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INVESTIGATION INTO SIX METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE CESP QUESTIONNAIRE

As everyone knows, the method of the 'last reading date' does not produce an unbiased measure of 'last period' readership.

To achieve that, using this method, it is necessary in fact to distinguish, from amongst the total readings reported in the course of the last period, initial reading from repeat reading; only initial reading must be taken into account in order to obtain an unbiased measure of readership.

To show up initial reading it is necessary to ask two additional questions, aimed at establishing:

- the number of different issues read in the course of the last period,
- and the date each of these issues was read for the first time.

Being aware of this problem, and always concerned to refine their studies of readership measurement, those responsible at CESP decided in 1984 to study possible alterations which could be made to those studies, to be in a position to ask these two additional questions under the best possible conditions.

In the context of these studies of possible alterations, it was decided to investigate as a matter of priority new methods of administering the questionnaire. The one used currently by CESP is already so extensive that it does not permit addition of supplementary questions.

Moreover, the fact that CESP wishes to study a greater number of titles (currently around 120) also militated in favour of studying a new method of administration of the questionnaire.

A qualitative test was therefore conducted, aimed at comparing six methods of administering the CESP questionnaire at different levels.

In the first section I will briefly describe the six methods of administration investigated and in the second section I will present the main results of the study.

THE SIX METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION INVESTIGATED

In order to be able to eliminate the effect of a given method of administration on the readership results, CESP decided that at the first stage only the 'filter' question (reading in the course of the last twelve months) would form the subject of the test.

The information collected for each of the six methods of administration concerned therefore only related to:

- reading in the course of the last twelve months,
- the (condensed) descriptive information given by the interviewees.

The six methods of administration studied were as follows:

- (1) the current method of CESP
- (2) the so-called 'Simmons' method
- (3) the adapted English method
- (4) the so-called 'South African' method
- (5) a method known as 'mixed'
- (6) the above 'mixed' method with one variation.

These will now be briefly described.

They were chosen whilst keeping in mind the desirability of obtaining good participation in the survey, and thus good involvement, on the part of the interviewees.

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(1) The current method of CESP

This consists in presenting a booklet to the interviewees; each page of this booklet shows a title represented by its logo.

The interviewer leafs through the booklet and reads out the titles one after another; the interviewee indicates for each title whether he has read it or not (yes/no).

The titles studied are grouped according to their frequency, in such a way that in fact three booklets are presented to the interviewees (dailies, weeklies, monthlies; when each booklet is presented, the interviewer indicates to the interviewee whether dailies, weeklies or monthlies are involved.

(2) The Simmons method

This method is fairly similar to that of CESP.

The titles are firstly listed in alphabetical order; they are then grouped in threes on spirally bound boards.

Each title is represented by its logo.

The interviewer leafs through the booklet containing the boards and for each one asks the interviewee which are the titles which he has read or looked through in the course of the last twelve months.

Apart from grouping the titles in threes, the two essential differences between this method and that of CESP are therefore.:

- the interviewee states the titles he has read instead of saying Yes/No to each title presented to him in the context of the CESP method.

- dailies, weeklies and monthlies are mixed (and thus the frequency of the titles presented is not indicated to the interviewee).

(3) The English method

This method consists of grouping a set of titles (four to eight) on boards belonging, preferably, to the same area of interest.

Each title is represented by its typed name and not by its logo. Weeklies and monthlies are mixed; dailies are shown together on separate boards.

In the first stage, the interviewees are invited to make three piles of the boards presented to them:

- those containing titles which they have definitely read or looked through in the course of the last twelve months;

- those which did not include any titles which have been read or looked through;

- and finally those which they are not sure about; subsequently these boards are re-examined for the purposes of allocation to one of the above two piles.

In the second stage, the boards bearing titles definitely read or looked through in the course of the last twelve months are re-examined.

Since the CESP test only referred to the filter question, the English method had to be adapted here.

The adaptation effected gave rise to two variations:

- the first consisted in asking the interviewees whether they had read (Yes/No) each of the titles shown on the selected boards (thus similar to the CESP method).

- the second consisted in asking them which were the titles which they had read in the course of the last twelve months (thus similar to the Simmons method).

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(4) The South African method

This method consists in presenting to the interviewee a set of 'free' cards each showing a title; this is represented by its logo.

All the organs of the press are handled in the same way and since the set of cards is shuffled before each interview, dailies, weeklies and monthlies are presented together to the interviewee, in a completely random order.

In the first stage, the interviewee is invited to make three piles of the cards in his hand:

- one pile of cards corresponding to the titles which he has definitely read or looked through in the course of the last twelve months;
- one pile of cards corresponding to the titles which he has definitely not read in the course of the last twelve months;
- a pile corresponding to the titles he is not sure about; subsequently these cards are re-examined for the purposes of allocation to one of the first two piles.

(5) The mixed method

This new method aims to combine the advantages of some of the above methods and to eliminate, as far as possible, the disadvantages they present.

