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Secil Tuncalp,

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The problems for international advertisers in Saudi Arabia.

Print Media Planning in Saudi Arabia

Secil Tuncalp

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Introduction

One of the most important markets in the world and definitely in the Middle East, representing \$20-25 billion worth of annual export potential to international exporters, Saudi Arabia came out of the Gulf crisis unscathed. As a matter of fact, the economy of the country was able to withstand the burdens of the Gulf crisis (Hashem, 1990), and perhaps emerged from the crisis with an improved future outlook.

Currently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is thought to be producing around 8.8 million barrels of crude oil per day. This level of output is 57 per cent higher than its pre-war output when the Kingdom was pumping 5.4 million barrels per day before Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August, 1990 (Parker, 1990a). Assuming the crude oil prices will remain stable, the oil revenues of Saudi Arabia should remain significantly higher in the foreseeable future than the oil revenues estimated to be over \$60 billion during 1990 (Parker, 1990b). All this means good news for the international marketers who have been hit hard by the interruption in their export programmes to the Iraqi and Kuwaiti markets.

However, the export opportunities presented by the lucrative Saudi market do not come easy (Tuncalp, 1987, 1988, 1990a; Tuncalp and Yavas, 1986; Yavas *et al.*, 1987). The competition among the international marketers is

extensive. For example, during the early 1990s, the top 12 competitors in the Saudi market were the exporters from the USA, Japan, England, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, South Korea, Taiwan, Holland, China and Turkey. Even though exporters from the USA are able to maintain their traditional top position, they are also giving up some of their relative market shares to competition. For example, while the exporters from the USA supplied around 40 per cent of the Saudi imports during the mid-1970s, they now account for only about 15 per cent of the annual imports. From being the sixth largest export market in 1982, the Saudi market became the twentieth export market for the USA.

A key to success in the Saudi market is a creative advertising programme which can effectively reach the consumers and industrial buyers (Tuncalp, 1990b; Yavas and Tuncalp, 1983). The most creative advertising programme will not reach its intended markets if it is not communicated through the proper media (Tuncalp, 1992). Therefore, in addition to the care international marketers should be showing in the preparation of their advertising messages, they should also be focusing on the selection of the most appropriate media to channel their advertising messages.

Advertising Industry

The advertising industry in Saudi Arabia is still in its early stages of development. During the height of economic development of the early 1980s, the size of advertising expenditures was estimated to be around \$200 million per year (Riyadh Bureau, 1984). However, in the light of the prevailing economic recession, according to the Al Khaleejiah advertising agency in Saudi Arabia, the current advertising spending is estimated to be around \$170 million. Over the coming three years, the same agency estimates advertising expenditures to rise by 16 per cent annually and reach \$261 million by 1995.

Even though the expected growth in the advertising expenditures is impressive, a more detailed analysis of advertising expenditures would show that Saudi Arabia has a long way to go before catching up even with some of its Gulf neighbours. For example, the per capita advertising spending is estimated to be around \$10.5 in Saudi Arabia. In comparison, the same statistic is estimated to be \$48 for Kuwait (reflecting the pre-war situation); \$45.1 for the United Arab Emirates; \$27.4 for Qatar; and \$21.4 for Bahrain (GIB, 1990).

The development of the advertising industry in Saudi Arabia is hindered by the unavailability of a number of media to advertisers. For example, cinema, which is an important medium in many developing countries (Shugaar, 1983), is not available in Saudi Arabia. Social values do not permit the showing of movies in public

gatherings. Recently, the Saudi Government prohibited the showing of advertising on films rented to the public through the video medium. Radio is available in the country. But, at the present time, the Government will not allow commercial advertising to be broadcast on radio. Advertising on Government-owned television was permitted after 1986, allowing limited broadcasting of commercial advertising.

