

RESEARCH INTERNATIONAL



The opening of Pandora's box

Page traffic – the publisher's responsibility

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1. I do not trust your numbers!

For a number of years print has been on the defence. Advertisers and media planners have increasingly aired the need for print to produce numbers that are more accurate and in a better way actually measure advertising exposure instead of AIR.

Print has been accused for not adopting to the emerging environment of accountability.

And it is not so hard to understand the advertisers' complaints - considering the growing number of brands, media and GRP:s , which clutter our everyday lives. When competition is growing fiercer the need for new GRP:s increase and there are more media than ever to choose from. To survive in this environment the advertiser needs to be lean and mean and he has little understanding for methodological questions or media politics.

Hence great efforts have been made by print to develop new or supplementary figures aiming higher in the hierarchy of the ARF model. We have today a good insight in how and when newspapers and magazines are consumed, in detail penetrated and described in literally thousands of studies, but yet the information is paid little, if any, attention by media agencies and advertisers. Nothing print has done in this line of work has been actionable enough to be included in the everyday planning process.

In short, print actors have done their best to meet the advertisers needs but have not really made it.

1.2 But I do trust TV's GRP ratings

There seems to be a general assumption that the measurement methods print use has affected the medium negatively compared to TV.

The god of the planning tribe has been the television audience measurements. Planners have argued that television gives them fast data, which is also delivered, not on a vehicle exposure level as in print but on an advertising exposure level. Although the weaknesses of TV panel data are commonly known by planners as well as by TV representatives (on second thought – they probably are not) its application as the base for planning, evaluation and trading is indisputable.

At a first glance at the situation there seems to be a confusing mix of methodological questions, political concerns and matters concerning different business models. As researchers we are caught up in the eye of the storm.

1.3 New actors mean new business models

There are also new media actors in the marketplace and they do more often agree to get paid by direct response. Internet, among other has put new pressure on the old media. In Sweden publishers have at times tried to make agreements with clients to get paid by direct response. This has however not seemed to be very successful and according to our knowledge most of these settlements has turned out to be rather expensive experiments for the media owners. There has been a tendency that the publisher has agreed on a business model that relies on success factors he to the major part cannot affect.

However, the rules are changing – print and print media researchers might not enjoy it but we have to adopt or we will have to suffer the consequences.

2. The outlook

In this paper we are trying to outline the development that has taken place in the planning process to include more “qualitative” measures than AIR. We have in this context primarily looked at newspapers and the development concerning section readership, page traffic and read & noting studies.

In Sweden we are ourselves measuring section readership and we have over the years conducted hundreds of read & noting studies and over the last years conducted approximately 200 page traffic studies on behalf of dailies.

But the thousand-dollar question is whether anyone in the planning process has really used any of the magnificent studies print is providing planners with and if they have used them to what extent have they been used. And if the answer is negative? What can we do to improve the situation?

3. A Serious threat to print

The fact that planners and advertisers consider print research as slow and imprecise is a serious threat to the print industry. If print is considered not to meet up to the advertisers demands then the advertising budget might be allocated elsewhere.

The three most often expressed demands are in our view the following.

1. Firstly planners say they need fresher print planning data, faster.

As a researcher the obvious question is of course, why? It is quite doubtful if the impreciseness of for example weekly deliveries has a better predictive value than the preciseness of quarter year data. In other words this is possibly not a real planning matter but it is more a psychological question. The media and the planner are able to tell the advertiser that they are basing their decisions on absolutely fresh data and thus are matching television.

Den Boon and Faasse describe in their paper from ARF/Esomar LA 2003 how they have measured specific issue reach. To allow for measurement on specific issue reach, they have estimated that the sample size needs to be about ten times the original size.

In a way we think that specific issue reach is more a question for the evaluation phase than a media planning issue.

To meet our clients' demands we will from now on deliver weekly audience data.

2. Secondly planners also want effect measures on a day by day basis.

The effect planners are talking about is not really an effect but merely a feedback from dailies to know how many contacts that were delivered on a daily basis. The interesting point here is that it shows on media planner distrust with the AIR levels since they apparently expect a specific issue readership model to give them other figures. Given the stability of the newspapers in Sweden and the high number of subscriptions this is extremely doubtful.

The dilemma if you will perform this evaluation study in the form of a survey is obviously the cost. Even if one would accept no target groups or very crude ones it would still be extremely expensive.

To meet our clients' demands we now deliver “campaign audience contact evaluations”, based on estimations of day-by-day reach figures. These estimates are based on day-by-day circulation figures, which are multiplied with the last three-months' average day type RPC levels. This then allows for estimation of number of delivered contact opportunities.

3. Thirdly – Opposing the first two wishes on rather quick and shallow information, planners are also voicing the need to get more qualitative measurements built into the print currency systems. To move further, from Average Issue Readership, onto measuring the advertising exposure level.

To meet our clients' demands we perform page traffic studies to obtain APX scores.

3.1 The risk newspapers are facing

One risk print is facing is that the increasing demands on them might lead us from media planning with the focus on communication into a world of crude post campaign evaluation.

In Sweden nowadays there seems to be an overall belief (among print media owners and marketers) that a transparent GRP definition is the solution, a key to a better understanding of how advertising and ROI are linked together.

Cynthia Evans at Mediaedge expressed it in this way at WWRS 2001:

“It is hard to believe research on reading quality has been so little used when there is so much data available to understand the “co branding” or synergy that inevitably occurs between clients advertising messages and the media in which they are carried...”

Perhaps the pressure to match TV with statistical timeliness and “goodness” of audience estimates or media vendor horror over what agencies can potentially do with the numbers has constrained efforts”

Or put in the words of Ingemar Lindberg where he discusses the end of media research, as we know it:

“Will it all just end up in a controller’s world of DACCD (Day After Checking of Contact Delivery) with GRP’s as the currency, without regard to communication targets, campaign net reach or exposure probability distribution?”

Why is this a risk? The dilemma is that it contrasts very sharply with what we in our line of work are told by the advertisers to be their real needs. The advertisers actually want even more work to be put into the planning phase and the consumer understanding phase of media planning. Because media is about communication and communication is about the understanding of people and people are different.

4. Two main reasons why page-traffic is on the planners’ agenda

In our opinion there are two main reasons why page traffic once again has surfaced on the planners’ agenda.

4.1 ROI

The first reason is the refreshing ROI debate and the marketing managers need to be able to explain to the board what the company exactly is spending there money on and what results they are achieving.

Basically – advertisers are not really interested in anything else but the final result. Thus we need to get the data, which the advertisers finds more relevant in a ROI context into the planners’ everyday planning situation.

