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EDITORIAL TARGETING (OR, IMPROVED ADVERTISING POSITIONING IN MAGAZINES)

What does our industry know about positioning advertising within a publication?

It is most unfortunate, but as an industry we know very little about how to maximise effectiveness through the positioning of our printed advertising messages. We find comfort through the use of learned positioning cliches such as:

- Right hand page, far forward
- Facing Table of Contents.

Positioning requests are applied to all advertising insertions without regard to their precise application or value. The premise is that if it was a good idea for one advertiser, it is just as good for another.

However, when pressed, many of us would have to admit that we could more easily identify a poor position, than an excellent one. Since we have this vacuum of information, we tend to fall back on the cliché.

EXAMPLES OF POOR POSITIONING

To demonstrate the point that we can quickly identify poor positioning, let us consider the example of the 1936 issue of the *Wheeling West Virginia News Intelligentsia*. The advertising strategy of a health elixir called Gly Cass Action was to use the name and photograph of a local personality for an advertisement in the local newspaper. The ad proclaimed how wonderful this person looks and feels. The message was clear; these healthy characteristics are attributed to the use of the elixir. The irony of

positioning: an ad featuring a Mrs Anna Deaps appeared on the very same page and day as her funeral announcement.

Sometimes the synergy between the ad and editorial provides a curious association. Take the awkward positioning of an advertisement in *Newsweek*, when the editorial dealt with political philanderers and utilised a photograph of Senator Ted Kennedy walking with his wife in the Mary Jo Kepeckne Funeral procession. Remembering that Senator Kennedy had caused Miss Kepeckne's death by accidentally driving off a bridge, gives one pause when looking at the Rand McNally Map Co ad facing the editorial. The ad dramatically associates a closed roadway and a vulture sitting on a road barrier.

More recently we have other evidence of poor advertising positioning. Consider the advertiser who found his beautifully photographed and seductive ad for Bali undergarments, positioned against the editorial headline appearing in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, 'How to get your husband to use a condom'.

These advertising situations demonstrate the questionable placement of print ads. They also make the point that we sadly lack supportive documentation to guide us in our advertising positioning judgements.

INSIGHTS THROUGH OUR EDITORIAL RESEARCH

As a by-product of LHM's editorial research, utilities were found which provide some interesting considerations for improved advertising placement.

The original objective of this editorial research, was to insure that the editorial staff had the necessary input to monitor the contemporary status of the readers in terms of their interests, habits and tastes. This research project has been in place for some years through a personal interview quota base sample, throughout the US in twenty five marketing areas. These studies are conducted monthly and can be accumulated over a twelve month period.

Each month, 150 + interviews of a specific issue are gathered. This information encompasses the reading behaviour of the respondent in terms of which articles were started, which were completely read, and finally, a rating of the reader's satisfaction with each of the individual editorial pieces. In addition, data are collected on a wide range of qualitative and quantitative measurements.

The relative values of individual articles are tabulated and reported to the entire editorial staff every month with noteworthy patterns and trends. Broad scope measurements are gathered through accumulating twelve consecutive months of data which produce a net sample of approximately 2,000 interviews. The knowledge gained by the editorial staff is translated into the magazine product by continuously refining and adjusting editorial subjects and treatments.

Editors should never be satisfied

Even with this ongoing process of information dispersion, the appetite for more information is never satiated. Varied and deeper insights into the LHJ readership are always being requested.

Some time ago, the editors wanted clear images of the people who were reading their articles, beyond the standard demographic data that we supplied. They wanted to know all about their reader in terms of her aspirations, her ambitions, her emotions, her lifestyles, her hopes,

her dreams. They wanted to gain a better picture of this reader so that they could write more directly to her, and in turn, produce a better article.

Perhaps in a somewhat different posture, the questions raised by the editors parallel a general question long asked by the advertisers and agencies.

Who is the average reader of LHJ?

As a general question, this is unanswerable. *Ladies' Home Journal* has a huge circulation and ultimate readership.

Fully to appreciate the dimensions of this magazine's audience size, transport yourself through your imagination. Think back to the last time you attended a major sporting event. Visualise the stands packed with people. Remember that split second, after you sat down and absorbed the smells, sights and sounds of the sports complex, the thought crossed your mind as to how large the crowd was at the event.

