

5.5 The effects of change of filters

THE ORIGINAL FILTER (1978-81)

In the statement on Norwegian media research, given at our first symposium in New Orleans in 1981, I described the year 1978 as a milestone because of the major changes resulting from the changed systems for financial contributions to the National Readership Survey, the change of contractor, and last (but for this paper certainly not least) the change of questionnaire technique.

It would be fair to say that we gained considerable inspiration from Germany's Media-Analyse. In 1978, the German general filter divided the reported publications into three groups:

- (a) Publications completely unknown to the respondent (and thus consequently never read or glanced through by him or her)
- (b) Publications which, although known to the respondent, he or she had never read or glanced through
- (c) Publications which the respondent had read or glanced through on some occasion, and only the last group of publications qualified for inclusion in the rest of the interview.

Although we could well enough understand the philosophy and reasoning behind the German formulation of this general filter, we had to face the fact that in a small country, with a consequently relatively small number of publications, hardly any publication would be unknown to many respondents, and that it could also be anticipated that almost all respondents would at some time have read or glanced through all the publications. Our conclusion was that what was probably a well-functioning filter under German media structural conditions would not act as a filter at all under Norwegian conditions.

In addition, we saw another complicating factor. Our 1979 survey (field work 1978-79) included a total of 31 publications, comprising six monthlies, five fortnightlies, 15 weekly magazines (of which two were supplements) and five daily newspapers.

If we adopted the German general filter we would, in the second sequence of the questionnaire, have had to continue with a special filter for each issue-frequency group of publications asking whether the respondent had read each publication within the last 12-issue period,

and for this we should have had to separate the various issue-frequency groups. However, if we did so we might give the different publications a chance to be stated as read by the respondent, dependent on its position within, for example, a small group of 6 monthlies as opposed to the larger group of 15 weeklies. The advantage would of course be with those publications belonging to groups with a small number of publications.

In consequence we introduced a general filter, having no relation to the issue frequency. As stated in New Orleans we simply divided the publications into two groups:

- (a) Publications not read or glanced through by the respondent within the last year
 - (b) Publications read or glanced through by the respondent within the last year
- and of course only the latter group qualified for further questioning in the particular interview.

THE NEW FILTER (1982-)

The general filter finally chosen was, however, from the very start subject to criticism stating that it favoured publications with a greater issue frequency (ie daily newspapers and to some extent weekly magazines) at the expense of publications with a smaller issue frequency (most particularly the monthlies). It would take far too long to refer to all the discussions on this topic but in the end the technical committee of the 'Norsk Mediesentral' (the equivalent of JICNARS in the UK) decided to change the filter with effect from the June 1981 wave of interviews for the report in 1982.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to try to evaluate the effect of this change of filter by comparing the 1981 readership and coverage results with those given in the 1982 report. As the circulation figures play their part in this evaluation we will restrict the comparisons to those publications with a continuous and comparable circulation certificate from the Norwegian ABC during the years of field work (ie 1980-82).

5.5

The effects of change of filters

TABLE 1
Percentage coverage 1981 and 1982

	ALL 15+		MEN		WOMEN	
	1981	1982	1981	1982	1981	1982
No. of interviews	11,523	10,243	5,767	5,090	5,882	5,153
<i>Monthlies:</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Alt om Mat	7.4	8.1	5.0	5.1	9.8	11.0
Det Beste	20.3	21.1	22.5	22.7	18.1	19.5
Norsk Hagetidend	6.2	6.7	6.1	6.7	6.3	6.7
Motor	33.8	33.8	43.5	43.3	24.3	24.5
<i>Fortnightlies:</i>						
Familien	10.4	10.3	7.1	6.7	13.7	13.8
<i>Weeklies:</i>						
Allers	31.6	29.7	25.8	24.1	37.4	35.1
Det Nye	13.0	12.1	10.8	9.9	15.2	14.2
Farmand	5.8	5.6	8.0	7.6	3.6	3.5
Hjemmet	43.6	42.2	35.0	35.3	52.1	49.0
KK	10.0	10.5	4.3	5.4	15.6	15.4
Norsk Ukeblad	36.2	36.7	30.1	30.0	42.1	43.3
Nå	11.6	12.9	12.7	13.1	10.4	12.6
Romantikk	4.2	3.5	1.5	1.7	6.8	5.3
Se og Hør	19.3	21.0	19.4	21.2	19.2	20.7
Vi Menn	12.8	12.4	18.4	18.5	7.4	6.5
<i>Weekly colour supplement:</i>						
A-Magasinet (Aftenposten)	21.1	19.6	22.6	21.4	19.8	17.9
<i>Dailies</i>						
Aftenposten (morning edition)	22.2	21.7	25.0	24.3	19.5	19.1
Aftenposten (evening edition)	14.7	13.7	15.1	14.1	14.2	13.2
Arbeiderbladet	7.5	7.2	8.5	8.6	6.5	5.8
Dagbladet	18.0	19.2	21.3	23.1	14.8	15.3
VG	28.5	30.9	33.3	36.3	23.8	25.5

Sources: Norsk Medieindeks — riksundersøkelsen 1981 and 1982 (Norwegian National Readership Survey 1981 and 1982).

