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## The Roy Morgan Readership Survey Results Obtained for Magazines Published with Newspapers

- prepared by -

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This paper looks at claims about readership levels of magazines published with newspapers.

The paper shows why magazines published with newspapers have lower readership levels than those of their host newspaper. There is no evidence to suggest that the current Roy Morgan Readership Survey data is not correct. Any other readership data should not be used.

Earlier this year at a recent Melbourne Column Club luncheon, where I was the guest speaker, members of the audience brought to my attention concerns they have with the readership figures we obtain for Good Weekend and The Australian Magazine.

Since then, The Australian Magazine sent a letter (dated May 23, 1989) to advertising agencies (and I assume some advertisers) saying The Roy Morgan Readership Survey estimate for The Australian Magazine is "a load of rubbish".

That letter also mentioned U.K. and U.S. readership results, namely:-

"Does 25 years of researching colour supplements (in the U.K.) count for nothing?"

"If Morgan adopted the same methodology as the U.K. and U.S., we would expect similar results."

In addition to the above, Yvonne Gregory of The Australian Magazine has written to B&T and Advertising News referring to the survey results we obtained immediately after the launch of the new Victorian Sunday newspapers.

Reference has also been made to the results of surveys we conducted in 1982 and 1986 for Newspaper Advertising Bureau. (These surveys looked at how people read a newspaper, not readership of specific sections of a newspaper nor readership of the Good Weekend insert which was then the only newspaper magazine insert.)

### 1. The Facts are the Following:-

Magazines inserted in a newspaper are magazines delivered free by a newspaper instead of being sold through a newsagent or by subscription.

Because magazines delivered by newspapers are still magazines, the accepted 'currency' for measuring their readership is based on "specific issue readership" where a respondent is shown an actual issue of each publication being surveyed.

The method we now use in Australia to measure Good Weekend and The Australian Magazine is a "specific issue" method similar to the U.S.A. method used by Simmons. Our method is an improvement on the U.S.A. Simmons method as we use complete "specific issues", not truncated (cut down) issues as does Simmons.

As explained below, it has been well established that the U.K. method produces exaggerated readership levels due to the poor questions asked.

There are logical reasons why a particular section of a newspaper is not read by everyone who reads or looks into a newspaper. With The Weekend Australian and the Saturday Age/Sydney Morning Herald, many readers look at these newspapers solely for the classified advertisements. In addition, those Saturday papers are large, cover many topics and have several independent sections. Some people read only the sports pages, others only the political news, others only the financial news, etc..

People buy newspapers to read the daily news so obviously inserting a magazine in a newspaper doesn't necessarily mean the magazine will be sought after and read.

In our October '88 - March '89 readership survey we estimated the Saturday Age/Sydney Morning Herald readership at 2,182,000. We estimated Good Weekend readership at 1,176,000 (54% of the AGE/SMH total readership). Our Oct '88 - March '89 readership survey estimated The Weekend Australian's readership at 840,000. We estimated The Australian Magazine readership at 334,000 (40% of The Weekend Australian readership).

The Roy Morgan Readership Survey for the 3 months April '89 - June '89 shows a similar result for the Good Weekend but a higher result for The Australian Magazine was obtained (particularly in NSW, where both magazines have readership levels which are 56% of the host newspaper's readership).

## 2. U.K. Readership Research

The U.K. method of measuring readership uses a series of questions. With daily newspapers the question asks about "yesterday" reading. With weekly magazines, weekly newspapers and their magazine inserts the question asks whether read "in the last 7 days".

We in Australia have conducted numerous experiments on magazine readership using methods similar to the U.K. method and compared the results. (See the paper prepared by my father, Roy Morgan, in 1983 "How a Composite Method Has Overcome Telescoping, Prestige and Replication in Readership Research").

Before using our "specific issue" method to measure readership of business and general weekly magazines (Bulletin, Time, BRW, Australian Business, Good Weekend, The Australian Magazine and West Australian Magazine) we used a "recency" question similar to that now used in the U.K.. Our "recency" method resulted in inflated readers-per-copy estimates of up to 30% higher than the current results we obtain from using the "specific issue" method.

The U.K. questions make no attempt to eliminate replication, telescoping, or prestige. Because of this, the specific U.K. questions have to inflate readership levels. The "specific issue" method eliminates these errors.

The U.K. biases have been well documented and consequently any reference to U.K. readership levels for magazines should be treated with scepticism.

### 3. U.S. Readership Research

There are numerous companies conducting readership research in the U.S.A. Simmons and Scarborough have documented their methods. Both have gone to considerable trouble to produce results which don't inflate readership levels.

For magazines Simmons uses truncated specific issues. Although using truncated issues of magazines is less preferable to using complete issues, the method eliminates replication and telescoping.

For national newspaper readership estimates Simmons uses questions based on "yesterday" reading. The questions are designed to eliminate prestige.

For local daily newspaper surveys both Scarborough and Simmons use the same "yesterday" reading questions. (We have tested these "yesterday" reading questions in Australia and have obtained results similar to those obtained by the standard Roy Morgan Readership Survey.)