Now multiply that singular stadium's image by every US professional and college football stadium. Add to this compilation, all the baseball stadiums in the US, and for good measure, all sports arenas throughout the country. The combined seating capacity for all of these stadiums and arenas, is in excess of eight million. If a woman was sitting in every seat, and another person was also placed in her lap, it would equal the total monthly female readership of *Ladies' Home Journal*.

Clearly, with an audience this vast, one cannot simply create averages in order to develop a personification of a typical reader. Oversimplification of audience levels is always a mistake.

However, there is still the question, raised by both the editors and the advertising community. Who is the average reader of LHJ?

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Perhaps this question could be answered by looking, not at a singular personality, but a range of different personalities.

SRI's VALUES AND LIFESTYLES (VALS)

One of the component research services that grew out of Stamford Research Institute in California, is a systematic sociological identification model called VALS. This multi-personality segmentation might well provide the necessary insights into the magazine's reader.

LHJ purchased access to the questionnaire design and married it to the monthly Editorial Research Study fieldwork.

After gathering a year's worth of data, the tabulations were sent to SRI who weighted, factored and reformatted the information into the eight standard VALS personality cells. These data could then be cross-tabulated with the readership information by individual article.

The results were analysed and reported to the editorial staff of LHJ. Finally, the editors' questions could be answered by describing the various types of people who read specific articles or features.

Research application for improved positioning

Purely as a secondary utility, the possibility was conceived that by turning the data around, a totally different application could be found for this research.

Since it is possible to describe the various type of readers who are attracted to specific articles,

then the various articles attracted by specific readers could also be developed.

This expanded analysis of the data could now identify and classify all articles by the dominant VALS groups. We can also classify articles that are secondarily read by a specific VALS group. A third identification is, naturally, those articles that are not read at all by a specific VALS group.

One of the findings in the ongoing Editorial Research study is that a typical reader of our publication self-selects only those articles and features that are of great interest to her. This means that, on average, a reader will select between 60%-65% of the available articles, and read them completely (from first word through last). This is not to be confused with a scanning process which allows the reader to page-through all aspects of the magazine very casually.

Therefore, a key application of this new data is identifying where *not* to position an ad, if the editorial in that position is not being read intentionally by the targeted audience that the advertiser is trying to attract.

An important point to remember is that our findings are based on the fact that these readers have read the entire article. That is to say that they followed the article through, even if it was carried over to the back of the book. Therefore, any assumed bias of front vs back of book is irrelevant.

Specific findings by individual VALS types

The results of this new analysis reveal unique patterns for each VALS group. The insights on demographics, psychographics, acquisition of copy, use of magazine, and interest of articles,

can all offer new direction for publishers and advertisers alike.

Survivors

These are older and retired people who are generally living on fixed incomes. They occasionally subscribe to the magazine if they find a bargain subscription offer. As a general rule they acquire their magazines as a pass-along copy.

They are heavily into clipping coupons, recipes, and articles from the copies they read. The mutilation of an issue notwithstanding, they are a source for other pass-along readers.

The editorial features that capture their attention are:

Basic foods like meat loaf, chicken, pasta, hamburgers, or any other simple food preparation will attract these readers.

Contests are especially appealing to this group. This phenomenon is likely to be equally true whether we are dealing with an editorial contest, or advertiser-placed contest.

Flowers and gardening hold great interest for them, perhaps due to their abundance of free time which can be used for hobbies.

'Psychologist Journal' and 'Expert Opinion' are articles that Survivors gravitate to more than any other VALS type. There is a possible pre-occupation, fostered by their attitude and life changes. This could create a desire for them to draw comparisons against some standard or average, in order to determine any variability they may have to the norm.

Sustainers

Demographically this group can be described as inner-city minorities, and socio-economically poorer than all other VALS types. A key demographic characteristic is their larger family size.

They will rarely, if ever, subscribe to the magazine or buy a news-stand copy. They virtually always acquire their copies as a pass-along reader.

The types of articles that most attract their attention deal principally with raising children and parental guidance.

