

Making Magazine Creative Accountable: How to Improve Magazine Ad Effectiveness

Creative Diagnostic Tool Only

Consumer engagement with advertising has emerged as a key discussion point in the ongoing effort to improve advertising accountability.

Research has shown that creative quality is the most important factor in affecting advertising results, although media engagement also plays a role.* Therefore, Magazine Publishers of America (MPA) wanted to know: **Can learning from magazine engagement research be used to strengthen the effectiveness of magazine advertising creative? And if so, how?**

In tackling this topic, MPA first examined the impact of magazine engagement on advertising effectiveness, including whether findings would be broadly applicable across ad categories and magazine genres. Then MPA explored how learning could be applied to creative development.

Based on study findings, MPA has developed an easy-to-administer diagnostic tool that allows advertisers to assess consumer engagement with magazine advertising creative—and consequently help to strengthen ad recall and action-taking.

Key Findings

- **More engaged readers are more likely to recall and act on magazine advertising than less engaged readers.**
- **The overall relationship between greater reader engagement and higher ad effectiveness holds true consistently across advertising categories and magazine genres.**
- **Magazine reader engagement is driven by magazine advertising, not just editorial content.**
- **Using engagement metrics to pre-test advertising creative can help to improve ad recall and action taking by providing valuable insights into how consumers connect with the ad.**

*Sources: "Identifying Key Metrics for Magazine Planning," Ware, Baron and Edge, 2005 Worldwide Readership Research Symposium; "Exploring Media Engagement," Eubank and Griffiths, 2007 ARF Audience Measurement 2.0

How to use the creative diagnostic tool

Based on test results with advertisers in five different product categories, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the creative diagnostic tool developed by MPA can help to predict magazine advertising impact and, as such, could be a valuable tool in magazine creative development. The tool can be used to understand emotional connections as an end in itself or help to predict magazine advertising impact. Importantly, since tests can be conducted online, they can be executed inexpensively and quickly. The turnaround time for individual tests took less than 10 days, once the ads to be tested had been selected and the desired target had been identified.

An agency or advertiser who wants to employ the creative diagnostic tool should use the following guidelines:

- 1. Select the ads to be analyzed.** The analysis may include executions for your own brand(s) and/or those of a competitor. The ads should be easily distinguished from one another (e.g., a different headline alone does not provide enough variation to be tested using this method).
- 2. Work with a research company that can effectively survey your target.** The research company should be able to identify consumers based on your designated target audience, which might be defined by product usage habits, demographic characteristics or readers of magazines most likely to be on your media schedule. The study presented in this document was administered online, which provided fast turnaround and cost efficiency. However, in-person or mail interviews can also be used. Whatever method is chosen, the survey approach should be consistent over time, if there is a desire to compare results from multiple surveys and/or build a database to enhance learning.
- 3. Administer the survey.** Respondents should see only one ad. When the ad is presented, ask respondents to indicate their agreement with the 26 experiences for the ad, using the questionnaire on page 12. While over time the number of statements may be refined, MPA recommends using all 26 statements at this time, since what drives engagement for specific categories and demographic groups is not yet known.
- 4. Generate enough responses for valid analysis.** Ideally, results will include at least 200 respondents. This will allow for segmentation of responses, such as by gender and broad age and income groups within the overall target audience.
- 5. Assess which ad generates overall higher engagement levels.** Calculate the percent of engaged readers for each of the 26 statements by adding the percent of those who somewhat and strongly agree. Total the percent of strongly/somewhat engaged readers for all 26 statements, and divide the total by 26. The ad with the higher rating is the more engaging ad. It is important to note that the score should not be used in isolation, but should be paired with qualitative assessment, as noted below, to understand what drives engagement.

6. Examine which attributes drive engagement for each ad and how that affects results.

Although work to date has shown that better ad results may be driven by higher engagement ratings among more factors, they can also be driven by higher scores among the top ranking factors that are most critical in determining engagement. You can add to your learning by:

- Ranking all 26 attributes by percent of those who strongly or somewhat agree for each ad, and then seeing what statements drive engagement for each ad: are they similar or different?
- Looking at the specific statements in which each ad excels or is weaker to decide how insights can be used to strengthen either or both ads
- Examining how the ads compare on key factors by totaling agreement scores for the top five (or 10) statements and dividing by five (or 10) to see if those scores differ from the overall scores

7. Build learning over time. Consider creating a database of engagement results across multiple surveys, in order to assess what drives success for your brand(s). The database may include results for different campaigns, products and/or target audiences. Analysis may yield valuable insights that increase the odds for future success.

8. Use survey results as a diagnostic tool, not a score. Use survey results as a diagnostic tool, not a score. As noted, the pattern of responses can provide important information that can help to strengthen advertising, whether looking at the results from a single test or examining a database consisting of the results of many tests over time. Looking at the engagement rating alone will not yield these insights.

This document and research from the full study used to develop this creative diagnostic tool are available for download at www.magazine.org/engagement.

Affinity LLC, an innovative marketing and research company, specializes in advertising effectiveness and media engagement. Their suite of research products includes the VISTA Print Effectiveness Rating Service, which measures the performance of more than 30,000 magazine ads annually.

Magazine Publishers of America (MPA) is the industry trade association for consumer magazines. Established in 1919, MPA represents more than 240 domestic publishing companies with approximately 1,400 titles, more than 80 international companies and more than 100 associate members.

For more information on the research presented here, please contact Wayne Eadie, Senior Vice President, Research, Magazine Publishers of America, at weadie@magazine.org or Tom Robinson of Affinity Research at tom@affinityresearch.net. For copies of related MPA resources, please e-mail promotion@magazine.org or visit MPA's website: **www.magazine.org**.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
I believe this ad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad touches me deep down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad effects me emotionally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad will lead me to try new things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad shows me how to do things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would likely share this ad with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would likely talk about this ad with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad is for someone like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad deals with something that I relate to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad inspires me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad makes me feel good about myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad is sophisticated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a better sense of the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found this ad humorous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad leaves me feeling good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad is an escape for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad absorbs my attention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad makes me smarter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get ideas from this ad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad updates me on things I follow	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad makes me picture things in my mind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look at the pictures in this ad and say "wow"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad is pretty cool	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad is unusual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad has something that surprises me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would want to save this ad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The full study is available for download at www.magazine.org/engagement.