

5.5 Reader attitudes and expectations

Scandinavian research has shown a considerable interest in consumers' use of communication media.

The literature and philosophy have been based on the following assumptions which have been generally accepted:

- (a) people look for information about subjects about which they are knowledgeable.
- (b) they look for information about subjects of which they do not even know the existence.
- (c) when they are in contact with a medium they expect some information which is important to them and some which is not.
- (d) they receive certain information which they have not even asked for.
- (e) among the information given but not asked for readers are able to deliberately or unconsciously sort out information which looks valuable to them.

From an international point of view it is worth noting

that in many of the investigations advertisements as well as editorial matters have been included.

We all know that in every publishing house there is a very sharp distinction between the editorial staff and the advertisement department. However, among researchers it is assumed that the readers do not have this clear distinction, as there is valuable and non-valuable information in the advertisements as well as in the editorial content.

In syndicated media research in Denmark there is perhaps an organisational reason: many publishing houses are rather small, with a distinct division between journalists and advertising people, but with an editor as the supreme chief. He has to sign the bill from the research syndicate and so wants to get value for money – and he has a better understanding of the editorial problems than of the problems of selling space.

In an article in the Norwegian 'Markeds-

TABLE 1
Media: total: all adult readers. TV/radio. Existence. 'Don't know' related to all other possibilities

Media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
NN																		
2	1.1																	
3	4.8	0.9																
4	4.0	0.9	0.0															
5	3.9	2.4	2.1	2.1														
6	1.2	0.2	-0.5	-0.5	-2.0													
7	0.5	-0.5	-1.5	-1.5	-2.8	-0.6												
8	4.1	2.3	1.9	1.9	-0.5	1.7	2.7											
WN																		
9	4.0	1.8	1.3	1.3	-1.3	1.2	2.3	-0.9										
10	5.1	2.6	2.4	2.5	-0.7	1.9	3.1	-0.1										
11	4.1	1.9	1.5	1.6	-1.1	1.4	2.4	-0.7										
12	5.1	2.3	2.1	2.3	-1.0	1.6	2.8	-0.5										
13	3.8	1.7	1.1	1.1	-1.4	1.1	2.2	-1.1										
14	4.7	2.1	1.8	1.8	-1.2	1.4	2.6	-0.8										
15	4.1	1.8	1.3	1.4	-1.3	1.3	2.3	-0.9										
16	5.7	2.7	2.7	2.9	-0.8	1.9	3.2	-0.2										
17	5.5	2.9	2.9	3.0	-0.4	2.2	3.4	0.3										
18	12.2	8.0	9.8	10.2	3.4	6.6	8.5	5.1										
19	10.3	6.0	7.6	8.0	1.6	4.6	6.5	3.0										
WW																		
									1.1									
									0.3	-0.8								
									0.7	-0.6	0.3							
									-0.2	-1.3	-0.5	-0.9						
									0.3	-0.9	-0.0	-0.4	0.5					
									0.1	-1.0	-0.2	-0.6	0.2	-0.2				
									1.2	-0.1	0.8	0.6	1.4	1.0	1.1			
									1.6	0.6	1.3	1.2	1.8	1.5	1.5	0.7		
									8.1	7.1	7.5	8.6	8.4	8.7	8.1	8.3	6.2	
									5.8	4.6	5.2	6.1	6.1	6.3	5.8	5.8	3.7	-3.0

1–8: newspapers; 9–19: weeklies; NN: newspapers tested pairwise against each other; WN: weeklies and newspapers tested pairwise against each other; WW: weeklies tested pairwise against each other; Italic = significant Benoulli value.

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kommunikasjon' 1975 Professor Otto Ottesen (who is a Norwegian by birth but for many years has been a professor at the Copenhagen School of Business Administration and Economy) has outlined a model for communication effects based on attitudes and expectations to advertisements in certain media.

He works with the following concepts:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1 Relevance | 5 Usefulness |
| 2 Reliability | 6 Attitude |
| 3 Existence | 7 News value |
| 4 Fullness | 8 Readability |

In 1974–75 an investigation was made in Norway, the two products involved being TV/radio (durables) and hair care remedies (consumer goods).

The questioning took place in eight omnibus surveys comprising about 1600 persons, and each interviewee was asked about both the products mentioned, for, eg, relevance.

A statement technique with a five-point scale was used. An example of a relevance statement is: 'In advertisements concerning TV/radio all the information given has some interest to me when I want to evaluate a brand (ie decide whether it is worth buying or not).

Another example concerns attitude: 'I am very much opposed to advertisements for TV/radio appearing in the medium concerned.'

The tabulation of the results of course is massive, as for each medium (19 were included) there were two products (TV/radio and hair care remedies) × three possibilities (don't know – disagree (partially or fully) – agree (partially or fully).

As an example the results on existence of advertisements for TV/radio, where pairwise comparison of the percentages for 'don't know' are shown (**Table 1**).

Table 1 shows the Pairwise Benoulli test including all 19 media concerning 'don't know' against all attitudes, positive as well as negative and equal.

