

1.6 Changes in the Simmons study of media and markets

This first session deals with changes which have been made in magazine audience measurement systems since the New Orleans Symposium in 1981. Since that time we at Simmons Market Research Bureau have adopted a system which measures 110 magazines and measures them all using a through-the-book procedure. The first study to use this design — our 1982 study — was released nearly nine months ago. The 1983 study — with the same design — is currently near completion and will be released in about three months.

Analyses of the results of the 1982 study are, of course, an integral part of this paper. But first, to fully understand the implications of the new study and its design, a brief description of the design of previous Simmons studies and of the events which led our current design is called for.

First, I touch on the previous three Simmons studies, that is the studies released from 1979 to 1981. Each of those studies measured and reported total audience estimates for more than 110 magazines, but all magazines in those studies were not measured using the same technique. With only a few exceptions, the 45 to 50 largest-circulation magazines were measured using through-the-book procedure. An additional 100 or so magazines were measured using a recent reading approach, but audience estimates for those magazines were calibrated to through-the-book levels. This study design and the adjustment method used were the subject of several presentations at the New Orleans Symposium, and I will not go into them here. (1)

The impetus for making a change in the Simmons study came from guidelines issued by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (the AAAA) in December, 1980. (2) Those guidelines deemed it critical that syndicated magazine audience research measure between 100 and 120 magazines using an *issue-specific* technique for all magazines measured. They also specified that the audience estimates produced should have two-sigma sampling tolerances of no more than 15%. We at Simmons spent most of the next six months trying to identify an approach that would satisfy the criteria set forth by the AAAA. In June, 1981 we presented our findings to our clients and polled them to determine the design of our 1982 study. More than 80% of those who responded directed us to adopt the approach we ultimately used which involved two major changes, namely:

(1) Increasing the sample from 15,000 to 19,000 respondents and the total number of interviews on

magazines from 26,000 to 35,000. We have always conducted two interviews with each respondent in our sample.

(2) Measuring 110 magazines with a single issue-specific procedure. This procedure was somewhat different from previous Simmons through-the-book procedures in that it used fewer items in each test issue.

It is certainly true that we would not have gone in this direction without the approval of our client base. However, we also resolved only to pursue this course if we were convinced that the new design would produce research results that were not materially different for magazines previously measured through-the-book by Simmons. In order to proceed we had to feel confident that:

(1) Reducing the number of editorial items shown to respondents for each publication would not affect readership levels.

(2) Increasing the number of magazines measured using a through-the-book approach would not affect levels, and, not the least of our concerns,

(3) That a study with 110 magazines measured through-the-book could, in fact, be conducted without putting an undue burden on either the interviewer or the respondent.

We approached these concerns from two directions. We could resolve some of them by examining other research. But we could only satisfy our questions about the feasibility of executing such a study by conducting a pilot test since no one had ever before tried to conduct a through-the-book study with 110 different titles. Obviously, since we did go ahead, we were able to satisfy these questions. I discuss briefly the data at which we looked.

We first looked at data from two studies conducted by Simmons in 1976 and 1977. One study, the *1976 Primary Passalong Study*, measured only 15 major magazines and used as many as 36 editorial items in the test issues of each magazine. (3) The second study, the *1976/77 Simmons Study of Selective Markets*, was conducted over nearly the same period of time but measured 65 magazines, showing no more than 12 editorial items for each test issue. (4) Despite these seemingly disparate designs, the results for the 15 magazines the two studies had in common were virtually indistinguishable (See **Tables 1** and **2**). The average reader per copy figure differed by less than 2%.

