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## **4.1 The potential contribution of readership diary panels**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the last Readership Symposium two years ago, much attention was paid to the relative accuracy and value of 'recent reading' techniques in comparison with 'through the book techniques'. Very little discussion was held on the potential offered by readership panels, except for the contribution by Coen de Koning.

In this paper we shall be discussing the criteria on which readership surveys should be judged, and examining the theoretical and practical contribution of readership panels in meeting these criteria. Since the last symposium AGB Research has carried out a number of studies using readership panels and the lessons from these panels will be discussed. Finally, we will be reviewing the position we are in today and commenting on what steps should be taken next to further our knowledge of the contribution which panels can make.

It is as well to emphasise at this early stage in the paper that the surveys we have carried out had quite separate and distinct aims. One of them was designed to test an approach which on a larger scale could be used as a replacement for the National Readership Survey. It was, however, very much an initial step in this direction and was too small in scale to make the specific readership results worth evaluating in detail. Nevertheless some useful preliminary findings arose from it, which can be taken into account in further work. The two other surveys we will describe were designed with a totally different aim in mind — to see if existing panels could collect useful data on readership, in conjunction with data on exposure to other media, and also purchasing data. These surveys were not designed to replace the NRS, but to supplement it with information of wider value for target marketing purposes.

### **THE CRITERIA ON WHICH READERSHIP SURVEYS SHOULD BE EVALUATED**

Before looking at the results of our work, we need to review the criteria on which readership studies should be evaluated, to give us a context in which to place our results. The essence of any readership survey is the need to produce estimates of the levels of readership for a range of publications, which are acceptable to users of the data, i.e. advertisers, advertising agencies and media

owners. In order to be acceptable the data have to match up to a number of criteria. Some of these criteria are as follows:

#### **Accuracy**

Readership surveys have to provide robust estimates of readership. In this paper we will not go into any discussion of what 'correct' levels of readership are. In our view there is no such thing as a correct level of readership, since reading is far too ephemeral an event to be recorded in any precisely defined way. The important thing is that all publications in a readership survey are treated equally and that the results are credible to users of the survey. By this we mean that the results have to be repeatable under the same conditions; they have to be consistent over time when there are no reasons for anticipating change; and they are not biased from one publication to another.

#### **Breadth**

Readership surveys have to cover a wide range of journals and newspapers so that users can compare the results from one to the other.

#### **Economy**

Any survey, and readership surveys are no exception, has cost constraints. Although budgets for readership surveys are typically quite large, they are by no means inexhaustible.

#### **Speed**

Readership surveys need to produce data on readership behaviour quickly if they are to be valuable in a time when readership levels are changing. If the marketing environment is stable this is, of course, a less important criterion.

#### **Sensitivity**

Again, in changing market conditions it is vital that the survey is sensitive enough to be capable of measuring change over short time-periods.

### **PERFORMANCE OF EXISTING MEASUREMENTS AGAINST THE CRITERIA**

As is well known, the United Kingdom, along with many

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other countries in the world, has tended to measure readership by means of recent reading methods. The recent reading method has failings on some of the above criteria, particularly in terms of accuracy, speed and sensitivity. These failings have led us to look at the potential contributions of panels as an alternative to the recent reading approach. Before discussing the results of the work we have carried out it might be worth briefly referring to the failings of the recent reading methods on the three criteria referred to above.

There is no doubt that readership results based on recent reading methods produce stable estimates, perhaps too stable, but it is debatable whether they are acceptably accurate. To take some examples from the British National Readership Survey:

(a) Do the majority of advertisers accept the fact that *Vogue* has 13.5 readers per copy?

(b) There must be concern that the readership of *Homes and Gardens* (1,907,000) and *House and Garden* (1,791,000) are so much at variance with their circulations of 187,566 and 90,665 respectively.

(c) The rotational effects of the mastheads appear to discriminate against the less frequently produced publications, as indicated by Edward Whitley at the last symposium.

(d) There are obvious dangers involved in ignoring parallel and replicated readership.

