

## DO MAGAZINE ADS MOTIVATE CONSUMERS?

Evidence from three classic research efforts indicates that the answer is yes! In the following pages we summarize the basic findings of these studies:

**The Politz Repeat Reading Studies: 1959–65**

**The Time Inc./Seagram's Study: 1979–80**

**The Family Circle/SMRB/Citicorp POS Studies**

## EARLY EVIDENCE THAT MAGAZINE ADS WORK: THE POLITZ REPEAT EXPOSURE STUDIES

One of the most compelling indicators of the positive effects of magazine ads upon their readers occurred as a by-product of three Politz studies, conducted in 1959, 1962 and 1965 for **The Saturday Evening Post**, **McCall's** and **Reader's Digest**, respectively. In each case, the object was to demonstrate the added impact of a second ad page exposure upon the magazine's audience.

The Politz design was ingenious. In each study, predetermined samples of subscribers were not sent an issue they would normally receive in the mail. Instead, interviewers visited these households, personally delivered the copy and asked the subscriber whether he or she would submit to another interview regarding opinions of the editorial. An appointment was made for a reinterview a day or two hence, with the subscriber agreeing to look at the issue page-by-page, then place it in a sealed envelope and not read it again. On the appointed day, the interviewer returned and asked questions about the magazine's editorial matter and then explained that some people refine their impressions after a second reading. Subscribers were asked if they would repeat the process—opening every page, then returning the issue to its envelope. Several days later, the interviewer conducted the final interview, again concentrating on the editorial features, but closing with a series of queries about some nationally advertised brands, which included brand awareness, claim or slogan familiarity, believability of the claim, the perceived “quality” of the brand and, finally, the respondent's willingness to buy a specific brand.

Needless to say, the copies of the magazine that subscribers were induced to peruse had ads for a number of brands specially tipped in or stripped out, creating a situation for each brand where one-third of the sample could not have seen the ad, another third had only one exposure to it, while a third group had two exposures. Ad impact findings for 12 brands were obtained in each of the Politz studies. The next table indicates the percent gain with one and two ad exposures relative to the non-exposed group (those who saw copies without the ads). In the 1959 Rochester study (the locale of the research), the average brand scored a 19% gain in awareness after one issue exposure and a 36% gain among those who read their copies twice.

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*Early Evidence That Magazine Ads Work: The Politz Repeat Exposure Studies Continued*

## SUMMARY OF THREE POLITZ REPEAT EXPOSURE STUDIES OF MAGAZINE AD IMPACT

	1959 SAT. EVE. POST ROCHESTER STUDY <sup>1</sup>		1962 McCALL'S STUDY <sup>2</sup>		1965 READER'S DIGEST STUDY <sup>3</sup>	
	1 EXPOSURE	2 EXPOSURES	1 EXPOSURE	2 EXPOSURES	1 EXPOSURE	2 EXPOSURES
Brand Awareness <sup>4</sup>	119	136	126	144	112	121
Claim Familiarity	134	162	114	130	103	106
Belief In Claim	116	148	122 <sup>5</sup>	135 <sup>5</sup>	111 <sup>5</sup>	117 <sup>5</sup>
Willingness To Buy	124	152	128	147	115	126

<sup>1</sup>Conducted with 150 *Saturday Evening Post* subscriber families (base: adults).

<sup>2</sup>Conducted with 463 women readers of *McCall's*.

<sup>3</sup>Conducted with 746 *Reader's Digest* adult readers.

<sup>4</sup>Comes to mind first.

<sup>5</sup>Consider the brand to be of very highest quality.

Although the indices varied somewhat from study to study, as well as by criteria, the overall pattern was clear. As shown in the next table, which averages the results from the individual studies, there was a progressive and significant lift in the average brand's awareness, ad claim registration and, especially, in the respondent's interest in buying or trying the product, following a single ad exposure. This was further improved by a second exposure to the issue carrying the ad. ■

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*Early Evidence That Magazine Ads Work: The Politz Repeat Exposure Studies Continued*

## IMPACT OF A FIRST AND SECOND AD EXPOSURE IN MASS MAGAZINES

Three-Study Average

	NO EXPOSURES	1 EXPOSURE	2 EXPOSURES
Brand Awareness	100	119	134
Claim Familiarity	100	117	133
Belief In Claim/ Brand Quality Rating	100	116	133
Willingness To Try Or Buy Brand	100	122	142

*Source: Media Dynamics, Inc.'s summary of **Saturday Evening Post**, **McCall's** and **Reader's Digest** studies conducted by Politz.*