Belongers

This is singularly the largest group in the population, and likewise is the largest proportion of the LHJ readership. They reside in small towns and open spaces. These people do not live in metropolitan cities, but in more rural/suburban environments. They can be described as the Traditionalists, especially in terms of strong family ties.

They will join a wide variety of organisations such as School Groups, (PTA, School Boards, etc.), Social and Civic Groups, (Kiwanis, Rotarians, Elks, etc.), and Church Groups. Perhaps it is because of this 'joining' pattern that SRI has labelled them, 'Belongers'.

This particular group is the strength and backbone of the subscriber population. Additionally they have a predictable pattern of renewing their subscriptions. This tendency towards renewing makes these people extremely valuable in terms of publishing economics.

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This population segment holds onto the publication longer and spends more time with the publication, than any other VALS type. They freely share their publications with others, thereby becoming a key source for pass-along copies.

In terms of their significant reading patterns of LHJ features, we find the following:

Although 'Can this Marriage be Saved?' is a widely popular feature, it is most identifiable with the Belongers group. This population has the largest concentration of pet ownership, therefore, it is no surprise that 'Pet News' is singled out by this VALS type.

In terms of food service editorial, there are two types of features that dominate their interest. These are fast and easy to prepare foods, plus foods with a regional orientation. They have a significant level of interest in 'Fiction' pieces.

All forms of medical articles will attract their interest. Whether it be the quick medical facts and breakthroughs that appear in the 'Medi-news' section, or the more detailed feature articles or columns that deal with medicine.

Emulators

This population segment is socioeconomically middle class, and has some similar characteristics to the Belongers in terms of family relationships and work ethic. They have two distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from the Belongers; they are inner city dwellers and have no desire to be noticed or singled out in any way. This chameleon quality is noticed throughout a wide range of lifestyle characteristics. They are both loyal and long term employees who work diligently and efficiently. Like social service workers they will never make waves or problems.

Almost subliminally, they carry this desire for invisibility into other facets of their life. Their

reading patterns of LHJ indicate that they read 60% of all articles in a given issue completely. However, they have a lack of reading intensity which results in their not having any dominant identification with specific articles.

The Emulators tend to acquire their copies from news-stand sources. They do not take any actions with their copies such as clipping, cutting or saving articles, recipes, or coupons. Although their copies are in nearly mint condition, they would rather not pass them along to other potential readers.

Achievers

This is a group of regular news-stand purchasers. They make their decisions to buy an issue based on the publication's cover. They use and read more of the magazine than any other personality group. They typically read 72% of all the articles presented in an issue. They tend not to use the Table of Contents but run virtually through the entire issue. Their involvement in the magazine includes removing any articles, recipes, ideas, instructions, or coupons that interest them.

As a consumer target, these people represent the ultimate purchaser. They are affluent, well educated, and have an active lifestyle. They tend to be somewhat ostentatious and place heavy emphasis on creature comforts. Predictably, their taste in articles correspond to their affluence. They dominate the readership of the Decorating features, along with the 'Money News' column. Interestingly, they seem to have a paradoxical set of interests, reading about both diets and desserts.

Societally conscious

This VALS group is the best educated and as affluent as the Achievers. However, these people are not as preoccupied with the overt demonstrations of wealth and comfort as their

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Achiever counterparts. Not unlike the Sustainers, these people also tend to have larger families.

They are motivated by broad base social problems and political issues. Conservation and environment are equally important to them.

They acquire their copies of LHJ principally as pass-along readers, although they will, to a far less degree, purchase news-stand copies. They rarely pass their copies along to other potential readers; which may be a by-product of their activities as clippers and savers of recipes, coupons, and articles.

Their editorial interests guide them toward the monthly feature called, 'A woman today', which is written and submitted by readers on their own life experiences within the scope of social issues. Their larger families influences their interest in the 'News for parents' column.

I-am-me's

These are the youngest VALS segment. They tend to be college students who are affected by peer pressures. An identifying trait is their disproportionate concern with their friends rather than with family.

They are generally pass-along readers, but will occasionally purchase a news-stand copy if the cover celebrity attracts their interest. The two editorial features that capture their attention more than any other VALS group, are the relationship and fashion articles.