(e) The results produced by the recent reading approach are susceptible to very significant change simply as a result of changes in the way questions are asked, as shown by the 'Cumberland Lodge' experiments. This suggests a basic lack of stability in the design.

Again, we should emphasise that we are not suggesting which readership results are 'wrong' and which are 'right'. What we are suggesting is that some of the results are unacceptable to users.

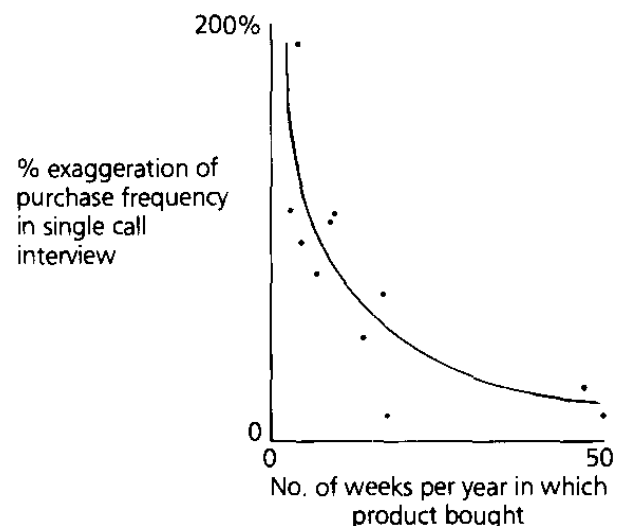
The speed of the National Readership Survey is a major point of criticism. At the time of writing this paper (24th April, 1983) the latest data available on readership of publications in the United Kingdom relates to the October-December 1982 period — a period with a mid point over 5 months ago. This slow level of reporting is not acceptable to users of the data.

Unless far larger sample sizes are used than is currently the case, recent reading surveys cannot produce sensitive data over short time-periods. In Great Britain, monthly analyses of the National Readership Survey are possible, but they are not desirable, both on grounds of sample size (approximately 2,300 a month) and also in terms of sample design. The survey is not designed to be analysed over periods as short as a month and yet changes in the marketplace now lead media planners to need data based on periods as short as a week, let alone a month.

### THEORETICAL ADVANTAGES OF A PANEL - BASED APPROACH

If the recent reading approach falls down in terms of accuracy, speed and sensitivity, what leads us to suggest that a panel approach will be any improvement? There are both theoretical and practical reasons why panels might produce more acceptable data. Let us look at the theoretical reasons. First a diary, in which respondents record their reading behaviour on a daily basis, allows the record of readership to be made at the time, or close to the time, of exposure. As a result the problems of inadequate recall are minimised. In comparison, on the recent reading approach one is frequently having to recall reading which took place up to four weeks ago. There are many examples in research literature of the exaggerating effects of recall based interviews. As an illustration the chart below, **Figure 1**, drawn from data presented in an earlier paper by John Parfitt, shows the level of exaggeration in single call interviews (by comparing the results of these interviews with panel records from the same respondent). The results show that the less frequently a product is bought, the greater the tendency to exaggerate the frequency in a single call interview. The potential effects of this tendency on measurements of readership of monthly publications by recent reading methods are obvious.

FIGURE 1



Source: Attwood Experimental Study, Summer 1966

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Second, not only is the recall period minimised, but there is also a strong stimulus to accurate recall, in that the respondents know that they will have to complete a record of their reading behaviour. Consequently, whenever a reading event takes place, the respondent is likely to be triggered into remembering it, in a way they would not otherwise do.

Thirdly, a diary panel does not rely on any model of reading behaviour as does the recent reading model. A factual record of reading behaviour on a day by day basis allows one to measure average issue readership without recourse to any theoretical model of normal reading behaviour. Fourthly, because one is dealing with the same sample of people rather than separate samples of people, both short and long term comparisons of reading levels can be made with greater statistical confidence, since between-sample variations are minimised.

### PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES OF A PANEL - BASED APPROACH

In addition to the theoretical reasons, there are also some practical reasons for believing that panels might produce more acceptable readership estimates in the light of the criteria discussed above. Firstly, they allow for much faster response to change in the market, because the number of observations per week, or per month, can be far greater than with the current methodology even with relatively small panel sizes. Even a panel of only 2,300 people would give 30 times as much information in a month as the National Readership Survey does. Thus monthly, and even weekly, data can be analysed with confidence provided the overall panel size is sufficiently large. Secondly panel approaches allow one to record a greater range of data on each readership occasion. Since respondents only record those reading events which take place, and need not be bothered with endless questions on reading events which did not take place (as is necessary in the recent reading approach) a greater depth of questions can be asked on reading events. For example, it is possible to ask questions on where publications are read, how they were obtained, and how long they were read for.

Apart from the research-based reasons referred to above, panels also have advantages over other methods in terms of the type and speed of data they provide. Any publisher in the present competitive environment needs to be able to keep track of the loyalty of his reader; the rate at which he is picking up new readers; where they are coming from; how many desert him when new competitors are launched; and where they go to. Not only does he need to know this, but he needs to know it *quickly* so he can act on it. There can be little dispute that

existing readership surveys fail to provide this information, and that readership panels are capable of doing so. To this extent panel data has far more value to the publisher in the marketing of publications, as well as in selling space in them.

One further advantage of panel data is that it provides accurate information on long-term readership cumulation without the need for the estimation which has to be used on single-interview based data. As a result schedule analyses based on large numbers of insertions should be considerably more accurate.

### POTENTIAL DISADVANTAGES OF READERSHIP PANELS

Against these theoretical advantages we have to set a number of possible disadvantages. Using the same criteria as before, panels should present no disadvantages in terms of breadth of coverage, speed of reporting or sensitivity. A wider range of publications can be covered because respondents do not need to be questioned on those publications which are not read, and thus the length of the media list has little effect on respondent load. Speed of reporting can be quicker provided the panel size is sufficient, because the whole sample reports on a weekly basis. Sensitivity, as we have already said, ought to be improved since more measurements can be taken within a short period of time, and also because of the reduction in sample errors.

This leaves two areas in which panels can be at a disadvantage. The first is cost, and the second accuracy. There is no way in which a panel of the same sample size as the annual sample of a recent reading survey can be carried out at the same cost (not that it would be necessary to have the same sample size, since a panel would provide many more measurements for an equivalent sample size than a recent reading survey).

Two options remain: if one wishes to stay within the same cost, either the readership panel is carried on the back of an existing large sample survey, or the panel sample is smaller than the recent reading sample. In the latter case the accuracy overall may still be higher because the number of observations taken will almost certainly be higher. There are, however, problems with analysis of small sub-groups, and particularly small regional groupings, where sample sizes are small and clustering is high. There are also difficulties with low-readership publications where large samples are necessary to build up sufficient measurements over a long period of time to produce accurate results.

Under the accuracy criterion the major areas of concern are:

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### Quality of sample

Sign-up rates on panels are lower than response rates on single interview surveys. If the sign-up is differential across readership or demographic groups and cannot be corrected the accuracy of the data will be affected.

### Consistency of response

Over time the consistency of response from a panel member may deteriorate, which will produce unstable readership patterns.

### Differential drop-out

Inevitably people will drop out of a panel and need to be replaced. Replacements can be made who match the drop-outs in demographic terms. It is possible, however, that the drop-outs are atypical in other less measurable ways. They may, for example, be light readers of all publications. If so, it would be far more difficult (though not necessarily impossible) to replace drop-outs with satisfactory matching replacements.

### Accuracy of recording of casual reading events

Because the completion of the diary is the respondent's task, it may be that it will be less rigorously carried out than a face to face interview by a trained interviewer. This might result in under-reporting of casual or infrequent reading events.

## RECENT EXPERIENCE IN READERSHIP PANELS

There are, as we have seen, a number of reasons for supposing that a panel approach to readership measurement might have some advantages over the recent reading methods. These potential advantages might be outweighed by some of the problems described in the section above. However, all this is conjecture without some solid evidence of how panel techniques work in practice. Over the past 18 months, AGB Research have carried out three surveys in which readership data have been collected by means of a daily diary.

