

NUMBER

60

THE MPA RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Advertising Positioning

Is Front-of-Book Always the “Best” Position? When was the last time you heard an agency media planner say “Anywhere in the book is fine”? Usually they say, “I’d like the ad placed as close to the front of the book as possible, on the right hand side.” You reply, “But it’s been proved that it really doesn’t matter where the ad is placed.” The usual response is: *“WELL IF IT DOESN’T MATTER WHERE, THEN PUT IT IN THE FRONT!”*

But is front-of-book always the “best” position?

In fact, position alone generally, does not affect readership of an ad or increase awareness for a brand. *A strong creative execution will perform well regardless of its placement in the magazine.*

A “bad ad” will not perform well even if it is in the front of the book.

(continued)

MPA

Magazine Publishers of America

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE IN AD READERSHIP BASED UPON POSITION?

Not according to the data presented in this newsletter, which tends to dispel some of the prevailing myths surrounding advertising positioning and such related topics as:

- Front-of-book vs. back-of-book
- Covers vs. inside pages
- Left-hand vs. right-hand pages
- Ads facing editorial vs. ads facing other ads
- Size of advertisement
- Color of advertisement
- Size and color of advertisement
- Bleed vs. non-bleed ads

STARCH IS THE PRIMARY SOURCE ON AD POSITIONING

The primary source on ad positioning is Starch INRA Hooper, Inc. For several decades, Starch has measured the readership of magazine advertising (including the effectiveness of the use of color, size of ad, and bleed vs. non-bleed), on the basis of personal interviews with a sample of men and women who have read the issue in which the ad appeared.

Starch measures three degrees of readership:

NOTED: The percent who remember having previously seen the ad in the issue.

ASSOCIATED: The percent who saw any part of the ad that clearly indicates the brand or advertiser.

READ MOST: The percent who read 50 percent or more of the written material in the ad.

Based on *Starch Tested Copy* results, the following graphs refute some long-held assumptions, beliefs, propositions and misconceptions about positioning, size and color of magazine ads.

FRONT, MIDDLE OR BACK OF BOOK?

In June of 1989, *Starch Tested Copy* reported how ad positioning affects ad readership. A total of 105 issues of three business magazines and *Sports Illustrated* plus 10 women's books were studied. It should be noted that in the women's publications, 42 percent of the ads were located in the first third (tercile) of the book, 34 percent in the second and 24 percent in the third tercile. The business/men's publications had a more even distribution of ads.

The findings:

1A) Average Readership of All One-Page 4-Color Ads by Page Position In Magazines

Page Position	3 Business Publications & S.I.					
	Noted		Associated		Read Most	
	%	Index	%	Index	%	Index
1st Third	46%	107	39%	105	11%	110
Middle Third	43	100	37	100	10	100
Last Third	41	95	36	97	10	100

1B) Average Readership of All One-Page 4-Color Ads by Page Position In Magazines

Page Position	10 Women's Magazines					
	Noted		Associated		Read Most	
	%	Index	%	Index	%	Index
1st Third	53%	106	47%	107	12%	100
Middle Third	50	100	44	100	12	100
Last Third	49	98	44	100	12	100

Source: Starch Tested Copy, Volume 1, No.2 June 1989.

"Read Most" scores remain constant across all three position terciles. However, Noted and Associated scores fall slightly from the first through the third tercile, though not as much as many would assume.

When Starch controlled for product category and then for advertiser for the same ads analyzed above, the findings showed relatively less difference among the three terciles, for Noted scores, as shown below:

2) Ad Position in Magazine

Product Category Controlled

Page Position	3 Business Magazines & Sports Illustrated		10 Women's Magazines	
	% Noted	Index	% Noted	Index
1st Third	48%	102	53%	112
Middle Third	47	100	47	100
Last Third	44	94	44	94

Advertiser Controlled

1st Third	48%	96	49%	100
Middle Third	50	100	49	100
Last Third	49	98	45	92

Source: Starch Tested Copy, Volume 1, No.5 June 1989.

Back in June, 1960, Starch found similar results, which show virtually no change in index scores for the first vs. the last third of the magazine for ad readership:

3) Ad Position in Magazine

Page Position	Noted	Associated	Read Most
1st Third	107	107	100
Middle Third	100	100	100
Last Third	98	100	110

Source: Starch Tested Copy, Volume 1, No.4 1960

Note: Middle third is anchored at 100.

