



GfK MRI

GfK MRI's Test of Preamble Wording for Publishing Brands

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Introduction

For over 30 years, GfK MRI has measured average-issue audiences of more than 200 of the largest circulating consumer magazines in the United States. These estimates have served as the currency for magazine planning and have provided essential information about consumer behavior and lifestyle/attitudes of these readers for publishers, agencies and advertisers, alike. Since its first study in 1979, GfK MRI has consistently employed the same preamble for describing "reading or looking into" a publication as part of its audience measurement procedure. That preamble was drafted when magazines were only published in hard-copy and even the growth of publication brand websites over the past several years did not necessitate a change. However, recent developments, including the rapid growth in ownership and use of e-readers, tablets and smartphones, strongly suggested that GfK MRI consider revamping its questions measuring magazine readership. This included rewording the preamble to the magazine readership section and changing/expanding possible answer choices to the recent reading and subsequent reading behavior questions. The ultimate objective was to capture the total audience reach of print brands across all delivery platforms. Before implementing any of these changes to the National study, GfK MRI conducted a substantial test of the likely impact of the revised wordings on readership estimates. The methodology and results of this test are discussed in this White Paper.

Background

The introduction of electronic readers (e-readers), such as the Kindle or the Nook, tablets (e.g., Apple iPad, Samsung Galaxy Tab), and more advanced smartphones in recent years has opened up a vast array of opportunities for print brands to provide their content in many and varied ways. Recent figures suggest that over 6 million e-readers were sold just in 2010 and that iPad sales reached 15 million worldwide since its initial release in April, 2010. Along with Zinio, Coverleaf and other electronic versions of the printed edition, all these platforms mean that print brands are not limited to delivering their editorial and advertising messages in only a hard-copy format. The acknowledgement that these devices are potentially producing a seismic change in the print medium is further reflected in other recent developments. The Magazine Publishers of America (MPA) has formally changed its name to The

Association of Magazine Media to signify the new print environment. In addition, the Worldwide Readership Research Forum has renamed itself the Print and Digital Research Forum in similar recognition of the changing print media landscape.

All these developments strongly indicate that a magazine survey preamble failing to mention all possible delivery platforms is not adequate in today's environment. GfK MRI's challenge was to draft a new question wording that incorporates all required elements for measurement while simultaneously ensuring a consistent measure of the print or hard-copy audience. These were the objectives of the test that GfK MRI conducted in 2010.

Test Design and Methodology

After conducting initial qualitative research on different wording alternatives to describe all print brand platforms (i.e., the preamble) in late 2009, GfK MRI finalized a revised preamble to capture print brand total audience. In order to test the possible impact of introducing the new preamble on readership estimates in the National study, we designed a paired-cluster match test of the current and suggested new preamble. The two versions of the preambles are:

CONTROL VERSION

The titles of magazines and other publications are printed on these cards. Some of these publications are weekly newspapers.

This is a sort board. I'd like you to sort these cards into piles on the board to show whether or not you've read or looked into them in the last 6 months.

If you are sure that you have read or looked into the publications, put the cards in this position (POINT TO BLOCK FOR "YES-SURE HAVE"). If you are not sure if you have read or looked into the publications in the last six months, put the cards in this position (POINT TO BLOCK FOR "NOT SURE"). And finally, if you are sure that you have not read or looked into the publications, place the cards in this position (POINT TO BLOCK FOR "NO-SURE HAVE NOT")
(Any Copy:) **We want to know whether you've read or looked into any copy, whether it belonged to you or not.**
(Anywhere:) **It could have been in your home, someone else's home, or any other place at all, such as the beauty (barber) shop, doctor's office, etc.**
(Any Reading or Looking Into:) **It doesn't matter whether you read it, or just looked into it.**

Now, would you sort these cards to show whether you've read or looked into the magazines and other publications in the last 6 months? Please take your time and consider each one carefully.

TEST VERSION

(GIVE RESPONDENT LAMINATED COLOR SHOWCARD)

Magazines can be read or looked into in different ways. This card shows examples of some of them. They can be printed on paper or they can be published electronically, such as those read on a computer or on the Internet or with an electronic reader. You may also be able to read or look into a magazine on a cell phone or other mobile device or you may look at the magazine's website. (TAKE AWAY LAMINATED COLOR SHOWCARD) I'll give this back in a moment.

The titles of magazines and other publications are printed on these cards. Some of these publications are weekly newspapers.

