MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADS IN DIGITALLY DELIVERED MAGAZINES

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The measurement of new behaviors, activities or consumption habits poses two important challenges to researchers. First, the availability of sample for measurement can be limited. This is a key issue because the ability to find individuals who participate in the variable of interest may be difficult. This potential weakness in sample availability can greatly limit the means of the researcher to accurately produce information around the topic of interest.

The second major challenge is terminology. When attempting to measure new phenomena, it is especially vital to find the clearest approach to asking about the behavior. In particular when sample may be limited, if questions are not asked clearly and in the commonly used lexicon pertaining to the behavior, confusion may arise which may lead to, among other things, over and/or under claiming of the behavior by respondents.

This quandary is not new to researchers. Most recently, the introduction of digital devices such as tablets and eReaders and their impact on media brands has established a new iteration of interesting challenges to the measurement of media consumption for researchers.

The expansion of these devices in the marketplace has been quick, in particular for tablets such as the Apple iPad. Introduced in April 2010, 3 million iPads were sold within 80 days of their introduction into the marketplace (Apple Press Release, June 22, 2010). Within almost a year, 15 million iPads had been sold (The Economist Online, March 2, 2011). This rapid penetration of the marketplace has revolutionized media consumption, expanding the options that consumers have to consuming media.

In the midst of this change, media buyers and owners are anxious to understand consumption of these newest extensions of media brands. Of particular interest in this paper is the measurement of magazine brands that can be found on digital platforms.

In early 2010, GfK MRI began studying the significance of this shift in the media consumption landscape. This research exploration first impacted the GfK MRI National Study and, more recently, the GfK MRI Starch ad effectiveness service. It is the experience of the latter of these two, measuring the impact of ads served to consumers through digital magazine editions that is the focus of this paper.

DIGITAL STARCH – THE BEGINNING

In May 2011, after months of preparation, GfK MRI launched the first digital Starch surveys. The approach taken with this initiative is syndicated in nature – any magazine title measured on the Starch calendar is eligible for "digital starching" as long as it has magazine-like characteristics, including ads and editorial content, on the devices of interest. Magazine branded apps are not measured as part of this endeavor. Starch surveys are conducted for magazine editions found on the tablet, eReader (such as the Barnes & Noble Nook) and Zinio[2]/Coverleaf[3] (digital replica).

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[1] The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Valerie Veith in the analysis conducted for this paper.
[2] Zinio was founded in 2000 and delivers printed material, such as magazines, in digital format. Zinio content was initially accessed via the web on computers and more recently is available through an app on the tablet.
[3] Similar to Zinio, Texterity's digital newsstand, Coverleaf, delivers magazines digitally. These magazines can be accessed via the web or mobile devices.

Of the 193 titles comprising the Starch syndicated calendar in 2011, 123 titles have magazine-like editions available on or through at least one of the three digital platforms of interest. Table 1 shows the breakdown of these 123 titles by device, while Table 2 displays the title by number of device distribution.[4]

Table 1: Number of Starch Titles by Digital Platform

Device	Number of Starch Titles With Magazine Editions
Tablet	59 Titles
eReader	80 Titles
Zinio/Coverleaf	92 Titles

Table 2: Number of Starch Titles by Number of Digital Platforms

Number of Digital Platforms Measured	Number of Starch Titles
1 digital platforms	44 Titles
2 digital platforms	50 Titles
3 digital platforms	29 Titles

In the fully loaded scenario, if a magazine publishes tablet, eReader and Zinio/Coverleaf editions in addition to the printed paper edition, Starch fields four unique studies for every issue of the title. The Starch survey begins with a platform screener procedure that determines what edition/editions of an issue a respondent read or looked into by the time of the survey. Using this procedure allows the survey to draw respondents' attention to the possible platforms where they may consume magazine content for the particular title. This procedure generates data that introduces an opportunity to evaluate the extent of cross device consumption of the issue. A respondent's answers to the platform consumption screener determines which of the Starch survey versions will be administered to him or her.

The original Starch survey, which was developed to measure ad recall for paper versions of magazines, was revised to incorporate terminology indigenous to the consumption of digital magazines. The process to modify the text of the Starch survey was central to the launch of this digital endeavor and we focused on what were the most common ways to talk about possible behaviors by platform (swiping, tapping, etc.). We also incorporated new items that would provide supplemental information potentially giving us insights about how readers were reacting to magazine editions and their unique features on these newer platforms. GfK MRI Starch utilized key findings gleaned from the experimentation already conducted for the National Study (in particular, how to name different platforms so that we maximize understanding by respondents).