As has already been pointed out, the three surveys are quite different in their aims. The first survey was a very small pre-pilot exercise designed to evaluate a panel design which could replace the NRS. Being small in scale it can only be used as a guide to some of the practical advantages and problems of readership panel measurement. It cannot be used as an indicator of the readership levels which might result from a full scale survey of this type. It has, however, underlined the need for a large scale pilot exercise, and has provided some clues for the treatments which should be examined in such a pilot.

The second and third surveys were not designed to collect NRS-style readership data. They were conducted because we felt there was a need for more dynamic multi-media data, linked in with information on consumer expenditure. With this data advertisers would be able to assess short term changes in their markets and look in much more detail at the way in which both TV and print media could be used to reach their markets. Readership data were, of course, collected on these surveys, but because of their wider scope were not designed to be comparable to the NRS. Nonetheless, the results can tell us something about the role which readership panels can play.

The three surveys are described briefly below:

### A pre-pilot readership panel

We have been suggesting for some time that JICNARS in the United Kingdom should conduct a pilot operation to measure readership on a panel basis. This would, however, be a large and costly exercise even though it would only be a pilot. In order to gain some preliminary experience of the types of problems, and the types of answers which might be produced by a readership panel, we conducted a pre-pilot exercise. It should be emphasised that the sample size involved was small (175), the sample was deliberately biased towards younger people, since they are likely to be one of the most difficult groups to obtain full co-operation from, and the sample was also biased towards three major conurbations (Greater London, Manchester, Glasgow) where co-operation levels are, again, always lower. The panel members were signed up at the end of an interview on AGB's Home Audit survey. They were asked to complete a diary on a daily basis on their reading behaviour for a period of twelve weeks. The diary used a free format design in which panel members recorded the publications they read by writing in a code number appropriate to the publication. The code numbers were listed on a simple leaf-through index in which publications were listed by alphabetical order within frequency group. Respondents also recorded the issue date of the publication, an indication of their depth of reading, where they obtained it, and where they read it.

### AGB INDEX media selectivity study (1)

The AGB INDEX is a panel of 10,000 adults which measures spending, saving and borrowing. Panel members record all purchases over £3 in value on a continuous basis. In March 1982, questions were added to the panel, for a four week period, on television viewing and readership of a selected range of publications, to a sub-sample of 5,000 panel members. Here we are only concerned with the readership information, which in this case, covered a range of 37

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publications some dailies, some weeklies and some monthlies. Respondents recorded their reading of these publications on a daily basis.

### AGB INDEX media selectivity study (2)

This survey was carried out in February and March 1983. It was based on the same panel as the survey mentioned above, but on this occasion was conducted amongst the whole of the panel of 10,000. A similar diary was used to the one described in the 1982 survey. Once again the questionnaire covered a four week period.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the same diary is being used experimentally this year on a large housewife panel run by Attwood in the UK. Results of this panel are not available at the time of writing, but they should also throw some light on what can be achieved with readership panels in conjunction with normal consumer panels

### PRE - PILOT PANEL

As we have already said, the pre-pilot panel was close in concept to the type of panel on which the NRS could be run. It must be emphasised, however, that a *major* pilot study is necessary to see whether a panel approach could work in practice. Considerable experimentation would be necessary on aspects such as: incentives; frequency of diary return; and data collection, before the optimum method could be found. Our pre-pilot was too small in scope to do anything but scratch the surface of these areas. It is important, therefore, that any weaknesses in the pre-pilot results are not seen as condemning the panel approach — they merely highlight the aspects which need investigation and experimentation on a

larger basis.

