign, and represented the maximum potential for ad exposure.

Distribution of readership was highly consistent across the months of the testing period. Of the four titles included in the study, two-thirds of total readership was in *Better Homes & Gardens* exclusively, while one-third included readership of one or more titles in addition to BHG. (Figure 2)

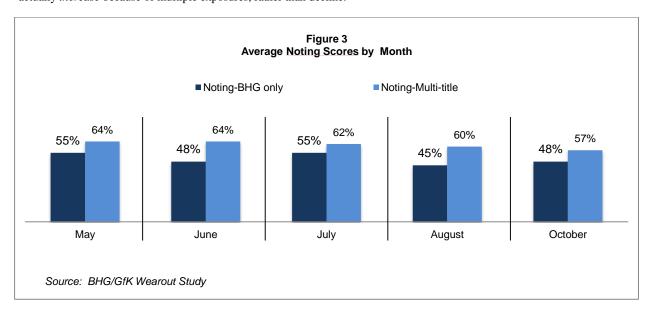


Average Scores by Month

Figure 3 illustrates the average noting and average actions taken scores by month. The sample was not longitudinal, and respondents were not asked whether they recalled the Ken's ads that appeared in previous issues, so these scores are specific to that month only. From this chart, we can make two observations:

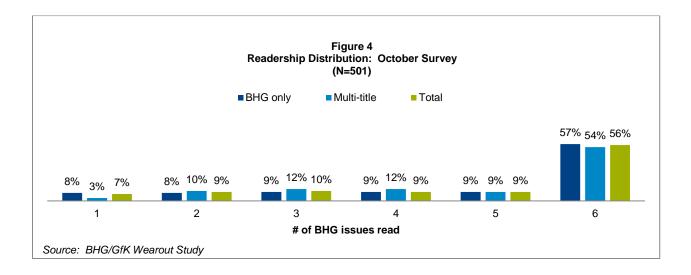
- 1. There is no consistent pattern of decline of wearout among the BHG exclusive readers at each point in time.
- 2. Average noting scores and actions taken scores are consistently higher among multi-title readers than for the BHG exclusive readers. We know that these respondents recalled the Ken's ad in BHG and had at least one OTS in another Meredith publication. This suggests that a multi-title schedule is more likely to contribute to higher noting and actions taken scores than a single title schedule.

The fact that noting was higher among the multi-title group would seem to suggest a counter argument to wearout: Noting may actually *increase* because of multiple exposures, rather than decline.

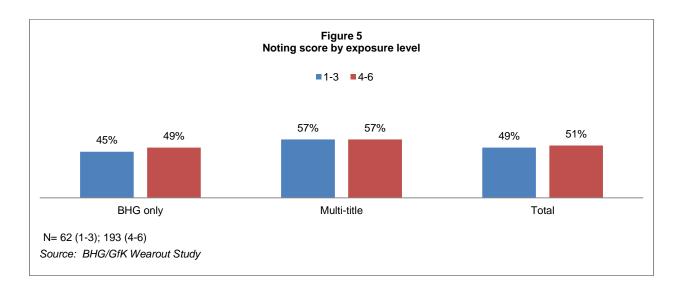


Maximum Exposure Potential

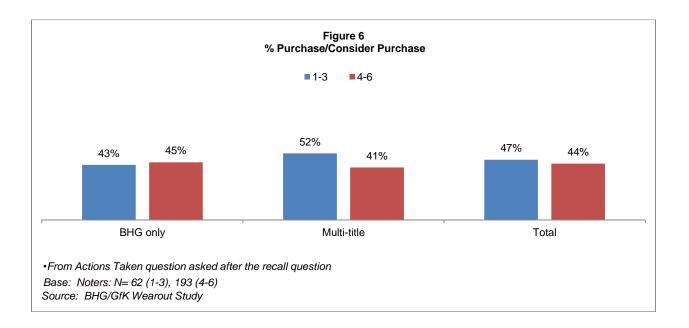
In order to isolate the maximum exposure potential for the Ken's ad we focused on the results from the October survey, which was the last month in the test timeframe. Figure 4 illustrates the readership distribution for the October survey respondents across the six BHG test issues. Out of 501 respondents, over half of BHG exclusive readers (57%) had the potential of seeing the Ken's ad six times, and over half of the multi-title readers (54%) had the potential of seeing the ad seven or more times. The remainder of the sample was distributed fairly evenly across 1-5 issues.



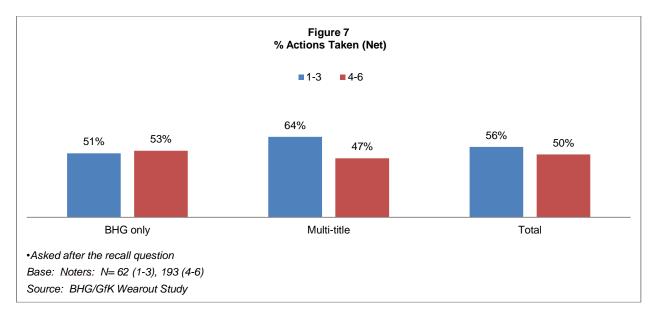
Exposure levels were then grouped to compensate for small sample sizes at the lower exposure levels (Figure 5). Ad noting was higher at the higher exposure levels (4-6) for the BHG exclusive readers and identical for the multi-title readers. This provides strong evidence that we arout may not be a phenomenon for magazines. In addition, overall noting scores were higher for multi-title readers, suggesting that ad exposure in multiple titles has a higher contribution to ad recall than exposure in a single title.