Similar tables were calculated for all the other factors and for both products. A summary is given in **Table 2**.

For many years it has been recognised that there are differences within newspapers and weeklies, but **Table 2** shows that the differences within the two media groups in question are at least as big as those between the media groups.

Therefore, the conclusions may be that the old thesis which says that some products have to be advertised in newspapers and others in weeklies is a truth with very big modifications. Apparently some products get a good communication through advertising in one weekly but not in another, and in the same way perhaps in one newspaper and not in another.

Furthermore it was noteworthy that the numbers of

'don't know' were rather small, so that readers as a general rule have rather exact expectations concerning the type of advertisements they will see in the different media.

As the numbers at the left side indicate, many more statements were tested than the few included in this table. However, they show very clearly strong differences between the media covered by the research as well as between different attitudes.

In April 1979 the leading quality newspaper in Denmark, *Politiken*, made a survey in the capital area, and the purpose of this investigation was to throw light on related problems. In the investigation were included *Politiken*, *Det grønne område* (a free sheet distributed in a suburban district with a high social class) and *Billed-Bladet* (the biggest programme magazine in Denmark). Some results are given in **Table 3**.

As can be seen, these results are not related to particular goods but to attitudes to advertising as such and to media groups.

The next investigation to be reported in this paper was carried out on behalf of Dansk Media Komite; here we compared different products/advertisements in one newspaper.

On Monday 24 March 1980, four advertisements of 1800 millimetres each were inserted in a typical Danish provincial newspaper, placed on the right on pages three, five, seven and nine. They were respectively for stereo equipment, beer, a local member of a food chain store and a car dealer. Thus we had two national brand advertisements (stereo and beer) and two special local advertisements (food and cars).

The following day we interviewed 288 persons, partly oral, partly through a self-completion questionnaire.

In the personal interview we asked about their reading of the newspaper concerned, and especially about their reading of the pages in question (together with the usual demographic criteria).

In the self-completion questionnaire statements were used for eliciting respondents' attitudes to advertisements generally and especially for the products concerned in the newspaper used.

The self-completion questionnaire was constructed in such a way that we had the same eight components and in **Table 4** it is shown that the reading probability is bigger for people who are positive to advertisements than for the neutral and negative ones.

There is much which shows that the readers have, after all, some very clear expectations as to advertisements for different products in a particular paper.

Readers have attitudes and assumptions which generate a higher or lower reading value, and therefore a bigger or a smaller value to the advertiser.

TABLE 2
Significant differences for each of the eight factors: disagree against agree

	Number of combinations (1)	TV and radio		Toiletries for the hair	
		Significant differences Total (2)	Differences Percentage (3)	Significant differences Total (4)	Differences Percentage (5)
Relevance					
Newspapers – weeklies	88	9 (45%)	10	2 (50%)	2
Weeklies – weeklies	55	8 (40%)	15	2 (50%)	4
Newspapers – newspapers	28	3 (15%)	10	0	0
Sum	171	20 (100%)	12	4 (100%)	2
Reliability					
Newspapers – weeklies	88	3 (60%)	3	10 (71%)	11
Weeklies – weeklies	55	0	0	0	0
Newspapers – newspapers	28	2 (40%)	7	4 (29%)	12
Sum	171	5 (100%)	3	14 (100%)	8
Existence					
Newspapers – weeklies	88	63 (85%)	72	44 (59%)	50
Weeklies – weeklies	55	1 (1%)	2	25 (33%)	45
Newspapers – newspapers	28	10 (14%)	36	6 (8%)	20
Sum	171	74 (100%)	44	75 (100%)	45
Fullness					
Newspapers – weeklies	88	5 (50%)	6	26 (56%)	30
Weeklies – weeklies	55	2 (20%)	4	9 (20%)	16
Newspapers – newspapers	28	3 (30%)	10	11 (24%)	40
Sum	171	10 (100%)	6	46 (100%)	27
Usefulness					
Newspapers – weeklies	88	22 (55%)	25	2 (40%)	2
Weeklies – weeklies	55	11 (28%)	20	3 (60%)	5
Newspapers – newspapers	28	7 (18%)	25	0	—
Sum	171	40 (100%)	23	5 (100%)	3
Attitude					
Newspapers – weeklies	88	14 (70%)	16	2 (50%)	2
Weeklies – weeklies	55	0	—	1 (25%)	2
Newspapers – newspapers	28	6 (30%)	21	1 (25%)	4
Sum	171	20 (100%)	12	4 (100%)	2
News value					
Newspapers – weeklies	88	3 (43%)	3	2 (50%)	2
Weeklies – weeklies	55	3 (43%)	6	2 (50%)	4
Newspapers – newspapers	28	1 (14%)	3	0	0
Sum	171	7 (100%)	4	4 (100%)	2
Readability					
Newspapers – weeklies	88	7 (78%)	8	9 (50%)	10
Weeklies – weeklies	55	0	—	6 (33%)	11
Newspapers – newspapers	28	2 (22%)	7	3 (17%)	11
Sum	117	9 (100%)	5	18 (100%)	10

Total = All readers Scale value 1 + 2 + 3 (disagree) against 4 + 5 + 6 (agree).

