Rolf Speetzen
Axel Springer Verlag AG
Hamburg, Germany

MORE ON YARDSTICKS - FROM AVERAGE ISSUE READERSHIP TO AVERAGE PAGE EXPOSURE

SUMMARY

This paper describes the progress made towards a new media currency in Germany. Most of media analyses worldwide, including the German MA of today, are based on advertising carrier contacts, which present a distorted picture of the exposure to the message. Therefore, these measurements are unsatisfactory for agencies and clients, who aim to buy as cost effectively as possible.

Progressive media researchers and planners at both, media owners, agencies and clients, in Germany, followed a route towards contact qualification, starting in the early 80's. The first stage, presented at the Readership Research Symposium in Salzburg is now reaching the very crucial phase, when the inclusion of the "new currency" into the German MA as an official score is under discussion.

1990 saw the publication of an official MA report based on large scale experiments, the "Parallelwelle", so-called because fieldwork was carried out parallel to the actual MA 1990. The media results were adjusted to the actual MA figures.

While the report was somewhat ill-starred, however, it does serve the purpose of getting used to the new ideas.

Media efficiency of individual publications selections based on the "old philosophy", average issue readership, varied in parts extremely from that based on the "new currency". Economic and cost effective media planning calls for evaluation of average page exposures or even multiple page exposures to include all the benefits print media can offer.

1

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of the media analyses worldwide are based on the carrier contact, i.e. the probability of a target person to be exposed to the vehicle of the advertising message, a magazine, a newspaper, a TV or radio program etc. They do not distinguish between intensive or transient contact, and whether a contact with the advertising did occur or not. The usual yardstick is the average issue readership (AIR) size, regardless of the quality of the exposures.

However, advertising effectiveness is based on the exposure to the message, to the advertisement or the spot. Consequently, German advertising agencies have demanded for many years to move from carrier contact towards exposure to the message. In the case of readership research it meant moving from **Average Issue Readership** to **Average Page Exposure**.

It was a long way from the first attempts and demands, to the results of the official MA experiments, which are available now, albeit only as an experimental data base (Parallelwelle), not the badly wanted official hard currency.

Interim results of this endeavour were presented at the Salzburg Symposium as 'Yardsticks for Exposure Quality' by Ursula Wangard and Rolf Speetzen. The first 'Yardsticks' were based on a survey designed by the German Association of Advertising Agencies (GWA) and sponsored by Axel Springer Verlag AG.

First attempts were rather ambitious. All known potential criteria effecting the quality of exposure were included in the survey to evaluate their influence. Of the 35 original criteria, seven proved to be valid, impartial to the media and effective to distinguish high quality contacts from low quality contacts: Two criteria indicating the amount read, two general statements describing the attitude towards advertising, two characteristics describing the reader-loyalty or the proximity towards the medium and last but not least 'multiple page exposure'.

Follow-ups to the initial 'Yardsticks for Exposure Quality' confirmed the first results. However, to create a feasible section within the questionnaires of multi media and market surveys, the number of criteria was reduced to the following four:

> Amount Read
> Multiple Page Exposure
> Proximity to the Magazine
> Positive Attitude Towards Advertising

A first stage success on the way to page exposure was achieved when, at the general meeting of the AG.MA, the German Media Analysis, in February 1989, the majority voted for the inclusion of exposure qualifying criteria into the questionnaire of the MA 90, and for a new and harder currency. However, the difficulties with decreasing AIR figures in the MA 1989 report led to second thoughts on that decision resulting in a split run, adding the exposure qualifying questions only to the interviews of an experiment, the so-called 'Parallelwelle'.

2

615

2 THE NEW MEDIA CURRENCY

As already mentioned, most media analyses are based on vehicle contacts: exposure to a media vehicle. But exposure to the carrier does not automatically mean an exposure to the advertising message, the advertisement or spot carried by the medium. However, the advertising industry being naturally more interested in exposures to the message than vehicle, it is only logical that agencies and clients are pushing towards a harder media currency which better reflects the contacts with the advertising rather than with carrier.