OTHER SOURCES SUPPORT STARCH FINDINGS ON POSITIONING

In 1985, *The New Yorker* commissioned The Pre-Testing Company, an independent research firm, to conduct a study on ad positioning. One of the main objectives was to determine the performance of identical ads appearing in different positions in the same and different magazines. Respondents were tested using a readership recording device known as the "clip-on". This half-ounce device either clips on to a respondent's glasses or is attached to an open-frame pair of glasses, recording viewer involvement with the magazine.

Each of the four magazines' respondents tested were divided into four sections or quarters. There were 75 respondents per magazine.

Read Most scores remain constant in front, middle and back-of-book.

Summarized below are the findings from this study for those respondent's claiming to have *definitely seen the ad*, for each of the magazines tested:

People

Magazine

Study

supports

research

from

Starch

and other

studies

on ad

positioning.

4) Ad Position in Magazine

Magazine	% Claim To Have Definitely Seen Ad			
	1st Qtr.	2nd Qtr.	3rd Qtr.	4th Qtr.
THE NEW YORKER	37%	45%	24%	37%
Magazine A	31	26	32	23
Magazine B	46	29	35	36
Magazine C	31	38	30	17

Source: The New Yorker, 1985

While differences do exist between each of the quarters, it is interesting to note that in 3 out of the 4 magazines tested, the first quarter isn't even the best as far as recall is concerned.

Findings from the *People Magazine Advertising Positioning Research Study* in April 1989 support the research presented thus far. The Pre Testing Company conducted the study, using a device known as the People Reader. This is a lamp with two cameras hidden in its pedestal, one focused on the eyes and one on the page of the magazine. Exposure is recorded electronically. There were 400 participants in the sample, 50 percent male and 50 percent female.

Results from the *People* study were compared to data from similar studies conducted by The Pre Testing Company from 1983-1989, which tested 24 magazines over that time period on brand name recall, reader involvement and competitive imagery. Data from both the study conducted for *People* and the comparative data from The Pre Testing Company (the "Normative" data) were based on positioning data gathered from ads appearing in the front, middle and back of the publications and left-hand and right-hand ads.

Following are the findings comparing the *People* study to normative results from previous Pretesting Company studies:

5) Page Position in Magazine

	Front Index	Middle Index	Back Index
Involvement			
PEOPLE Study	100	96	104
Normative	100	94	85
Recall			
PEOPLE Study	100	107	107
Normative	100	93	97
Competitive Imagery			
PEOPLE Study	100	99	98
Normative	100	87	92

Source: People Magazine Advertising Positioning Research Study, April 1989

One hundred *Business Week* ads from 1980 were Starched. Noted scores were compared for first vs. second half of the magazine, and first, middle and final third of the book. Findings show relatively no difference in position, as shown on the next page.

6) Page Position in Magazine

	% Noted	Index
1st Half	65.4%	100
2nd Half	64.0	98
Front	65.2	100
Middle	65.0	100
Back	64.5	99

Source: Business Week Ad Traffic Museum

FRONT VS. BACK OR RIGHT-HAND VS. LEFT- HAND PAGE?

It Doesn't Matter

Cahners Advertising Research conducted a study of all fractional and full-page ads appearing in 16 Cahners publications from 1972-1986. Ads were separated first by size, by black-and-white, and then by two-color and four-color. The 57,672 ads were divided into two categories:

Front: ads preceding the middle of the issue;

Back: ads positioned within or following the middle page.

Ads were categorized as left-hand or right-hand. Median Noted scores were collected. (Noted score is the percent of readers remembering seeing the ad in the tested issue.)