Because of the fewer media available for advertising, the print media have always been the most important channel for advertising in Saudi Arabia. Even though firm statistics are hard to find, one source estimated print media to account for about 74 per cent of the advertising expenditures in the Kingdom (Riyadh Bureau, 1990). Another source estimates the same figure to be around 70 per cent (PARC, 1988). In any event, the print media are the most used channel for advertising in Saudi Arabia, accounting for around three-quarters of the advertising expenditure in the country.

The all-important position of print media in Saudi Arabia is being influenced by a recent development. This development is the dramatic improvement in literacy among the indigenous population. Already, the student population at all levels of the school system in the Kingdom reached 2.5 million, to constitute about 20 per cent of the total population which is estimated to be around 13 million people (SAMA, 1992).

It is against this background that this article presents the results of a study conducted to determine print media availability in Saudi Arabia: the media that attract a major portion of the annual advertising expenditures in the country. The article will discuss various types of print communication vehicles that can be used to place commercial advertising. In order to help international marketers in their print media planning decisions for the Saudi market, the article will also present the cost effectiveness of various print media covered in the study as well as examine their shortcomings.

Print Media

The study will evaluate four different types of print media: handbills, yellow pages, newspapers and magazines. Handbills, including brochures, pamphlets and flyers, found some use in Saudi Arabia. This medium is used to announce special promotions such as contests and games, and to describe recipes for food products that are new to Saudi consumers. A recent government decree prohibits their distribution to passers-by at main intersections, and Saudi social values would not permit their distribution through the mail system to homes. At best, handbills are placed near the check-out counters in supermarkets for customers to pick up. Because of their limited reach and their more constrained use, this study will not discuss this

print medium. It will be sufficient to mention that there are numerous printing companies in all major cities of Saudi Arabia that possess satisfactory creativity and expertise, and they can provide design and colour printing services to international advertisers.

The yellow pages of the telephone directories have been available for placing short advertisements since the first professionally produced telephone directories appeared in Saudi Arabia during the late 1980s. The Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia oversees the publication of the telephone directories. The Kingdom is divided into eight districts and a telephone directory is produced for each district. At present, the eight telecommunication districts are: East and North Province; Qassim and Hail; Al Madinah Al Munawarah, Tabuk and Yanbu; Makkah Al Mukarramah; Jeddah; Taif; South Province; and Riyadh. The ministry distributes telephone directories free of charge to every telephone subscriber in the Kingdom. As an advertising medium, the yellow pages of the telephone directories are useful for advertising company information including company addresses and telephone numbers.

Because of the limited use for handbills and the yellow pages of telephone directories, print media in Saudi Arabia consist primarily of newspapers and magazines. It is estimated that around 80 per cent of advertising expenditure for print media go to newspapers and the remaining 20 per cent to magazines. In addition, about 80 per cent of the expenditure for print media is for advertisements that are placed in Arabic language print media and the remaining 20 per cent goes to English language print media (Shehadi, 1984).

As can be observed from Table I, numerous periodicals are available in Saudi Arabia. The number of periodicals published in the Kingdom is 72. In terms of publication frequency, 14 of these are published on a daily basis, and eight are issued weekly. The daily periodicals and one of the weekly periodicals make up the 15 newspapers published in Saudi Arabia. Among the remaining 57 periodicals, there are 49 commercial magazines. These newspapers and magazines provide print-advertising opportunities for international advertisers in Saudi Arabia.

Table I also shows that the first periodical began publication in 1923. Since then, the number of periodicals published in Saudi Arabia has grown steadily. Most rapid growth took place between 1971 and 1985, during which time 44 new periodicals have been published. As the number increased, their print quality also showed significant improvement. Today, most newspapers are published in black and white, and magazines are printed in colour.