DIGITAL MAGAZINE CONSUMPTION – FINDING THE READERS

GfK MRI launched its digital Starch surveys not expecting to find too many readers of digital issues. This expectation was based on findings already established by the National Study which indicate that 39% of tablet owners and 15% of eReader owners read magazines on their devices (GfK MRI Spring 2011 National Study). Information published in the press regarding given titles further suggested that the incidence of magazine readership on digital devices, in particular the tablet, was still in its infancy (Foliomag.com, February 28, 2011, TechCrunch.com, April 22, 2011).

Table 3 includes sample in-tab information by platform as of August 2011 surveys.

[4] Note: The number of titles with digital editions is not constant. That is, new digital editions of magazine brands are introduced on a regular basis. To this end, GfK MRI Starch continuously reviews the digital status of each title on the measurement calendar.

Table 3: Starch Completes by Platform (Topline)

Device	Average Number of Completes Across All Study	Range of Completes Across All Studies	Number of Studies With 50 or More Completed Surveys
Tablet	36	1-95	63
eReader	15	1-82	11
Zinio/Coverleaf	35	1-93	94

While the numbers shown in the table above are small, they are bigger than expected based on knowledge about the incidence of these behaviors.

The sampling approach for digital Starch surveys to date has been organic rather than targeted – that is, how many digital readers can be found naturally among readers of the title rather than targeting readers by particular platform. To that end, currently there are no quotas for completes attributed to digital Starch surveys as there are for paper Starch surveys (the quota assigned for paper Starch surveys is 125 completed surveys for every group of 25 ads measured). The goal is to see how many completes naturally occur during the course of the fieldwork.

DIGITAL STARCH – VOLUME OF DATA COLLECTED

As of the end of August 2011, Starch had launched more than 850 surveys to measure digital editions of magazines. The breakdown of the surveys conducted by platform can be found in Table 4. Digital Starch surveys, as is the case with paper edition Starch surveys, are launched on a daily basis. And, in fact, Starch surveys for digital editions are introduced into the field simultaneously with the survey for the corresponding paper issues.

Table 4: Starch Surveys by Platform

Platform	Number of Surveys Launched
Tablet	223
eReader	347
Zinio/Coverleaf	278

Across all of these surveys, over 16,500 ads have been measured.[5] These volume figures expand on a weekly basis as new data enters the database. But while the database includes a sizeable group of measured ads, the limitation on sample size by ad is still a reality – the information on the range of study completes in Table 3 above is suggestive of this overall limitation to the data.

SOME DIGITAL STARCH RESULTS

While sample size limitations permeate the digital Starch data currently, there still remains great interest in finding out how magazines perform on different platforms. The data shared in this paper will not be presented on a specific ad basis, but we can make comparisons across platform overall and even show information for certain product categories in which we have measured at least 50 ads across all the issues measured.

Table 5 depicts a comparison of the performance of ads across platforms. Data for the comparable print titles fielded during the same time period are included to provide context. However, it is important to note that the data for paper issues are weighted while the digital Starch data are not.

[5] While all ads of 1/3 of a page or larger are measured by Starch for paper magazine editions, up to 25 or 27 ads are measured for digital surveys. This limit to the number of ads measured comes as a result in the limit to sample availability.

Table 5: Topline Averages by Platform

	Paper Editions ***(Comparable Titles Within Time Period)***	**Tablet**	**eReader**	**Zinio/Coverleaf**
Average Noted Score	54%	54%	41%	47%
Average Any Action Taken Score	61%	70%	62%	62%
Average Interactive Taken Score	NA	63%	49%	49%
Number of Studies	894	223	278	347
Number of Completed Surveys	213,007	7,903	4,096	11,929

The information in this table includes data collected through mid-August 2011. This comparison shows overall findings for a number of ad receptivity metrics. A closer examination of average Starch noting[6] scores shows tablet ads performing at the same level as ads in paper versions of the magazine. That is, individuals reading magazine ads in paper versions versus tablet version seem to recall ads, in general, at the same rate. There is some suggestion that tablet ads that include more interactive features perform better than the average (additional analysis by the presence of interactive features is underway).

