

8.2 What the agency and the advertiser want

The answers given in this short paper to the question 'What do the agency and the advertiser want?' are based on two special enquiries. I refer, of course, only to the Dutch scene, since different structural relationships between media, agencies and advertisers in other countries could mean that my conclusions are not valid for those other countries. It is up to the reader to judge.

I propose to handle the subject under three heads.

First, some background information about the history and organisational structure of the National Readership Survey in the Netherlands.

Second, a short description of the research methods used in the two enquiries, followed by the principal findings.

Third, a short summary of these, and a preliminary evaluation of their significance.

The first national readership surveys were conducted at the beginning of the sixties: they were done in alternate years by a research institute, which sold the findings. In 1967, however, a consortium of magazine publishers initiated what proved subsequently to be the precursor of the National Readership Survey. This, the so-called TON research, was carried out in 1967 and 1970, and only magazines and national dailies were covered. But an agreement with the newspaper publishers resulted shortly afterwards, and the first major NRS was conducted in 1972, providing data also for individual regional newspapers: the sample size was 25,000.

Since then the NRS has been conducted at two-yearly intervals, in 1975, 1977 and 1979. It covers magazines, national newspapers and regional newspapers, and only a single question is asked about radio listening and TV viewing.

The NRS is an *ad hoc* research based on personal interviewing, with fieldwork staggered over the year. The average issue readership method is followed, and mastheads are used to identify publications. The survey is controlled by a special foundation called NOP, the board containing senior management from the magazine and newspaper publishing houses and - on a personal basis, not as formal representatives - media experts from agencies and advertisers. The fieldwork is done by two research institutes, and the results are the property of the NOP foundation.

This seems enough by way of background: I now pass to the question of what agencies and advertisers want. To discover what are their wishes and needs two enquiries were recently held - one among agencies, and

the other among advertisers.

In both studies the data collection was by postal questionnaire, the response rate being 59% among agencies and 21% among advertisers (this last low percentage being the consequence, according to our analysis, of the enquiry having been done during the summer). Results were calculated in two ways: first, unweighted, and secondly weighted for agencies on the basis of turnover and for advertisers on the basis of advertising expenditure on print media.

The questionnaire comprised 20 questions, covering the following subjects:

- (1) the use of the NRS as a whole, in its component parts, its publications and its computer tapes.
- (2) the functions for which it is primarily used.
- (3) the need within the NRS for such particular elements as: audience figures, method of delivery, page or advertising exposure, lifestyles, readers' interests, reader loyalty, place of reading and seasonal fluctuations.
- (4) categories of media to be included or excluded.
- (5) satisfaction with the content, the questions asked, publication and run facilities.

The figures speak for themselves (**Table 1**), and I shall comment only briefly.

The NRS is used by all agencies in the study, and by almost all the advertisers. It does not seem surprising that the NRS is used mainly for its media data, but in my opinion the low rank order given by advertisers to product

TABLE 1

	Agencies %	Advertisers %
Whether NRS figures used		
Yes	100	91
No	0	9
Ranking 1st in order of importance*		
Media data	87	80
Socio-economic data	11	14
Product data	11	3
Ranking 1st in order of purpose of usage		
Media selection	92	80
Target group selection	7	13
Defining market size	2	2

* Some informants ranked more than one subject first.

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data calls for attention. Nor is it surprising that the primary use to which the NRS is put is that of media selection (Table 2).

The overwhelming majority of the agencies report a need in the NRS for media and product data, but among advertisers this need is not so strongly expressed, especially in respect of product data. Among advertisers (and also among agencies, but exact figures cannot be calculated because of grouping) there is a not unimportant call for computer run facilities by an independent institute (Table 3).

It can be seen that agencies and advertisers are most interested in reach data and in data about exposure to the advertising elements in the media: a less strong interest is expressed in other, more qualitative, figures. Insofar as there are differences in the needs of advertisers and of agencies, these are concentrated in reader's interests (relatively less by advertisers), and actual reach and advertising page exposure (relatively more by advertisers). The majority of both agencies and advertisers want other types of media to be included in the NRS (Table 4).

The majority of agencies and advertisers are in favour of a study conducted every year. But satisfaction with the NRS as it currently exists is not complete: among agencies particularly there is less satisfaction with the content of the NRS, the questions on product data and the questions on media data. Relatively speaking, there is less satisfaction among advertisers with the questions on socio-economic data.

My summary of the principal findings is as follows:

- (a) the NRS is not just a status symbol on the bookshelves of agencies and advertisers. It is used by virtually all agencies, and by almost all advertisers.
- (b) it is used primarily for the purpose for which it was established, namely media selection.
- (c) the triangle media data, socio-economic data and product data still remains the backbone of the study.
- (d) so far as concerns the media data, there is a clear priority for the quantitative data on reach. A not inconsiderable proportion of the users express a need for

other data, which rank (after reach data) as data describing the audience in terms other than socio-economic, then advertising strategy data such as advertising exposure, seasonal fluctuations and cumulative reach, and finally data concerning the relationship between the medium and the reader.

(e) a strong need exists for the integration into the NRS of

TABLE 3
Percentage seeing a strong need in the NRS

	Agencies %	Advertisers %
Data on		
Reach	84	70
Advertising element in media	80	66
Reader's interests	60	43
Lifestyles	51	52
Actual reach	47	59
Cumulative reach over time	46	39
Advertising page exposure	42	50
Seasonal fluctuation	41	37
Media functions	37	21
Reader loyalty	27	20
Method of delivery	25	11
Place where read	11	7

Percentage wanting other types of media to be included

TV, radio, financial dailies and magazines, freesheets, etc	76	70
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TABLE 4

	Agencies %	Advertisers %
Percentage wanting the NRS to have a frequency of		
Every year	57	54
Every two years	34	38
Greater interval	9	8
Percentage expressing satisfaction with		
The content of the NRS	54	82
The questions on media data	67	76
The questions on product data	51	75
The questions on socio-economic data	85	74
Tabulation methods	97	80

TABLE 2

	Agencies %	Advertisers %
NRS needed in general for		
Media data	98	85
Product data	94	69
Computer runs should be done by		
Publishing houses	---	23
Independent institutes	---	36

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the audiovisual media and of other press media.

(f) the NRS must be conducted at least every two years, but most respondents wanted it every year.

(g) both the content of the NRS and its questions about both media and products need to have something done about them.

In attempting to evaluate the significance of these main findings I would make the following points:

(a) the NRS, its content, and its methods are not in question, generally speaking.

(b) the wishes and needs expressed do not affect any fundamentals, and can be integrated into the present system, with the possible exception of radio and television data.

(c) it is not only the wishes and needs of agencies and advertisers that have to be taken into account in the NRS. The publishers themselves are becoming major users of the NRS – not for media selection, but to deal with problems in the sphere of editorial and of circulation marketing. So their wishes must not be forgotten.