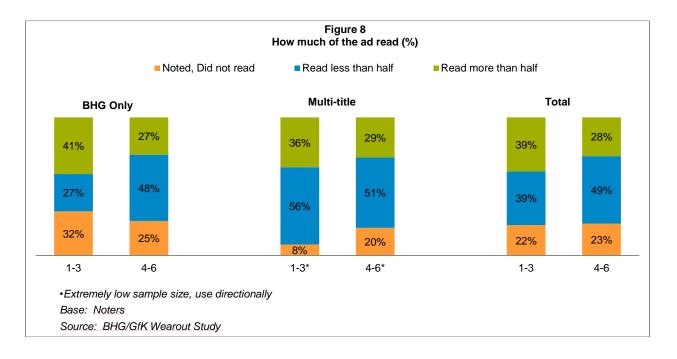
Results for questions related to purchase and purchase consideration show a similar pattern to the noting results: purchase potential was higher among multi-title readers vs. BHG only readers (52% vs. 43%). Although the multi-title readers could have only been exposed a maximum of six times in BHG, their actual exposure potential (16-24 exposures) was much greater since they were also exposed to the ad in other titles. The data appear to suggest that extreme levels of exposure (at least seven exposures or more) may not continue to drive higher levels of purchase (as evidenced by the 11 point difference among multi-title readers), however tests of statistical significance show no difference at the 95% confidence level, thus we cannot conjecture that these results are meaningful. (Figure 6)



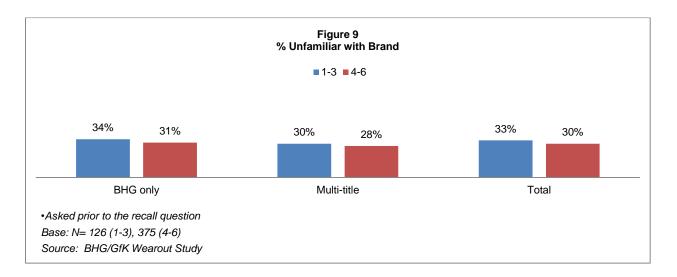
When looking at net actions taken, we see a similar pattern as purchase consideration: likelihood to take an action decreases at high exposure levels (Figure 7). Again, the exposure levels for multi-title readers at the upper end of the scale represent a potential for 16 to 24 exposures. Fewer respondents took action at these extreme levels, possibly because they may have already taken an action at the time of initial exposure. However, due to low sample sizes, statistical tests show no meaningful difference at the 95% confidence level.



Another metric we examined was how much of the ad's copy was read. ("How much of the written material did you read?") Not surprisingly, less of the copy was read by respondents at the higher exposure level. While percent of copy read is not a direct indicator of wearout (data reported earlier are more representative of effectiveness measures) it is interesting to note that although less of the ad is read over time, the ad is still serves to remind the consumer of the product. Readers are aware of the ad message and will take action without having to read it again. (Figure 8)



The final wearout indicator in our analysis was brand awareness. ("Which of these statements best describes your opinion of each brand/company?"... "I'm unfamiliar with it.") As illustrated in Figure 9, unfamiliarity with the brand was slightly higher at the lower exposure levels. Although the purpose of the analysis was not to determine optimal levels for building awareness, anecdotally our analysis suggests that a minimum of four exposures may be necessary to increase brand awareness for an established product in this category. (Although Ken's is new to magazines, the brand has been around since 1941 and is available nationally. Lack of awareness of the brand may be due to external factors related to product distribution or non-usage of the product category in general.) Again, due to low sample sizes, there is no statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level.



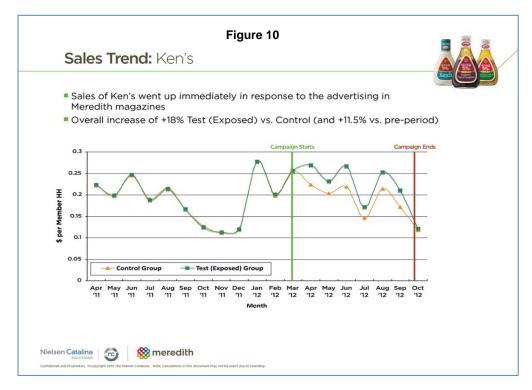
Summary of Findings

- Overall, the results from the study did not produce any definitive evidence of a pronounced wearout effect on ad recall for this campaign. Noting scores remained consistent across exposure levels.
- In comparing the results of the BHG exclusive readers to the multi-title readers, the overall noting scores were consistently higher for multi-title readers. This suggests that ad exposure in multiple titles has a higher contribution to ad recall than exposure in a single title.
- There may be some evidence of a wearout effect on purchase behavior and actions taken but the data are far from
 conclusive, and are only suggestive at higher exposure levels. However, due to low sample sizes, the results were
 not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