While tablet ads seem to draw recall rates on par with ads running in the paper version of magazines, these data suggests that ads in eReader magazine editions and Zinio/Coverleaf magazine editions seem to be noted at a lower rate overall. There are many possible reasons why this may be the case including the differences in the devices and the way that they each, up until now, have represented ads.

The average any action taken[7] scores seem to suggest that tablet ads that are recalled provoke more action than ads in paper magazines, eReaders or Zinio/Coverleaf. More in-depth analysis of these actions taken data may provide some interesting insights. For example, are there certain actions that readers are more likely to take when they are reading a magazine on a digital platform? It is important to note that these generic actions are different from possible actions taken to access the interactive features.

Digital Starch surveys ask readers about whether they actually access the interactive features that may be present in specific ads. Interactive features can vary from a direct link to a company website to videos, interaction with the product advertised, etc. As one can see in Table 5 above, the average interactive actions taken scores are overall higher for tablet ads than they are for eReader and Zinio/Coverleaf ads. One big driver of this differential is that tablet ads until now have incorporated more interactive features than ads in the other two platforms. While, tablets have tended to produce more interactive features this situation seems to be changing. If eReaders and digital replicas such as Zinio and Coverleaf begin including more interactive features, we may see these data patterns amend.

Taking a more granular view of the available data, Tables 6-8 present information from digital Starch surveys on a product category level. The data include those product categories (out of 60 major product categories) in which Starch has measured 50 ads or more. In each table, the paper version comparison is provided for context.

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[6] The noted score is the core metric from Starch surveys. This score indicates how many readers of the issue remembered seeing the particular ad in the issue.

[7] The action taken question is asked as a follow-up to those ads that a given respondent remembered seeing (noted). Possible actions taken include going to the company's website, speaking to someone about the product/service, purchase consideration, purchase, etc.).

Table 6: Product Category Information for Starch Tablet Surveys

Product Category	Number of Ads (Tablet)	Average Noted Score (Tablet)	Number of Ads (Paper)	Average Noted Score (Paper)
Automotive, Automotive Accessories & Equipment	161	54%	762	55%
Cosmetics & Beauty Aids	159	56%	836	57%
Miscellaneous Services & Amusements	139	45%	445	48%
Financial	122	48%	448	47%
Media & Advertising	103	51%	294	50%
Public Transportation, Hotels & Resorts	90	49%	426	52%
Computers, Software, Internet	79	54%	223	53%
Communications	66	54%	176	53%
Medicines & Proprietary Remedies	66	45%	525	44%
Jewelry & Watches	60	57%	233	57%
Retail	57	54%	337	54%

Comparing results on a product category basis for tablet versus paper versions of magazines during the same time period, we see great consistency on a category-by-category basis. These product category data suggest that ads on tablets are recalled at the same rate as in paper magazines reinforcing the top line, platform findings displayed above.

Table 7: Product Category Information for Starch eReader Surveys

Product Category	Number of Ads (eReader)	Average Noted Score (eReader)	Number of Ads (Paper)	Average Noted Score (Paper)
Automotive, Automotive Accessories & Equipment	341	44%	1054	55%
Cosmetics & Beauty Aids	317	44%	1088	57%
Medicines & Proprietary Remedies	283	32%	952	43%
Direct Response Companies	219	34%	621	46%
Financial	207	35%	387	47%
Media & Advertising	175	40%	395	52%
Computers, Software, Internet	149	47%	260	54%
Personal Hygiene & Health	149	39%	439	52%
Retail	145	43%	595	54%
Dairy, Produce, Meat & Bakery Goods	141	49%	409	63%
Miscellaneous Services & Amusements	129	33%	417	48%
Public Transportation, Hotels & Resorts	116	39%	387	53%
Confectionary & Snacks	97	45%	233	59%

Communications	92	46%	199	51%
Jewelry & Watches	88	43%	318	55%
Hair Products & Accessories	87	36%	311	52%
Insurance & Real Estate	86	38%	236	51%
Footwear	74	44%	201	56%
Liquor	71	49%	237	58%
Beverages	62	44%	273	60%
Pets, Pet Foods & Supplies	62	36%	168	49%
Prepared Foods	61	47%	172	62%
Building Materials, Equipment & Fixtures	54	37%	222	52%
Sporting Goods	53	46%	133	53%
Audio & Video Equipment & Supplies	50	47%	139	54%

In the case of eReaders, there were 25 out of the 60 major product categories that included measurement of 50 or more ads. In every one of these 25 product category cases, the scores of ads running in paper version of the magazine performed better than those running in eReader versions. It is important to note, because the number of completes overall for eReader surveys were the lowest (see Table 3), the stability of the eReader data may be in question. .

