### Does a Second Color Help?

Does it pay to use a second color (yellow, red, green, orange) on a layout for editorial matter or for advertising? This question has been the subject of over 30 splits.

The answers tend to run in one direction. Most of the time, a second color — in Wallaces Farmer and Wisconsin Agriculturist — doesn't do much to help readership.

This conclusion has exasperated all of us in the office. We like the looks of a second color. We think readers should like it. Unfortunately, it appears as if they don't. We keep thinking we'll yet find a color combination that will do something substantial for readership. Perhaps we will eventually, but we haven't yet.

It should be pointed out that this conclusion should be accepted only for farm audiences in Iowa and Wisconsin and for our kind of publication. The fact is that a second color is no treat to our readers. Our papers are full of second colors — especially red. If fewer ads used a second color, the ones that do use it might show up better.

To detail all the color splits would take too much space. Following are some high points:

White letters on red. This was used by Quaker Oats in Wisconsin Agriculturist (November 7, 1953, page 41) in the A version. B had the same head, but black letters on white, with a red line around the head (Figures 3.7, 3.8).

Women	Α	(Reverse)	B (Black)
Head		23.3%	<b>52.0</b> %
Sales Copy (Read Most) .		12.9	31.0

The reverse head (as in A above) has been tested by many researchers. Their conclusions, in general, agree with ours.

Head in color. This split, probably because it is easy to handle, has been tried by us more than any other.

Typical is the Nutrena ad in the Wisconsin Agriculturist (November 7, 1953, page 21). A put the head in red; B in black.

Men	A (Color)	B (Black)
Any This Ad	30.0%	34.5%
Head	24.3	23.8

This has been the usual experience. There is no measurable gain through using a head in color. On some splits, it seemed that the black head scored a little better.

Overprint. We have used black letters on a red screen; black on a yellow screen or a yellow solid, etc.

We did not have much luck with this, but a few splits seemed to hold some hope. Here is one:

Overprint (black on yellow) was tried in Wallaces Farmer (March 1, 1947). The head, "Why Work Hard at Chores" was black on yellow for A and black on white for B.

					A (Color)	B (Black)
Any This Page					86.0%	80.0%
Women					<b>33.7</b>	19.7

There is no difference for men, but with women, the difference is significant. Men, more interested in the article, were not impressed by the color. Women, not so much interested in the article, apparently responded to color.

This same tendency has showed up in other splits. The readers who were less interested in the copy might be lured by color or some other layout gadget. Those more interested in the copy paid no attention.

If we are trying for a dual purpose score (good with both men and women) and the article is aimed at men, color may help the women's score. If the article is aimed at women, color may help the men's score.

Does this tentative rule work with ads? Once in a while. But the evidence is stronger for editorial copy.

It makes a difference, of course, whether the overprint is imposed on a solid color or a screen. We haven't had much luck with solids; there is a tendency to smear. With red or green, the screen range has been from 40 to 60. On the whole, 50 has been the best. With yellow, a heavy screen (70) has looked the best, though we have gone as low as 50. A 50 screen with yellow, how-

ever, tends to fade out. There have been no readership splits on the different screens.

What about an overprint of black on red? In the Wisconsin Agriculturist (November 3, 1951, page 9), a one-column, two-line head was overprinted in black on red in B: black on white in A.

Men						Α	B (Color)
Read Sor	ne .					41.1%	36.1%

Unchanged copy on the same page gave the edge to B.

A heavy red border around the head was used in Wisconsin Agriculturist (February 20, 1954, page 6) for A. The color was taken off for B.

Men					A (Color)	В
Any	This	Page			93.3%	93.2%

For a test split, this copy was too attractive. It was a dairy story and pulled almost all the readers. Color made no difference here. It might have made some difference if the article had dealt with sheep or hogs, less popular than cows in Wisconsin.