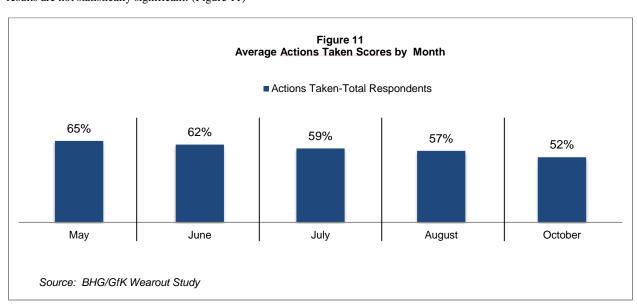
 Brand awareness levels increased slightly across the length of the campaign. However, we must apply the same statistical caveat as above.

Validation: Sales Results

Sales results for Ken's based on the campaign in Meredith titles seem to validate our findings. Meredith households (test group) purchased 18% more Ken's Salad Dressing than the matched control group during the campaign period, and sales increased 11.5% among those households compared to the same time period a year ago. Tracking analysis indicates that the sales response to advertising began immediately after the magazines went on sale and continued throughout the campaign period. Sales for the test group were consistently higher relative to the control group over the length of the campaign, indicating an absence of message wearout. (Figure 10)



As shown above, exposure to the ad continued to produce sales results among the test group compared to the control group throughout the length of the campaign, with the decline in both groups most likely due to seasonal effects on purchase behavior. Anecdotally, our Actions Taken data are consistent with the overall pattern of the sales trend over the same period, though the results are not statistically significant. (Figure 11)



CONCLUSION

Overall, our findings suggest that magazine wearout may not be a concern for advertisers running in monthly magazines. Unlike the results from the Millward Brown studies in the 90's, our data did not confirm the presence of wearout in monthly magazines. Any impact of repeat exposure was observed at levels well above the 3+ benchmark established by the UK Magtrak studies though these effects are suggestive at best due to low sample sizes. Sales data provided by Meredith further calls into question any negative effects of repeat exposure.

Wearout in magazines has become a natural extension of the wearout question for television. The television transactional paradigm allows for the potential of frequent exposures over a short amount of time in order to ensure that the advertising message is fully communicated. Viewers who are unable to avoid this overexposure may become turned off and irritated by the commercial. But differences in how both media are consumed provide rationale for why wearout may not be in issue for monthly magazines. Reader control and the lapse of time between exposures do not allow for ad fatigue in the same way that frequent exposure to a television commercial does.

The implications of this analysis for advertisers are:

- 1. Print ads have a relatively long shelf-life, thereby reducing the need to produce new creative executions every month.
- 2. Brand messaging opportunities are maximized across a multi-title campaign versus a single title buy.
- 3. Magazines offer advertisers the ability to maintain awareness and recall of brand over a long period of time.

It is important to bear in mind that these results are based on a single CPG advertiser. Any subsequent testing could benefit from expanding the analysis to include:

- Weekly publications
- ·High interest or informational product categories, such as technology, electronics, or automotive
- Newer versus established brands

The results from this study, in conjunction with the sales data, validate and demonstrate magazines' ability to consistently impact behavior at multiple exposure levels.

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Appendix #1

Ken's Salad Dressing Creative Executions

• Ran in the April, June, and August 2012 issues of Better Homes & Gardens



• Ran in the May, July, and October 2012 issues of Better Homes & Gardens



Appendix # 2

Fieldwork launch dates:

Wave 1:

N = 7,416 evites deployed on 5/23/12; N = 6,719 reminders deployed on 5/24

Wave 2:

 $\overline{N} = 7,\overline{277}$ evites deployed on 6/11/12; N = 6,388 reminders deployed on 6/14 and N = 5971 second reminders deployed on 6/19

Wave 3:

 $\overline{N} = 7,290$ evites deployed on 7/19/12; N = 6,252 reminders deployed on 7/23

Wave 4:

N = 7,207 evites deployed on 8/16/12; N = 6,355 reminders deployed on 8/20

Wave 5:

N = 7,144 evites deployed on 10/18/12; N = 6,320 reminders deployed on 10/22/12 and N = 5972 second reminders deployed on 10/24

Appendix #3

Panelist invitation

Dear Panel Member:

WELCOME! to all of our new panel members and THANK YOU! to all of our existing members for your continued support.

Our latest survey is about the different types of magazines you read and how you may engage with them. The survey won't take more than 12 minutes to complete.

To show our appreciation, you'll have the chance to enter your name in a drawing to win one of two \$500 American Express gift cards!

CLICK HERE TO SHARE YOUR OPINIONS FOR A CHANCE TO WIN!

We have commissioned an independent research company, GfK MRI, to conduct the online survey. If you have questions while answering the survey, please contact them via email at BHGMagazineSurvey@gfkmri.com

We look forward to hearing from you and offer a big THANK YOU! for your continued help with The Better Homes and Gardens Neighbor Network.