

Measuring Results: How to tell whether experience innovations are working

For more information:

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If at all possible, the Readership Institute recommends measuring readership generally and among the targeted group(s) before launching significant changes to the newspaper. (If you choose to measure Reader Behavior Scores, the methodology can be found at <http://www.readership.org/consumers/rbs/main.htm> in the report titled “Understanding and Calculating a Reader Behavior Score.”)

We also recommend incorporating experience-related research questions into your readership questionnaire, and repeating the survey some months after the changes have been made to gauge their effect.

1. Select four or five experiences your newspaper will concentrate on over the next few years. Include the experience you choose to work on immediately, and three or four others that look promising. If you choose five experiences to track, you will incorporate about 35 questions into your readership survey. Make sure your overall sample size is at least 300 and that subgroups you wish to analyze include at least 200 respondents.
2. As indicated on the Readership Institute’s experience survey (<http://www.readership.org/consumers/NewsExp.htm>), the questions are asked on a 5-point agree/disagree scale. Introduce the questions in this manner: “I am going to read you a list of statements about how some people describe reading the newspaper. For each statement please indicate how much you agree or disagree that it describes your feelings about _____(name of newspaper).” Use the following scale
 1. Strongly Disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Neither Agree or Disagree
 4. Agree
 5. Strongly Agree
3. Randomize the statements within the section so the questions that apply to various experiences are not asked in succession.
4. For each respondent, simply average the responses to statements for each experience.
5. Include the mean “experience score” as an additional column in your dataset. Calculate overall mean scores for all respondents by averaging the mean experience scores for each respondent.

6. Conduct subgroup analysis by calculating mean “experience scores” for selecting demographic groups.

EXAMPLE

A newspaper chooses to measure the “*Something to talk about*”, “*Makes me more interesting*” and “*Drowning in news*” experiences.

1. Identify the statements that apply to each experience.

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT STATEMENTS

I bring up things I've read in this newspaper in conversations with many other people.
I like to talk about the national news and current events I read about in it.
I like to talk about the local news I read.
I like to give advice and tips to people I know based on things I've read in this newspaper.
I show things in the newspaper to people in my family.
I remember at least some of the things I have read in this newspaper for a long time.
It is important to me that I remember later what I have read in this newspaper.
I am mentally involved in this newspaper while reading it.

MAKES ME MORE INTERESTING STATEMENTS

It makes me feel younger.
A big reason I read it is to make myself more interesting to other people.
Reading this newspaper is a little like belonging to a group.
I like for other people to know that I read this newspaper.
The newspaper helps me understand or talk to the opposite sex better.
This newspaper deals with the same situations I find myself in.
I like to have the newspaper around so that others might read it.
I read this newspaper so I don't look foolish or uneducated.

DROWNING IN NEWS STATEMENTS

Unread copies of this newspaper tend to pile up in my house.
I sometimes let copies of this newspaper pile up and then read several in one sitting.
I make my decision whether or not to read it or not based on what I saw on the TV the night before.
I tend to daydream while reading it.
Reading this newspaper makes me feel like I am drowning in the flood of news that comes out each day.
I feel pressured for time when I am reading this newspaper.
I prefer to read it outside my home.

2. Randomize the statements in your battery of questions.

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|----|-------------|---|
| 1 | Talk | I bring up things I've read in this newspaper in conversations with many other people. |
| 2 | Interesting | I like for other people to know that I read this newspaper. |
| 3 | Drown | I sometimes let copies of this newspaper pile up and then read several in one sitting. |
| 4 | Talk | I like to talk about the local news I read. |
| 5 | Drown | I make my decision whether or not to read it or not based on what I saw on the TV the night before. |
| 6 | Interesting | This newspaper deals with the same situations I find myself in. |
| 7 | Talk | I show things in the newspaper to people in my family. |
| 8 | Talk | I am mentally involved in this newspaper while reading it. |
| 9 | Interesting | A big reason I read it is to make myself more interesting to other people. |
| 10 | Drown | I tend to daydream while reading it. |
| 11 | Drown | Reading this newspaper makes me feel like I am drowning in the flood of news that comes out each day. |
| 12 | Interesting | Reading this newspaper is a little like belonging to a group. |
| 13 | Talk | I remember at least some of the things I have read in this newspaper for a long time. |
| 14 | Interesting | The newspaper helps me understand or talk to the opposite sex better. |
| 15 | Drown | I prefer to read it outside my home. |
| 16 | Interesting | I like to have the newspaper around so that others might read it. |
| 17 | Talk | I like to talk about the national news and current events I read about in it. |
| 18 | Talk | I like to give advice and tips to people I know based on things I've read in this newspaper. |
| 19 | Drown | Unread copies of this newspaper tend to pile up in my house. |
| 20 | Talk | It is important to me that I remember later what I have read in the newspaper. |
| 21 | Interesting | It makes me feel younger. |
| 22 | Interesting | I read this newspaper so I don't look foolish or uneducated. |
| 23 | Drown | I feel pressured for time when I am reading this newspaper. |

3. Ask respondents to rate each statement on the 5-point agree/disagree scale.

4. Average the scores for each experience for each respondent.

To calculate a respondent's score for "Something to talk about", average his/her score for questions 1, 4, 7, 8, 13, 17, 18, 20. Do the same for each experience.

5. Calculate an overall experience score for your newspaper by averaging all respondents' scores for that experience.

This is your benchmark score. For example, your market's overall "Something to talk about" experience is a 3.20. Replicate the study nine months to a year after implementing your strategy to determine how the experience has changed over time. As with RBS, comparison against RI's national benchmark is possible. In this example a 3.20 would be statistically lower than the national benchmark of 3.48. (As a rule of thumb, differences of 0.2 or greater are statistically significant.) However, the most relevant and actionable comparisons are against your own scores over time.