As can be seen from Table I, at least one periodical is published in most of the Kingdom's major cities. Important

Table I. *Periodicals Published in Saudi Arabia*

	Number
<i>Frequency of publication</i>	
Daily	14
Weekly	8
Twice a month	2
Monthly	21
Quarterly	18
Bi-annually	5
Annually	4
Total	72
<i>Initial date of publication</i>	
1923-1960	4
1961-1965	10
1966-1970	2
1971-1975	17
1976-1980	10
1981-1985	17
1986-1994	4
Date unknown	8
Total	72
<i>Place of publication</i>	
<i>Western Province</i>	
Jeddah	14
Makkah	8
Medina	1
Yanbu	1
Taif	1
Baha	1
Total	26
<i>Central Province</i>	
Riyadh	39
Buraidah	1
Total	40
<i>Eastern Province</i>	
Dammam	4
Dhahran	8
Hkhafji	1
Total	6
<i>Source: Statistical Year Books, Central Department of Statistics, Ministry of Finance and National Economy, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</i>	

population centres such as Riyadh, Jeddah, Makkah and Dammam have several periodicals published in these cities. In terms of regional distribution, 40 of the periodicals are published in the Central Province, 26 in the Western Province, and the remaining six in the Eastern Province.

Newspapers

Table II summarizes some selected information about the newspapers published in Saudi Arabia. Newspaper

publication is a recent phenomenon. It was not until 1963 that the first newspaper was published in the Kingdom. At present, only 15 newspapers are published in the country: 14 of them are published on a daily basis and one comes out on a weekly schedule. In addition, 12 of the newspapers are published using the Arabic language and the remaining three come out in the English language. Furthermore, some of the newspapers are published under the umbrella of the same publishers. For example, because of the various publications it owns, the Saudi Research and Marketing Company deserves a special mention. This company publishes five newspapers: namely, *Ad Dihara*, *Asharq Al Awsat*, *Al Muslimoon*, *Arriyadiyah* and *Arab News*.

Table III gives location and circulation information for the newspapers published in Saudi Arabia. Ten newspapers are published in the Western Province of Saudi Arabia: eight of them are in the Arabic language and the remaining two are published in the English language. The single weekly newspaper also gets published in the Western Province. The city of Jeddah in the Western Province, which can be considered the commercial capital of Saudi Arabia, is the location for nine of the newspapers published in this region, two of which are published in the English language. A single Arabic language newspaper is published from Makkah in the Western Province. This city is the religious centre of the Kingdom as well as for Moslems throughout the world.

The Central Province is the location for four newspapers: three of them are published in the Arabic language and the remaining one uses the English language. All the newspapers published in the Central Province originate from the city of Riyadh, which is the centre of Government of Saudi Arabia. Finally, only one newspaper originates in the Eastern Province. This daily is published in Dammam, which can be considered the centre of the crude oil industry in the Kingdom.

Table III also shows that newspapers published in the Kingdom have a limited circulation. Only three newspapers are able to muster circulations which exceed 100,000 copies. These are the Arabic language dailies, *Asharq Al Awsat*, *Al Muslimoon* and *Al Riyadh*. As a matter of fact, *Asharq Al Awsat* has the highest daily circulation at around 260,000 copies. Even though information is difficult to come by, it is thought that, in addition to their circulation strengths in the cities where they are published, some newspapers enjoy a wider pattern of circulation. For example, *Asharq Al Awsat* has a wide circulation in all regions of Saudi Arabia. In addition to the city of Jeddah where they are published, *Al Madina* has an extensive circulation also in the city of Madina, and *Okaz* has a wide readership in Riyadh. Two newspapers that are published in Riyadh also have extensive circulations in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. These newspapers are *Al Jazirah* and *Al Riyadh*.