A medium such as a magazine is read by different target persons in different environments with different interest and intensity, depending on the function of the journal, the share of core or fringe readers, page volume etc. These differences result in different exposure probabilities for the advertising messages carried within this medium. It is the primary goal of 'Yardsticks' to better reflect these different probabilities than standard MA figures do. Inclusion of the qualifying criteria provides a tool to evaluate more realistically the performance of a campaign.

By moving from average issue readership to average page exposure titles lose on average approximately 25 percent of reach. If it would hit all magazines at a same rate, it would not cause any significant differences in the media evaluations. However, the differences actually range from 10 to 50 percent decrease in reach, depending on the nature and function of the publication in question.

Average page exposure levels of any given magazine correlate mainly to the amount read by the individual readers. The more pages are opened for reading, the larger the probability for an advertisement placed on those pages to be seen. For example, if a person normally opens and reads all the pages of a magazine then this person provides the best probability for seeing and noting all the advertisements.

It is also evident that regular readers usually read a magazine more intensely than sporadic readers who see the magazine infrequently and/or by chance. This can be illustrated by the differences in vehicle contacts and page exposure levels of individual publications by different target groups and titles. The larger the share of regular readers, the narrower the difference between average issue readership and average page exposure. On the reader side it means, that the more a person can be defined as a core reader of a title, the smaller the difference between carrier contact and page exposure, or conversely, the less a reader is a core reader, the larger the variance between the two measures.

This can be demonstrated based on average page exposure scores for demographic subgroups of readers of, for example, DER SPIEGEL, a news magazine, and FRAU IM SPIEGEL, a yellow press gossip magazine.

3

Table 1: Average Page Exposure as Share of AIR by Demographic Subgroups

Demographic groups	FRAU IM SPIEGEL	DER SPIEGEL	
Total population	73	72	
Men 30 - 39 years	55	81	
Men 30 - 39 years, top jobs	48	85	
Men 30 - 39 years, top jobs, top income groups	45	89	Typical SPIEGEL readers
Women	75	71	
Women 40 years and older	76	70	
Women 40 years and older, never employed	81	64	
Women 40 years and older without O-level, lowest income groups	79	62	Typical Yellow Press readers

The two examples in Table 1 demonstrate clearly that the new media currency is working as expected. The typical reader of a given magazine shows a comparatively high share of page exposure within the average issue readership. Thus the difference between AIR and APX is small for core readers and relatively large for fringe readers. This shows another advantage of the new media currency. It differentiates much better between individual target groups than the average issue readership, which appear to level out much of the differences.

4

2.1 ESTABLISHING AND CALCULATING THE NEW MEDIA CURRENCY

The new media currency is based on answers to the amount read scale per title. The amount read question follows the establishment of broadest audience, reading frequency and average issue readership. It is a fairly simple question, supported by a prompt list showing the amount read options. The question is worded as follows: "One has not always time and the opportunity to look through a magazine as thoroughly as one would have liked. Thinking of the last issue of ... which you have finished reading or which is not at your disposal anymore: How many pages of ... have you opened to read or to look at, altogether?"

The scale and weights are shown in Table 2. The weights are literal ascriptions to the verbal amount read claim.

Table 2: Amount Read Scale

Scale	Weight
(Almost) no pages	0.05
Only a few pages	0.10
Approximately a quarter of the pages	0.25
Approximately half of the pages	0.50
Approximately three quarters of the pages	0.75
(Nearly) all pages	1.00

The same scale is also used for multiple page exposures: "How many pages of ... have you opened twice or more times to read or look at?"

It is a simple calculation. If, for example, a person claims having opened nearly all pages of a certain magazine and has a vehicle contact probability of 85 percent, then the average page exposure probability of 1.00 for nearly all pages opened has to be multiplied with the reading probability of 0.85. If this person would have claimed only half of the pages as opened, the carrier vehicle probability of 0.85 would have been multiplied with 0.5, i.e.: 0.85 * 0.5 = 0.43.

The calculation of multiple page exposures is an additive process. The value for opening pages more than once is added to the single page exposure score. If in our example the person with the carrier contact probability of 0.85 would have claimed half the pages opened once and a quarter of the pages more than once, the calculation would look as follows: 0.85*(0.50 + 0.25) = 0.64.