We also examined data from the Advertising Research Foundation Comparability Study conducted in

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TABLE 1
Percent of features used

(Primary Passalong vs. 1976 - 77 SSM)

		'76 Primary Passalong (up to 36) %	'76 - '77 SSM (Maximum of 12 for all) %
Better Homes & Gardens	(16)	100	75
Family Circle	(22)	100	55
Good Housekeeping	(25)	100	48
Ladies' Home Journal	(26)	100	46
McCall's	(24)	100	50
National Geographic	(7)	100	100
Newsweek	(32)	100	38
Playboy	(36)	100	33
Reader's Digest	(45)	80	27
Redbook	(20)	100	60
Sports Illustrated	(12)	100	100
Time	(31)	100	39
TV Guide	(16)	100	75
US News & World Report	(27)	100	44
Woman's Day	(23)	100	52

TABLE 2
Comparison of primary passalong study results to 1976/77 Simmons study

	<i>Total Adult Readers per Copy</i>	
	'76 Primary Passalong	'76 - '77 SSM
No. of Magazines	15	65
Maximum Editorial Items	36	12
Mean Readers per Copy	3.50	3.44
Better Homes & Gardens	3.21	3.06
Family Circle	2.70	2.64
Good Housekeeping	4.19	3.98
Ladies' Home Journal	2.89	2.68
McCall's	3.07	3.14
National Geographic	3.06	2.96
Newsweek	5.50	6.02
Playboy	3.56	3.34
Reader's Digest	2.15	2.29
Redbook	2.63	2.85
Sports Illustrated	5.74	5.36
Time	4.32	4.54
TV Guide	2.24	2.27
US News & World Report	4.60	4.09
Woman's Day	2.59	2.43

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1979. (5) That study was designed to determine the comparability of the recent reading and through-the-book methods as practised by Simmons in its dual method design. For the through-the-book portion of the interview, all magazine test issues contained 12 items, which could represent as little as 20% or as much as 100% of the total editorial material. The magazines under study were stratified according to the proportion of their editorial represented in the test issue. When the through-the-book and recent reading levels were compared within this stratification, there was little differentiation. Since the recent reading levels could not have been affected by the proportion of editorial shown, this suggests that there is a threshold number of editorial items beyond which one need not go to aid recall. (See **Table 3**).

As I indicated earlier, we also conducted pilot research using the proposed 110 magazine through-the-book interviewing procedure. We fielded interviews in interviewing clusters that were also a part of our 1981 study. In this way we were able to make direct comparisons between the readership levels obtained for the 50 magazines measured through-the-book in the 1981 study in these clusters and the same 50 magazines measured as a part of the 110 magazine design in the pilot study. These results were very close, within 5 or 6% of each other and well within the realm of sampling error. (6) (See **Table 4**). More importantly, the pilot study clearly demonstrated the feasibility of executing the study successfully.

On the basis of these data, we were able to proceed with the 1982 study. We began the 1982 study using a test issue item selection procedure which at the time we called the 50% solution. Quite simply, this involved counting the number of items in each issue of a magazine and selecting half of them for the test issue. We imposed a maximum item count of 12, which was the count for all magazines measured through-the-book the previous year. In practice this meant a range of 5 to 12 items for the test issues in the study. We adopted this issue preparation approach because we found that the reduction in the number of items used reduced the bulk and weight of the test issues for the interviewer. In addition, this 50% approach also made it possible for the respondent to go through a larger number of magazines without actually increasing his or her workload.

One-third of the way through the study, our clients reversed themselves and instructed us to use the same number of items for each magazine measured. We switched over and began using nine items (plus the cover) for all magazines; this was actually the average number of items used for all magazines over the first

third of the study. As a result, we are afforded the unique opportunity of examining the impact of a different number of items for the same magazines within the same study. As was the case with the previous analyses, these data indicate virtually no difference. (7) (See **Table 5**).

The through-the-book results of the 1982 study itself compared quite favourably to through-the-book results in previous studies.

Of the 110 magazines measured in 1982, 46 had also been measured through-the-book in 1981. The readers per copy estimates for those 46 magazines differed, on average by less than 3%. Not one of those 46 magazines exhibited a difference between the two years which was statistically significant at the .05 confidence level. (See **Tables 6-8**).

In addition, 17 of the remaining magazines had been measured through-the-book by Simmons before 1981. When the 1982 data for these magazines were compared to the most recent through-the-book data from prior studies, the difference was less than 2%. (See **Table 9**).