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TABLE 3
Attitude to media and advertisements. 5-point scale, 1 = totally agree
and 5 = totally disagree

	<i>Quality paper (163)</i>	<i>Free sheet (104)</i>	<i>Programme magazine (119)</i>
Positive attitude concerning advertisements			
2 interested in reading advertisements	3.61	3.10	3.33
18 interested in reading free sheets	3.05	2.44	2.52
Negative attitude concerning advertisements			
17 cigarette advertising should be prohibited	2.26	1.98	2.26
22 advertising to children should be prohibited	1.81	1.98	1.85
Attitudes concerning popular tabloid papers			
14 prefer quality to popular papers	1.59	1.94	2.47
Attitudes concerning free sheets			
3 try to avoid free sheets	4.00	4.62	4.23
Attitudes concerning weeklies			
28 advertising in dailies is better than in weeklies	2.75	2.42	2.88
8 advertising in free sheets is better than in weeklies	2.73	1.99	2.38
Attitudes concerning innovation			
10 try to find the background in solving problems	2.53	2.53	2.80
26 prefer a job with varying tasks	1.33	1.18	1.37

Source: Project "Read", published by Politiken in June 1980

In drawing up the budget for 1981 the Technical sub-Committee of the Dansk Media Komite asked for resources to continue the investigation of this problem: this was agreed, so that the next step will possibly be done in September this year.

The sampling frame for Dansk Media Index is constructed so we are able to make a little survey for each local newspaper within its area.

The new sampling frame was introduced in 1978 and it seemed quite obvious that we should ask questions on

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TABLE 4
Readers who have read the advertisements, analysed by their general attitude to advertisements for the products concerned

	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Number of interviews</i>
<i>Percentage</i>	<i>(5-4)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(2-1)</i>	<i>288</i>
Stereo				
Seen/noticed/read	48	29	24	101
Read/totally or partially	30	4	5	39
Beer				
Seen/noticed/read	30	19	43	92
Read/totally or partially	18	8	15	41
Food store				
Seen/noticed/read	127	12	9	148
Read/totally or partially	102	2	4	108
Car dealer				
Seen/noticed/read	43	25	10	78
Read/totally or partially	25	5	3	33

TABLE 5
Reading of different topics in national newspapers (N) as an average and in a typical local newspaper (L)

	<i>Most of it</i>		<i>Some of it</i>		<i>Nothing</i>		<i>No answer</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Foreign policy	38	22	51	57	10	21	1	0
Domestic policy	49	27	46	62	4	10	1	1
Local matters	36	79	29	16	31	4	4	1
Sport	30	26	23	28	46	45	2	1
Personal	20	55	24	26	54	18	2	1
Radio/TV programmes, etc	65	66	25	25	8	8	1	0
Feature articles, letters, leading article, etc	46	30	39	49	14	20	2	0
Reviews/cultural articles	28	14	41	40	29	46	2	0
Articles on business, labour, money	33	26	37	40	29	33	2	1
Articles for consumers	27	32	45	45	27	22	2	1
Classified advertisements	14	27	27	39	56	31	3	2

Number of interviewees: N = 8663, L = 326

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TABLE 6
How the readers characterise their daily newspaper, based on statements

	<i>Fully agree</i>		<i>Agree partly</i>		<i>Don't agree</i>		<i>No answer</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Useful	69	70	28	27	3	2	1	1
Sensational	18	12	39	43	41	43	2	2
Easy to find what you want	90	91	7	7	2	1	1	1
Good entertainment	45	38	42	47	12	13	1	1
Easy to understand	87	88	11	10	1	0	1	1
Human	57	60	35	35	5	3	3	3
Reliable	37	37	51	53	9	7	3	3
Steadfastness	48	45	41	44	7	6	4	4

Number of interviewees: N = 8663, L = 326

the editorial content of the individual newspapers.

However, for economic reasons it was necessary to use the same questions for all newspapers, popular tabloid papers as well as the Danish version of Christian Science Monitor. From this it will be understood that we could not ask about the reading of particular articles but only about the reading of different types of editorial content.

We, of course, have found that many differences in reading of the different topics depend primarily on the readers' background (eg education). However, we also have found differences between people with the same background, so that we have introduced the phrasing 'media related data'.

When we combine the readers' expectations concerning advertisements with their expectations concerning the different editorial subjects we will know

more about the reading habits and hence of the possibilities of exposure and understanding.

In the same editorial investigation we also asked the interviewees to characterise their newspaper, and the results are shown in **Table 6**.

It is obvious that the Danish editors would be very interested in this table, but the advertising agency members of our Technical sub-Committee also thought that through figures of this type we provide very useful information for advertisers.

As far as all these investigations are concerned, it might be said that it will be very difficult to combine all the different information. I fully agree, but the first step has to be to clarify the single components, so that users may combine them as they want: there is no definitive way of doing this.