Studies of 11 splits in Wallaces Farmer where color was used with ads were made by R. J. Pommrehn. This report deals with a variety of uses of color. None made any significant difference in the scores, except that in a few cases low scores for women on ads addressed to men were pulled up a little by color. (1)

Cornell University reports an experiment in a somewhat different field. A sample of New York dairymen were sent a leaflet on early and late cut hay and silage.

Half of the sample got this leaflet (an advance print from *Successful Farming*) in black and white; half, in four color. (2)

Apparently the black and white had as much effect as the four color. The bulletin adds this caution:

It must be recognized that the test article used in this study had a high degree of attraction for the dairyman, since it directly affected profit. Consequently it might be expected that it would be read regardless of whether it was presented in color or in black and white. Possibly color is more important for attracting and holding attention among those for whom the item has less possibility of affecting profit.

This matches the experience of Wallaces Farmer and Wisconsin Agriculturist.

A yellow screen was tried out behind black type of "What's Ahead" in *Wallaces Farmer* (September 20, 1958).

Men					A	(Color)	В
Read	Some					63%	51%
	Most						41

This made black on yellow look hopeful. But two later splits with black charts on yellow showed no advantage. We are inclined to say that black type on a yellow screen probably has some advantages but that the point needs further testing.

Red screen as background for department heads was tried out several times. The best showing was with "Country Air" Wallaces Farmer (September 20, 1958).

Women		Α	B (Color)	
Read Some			53%	66%

This and similar tests indicate the possibility that this use of color in a department head on a spread with no other color may show good results. Further experiments along this line are now being tried.

We tried in Wallaces Farmer (October 5, 1957) a standard layout, black and white, in B; in A, art decorations in red. The same copy was used—the same illustration and the same head. This was designed to answer questions about art work as well as color (Figures 3.9, 3.10).

	Α	Men (Color)	В	A	Women (Color)	В
Any This Page .		<b>75</b> %	78%		53%	56%
Picture		65	<b>56</b>		<b>37</b>	42
Caption		<b>57</b>	61		28	42
Head		66	70		33	43
Copy Read Some		63	<b>7</b> 3		<b>39</b>	49
Read Most		<b>55</b>	62		29	40

In this case, as in all splits, we take a look at unchanged copy on nearby pages. If there is a difference in A and B scores on unchanged copy, especially if this copy is on the same theme as the tested copy, we make allowance for this. In this case, unchanged copy on nearby pages had A scores running 5 to 10 percentage points higher than B. Allowing for this, the B copy, without color or decorations, seemed to be making a better showing than A.

Possibly the article was too popular to make a good test. An article with a score of 40 Read Some would give more weight to the value of the color and art work.

We were hopeful about a feed ad in Wisconsin Ag-

riculturist (April 4, 1959). Here was functional color; the Duroc hog was entitled to be red. In A color was used on the picture, on the head and on the feed bag. Ad B was black and white (Figures 3.1, 3.2).

	Men		Women	
Α	(Color)	В	A (Color)	В
Any This Ad	32%	33%	14%	21%
Picture	31	33	14	21
Head	20	19	4	8
Sales Copy				
Read Some	19	19	2	7
Read Most	14	10	2	2
Company name, etc.	19	16	6	6

Color was skillfully used in this ad, but apparently made no difference in the response.



Figure 3.1

Red

A

Any This Ad

Men 32%

### Red Color on a Red Hog

Splashing color around on heads and decorations hadn't done too well. More hope was attached to "functional" use of color. This can mean a red color on a picture of farm machinery when that farm machine habitually uses red. Or it can mean a red color on a red Duroc hog.

We tried a split with A showing the hog in color on a tinted background.

B was black and white.

Figure 3.2

Black

B

Any This Ad

Men 33%



Men's scores on the split follow. Women were less interested in hog feed. With both men and women, the color made no real difference:

					A (Color)	B (Black)
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Sales Copy Read Some	or s icil	d b e ii	38.II 'a.ii'	y s di	. 19 . 14	19 10 16
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Wisconsin Agriculturist, April 4, 1959



**Black** 

A

Any This Page

Women 90%

## **Using Color in Heads**

Repeated splits which use color heads against black have come out like the experiment on this page. The color does not seem to help or to hurt.