THE ANALYSIS

Hypothesis

Our hypothesis would be that publications with a low issue frequency would gain in relation to publications with a high issue frequency, for two reasons:

- (a) the filter period of one year back would be maintained for monthlies but shortened for publications with a higher issue frequency, mostly for dailies. Thus the number of issues the individual respondent could have read is decreased. One could say, following our discussions in New Orleans, that this was a fair change.
- (b) introducing a more complicated filtering method,

and thus a more complicated entrance to the media questionnaire battery, would probably most disadvantage those publications placed last in the battery. And in Norway we follow the common procedure of starting with monthlies and continuing with fortnightlies followed by weeklies and dailies.

The Analysis

The analysis is shown in **Tables 1** and **2**.

Table 1 simply gives the percentage coverage rates for all adults (aged 15 years or more), for men and for women. Speaking broadly, there seems to be a tendency for monthlies to show an increase in coverage while the

5.5 The effects of change of filters

TABLE 2
Comparison of circulation and readership changes 1981 to 1982

	CIRCULATION			READERSHIP		
	1981 '000	1982 '000	Index	1981 '000	1982 '000	Index
<i>Monthlies:</i>						
Alt om Mat	42.7	43.3	101	227	250	110
Det Beste	221.0	228.1	103	621	652	105
Norsk Hagetidend	65.4	65.7	100	189	209	111
Motor	444.6	458.5	103	1,037	1,044	101
<i>Fortnightlies:</i>						
Familien	95.1	101.9	107	320	319	100
<i>Weeklies:</i>						
Allers	245.3	244.6	100	970	918	95
Det Nye	110.4	113.6	103	400	374	94
Farmand	33.8	33.9	100	177	172	97
Hjemmet	379.1	376.4	99	1,337	1,307	98
KK	88.7	89.7	101	307	324	106
Norsk Ukeblad	336.1	337.8	104	1,109	1,136	102
Nå	79.8	92.0	115	355	398	112
Romantikk	61.2	54.3	89	128	108	84
Se og Hør	165.3	187.5	113	592	648	109
Vi Menn	97.4	94.0	97	393	384	98
<i>Weekly colour supplement:</i>						
A-Magasinet (Aftenposten)	255.2	257.0	101	648	607	94
<i>Dailies</i>						
Aftenposten (morning)	225.9	229.0	101	681	671	99
Aftenposten (evening)	157.5	161.0	102	450	422	94
Arbeiderbladet	52.6	52.0	99	230	222	97
Dagbladet	140.4	138.7	99	552	593	107
VG	227.2	240.3	106	874	955	109

Sources: Circulation: Norsk Mediakontroll (the Norwegian Audit Bureau of Circulation)
Readership: National Readership Survey 1982 and 1982.

other issue frequency groups show a decline. But in all groups there are exceptions to this statement, and it must also be added that a relatively large number of publications show changes which are within the limits of statistical error and thus not significant.

These developments could, of course, also be the result of changes in circulation. This analysis is given in **Table 2**, as an index trend where 1981 is 100. With the exception of *Motor* all monthlies show a higher index for readership than for circulation in 1982.

With the exception of the weekly women's magazine *KK* and the lunch-time newspapers *Dagbladet* and *VG*, all publications with a fortnightly, weekly or

daily issue frequency have a higher index figure for circulation than for readership. While there seems no logical reason for *KK* to be such an exception, for the daily lunch-time newspapers the reason may be different trends in circulation and readership between Monday—Friday issues and Saturday issues. In the absence of Sunday newspapers *Dagbladet* and *VG* particularly have developed their Saturday issues to be weekend newspapers. Although separate circulation figures for Saturday editions are available, this is not the case for Saturday readership, simply because it is very difficult to solve the problem of Saturday edition identification in the course of the interview.

5.5

The effects of change of filters

CONCLUSIONS

With the reservation that the readership figures are subject to statistical error, there seem to be indications that the monthlies have gained and the other issue frequency groups have lost readership by the change of filter question in 1982.

In drawing this conclusion, however, we must stress that the results are obtained in a small country with consequently relatively few titles in its National Readership Survey. In comparison with the weeklies, the number of titles published monthly, fortnightly and daily is small. The results of such a change might be different in larger countries with a consequently far larger number of titles — as is, for example, the case in the German Federal Republic.

To this another point has to be added. The 1982

report of the Norwegian National Readership Survey included eight monthlies, four fortnightlies, twelve weeklies, two weekly supplements and five daily newspapers. When we present those group by group to a respondent, he or she may feel that we expect him or her to have read at least one title in each group, and consequently will answer the filter question letting a minimum of one title in the group pass the filter for further questioning.

In my personal view this is a significant point. If therefore it happens that within a group a number of titles cease publication, or go out of the survey for other reasons, it is necessary either to maintain some titles in this group in the questionnaire (although they may not be reported) or to change back to the original filter used during the period 1978-81.