These results confirmed our examination of data before the 1982 Simmons Study was executed. They also indicated that the new research design which was used in the 1982 study produces the same audience level estimates as do studies in which many fewer titles and more complete editorial content are measured by the through-the-book method.

REFERENCES

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- 3 *1976 Study of Primary and Passalong Readers of Fifteen Major Magazines.* W.R. Simmons and Associates, 1976.
- 4 *1976/77 Selective Markets and The Media Reaching Them.* W.R. Simmons and Associates, 1977.
- 5 Comparability Subcommittee of the Magazine Research Development Council. (1980) *A Controlled Field Experiment Comparing Three Methods of Estimating Magazine Audiences.* Advertising Research Foundation, January.
- 6 Simmons Market Research Bureau, Inc. (1981). *Results of SMRB "50% of Editorial" Pilot Study.* June 8.
- 7 Simmons Market Research Bureau, Inc. (1983). *Methodological Issues in the 1982 Study.* January 24.

TABLE 3
ARF comparability study

		<i>TTB—M/RR Ratio</i>
Monthly Magazines		
TTB — 77% of Features Used		.52
50 — 69%		.52
20 — 49%		.56
Weekly Magazines		
TTB — 70% of Features Used		.69
50 — 69%		.86
20 — 49%		.85

TABLE 4

	<i>Total Adults</i>		<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>	
	<i>50% Pilot %</i>	<i>1981 SMM %</i>	<i>50% Pilot %</i>	<i>1981 SMM %</i>	<i>50% Pilot %</i>	<i>1981 SMM %</i>
All magazines (50)						
Average Rating	6.0	6.3	5.9	5.8	6.2	6.5
R/S Ratio	52.1	49.2	55.3	54.1	49.9	46.0
Weeklies (12)						
Average Rating	8.1	8.3	9.5	10.1	6.9	6.7
R/S Ratio	53.1	50.0	55.3	52.8	50.8	46.9
Monthlies (36)						
Average Rating	5.1	5.3	4.7	4.7	5.5	5.8
R/S Ratio	52.0	48.9	55.5	55.3	49.7	45.3
10-12 articles used (19)						
Average Rating	7.4	8.1	7.4	7.5	7.5	8.6
R/S Ratio	53.2	51.7	56.7	55.4	50.7	49.3
8-9 articles used (18)						
Average Rating	4.4	4.3	3.2	3.2	5.5	5.2
R/S Ratio	49.5	41.6	51.6	45.5	48.5	39.9
7 or fewer articles (13)						
Average Rating	6.2	6.3	7.2	7.4	5.4	5.4
R/S Ratio	52.9	53.5	55.8	58.5	50.3	48.4

TABLE 5
Comparison of 50% of editorial and use of 9 items in 1982 study

Number of items in test issue during Wave 1	<i>Gross Rating Points</i>	
	<i>Wave 1 (50% Edit)</i>	<i>Wave 2/3 (9 items)</i>
Five, six or seven items	37	37
Eight items	42	45
Nine items	17	19
Ten items	42	42
Eleven items	98	98
Twelve items	102	102

TABLE 6
Comparison: 1981 vs 1982 readers per copy
46 magazines measured TTB in 1981