However, this weighting process is not a final solution because it limits the maximum score to 2.0! In addition, the combination of multiplicative and additive processes can undervalue readers with a low start level, that is a low carrier contact probability but higher single and multiple page exposures, which cannot be weighted accordingly.

5

3 VALIDATION OF THE AMOUNT READ SCALE

It is still an open question whether the amount read scale reflects real reading behaviour and can therefore be introduced as 'the' new media currency for getting at the advertising message. To test the usefulness of the average page exposure approach two additional verification studies were carried out.

First: Reading/noting studies for 13 selected magazines. The magazines include the most important advertising carriers among the print media, ranging from topical general interest and news magazines, Sunday papers, TV and radio programme journals to women's weeklies and women's fortnightlies. The latter representing the 'classic' German women's magazines.

The results from these reading and noting studies , shown in the next table, are very promising. They show the relationship between the amount read scale and the percentage of recognised pages in the noting study.

Table 3: Recognition Levels by Amount Read Scores

Difference from Average of Recognised Advertising Pages in Percent

Scale	Pages opened once	Pages opened more than once
(Almost) no pages	- 20	- 5
Only a few pages	- 23	+ 2
Approximately a quarter of the pages	- 18	0
Approximately half of the pages	- 12	+ 2
Approximately three quarters of the pages	- 2	+ 15
(Nearly) all pages	+ 8	+ 17

The scores for average page exposure and multiple page exposure are a clear evidence for the relationship between the amount read scale and the recognition of advertising pages. However, the usefulness of the noting studies is not undisputed. They seem a somewhat limited tool for a quasi validation. Surveys in the past (Yardsticks for Exposure Quality, 1984) have shown quite substantial recognition scores for unpublished pages. And examples from the United States showed scores even for unpublished issues. In some tests, pages, especially advertisements, were recognised as being seen in that issue before, while they were really seen somewhere else.

In contrast to this recognition of unpublished material, which inflates noting scores, some pages are only recognised in a noting study when they have previously been opened more than once, thus deflating noting scores.

These considerations led to another test of the reliability of the new tool.

6

Second: It appears that a better validation of the new media currency rather than through noting studies was achieved by measuring the communication effectiveness. Consequently, 'Yardsticks for Exposure Quality 1989' added to the noting study for checking the relationship between amount read claims and recognition a validation attempt, measuring the communication effectiveness of 41 advertisements from 57 magazines and 7 daily newspapers in two sweeps, PRE and POST. No advertisements had been used for a substantial time interval preceding the survey. Most of them were new, some especially created for the survey and placed into one of the test magazines just before the final sweep.

The effectiveness of the communication was established by using the same criteria in the two sweeps, before and after the insertions of the 41 test advertisements. If, AFTER the advertisements had been inserted, readers of the test magazines and newspapers had a better comprehension of the advertising messages than they might have guessed by chance BEFORE, that increase in comprehension had to originate from the exposure to these special ads. This can be even better demonstrated by comparing the PRE and POST level of knowledge, the effectiveness level, of persons with comparable amount read scores per title, thus excluding other influences.

Table 4 demonstrates the communication effectiveness showing the strong relationship with the amount read scale.

Table 4: Communication Effectiveness by Amount Read Scores

|	Knowledge of the Message	
Scale	Pages opened once	Pages opened more than once
(Almost) no pages	2	0
Only a few pages	0	52
Approximately a quarter of the pages	27	52
Approximately half of the pages	44	78
Approximately three quarters of the pages	75	100
(Nearly) all pages	100	100

Index: Maximum increase PRE/POST = 100; Minimum = 0

7

The result is an almost linear relation, however, for a single handling of the publication, pages opened once, the incline is considerably smaller than for multiple page exposures, where a much steeper increase results.

Multiple page exposure results can perhaps be better demonstrated as related to the number of exposures to the pages, where the increase in effectiveness at 1 exposure is anchored as 100. The chart shows the strength of the multiple handling of the magazines.