As in the English method, it consists of grouping families of titles on boards (six to eight).

Each title is represented by:

- a card showing its logo (South African method); the card may be removed from the board;
- its typed name immediately underneath the corresponding card.

The interviewer presents the boards one after another to the interviewees and asks them to remove the cards which correspond to the titles which in the course of the last twelve months they have:

- definitely read or looked through (first pile);
- possibly read or looked through (second pile); these titles are subsequently re-examined for the purposes of allocation either to the first pile, or to the pile of titles neither read or looked through during the course of the last twelve months.

(6) The mixed method with variation

This method is very similar to the preceding one; it consists, in the first stage, of asking the interviewees an open question aimed at establishing the titles which they read either regularly or fairly frequently, and in the second stage of following the above method.

After administering the questionnaire to the interviewees, the interviewers:

- asked some additional questions in order to find out how the interviewees 'experienced' the interview (interest, duration, reliability);
- completed a small questionnaire themselves aimed at making them qualify the interview according to various points of view (interest of the interviewee, his reactions, etc).

For each method of administering the questionnaire, about 60 individuals aged 15 years or more were questioned in the Paris region.

These persons were questioned in each case at home, on a quota basis, in the same residential areas in Paris and suburbs.

Six interviewers took part in the test, each of them carrying out ten

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interviews per method of administration of the questionnaire.

In order to eliminate any serial order effect, three interviewers carried out the test in the order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, the other three using the order 5, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Finally, each interviewer was briefed on each method of administration carried out before commencing the corresponding interviews; at the end of each series of ten interviews, each interviewer produced a report of the method of administration tested and an initial evaluation.

A general evaluation was finally drawn up with all the six interviewers used.

The interviews were carried out in the field between 21 January 1985 and 5 February 1985.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1 - Average number of dailies or magazines read or looked through in the course of the last twelve months.

2 - Average mark given by the interviewee concerning the duration (1 - very short; 7 -very long).

3 - Average mark concerning *interest* (1 - not very interesting; 7 - very interesting).

4 - Average completion time (minutes).

- The CESP method, in which the interviewer reads out the titles one by one is considerably longer than the other methods whilst the Simmons method seems a little quicker.

- The 'mixed method with variation', where the interviewee is asked to respond initially by means of an open question on reading habits, receives an interest score considerably higher than the other methods.

- The number of titles stated as read varies considerably from one method to another for all frequencies of publications.

- The CESP, South African and English methods (where the interviewer reads out all the titles of the Yes cards) lead to a higher number of items read than the others whilst the 'mixed method with variation' gives lower results.

- Finally, it will be seen that the 'mixed method with variation' leads to fewer items read than the mixed method; the remarks and observations of the

TABLE 1

	1		2	3	4	
	<i>Dailies</i>	<i>Weeklies</i>	<i>Monthlies</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Interest</i>	<i>Time to complete (minutes)</i>
CESP method	3.9*	12.8*	15.7	2.7	4.3	13.4
Simmons method	3.0	10.0	9.3	2.3	4.1	7.5
English method	3.4	12.0	12.2	2.4	4.1	9.3
South African method	4.2	14.8	15.0	2.3	4.0	9.4
Mixed method	3.5	10.6	10.5	2.3	4.4	9.9
Mixed method + variation	3.3	9.2	7.3	2.7	5.0	8.9

* The calculation carried out excluding the 20 magazines added over and above the current CESP, gives the following results: *Dailies* 3.9; *Weeklies* 10.6; *Monthlies* 14.3.

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TABLE 2
Reading of imaginary titles in the course of the last twelve months

	CESP	Simmons	English	South African	Mixed	Mixed + variation
Bases	58	60	58	60	52	60
Femina	2	-	-	2	-	-
Jeux du Stade	-	2	1	3	2	1
Semaine Télé	-	-	2*	1	1	-
Maison et Décoration	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>10*</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	10	4	13	18	7	2

* Including: *Semaine Télé*, 1; *Maison et Décoration*, 9, for the variation where all the titles of the 'Yes' cards were re-read.

TABLE 3
Association of *Tele 7 Jours* / *Tele 7 Jeux*

	CESP	Simmons	English	South African	Mixed	Mixed + variation
Bases	58	60	58	60	52	60
Télé 7 Jours	40	33	35	45	26	37
Télé 7 Jeux	22	13	12	24	8	11
<i>Duplication</i>						
Télé 7 Jours]						
Télé 7 Jeux]	17	9	10	24	6	10

interviewers suggest a disinvolvement phenomenon on the part of the interviewee after having the feeling of stating what seemed to him to be the most important (regular or semi-regular reading).

Four imaginary titles, which do not exist, were introduced into the list of 150 titles studied.

The South African method, the English method (when the interviewer reads each title on the 'Yes' cards) and, to a lesser degree, the CESP method lead to fairly numerous statements of having read these imaginary titles.