Advertisers and planners clearly express a need for print measurements to try to move up in the ARF model – from media exposure to advertising exposure.

4.2 Multimedia

The second reason, which basically is an effect of the aforementioned, is the growing realization of the necessity of mixed media planning.

All over the world we have seen multimedia databases mushroom. Mixed media planning has among other things put the focus on the different levels of communication the different media are measuring their currencies on.

In the context of television it can be worth mentioning that it seems to be the general opinion that Television’s average minute exposure is a reasonable substitute for advertising exposure (although we would need to reduce it some for persons who leave the room and do not log out, people sleeping, making love etc).

If we were only concerned with the equation of OTS between TV and print it would actually also be possible to level the OTS levels by adjusting television minute figures to total audience at program level, that should equate reasonably well with print’s Average Issue Readership.

However, if that would be done we are on the other hand forgetting the advertisers and their need to move up in the ARF model to better understand the correlation between spending and sales.

To conclude - Print needs to understand and explain how they can compare print figures with the television figures. They also need a better understanding of page traffic, the components of it and in what context they can use the data and by using them get a real understanding of the “true” value of the print OTS.

However – understanding is not enough. We need to move on and make the data actionable in everyday media planning.

4.3 In defence one could say

Given the criticism of print measurements it would be easy to say that it is unjust, because it is based on a number of wrong assumptions and does not take into consideration the uniqueness of the medium.

Every medium has evolved over time and measurement methods have been developed so that they in the best possible way can handle the nature of the media and cater to the needs of the industry.

Print has over the years supported their medium with enormous numbers of qualitative research but it has not really made a difference. One could say that print got the research they could, given the nature of the medium.

5. Post evaluation vs. Media planning

It might be wise to make a distinction between post evaluation of media plans and media planning. We believe that the less familiar advertisers or media executives are with media research the easier it is to make logical mistakes. We often find that people are talking about post evaluation but believe they are talking about media planning and by all means the other way around. To be absolutely precise there is also a third meaning of the word evaluation and this is when our clients are not really talking about evaluation, but about a receipt concerning number of delivered contacts – which they then call evaluation). It is confusing and this is exactly the reason why it needs to be clarified.

Media planning is the art of trying to understand how and where to reach the target audience with the right message at the right time in the right environment. This is the art of sophisticated research followed by a thorough analysis and number crunching combined with the gut feeling acquired by the skilled professional. This is planning – this is forecasting – this is the art of trying to maximise the probabilities of success.

Post evaluation is the art of understanding sales or the mental responses the media plan (the final product of media planning) has reached. As mentioned before, this is the meaning it should have while we today sometimes are talking about it as a receipt on delivered contacts.

We believe that the print industry at times, in the competition with television, forgets the difference. This is partly understandable given the differences in research and evaluation models that exist between the two media.

TV Planners plan television on aggregated data on an advertising exposure level and they place the ads according to research and gut feeling where they suppose the overall effect will be the greatest. Or they buy Run by station and let the network do the planner’s job and thereby limiting their own work to negotiations.

In television, planning and post evaluation (in the context of delivered contacts) is very closely linked together and the whole concept of television planning is to plan and negotiate so well so that you “cheat” the system in the evaluation phase.

When TV evaluates the “result” of the campaign is where it gets tricky for print to follow, because TV is not really evaluating a result (as in mental response or in sales). TV is just evaluating the number of probable hits (GRP) on a specific issue level and on an advertising exposure level (in the vocabulary of print).

Given the nature of the medium print has a hard time following the initiatives of TV.

6. The need of the planner and print's response

We will go through the planning process (with great simplifications) and link it with the research initiatives and in the end give our suggestions and remarks. Please note that one could have different opinions whether these levels of planning really are a linear function and if so, if this is the correct order.

6.1 The smorgasbord and the Italian Deli

Let us first make a distinction between newspapers and magazines. A newspaper is like a smorgasbord – you choose what you want to read – there will be a selection of what you choose according to demographics, lifestyle, interest etc. Only a hungry few will actually indulge in all the richness the smorgasbord has to offer. A magazine however is more like an Italian deli where a number of people with the same taste for delicacy gather and indulge in their special interest.

Let us move on to the first level of print planning;

7. AIR – The first level of print media planning

“In the beginning God created heaven and earth” just about a moment before the average issue reading measurement was invented. All media research and planning has ever since had the average reader of an average copy as its starting point. We have during the years argued over how to measure and estimate AIR but it is nevertheless the foundation of the print media map in every market. Reach and frequency are concepts well accepted and to a reasonable extent understood and used by all actors in the print media market.

The basics in print media planning is to sort out different media options based on estimates of reach and frequency and the implications that gives in terms of OTS, CPT etc in the desired target groups.

The Average Issue readership planning is based on the assumption that all readers relate to their publication in the same way and that all publications have the same ability to deliver open eyes to any given advertisement in the publication.

Yet there is no such thing as a reader. Or at least no clear definition of what a reader is as expressed by van der Noort and Shields;

“After at least half a century of serious readership research designed for the commercial benefit of those planning, buying and selling print advertising, all evidence would suggest we are not yet near coming to agreement on even this most basic notation”.

Consequently different research methods and definitions give different levels of reading and hence different type of readers. It has been argued by media researchers that this is of minor importance since readership scores should only be used on a relative scale, i.e. absolute figures are of dubious value. The relativism school however gets into problem when we are to compare different media vehicles measured in different ways (As print /Television).

Given that the media planner does his work being aware of this, the figures are a reliable foundation for effective and extensive print media planning. Average issue readership might not be the sharpest of tools but it is a solid and stable measure that relatively well caters for the planning purposes and the usage as “negotiation index” it is intended for.

But the Media world has changed. Over the years publishers decided to sectionalise their newspapers in order to cater for different needs in different sections. Planners realized that they needed data also on the new sections.

7.1 Section readership – the second level of print planning

From a research and a planning perspective it became a problem when it got obvious that not only did the sections have other levels of readership than the parent paper, they did also differ in composition of readers. Respondents got an even harder burden but at the end - after a number of years of experimentation with topical questions as filters and weighing down of parent papers etc, basically all major surveys measure the largest sections and include them in their National Readership surveys.

Section readership shares the same dynamics as page traffic. Hence the findings below may in some instances also be applicable to page traffic studies and vice versa.

Research has taught us that there is a general decline in readership levels from parent paper to section. From a target group perspective the better-read sections seems to be the ones that are targeted at specific target groups. And even though they lose average readers from the parent paper the decline is not as large in the specific target group. But the attraction power is not as strong as the general decline from the first section to the specific section.

Arnaa and Randrup state in their WWRS paper in 1997 that no section actually produces figures that are in line with the AIR figures. And that the section readership figures range from 91 % to 36 % of AIR.