Graph 1
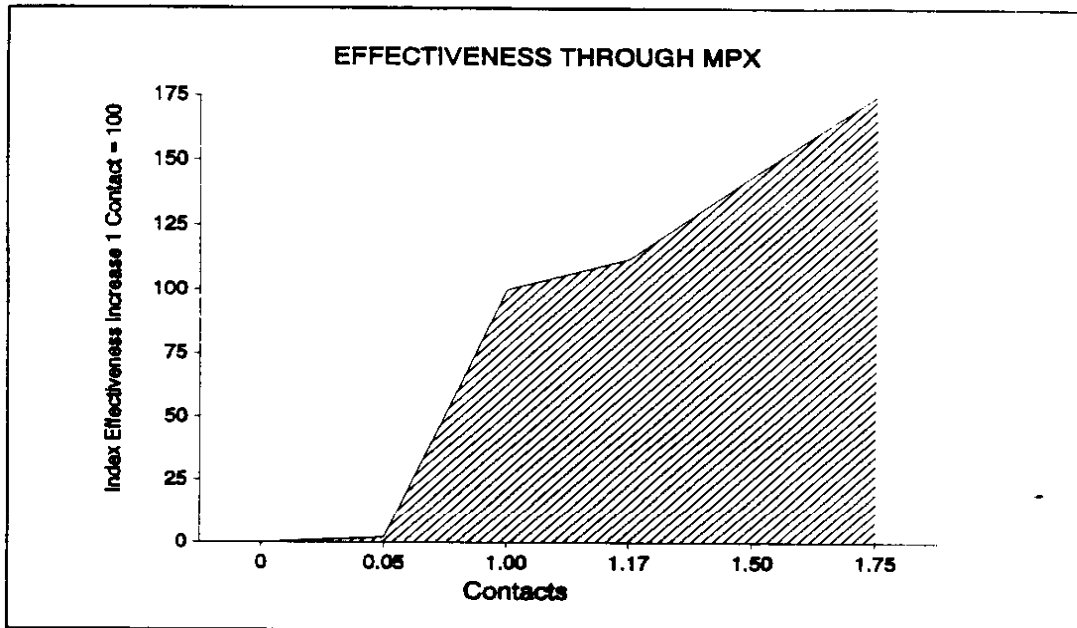
## 4 QUALITY MEASURES AND COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS

The basic factor for any communication is page exposure. However, it alone is no guarantee for an effective communication process. The process can remain rudimentary and fade away soon after the contact. Other factors reinforce or diffuse communication effectiveness. The influence of two of the 'Yardsticks' criteria was described earlier. But how about the other two characteristics: Proximity to the Magazine and Attitude towards Advertising?

It can be shown that these two criteria influence the effectiveness of the communication process, too. A very important criterion is the closeness a reader feels to the magazine, whether a certain title is emotionally close or remote, an indication of reader-loyalty. A cross check against the effectiveness of the communication process shows that persons exposed to an ad in a magazine they defined as remote had hardly taken in and retained the advertising messages.

8

Readers with a high degree of loyalty, who feel 'very close' to the magazine show much better effectiveness scores; the higher the degree of loyalty, the higher the communication effectiveness. It is almost a linear correlation again.