Let us look at some of the pilot panel results in the light of the criteria mentioned earlier. One of the first aspects to examine is whether there was any deterioration over time in the levels reported. In **Table 1**, we have only shown results for the first 8 weeks of the panel. This is because we tested two methods of reporting the data: half the sample returning their diaries weekly, while the other half returned them four-weekly. The trigger to the latter group to return their diary was the receipt of the diary for the next four weeks. Since there was no diary sent out for weeks 13 and onwards, many panellists failed to return their diary for weeks 9-12. Consequently the level of response was much lower on weeks 9-12 than on weeks 1-8, and as a result we have excluded this period from the results.

Over the eight weeks the level of reporting is extremely consistent. We have separated week 5 in the analysis because it was a Bank Holiday week when reading behaviour is likely to be different. There is a slight decline in the level of reporting of non-daily papers in both weekly and 4-weekly treatments, which is largely due to a decline in the reporting levels of magazines, rather than of weekly papers. This may be a panel effect, but alternatively, it could either be a seasonal effect, or a result of sampling error. In view of the small sample size the presence or absence of a small number of heavy magazine readers can have a significant effect on the results. Clearly this points up the importance of investigating the stability of magazine readership data on any larger scale pilot.

A second area to examine is the quality of the sample achieved by the panel. Historically we have taken the response rate achieved as a guide to the sample quality. On these grounds there are reasons for doubting

**TABLE 1**  
Reading occasions per week

Week	TOTAL		DAILIES				OTHER			
	Weekly Returns	4 Weekly Returns	Weekly Returns	4 Weekly Returns	Weekly Returns	4 Weekly Returns	Weekly Returns	4 Weekly Returns	Weekly Returns	4 Weekly Returns
1	11.3	11.8	7.5	8.4	3.8	3.4				
2	11.6	11.5	7.6	8.2	4.0	3.4				
3	11.5	11.5	7.6	8.2	3.9	3.3				
4	11.3	10.7	7.6	7.9	3.7	2.8				
5	10.7	11.1	7.1	8.1	3.6	3.0				
6	11.1	12.0	7.5	8.8	3.6	3.2				
7	11.6	11.6	7.8	8.5	3.8	3.1				
8	11.4	11.2	7.6	8.1	3.8	3.1				

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the quality of the data from this survey. Of those interviewed on the initial Home Audit Survey who were eligible for the readership panel, 69% agreed to join. Of those, 72% ultimately returned diaries which we could use in the analysis — by normal single-interview response-rate criteria a rather poor result. What matters, however, is *not* the response rate, but the representativeness of the sample achieved. In those terms the sample looks rather better. In comparison with the overall 69% who agreed to join the panel the proportions across various demographic groups are shown below (**Table 2**) (and one must bear in mind that the sample sizes in some of the groups are very low which will inevitable result in wide variations).

**TABLE 2**

Sex	Working Status		Age	
Male	63%	Full Time	68%	15-24 72%
Female	73%	Part Time*	84%	25-34 82%
			Not Working 66%	35-44 63%
				45-54 74%
				55 + 57%

\*Eligible Sample only 31

Overall! the variations are no larger than one is likely to see on any random sample, with the possible exception of the low response among those aged 55+. In comparison it is worth noting that response rates on the NRS for 15-24 year olds are *approximately* 63% while for those aged 55+ they are *approximately* 71%. On the NRS a lower response is achieved among young people — on the readership panel a lower response was achieved among older people.

Another aspect of variability which would need to be examined in any major pilot would be sign-up rates among groups of varying claimed weights of readership. No evidence on this point was collected on this survey.

Differential drop out from the pre-pilot panel did not prove to be a great problem. Where panel members did drop out they were not replaced as they would be on a continuous survey, but even so the profile of the panel did not change significantly on most of the major demographic variables. The only variable on which the panel changed very much was in terms of its age composition as the following data shows:

	Week 1	Week 8
15-24	24.3	21.9
25-34	22.5	20.5
35-44	10.8	12.5
45-54	15.3	12.5
55 +	27.0	32.8

There is clearly a higher drop out among the 15-24 and 25-34 groups, which results in a shift in the balance of the panel towards the older group. This suggests that it might be necessary to give higher incentives to younger panellists to encourage them to stay on the panel, and to avoid the problems caused by excessive replacements.