But this might not necessarily be bad news for the advertiser. The audience might be smaller but if the target audience has been carefully selected and it matches the profile of the section. In that case the advertising message is aimed towards people who are interested and motivated and to whom the advertising is relevant and they will receive the message in an environment that is beneficial to the communication.

According to Bonner, Niekerk and Brennecke and their WWRS paper from 1997 a selection process of sections, pages and articles characterizes the reading behaviour of newspapers. On average 90 % of the first section is opened. For the second the figure is 75 %, following sections average at 60 %.

Even if these are averages it can teach us something on the natural flow of section readership.

Jansen and van den Berg explain in their WWRS 2001 paper how there seems to be a good section stability within a newspaper over a number of research waves. But they also discovered that comparable sections in *different* newspapers differ a lot. And not only do they differ from newspaper to newspaper; they also differ within the same newspaper from day to day. The implications from a research perspective are that every newspaper and all sections on every day would need to be researched to cover the topic fully.

7.2 The third level of print planning – Open eyes in front of an open page

“The Medium’s essential strength is the active way in which readers choose and use their magazines”

This quote by Guy Consterdine from an article in Admap is essential. Consterdine is really talking about magazines here but the quote might be even more relevant when we look into newspapers and try to understand how they deliver page traffic.

We will now return to the planner and see what considerations that are being made at this stage in the media planning process.

Unfortunately, any skilled planner realizes that even if research has given him AIR figures for both the main paper and the sections it has not really given him any information yet, on what pages in the sections or in the paper that actually were opened by the reader.

The planner needs this information because his clients need to more fully understand the linkage between media spending and sales or mental response to advertising. So the planner has to understand what differs an OTS from an OTS.

In print - advertising exposure level data is best measured in a page traffic study. These studies have been performed in many countries using a number of different techniques. A real page traffic study measures all pages in a newspaper/magazine.

Turning back to media planning - The most common practice is that the planner puts in a overall down weighing factor (which weighs down the overall readership level to an average page exposure level), which he either backs up with research findings based on averages or he uses his vast experience to determine the weighing down factor (he makes it up).

We have delivered the possibility for planners to APX weigh AIR on an overall or on a frequency of reading level for at least 10 years. It is unfortunately a set of buttons that has not really been worn out in the planning community.

Erwin Ephron, examining magazines using MRI data, showed in his paper from WWRS 2001 that:

“In effect the advertising audience is 13 % smaller than the issue audience”

According to his calculations and MRI who produced page exposure data for 188 titles, 165 showed APX below one in the 4 out of 4 group (frequency of reading). When doing this he primarily used frequency of reading and percent of pages seen as measured in the currency survey. And as he states using the pages exposed by frequency of reading correction is a simple way of using the data from the readership survey itself. If the data is not available in the currency research and needs to be added from another survey, frequency of reading would probably be the ideal bridge.

However, this calculation is most probably not possible to use in the APX correction of newspapers. In a magazine there exists (most often) at least a common interest among the readers. Accordingly the diversity of the readers is not as big as in a newspaper.

Of the aforementioned reason there is more that supports the use of averages in a magazine APX calculation than in a newspaper (even though it is wise to make a difference between “general interest” magazines and more topical products). In a newspaper the smorgasbord effect and the diversity of the readers will make averages more doubtful to use.

However - one dilemma is that none of the research conducted has really affected the way in which print is planned. Der Noort and Shields reported the following in their WWRS paper of 2001:

“Despite the considerable amount of effort and money that has been spent in developing and validating such measures the emergence of an accepted standard seems even less likely than it is for the AIR currency”

This is partly due to the fact that the data we have provided for the planning community has not been actionable enough. Another reason is unfortunately that it just might be that the whole matter is so complicated due to the way newspapers are read, that it actually is not possible to make data of such a complexity actionable in everyday work.

Thus it might be that the data page traffic studies provide actually should be used in a more overall planning context or in an editorial development phase.

Yet another reason why we have encountered problems is that there exists a clash of definitions. Different actors in the marketplace have different agendas. Bronner, Nikerk and Brennecke reported the following in their WWRS paper from 1997;

“As we started earlier in 1988 the first results about reach of newspapers sections were published in The Netherlands and a definition clash emerged. Some wanted sections open eyes (mainly the publishers), others wanted average page reach (mainly media planning agencies). In this study we decided not “to burn our fingers” and present the resulting figures from four definitions”

The Danes also reported on some half-hearted initiatives from publishers due to fright of getting lower figures.

However the Danes took a stand in their QRP experiment and they included all kind of reading (Seen/glanced/read all or almost all page) in their definition of a hit. The argument was that the ad was to be regarded as delivered when the ad was in front of a person with open eyes.

This puts the emphasis on a number of points. Different actors want different things. Some wants to use the data as “research for teaching” (to show everyone how pretty they are) and some wants to use the data as “research for learning” (To create insight and learning on how ugly they are).

We all have different views depending on our political agenda. The research company will very often be stuck in the middle. Not wanting or being able to take a stand protecting the ones eventually paying all our bills, the advertisers. Therefore we need to be clear about what we are actually doing when we are doing it. Let us not mix up research for learning and research for teaching.

We believe that the political game has hindered print and print’s development severely. Making the wheels turn slower than they should and sometimes even turning in the opposite direction from the best interest of the advertiser.

Even though the theoretical framework for using the data in practice can actually reach unlimited levels of complexity. From a researchers point of view however, page traffic is basically pretty straightforward to measure and does not really offer any big problems.

Jansen and van den Berg reports that :

“From the pilot we learned that the differences in the results for single copy buyers and subscribers were limited. On average the OTS scores found for the single copy buyers were slightly higher”

Mats Lindén from Research International, Sweden, also found that there is no real differences when it comes to page traffic, reading of editorials or reading of ads, between subscribers with different discount levels (price on the subscription).

The interesting implication of this is that it seems as we can perform page traffic studies on subscribers without distorting the results on an overall level. This is probably only true for newspapers with high subscription levels.