	1981	Adults 1982	Diff	T-Score
Better Homes & Gardens	2.60	2.61	0.01	0.15
Bon Appetit	2.39	2.37	0.02	-0.07
Business Week	5.25	5.38	0.13	0.27
Cosmopolitan	3.64	3.71	0.07	0.28
Ebony	5.04	5.48	0.44	0.57
Family Circle	2.63	2.61	0.02	-0.33
Field & Stream	4.25	3.94	0.31	-0.85
Forbes	2.96	2.90	0.06	-0.26
Fortune	3.77	4.33	0.56	1.85
Glamour	3.34	3.00	0.34	-1.30
Golf Digest	2.37	2.20	0.17	-0.45
Good Housekeeping	3.66	3.47	0.19	-1.93
House Beautiful	5.31	5.25	0.06	-0.15
Ladies' Home Journal	2.58	2.64	0.06	0.44
Life	6.89	6.98	0.09	0.16
McCall's	2.59	2.38	0.21	-1.45
Mechanix Illustrated	2.77	2.90	0.13	0.47
National Enquirer	3.30	3.46	0.16	0.42
National Geographic	2.58	2.40	0.18	-0.94
Newsweek	5.26	5.47	0.21	0.68
New York	2.79	2.72	0.07	-0.15
New Yorker	5.69	4.88	0.81	-0.93
Organic Gardening	2.66	2.26	0.40	-0.97
Outdoor Life	3.41	3.40	0.01	-0.03
Parents	2.88	2.41	0.47	-1.39
Penthouse	2.04	1.99	0.05	-0.27
People	8.28	8.26	0.02	-0.04
Playboy	2.89	2.49	0.40	-1.73
Popular Mechanics	4.01	4.02	0.01	0.01
Popular Science	2.89	2.77	0.12	-0.58
Prevention	1.77	1.70	0.07	-0.72
Reader's Digest	2.15	2.11	0.04	-0.48
Redbook	2.32	2.00	0.32	-1.96
Seventeen	2.54	2.25	0.29	-0.98
Smithsonian	2.46	2.31	0.15	-0.41
Southern Living	2.71	2.40	0.31	-1.18
Sport	3.31	3.98	0.67	1.83
Sports Illustrated	5.59	5.48	0.11	-0.46
The Star	3.21	3.06	0.15	-0.50
Sunset	2.51	2.46	0.05	-0.11
Time	4.58	4.54	0.04	-0.16
True Story	3.18	2.58	0.60	-1.11
TV Guide	2.22	2.04	0.18	-1.62
US News & World Report	4.71	4.39	0.32	-0.95
Vogue	5.15	4.36	0.79	-1.79
Woman's Day	2.55	2.36	0.19	-1.42
Average (46)	3.51	3.41	(-2.85%)	

A T-Score of +/-2.26 is necessary for statistical significance at the .95 confidence level

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TABLE 7
Comparison: 1981 vs 1982 readers per copy
25 male and dual audience magazines measured TTB in 1981

	1981	Males 1982	Diff	T-Score
Business Week	3.76	4.05	0.29	0.85
Ebony	2.11	2.38	0.27	0.63
Field & Stream	3.36	3.14	0.22	-0.67
Forbes	2.18	2.19	0.01	0.03
Fortune	2.68	3.09	0.41	1.62
Golf Digest	1.96	1.49	0.47	-1.52
Life	3.71	3.61	0.10	-0.23
Mechanix Illustrated	2.24	2.45	0.21	0.85
National Geographic	1.41	1.27	0.14	-1.24
Newsweek	3.25	3.32	0.07	0.43
New York	1.34	1.30	0.04	-0.13
New Yorker	2.71	2.56	0.15	-0.43
Organic Gardening	1.24	1.04	0.20	-0.69
Outdoor Life	2.78	2.68	0.10	-0.29
Penthouse	1.66	1.63	0.03	-0.19
Playboy	2.26	2.04	0.22	-1.32
Popular Mechanics	3.25	3.37	0.12	0.38
Popular Science	2.32	2.34	0.02	0.11
Reader's Digest	0.94	0.89	0.05	-0.82
Smithsonian	1.27	1.16	0.11	-0.51
Sport	2.77	3.37	0.60	2.04
Sports Illustrated	4.50	4.41	0.09	-0.43
Time	2.54	2.59	0.05	0.34
TV Guide	0.99	0.94	0.05	-0.81
US News & World Report	2.95	2.79	0.16	-0.59
Average (25)	2.41	2.40	(-0.2%)	

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TABLE 8
Comparison: 1981 vs 1982 readers per copy
28 female and dual audience magazines measured TTB in 1981

