Prompt aids in readership research
Bennike, Sigurd
European Research
Volume 1, Number 6, November 1973
pp 259-262

A comparison of recall aids in readership research in various European countries is followed by a description of Danish practice. In Denmark, both mastheads and titles in uniform typography are used on circular discs.

One type of prompt aid is used when asking about reading within the last publication interval and another type when researching reading frequency.

Two discs are illustrated, one showing mastheads in a circle and the other the titles in uniform typography. The two discs were compared for total coverage and by each individual title on the total samples for urbanisation, sex and social grade sub-groups. Results indicated that some mastheads provided a good prompt and others a bad one in relation to certain demographic criteria and therefore it was most fair to use common typography when several titles were shown together.

The importance of number of titles on the discs was investigated by showing respondents discs with varying numbers of titles. It was found that the number of titles on a disc was important for the level of readership claimed and as a result the same number of titles on each disc is aimed for. However, when all local daily newspapers are covered, the country is divided into different areas with different discs.

Questions on reading frequency were asked using masthead booklets. Although the booklet order is constant, interviewers are asked to start each time with a different title from the one that was first at the previous interview.

Experiments in the measurement of readership
Tennstadt, Friedrich and Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth
Journal of the Market Research Society
Volume 21, Number 4, October 1979
pp 251-267

This paper reports various research experiments which attempt to explain the wide differences between the results of the two major German Readership Surveys.

The two surveys are the Media Analysis (AG. MA Arbertsgemeinschaft Media-Analyse) sponsored by an association of publishing houses, advertising agencies and advertisers, and the Allensbach Market Media Analysis (Allensbacher

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Werbetrag-Analyse - AWA) conducted by the institut fur Demoskopie

A systematic comparison between the two media surveys is presented.

The methodological experiments show there are influences of varying intensities to explain the diverging results. The following variables are discussed:

1. masthead cards
2. sampling
3. fieldwork organisation
4. question wording and questionnaire design.

It is argued that using recognition of original issues to test coverage provides the most reliable yardstick.

In order to avoid overburdening the main interview by presenting original issues, the recognition method has been devised as model to be applied in separately conducted surveys and the figures used to adjust the results of the main interview.

Another look at rotation effects in the NRS
Whitley, Edward
Admap
October 1980
pp 480-485

Following discussions of the NRS Cumberland Lodge programme, Edward Whitley looks at the problem of rotation - the effects of the order in which individual publications are presented to informants during the course of the interview.

A table illustrates the average issue readership levels for different publication groups by their position in the 48 rotated orders.

It is seen that monthly magazines among the publication groups are most subject to variance in readership levels across the 4 positions: if monthly magazines were asked about first in all interviews, then aggregate readership level would increase by 18%.

The writer looks more closely at the data for the 4 publication groups when each appears in the first position ie as a group at the beginning of the masthead booklet, and also within that

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position, to compare results for the forward and reverse orders. Assuming that the first position in the interview gives the least 'contaminated' measurement, it has been thought that the best and fairest average estimates can be obtained only by rotating the order of presentation. But detailed analysis of the Cumberland Lodge data shows how much rotation effect varies as between different publication groups.

The author argues for the adoption of a standard presentation order of monthlies, weeklies, Sundays and dailies. A note on title confusion stresses this problem, particularly for women's magazines. However, the adoption of one standard order for publication groups would offer the opportunity to expand greatly the within group rotation of titles.

Handling change in a continuous survey
Rothman James
Journal of the Market Research Society
Volume 28, Number 2, April 1986
pp 125-144

This paper describes JICNARS' experience with the extended media list and the grouped titles interviewing technique.

The National Readership Survey changed from masthead to grouped titles in 1984. The paper describes the change and some of the experimental work involved.

An early decision was to employ on-line experimentation to test whether readership estimates are affected by the way in which titles were allocated to cards. Several hypotheses were tested relating to:

1. card selection effect
2. within card duplication
3. categorisation errors
4. card length, and the results of these tests are discussed.

EML results were monitored before publication and the following criteria for checking the results established:

1. Publication AIR
2. Sample profiles
3. Gross AIR

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4. Frequency distributions
5. Rotation effects
6. Filter questions and probability of reading
7. Special interest questions
8. New titles.