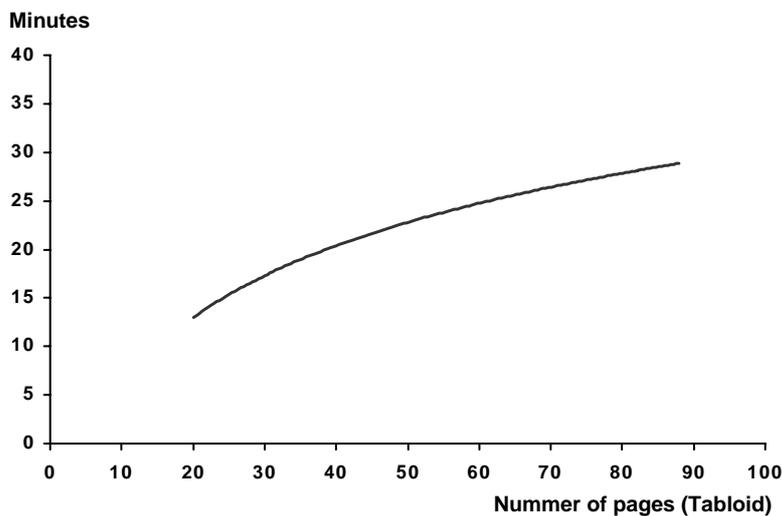
The reason why the Dutch found slightly higher OTS scores on single copy buyers is with all certainty due to the fact that the buyer has taken a deliberate action to read the newspaper this particular day. While a subscriber actually takes one decision to subscribe over a period of time but then his interest and mood might change over the subscription period.

Research has also shown that there is a strong relationship between number of pages and open eyes before open pages. As the volume of the newspaper grows, readers will become more selective. But the relation does not seem to be linear.

The reason could be that there is a correlation between a large newspaper (page wise) and a large audience. To cater to the different needs among a large audience the publisher requires differentiating the paper. He has to create a larger smorgasbord. A newspaper with a smaller audience is more like the aforementioned Italian deli or a magazine whereas there is not such a multitude of different kinds of people in the audience.

In our own research we have found that this seem to be true also for tabloids. In the graph underneath we see that when we analyse time-spent reading with number of pages in the paper. It clearly shows that it is obviously a matter of diminishing returns. People chose what they want to read.

Mediantime spent reading

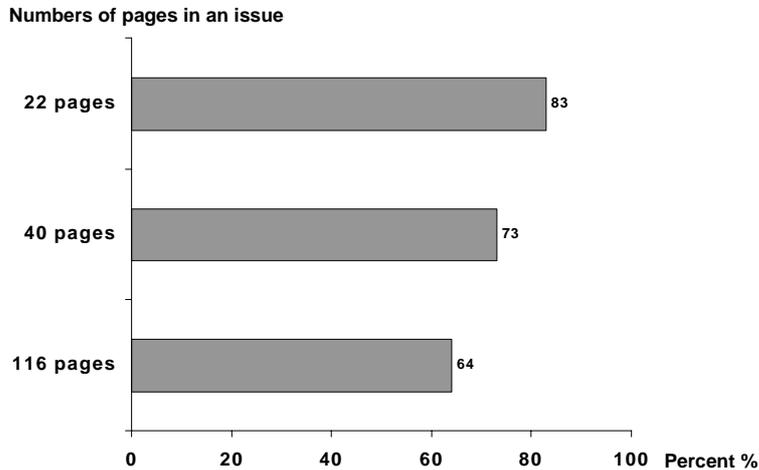


Another Dutch research initiative points out the same finding;

“As the volume of the newspaper grows readers will be more selective. But the correlation is not linear. A five times bigger volume reduces the pages opened with 20-25%”

Bronner, Nijkerk and Brennecke WWRS 1997:

Average open eye scores over all pages



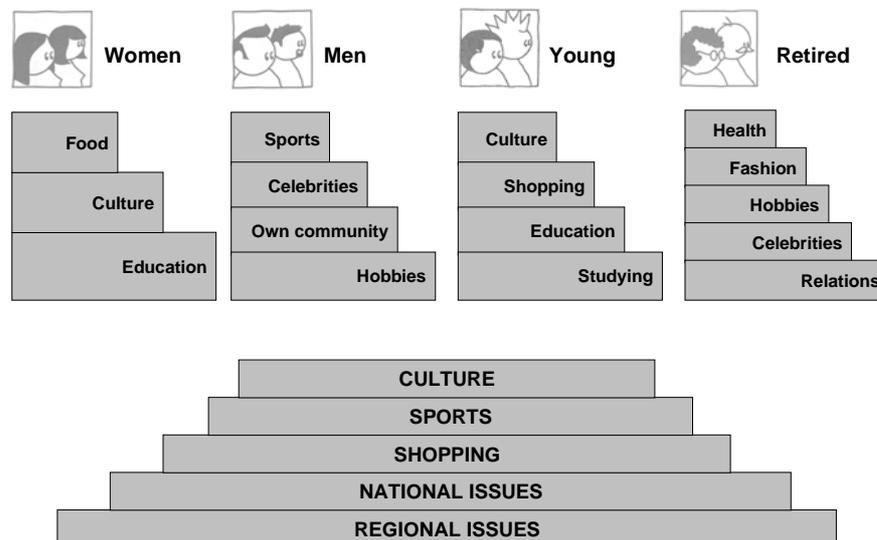
The graph above shows the relation the Dutch found between number of pages in an issue and the amount of open eyes in front of open pages. The same facts as the Swedish research showed. Jansen and Van den Berg takes this point further and state:

“In general for specific target groups the OTS scores are substantially higher than the average score...Subscribers that are interested in a certain topics within the newspaper have higher OTS scores on pages about those topics than the average subscriber”

Since special target groups find different part of the smorgasbord interesting it also shows the importance of looking more deeply into how different groups of people consume the paper.

Professor Lennart Weibull, University of Gothenburg, interestingly concluded in a number of studies in the mid 1980's that there's nothing as an average reader or an average reading pattern. His findings suggested that every reader on an individual basis shows a specific pattern with exemption of the early opening pages in the paper (front page and the starting headlines). The "reading steps"- model illustrated below was used to describe the phenomena.

Newspaper Reading Steps



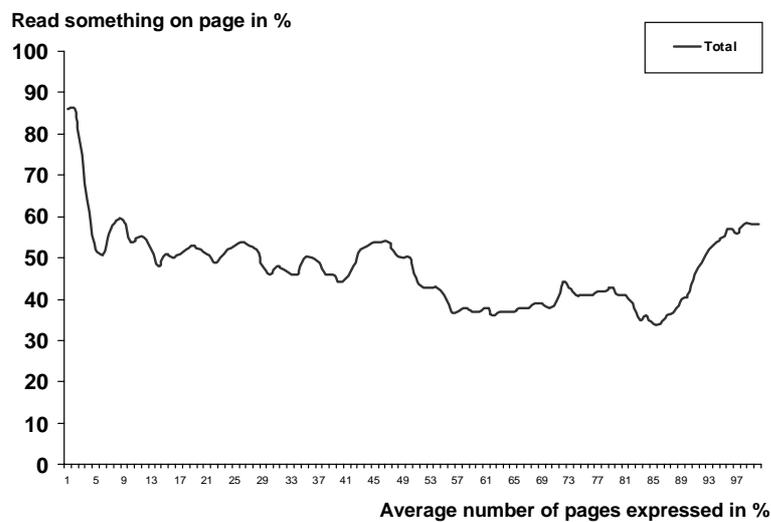
The model also elucidates another important finding made by Weibull in the correlation between the number of sections read (within the paper) and the overall commitment to the paper. Almost all readers take the first “steps” but quite soon the reading patterns become differentiated according to life stage, interests etc. His findings suggested that the higher the reader climbs in the model the stronger he or she relates to the paper.

