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GERMAN MEDIA ANALYSIS - CHANGES IN METHODOLOGY IN THE QUESTIONING FOR MAGAZINES AND THE RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on the experiments in the methods, put forward by the 'official' German Media Analysis body, to reduce the burden on respondents and interviewers.

With reference to the papers delivered in New Orleans and Montreal, I would like to go over the ground again, briefly, to give a better understanding of the experiments.

A Recent Reading model is the basis for the German model used in national coverage surveys. This means that the reader of an average issue is identified through the readers in the publishing interval of a journal. Unlike the English model, for example, the titles are subjected to a relatively powerful filtering process. The interview starts with the 'general filter' where all the titles are presented in a random sequence, irrespective of their publishing frequencies. This filter allows those titles through which the respondent has 'handled once, leafed through or read'.

A second filter is concerned with the 'maximum readership', defined as a 'reader during 12 publishing intervals'. The findings on reading frequency and timing of last reading stem from the maximum readership.

The respondent establishes rapidly which titles have been read, without knowledge of the supplementary questions emerging from the usage of a title. For this reason, title rotation could be sacrificed, even though there are currently 120 magazines to be taken into account.

The model has the undoubted advantage that the count of titles to be drawn in is quickly reduced, and the interview becomes quickly relaxed. The problem lies in the filter structure, and the associated risk that a rigid filtering

can cut out readership, and vice versa. Those titles with a comparatively high proportion of casual readers are particularly affected by this.

The experiments were conducted with a view to easing the burden of the interview *without changing the present coverage relationships*; with this model that means paying particular attention to ensure that the filtering process gives the same weight to the occasional reader as the current questionnaire model.

To achieve this objective, it was necessary to use a number of experimental stages which, after initially strong demarcations, came closer and closer to the usual MA-relationships. This showed that the existing model is a rigid one, where the readerships are cut rather than inflated. The experiments first led to higher values for maximum readership and readers per issue, and a shift in the coverage relationships in favour of those titles with a comparatively high proportion of casual readers.

With the following examples, I would like to give an outline of the effects on coverage values according to the changes in the methodology.

SECTION 1: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIMENTS?

(1) Effects in the general filter

In the first stages of the study, the following effects were noted:

General filter

Media Analysis version	Experiment I
Restricted to 3 categories - unknown - only known by name - already handled	Restricted to 2 categories - unknown - known

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Degree of awareness according to the general filter

	Media Analysis version	Experiment I	Index MA=100
Average degree of awareness (91 titles)	43.1	39.1	91
Gross coverage (91 titles)	3,921.7	3,557.1	91

Result: Two categories, leading to degree of awareness, deliver higher values than the restriction to one category.

(2) Effects on the maximum readership

Maximum readership

Media Analysis version	Experiment I
Restricted to 3 categories - read in the last 12 publishing intervals - read in the last 12-24 publishing intervals - read longer ago	Restricted to 2 categories - read in the last 12 publishing intervals - not read in the last 12 publishing intervals

Average number of titles passing through the maximum readership filter

Media Analysis version	Experiment I	Index MA=100
8.4	11.1	137

Gross coverage of readers - maximum readership

	Media Analysis version %	Experiment I %	Index MA=100
Core readers	251.6	266.9	106
Other readers	584.0	842.0	144
Total maximum readership	835.6	1,108.9	133

Result: With the same filter definition 'read in the last 12 publishing intervals', with the 'Yes/No' alternative significantly more readers pass through this filter than with the restriction to three response categories. This covers, in general, occasional readers, ie those who admit to reading less than 10 of the possible 12 issues. The coverage of core readers remains fairly constant.

(3) Effects on readers in the publishing interval

Readers in the publishing interval

Media Analysis version	Experiment I
Restricted to 4 categories - readers during one publishing interval - readers during two publishing intervals - readers during three publishing intervals - longer ago	Restricted to 4 categories - readers yesterday - readers during one publishing interval - readers during 2-4 publishing intervals - longer ago

Gross coverages of readers in the publishing interval

	Media Analysis version %	Experiment I %	Index MA=100
Core readers in AIR (91 titles)	237.7	250.1	105
Other readers in AIR (91 titles)	140.1	250.5	179
Total AIR (91 titles)	377.8	500.6	133

Result: In the experiment, the Average Issue Readerships (AIR) significantly exceed those shown in the Media Analysis. On one hand there is the effect of the high passage through the

filter in the maximum readership. On the other hand, it is arguable that the experimental restriction of two categories, leading to Average Issue Readership, delivers higher coverage values than the Media Analysis restriction of one category.

Again, the casual reader is more strongly affected than the regular reader.

A 33% increase in coverage, with a clear weighting on titles with a relatively high proportion of casual readers, was not acceptable.

In a second main stage, the restrictions corresponded exactly with the Media Analysis model for the general filter, ie the filter apertures were retracted. On the other hand, the Average Issue Readership restrictions of the experiment were retained, ie the experiment incorporates four response restrictions each time, of which two lead to Average Issue Readership while, in the Media Analysis, one of the four restrictions leads to Average Issue Readership. With the execution of this research, the Average Issue Readership coverage increases on average by 18%, on the other hand the increase in casual readership is over-proportional, ie it was established that the rise in Average Issue Readership in the first phase of the experiment stemmed from the filter opening *and* the 'hit rate' of Average Issue Readership.