	1981	Females 1982	Diff	T-Score
Better Homes & Gardens	2.02	2.01	0.01	-0.06
Bon Appetit	1.80	1.74	0.06	-0.26
Cosmopolitan	3.03	3.11	0.08	0.38
Ebony	2.93	3.10	0.17	0.38
Family Circle	2.28	2.27	0.01	-0.19
Glamour	3.13	2.78	0.35	-1.54
Good Housekeeping	3.17	2.97	0.20	-1.87
House Beautiful	4.47	4.12	0.35	-0.98
Ladies' Home Journal	2.27	2.34	0.07	0.46
Life	3.18	3.37	0.19	0.96
McCall's	2.29	2.10	0.19	-1.82
National Enquirer	1.97	2.16	0.19	1.09
National Geographic	1.17	1.13	0.04	-0.36
New York	1.45	1.43	0.03	-0.10
Organic Gardening	1.42	1.23	0.19	-0.96
Parents	2.26	1.91	0.35	-1.22
People	5.00	5.09	0.09	0.26
Prevention	1.16	1.31	0.15	1.76
Reader's Digest	1.21	1.22	0.01	0.18
Redbook	2.06	1.75	0.31	-2.27
Smithsonian	1.19	1.15	0.04	-0.23
Southern Living	1.73	1.71	0.02	-0.09
Star	2.08	2.00	0.08	-0.31
Sunset	1.63	1.60	0.03	-0.12
True Story	2.61	2.28	0.33	-0.73
TV Guide	1.23	1.10	0.13	-2.13
Vogue	4.58	3.82	0.76	-2.09
Woman's Day	2.35	2.21	0.14	-0.88
Average (28)	2.35	2.25	(-4.0%)	

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TABLE 9
Comparison: 1982 readers per copy vs most recent through the book estimates
17 magazines estimated using calibrated frequency in 1981 but previously measured TTB by Simmons

	Adults			Males			Females		
	Prev TTB	1982	Diff	Prev TTB	1982	Diff	Prev TTB	1982	Diff
Car & Driver	3.70	3.87	0.17	3.33	3.44	0.11	0.36	0.44	0.08
Esquire	3.75	3.49	0.26	2.40	2.29	0.11	1.35	1.20	0.15
Golf Magazine	1.92	2.65	0.73	1.49	1.99	0.50	0.42	0.66	0.24
Harper's Bazaar*	5.51	4.97	0.54	0.81	0.44	0.37	4.70	4.53	0.17
Industry Week	2.57	2.39	0.18	2.07	2.17	0.11	0.51	0.22	0.29
Jet	8.05	9.04	0.99	4.03	4.33	0.30	4.02	4.71	0.69
Mademoiselle	3.75	3.35	0.40	0.24	0.26	0.02	3.51	3.09	0.42
Money	2.99	3.35	0.36	1.86	2.03	0.18	1.14	1.31	0.18
MS	3.47	2.77	0.70	0.61	0.30	0.33	2.83	2.46	0.37
Road & Track	4.32	4.53	0.21	3.89	4.11	0.22	0.43	0.42	0.01
Rolling Stone	4.97	5.46	0.49	3.35	3.71	0.36	1.63	1.76	0.13
Scientific American	3.50	3.35	0.14	2.55	2.50	0.05	0.95	0.85	0.09
Soap Opera Digest*	4.48	5.79	1.31	0.49	0.69	0.20	4.00	5.11	1.11
Sports Afield	4.51	6.56	2.05	3.73	5.59	1.86	0.79	0.97	0.18
US	4.18	3.50	0.68	1.78	1.30	0.47	2.40	2.20	0.20
World Tennis	3.86	1.68	2.18	2.26	0.84	1.42	1.61	0.84	0.76
Z-D Net (GR) (7)	3.86	3.66	0.20	2.98	2.90	0.08	0.89	0.76	0.13
Average	4.08	4.14	(+1.5%)	2.23	2.29	(+2.7%)	1.85	1.85	(0.0%)

* Indicates magazines for which only one year's TTB estimate is available from past studies.
 Previous data for all other magazines is the average of the two most recent TTB estimates.