Here are the women's scores:

						A	(Color)	B (Black)
Head	Hurroc H	08					73%	77%
Read	Some				00	W.I	81	86
Read	Most		(10)				69	69

Red B

Any This Page

Women 91%

## Favorite Standby--Cheddar Cheese

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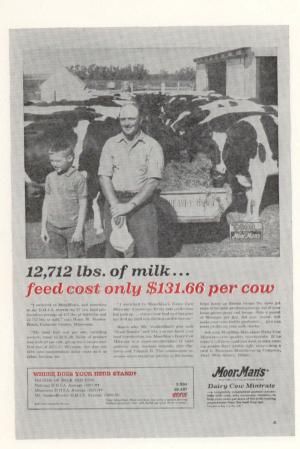
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Men read very little on this page, but those who did read showed a preference for the black head (12 per cent to 4 per cent).

A few experiments using black type on a yellow background have given a slight edge to this combination as against black on white.

The over-all lesson of many splits, however, is that a head in color makes little if any difference in readership.

Wisconsin Agriculturist, October 3, 1959



Red

A

Any This Ad

Men 44%

## **Another Split on Head Color**

Farm men made up the principal audience in this split. As in similar experiments, the head in color seemed to do nothing for the page.

Men's scores:

			A	(Color)	B (Black)
Picture and Head				40%	48%
Read Some					20
Read Most				8	14

Black

B

Any This Ad

48%



Women were less interested in the ad, and the difference between A and B was slight. (Any This Ad 23 per cent for A and 16 per cent for B.)

Farmers who were milking 20 or more cows showed a slight preference for B (black).

Wisconsin Agriculturist, October 3, 1959



Figure 3.7

Red

A

Any This Ad

Women 37.2%

### Reverse on Red Loses Readers

In this case, the use of a reverse head on red apparently lost readers. Scores by women follow:

				Α	(Color)	B (Black)
Picture .					37.2%	62.0%
Head .					23.3	52.0
Read Son	1e				15.1	35.0

Figure 3.8

Black

B

Any This Ad

Women 64%



The head in black (perhaps the red circle around it gets some credit) pulled up the unchanged part of the ad for women. Men had low scores with no difference between A and B.

Women who had families of four or more gave B (black) a big Read Most vote (35.3 for B and 15.1 for A). The ad as a whole made a good showing with this important group of big families.

Wisconsin Agriculturist, November 7, 1953



Red

A

Any This Page

Men 75%

Women 53%

# Decorations and Color

This was a combination split to see if some art work in color would help the article. Here are the principal scores for men:

						(Color)	B (Black)
Picture .				1		65%	56%
Head					7	66	70
Read Some						63	73
Read Most	•	•				55	62

Any This Page

Men 78%

Women 56%



Do you say

"No Hunting" to city folks?

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Women gave more of an edge to B. Read Some was 39 per cent for A and 49 per cent for B.

The editors liked A better. But the readers didn't agree. There was no real difference.

Wallaces Farmer, October 5, 1957

Where does this leave us on color? We are inclined to say:

- 1. A head printed in color won't raise the readership score.
- 2. A head in reverse (white letters on color background) will not raise the score and may actually lower it.
- 3. A head using black overprint on color may work once in a while.
- 4. Color on a department head, used on a spread without other color, may do some good.
- 5. Decorative art work in color doesn't usually work.
- 6. Functional color red hog, orange farm machinery (actual color of machine) doesn't seem to make any difference.
- 7. An overprint of black type on yellow may do some good.
- 8. Color may pull in a few readers who are indifferent to the theme of the copy. For instance, color on a farm machinery ad may attract a few more women, but it isn't likely to make any difference with men.
- 9. A second color is a long shot. If used, try it on a section of the book where color is scarce.