From a media planner’s point of view it is worth noting that when the objective is to reach a special interest segment in a newspaper, and the ad is placed in a certain area of the newspaper that attracts that kind of people, the loss of readers in the target audience will not be as big as the general decline compared from the news section.

In other words it does not really exist any such thing as a general decline, it is more “the smorgasbord effect” a choice of what different people want to read and a consequence of how the newspaper is built.

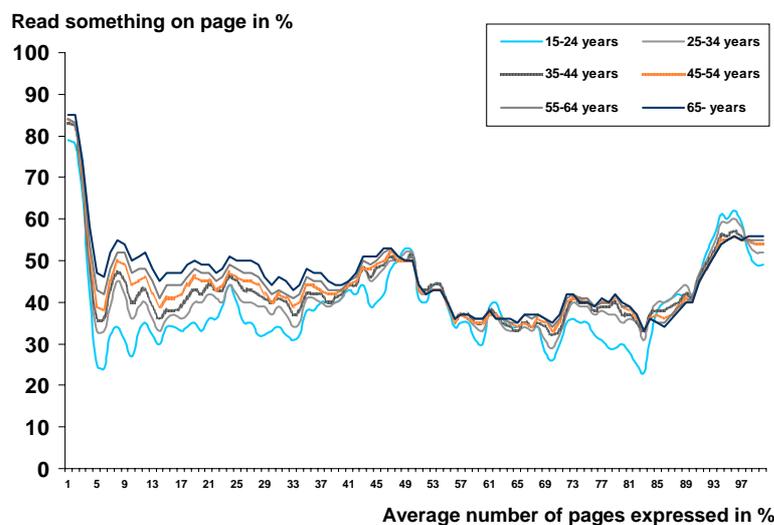
When looking at a database consisting of an aggregate of 75 page traffic studies conducted on newspapers in Sweden we can at the total level see a general pattern.

Page Traffic, total



The dilemma is that when we start looking at target groups, even when they are broadly defined and based on an aggregate of a large number of newspapers, there are large differences between different groups of people. In the graph below we see the huge differences of reading between different age groups.

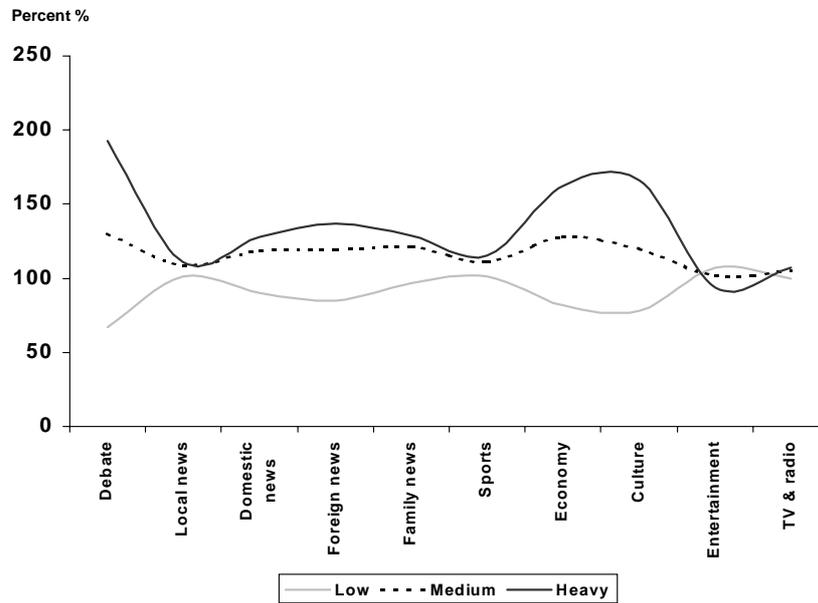
Page Traffic, age



This shows us a principal weakness when we are using averages in media planning. Averages obviously need to be used but it requires that we understand the dynamics of the underlying variations of the data.

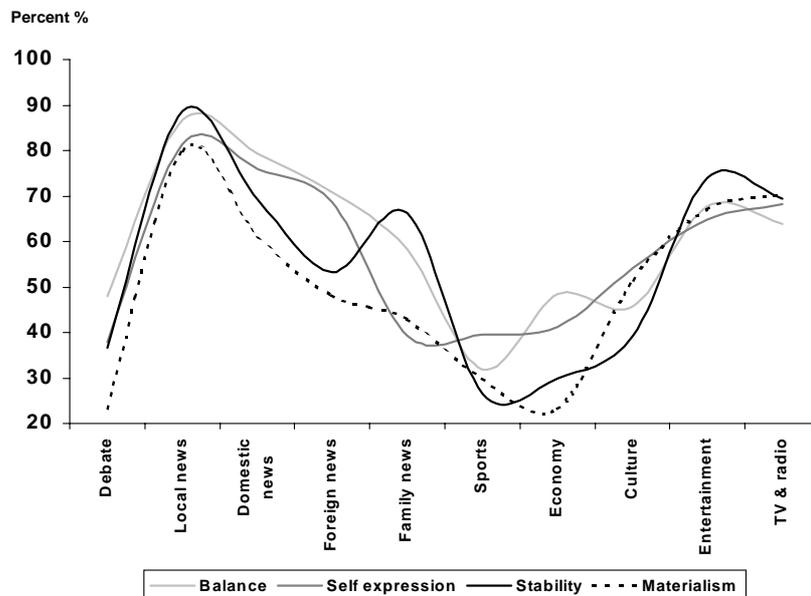
The dilemma is that the differences concerning what people read are so obvious and so large, no matter what target group we chose to look upon.