Experientials

These are young adults who, like their Socially Conscious counterparts, are very involved with conservation and environmental issues. To set a mental picture of this group, imagine a

young marrieds profile, although it is more likely that the experientials will be couples living together and not married. They have a driving need actively to participate, and taste all of life's experiences.

Their social lives are most important to them. They are avid participants in sporting activities. They also enjoy the broad spectrum of the arts, encompassing the theatre and the movies.

In terms of their magazine behaviour, the singular most important characteristic is that they are frequent news-stand purchasers.

This distinction is magnified by the fact that they buy enough single copies during the year but any subscription package would provide them with real savings. Nevertheless, their analytic personalities demand that they make individual decisions for each issue. They, more than any other VALS type, are drawn to the Table of Contents. They also utilise other evaluative editorial features such as; Recipe Index, and Next Month Previews, to help them with their purchase decision process. Interestingly they will clip and save anything, other than coupons.

This group has a dominant concentration over any other VALS type for a number of editorial features.

Celebrity and Personality features tend to have a universal appeal across all VALS types. However, the Experientials, who reflect the largest segment of the movie-going public, achieve the heaviest concentration against this editorial section.

Another universal appeal is 'Last Laughs'. However, here again the Experientials dominate the monthly readership of this column compared with all other VALS groups.

Not all their interests are light and humorous. The dominance in their readership of all Reportage articles illustrate this point.

This group is concerned about, and concentrate their interest on, Self Help, Medical and Beauty features; all of which are designed to instruct the reader in better personal care.

Almost paradoxically, they turn toward dessert food features over any other food editorial selection.

A compilation of vertical interest publications

LHJ caters to these eight separate readership descriptions and constituencies. Each of these VALS groups can find their own distinct assortment of editorial features that offer information and entertainment. The editorial staff of *Ladies' Home Journal* carefully and purposefully designs each month's product to a prearranged editorial balance of Service, Entertainment and Reportage.

A pragmatic application of these data

By understanding the individual selection patterns, it is possible to fine-tune the advertising positioning requirements. At an initial stage of the media analysis process, the media planner/buyer should establish a clear profile of the targeted consumer they want to attract. This consumer target should be identified with one or more VALS personality groups in order better to match the compatibilities between the reader and editorial. The requested positioning requirements will then clearly serve the ultimate objective of maximum exposure.

Never assume that all pages attract all readers with the same intensity of interest. It is possible to make the correct media vehicle selection,

and still not reach the intended consumer target.

As a reminder

It is easier to identify a poor advertising position than a good one. The following three illustrations of agencies should help keep the thought alive, that it is possible to have a less than compatible advertising position.

A well-intentioned service feature appearing in *Better Homes and Gardens* offered information and advice on Parenting in the article entitled 'Stepchildren'. As part of the editorial piece, a side bar provided additional facts on the subject of 'Sexuality and the stepfamily'—information relating to appropriate behaviour in terms of touching, showing affection, and nudity.

The ad appearing opposite this page was placed innocently by a candy company, Mars, for their Snickers Candy Bar. All would have been appropriate except that the ad featured a young mother and an older looking teenage son. The headline provided an imaginative double entendre when it boldly declared "When he comes home from school hungry, there's only one way to satisfy him. And me."

The ad agency, Ted Bates, subsequently referred to this ad as their 'incest ad'.

Another embarrassing illustration of an unfortunate ad/edit placement, appeared in *US Magazine*. The sensitivity of an advertised product like a contraceptive sponge, should always be considered delicate. Therefore, the agencies are most critical. However, in this particular illustration someone failed to notice all the dominant personalities captured in the adjacent editorial photograph. Along with Bryant Gumble and Jane Pauley, the hosts of the NBC Today Show, was the Pope.

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A final, and probably the most classic example of poor positioning, is from *Family Circle*. The article was entitled 'The cancer that men do not talk about', which dealt with testicular cancer. The editorial matter carried over as fractional space in the back of the book. Sharing the page, unfortunately, was an ad that promoted both

the product and its jar's ultimate utility as a decanter or a vase after the jar's contents were finished.

The product was Planter's Peanuts, and the headline exclaimed that you can, "Enjoy great taste, even after the nuts are gone".