Table 8: Product Category Information for Starch Zinio/Coverleaf Surveys

Product Category	Number of Ads (Zinio/Coverleaf)	Average Noted Score (Zinio/Coverleaf)	Number of Ads (Paper)	Average Noted Score (Paper)
Automotive, Automotive Accessories & Equipment	545	50%	1624	55%
Direct Response Companies	445	42%	1158	49%
Medicines & Proprietary Remedies	330	36%	1124	44%
Cosmetics & Beauty Aids	292	51%	984	57%
Retail	196	47%	730	54%
Media & Advertising	191	48%	416	52%
Financial	184	38%	354	49%
Sporting Goods	181	53%	497	53%
Personal Hygiene & Health	163	46%	475	53%
Dairy, Produce, Meat & Bakery Goods	140	53%	487	63%
Government, Politics & Organizations	129	45%	275	50%
Computers, Software, Internet	118	50%	299	51%
Public Transportation, Hotels & Resorts	109	44%	300	52%
Miscellaneous Services & Amusements	108	42%	340	48%
Confectionary & Snacks	96	53%	256	59%
Insurance & Real Estate	93	45%	257	51%

Communications	90	48%	188	50%
Hair Products & Accessories	87	44%	297	52%
Footwear	84	49%	251	57%
Jewelry & Watches	84	50%	259	55%
Prepared Foods	68	52%	201	63%
Beverages	66	52%	298	60%
Building Materials, Equipment & Fixtures	66	47%	270	53%
Pets, Pet Foods & Supplies	64	39%	207	50%
Liquor	62	56%	198	57%
Household Furnishings & Accessories	61	50%	229	54%
Miscellaneous Merchandise	60	46%	133	52%
Business & Technology	54	27%	155	45%
Ready-to-Wear, Formalwear & Bridal	54	49%	161	56%
Household Appliances, Equipment & Utensils	50	51%	180	53%

Similar to the comparison for eReaders, the data by product category reinforces that ads in paper versions of magazines yield higher noted scores than ads running in Zinio/Coverleaf editions. Interestingly, in the case of Zinio/Coverleaf, the ads are more likely to be exact replicas to the ads in the paper version issues. Any difference in scores, therefore, may be as a result of the different experience of reading and/or the different types of readers who are more likely to read one version over the other.

At this point, it is important to reiterate that all these comparisons should be made with caution. Because of sample size limitations, the digital data can be more unstable than the information we produce for the paper versions of magazines.

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

In 2011, GfK MRI Starch embarked on an expansive exploration of the effectiveness of ads on digital representations of magazines. Industry demand for this type of data is great. There is increased interest in understanding the efficacy of ads cross platform (given that the same ads actually run across those platforms). Additionally, there is the need to provide information to advertisers and agencies demonstrating whether these new vehicles present potentially positive environments for ad placement.

The approach taken by Starch seeks to measure as many ads as possible in order to increase the possible number of comparisons and possible learnings. Significant limits present themselves, however, around available sample because of the current low incidence of digital reading of magazines. As more consumers begin to read magazines on digital devices, it will be increasingly easier to survey larger samples of readers.

GfK MRI will continue to measure digital consumption of magazines in both its National Study and in Starch. As this pertains to the Starch work, GfK MRI will move ahead with deeper analyses of the data available. Several areas that we will seek to explore: does cross platform consumption of issues exist and to what extent, are readers who read exclusively in print differ from readers who read exclusively on digital platforms or readers who read over multiple platforms. Most significantly, GfK MRI will seek to analyze its Starch digital data against passively generated data from sources such as Omniture. This will be an important step in attempting to validate the survey-based findings.

Additionally, GfK MRI is exploring additional approaches to collecting information on digital consumption of magazines. Perhaps it is too soon to utilize general market online panel providers for this type of work.

Finally, GfK MRI is also investigating modifications to its approach for the digital surveys. Among other impacts, these modifications may help to bolster sample in-tabs.

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