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5.4 Calibrating quality of reading

SUMMARY

Of all practicable variables that show a connection between the effective amount of reading of editorial and advertising contributions, the information about the amount of pages read or looked at (intensity) must be viewed as the best predictor. Unlike most other variables, the discrimination by regular or occasional exposure to a magazine can be regarded as a good substitute for intensity. Since frequency questions form part of the standard programme of practically all media investigations, they make it possible to obtain information on the advertising exposures in a fairly simple way without entailing the necessity of including other expensive investigations for this particular purpose.

INTRODUCTION

The desire for more and more information is increasing; there is a desire for more information on the question of media quality, on the quality of a measured exposure (OTS), as well as the demand for more and more precisely defined target groups. This makes the interviews longer and longer. The overburdening of interviewers and interviewees threatens to reduce quality. In this situation we must look for ways which lead us to the desired goal without costing us too much loss of information and with a not so lengthy questionnaire. Our paper is to a great extent based on investigations conducted by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, some of which were already reported on in connection with ESOMAR conferences (Budapest in 1976 and Berlin in 1980).

AN UNSATISFACTORY STARTING POSITION

There is general agreement that readership investigations measure reading or looking through a certain issue of an average magazine copy; it is obvious from this definition that occasional or sporadic readers are included. In all investigations dealing with this area, advertising media exposure must be outlined; according to this definition, any user of advertising is identical with another, no matter what the probability is of his using the advertising medium concerned in its entirety.

Every reader is given the same weight, no matter how much he reads during the time of measurement or how intensively and in which way he/she read or leafed through the periodical in question. The readers per issue figure, therefore, gives us insufficient basic information.

The mere media exposures result in an unjustified levelling of exposures. Why has no progress been made in the practical application of procedures to measure advertising exposures? One of the reasons certainly is that we cannot make any use of a very lavish model as far as the size of the questionnaire is concerned.

The dilemma we face is having to restrict the information to be measured to one interview. Therefore, we have to look for simple models which nonetheless satisfy high standards. There are a few ever-recurring objections to the use of relatively simple models and techniques. Often enough, these objections are not justified.

One argument reads: 'estimative scales and subjective information are of little use'. But are they *really* of such little use?

We find there is a multitude of evidence gathered in the field of survey research which establishes proof of a significant connection between such scales and actual behaviour.

Subjective information and estimative scales allow for good differentiation. Let us recall that we use them in our frequency questions. We only have to learn to objectify them, to quantify them, to calibrate them by their numerical value.

As a result of our experience we can state: if one wants to measure something extremely specific, for example ad exposure, one has to limit oneself to a single, clear-cut statement. In this case adding up a multitude of statements into a total score does not have any advantage.

A LEGEND: OCCASIONAL OR SPORADIC READERS MAY BE NEGLECTED

The occasional or sporadic readers are a group to which the advertiser may have to address himself, a group with a financial importance one should not *a priori* forgo. This applies all the more if one knows from investigations that this group shows an ad exposure probability which amounts to practically half that of a very regular user.

Aside from this, there are many people among the occasional and sporadic readers who are very hard to reach through advertising, so that any opportunity to approach them, even if only occasionally, must be taken. The fact that the occasional and sporadic readers are

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TABLE 1
Percentages of copy read (of the rpi) in various frequency classes of magazine exposure

	total copy read %
Readers from the frequency class	
Read regularly, all 12 issues	67
Read very often, even if not all 12 issues	59
Read rather often	54
Read now and then	45
Read only very seldom, one or two issues at most	39

Source: AWA '77, average of all magazines

TABLE 2
Intensity of magazine reading (correlations with the different models of readership)

The proportion of editorial contributions read correlates with	*correlation coefficient gamma*
Intensity of use/amount of verbal reading	.63
Verbal reading frequency	.47
Numerical reading frequency	.41
Reader-medium loyalty	.39
Form of acquisition	.31
Attitude toward advertising	.14

Source: Allensbach Archives No 369, *Summer 1966 Proportion of editorial contributions that were read thoroughly (1) or casually (0.5).*

included in varying proportions in different groups of magazines or media also suggests that they are being correctly ascertained. They can be particularly important and productive when there is a combination of media in a campaign or in multiple advertising. We should also bear in mind the large groups of occasional users which we find in the inter-media scene, in Germany at least, for commercial television.

Correlations with ad exposure

Characteristics such as: degree of reader-medium loyalty; primary readers; means of acquisition; reading days; or, regular–occasional reading correlate more or less highly with reading. In the investigation of advertising exposure, the focus can thus only be on the optimal predictor for the chance of finding and using advertising media exposure. Reading days, for instance, are certainly not a very suitable characteristic. They depend too much on the topicality of a magazine, on its 'life span' and on its size.

From the Allensbach investigations we know that reading intensity is the best predictor, that is, the best forecasting variable for the amount of reading matter or picture material consumed.