Table II. *Newspapers Published in Saudi Arabia*

Name of newspaper	Frequency of publication	Year of establishment	Language of publication	Publisher
<i>Asharq Al Awsat</i>	Daily	1977	Arabic	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Al Madina</i>	Daily	1963	Arabic	Al Madina Press Establishment
<i>Okaz</i>	Daily	1963	Arabic	Okaz Organization for Press and Publication
<i>Al Bilad</i>	Daily	1963	Arabic	Al Bilad Publishing Organization
<i>Al Muslimoon</i>	Weekly	1985	Arabic	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Arriyadiyah</i>	Daily	1988	Arabic	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Ad Dahira</i>	Daily	1990	Arabic	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Al Nadwah</i>	Daily	1963	Arabic	Mecca Printing and Information Establishment
<i>Saudi Gazette</i>	Daily	1976	English	Okaz Organization for Press and Publication
<i>Arab News</i>	Daily	1974	English	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Al Jazirah</i>	Daily	1963	Arabic	Al Jazirah Organization for Press, Printing and Publication
<i>Al Riyadh</i>	Daily	1963	Arabic	Al Yamamah Press Establishment
<i>Al Massaeyah</i>	Daily	1982	Arabic	Al Gazeerah Establishment
<i>Riyadh Daily</i>	Daily	1985	English	Al Yamamah Press Establishment
<i>Al Youm</i>	Daily	1963	Arabic	Dar Al Youm Press, Printing and Publishing Limited

Table III. *Location and Circulation Information*

Name of newspaper	Region of publication	City of publication	Estimated circulation	Extent of distribution
<i>Asharq Al Awsat</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	260,000	International
<i>Al Madina</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	46,000	National
<i>Okaz</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	75,000	Pan-Arab
<i>Al Bilad</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	30,000	National
<i>Al Muslimoon</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	135,000	International
<i>Arriyadiyah</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	63,000	Pan-Gulf
<i>Ad Dahira</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	50,000	International
<i>Al Nadwah</i>	Western Province	Makkah	35,000	Local
<i>Saudi Gazette</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	18,000	National
<i>Arab News</i>	Western Province	Jeddah	68,000	Pan-Gulf
<i>Al Jazirah</i>	Central Province	Riyadh	90,000	Pan-Gulf
<i>Al Riyadh</i>	Central Province	Riyadh	140,000	Pan-Arab
<i>Al Massaeyah</i>	Central Province	Riyadh	50,000	National
<i>Riyadh Daily</i>	Central Province	Riyadh	15,000	National
<i>Al Youm</i>	Eastern Province	Dammam	25,000	Local

Source: *The Middle East and North Africa 1991 (1990)*, 37th eds, Europa Publications, London, pp. 763-4

Despite the fact that newspapers reach limited circulation levels, especially according to Western standards, nevertheless the 15 newspapers published in Saudi Arabia give advertisers not only local or national market coverage but some of them enable advertisers to reach pan-Gulf, pan-Arab, or international markets, as well. For example, *Asharq Al Awsat* is published simultaneously in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam in Saudi Arabia, and in London, Paris, Marseilles, Frankfurt, Casablanca, Washington DC and Cairo. This newspaper truly has an international distribution. *Ad Dahira* and *Al Muslimoon* can also be classified as having an international distribution.

Finally, advertising in Saudi newspapers can be placed in three ways: through advertising agencies that have the sole advertising rights to certain newspapers; through advertising departments of the newspapers; or through general advertising agencies that represent several newspapers. As can be seen in Table IV, most of the Saudi newspapers will accept advertising either through a general agent or directly through their advertising departments. However, there are some which sell advertising space also through exclusive agents. For example, advertising can be placed in two newspapers, *Al Nadwah* and *Al Jazirah*, only through the sole agent called Tihama for Advertising, Public Relations and Marketing. Similarly, another advertising agency, Al Khaleejiah

Advertising and Public Relations Company Limited, is the sole advertising agency for five newspapers including *Asharq Al Awsat*, *Al Muslimoon*, *Arriyadiyah*, *Ad Dahira* and *Arab News*. Marketing and advertising managers wanting to buy advertising space in any one of these five newspapers have to approach this exclusive agent.

Cost of Newspaper Medium

Table IV also summarizes the cost of placing a full-page advertisement in black and white to appear in the inside pages of newspapers published in Saudi Arabia. There is quite a difference among newspapers in terms of how much they will charge for a full-page commercial advertisement. As a matter of fact, the range is from 13,000 riyals all the way up to 35,000 riyals (1 dollar = 3.76 riyals). There seems to be a direct relationship between the cost of a full page advertisement and the circulation levels of newspapers. The higher their circulations are, the more they charge for advertising space. Also, as some newspapers charge similar rates for placing full-page advertisements, this could be an indication of price fixing among the newspapers in the Kingdom for their advertising space.