## MORE EVIDENCE THAT MAGAZINE ADS WORK: THE TIME, INC./SEAGRAM STUDY

Another landmark study on the effectiveness of magazine advertising was a massive project sponsored by Time, Inc., on behalf of **Time** and **Sports Illustrated**, in conjunction with Joseph E. Seagram & Sons. The object of this project was to explore the effects of magazine advertising frequency in a real world context over an extended period of time. To do this, a number of market areas were established and a sample of 16,500 subscribers to either of the two Time, Inc. weeklies was singled out. Eight of Seagram's brands took part: four were "high profile" brands, four were "low profile" brands. The test lasted 48 weeks and the effects of ads for each brand were tested at four frequency levels by tipping in ads to selected subgroupings of subscribers. One group was exposed to no ads, another to 12 ads (one a month for 12 months), a third to 24 ads and the final group to 48 ads. Each subscriber received their regular copies of **Time** or **Sports Illustrated** without knowing that the ad frequencies for the eight Seagram brands were being controlled. Steps were taken to ensure that no other Seagram brand advertising occurred in the test markets while the study was in progress, thereby assuring that any noted effects could be attributed to variations in ad frequency.

In order to obtain the requisite data on ad impact, small subsamples of subscribers were surveyed via the mail on a weekly basis until, at the end of the 48-week interval, each had supplied one set of data (each subscriber was surveyed only once). Among other things, the questionnaire inquired about brand awareness, advertising awareness, willingness to buy, brand use and purchase for both the product categories involved and for the individual labels. The study was conducted between November 1979 and September 1980.

Like the Politz research a decade earlier, the Time, Inc./Seagram study demonstrated the power of magazine advertising, and the benefits of moderate to heavy frequency levels. As shown in the following table, the average Seagram brand gained only modestly in brand awareness, indicating that many liquor drinkers (the database) were not particularly interested in knowing about new labels. However, when the queries turned to advertising effects, the results were more dramatic. A 12-time schedule produced a 40% gain in the average brand's ad awareness, a 24% gain in the reader's expressed willingness to buy it, a 43% gain in usage and, most importantly, a 111% gain in purchase. As the table indicates, significant incremental gains ensued with added insertion frequency for ad awareness and brand use/purchase. ■

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*More Evidence That Magazine Ads Work: The Time, Inc./Seagram Study Continued*

## TIME, INC./SEAGRAM STUDY AVERAGE RESULTS FOR EIGHT BRANDS

INDEX OF	YEARLY AD FREQUENCY			
	0	12	24	48
Brand Awareness	100	110	115	122
Ad Awareness	100	140	166	194
Willingness To Buy	100	124	128	141
Brand Consumption Or Serving	100	143	143	172
Brand Purchase	100	211	214	270

*Note: The base is liquor users; the index is subscribers receiving no ads.*

*Source: Time, Inc., A Study of the Effectiveness of Advertising Frequency in Magazines, 1981.*

# MAGAZINE ADS SELL PRODUCT: THE FAMILY CIRCLE/SMRB/CITICORP POS STUDY

Striving to demonstrate that magazine ads produce a positive and measurable effect on product sales, **Family Circle** utilized the expertise of the Simmons Market Research Bureau. SMRB was acting as the media sales arm of Citicorp POS Information Services, whose scanner tracking facility provided the basic data.

The Citicorp system utilized scanners to monitor the shopping behavior of nearly 100,000 households that enrolled in a special promotional program offered by 299 supermarkets in three cities (Chicago, Los Angeles and Richmond). Each household used a special membership card when making its purchases, which allowed Citicorp to track its brand selections and total sales volume on an ongoing basis. Because **Family Circle** is sold in supermarkets, the system also identified single copy buyers of the magazine on an issue-by-issue basis. **Family Circle** also provided the names of its subscribers in the same areas, permitting Citicorp to isolate its primary reader households (subscriber and single copy) from others in its shopper panel. This allowed two sets of demographically matched homes to be evaluated, one representing **Family Circle**'s primary audience (8,683 shoppers), the other a control group of 90,489 shoppers.

The **Family Circle**-Citicorp POS study focused on 22 ads appearing in the publication's April 24, 1990 issue. Sales of each product category and the advertised brands were tallied among the **Family Circle** and "all other" panels for a 28-week period—12 weeks prior to the appearance of the ad (the base period), 4 weeks immediately after the ads appeared and 12 weeks following that.