The picture remains the same whether the basis is a simple correlation table or a sophisticated regression model.

From this investigation we also learnt that the responses about reading must be quantified by the amount of editorial contributions that were read rather than by the response about attention paid to advertising.

To a considerable extent, ad exposures are simply not mentioned in an interview (if we ask directly for advertising, we use words like advertisements, advertising or ad exposure).

This finding corresponds with an investigation the British Market Research Bureau made when it recorded reading behaviour with a hidden film camera. It was found that only 72% of the observations the camera made could be reproduced in recognition interviews.

Reading frequency and ad exposure

Our 1966 study as well as the tables from the 1974 SPRINGER documentation contain information on various degrees of ad exposure with regard to reading regularity. RIDIT values can be calculated on this basis.

Using the RIDIT value for each frequency category and the degree of ad exposure within this category, we have worked out regression equations.

Regardless of whether recognition or double-page ad exposure had been measured, whether the frequency question had been worded in one way or another, the regression lines are similar in all studies. The closer the reader-medium loyalty, measured by the question as to how often a magazine is read or looked through, the better the rpi's chance of ad exposure.

From media exposure to ad exposure

The shift from advertising media to advertising exposure derives from additional information on the extent of use. For the print media, it starts out with information on approximately how many of the editorial contributions were read in the last issue*; for the electronic media, it starts out with information about how much of the whole broadcast or series of broadcasts were listened to or watched.

If such information is not contained in the basic information, it is advisable to make use of the second best predictor of advertising exposure, the information about the frequency of noting of the medium concerned.

* *see Appendix A.*

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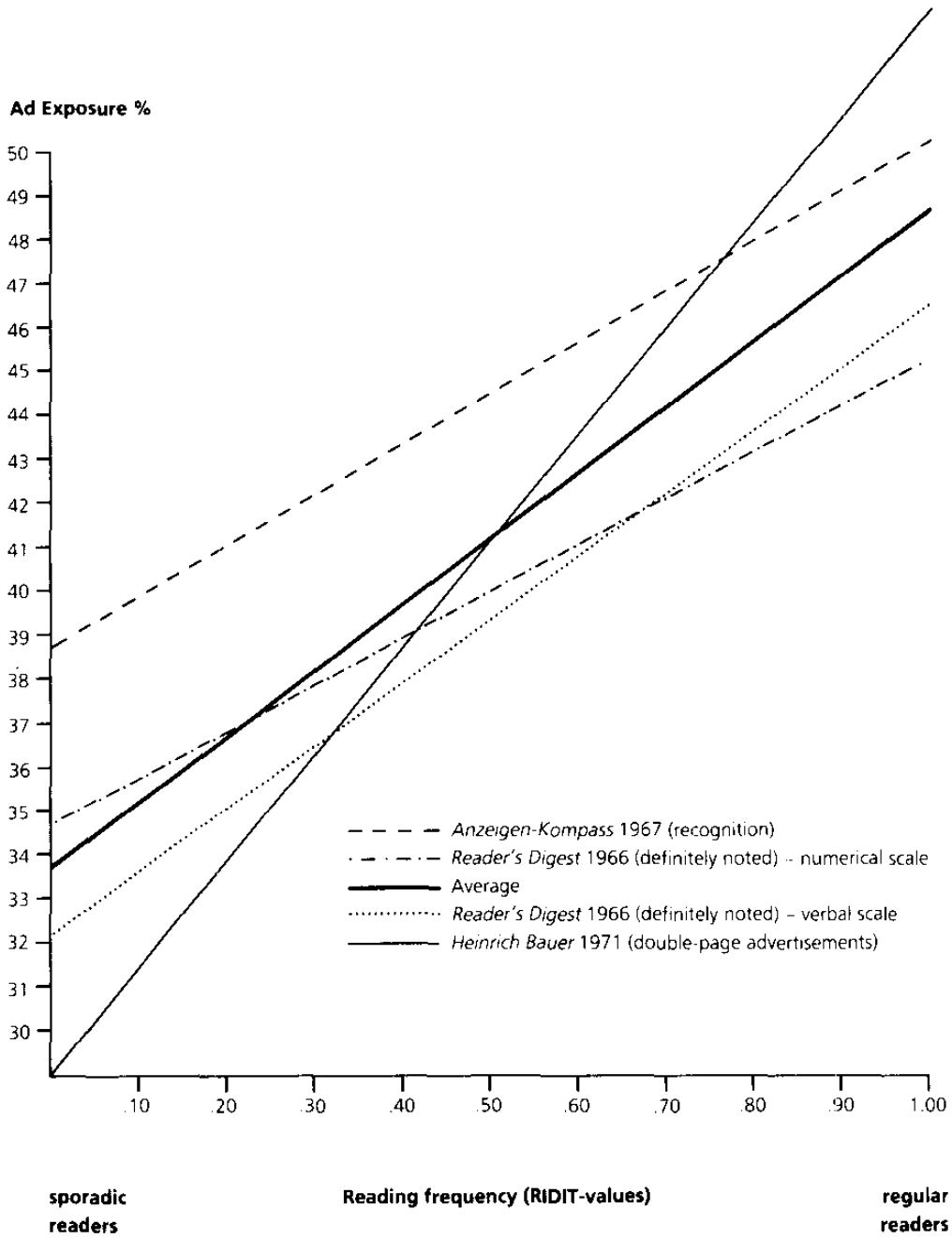
FIGURE 1
Reading frequency and ad exposure
Regression analysis with RIDIT-transformed data



