

READEX REVIEW

Spring 2007

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Successful Research Planning Step 3: Sample Size and Response Rates

In previous issues, we discussed the importance of developing concrete objectives for your project and how to translate them into specific questions. In this issue, we'll explore the importance of sample size and response rate, and the factors that influence what your survey data truly represents.

First, assume that you conduct a survey to find out more (or prove a point) about your circulation. For a survey to be effective, the survey's initial sample (mailout) must represent the population, your circulation, as must the people who respond to the survey.

Taking care of the first issue is relatively easy—usually by pulling every "nth" name across the population of interest. For example, if your circulation is 12,000 and you plan to survey 1,000, you would randomly pick a starting place and pull every 12th name.

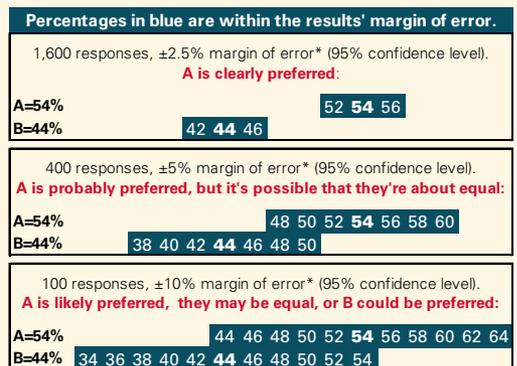
The concept of making sure *respondents* represent the population is often misunderstood or overlooked; however, the degree to which results represent the population depends upon how similar the respondents are to those who are surveyed but don't respond. As the response rate of a survey increases, the estimation errors due to non-response bias decrease. In other words, the higher the response rate, the more accurate the survey. Thus, the total design of the project should aim to get as high a rate of response as is economically prudent.

You also need to think about the implications of the sheer *number* of responses, which affects the margin of error (or maximum sampling error—MSE), the \pm figure you see associated with survey results. For example, you might see the following statement in a research report: *Results are subject to sampling error of \pm 4% at the 95% confidence level.*

What that's telling you is that the chances are 95 in 100 that the results you get are within 4 percentage points—higher or lower—of the true percentage for the entire population.

MSE is based on the number of responses the survey yields; the more responses your results are based on, the more precise those results are. Unfortunately, the relationship isn't linear, it's exponential: in order to *cut the MSE in half, you need to quadruple the number of responses.*

For example, let's say you conducted an editorial survey asking which feature readers liked best. 54% said feature A and 44% said feature B. It would appear to be a clear mandate for feature A, but look at how the number of responses impacts data precision:



*The chances are 95 in 100 that the population's percentage actually falls between the higher and lower numbers for each score reported, accounting for the overlaps in the above table.

The relationship between sample size and precision leads to a balancing act—aiming for a level of precision that will allow you to make informed decisions without breaking the bank. A 10% sampling error figure might be sufficient for an Ad Readership Study but would not be sufficient for a political poll. Part of our role as a research partner is to discuss the particular sampling plan that will work best for your particular objectives.

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Boost Advertising Frequency with Brand Awareness Results

Brand Awareness surveys usually ask questions regarding brands in certain product categories. The questions can focus solely on awareness, but can also be expanded to explain preferences for brands, to determine planned expenditures, etc.

Results will typically follow a certain pattern. Advertisers who most frequently advertise their brands in your publication usually have high awareness, and those who advertise less frequently will have lower awareness. Use these results to encourage advertisers to boost frequency.

It can be difficult to prove to sporadic advertisers that aggressive—or even consistent—advertising is an effective way to build awareness of a brand. Advertisers are likely to suspect your motives if you tell them, without proof, that frequent advertising builds awareness. On the other hand, if you provide statistical data revealing that the most frequent advertisers have the most awareness among your readers, that's proof any advertiser will have to consider.

One way to gather this data is by conducting a Brand Awareness Study. Coupling the results with advertising frequency reinforces the value of advertising to your biggest advertisers and shows less frequent advertisers that aggressive advertising increases awareness.