Topical readership



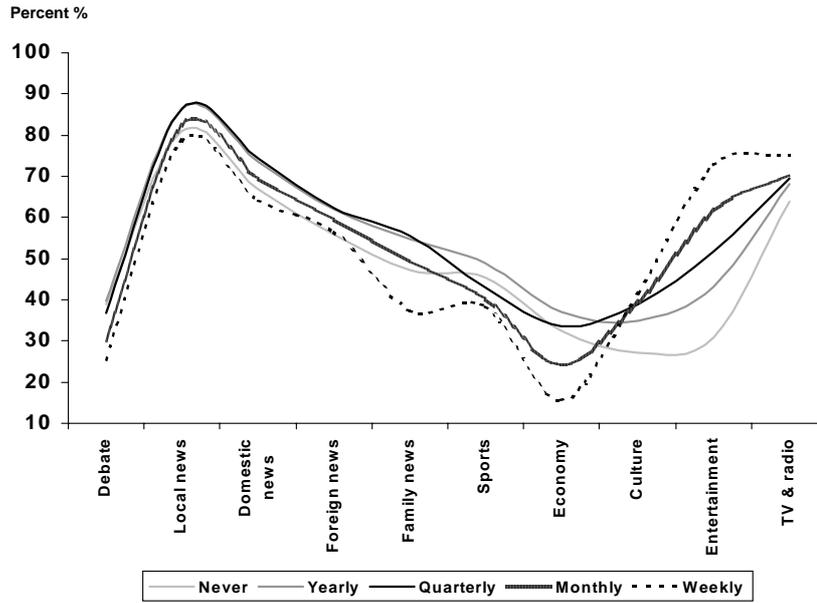
The graph above shows the differences in topical readership looking at low, medium and heavy readers of newspapers. It is apparent that the differences are once again obvious and large. Local news, sport and entertainment and the television pages seem to be the topics with the smallest variations between the reader groups.

Topical reading in value groups



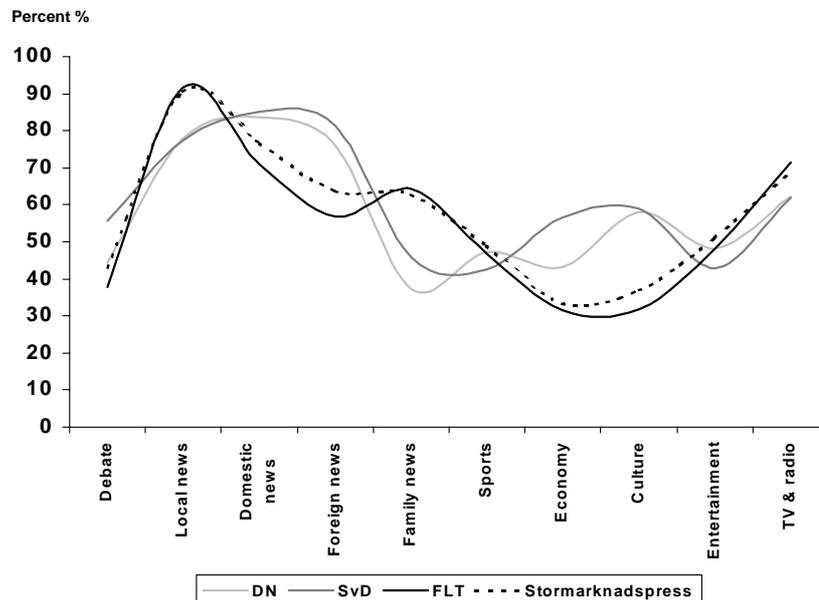
In the graph above we have divided the Swedish population into four different groups based on their values and once again the differences become apparent.

Topical reading vs. shop visitors



Even when we divide visitors to a clothes store into visiting frequency groups it brings out differences that almost make the data impossible to use on an aggregate level. A person is clearly not a person.

Topical reading in different newspapers



We have now seen that the topical reading varies a lot between different kinds of people, which makes it difficult to aggregate the data into overall levels. But it does not end there. The last graph above shows the difference in reading patterns between different newspapers. Since people apparently behave differently, and readers of a paper are people, it is not so hard to understand that even papers show enormous differences amongst themselves. It stresses the point that a paper is not a paper and that by aggregating them into averages the only sure thing is that in some cases a paper's figures will be exaggerated and in some underestimated.

Several studies seem to suggest that even though readership declines from section to section it does not, relatively speaking, decrease the levels of ad recognition. This could be because it is quite common that the latter parts of the newspaper are more topically oriented than the more general first part. This could also mean that ads, which are placed in the more topical sections, are of more topical interest and due to relevance and selective perception the readers choose to take up the opportunity to see since the subject interests them.

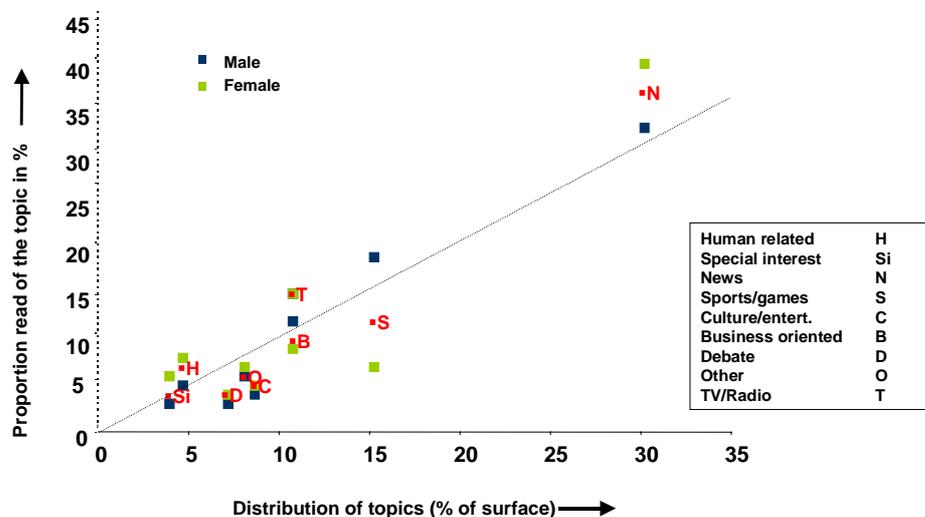
Jansen and van den Berg found that in their case the gradual decline from section to section was not completely true, especially during weekends it existed sections far back that even had higher value than the earlier parts of the paper. This is probably due to weekend reading on certain topics, it should however be yet another warning to all planners about leaning to much on averages without understanding the underlying dynamics of the figures.

When performing a page traffic study it is essential to really think about the definitions that are to be used. From a commercial point of view "open eyes before an open page" might be the most interesting definition. But from an editorial perspective it adds a tremendous dynamic and more insight into reading behaviour to use multiple definitions in order to understand the correlation between open eyes and amount read etc. The data could then be used in the editorial development. This will benefit the advertiser, since the loss of people in the target audience will be less if the newspaper is built in an easily navigated and well-arranged way that brings in the target audience to the topical pages.