Findings indicated in chart 7 show ad readership remains relatively stable regardless of placement, either front or back or left-hand vs. right-hand page:

7) Page Position in Magazine

	Median % Noted Scores	
	Front	Back
Fractional		
Left	23%	28%
Right	23	23
1-Page, B&W		
Left	30	35
Right	31	32
1-Page, 2-Color		
Left	32	35
Right	33	34
1-Page, 4-Color		
Left	42	43
Right	43	43

Source: Cahner's Advertising Research Report, No. 116.2A

Based on the *People Magazine* Advertising Positioning Research Study, the following results of the study show indices for left and right-hand ads for the three criteria measured:

8) Left vs Right-Hand Page

	Left-Hand Index	Right-Hand Index
Involvement	100	100
Brand Name Recall	94	100
Competitive Imagery	103	100

Source: People Magazine Advertising Positioning Research Study, April 1989

COVERS VS. INSIDE PAGES

Covers Do Make a Difference

Position does play a role for ads appearing on covers. Starch addresses the issue for cover ads appearing on either the second, third, or fourth cover. The main focus is to determine which cover has the greatest increase in Noted scores over similar run-of-book ads. Findings reported in the October 1989 *Starch Tested Copy* conclude that overall, ads on the second cover earned the highest average Noted scores and register the greatest increases over run-of-book ads.

Among the five types of reader audiences measured (Women readers: 15 women's publications, Women readers: six dual audience publications, Men; six dual audience, Men: 10 consumer magazines and All readers: six business magazines), the findings below show that second cover has the greatest advantage over third and fourth cover with respect to percent difference in noted scores for similar run-of-book ads.

9) Covers vs Inside Pages

	Five Groups of Reader Audiences*	
	% Noted	Index
2nd Cover, 1-Pg. 4C	58%	129
Inside Page	45	100
3rd Cover, 1-Pg. 4C	49	106
Inside Page	46	100
4th Cover	55	125
Inside Page	44	100

*Controlled for size, color and product.

Source: Starch Tested Copy, Volume 1, No.9 October 1989

ADS FACING EDITORIAL OR FACING ADS

Ads Facing Ads Score Better than Ads Facing Editorial

In the *People Magazine* Advertising Positioning Research Study, measurements were also made on ads facing edit and ads facing ads.

While reader involvement would seem to favor those ads facing editorial (see below), recall and competitive imagery are slightly higher for ads facing other ads:

10) Ads Facing Edit vs Other Ads

	Facing Editorial Index	Facing Ads Index
Involvement	100	86
Recall	100	116
Competitive Imagery	100	102

Source: People Advertising Positioning Research Study, April 1989

As shown, although readers spend less time with ads facing other ads, they are more likely to recall them. Summarizing the rationale presented in *People's* Study, this apparent paradox may happen because readers are more involved with the editorial and therefore spend more time viewing ads facing edit. However, in the case of ads facing other ads, although readers may spend less time, they may be more likely to recall them because their full attention is given to the ad, rather than any preceding or following editorial.

In the *Starch Tested Copy*, vol.2, No.23 (January 1987), the effects of adjacent

material on ad readership are addressed. Starch looked at the contents of five women's magazines and divided the adjacent materials into 15 categories, listed below:

11) Type of Adjacent Material to Ads

Persons/People	Leisure	How-to-Gardening
Health	Interiors	Recipes
Crafts	Exteriors	Features
Entertainment	Travel	Picture Articles
Clothing	Continued-Articles	Table of Contents

The data were indexed so that ad scores in different magazines could be combined. All ads were one-page. Readership scores were indexed with the average equal to 100. Differences between the highest and lowest scoring ads for each of the categories were then compared.

According to Starch, results suggest adjacent editorial material definitely *does* affect the ability of an ad to communicate. As noted by Starch, difference between highest and lowest scoring ads are not entirely due to adjacent material. Below are the categories of adjacent material that may be more likely to positively affect ad readership:

12)

Type of Adjacent Material	% of Ads Opposite in Highest Scoring Group
Feature Articles	67%
Table of Contents	61
Person/People	49
Articles w/Recipes	49

Following are the types of material that appear to be *less* beneficial as adjacent material for ad readership:

13)

Type of Adjacent Material	% of Ads Opposite in Lowest Scoring Group
Gardening Articles	59%
Entertainment	48
House Exterior Articles	47
Craft Articles	40

Source: Starch Tested Copy, Volume 2 No.23 January 1987

SIZE OF AD

Spreads Usually Perform Better than Full-Page Ads

To determine if advertising readership is influenced by ad size, Cahnners Advertising Performance Studies analyzed 87,823 advertisements that appeared in 48 Cahnners publications from 1972-1989. Included were all half-page or larger ads. Ads were divided into categories by size, and comparisons were made after median noted scores were tallied.