First, you can reinforce to your aggressive advertisers that their efforts are working. Using the sample results above, you can show the relationship between advertising and awareness. Because of Brand A's frequent advertising, its awareness among your readers—its market—is highest of all the brands. On the other hand, Brand C, with minimal advertising frequency, has the least awareness in the market.

Second, you can show Brand B or C that they may be able to improve awareness in the market by increasing their advertising efforts with your publication. Showing them these results reinforces the adage "out of sight, out of mind," while illustrating the relationship between aggressive advertising and awareness.

	<i>Familiar with Brand</i>	<i>Advertising Frequency</i>
Brand A	90%	Aggressive
Brand B	70%	Moderate
Brand C	30%	Minimal

Note the relationship between advertising frequency and brand familiarity. This data could be valuable on your next sales call.

Likewise, the results can dissuade any of these advertisers from decreasing their advertising. For example, Brand C may say that because its awareness is so minimal it isn't worth their money to advertise. The results support that if Brand C stops now, its awareness will fall even farther behind the other brands. Not only should the company continue to advertise, but frequency should be increased to boost awareness. While getting an advertiser to consider increasing frequency when it wants to cancel may sound impossible, the compelling information that a Brand Awareness Study provides may make it easier.

Advertisers that increase their frequency will not experience dramatic improvements overnight. The addition of one or two ads in the short-term will not shoot their awareness to the top. It is consistent advertising over a long period of time that builds high awareness. A follow-up study six months or a year after an increase in advertising can be used to show awareness—building progress, while offering you the same benefits as the first study.

Breaking Down an Effective Ad: Sikorsky

When an advertiser asks what makes an ad effective, one of the easiest ways to answer is to pull out a high scoring ad. By looking at individual elements of the ad, you'll start to identify the techniques that are successful with your readers. The example below features one of the two ads that received the highest Readex score (71%) of all ads studied in 2006 Readex

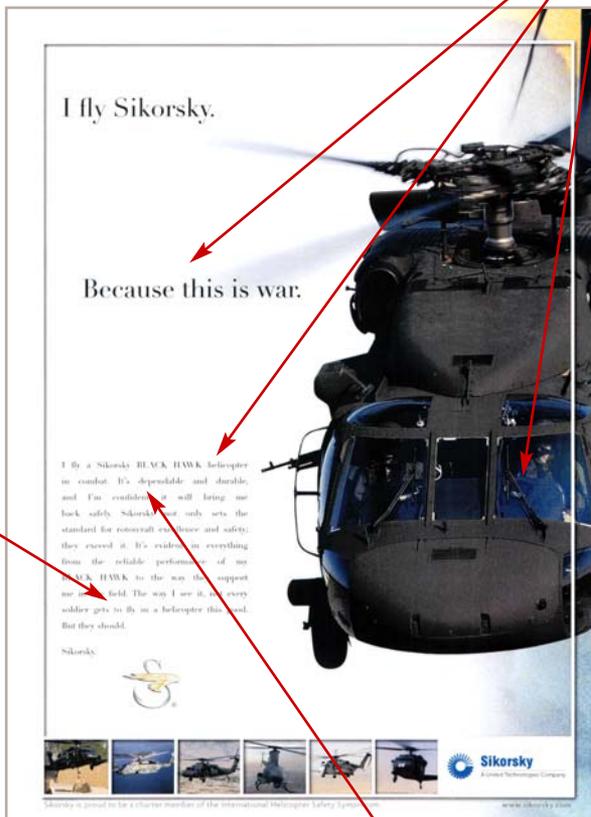
Research Red Sticker Studies. The short, concise ad copy entices readers into the ad, as opposed to text heavy ads that can overwhelm readers into ignoring the message. Because this ad incorporates many of the tips offered in Readex's Creating Effective Advertising brochure, readers are more likely to spend time with it.

Our thanks to Sikorsky, Bennett-Davis-Nakazawa Aerospace & Defense Marketing, and Rotor & Wing for their permission to feature this ad.

This ad **clearly presents one central proposition** to readers—that soldiers have confidence in Sikorsky helicopters during combat.

The text **sells the merits of the product** by identifying a few benefits, such as “sets the standard for rotorcraft excellence and safety,” and “reliable performance.”

