

## 8.1

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

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I want to start with a confession - I have to confess that I leave Salzburg substantially more confused than I left Montreal. That might be my very individual problem; but I think that there are some good reasons for such a confusion. First, in my view, too many contributions dealt with rather small fragments of rather old problems. We do know that there is over-claiming and under-claiming too, we do know that you get different answers if you ask different questions, and we do know that there is no way - I think there is no way - to get absolutely true figures either by asking questions or by measuring with electronic devices. There are over-reporting problems also on TV media panels, not only in readership surveys, by the way. I think that is common knowledge, and I cannot find too much sense in re-inventing the wheel. I will concede that maybe some new bolts and nuts have been added to that wheel, but I doubt if that will accelerate progress.

The second reason for my confusion is that there are so many different answers to apparently similar questions. For example, some experiments indicate that the 'Through-the-Book' method is superior to the 'Recent Reading' method, others share the opposite view, and from a third point of view, both these methods are obsolete and media research should switch to the 'Yesterday's First Reading' approach. We still seem to lack a frame of reference to evaluate these different findings. On the other hand there are enough papers to indicate that there is progress in media research and at the Symposium in Salzburg. There are at least five areas where improvements (or let us say new and useful ideas) have been demonstrated.

First, I was glad to see that the old belief that there should be a direct correlation between response rate and accuracy of data is mainly belief not fact. Lester Frankel demonstrated that

above a certain level of response rate you spend a lot of money for absolutely nothing, and I could back up his findings with research done in our company.

Second, it is certainly too early to speak of renaissance of the panel method in press media research, however much some of our British friends tell us that it might be worthwhile to reconsider the concept of panels in spite of some evident problems which we know still have to be solved.

Third, for a long time data collection by telephone has been the second choice of European researchers, if not the third one, and not only because of the rather low telephone coverage in European countries in earlier years (with the exception of Switzerland). Since then about 90% of private homes can be contacted by phone in some countries at least (in Germany and the Netherlands for instance) and Emile van Westerhoven has demonstrated in his paper that software-assisted telephone interviewing in media research can be superior to face-to-face interviewing not only in terms of time, but also in efficiency and quality.

Fourth, Jacques Antoine in France and Hans Scheler and Jürgen Wiegand in Germany have injected new hope that after many step-by-step improvements during the last fifteen years, the concept of fusion might work. I am sure that we still do not really understand some very important theoretical implications which are behind the mathematical model, but we might choose our usual empirical approach and hope for better understanding when the model makers have solved their more or less technical problems.

Fifth, I think that Ulla Wangard and Rolf Speetzen have done an outstanding job. For decades there have been sleepless nights because of the everlasting cries for qualitative

data, whatever that might mean. There has been a flood of so-called qualitative data, but in many cases you could not be sure what they meant - or if they meant anything at all. In carrying out a very big and extremely complex research design, the exposure quality index is in my view a real breakthrough in that area.

So far about my opinions on progress in Salzburg, but could we do better in the future? I think we could, and I would like to make some suggestions.

First, I think we are not necessarily restricted to press media research for advertisers only. We ignore the vast area of editorial media research not associated with the advertising business. I know that that is a very sensitive material, and that experiments done in that field do not find their way to the offices of this scientific community here. However, I imagine that there are ways round this, and I am convinced that some ideas, concepts and results of that part of

media research could lead to new ideas also in advertising-orientated media research.

Second, we are too concerned with print media research. I think print media researchers should observe and know in detail about the procedures of TV and radio research. People tend to over-rate electronic media because their knowledge of electronic media research gets stuck on the shelf, and that probably goes also for some of those here. So why not have sessions about recent developments in electronic media research?

Third, and last, about seven percent (if I compute it correctly) of the Salzburg delegates represent advertisers or advertising agencies. In my view there should be more: they represent the market where our ideas and findings are finally tested. Whatever currency media researchers will coin, the advertisers will decide on the exchange rate.