Other useful information on the pre-pilot was gained by conducting a number of interviews with panel members, either at random calls during the thirteen weeks of the panel, or after the last diary was returned. Some of this work was funded by JICNARS as part of their investigation into readership panels.

The results of these investigations were encouraging in that they showed that the great majority of panel members completed their diaries within 48 hours of the reading event; they completed their diaries in places conducive to the completion requirement; and (not least) the interviews showed that the diary could stand up to the wear and tear imposed on it for a lengthy period.

We have already said that there is little point in looking at the individual readership results produced by the pre-pilot panel since the sample size involved is too small to make comparisons with NRS figures of any value. However, some comments can be made on the overall direction of the results:

(a) Net readership levels were very similar on the pre-pilot study to NRS levels for daily papers, evening papers and Sunday papers; for magazines the pre-pilot produced net readership levels lower than the NRS.

(b) Among daily papers (where the individual results are more accurate because of the larger number of measurements) the rank order of publications is exactly the same as on the NRS with one minor exception, which could be explained by the fact that the age profile of the pre-pilot was deliberately weighted towards the young.

(c) Readership levels of the TV programme magazines were significantly lower than on the NRS. With hindsight this was traced by follow-up interviews to be due to the instructions given in the diary which could be taken to imply that glancing at one page to refer to a particular programme time or channel (as one would do frequently with a programme magazine) should not be included as reading. This problem should be soluble by more precise instructions on the diary.

(d) Readership levels for Sunday colour magazines were also lower than one could expect. This may be due to the fact that no description of their source (i.e. 'distributed

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free with the Sunday.....') was given, as on the NRS mastheads.

These results suggest that a readership panel on a larger scale could well be capable of producing credible results. We have gained some useful insights into the way in which a panel could operate, and we have seen indications of both satisfactory results and problem areas for further investigation.

*Satisfactory results.....with some exceptions*

Most reporting levels  
stable over time . . . . . Some decline in  
magazine reporting levels

Most demographic groups  
equally likely to sign up . . . . . Elderly more reticent to  
sign up

No major demographic  
bias in panel drop out . . . . . Slightly higher drop out  
among the young

Daily and Sunday readership  
levels acceptable . . . . . Lower levels of readership  
for magazines —  
especially TV programme  
magazines.

### IN THE MEANTIME — THE MEDIA SELECTIVITY STUDY

If headway is going to be made on investigating the use of readership panels as an alternative source of readership estimates to the current NRS, then a much larger pilot exercise will need to be conducted. Such a pilot survey would inevitably take a great deal of time to design, carry out and interpret. Even after the interpretation had been completed (and assuming the results were acceptable) it is unrealistic to suppose that an agreement to proceed with a full scale readership panel could be taken quickly. In our view it is unlikely that we could see a readership panel running in parallel with the current NRS — as would be necessary for validation purposes — until 1986 at the earliest.

In the meantime advertisers and publishers would still be in the position of not knowing what was happening in the marketplace as quickly as they would like, and they would not be receiving the type of dynamic data that a panel can produce. As a result, we decided to embark on a new study which would be quite different in its aims to the NRS but which would collect usable readership data in a more dynamic way than the NRS does. This survey is the AGB INDEX Media Selectivity Study.

The Media Selectivity Study is different from the NRS in that it is designed to collect single-source data on exposure to both TV and print media, at the same time as collecting target market data. In comparison with the pre-pilot panel the method of collecting readership data varies in four significant ways.

First it is collected on the back of an existing panel already reporting on a continuous basis. Second, 37 publications are measured instead of the 100+ on the NRS. Third, readership is measured over four weeks, but at the same time as measuring TV exposure. Fourthly, the diary used was simpler, collecting only readership data and not information on source of copy, depth of reading, etc. As a result we did not assume that this study would produce readership levels which were similar to those produced by the NRS. Not only was the study based on a panel approach, but the readership part of the study was far simpler than in the pre-pilot in order to allow us to collect the wealth of other data necessary to enable more dynamic use to be made of the results.