Table IV provides the cost per 1,000 figures for the newspapers published in Saudi Arabia. In this case, the cost per 1,000 is an indication of the cost effectiveness for reaching one 1,000 readers of newspapers. It is a useful

Table IV. Cost of Newspaper Advertising in Saudi Arabia

Name of newspaper	Cost of inside full-page ad (riyals)	Cost per 1,000 full-page ad (riyals)	Colour ads available	Advertising agency
<i>Asharq Al Awsat</i>	35,000	135	No	Al Khaleejiah Advertising & Public Relations Co. Ltd
<i>Al Madina</i>	21,600	470	Yes	Publisher and/or general agents
<i>Okaz</i>	21,600	288	Yes	Publisher and/or general agents
<i>Al Bilad</i>	21,600	720	Yes	Publisher and/or general agents
<i>Al Muslimoon</i>	17,000	126	No	Al Khaleejiah Advertising & Public Relations Co. Ltd
<i>Arriyadiyah</i>	18,000	286	No	Al Khaleejiah Advertising & Public Relations Co. Ltd
<i>Ad Dahira</i>	13,000	260	No	Al Khaleejiah Advertising & Public Relations Co. Ltd
<i>Al Nadwah</i>	12,960	370	No	Tihama for Advertising, Public Relations and Marketing
<i>Saudi Gazette</i>	18,720	1,040	Yes	Publisher and/or general agents
<i>Arab News</i>	24,000	353	No	Al Khaleejiah Advertising & Public Relations Co. Ltd
<i>Al Jazirah</i>	19,440	216	Yes	Tihama for Advertising, Public Relations and Marketing
<i>Al Riyadh</i>	21,600	154	Yes	Publisher and/or general agents
<i>Al Massaeyah</i>	12,960	259	No	Publisher and/or general agents
<i>Riyadh Daily</i>	17,280	1,152	Yes	Publisher and/or general agents
<i>Al Youm</i>	21,600	864	Yes	Publisher and/or general agents

statistic for comparing a number of newspapers to decide which is the best buy in terms of advertising costs. Of course, in addition to the cost per 1,000, the final decision for choosing in which newspaper to advertise should depend on the readership characteristics, editorial climate, print quality, and the extent of market reach, among many other criteria.

Three newspapers stand out as being best buys in terms of the cost per 1,000 criteria. These newspapers are *Al Muslimoon*, *Asharq Al Awsat*, and *Al Riyadh*. Two other newspapers have cost per 1,000 figures above one 1,000 riyals, which is seven to nine times more than the similar figures for the best-buy newspapers. These newspapers are the *Riyadh Daily* and the *Saudi Gazette*. Other newspapers that have relatively high cost per 1,000 riyals figures include *Al Youm*, *Al Bilad*, and *Al Madina*. It should be pointed out that most newspapers in Saudi Arabia will also print advertising in colour. When colour is used in newspaper advertising, depending on the number of colours used, the newspapers will charge up to 50 per cent surcharge for advertisement space.

Magazines

Are around 48 magazines are published in Saudi Arabia. Table V summarizes general information about eight magazines which present important opportunities for advertisers. One of these magazines comes out on a monthly basis; all others are issued every week. The weekly magazines are published on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The monthly magazine is issued on the first work-day of each month. In Saudi Arabia, Thursday and Friday are the weekend days corresponding to Saturday and Sunday in most Western societies.