Taking account of the preceding table, it seems that the conclusion can be drawn that these three methods give rather over-estimated reading results, probably due to the fact that the interviewee is obliged to say 'Yes' or 'No' for each title (a long sequence of 'No' may generate a 'Yes' due to the embarrassment which the interviewee feels at always saying 'No').

Télé 7 Jours is a television magazine, therefore a weekly.

Télé 7 Jeux which is derived from *Télé 7 Jours* is a games magazine which appears every month.

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TABLE 4

Question: "If I asked you, now, the same questions, do you feel that you would give exactly the same replies?"

	<i>CESP</i>	<i>Simmons</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>South African</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Mixed + variation</i>
Bases	58	60	58	60	52	60
Yes, definitely	33	30	41	35	38	46
Yes, I think so	22	29	17	21	12	12
No, possibly not	3	1	-	3	2	2
No, definitely not	-	-	-	1	-	-

The current CESP method and particularly the South African method lead to considerable duplication of the two magazines studied.

These results seem to militate in favour of presentation of the magazines by area of interest and not one-by-one in random order, since there is a risk of statements of having read a title arising from confusion in the latter case.

The administration of the questionnaires as such having been completed, the interviewer asked the interviewees: "If I asked you, now, the same

questions, do you feel that you would give exactly the same replies?"

The replies to this question are shown in Table 4.

The English method, the Mixed method and the 'Mixed method with variation' seem to receive better scores than the others, particularly compared with the Simmons method.

If the various methods are now analysed, in qualitative terms, the advantages and disadvantages of each can be summarised as follows:

TABLE 5

Characteristics of the current CESP method

The current CESP method offers more disadvantages than advantages

Advantage

- The interviewees see and hear all the titles studied.

Disadvantages

- Long
- Mechanical
- Frustrating
- Tiring
- No relationship with the interviewee
- The brackets are irritating
- The booklets create an unfavourable impression.

TABLE 6
Characteristics of the Simmons method

The Simmons method has far more advantages than disadvantages

Advantages

- Clear, easy, no difficulties, appropriate, modern, serious
- Quick
- Appealing
- Participation of the interviewee
- Leafing through folder like a magazine
- Compact materials.

Disadvantage

- Tendency of interviewees to go rather quickly.

Recommendation

- Give same dimensions to the logos
 - Put 'read or looked through in the course of the last 12 months' on one page in every n.
-

TABLE 7
Characteristics of the English method

The English method has more advantages than disadvantages

Advantages

- Practical
- Quick
- Good interviewee participation
- Method seems to be the most rigorous
- Light materials.

Disadvantages

- Dull materials
 - Absence of logo - possibly a handicap?
 - A mechanical and tiring method when enumerating all the titles of the cards read.
-

TABLE 8
Characteristics of the South African method

The South African method has more disadvantages than advantages

Advantages

- Quick method
- Entertaining method

Disadvantages

- Method is much too quick, the interviewee tends to 'rush through it'
 - Lack of reliability of statements
 - Considerable 'dead' time for recording the statements
 - Difficult to go back
 - Necessity of re-counting all the cards at the end of the interview
 - Reticence of the interviewee in re-examining the 'no' pile.
-

TABLE 9
Characteristics of the mixed method

The Mixed method has far more advantages than disadvantages

Advantages

- Fairly quick method
- Pleasant and appealing method
- Good interviewee participation
- Good relationship with the interviewee
- All titles are examined.

Disadvantages

- Sometimes the interviewee does not want to re-read all the boards
- The act of removing the cards may seem 'incomprehensible' to some interviewees.

Recommendation

- Improvement of materials.
-

TABLE 10
Characteristics of the Mixed method with variation

Apart from the characteristics of the preceding method

Advantages

- Good introduction to the subject, the interviewees are very happy
- The interviewee is given the feeling that all his reading is of interest.

Disadvantages

- Risk of not quoting subsequently titles stated spontaneously
- Tendency to go fast after replying to the open question.

Recommendation

- Ask the open question after completion of the boards due to the positive influence which it may have on the remainder of the interview.

In conclusion, it seems that it could be said that:

- the South African method should be rejected as it stands;
- the current CESP method is difficult to retain as it stands.

Three new methods of administration may be envisaged for the future:

- the Simmons method which shows the essential characteristic of leading to fairly few reading statements;
- the English method;
- the Mixed method.

Each of these methods may form the subject of the variation envisaged in this test for the Mixed method; however, it would be appropriate to ask

the open question about regular or semi-regular reading at the end of the filter question and not before it, as was done in this study.

Without losing sight of the fact that only the filter question formed the subject of the test and that it is thus appropriate to subsequently ask other questions (last reading date, reading habits), and not forgetting that the aim is to achieve the maximum participation, and thus involvement, on the part of the interviewees, the question may be asked whether it is not the Mixed method which should be retained.

This represents a completely personal point of view; it is certainly for CESP to decide at this level.