In the page traffic studies we have performed we have had a dual focus. On one hand we have tried to perform classical page traffics studies to better help the publishers understand the flow of the newspaper and to obtain general figures on average page exposure levels.

But we have also classified all editorial material in order to help publishers study what amount of space, being used for a topic and then we have analysed how large proportion of the total reading that the topic consists of.

Relation editorial contents vs reading Base: Gender



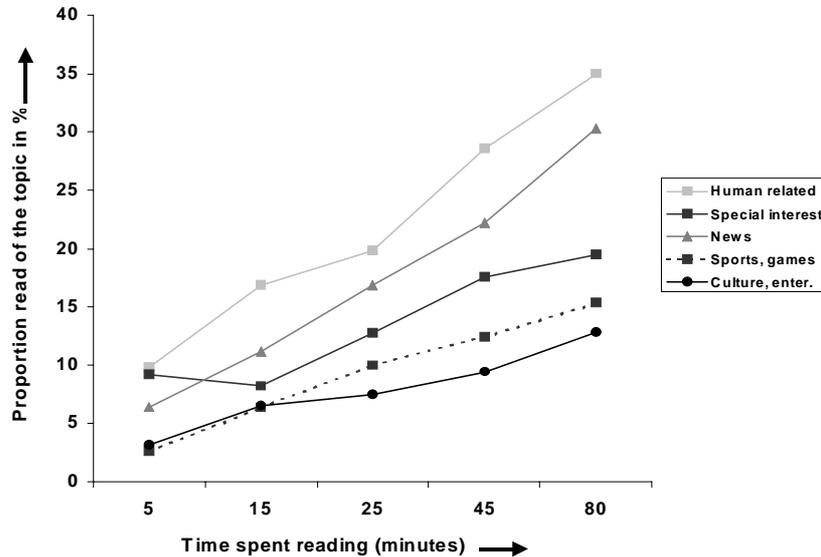
The matter of editorial demand and supply can be studied in the graphs as the one above. On the horizontal axis we can see the proportion of the total paper that the topic covers and on the vertical axis we can study the amount read of the total reading in the different target groups.

This allows us to see what parts of the paper that relatively speaking are in overdemand or in oversupply. In this particular case we can for example see that sports seems to be in overall oversupply.

But on the other hand we can see that this is a very gender sensitive question since the average consists of one group where there is an overdemand (men) and another where there is a obvious oversupply (female).

Relation editorial contents vs. time spent reading

Base: All readers



As stated many times already people vary, as does their interest in reading special topics. The interest in certain topics also vary by time spent reading. In the graph above we can see that special interest material is relatively highly valued among the light readers. Material like this is a good help for any publisher trying to develop his product.

We believe that due to the smorgasbord effect it actually is very difficult to talk about average APX scores for newspapers. We believe that the publisher's responsibility is to create a newspaper where he maximizes the probabilities of the demanded eyeballs open in front of the page. Page traffic studies is one way of helping the publisher to create such an environment.

But at the end of the day the planner needs to make a decision. We would strongly suggest that if he is to apply an APX score (which he should) to a newspaper, the APX score should not be weighed down as much as the average suggests. Because if the advertisement is placed in a favourable environment, probabilities due to selective perceptions and relevance are a lot higher than there will be open eyeballs in front of that page than the average would suggest. It is also worth noting that when the planner is weighing down AIR he should consider doing so using the frequency scale instead of on an average level.

The Dutch make the interesting remark that only 12 % of the researched ads were placed in what could be described as an appropriate setting. This is obviously not good news and stresses the point of a better "in house" ad placing strategy among newspapers.

So what should the future for page traffic studies be? One could imagine two other scenarios.

One scenario could mean a prolongation of the Dutch and Danish initiative where all papers are surveyed on large sample basis. This makes it possible to analyse the data on target groups and then to fuse the data into the NRS study.

The second scenario could be to perform extensive page traffic studies and studying the editorial flow as to create a more effective newspaper. The data could then be put into an "internal" media planning software. That could mean that the sales representative could guide the planner to find the most efficient section in the newspaper, which suits that specific target. This information could also be combined with read and noted studies as to give further information on factors outside the control of media, that could be beneficial to the advertiser. So let us move on to the fourth level of media planning, the qualitative aspects.

7.3 The fourth level of print planning - Reading & Noting – Qualitative factors

In an effort to climb yet another step on the ladder of communication a great number and a tremendous variety of reading and noting studies have been carried out on behalf of print. These studies have mainly taken their starting point either in media characteristics or in communicative conditions due to advertising characteristics (size, type of advertising, colour, clutter etc) and how those circumstances affect the impact of print advertising.

The accumulated learning in this context has been both extensive and detailed. One example is the work done in connection with the QRS studies in Great Britain. Guy Consterdine concludes the result of their work “Readers screen advertising in much the same way as they screen editorial – looking for items that interest, Intrigue, Catch the eye, entertain, inform”, a conclusion that in all it’s simplicity could get major consequences if taken into consideration in print media planning.

There seems to be no doubt that this kind of factors affects the way print carries ads among media planners though opinions differ on how they are linked together. Once a candidate list of magazines and/or newspaper has been drawn up (based on AIR, cover, CRP, frequency etc.) overall media quality data is used for modelling and estimating different response levels. Pure ROI targets occur in some media plans but are to all appearances very rare.

The estimates are basically made from at least one of the following point of views:

1. Media technical characteristics i.e. research provided to illustrate the influence of source of copy, number of pick-ups, time spent, overall liking etc.
2. The influence of editorial environment, attempts to study the “the media is the message” phenomena and how the context sets the frame of mind.
3. Brand synergies between the message and the print medium

7.3.1 Media technical characteristics

For “natural” reasons (it is measurable, easy to explain and grasp) it is primarily the media technical information that seems to be used instrumentally by print planers. Different quality rating indexes and models have been introduced. One example is the QRS in the UK. In Denmark this thinking has resulted in TNS Gallups QRP survey and in Holland Cebuco/R&M has made the QIS, just to mention a few of the initiatives. In some cases the media quality data have been connected with the NRS, in one way or another (single source, fusing etc), which makes multi dimensional response estimations possible.

Our general experience is that its main tribute to a richer and more dynamic media planning has been on an overall level.

There are mainly two issues that have been discussed in the process of implementing this kind of data into the print planning process, both unfortunately with no clear solution. Firstly it is a question of responsibility, i.e. the question of to what extent media can or should bear the responsibility for the impact of specific advertisements (further discussed later in this paper). Secondly there have been different opinions about the relevance of the information. The opinions differ in questions like; if and how the amount of time spent with a magazine or a newspaper affects its qualities as carrier of ads or what importance involvement should be accounted for etc. Though a number of indexes and quality-of-reading models have been developed they vary in content and context reflecting different elements of the relationship between readers and publications. Even though much has been written on the subject, no consensus has been made, neither by the media industry itself nor by media researchers.