Graph 2
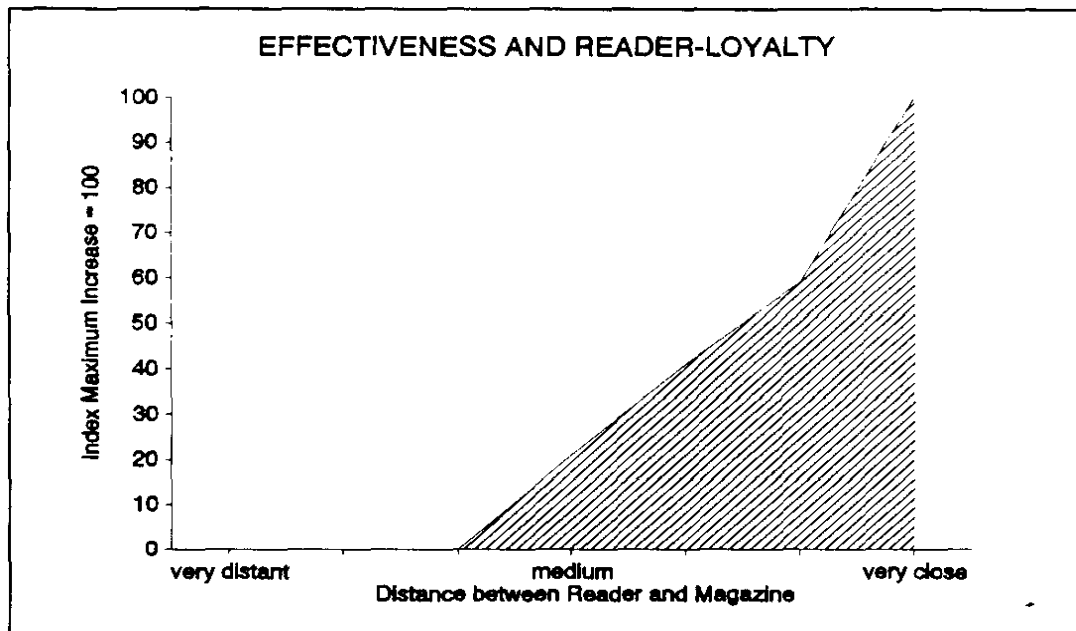
Another exposure qualifying factor is the attitude towards advertising in general. 'Yardsticks for Exposure Quality' and the follow-ups revealed a strong correlation between a positive attitude towards advertising and the recognition scores of advertisements. The more advertising was rated as entertaining the higher the recognition scores.

However, it has been disputed that the effectiveness of communication is affected by the general attitude towards advertising. The anti-thesis was: Advertising works the same, regardless how people feel about advertising.

Contrary to that, PRE/POST comparisons demonstrate that the more people feel advertising as entertaining the higher the communication effectiveness. Therefore a positive attitude towards advertising is a good indicator for effective advertising.

9

Graph 3

EFFECTIVENESS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ADVERTISING
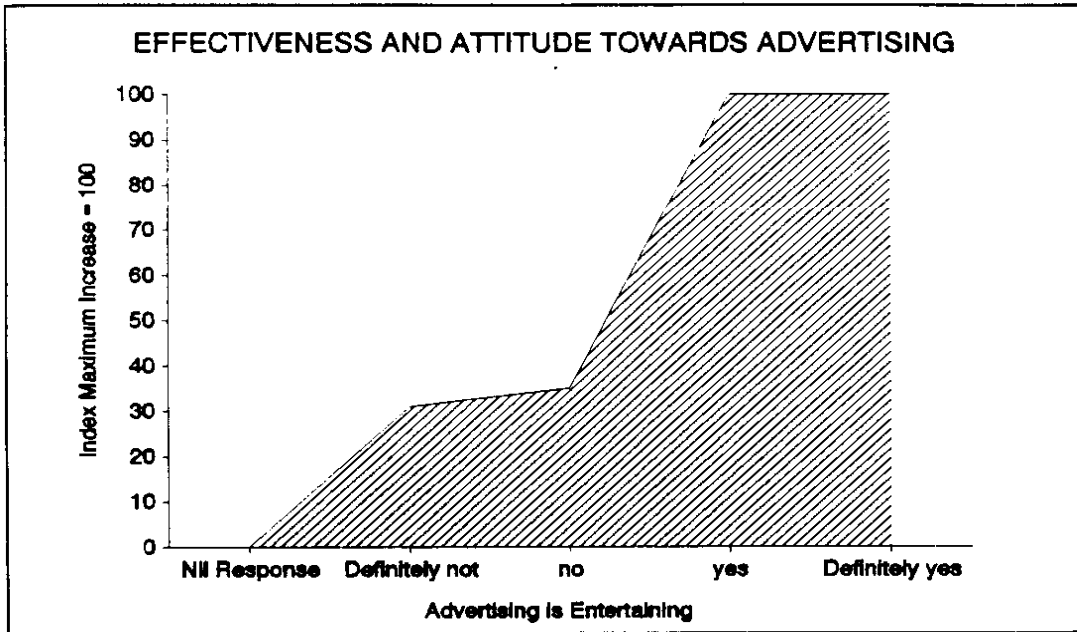
5 EFFECTS ON SCHEDULES

So far the theory. How about in practice? Previous surveys on exposure qualification showed similar results. The variables differentiated very well among the different titles of a media analysis. Indices for large target groups varied from 80 on the low side to 110 or even 120 on the high end. Within special and small target groups the indices varied even more.

