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### DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES PRODUCE DIFFERENT RESULTS - BUT TO WHAT EXTENT?

#### SUMMARY

It is obvious to all of us that the results of readership research in terms of reach and duplication are heavily dependent on a lot of factors, such as media structural conditions and the agencies used for surveying and sampling, as well as questionnaire technique.

So far we seem to be satisfied by stating the fact that different techniques produce different results. The questions I want to raise are, firstly, whether this is satisfactory also in the future, and secondly, if we answer the first question with a 'No', how can we improve.

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I have no answer to this second question. I simply want to raise a discussion in order to stimulate some thoughts aiming at improvement.

Thanks to Erhard Meier of Research Services Ltd we know a lot of details on the surveys conducted in each of the countries represented here. We have further at each Symposium, in New Orleans and in Montreal as well as here, discussed various aspects of those different techniques.

In New Orleans in 1981 we were presented with two basic techniques: The 'recency' technique aiming at measuring 'recent reading' (through last issue period readership) and the US 'Through-the-Book' technique aiming at measuring readership after a number of issue periods. Obviously these two methods produce different results.

But even if we concentrate on one of those techniques - and let us here concentrate on the 'recency' technique - we will see that details in the questionnaire technique can be decisive for the results.

#### A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Let us demonstrate this with a practical example. In Norway, the questionnaire technique was radically changed from the 1978- to the 1979-report of the national readership survey, IFM's Mediaindeks. Those changes are shown on the next page.

In addition the contractor was changed from Norges Markedsdata as to MMI - Markeds- & Mediainstituttet as. The same sampling method was used both until 1978 and after 1979. The contractor effect is supposed to have created only marginal and insignificant changes in the results.

Finally, there were of course circulation developments. One magazine, *Alle Kvinner*, ceased in 1978 and some readers may have been taken over by other women's magazines, especially by *KK - Kvinner og Klær*. However, even for this latter magazine, as well as for the others, circulation developments were relatively small and of no substantial importance to the results.

The results were reported at New Orleans where they were given in my paper: 'Norway: The development of industry surveys on consumer media', but they are repeated here in Table 1.

We shall not go into details on the reasons for the changing results. All publications obtained higher reach and readership in 1979 than in 1978; this fact is applicable also to *Programbladet*, which up to 1978 obtained an 'extra' readership through confusion with a TV-/radio supplement issued by the largest morning newspaper *Aftenposten* (Oslo). *Programbladet* lost those 'extra' readers but in return was compensated by readers who forgot this magazine with the technique used up to 1978, but with the technique used from 1979 were reminded about it.

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<i>Change of</i>	<i>Until 1978</i>	<i>1979-81 (Cf.note)</i>
Filter	Happens to read or glance through	Read or glanced through during last 12 months
Aid for identification of publication	Neutrally typed lists	Individual masthead cards
Order of publications shown	Alphabetic lists	Random order
Publications shown	Individual lists by issue frequency	All in one pile
Frequency measured by	Number of issues read or glanced through of last six issues	Number of issues read or glanced through of last 12 issues
Specifically on		
- weeklies	Shown in two groups	Shown as part of all publications
- newspapers	164 included	Five included

*Note The filter question was changed again from 1981 to 1982 so that the one filter question described above was replaced by four filter questions for each issue frequency (monthlies, fortnightlies, weeklies and dailies) and concerned readership within the last 12 issues period. This change therefore also caused changes for the order of publications, for the publications shown and for the point: 'Specifically on weeklies'. I described this change of filter and its effect on results in Montreal in my paper: 'Effects of change of filters'.*

The main conclusion to be drawn is that changes of questionnaire technique also change the results in terms of reach and readership.

It must be added that the 1979 technique did not produce significantly more total net magazine readers than the 1978 technique. Consequently, the duplication rates between magazines also increased substantially. The new technique used from 1979, in comparison with the old technique used up to 1978, also produced higher levels of frequency of exposure from the use of combinations of two or more magazines.

Whether the combination of increased reach and frequency has caused the advertisers and advertising agencies to use shorter magazine lists in their campaign planning we do not know, simply because it has never been investigated.

So far, we have only been looking at

magazines individually. Those figures and changes of result are of interest mainly to the personnel at publishers responsible for the marketing of advertising space. Advertisers and advertising agencies are more interested in combinations of magazines for campaign planning and execution. Let us therefore look at such combinations.

