

# READER ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLICATION QUALITY

Using PReSS to Understand These Critical Issues



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## Introduction

Many approaches have been developed and implemented in the United States to estimate and assess publication audiences. The vast majority of these approaches focus solely on the number of readers reached by one publication versus another (using circulation and audience survey counts). The use of this approach ignores a publication's qualitative attributes, namely those attributes that relate to readers' engagement and connection levels with the publication as well as readers' perceptions of the publication's product quality (editorial content, advertising content, and visual attributes).

In November 2004, Monroe Mendelsohn Research (MMR) released the results of its first **Publication Readership Satisfaction Survey (PReSS)**, a syndicated survey designed specifically to measure the qualitative brand attributes of consumer publications across many different publication categories. In November 2005, MMR released the results from its second **PReSS** Survey. In March 2006, the **PReSS** 2004/2005 Double-Base was released.

This report addresses the following:

- What is **PReSS**?
- How MMR defines "engagement";
- What MMR has learned to date;
- Conclusions.

## What is PReSS?

**PReSS** is not a syndicated audience survey.

**PReSS** has been designed specifically to measure consumer magazines and national newspapers as brands with product and brand attributes just like the products and services that are advertised in them.

**PReSS** provides the previously missing information that:

- Allows publications to demonstrate how they attract their audiences;
- Allows advertisers and their agencies to understand to what extent readers are engaged with each of the titles they read.

**PReSS** reports on how readers rate each publication on editorial and advertising content as well as on visual attributes (the cover or front page, photography, and illustrations).

**PReSS** data are intended to supplement the circulation and audience data used to select publications for advertising campaigns.

**PReSS** provides a unique, multi-purpose database that goes "beyond audience".

**PReSS** measures approximately 200 titles on a level playing field and from a consumer branding perspective.

**PReSS** fills a major void by providing publication data collected from readers to enable better planning and decision making by the following:

- Advertisers and their agencies;
- Publication management;
- Ad sales and marketing staff;
- Consumer marketing and circulation staff;
- Editorial staff;
- Investment bankers and strategy consultants.

For each publication released in the **PReSS** Surveys, readers provide the following seventeen title-specific measures:

- The frequency of reading each title;
- How the title is usually obtained (subscription, single copy, or pass-along);
- How much of the title is usually read (all of it, most of it, or some of it);
- Average reading time;
- Overall rating of the title (from "excellent" to "poor");
- Agreement levels (from "agree very much" to "disagree very much") for the following attributes:
  - Differs from other publications of the same type;
  - Look forward to reading every issue;
  - Is enjoyable to read;
  - Is entertaining;
  - Is cutting edge;
  - Is informative;
  - Is authoritative;
  - Has eye-catching covers;
  - Has quality photos/illustrations;
  - Contains useful ads;
  - Contains attention-getting ads;
  - Contains ads that the reader trusts.

**PReSS** provides advertisers, agencies, and publications with the database that can be tailored to measure the extent to which specific publications or print brands engage their readers.

## How MMR Defines "Engagement"

The concept of engagement is relevant at three levels:

- The medium (print, TV, radio, outdoor, Internet, etc.);
- The brand (publication title, TV show, etc.);
- The message (print ad, TV commercial, etc.).

**PReSS** has been designed to provide advertisers, agencies, and publications with data that can measure the engagement of publications at the brand level, which can be defined as "a measure of the degree to which each brand or title provides a conducive environment for a print ad to achieve its objective." Based on our experiences to date, MMR has concluded there is no single way of measuring engagement, even when such measurement is confined solely to the specific brand. Measures of engagement vary by:

- Advertising objective;
- Product or service category.

## What MMR Has Learned To Date

With **PReSS** there now are numerous ways to measure engagement. Some **PReSS** subscribers have now created their own "engagement index" to differentiate titles. The following describes one way among many of compiling such an index.

The following index is a representative example of what can be created using **PReSS** data. This specific index of reader engagement is a combination of three of the title-specific measures that readers provide through **PReSS**:

- The global evaluation of the title: Overall rating (ranging from "excellent" to "poor");
- The level of anticipation: "I look forward to reading every issue" (ranging from "agree very much" to "disagree very much");
- The level of enjoyment: "Is enjoyable to read" (ranging from "agree very much" to "disagree very much").

This specific index is created as follows:

- Depending on the reader's responses to each of the three measures included in the index, each publication rated by a reader receives a numerical rating of "1" to "4";
- The three ratings are summed to create an engagement index with scores ranging from a low of "3" to a high of "12".

Using the 2004 **PReSS** data, engagement index scores were created for all reported titles. About a quarter (23%) of the titles scored a "12", which corresponds to "fully engaged" readers. These readers of the highest-scoring titles rated them "excellent" overall, and they "agreed very much" that they "looked forward to reading every issue" and that the title was "enjoyable to read". The following table displays the distribution of the engagement index scores across all reported titles.

<b>Engagement Index</b>	<b>All Observations %</b>
3	0.4
4	0.3
5	0.9
6	2.8
7	6.6
8	11.9
9	23.5
10	14.1
11	16.5
12	23.0

Notably, when the engagement index scores for individual titles were aggregated by the MMR publication genres (twenty-one genres in total), the percentage of "fully engaged" scores ranged from a high of 30.9% among all titles in the parents/babies genre to a low of 11.4% in the bridal genre, as displayed in the following table.