Except for one magazine, all of the magazines listed in Table V are published in the Arabic language. Some of these magazines focus on a variety of topics and issues. For example, *Al Yamamah* and *Asharq Al Awsat* deal with issues that are of general interest. *Iqraa* and *Al Majalla* focus on socio-political issues and *Al Faisal* covers cultural and educational issues. Some magazines, on the other hand, cover more selected topics or target themselves to special readership groups. For example, *Sayidaty* magazine primarily targets Arab women readers, and covers issues that would be interesting to this group. *Basim* magazine is for Arab children from five to 15 years of age. For this reason, this publication would contain a variety of educational features, cartoon strips, and other topics that would appeal to children. The *Saudi Economic Survey* is the only English language magazine published in Saudi Arabia after the demise of its competitor called *Saudi Business*. This magazine deals only with business issues and economic development in Saudi Arabia.

Table VI gives the location and circulation information for the more important and influential magazines published in Saudi Arabia. Most of the magazines are published in Jeddah or Riyadh, or both cities. *Al Majalla* and *Sayidaty* are also published in London, and *Asharq Al Awsat* is printed in Casablanca, as well. All of these magazines have pan-Arab distribution and some of them are sold in other international markets where there are large congregations of Arabic-speaking people.

Circulation figures show that only three magazines are exceeding sales of 100,000 copies. These magazines are *Al Majalla*, *Sayidaty*, and *Asharq Al Awsat*, all of which are also published outside the Kingdom. As a matter of fact, the *Sayidaty* magazine deserves a special mention for the extent of its circulation. It was reported that *Sayidaty* was the most read magazine in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries consisting of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait,

Table V. General Information about Selected Magazines

Name of magazine	Frequency of publication	Language of publication	Editorial climate	Publisher
<i>Iqraa</i>	Weekly (Thursday)	Arabic	Social/political	Al Bilad Publishing Organization
<i>Al Yamamah</i>	Weekly (Wednesday)	Arabic	General interest	Al Yamamah Press Establishment
<i>Al Majalla</i>	Weekly (Wednesday)	Arabic	Social/political	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Sayidaty</i>	Weekly (Monday)	Arabic	Women and family	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Asharq Al Awsat</i>	Weekly (Wednesday)	Arabic	General interest	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Basim</i>	Weekly (Tuesday)	Arabic	Children/educational	Saudi Research and Marketing Company
<i>Al Faisal</i>	Monthly	Arabic	Cultural/educational	Al Faisal Cultural House
<i>Saudi Economic Survey</i>	Weekly (Wednesday)	English	Business/economics	Saudi Economic Survey Company

Table VI. *Location and Circulation of Magazines*

Name of magazine	Location of publication	Estimated circulation	Cost of inside full-page colour ad (riyals)	Cost per 1,000 full-page colour ad (riyals)
<i>Iqraa</i>	Jeddah	32,000	7,000	219
<i>Al Yamamah</i>	Riyadh	35,000	6,000	171
<i>Al Majalla</i>	Jeddah, London	172,000	21,500	125
<i>Sayidaty</i>	Jeddah, London	154,000	18,750	122
<i>Asharq Al Awsat</i>	Jeddah, Riyadh, Dhahran, Casablanca	184,000	17,500	95
<i>Basim</i>	Jeddah, Riyadh, Dhahran	35,000	8,000	229
<i>Al Faisal</i>	Riyadh	70,000	11,000	157
<i>Saudi Economic Survey</i>	Jeddah	30,000	1,800	60

Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (Jeddah Bureau, 1990). It was also reported that this magazine was read by around 25 per cent of the adult females in these countries, most of this readership coming from the high income and affluent female strata.

Cost of Magazine Medium

Table VI also summarizes the cost of advertising space in some of the important magazines published in Saudi Arabia. The extent of their circulations has an effect on the cost of advertising space in these magazines because magazines with the highest circulations charge the highest prices. The cost of placing a full-colour full-page advertisement in one of the inside pages runs from 1,800 riyals for *Saudi Economic Survey* to 21,500 riyals for *Al Majalla*.