**A LOOK AT COMBINATIONS**

A simple combination to investigate in Norway would be a combination of the two leading general magazines: *Hjemmet* and *Norsk Ukeblad*. A comparison between 1978 and 1979 for women would give the results shown in Table 2.

In other words, an advertiser with a net reach target of 60% would, when planning his 1979 campaign in 1978, have had to find one or more additional magazines to raise the net reach from

**TABLE 1**  
Comparison of reach 1978 and 1979

	Women			Men		
	1978 reach %	1979 reach %	Index (1978 =100)	1978 reach %	1979 reach %	Index (1978 =100)
<i>General magazines</i>						
Familien	13.7	15.2	111	5.8	6.8	117
Allers	30.2	38.7	128	19.2	26.5	138
Hjemmet	38.3	50.1	131	22.8	35.3	155
Norsk Ukeblad	34.7	43.1	124	21.1	31.1	147
<i>Women's magazines</i>						
KK - Kvinner & Klaer	10.8	16.1	149	2.6	5.2	200
Det Nye	12.2	18.2	149	4.7	10.8	230
Mitt Liv	5.8	7.0	121	1.4	2.9	207
Romantikk	3.5	6.0	171	1.0	1.5	150
<i>Men's magazines</i>						
Alle Menn	2.8	4.9	175	16.4	16.8	102
Vi Menn	4.7	7.4	157	21.5	22.4	104
<i>Pictorial magazines</i>						
Naa	3.7	9.5	257	6.7	12.4	185
<i>Special magazines</i>						
Alt om Mat	9.0	10.4	116	2.9	5.5	190
Foraeldre & Barn	4.4	6.8	155	1.9	3.2	168
Motor	9.5	20.2	213	27.2	38.0	140
Nye Bonytt	7.3	11.6	159	6.3	10.4	165
<i>Miscellaneous</i>						
Det Beste	16.4	20.3	124	22.3	24.2	109
Vaart Blad	8.7	13.9	160	8.2	14.9	182
Donald Duck & Co	12.0	21.7	181	14.0	25.0	179
Farmand	1.6	3.2	200	4.5	7.1	158
Programbladet	9.5	9.5	100	10.1	10.6	105

Note Only magazines reported in both surveys are included.

Source IFM's Mediaindeks 1978 and 1979 (issued by Institute of Marketing, Oslo).

56% in order to reach his 60% target, while in 1979, planning his 1980 campaign with the same target, he could happily restrict himself to the usage of *Hjemmet* and *Norsk Ukeblad*. Clearly his 1979 campaign based on 1978 results would be more effective in net reach and frequency of exposure than his 1980 campaign based on 1979 results.

There is not very much that can be done about this now. The technique used up to 1978 was not sufficient for the media and it was fair to draw the consequences and improve the technique, even if it had consequences as shown below. There are good reasons to praise the interested parties who quietly accepted the new results six

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**TABLE 2**  
**Comparison of combination**  
**Hjemmet/Norsk Ukeblad 1978 and 1979**

		1978 %	1979 %
Hjemmet	reach	38	50
Norsk Ukeblad	reach	<u>35</u>	<u>43</u>
Gross reach		73	93
Readers of both		17	30
Net reach		56	63
Average frequency one insertion		1.3	1.5

*Source: IFM's Mediaindeks 1978 and 1979*

years ago. Now that the 7th report (1985) has been issued there are no problems in comparisons between the campaign for one year and the campaign for the previous year.

**WE KNOW THERE ARE DIFFERENCES - DO WE NEED TO QUANTIFY THEM?**

The figures given above in Tables 1 and 2 should be sufficient to prove that different techniques produce different results. I have also aimed at quantifying those differences by taking the latest year before and the first year after changes in one country, Norway.

This quantification, however, concerns only the type of techniques used and cannot quantify which results we had arrived at had we changed to other techniques. This is the first lack. The second lack is whether this quantification is really relevant; I doubt that and want to stress that a comparison and quantification between countries at the same survey period is far more relevant to practical requirements. I also believe that there may be an increasing need for a quantification of differences created by the use of various questionnaire

techniques and thus allowing for a comparison between survey results in different countries.

The first reason for this need is a growing number of multi-national companies. Those companies want in their investment policy to set up targets for their operations in different countries and measure those targets against their effects. As examples of such targets could be for a media campaign to obtain a certain net reach (eg 60%) of a given target audience and to deliver the creative message with Average Opportunities to See (AOTS) at a certain level (eg 3.5 in the campaign period).