MMR Genre	Total	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18-34	35-54	55+
<b>All Titles</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>24.5</b>
Parents/Babies	30.9	17.0	33.2	33.9	26.1	SB
Food/Wine	30.3	19.4	34.4	30.0	27.6	33.9
Hunting/Fishing/Guns	29.5	22.2	50.6	SB	23.6	33.7
General Interest/News	28.2	23.3	31.5	26.8	31.1	26.5
Golf	27.2	28.3	25.0	SB	25.0	27.7
Science/Nature	26.3	23.2	34.5	SB	28.4	31.2
Hobbies	26.1	20.3	31.2	SB	23.9	29.6
Home	23.2	12.5	26.7	21.6	18.5	29.8
Women's	23.2	11.5	24.8	24.0	22.0	23.7
Automotive/Motorcycles	23.2	21.3	27.7	32.7	12.1	18.2
Boating/Sailing	22.8	32.0	SB	SB	10.0	SB
Sports/Outdoor	21.2	20.7	22.3	21.5	21.0	21.2
Leisure/Travel	21.0	13.0	26.0	SB	21.1	21.2
Health/Fitness	19.9	12.2	22.4	14.1	23.5	21.3
Men's	19.7	20.9	15.7	20.4	19.5	13.0
Celebrities/Entertainment	19.6	16.4	21.0	20.2	19.7	17.9
Business/Finance	17.2	14.3	21.2	15.3	17.1	20.1
Sunday Newspaper Magazines	17.0	10.9	20.6	SB	17.6	19.1
National Newspapers	15.7	17.9	12.9	12.4	17.0	16.9
Personal Computing	13.3	12.8	SB	SB	13.8	SB
Bridal	11.4	SB	11.7	SB	SB	SB

SB = small base of <50 observations

While the genre index scores are useful in themselves, the real power of **PReSS** becomes apparent when titles are compared within genres or versus competitive sets. When the scores for selected titles (actual publication names have been omitted to maintain confidentiality) within three of the twenty-one MMR genres are examined, the ranges of engagement index scores are generally large.

The following table displays the "fully engaged" scores ("12") for six titles in the automotive genre. The highest ranked title's "12" score was 29.7%, while the lowest was 16.9%.

<b>Title</b>	<b>All Readers</b>
C	29.7
E	28.0
D	27.8
A	22.1
F	21.4
B	16.9

When the "fully engaged" scores for twelve selected titles in the general interest/news genre are reviewed, the highest-ranked title scored a 57.3% "fully engaged" score, while the lowest-ranked title received a 10.6% score. The following table displays the "fully engaged" scores for these titles:

<b>Title</b>	<b>All Readers</b>
D	57.3
J	44.4
C	44.0
A	40.8
E	40.6
H	34.8
G	22.3
K	19.0
I	16.5
F	15.6
B	13.8
L	10.6

Finally, when the "12" scores for eighteen selected titles in the women's genre are tabled, significant differences are again apparent in readers' engagement levels.

Title	All Women
C	57.6
K	45.1
Q	43.0
H	31.0
I	27.6
J	25.8
E	25.8
N	25.3
L	22.1
O	21.9
P	21.8
A	20.7
F	20.3
B	19.8
R	19.0
G	18.7
D	18.4
M	16.9

Considering the wide range of "12" scores in the automotive, general interest/news, and women's genres (from a high of 57.6% to a low of 10.6%), the issue arises of what other title-specific **PreSS** metrics "drive" or influence this specific engagement index.

To obtain insights into what other factors affect publication engagement, MMR conducted regression analyses of this engagement index on other **PreSS** rating attributes. In nearly all cases, editorial attributes were the first three metrics to enter the regression models:

- "Is entertaining," "Is cutting edge," and "Is informative" are the key attributes for most demographic groups;
- "Is different from other publications of the same type" is among the top three attributes for men, and for readers aged 35 though 54.

The following table describes the "drivers" of publication engagement for all readers, by gender, and among three age segments.

"Drivers" of Publication Engagement – Summary of Stepwise Regression Models  
(Numbers in each column indicate step in which attribute entered each model)

PReSS Rating Attributes:	Attribute Type:	All						
		Observations	Gender		Age			
			Men	Women	18-34	35-54	55+	
Is entertaining	Editorial	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Is cutting edge	Editorial	2	-	2	2	6	2	
Is informative	Editorial	3	2	3	-	3	3	
Is different from other publications of the same type	Uniqueness	4	3	4	4	2	4	
Contains ads that I trust	Advertising	5	5	5	3	4	-	
Has quality photos/illustrations	Visual/graphics	6	-	6	-	5	-	
Contains attention-getting ads	Advertising	7	6	-	-	-	5	
Is authoritative	Editorial	-	4	-	-	-	-	
Contains useful ads	Advertising	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Has eye catching covers	Visual/graphics	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	<i>R</i>	.796	.792	.803	.802	.802	.797	
	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	.633	.625	.643	.639	.642	.633	

## Conclusions

"Reader engagement" and "publication quality" are phrases on everyone's lips today — advertisers, agencies, and publishers — and will be for years to come. Traditional audience metrics alone are not sufficient to answer the questions that are now being asked. For those focused on publications, **PReSS** provides the relevant engagement and quality data that users are now seeking.

For more information on the research presented in this report, please contact Bob Shullman, Senior Vice President, Monroe Mendelsohn Research.

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