

Campaign Media Research Results

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Recommended Citation

Zarkin, David A. (1978) "Campaign Media Research Results," *Journal of Applied Communications*: Vol. 61: Iss. 1. <https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.1892>

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Campaign Media Research Results

Abstract

Taking the guess work out of publicity campaign planning is the result of three years of research by the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Extension Service for consumer-oriented housing short courses.

Based on the Reorder sub-list, an 'Action Request' form is sent to the responsibility center for each publication in short supply. Usually, within 1 to 3 weeks we receive the financial authority to reprint, or within 2 to 4 months we receive a revised manuscript for printing.

Costs and Benefits

Since we have been using in-house computer facilities and our own keypunching personnel, the actual costs have been minimal. The weekly summary reports average \$1 to \$2 actual computer time (70 to 90 sec). The monthly and semi-monthly printouts also average between \$1 and \$2 each. These costs are absorbed by our Data Processing Unit. No estimate of costs for keypunching, machine rental, cards and printout paper have been calculated.

On the positive side we have the following benefits:

- We save about one man-year of clerical labor in data collection and tabulation.
- We have far more accuracy in the inventories of our more than 700 publications.
- We are able to maintain an almost continuous supply of each publication.

Therefore, as a result, we can render better service to our clients — which is our *raison d'être* and our objectives.



Campaign Media Research Results

David A. Zarkin

Taking the guess work out of publicity campaign planning is the result of three years of research by the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Extension Service for consumer-oriented housing short courses. In contrast to other AES programs, the housing curricula rely on user charges, publication distribution in excess of \$10,000 annually, staff salary and overhead commitments of about \$75,000 and in-kind contributions of about \$250,000.

With these added resources, course coordinators could add paid advertising to the traditional promotion methods, such as news releases, county newsletters and public service announcements on radio and television. With the new dimension, cost effectiveness became a consideration. Research was part of the plan to see what worked and how much it cost in terms of registrants.

At the first of five to nine sessions of these non-credit shortcourses in Minnesota locations, registrants completed survey forms to elicit demographic and media data. "What was the first way you learned about this short course?," they were asked. A 4½ x 3 display advertisement in the classified real estate section of the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, which covers 60 percent of the homes in the 10-county metropolitan area, at a cost of \$172 more than paid for itself in the Building or Buying a New Home Course campaign during the winter of 1977 and accounted for 34 percent of the total registration.

This advertisement brought a high of almost 46 percent of the registration at the Anoka County site and a low of 14 percent at Maplewood, where the dominant communications channel was word-of-mouth and "other" (28 percent).

For the question, "What was the first way you learned about this short course?," here is the breakdown by media:

- Newspaper advertisement, 34 percent
- Newspaper story, 17 percent
- Radio, 3.8 percent
- Promotional flyer, 14.2 percent.
- Extension newsletter, 10.8 percent.
- Other (word-of-mouth, etc.), 15.3 percent.

What conclusions can be drawn from this tabulation? You certainly cannot put all your eggs in one basket by buying one large classified display advertisement for every adult education offering in metropolitan area. For the new homes course, the large *Tribune* advertisement worked, but a media mix, including radio and television announcements, news letters, newspaper stories and promotional flyers, are needed to insure success.

Although the advertisement accounted for 34 percent of the total registration, the remaining registration was considerably fragmented among the various media. For instance, "word-of-mouth" doubled in importance in terms of registration from Maplewood to Anoka, both in the northern metropolitan area. A television spot on WTCN, Minneapolis, featuring a county extension worker, accounted for almost 9 percent of the Brooklyn Center registration, but was almost negligible at the Anoka classes where it brought slightly more than one percent of the registration.

An interview with the extension housing specialist on 50,000-watt WCCO-AM, whose transmitter is at Anoka, along with short announcements on other stations brought less than significant registration for the

classes at Anoka (6.3 percent) and Maplewood (5 percent) and radio only accounted for about 1 percent of the registration at the other three sites. Anoka and Maplewood benefited most from radio, yet the ad brought the most action.

The survey showed that promotional flyers are steady, fairly reliable publicity tools for the new homes classes. The flyers ranged in effectiveness from 19 percent at Maplewood to 7 percent at Brooklyn Center. Like the newspaper advertisement and newspaper stories, the flyer offered families something they could refer to after first learning about the classes. With this printed information in hand, they could act on the matter at a later date, possibly being reinforced by word-of-mouth, radio and television.

Extension newsletters, distributed by county extension offices to homemakers, were also reliable in reaching a select audience. They ranged in effectiveness from 18.3 percent at Shakopee to 5.5 percent at Brooklyn Center.

Publicity flyers were the dominant media in registration for a fall 1976 Buying an Older Home course, also offered by the Minnesota Extension Service, at three central city locations and two suburbs. Registrants first learned about the classes from:

- Newspaper advertisement, 19.9 percent.
- Newspaper story, 15 percent.
- Radio, 3.8 percent.
- Television, 5.9 percent.
- Extension Newsletter, 7.7 percent.
- Other (word-of-mouth, etc.), 15.4 percent.

Distribution to libraries of several thousand flyers, which were delivered to the county offices in August for the early October classes, proved to be important. Also receiving the flyers were banks, real estate and loan agencies, discount department stores, municipal and county buildings, community and technical schools and all county mailing lists.

An undated news release was sent by the Department of Information and Agricultural Journalism at the University of Minnesota to the county offices in late August with a cover letter for distribution to community and neighborhood print media. In early September the department sent the same release to metropolitan daily and weekly newspapers.

For the Buying an Older Home Classes, a display advertisement was placed in the family life news section of the St. Paul *Sunday Pioneer Press* in mid-September and in the *Sunday Tribune* in the classified real estate section a week later. A display advertisement in a downtown Minneapolis paper and commercials on an AM country and an FM rock music station failed to bring direct registration results, but may have reinforced the message and brought Extension visibility to a new audience.