The approach used has advantages and disadvantages for measuring readership. Because it is run on the back of an existing panel there are fewer problems of panel balance, continuity of reporting and differential sign-up, since the panel already exists in a well-balanced form. Panel members are all already familiar with the tasks required of them. On the other hand, it is possible that the additional load imposed by asking them to report their media behaviour might result in poor quality reporting.

Without going into great detail it is clear that this more limited study has provided promising results, without some of the difficulties found in the pre-pilot survey described above. A high proportion of the panel (88%) returned usable diaries for the four weeks of the survey. There is no indication of any bias either demographically or in regional terms in the responding sample — as indeed one might expect with such a high response rate. Nor is there any indication of any significant decline in the reporting levels across the four weeks of the survey, either in total or by particular groups of publications.

The readership levels recorded on the study are, in fact, similar to those found on the NRS for daily and Sunday newspapers as shown below. There is a tendency for the panel results to be lower than NRS results by around 10%. On weekly and monthly magazines this differential increases to around 25%, although it is notable that on this panel the estimates for the TV programme magazines are very close to NRS levels.

The point of the Media Selectivity Study, is not,

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	NRS	Panel
Dailies	%	%
Sun	29	26
Daily Mirror	24	21
Daily Express	14	11
Daily Mail	13	10
Daily Star	11	9
Daily Telegraph	8	6
Daily Record	5	4
Guardian	3	2
The Times	2	2
Financial Times	2	1
Sundays		
News of the World	27	24
Sunday Mirror	24	22
Sunday People	23	22
Sunday Express	17	17
Sunday Post	10	12
Sunday Times	9	6
Observer	6	4
Sunday Mail	6	6
Sunday Telegraph	5	4

however, to replicate NRS levels of readership, but to provide readership information in a more dynamic and usable form. The examples which follow indicate the possible uses to which readership data of this type can be put.

From an advertiser's, and a publisher's, point of view, it is useful to know the days on which publications are read. With a normal readership survey this can only be found out by asking a recall-based question, or by asking about respondents' 'usual' behaviour. With panel data the information is available from the diary record. Let us consider two publications — the *Sunday Times*, an up-market Sunday paper and the *News of the World*, a more popular Sunday paper. Each of them has its own colour magazine which was measured separately on the panel. (See **Table 3**).

It is clear that the *Sunday Times*, and its magazine, are both read over a longer period of time than either the *News of the World* or its magazine. With nearly a quarter of reading occasions taking place on days other than Sunday, the *Sunday Times* has a much better case to put to an advertiser whose products are not on sale on Sunday than does the *News of the World*.

We can extend this to some of the magazines covered on the survey to show the very high number of reading days for the TV programme magazines compared with womens weekly magazines.

Number of reading days per week	
Radio Times	4.7
TV Times	4.6
Woman's Weekly	1.7
Woman's Realm	1.6
Woman's Own	1.4
Woman	1.4

This pattern is not particularly surprising, of course, since programme magazines will inevitably be referred to several times in each week, but it becomes much more useful when each publication's reading occasions are analysed by day of week. (See **Table 4**).

The implications of the peaked reading pattern for the two women's publications could be quite marked for advertisers whose products have an uneven pattern of purchase by day of week. An advertiser whose purchase patterns were weighted towards the end of the week might find *Woman's Weekly* a more useful medium than *Woman's Own* since more of the exposure to his advertisement would come close to the purchase decision time.

A final example will illustrate the value of readership data linked to TV viewing data in media planning. Channel 4 in the UK is a new commercial channel with

**TABLE 3**  
% of Reading occasions by day of week

	<i>Sunday Times</i>	<i>Sunday Times Magazine</i>	<i>News of the World</i>	<i>Sunday (the N. of W. Magazine)</i>
	%	%	%	%
Sunday	77	77	90	83
Monday	12	12	7	9
Other days	11	12	3	8