As a result of the trial it was established that the coverage value with a Recent Reading model is greatly influenced by the number and spread of the response restrictions. In general, the casual readerships are affected by these methodological effects.

SECTION 2: WHAT FORM OF QUESTIONING BEST ACHIEVES THE TRIAL'S OBJECTIVES: TO SIMPLIFY THE INTERVIEW WITHOUT CHANGING THE COVERAGE RELATIONSHIPS?

If there is to be no shift in the coverage relationships between magazine

titles, then the Average Issue Readership restrictions must match those of the Media Analysis, ie an unchanged general filter, maximum readership filter and Average Issue Readership restrictions.

The routes to simplification were:

- a horizontal questioning technique following the maximum readership filter. The questions on reading frequency and Recent Reading were posed in direct succession for each title

- the 12-point scale for reading frequency was concentrated into a seven-point scale

- elimination of a further question group on reading yesterday/day before yesterday, and how the issue was obtained

- masthead cards for aided recall in DIN A7 format (formerly DIN A5 size).

SECTION 3: WHAT COVERAGE FINDINGS WERE BROUGHT OUT BY THE FIRST MEDIA ANALYSIS WITH THE MODIFIED QUESTIONING?

The results of the first Media Analysis with the above changes have been available since the middle of 1984.

It has to be said, at the start, that the changes in methodology led to no increases in coverage in the magazine sector. The 1984 Media Analysis, in general, matched the 1983 levels. The maximum readerships, as noted in earlier years, showed a marginal increase, while the Average Issue Readership followed a general long-term downwards trend. Qualitative changes came through, however, and the readerships were identified more clearly in their target groups. It is possible that this could only partially be attributed to the changes in the questioning; it is also related to a changing market place.

Actually, it was in 1983 that the market changes were strongly shown, the

year which was the basis for the 1984 Media Analysis, and greatly impaired the evaluation of the effects of the changes in methodology:

- Springer Verlag, on March 14, 1983, launched the weekly *Bild der Frau*. The audited circulation rose from 1.3 million in the second quarter to 2.1 million in the fourth quarter (cover price DM 0.60)

- In the middle of June 1983, Bauer-Verlag brought out a new weekly *das neue*. The initial circulation of 600,000 copies rose to 700,000 in the fourth quarter (cover price DM 1.20)

- In the autumn there were journals launched with a hybrid editorial concept of 'topical illustrated and TV magazine in one'

- *die zwei* (Gong-Verlag, cover price DM 0.90, circulation in the fourth quarter 680,000)

- *Bildwoche* (Springer Verlag, cover price DM 0.80, circulation in the fourth quarter 600,000)

- *auf einen Blick* (Bauer-Verlag, cover price DM 0.60, circulation in the fourth quarter 850,000).

These five titles have successfully achieved mass circulations, with effects of course on the existing titles.

Declining circulations in the weekly magazine group were most strongly noted in the 1983 survey year, with clear losses shown also with topical illustrated magazines and Radio/TV programme journals.

In addition, the growing interest in women's handicrafts (knitting, crochet, etc) has led to a boom for specialised journals in this market, which has affected the existing monthly women's dressmaking journals.

AVERAGE DOMESTIC CIRCULATIONS

	Index 4 Quarter 1983 (1. Quarter 1983 = 100)
Topical illustrated magazines	96
Radio/TV programme journals	95
Weekly women's magazines	90
Fortnightly women's magazines	98
Monthly women's magazines	98

The following shows some global results of the 1984 Media Analysis:

	Relative deviation MA 83 : MA 84 in %	
	Maximum reader- ship	Average Issue Reader- ship
Weekly magazines	+ 3	- 4
Fortnightly magazines	+ 1	- 3
Monthly magazines	0	- 5

A study of the results for the individual titles shows no discernable aberrations through the changed methodology. A comparison of the circulation and coverage trends shows an ongoing regularity. This observation also applies for the publishing interval groups.

The following overview for the magazine categories, particularly those affected by the new launches, shows a comparison of readers per copy in the light of circulation developments (next table).

These results again show clearly that the changes in methodology had no visible effect on the readers per copy values of the 1983 Media Analysis.

The values are virtually constant; the small shifts which were detected were dips in coverages through market changes.

The objective of the trial was achieved: To smooth and simplify the interview while protecting the coverage levels and the relations between the titles.

Finally, it should be noted that the burden of the interview has eased, an

additional and urgent element in the light of the increase of titles in the Media Analysis from 91 magazines at the time of the experiment to the current level of 120 journals. With the inclusion of the religious press from 1986, the roll of magazine titles will be increased even further.

VALUE OF READERS PER COPY FOR DIFFERENT PUBLICATION GROUPS

	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>MA 83</i>	<i>MA 84</i>	<i>MA 83</i>	<i>MA 84</i>	<i>MA 83</i>	<i>MA 84</i>
Weekly women's magazines	0.7	0.7	1.7	1.7	2.4	2.4
Fortnightly women's magazines	0.8	0.6	3.3	3.5	4.1	4.1
Monthly women's magazines	0.6	0.6	2.3	2.3	2.9	2.9
Topical illustrated magazines	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.0	4.0	3.9
Radio/TV programme magazines	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.4	2.7	2.6