A comparison of magazines for advertising cost-effectiveness in terms of the cost per 1,000 criteria shows that the best buy for advertising space is the *Saudi Economic Survey* followed by *Asharq Al Awsat*, *Sayidaty*, and *Al Majalla*. The range of cost per 1,000 criteria is between 60 riyals and 229 riyals. It is interesting to note that the cost per 1,000 criteria for magazines vary on a narrower range than the same variation for newspapers. This could be an indication that magazines set their costs for advertising space more realistically after comparing their circulations against their competitors.

Problems with Print Media

There are a number of serious problems with Saudi newspapers and magazines as an important media alternative for international advertisers. Considering the fact that the cultural and traditional character of Saudi society does not permit the use of several media for advertising (i.e. cinema, radio and video), several problems

in the print media make media selection a more difficult decision for advertisers. The problems will be presented in four general categories. These are circulation, distribution, readership, and cost issues.

Circulation

The print media available in Saudi Arabia suffer from limited circulations. The top-selling newspaper can muster a circulation of only about 260,000. The most popular magazine sells around 185,000 copies. For a country thought to have a population of 13 million people, the print media are estimated to reach less than 5 per cent of the adult population. This circulation is also fragmented. Most newspapers and magazines achieve their greatest sales in the cities where they are published, even though they sell a few copies elsewhere within and outside the Kingdom.

In the past, circulation figures available to the advertisers were extremely unreliable. The advertising departments of the publishers or the advertising agencies would inflate the actual circulations of the newspapers and magazines in order to be able to charge more money for advertising space. However, recently a semblance of order has arrived in this formerly chaotic scene through the efforts of the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC). Most print media have now become members of ABC and this agency will release reliable circulation statistics from time to time. However, the circulation figures received from advertising departments of publishers and advertising agencies can still be misleading. Advertisers should always search for the latest audited circulation figures released by ABC before deciding which newspapers and magazines to use for their advertising campaigns.

To exacerbate the circulation problem, some print media are not published during certain days and times of the year. For example, some newspapers are not published on Fridays which is considered to be a day of importance for

Moslems. Also, during the month of Ramadhan, when Moslems practise a period of fasting each day, some newspapers and magazines will stop publication throughout this month. Also, some newspapers will publish magazines on certain days of the week which they package together with their newspapers to be sold at tie-in prices. Many newspaper readers will refuse to buy these newspapers on these particular days either because they do not want to purchase the magazines or because they want to boycott the publishers for their tie-in sales practices.

Despite the fact that the print media in Saudi Arabia suffer from limited circulation, publishers show a total lack of marketing orientation. Other than occasional advertising in their own publications for themselves and for their sister publications, the publishers seem to be content to maintain the existing status quo. In reality, these publishers should be taking action to improve the quality of their newspapers and magazines, and should be designing and implementing marketing strategies to improve their poor circulations.

Distribution

Perhaps one reason for the lack-lustre circulation achievements for the Saudi print media is their ineffective distribution systems. For example, in many rural areas of the Kingdom, newspapers and magazines are difficult to find or they are not available at all. Even in large metropolitan centres, there are distribution problems. Newspapers and magazines are hard to find because there are not enough outlets that sell them. Often, newspapers and magazines are late in arriving at retail outlets, and vendors suffer from frequent stock-outs because they do not receive enough copies from the distributors. There are no newspaper and magazine stands, and newspaper selling through self-service vending machines has not arrived yet in the Kingdom. Unfortunately, social values do not permit home delivery of newspapers and magazines.

Some of the distribution problems can be tied to the size of the country. Saudi Arabia is a large country occupying about 2.24 million square kilometres. Considering the 13 million inhabitants, the country is very sparsely populated. There can be large distances between population centres. In addition, the peninsula contains a number of harsh environmental features (i.e. extreme humidity, high temperatures, sandstorms, etc.), which adversely affect distribution of newspapers and magazines. Recognizing their distribution problems, some publishers are now printing their publications simultaneously in multiple locations in order to achieve a better coverage of the country.