Although the copy is not large, the ad has been **designed for easy reading** by incorporating ample space between the lines.



All of the ad's elements support its basic proposition: The headline introduces the ad's proposition, the illustration features two soldiers in the helicopter, and the text is in the voice of a soldier.

Featuring the words of an unnamed soldier, “I’m confident it will bring me back safely,” the ad makes a powerful **appeal to the reader’s needs and self-interest.**

Here are some tips you can share with your advertisers regarding creating effective ads...

Utilize your Readex Research Ad Readership Study Scores

Present one central proposition

Support the basic proposition with all elements of the ad

Show the product in use

Appeal to the readers' needs and self-interests

Sell the merits of the product/service

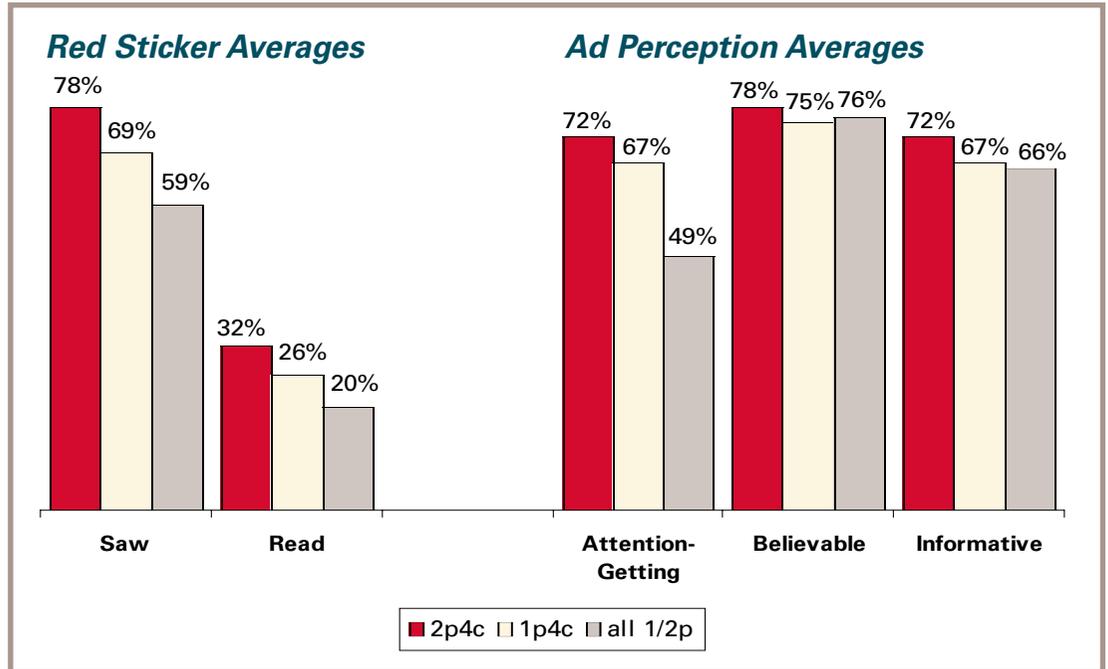
Emphasize benefits, not facts

Design the ad for easy reading

Use humor carefully

Repeat a successful ad and drop a low scoring ad

What's the average ad readership score?



Giving a straight answer to this question may not be easy since the definition of “ad readership” can vary greatly from person to person. In addition, the reasons people ask this question differ, as well.

Some people who ask us this question want to know the average scores from a specific study type so they can compare their scores with an overall average. Others may use the averages to prove the extent that readers, in general, engage with ads in publications.

Readex Research offers four types of studies that measure ad readership: On Target®, Message Impact®, Red Sticker™, and Ad Perception™. Because On Target and Message Impact studies report scores based on an index, the data doesn't lend itself to this type of comparative analysis. Red Sticker and Ad Perception studies report scores as percentages, so these studies provide us with aggregated data that can be used for a variety of purposes.

The averages in the charts above consist of scores from ads included in 1992–2006 Readex Red Sticker and Ad Perception studies.



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