The second reason is that even long-established multi-national companies now seem to take a stronger interest in such inter-market comparisons. While earlier each national affiliate could conduct its media planning within a given and approved budget, inter-national management seems to involve itself more and more in setting targets and measuring effect. It can be added that in Norway we also feel that the Advertisers' Association and individual national companies get more and more interested, along the same lines as multi-national companies.

But the use of different questionnaire techniques causing different results in reach, readership and duplication makes it difficult, not to say impossible, for a multi-national advertiser to set up such targets for net reach and frequency.

Another set of reasons lie in the media area. Those press media for which we aim at measuring readership, are meeting increased competition from international press media, whether issued all over the Western World in English or issued in various editions in English, French, German and Spanish. Such international press media may become dissatisfied with the different techniques used in their various markets, and present competitive consumer-oriented media surveys.

From the point of view of marketing departments, however, it would be an advantage for all media, advertisers and advertising agencies to be presented with the same technique in all markets.

In addition to this, TV is a growing medium in most markets through the launch of new national channels in some countries and through international channels and - as, for example, Sky Channel, Music Channel and TV 5. By using electronic techniques to measure its audience TV is in fact coming closer to working with the same technique in all markets. This fact may stimulate the demand for more standardised press readership research techniques.

#### MEDIA STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES

Our problem concerning press media audience research lies not only in the different questionnaire techniques; if that were so, it would be easy to adjust for differences in practical media planning. Other factors influencing results are of a sociological and media structural nature.

The sociological factors are factors like average educational level: the higher this is the larger the newspaper market seems to be. Others of those factors arise from tradition, such as in Norway where magazine readership has always tended to be on a relatively high level in comparison with other countries.

The most important media structural factor is probably the size of the country or of the associated language area. Looking back at the reach levels of the Norwegian general magazines *Hjemmet* and *Norsk Ukeblad* we realise that their reach levels as a result of both techniques are on a very high level in comparison with reach levels obtained by leading magazines in other countries.

The reason for this is, of course, that Norway is a small country with a language area of approximately four million people. A consequence is that (related to population) the circulation and reach levels need to be relatively high in order to secure long-term profitability and thereby long-term publishing. On the other hand, in a large country with a large language area even publications with a small circulation and a small reach level in relation to population can survive.

Looking on the consequence from the point of view of the reader the output of titles for subscriptions and news-agent sales is tremendously higher in a large than in a small country. This wider choice presented to potential readers in a larger country of course tends to keep down the reach level of publications.

#### HOW CAN WE ARRIVE AT A QUANTIFICATION?

If we find that it is not enough to state that different techniques produce different results, but that because of increased competition from international publications and from TV, and because of increasing advertiser interest and need, we ought also to quantify such differences in results, how can we arrive at such quantification?

In my opinion there are two ways to go:

(1) We can eliminate the problem. The way to do this is to adopt the same questionnaire technique in all countries. This is easy to say, but difficult to implement in practice. Firstly, we may hit on a technique which is impractical in some countries, or a technique which may prove to be too expensive for some countries. Another point is, of course, that in many countries the technique used is a result of long-term discussions and could be changed only after equivalent discussions, if a change is possible at all.

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(2) We can recognise that the problem exists and cannot be eliminated. This is probably a more realistic attitude. But such acknowledgement of the problem and the impossibility of eliminating it does not necessarily exclude the need to study the problem, and that is, possibly, what we ought to do.

I have no firm proposal for such studies. However, it is obvious that we need to measure the results obtained by the use of a number of techniques under equal conditions in other terms, ie the same number of publications included, same position in the questionnaire, same aids used (all at the same time in order to eliminate variations in circulation and readership). It will cost us money and effort and I have no authorisation on behalf of the Norwegian media research world to offer anything here.

In order to arrive at a rapid indication of readerships produced by different questionnaire techniques we could start simply by making a comparison of readers-per-copy from all participating countries. Supplied with

sufficient material from fellow-participants I would not mind doing this.

I am not ashamed of that. I do not think the pressure today is so strong that we need to find any solutions here and now. But if we follow our normal schedule we are likely to meet again somewhere in late 1987 or early 1988, and looking into developments of this problem may be more pressing then.

The intention of this paper has not been to provide any solution, but to point out a possible future problem in order that it can be discussed, calmly, before it becomes a problem putting us under pressure. I therefore invite your views on whether the problem of quantifying differences in results caused by the use of different questionnaire techniques is or will be a pressing problem in a not too distant future? And if the answer to this question is 'Yes', are there any suggestions to the programme committee for Symposium IV which will bring us closer to a solution when we meet next time?