There are other U.S. research companies (Mediamark Research and Belden) who purport to measure readership of newspapers and magazines. Both use questions which obtain inflated readership estimates either due to replication, telescoping or prestige.

### 4. Recent Australian Experiments

In February this year and more recently in August and early September, we conducted a series of experimental surveys. One of the areas covered looked at the different methods we could use for measuring readership of the Good Weekend and The Australian Magazine.

Some media executives have mentioned to us that they believe we obtain readership estimates which are too low for the Good Weekend and The Australian Magazine because we do not list those magazines on the same show card as we use for the weekend newspaper question.

Another area of concern mentioned is the belief that our survey does not take into account people reading Good Weekend or The Australian Magazine at a date later than when published.

The present Roy Morgan Readership Survey "specific issue" readership questions cover both these concerns.

#### 4a. Results of February 1989 Experimental Research

In February 1989 we asked door-to-door an Australia-wide cross section of 2,471 men and women aged 14 years and over a series of experimental questions on reading in the last 7 days (day-by-day) of all newspapers and their magazine inserts. In this experiment the newspaper magazine inserts and their host newspapers were listed together on the same show card.

The following table shows the readership of the weekly newspaper magazines as a percentage of the readership obtained for the host newspapers delivering those magazines.

As can be seen from the experimental survey, the result for The Australian Magazine was almost the same as we obtained from our standard Roy Morgan Readership Survey. The Good Weekend figure was lower than the standard Roy Morgan Readership Survey.

Australia-wide results	Readership for newspaper magazines as a percentage of the readership obtained for the host newspapers	
	Based on standard Roy Morgan "specific issue" readership estimate	Personal interview experimental survey
Total sample size surveyed	Oct '88-March '89 (14,535)	February 1989 (2,471)
<u>Good Weekend</u> published with the Saturday Age and Sydney Morning Herald	% 54	% 39
<u>The Australian Magazine</u> published with The Weekend Australian	40	41

**Conclusion:** Showing the specific issue of the Good Weekend increases the readership estimate for that publication. For The Australian Magazine we obtain the same readership level.

#### 4b. Results of August/September 1989 Victorian Experimental Research

Recently we conducted two Victorian telephone surveys to measure the launch of the new Victorian Sunday newspapers and their magazine inserts. Each survey was based on approximately 1,000 interviews.

As would be expected, the first survey taken immediately after the new Sundays were launched showed the first issues of the new Sunday Sun TV Magazine, Sunday Age TV Magazine and Sunday Herald Magazine obtained relatively high readership levels. As previously reported, they were 82%, 85% and 86% respectively of the readership levels obtained by their host newspapers. Reference has been made to these figures as an indication of the levels that should be obtained for other magazines inserted in newspapers. This is obviously not correct as shown by the subsequent survey results three weeks after the new Sundays were launched.

On September 4,5&6 we repeated our Sunday newspaper survey and measured average issue readership levels for the Sunday magazine inserts. The readership levels as a percentage of the readership obtained for the host newspapers were as follows:

Sunday Sun TV Magazine's readership was 55% of Sunday Sun's readership  
 Sunday Age TV Magazine's readership was 58% of the Sunday Age's readership  
 Sunday Herald Magazine's readership was 40% of the Sunday Herald's readership

At the same time we measured the readership levels of the Good Weekend and The Weekend Australian by asking the "1st time reading" questions. (This method is now used in the Roy Morgan Readership Survey for some weekly magazines. The "specific issue" question is used to measure the readership of The Bulletin, Time, BRW, Australian Business, Good Weekend, The Australian Magazine and West Australian Magazine.)

The following are the results for Good Weekend and The Australian Magazine compared with the readership estimates obtained in Victoria by the Roy Morgan Readership Survey for October '88 - March '89 and April - June '89. (It is interesting to note that for the same period in NSW the readerships of both publications, as a percentage of the readership of the host newspapers for both publications, were 56% - the Good Weekend was up 2% on the previous 6 months and The Australian Magazine was up 6% on the previous 6 months.)

Victorian results	Readership of newspaper magazines as a percentage of the readership obtained for the host newspapers.		
	Based on standard Roy Morgan "specific issue" readership estimate		Telephone experimental survey
Total sample size surveyed	Oct '88-March '89 (14,535)	April-June '89 (7,102)	Sept '89 (1,006)
<u>Good Weekend</u> published with the Saturday Age	% 54	% 51	% 62
<u>The Australian Magazine</u> published with The Weekend Australian	41	46	64

**Conclusion:** As can be seen, the telephone experimental survey obtained readership levels higher than those obtained by the Roy Morgan Readership Survey "specific issue" questions for April - June 1989. In September both the Good Weekend and The Australian Magazine inserts had slightly higher readership levels as indicated by the experimental telephone survey. Alternatively, the Victorian Saturday newspaper readership levels for the Saturday Age and The Weekend Australian could be lower (due to the new Sunday newspapers taking readers) resulting in the number of readers of the magazine inserts, as a percentage of the host newspapers readership, being higher.

5. Summary

Results from both the Victorian experimental telephone survey and the Victorian Roy Morgan Readership Survey show the newspaper magazine inserts have readership levels significantly lower than their host newspapers, and to claim otherwise "is a load of rubbish"!