When it came to evaluation runs, the pricing policy pursued by an individual publisher can weigh more heavily than exposure quality, and can be applied in such a way as to not only level out all attempts at differentiation, but also to support the view that attempts to go beyond carrier contact are superfluous. Clearly, that type of levelling effort is beyond the control of research.

However, MORE ON YARDSTICKS offers a better differentiation than it's predecessors through the inclusion of page and multiple page exposures. This new and comprehensive process can be demonstrated to improve media selection, even for large target groups, where differentiation is the hardest to arrive at.

For example, a media evaluation from the German Verbraucher Analyse, a Consumer Analysis with audience scores matched to the "official" MA = Media Analysis. The target group used in the example: People with a high general brand affinity, a universe of 19.75 million within the former West German population. The following table demonstrates the results.

10

Column 1 (left) lists the top 20 titles. Basis: Rank order of cost of 1000 page exposures.
Column 2 shows the Average Issue Readership of these Top 20 from the VA.
Column 3 gives the cost per 1000 readers on the basis of the AIR.
Column 4 shows the Index Average Page Exposure/Average Issue Readership APX/AIR
Column 5 illustrates the "original" rank order based on AIR and the usual cost per 1000.
Column 6 shows this rank order based on the "new currency", page exposure.
Column 7 goes further, demonstrating the effect of multiple page exposures MPX

Table 5: The Effect of APX and MPX on Media Schedules

Titles	AIR in VA	Cost per 1000 readers (AIR)	Index APX : AIR	Rank Order AIR	Rank Order APX	Rank Order MPX
	%	DM				
Freizeit Revue	7.5	18.02	75	1	1	1
Frau im Spiegel	5.4	21.01	71	2	2	7
BILD am Sonntag	19.3	22.85	75	3	3	9
Funk Uhr	9.1	25.89	80	10	4	2
Bild + Funk	6.4	23.85	74	4	5	3
Fernsehwoche	11.1	26.46	81	11	6	4
Gong	6.3	25.42	76	6	7	5
TV Hören + Sehen	13.6	27.28	78	14	8	6
Das Neue Blatt	5.7	25.33	72	5	9	13
Neue Post	7.0	25.82	73	9	10	12
Hörzu	19.6	28.15	79	18	11	8
IWZ	7.6	28.03	74	17	12	10
Neue Revue	7.9	25.82	67	8	13	15
Tina	8.6	30.38	76	20	14	14
Bunte	10.3	27.79	70	15	15	19
Quick	7.4	25.63	64	7	16	21
Stern	16.1	27.27	68	13	17	18
ADAC Motorwelt	28.6	27.94	69	16	18	16
rtv	14.4	27.17	65	12	19	11
Das Beste	7.1	29.72	70	19	20	20

Selection criterion: Minimum 5 % AIR

Comparing the rank order of 1000-carrier contact prices with the 1000-page exposure prices, there is no surprise in the first three positions. However, titles in the 10th, 11th or 14th position in the standard ranking move up to 4th, 6th or 8th position based on the new currency.

Including MPX shakes the ranking even further. FREIZEIT REVUE remains in the pole position, but numbers 7 and 9 based on page exposure ranking jump to positions two and three.

rtv, a TV programme supplement, shows an interesting pattern. It ranks 12th based on the "old" standard, drops to 19th position on average page exposures and comes up to the 11th position, when multiple page exposures are included.

All these movements up and down the rank orders are making their marks on media schedules. The difference in the cost effectiveness between old and new currencies calls for media selections based on criteria, which reflect the advertising effectiveness better than the carrier contacts. Progressive media planning will in future be based on a new dimension, evaluation of the probabilities of contacts with the message!

12