It should be noted that the control group, which was not exposed to any of the 22 ads that appeared in the April 24, 1990 issue of **Family Circle** via purchase of the magazine, may have seen a pass-along copy. In addition, these brands ran ads in other women's service magazines whose readership is heavily duplicated with **Family Circle**. Nevertheless, the magazine estimates that even though the control group saw a number of the ads, its frequency of exposure was considerably lighter than the exposed group (those who purchased the **Family Circle** issue that carried the 22 monitored ads).

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*Magazine Ads Sell Product: The Family Circle/SMRB/Citicorp POS Study Continued*

The overall results of the **Family Circle**-Citicorp POS study were striking. Sales to homes that bought the magazine's April 24, 1990 issue increased relative to the control group for 15 of the 22 advertised brands during the 16 weeks after the ads appeared. For these 15 brands, the average sales gain relative to the control group was 19.6%, with a high of 46% for one product (a ready-to-spread frosting) and a low of 4% (a toilet paper). Obviously, if one treats all 22 brands in aggregate, whether or not their ads stimulated sales gains, the average increment was reduced somewhat, to about 10% by our calculations.

The residual effects of advertising are evident in this study since, once the persuasiveness of the ads induced consumers to try the brands, many came to like the products and continued to buy them. This, coupled with continued advertising exposures (in **Family Circle** and elsewhere), extends the effect of the brands' ads well beyond the time that they are first seen and acted upon.

Supporting evidence on this score comes from the **Family Circle** study, via breakdowns for four of the brands, which indicated differences in share of sales between the **Family Circle** buyers and the control group for the base period (12 weeks before the ad appeared), the first four weeks after the ad was seen, and the subsequent 12 weeks. In the following table we show these findings in two ways. The first three columns describe changes in share of volume between the exposed group (buyers of the **Family Circle** April 24, 1990 issue) and the control group (all other shoppers) for each of the three reference points. In the case of Duncan Hines frosting, this brand's share of volume was 1.6% higher among the exposed group in the 12 weeks before the issue was available. Its appearance prompted a 22.3% relative share gain during the first four weeks, and a 7.8% gain in the next 12 weeks (see table).

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*Magazine Ads Sell Product: The Family Circle/SMRB/Citicorp POS Study Continued*

## RELATIVE DIFFERENCE IN SHARE OF SALES VOLUME FOR EXPOSED VS. CONTROL GROUPS FOR FOUR BRANDS

	SHARE OF VOLUME			16-WEEK SALES	
	BASE PERIOD <sup>1</sup> (12 Wks.)	% CHANGE WHEN AD APPEARS		VOLUME CHANGE <sup>2</sup>	
		1 <sup>ST</sup> 4 WKS.	NEXT 12 WKS.	EXPOSED	CONTROL
Duncan Hines Frosting	1.6%	22.3%	7.8%	11%	—
Harvest Crisps	1.3	35.0	33.3	147	102
Fantastic All Purpose Cleaner	-6.4	9.8	-11.1	48	34
Keebler Ready Crust	5.9	10.4	6.0	87	55

<sup>1</sup>Prior to appearance of *Family Circle*'s April 24, 1990 issue, which carried the 22 ads whose impact was monitored.

<sup>2</sup>After ad appears in *Family Circle*'s April 24, 1990 issue.

Share of volume is only one aspect—albeit the one of most concern to brand managers—of ad effectiveness. However, the actual volume that is generated must also be considered. As in most other studies of this type, the advent of advertising, even if by a single brand, stimulates sales for the *whole category*, as well as the brand itself. To take this factor into account, the final two columns in the above table describe the change in sales volume of the four brands for the exposed and control groups. These are shown in terms of gains posted during the 16 weeks *after* their ad appeared in **Family Circle**'s April 24, 1990 issue, relative to sales volume in the 12 prior weeks. In the case of Duncan Hines frosting, the exposed group bought 11% more of this product after coming into contact with its ad, but the control group's sales volume did not change at all. It is noteworthy that in three out of the four cases, the control group *increased* its purchases of the advertised brands. As noted earlier, this may be attributed to the effects of pass-along readership of **Family Circle**'s April 24, 1990 issue, and also the impact of other ads run by the brands in women's service magazines, TV and elsewhere.

The basic point remains the same. **The Family Circle-Citicorp POS study** demonstrates most effectively that magazine ads can motivate consumers to buy branded products and that their impact extends beyond the initial exposure period, due to repeat magazine reading over time, and also due to repurchases by early samplers who liked the product and go back for more. ■