Noted scores below represent the percentage of readers who remembered seeing the ad in the issue surveyed.

14) Size of Ad

	Median % Noted Scores
Fractional Ads	24%
1-Page Ads	40
2-Page Spreads	55

Source: Cahnners Advertising Research Report, No.110.1B

Adjacent editorial material does affect the ability of an ad to communicate.



Spreads
perform
about 25%
better than
full-page
ads.

In an earlier report from *Starch Tested Copy*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (May 1981), ad size is addressed with findings compared to a similar report from *Starch Tested Copy* in 1970. The findings below are based on Starch data compiled in 1970 and 1980. Over 31,000 ads were used in the Starch analysis.

15) Size of Ad

	1970		1980	
	% Noted	Index	% Noted	Index
1/2 Page	25%	62	27	69
Full-Page	40	100	39	100
2-Page Spread	50	125	50	128

Source: *Starch Tested Copy*, Volume 1 No. 6 May 1981

In the Chart above, full pages are set at 100.

The Starch findings are relatively consistent with the findings reported by Cahners. On average, according to Starch, spreads perform about 25% better than full-page ads, and a typical half-page is about two-thirds as effective as a full-page in attracting readership.

In a more recent issue of *Starch Tested Copy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (February 1989), effect of ad size is addressed once again. A total of 7500 one-page and two-page spread black and white ads that appeared in three business publications and seven women's publications were tested.

Shown below are average noted scores and indices for size of ad for the 3 business publications:

16) Size of Ad

	Business Publications			
	Black & White		Four-Color	
	% Noted	Index	% Noted	Index
1 Page	29%	100	42%	100
2-Page Spread	34	117	52	124

Source: *Starch Tested Copy*, Volume 1 No. 1 February 1989

Scores increase for two-page spread four-color ads by 24 percent vs. one-page four-color ads and 17 percent for two-page spread black and white ads vs. one-page black and white ads.

Similarly, in the seven women's publications, findings shown below reveal two-page spread four-color ads scored 26 percent higher than the one-page four-color ads.

17) Size of Ad

	Seven Women's Publications			
	Four-Color One-Page Ad		Four-Color Two-Page Spread	
	% Noted	Index	% Noted	Index
	47%	100	59%	126

Source: *Starch Tested Copy*, Volume 1 No. 1 February 1989

COLOR OF AD

Four-Color ads vs. Black and White Ads Have Dramatic Impact on Ad Readership

In the same *Starch Tested Copy*, (Vol. 1., No. 1. 2/89), Starch also addresses the issue of color and its impact on ad readership. Findings show four-color two-page spread ads scored 53 percent higher than black and white two-page spread ads, and four-color one-page ads scored 45 percent higher than comparable black and white ads.

In an earlier issue of *Starch Tested Copy* (Vol. 1, No. 6 May 1981), findings on impact of ad color on ad readership reveal the following:

18) Color of Ad

	% Noted	Index
Black & White*	29%	100
2-Color	24	83
4-Color	41	141

*Black & White ads indexed at 100.

Source: *Starch Tested Copy*, Volume 1 No.6 May 1981

Cahners Advertising Research reports four-color ads receive 39 percent higher readership scores than black and white ads, shown below:

19) Color of Ad

	Median % Noted Scores
Black & White	33%
2-Color	34
4-Color	46

Source: Cahners Advertising Research Report No.110.3A 1989

These data are based on 69,590 ads that appeared in 48 Cahners publications from 1972-1989. Included were all full-page or larger ads. The ads were divided into three categories: Black and white, two-color and four-color.

SIZE AND COLOR OF AD

Four-Color Spread Has Significantly Higher Scores than One-Page Black-and-White Ad.

When both size and color are considered together in impact upon ad readership, we see the following:

20) Size & Color of Ad

	% Noted	Index
1-Page B&W	29%	100
4-Color Double Page Spread	52	179

Source: *Starch Tested Copy*, Volume 1 No.3 February 1989

In an earlier issue of *Starch Tested Copy* (Vol.1, No.6, 1981), effects of size and color on ad readership were compared to a similar report from 1970, findings shown below:

21) Size & Color of Ad

	1970			1980		
	1/2 Page	Full Page	Spread	1/2 Page	Full Page	Spread
B&W	63	100	123	74	100	116
2-Color	60	89	**	61	90	**
4-Color	94	123	154	100	132	171

Source: *Starch Tested Copy*, Volume 1 No.6 1981

Results are shown in indices with black-and-white and full-page ads set at 100.

