How to read MRI or SMRB

MRI (Mediamark Research Inc.) and SMRB (Simmons Market Research Bureau)
Two major syndicated sources of information that combine data on consumer demographics, purchase behavior, and media usage. Each provides figures for overall product and service categories and further classifies them by major national brands. For most products, consumers are divided among all users, heavy users, medium users, and light users. MRI and Simmons interview 20,000 consumers each year to make these projections.

The deep, dark secrets of reading these tables. As a rule, the following applies:

- Rows read across
- Columns read down
- Demographics read down left side
- Product usage reads across top; usually look for “Heavy” user column
  - see back for example of MRI page for “Dog Biscuits or Treats”
  - anyone who uses more than 3+ packages in 30 days is considered a heavy user
- Total '000 —> actual number in thousands in U.S. (raw number)
- Proj '000 —> projected count in thousands for your target
- Pct across —> tells % of demo in category
- Pct down —> tells actual %
- Index —> the place we start
  - the index is the most revealing number at a glance
  - the larger the number, the more people who use it
  - 100 = average on an index
  - below 100 is below average; above 100 is above average

The best way to remember this stuff: Put it into a sentence. Here’s how:

- Always put the number first.
- If it’s in the “Pct Down” column read “UP” first, then across:
  - 7.5% of heavy users of dog biscuits or treats are homemakers between the ages of 18 and 24.
- If it’s in the “Pct Across” column read across, then up:
  - 6.7% of homemakers between the ages of 25 and 34 are heavy users of dog biscuits or treats.

Other things to be aware of:

- Watch * because it says the number isn’t reliable. (Read: don’t use this.)
  This is often the case in race.
- Always check the amount of usage and population size of any demographic group that has a large index number. It should be obvious that if either or both are small, then you’ll want to find some other demographic segment with a higher usage or larger population base, even if it has a smaller index number. Also, it might be more productive to advertising in three or four smaller geographic (or demographic) markets rather than in one large market.

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