This is a sort board. I'd like you to sort these cards into piles on the board to show whether or not you've read or looked into them **in any of these ways in the last 6 months.**

If you are sure that you have read or looked into the publications, put the cards in this position (POINT TO BLOCK FOR "YES-SURE HAVE"). If you are not sure if you have read or looked into the publications in the last six months, put the cards in this position (POINT TO BLOCK FOR "NOT SURE"). And finally, if you are sure that you have not read or looked into the publications, place the cards in this position (POINT TO BLOCK FOR "NO-SURE HAVE NOT") (Any Copy:) We want to know whether you've read or looked into any copy, whether it belonged to you or not. (Anywhere:) It could have been in your home, someone else's home, or any other place at all, such as the beauty (barber) shop, doctor's office, etc. (Any Reading or Looking Into:) It doesn't matter whether you read it, or just looked into it.

Please include copies printed on paper as well as electronic versions, such as copies read on the Internet or with an electronic reader, cell phone or other mobile device. Also please include reading or looking into the magazine's website. You can use this card as a helpful reference. (GIVE RESPONDENT LAMINATED COLOR SHOWCARD.)

Now, would you sort these cards to show whether you've read or looked into the magazines and other publications in the last 6 months? Please take your time and consider each one carefully.

Along with the wording changes in the preamble, GfK MRI also developed a laminated card showing respondents different platforms/devices that should be considered when they are answering the readership question. A reproduction of the laminated card is shown below:

WAYS TO READ OR LOOK INTO A MAGAZINE

<p>PRINTED ON PAPER</p> 	<p>ON A CELL PHONE</p> 
<p>MAGAZINE'S WEBSITE</p> 	<p>USING ANOTHER MOBILE DEVICE</p> 
<p>ON A COMPUTER OR USING THE INTERNET (Not the website)</p> 	<p>USING AN ELECTRONIC READER</p> 



The interviewer displayed the card to the respondent prior to beginning the magazine reading section of the questionnaire.

The new multiplatform measurement required one additional change to the set of reading questions. The traditional or current procedure did not probe for the type or platform of readership until the “source of copy” question. Since the revised preamble specifically asks the respondent to include all consumed print content, including magazine websites and electronic reproductions, the interviewer asks the respondent to indicate whether they read or looked into the publication in its printed (paper) form and/or an electronic form. The question used in the test survey is shown below:

(VERSION)

Thinking of (FIRST TITLE CIRCLED IN COL. Q. 12 “YES-SURE HAVE”), which version or versions from this card did you read or look into in the last (TIME PERIOD) days?

Choices on the showcard are:

1. Paper
2. Electronic (including the magazine’s website)

The sample was selected from unused clusters in our Wave 63 fieldwork. In order to cover a wide spectrum of potential respondents from all Census regions of the continental United States, GfK MRI chose five strata from among the top ten GfK MRI DMAs. These DMAs were:

- Chicago
- Philadelphia
- Detroit
- Washington DC
- Dallas

In addition to these top PSUs, GfK MRI selected 15 additional PSUs from CBSAs ranging from Baltimore to San Diego.

Our sample design also considered the likelihood that upper income respondents were more likely to be purchasers of these new digital devices and consumers of electronic content. Accordingly, we oversampled upper income clusters (secondary selection units) in these areas to make the sample design more efficient. At this stage, we systematically selected paired clusters and interviewers were assigned to conduct interviews in both clusters of a matching pair. A total of 126 clusters (63 matched pairs) were selected. Interviewer protocols for selecting a respondent in a household and all other procedures, including validation, were exactly the same as used in the National study. Altogether, a cross-section of 29 experienced and relatively new interviewers participated in the study.

Interviewers were instructed to administer the current (traditional) preamble to the readership question in the first cluster and the test preamble version in the second or matched cluster. This design controlled for the potential impact of interviewer effect on any results. The training of the interviewers

on the new preamble took place over several days and no interviewer was allowed to administer any live surveys until he/she demonstrated competence in asking the new version of the readership question.

The interviewing began on April 23, 2010 and lasted until November 14, 2010. 547 respondents completed the traditional survey preamble (control group); 512 respondents completed the test survey preamble (test group). The response rates for the control and test groups were 55.8% and 52.9%, respectively.

Results and Analysis

The objectives of this research study were two-fold:

- Analyze the impact of the revised preamble on current hard-copy (paper version) readership levels using the current wording
- Evaluate the reading levels for all electronic or digital sources obtained from the new preamble

In order to examine the effect of the new readership questions, we first compared the average number of screens (i.e., number of magazines read in the past 6 months) per respondent between the test and control versions. Table 1 shows these comparisons for adults, men and women, respectively.

Table 1
A Comparison of Average Screens Per Respondent
Between the Control and Test Samples

	Control Sample	Test Sample
	N=547	N = 512
Adults	19.23	20.18
Men	16.41	17.84
Women	22.68	22.73

Since the test preamble version sample uses a more broadly defined definition of readership, we would expect the average number of screens to be only modestly higher than that found in the control version sample. The expected modest change is attributable to the relatively small audiences generated by these nascent platforms compared to the audience size of the printed version of the brand. This is indeed the case, although the differences are not statistically significant for overall screens.