Besides the early/late order effect EML gives the opportunity of other types of order effect, ie card layout; position on a page; prompt order.

Publication plans for the new survey are outlined, and plans for further work described.

Experience in introducing EML has been that the new technique, with certain explicable exceptions, produces results which are very similar to those obtained under the old method.

An appendix presents results of investigations into card effects.

Readership research: explosion from Holland
de Bock, Harold
Admap
April 1987
pp 19-21

This article described the MediaScanner system operated in the Netherlands for the Cooperative for Multi Media Research, SUMMO by Inter/View. This system uses CATI following the 'yesterday first-time reading' method. 39,000 interviews are conducted each year - 125 interviews with people 15+ from Monday - Saturday. Sampling is based on random digit dialling. The sampling and recall techniques are described in detail.

MediaScanner covers about 600 titles. The questionnaire design has satisfied SUMMO's Technical Committee that the lack of mastheads does not jeopardise adequate reconstruction of reading behaviour. The questionnaire starts with print media, followed by television, radio and cinema. It also covers shopping behaviour, automotive questions and personal and household characteristics.

Very specific target groups are identified, single-source, through a mail follow-up study. This involves a random sample of about 8400 randomly-selected MediaScanner respondents.

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The advantages of using the telephone for readership research are discussed.

**Businessmen readership: redefining the target and refining the methodology**
Bates, Bryan
Admap
Volume 25, Number 10, October 1989
pp 276-30

The most common criticism of the BMRC is that the universe it covers is so widely defined that it is incapable of producing information about the top strata of businessmen whose importance is out of all proportion to their number, and whose reading and consumption patterns are very different from those of businessmen in total.

For senior businessmen in Central London, the BMRC effective response rate is only 40%. The EML system of identifying titles is used, in spite of the fact that the limited number of titles being surveyed would lend itself more to the use of the old NRS masthead methodology. By using measures of readership intensity and primary versus secondary readership, it is possible to classify the readers of business titles according to their 'level of involvement'.

MORI has set up the Senior Managers' Omnibus Survey and the 'Captains of Industry' Survey to achieve this, and use more narrowly defined universes. In both cases, the studies are drawn from very senior sectors of industry which would represent only 5% of the BMRC universe even if they were adequately covered by that survey.

**BMRC 1990: where have all the reading businessmen gone?**
Ryan, Michael
Admap
Volume 26, Number 1, January 1991
pp 14-16

The author summarises the findings of the 1990 BMRC (Business Media Research Committee: the formal title of the survey is The 1990 Businessman Survey) and uses 1973 and 1980 data to show that most of the changes since 1988 are part of longer trends. Most publications in most sectors have seen a decline in business readers not offset by incoming new titles. However, businessmen are not consuming less media: newspapers have more pages, there has been an explosion of new magazines, especially free ones, and there is more television and direct mail. Improved prompt aids -
mini-mastheads - have reduced title confusion, and Saturday readerships of daily newspapers are now reported separately.

Regional newspaper readership research
Brown, Michael
Admap
Volume 29, Number 10, October 1994
pp 54-56

This article discusses JICREG, the Joint Industry Committee for Regional Press Research.

It describes experimental work done by RSGB on the technical design of its readership surveys in 2 areas: the actual extent of title confusion between regional weekly newspapers and the apparent effects on accuracy of employing coloured mastheads as prompts (rather than black-and-white) and of presenting confusable titles in groups (rather than singly).

Within each of the 2 survey areas, 3 parallel samples of 100 respondents were drawn, using a random location design. The effective bases were not respondents, but observations & the number of titles for which data were obtained, summed across respondents. In each area a different set of prompt aids was used with each sub-sample.

The author examines the consistency or inconsistency of the title-prompted and issue-prompted claims and the dependence of these levels on research design features. Particular attention is paid to the association of the consistency levels with the type of prompt used. The use of grouped titles produced the lowest absolute of under- and overclaims at both the 12-month and issue period levels.

The test titles, average AIR appeared understated by approximately 5%. Use of either of the experimental prompts improved this situation but, although the grouped mastheads yielded the lowest absolute number of apparent inconsistent claims, net understatement of readership was least with the coloured mastheads.