**Insufficient ads for analysis.

Findings from Cahners Advertising Research Report, shown below, indicate ad readership increases with size and use of color:

Ad readership increases with size and use of color.

22) Size & Color of Ad

Median % Noted Scores

Fractional	24%
1-Page B&W	32
1-Page 2-Color	34
1-Page 3&4-Color	43
B&W Spread	43
4-Color Spread	56

Source: Cahners Advertising Research Readership Report No. 105.1A 1989

BLEED VS. NON-BLEED ADS

Bleed Ads Have Definite Advantage Over Non-Bleed Ads

Starch Tested Copy, (Vol.1, No.5 1981) presents findings based on a study of 3527 full-page ads in color and black and white. Shown below are readership scores for bleed vs. non-bleed ads:

23) Bleed vs Non-Bleed

	# of Ads	Bleed Index	# of Ads	Non-Bleed Index
1-Page, 4-C	1368	115	1232	100
1-Page, B&W	476	111	451	100
Combined Average		113		100

Source: *Starch Tested Copy*, Volume 1 No.5 1981

Based on the findings above, the average gain in readership for ads with bleed layouts is 13 percent.

RANKING ORDER OF MAGAZINE ADVERTISING SIZE IMPACT

Multiple-Page Ads Have More Impact

1. Three single-page ads following each other on the right side.
2. Two single-page ads in different sections of the same magazine on the right side.
3. Double-page spread.
4. Single-page ads on right.
5. Single-page ads on left with strip on right.
6. Single-page ads on left.
7. Checkerboard ads on right.
8. Checkerboard ads on left.
9. Half-page ad, upper right.
10. Half-page ad, lower right.
11. Strip on both right and left sides.
12. Half-page ad, upper left.
13. Half-page ad, lower left.
14. Third-page block, lower right.
15. Strip (one-column) extreme right.
16. Strip, extreme left.

Source: The PreTesting Company

SUMMARY

- A strong creative execution will perform well regardless of its placement in the magazine.
- A "bad ad" will not perform well even if it is in the front-of-the-book.
- Covers do make a difference.
- Ads facing ads score better than ads facing editorial.
- Spreads usually perform better than full-page ads.
- Four-color spreads have significantly higher scores than one-page black-and-white ads.
- Bleed ads have definite advantage over non-bleed ads.
- Multiple page ads have more impact.

CONCLUSION

An exceptionally strong ad will usually perform well no matter where it is placed in a magazine.

Marian Cooper

NEWSLETTERS OF RESEARCH—BACK ISSUES

Partial listing of available back issues:

- #40 VALS-As A Media Evaluation Tool
- #41 When Discretionary Dollars Talk, Do Advertisers Listen?
- #42 Changing Levels of Automobile Advertising Effectiveness
- #43 Some Basic Magazine Values for the Advertiser
- #44 Now You See It! Now You Don't!
- #45 Advertising Exposure in Cable Homes
- #46 Magazine Almanac...Facts, Trends & Perspectives That Can Work For You
- #47 Magazine Infobasics 1 * 2 * 3: A Program For Increased Sales Of Microcomputers And Software
- #48 Segmenting Markets and Media with Cluster-Plus
- #49 New Product Success Begins With The Super Innovators
- #50 The Many Faces Of America's Working Woman
- #51 You Select The Target, But...The Medium Selects The Audience
- #52 Making Leisurestyles Work For You
- #53 Magazine Almanac...Information Is Your Competitive Edge
- #54 The GET \$et...Beautiful People Who Buy More
- #55 A Documentary On The Power Of Magazines
- #56 Magazine Almanac...Facts, Trends & Perspectives That Can Work For You
- #57 It's Dinnertime...Do You Know Where Your Kids Are?
- #58 How to Launch New Products Successfully in Today's Crazy Mixed-up Micromarketing Morass.
- #59 The 1990-91 Magazine Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for Advertisers, Ad Agencies and Magazine Marketers

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