A comparison of the average number of total reads (i.e., reading in the publication period) between the control and test samples shows results that are consistent with the screen findings and are in the expected direction (see table 2).

Table 2
A Comparison of Average Reads Per Respondent
Between the Control and Test Samples

	Control Sample	Test Sample
	N=547	N = 512
Adults	7.53	7.95
Men	6.50	6.87
Women	8.79	9.12

The critically important comparison of average number of paper or hard-copy reads per respondent, which is the basis for the traditional currency measure, is shown in Table 3. (Sample size limitations prevent an analysis of reading claims for any specific magazine.) Our revised wording is designed to maintain a consistency in paper or hard-copy ratings, while at the same time incorporating measurement of all print branded electronic content. The table shows that the average number of paper or hard-copy reads per respondent is consistent between the two versions. While we observe a modest (3-6%) decline in the average number of claimed reads in the test version, these results are not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level from those found in the control sample. The changes are more pronounced for women than for men, but neither of the gender-based test reading levels differences is statistically different from the control sample estimates.

This finding is especially critical: the study findings indicate that the revised wording and protocol do not have a statistically significant impact on hard-copy only audience ratings. In effect, any observed changes in audience levels in subsequent studies using the new measurement questions cannot be attributed to these methodological changes.

Table 3
A Comparison of Average Hard-Copy (Paper) Reads Per Respondent
Between the Control and Test Samples

	Control Sample	Test Sample	Test/Control
	N=547	N = 512	Index
Adults	7.20	6.97	97
Men	6.07	5.93	98
Women	8.59	8.10	94

Any evaluation of the impact of changing the preamble should consider two additional aspects. First, the traditional preamble is ambiguous about defining the type of readership (i.e., paper or electronic) being measured while the new preamble is quite specific in soliciting responses. We might therefore

expect the more precise wording of the new preamble to elicit more accurate responses from respondents. Second, the observed effects on reading levels are based on averages across all magazines and may differ for any particular magazine or set of magazines.

The second objective of the study was to examine the pattern and nature of responses to the electronic/digital publishing platforms. The test preamble mentions websites and other electronically published content found on computers, e-readers, tablets and cell phones. Since the study was conducted in the very early months of iPad’s existence and since data from GfK MRI’s National study indicated that 14-18% of e-reader owners read magazines on their devices, we did not expect to find substantial reading claims for these electronic devices. We expected that website viewing would constitute the dominant share of electronic reading events. Our findings, as seen in Table 4, below, were consistent with our expectations.

Table 4
Number of Electronic Reading Occasions:
Types of Electronic Reads v. Reading Devices Used

		Types of Electronic Reads				Grand Total
		App	Digital reproduction	Text-only	Website	
Devices Used	computer	17	100	25	469	611
	mobile	22	5	9	37	73
	reader		3		3	6
	tablet		2		2	4
Grand Total		39	110	34	511	694

Beyond examining the types of devices, and those devices used to access electronic content, GfK MRI expected the average number of electronic copy reading events would be noticeably higher among the better educated, more affluent, younger respondents. Tables 5-7 support these hypotheses. Respondents who have attended or graduated from college are twice as likely to read or view electronic copies as are less educated respondents. The similarity between “attended college” respondents and college graduates reflects the likelihood of using digital devices by income (see table 6). We observe a comparable pattern among income cohorts; more affluent respondents are much more likely to read or view print content on electronic/digital devices than are less affluent respondents. Table 7 shows that the youngest age cohort is more likely to consume print content on electronic/digital devices. We must caution that these estimates are based on sample sizes no greater than 200 for any single demographic group and, as such, are not statistically significant.

Table 5
A Comparison of Average Electronic Copy Reads Per Respondent:
Education

	College Grads or More	Some College	HS Grad or less
Adults	1.41	1.57	.65
Men	1.52	1.54	.45
Women	1.27	1.59	.87

Table 6
A Comparison of Average Electronic Copy Reads Per Respondent:
Household Income

	HHI 1-49K	HHI 50 -99K	HHI 100K+
Adults	.82	1.41	1.50
Men	.63	1.23	1.69
Women	.96	1.63	1.23

Table 7
A Comparison of Average Electronic Copy Reads Per Respondent:
Age

	18-34	35-54	55+
Adults	1.71	1.29	.87
Men	2.00	1.30	.60
Women	1.38	1.28	1.16

Conclusion

This pilot test showed that the revised preamble and follow-up question wording changes had no statistically significant impact on the level of hard-copy readership obtained from the traditional GfK MRI measurement. While the continued adoption of these electronic platforms may ultimately affect hard-copy audiences, any observed changes in future National study waves are not attributable to the revised methodology. We will also continue to ensure that respondents understand the new questioning language by updating wording to reflect changes in the availability and capabilities of all electronic devices.