We chose this procedure in 1979 AWA and produced a data tape with probabilities for ad exposure, for internal use for the moment.

We have used the relationship between media noting frequency and the amount of contributions consumed from an additional investigation of the 1977 AWA (**Table 1**).

The rpi probabilities are multiplied by the probabilities for advertising media exposure.

With which changes, with which impact do we have to reckon?

The coverage figures become more realistic and are between 30 and 50% lower than those of the media exposure, if we leave aside the cinema, which represents a special situation.

Periodicals which were able to deliver an above-average number of regular readers score much better in this respect. Shifts occur in rank order counting which serve to make a preselection for a media plan. The coverage of some 12 consecutive advertisements in periodicals is only some 20% lower than that of the media exposure. The intensity of exposure, the average number of exposures per person reached, is some 30% lower for the advertising exposure if the advertisement appears 12 times.

The cumulation curves are steeper, there is a higher increase in coverage per advertisement and the exposure density is lower at the same time.

Consideration will have to be given as to whether the views hitherto held about the number of necessary exposures do not necessitate more intensive advertising according to these results.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The procedure outlined in this paper should be regarded as an attempt to make audience measurement more efficient.

We certainly do not claim that the model described is perfect in every respect. We would like to see it accepted as a first step in bridging the existing gap between our knowledge of reading frequency and of ad exposure.

It will be a task for the near future to collect information about the average chances of exposure to advertising messages. It is recommended not to ask directly for 'noting of advertisements', but for the intensity of media exposure. This would seem to be justified in view of the considerable proportion of ad exposures which respondents do not recall.

TABLE 3
The simple weighting process (example: *Burda Moden*)

	rpi probability	*Multiplier (ad exposure probability)*	*Resulting ad exposure probability (to be included in the new tape)*
Men			
1) Read regularly, all 12 issues	.85	0.70	0.60
2) Read very frequently, though not all 12 issues	.83	0.60	0.50
3) Also read fairly frequently			
4) Read from time to time	.55	0.55	0.30
5) Read only very seldom,	.33	0.45	0.15
one or two issues at the most	.11	0.40	0.04
Women			
1) Read regularly, all 12 issues	.92	0.70	0.64
2) Read very frequently, though not all 12 issues	.79	0.60	0.47
3) Also read fairly frequently			
4) Read from time to time	.53	0.55	0.29
5) Read only very seldom,	.31	0.45	0.14
One or two issues at the most	.18	0.40	0.07

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TABLE 4
To which proportions does the transition from media exposure to advertising exposure lead?

	Media exposure (OTS)	*Ad exposure*
A few examples		
Commercial radio (first channel)	9.2	4.1
First channel television	8.6	4.7
Cinema	5.9	4.6
Bildzeitung	27.5	17.7
Bunte	17.0	9.6
Hörzu	28.8	28.9
Brigitte	14.9	8.6
Das Beste	11.2	6.5

Source: AWA '79

TABLE A
Reading intensity, quantification of verbal statements

	Proportions of editorial contributions read %
Readers stating that they have read a certain issue	
'all, almost all'	81
'About three-quarters'	68
'About half'	54
'About one-quarter'	39
'Less than a quarter'	24
Total readers	59

Source: Allensbach Archives No 369, Summer 1966 (n = 881)

APPENDIX A

Reading intensity – calibrating verbal statements (Table A)

If only for the sake of documentation we will now quantify the responses to our verbal scale measuring reading intensity, that is, the editorial contributions read.

The Allensbach survey used for our analysis was based on a nationwide quota sample of 881 persons (16 years old and over), selected among the readers of four major German magazines, not including radio and TV guides and women's magazines.

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it would link Starch tests and general media analysis data.

In this context, we are only interested in the relationship between the different categories of reading intensity and the reading of editorial contributions.

Readers claiming to have read "all, almost all" have actually read four out of five editorial texts. In other words, the probability of their reading or noting any text is three times higher than that of those readers who stated having read "less than a quarter". The average reading figure was 59%.

By analogy, we can conclude that on the average about three out of five advertisements will be read, or noted in a cursory manner at least.

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