

The dollars and sense of good advertising

High scores in ad readership studies are important to advertisers, since readership and response demonstrate a return on their investment. But many advertisers may not realize that these studies are also a useful way to measure an ad's cost-effectiveness.

For example, readership of a Brewer client's advertising program (standard page, 4-color) has consistently ranked in the Top 10 for readership. The ads often outscore 2-page spreads and tabloid pages. And while one ad's readership slipped a bit in a recent study (it stayed in the top 20 percent), a close look at the results showed that the ad delivered more readers for the dollar than competitors' ads.

Here's the math: three competitors who ran larger ads in the studied issue paid 40-55% more than our client's rate for a standard page. But their readership was only 8-13% higher. That doesn't seem worth the extra investment; in fact, that additional money might have been better spent on more frequency or on complementary support (direct mail, on-line, publicity, etc.).

This raises a question: if good standard page ads are more cost-effective than spreads, can fractional sizes be more cost-effective than pages? Sometimes they can. While fractional readership is typically lower than pages, you can beat the curve with above-average creative.

Some half-page ads actually outscore full-page ads in readership and believability. But full pages are still generally the better buy.

Bottom line: bigger isn't always better. The key to cost-effectiveness is having good ads — large or small — because they get you more readers for your hard-earned dollar.

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