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intended appeal to minority groups in the population. At the time of conducting the Media Selectivity Study Channel 4 was not on air, but for the purpose of this example we can use BBC2 (a similar minority interest channel, which is not in fact, commercial) as a substitute. A plausible mixed media schedule for an up-market product might be BBC2 TV plus the *Daily Telegraph* as a print medium. If one aim of the schedule is to achieve maximum frequency it is beneficial to place the advertisements on days when *Daily Telegraph* readers are most likely to be viewing BBC2. No data on this subject are available to allow this decision to be made either from the NRS, or from the TGI or from BARB (the TV rating measurement survey). However, the Media Selectivity Study shows that there are enormous benefits to be gained by selecting the right day of the week:

### Levels of BBC2 viewing by day of week (All adults level = 100)

	<i>Daily Telegraph Readers</i>
Monday	100
Tuesday	96
Wednesday	173
Thursday	144
Friday	131
Saturday	135

The analysis shows that readers of Wednesday's *Daily Telegraph* are 73% more likely to watch BBC2 on Wednesday than the population in general. Advertisements placed in both media on Wednesday will result in a higher frequency than advertisements placed on Friday for example. (It is perhaps worth noting that a

Wednesday schedule might produce a lower total reach than a Friday schedule, but if frequency is more significant than reach for this specific campaign, a Wednesday schedule would still be the most appropriate).

These examples only begin to show the depth of analysis which is possible with a mixed media panel. This extension of the concept of a simple readership panel has considerable implications for the future sophistication of the media planning business, particularly in a situation in which the broadcast media are likely to be becoming increasingly fragmented, and mixed media campaigns becoming more frequent.

At the time of writing, the results of the 1983 Media Selectivity Study are not yet available.

### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Our experience so far with readership panel data is encouraging. Even on a very small scale pre-pilot there were indications that stable readership data could be produced and that representative samples of people could be induced to complete a readership diary over a long period of time. Bearing in mind the deliberately skewed sample, and the very limited sample size, the readership levels produced by the pre-pilot were reasonable.

If, however, readership panels are to be considered seriously as a prime source of data for publishers and advertisers a much larger and more thorough pilot must be carried out. We need to be able to examine readership results for a wide range of publications over relatively long periods of time if we are to be able to assess the stability of panel data. There is also a need for much more detailed examination than we have been able to carry out so far of the effects of factors such as differential sign-up, panel conditioning, panel wear-out, etc.

**TABLE 4**  
Share of readership occasions by day of week

	<i>Radio Times</i>	<i>TV Times</i>	<i>Woman's Weekly</i>	<i>Woman's Own</i>
	%	%	%	%
Monday	14	15	12	14
Tuesday	14	14	10	29
Wednesday	15	15	12	20
Thursday	14	14	24	14
Friday	15	15	21	11
Saturday	15	14	13	8
Sunday	13	13	8	4

## 4.1 The potential contribution of readership diary panels

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Most important of all perhaps is the need to find a way of validating the results produced so that comparisons with existing methods of collecting readership data can be made.

Given the current level of dissatisfaction with existing methods of measuring readership, both in terms of their accuracy, speed and sensitivity, we believe that potential contribution of readership panels must be examined seriously. This can only be done by investing in a major pilot study of the type discussed above. We do not suggest that such a pilot will inevitably prove that panels are the right way to measure readership. It may prove that they have as many problems as have existing techniques. However, we would suggest that there is sufficient theoretical and practical evidence to make such an investment a necessary step if we are to be serious in our search for a better way of measuring readership.

On a different level the results of the Media Selectivity Study are also encouraging in that they show what can be achieved by fairly limited readership questions on a readership panel in conjunction with other media and purchase data. Data of this sort cannot be used as an alternative to the NRS, but the additional value of mixed media single source data to publishers and advertisers suggests that this is a fruitful area for further activity.

We shall be continuing our activities in the field with further short term surveys on the AGB INDEX Panel. We will also be looking into the possible extension of surveys of this sort on to other existing AGB Panels, so that the value of dynamic multi-media data can be assessed in relation to product fields not covered by the INDEX Panel. We foresee that the results of surveys of this type could have a significant effect on the way in which media planning is carried out in the future.