The measurement of the readership of sections of UK national newspapers
Birt, R
Proceedings of Worldwide Readership Research Symposium
Berlin, October 1995
pp 125-130

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The readership of newspaper sections has been one of the most hotly debated readership issues in the UK in recent years. Such sections are treated as part of the main title and not covered separately as are the newspaper colour supplements, launched by many newspapers in earlier years. Since the advertising revenue of some of the newspaper sections is equal to the revenue of many of the titles covered separately by the survey the demand for some form of measurement is strong.

The paper discusses the problems likely to arise, including the variable nature of many sections, some lacking any form of title while others have a title common to many publications, such as Sports Section. Furthermore, some sections often appear on one day of the week only.

After an analysis of alternative solutions and bearing in mind these considerations the paper suggests that data collection for newspapers would be greatly simplified if the recency questions were asked in a specific issue form. Questions about the readership of relevant sections would be asked only of respondents making a readership claim for the specific issue concerned.

To test this hypothesis a pilot test of 153 interviews was carried out and is described in the paper. For each newspaper with sections, and after the SIR and frequency questions for the parent paper, a masthead stimulus card was used, with variations by day-of-week if necessary, and a question asked to cover both actual and expected reading, for those sections read after the day of publication.

Though the sample size was small the results were in line with expectation and interviewers had no difficulty with the different approach. It was therefore concluded that the approach offers a possible practical solution to the complex problem of measuring the readership of the main ad-revenue attracting newspaper sections.

Mini-mastheads on extended media list cards
NRS Ltd, London
September 1989
25 pp

This report summarises the experimental work which was undertaken to examine the hypothesis that the accuracy and stability of the readership estimates provided by the NRS would be improved by the use of 6 typescript titles on the front of the prompt card, but to replace this format on the reverse of each card, covering the same titles but incorporating the appropriate frequency scale, by mini-mastheads. With the introduction of the multi-title prompt
cards in 1984 on the NRS there had been a change from masthead to typescript prompt cards because it was considered that the use of typescript was the best way to communicate a large amount of information as simply and quickly as possible, without the risk of some long or heavy mastheads dominating other mastheads on the same card.

The experimental design used for the test involved interviews with 380 respondents, divided into two matched halves, who were taken through a readership study after they had been invited to look through publications of their choice selected from 31 current issues of newspapers and magazines. This reading took place in a waiting room and was observed, while the range of titles available to be read included many publications likely to experience response problems, such as those with easily confusable titles.

For half the interviews the standard prompt card with typescript titles on both sides was used, while for the remaining interviews the experimental card with mini-mastheads on the reverse was used.

It was found that the mini-masthead card significantly increased the level of matching between observed and reported reading behaviour, and also reduced the level of miss-reporting between easily confusable titles. It was therefore concluded that the proposed change would increase the accuracy of the standard method without increasing the burden on the interviewer or respondent.

The extended media list experiment
NRS Ltd, London
December 1983
16 pp

This report summarises the thinking and development research which was undertaken before it was decided to switch from single title masthead cards, presented to the respondent in a randomised sequence, to cards on which titles were grouped together in some form of planned manner. Such a move was contemplated as a way of making it possible to materially increase the number of titles covered by the survey from the perceived maximum operating at that time of around 120 titles to 200 or more. The maximum was imposed because of rising concern about the length of the interview and significant order effects of 30%+ and title confusion.

The grouped card design, known as the Extended Media List (EML) used a set of 37 cards, each bearing up to 8 titles, with the

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titles presented in typescript not masthead form. This was done to avoid long or heavy mastheads visually dominating the other mastheads on the card. The experimental interviewing was carried out for half the normal NRS interviews in May 1983, in just under half the NRS sampling districts, with the interviewers in these districts conducting both standard and experimental interviews. In this way inevitable interviewer and sampling district differences were cut to a minimum.

The conclusion from this work was that the experimental EML approach satisfied the conditions which had been laid down at the start of the development work, making it possible to cover many more titles on the NRS and at the same time to reduce order and title confusion effects significantly. The design was described as a more realistic, interesting and comprehensible approach to the collection of information on reading events than the approach then being used by the study. It was also preferred by interviewers with experience of both approaches.