Readership

Another shortcoming of the print media published in Saudi Arabia is the lack of information they possess about their readers. Advertisers have no access to reliable readership

profiles for the newspapers and magazines in which they want to advertise. Most publishers do not bother to study their readers to find out about their geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioural characteristics. This information is very important to advertisers who are trying to reach their target markets by achieving a good match between the characteristics of their own target markets and the readership characteristics of the print media they use to advertise.

In fairness to the print media, it should be mentioned that from time to time some newspapers and magazines will publish a few statistics describing their readers. If this information was developed in-house by the publishers, it is very doubtful that these readership statistics were acquired through reliable market research studies. However, some publishers have begun to recognize the importance of facts and figures about their readers in attracting advertisers and they have started to hire professional research companies to undertake readership studies in Saudi Arabia. One research company that has been active in the Kingdom for conducting surveys of newspaper and magazine readers is the Pan Arab Research Centre (PARC) out of Kuwait, a member of Gallup International.

Costs

In spite of the limited circulation, problems with distribution, and lack of readership information, perhaps the most important problem for the print media published in Saudi Arabia is the exorbitant prices they charge for advertising space. As can be seen in Table IV, the cost per 1,000 criteria for a full-page advertisement varies between 126 riyals and 1,152 riyals (1 dollar = 3.76 riyals) for the 15 newspapers published in Saudi Arabia. The average cost per 1,000 for the Saudi newspapers is around 119 dollars. Table VI shows that the cost per 1,000 criteria for magazines are substantially lower than those for the newspapers, and the differences among the magazines in terms of these criteria are not so extensive as the differences exhibited among the newspapers. The cost per 1,000 for a full-page colour advertisement varies between 60 riyals and 229 riyals, and the average cost per 1,000 is around 39 dollars.

It must be pointed out that the cost of reaching 1,000 readers through advertising in newspapers and magazines published in Saudi Arabia is substantially higher than the similar cost advertisers would accrue in Western markets. For example, a study including 11 different European countries has found that the cost per 1,000 criteria for print media ranged from 1.58 dollars in Belgium to 5.91 dollars in Italy (Cateora, 1987, p. 432). More specifically, the cost of reaching women readers through women's magazines varied from 2.51 dollars in Denmark to 10.87 dollars in Germany. The similar cost for reaching women readers through the *Sayidaty* magazine would be around 32 dollars in Saudi Arabia.

Summary and Conclusions

The study results indicate that the planning of print media, which is the most developed media alternative in Saudi Arabia, is a complex task for the international advertisers. A number of issues make it difficult to put together a well-balanced print media mix. The international advertiser is presented with a narrow range of choices in terms of print media alternatives. Even though a little over 12 newspapers and about 48 magazines are published both in English and Arabic languages, the viable choice alternatives can be reduced down to less than 12 among all the newspapers and magazines published in the Kingdom. The rest of the periodicals can be dismissed for having a "me too" status, or for presenting an editorial climate not suitable for commercial advertising (religious readership), or for having unreliable distribution, limited circulation, and expensive advertising rates.

The limited nature of the circulations for the newspapers and magazines is a problem serious enough to be highlighted again. One way to assess the print media effectiveness in a country is to study the circulation achieved per 1,000 population. For the newspaper medium, the 15 newspapers published in Saudi Arabia would yield 85 newspapers published/circulated per 1,000 population per day. The same indicator for some selected countries would be: 102 for Spain, 115 for Mexico, 282 for the USA, 333 for Germany, and 569 for Japan (Cateora, 1987, p. 300).

The international advertisers need to study all types of print media alternatives available in the Kingdom for their strengths and weaknesses before finalizing their media choices. As none of the media alternatives will give advertisers a wide and deep market coverage with high-impact and quality-exposure characteristics, the international advertisers are encouraged to include in their print media-mix some use for various print media available in Saudi Arabia. By scrambling their print media choices, perhaps by including newspapers and magazines published in each province of the Kingdom in their media mixes, international advertisers can hope to reach their target markets in Saudi Arabia.

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