In his paper presented at the Worldwide Readership Symposium 1997 Guy Consterdine showed that magazine advertising is affected due to the reader relationship as well as the advertiser relationship. Further conclusions from over 200 magazine research studies illustrated both how print advertising alone sells products and how it contributes to TV advertising (i.e. TV + Print communicates better than TV only). Some of the key findings were:

- The intimacy between reader and magazine benefits advertisers. The magazine environment delivers a reader in the right frame of mind to be receptive to advertising.
- In the sympathetic context of the right magazine the strong positive brand values of the magazine can transfer onto the advertisements.
- A reader’s identification with an engaging magazine can go well beyond the simple provision of information and ideas.
- The print medium’s essential strength lies in the active way in which readers chooses and use their publications. Print is an active medium, with the reader in control.
- The “presenter effects” means that the interpretation of a given advertisement can be influenced by the specific publication in which it appears.

7.3.2 Editorial environment

There have been intensive debates over the value and influence of the editorial content ever since McLuhan launched his “the medium is the message” theory. On one hand the findings done in Denmark (and elsewhere) about the co-variation between section reading and ad awareness indicate that the editorial context does influence the impact (e.g. recognition). But on the other hand other research findings suggest that the effects found in different sections primarily derive from the fact that different target groups traffic different parts of the newspaper (i.e. there is nothing as an average reader). Thus the differences found would be a result of the target audience preferences and composition and not from the editorial context.

Either way the conclusions are hard to quantify and thus to implement in media planning models. Even so the editorial environment is of great importance and a decisive factor in magazine planning. The relationship built up between the reader and the magazine and the “natural” context provided hereby is seen as one of the main keys to get past the commercial defence wall that selective perception constitutes.

7.3.3 Brand synergies

The brand synergy between the advertiser and the brand assets built up by print media is likewise a frequently debated question. The central thought is that effective communication happens in the mind of the consumer and that co-branding would give the “one plus one equals three” synergy.

The Y & R Brand Asset Valuator as presented by Cynthia Evans at the WWRS 2001 clearly showed that magazine brands do matter to readers and magazine consumers. The study proved some strong connections and co-variations between brand images/attributes and magazine consumption.

In the concluding remarks she states “*It is hard to believe research on reading quality has been so little used when there is so much data available to understand the “co-branding” or synergy that inevitably occurs between clients’ advertising messages and the media in which they are carried*”.

But once again the problem seems to be the problem in determine and clearly identify the interface between the co-branding and what advertising effects that derives from the creative treatment of the ad given the communicative goals, the target group etc.

Or as Harry Henry puts it:

“We then have to recognise the various correlates of a high [reading-and-noting]-score, and to appreciate that these including among others such factors as the intrinsic appeal of the product being advertised, the size of the advertisement, the creative appeal of the advertisement, and the contribution of the “white space” in the medium”.

We would like to air the possibility that this conclusion is inevitable in the sense that we as researchers has to broaden our minds, primarily in the field of how we view media’s role in the communication process. Once again we would like to quote Harry Henry:

“I sometimes wonder if it is too uncharitable to suggest that when you are uneasy about the validity of your statistics you put them into a computer and see your fears and doubts whisked away”.

That is, we have a tremendous amount of data, we know “all there is to know” about how, when and why magazines and newspapers are read. But in view of how limited the progress due to linear media exposure thinking (i.e. ARF model thinking) have been in terms of developing the “minds and hearts” of print media planners there is probably much to gain in re-evaluating our task as media researchers.

Probably we must, and should, continue to do all kinds of reading and noting studies and promise ourselves never to stop contributing to accumulating knowledge. But we also have to realise that we will probably never be able to constrain these data in to a linear model, from AIR into the brains of the media consumers (via TV similar GRPs’). The path of adopting a multi dimensional perspective with focus on the connection between consumer and media behaviour from the advertiser’s point of view is a more sufficient one.

In this context the effectiveness of an advertisement due to its characteristics should be taken into consideration. I.e. not only is the effect determined by differences in title section reading, reading patterns and the media context, the design of the advertisement is of crucial importance.

This is probably the most sensitive part of the media planning process. For the first time creativeness is to meet the hard reality of quantitative figures and estimates. A miss calculation in the estimate of the dynamics between media characteristics, target group and advertisement qualities will give devastating consequences. Yet this part of the media planning process is commonly done based on educated guesses.

On an overall level quite a lot of research has been done in the field of advertising response (e.g. left-hand versus right-hand, colour and size). Print planners have found it hard to implement the information since every campaign has its individual prerequisite and the value of average research figures hence is difficult to apply with any accuracy.

James Walker and Daniele Cardillo could establish

"Our page traffic findings show that there is a totally linear relationship between reading editorial and ad noting".

In other words advertisements have an equal possibility to be read or noted as any editorial material.

But their research clearly showed that a number of different attributes of advertising were working in combination in contributing to the effectiveness. There was no single attribute that promoted ad awareness decisively.

They observed very strong diminishing returns in ad noting, i.e. even though the level of ad noting increases with size the increase is not proportional. They found that a 25cm x 4-column space ad scored optimally (measured in ad noting point per ccm).

Another finding was that the benefit of colour was considerable but declined above a certain size. Significant additional noting was recorded for advertisements with colour of a size not larger than 300 ccm.

Swedish research shows that observation of ads decrease linear with age – with the largest difference for the youngest and with full-page ads (also colour) – The MTV generation needs impact. But we can also see that the older a reader is the longer he reads. This tells us the necessity of looking into different targets and to treat them differently with different response functions in the media planning.

An interesting finding done by Staffan Hultén was that in the week after pay day, ad observation increased with 10-12 %, when a major part of the target group evidently were in a more receptive mood (relevance and selective perception).

7.4 The fifth and sixth level of print planning – Time and repeat exposures

Even though it may not be in the scope of this specific paper it would be strange not to shortly include the missing parts of the planning process. The planner obviously also needs to consider the question of repeat exposures. In newspapers the repeat exposure is most often considered to be equal to one. Even though certain sections will have the same repeat exposure pattern as would magazines. In magazines the repeat exposure pattern can vary enormously between titles.

The vital question is of course, whether the reader is exposed to new pages every time he picks up the paper (in which case it is multiple pick-ups but not really a question of repeat exposures) or if he flips through the whole magazine "every" time the magazine is picked up. This could vary dramatically both between different categories of magazines as well as between specific titles within a category. Theme related issues put yet another dimension to the situation.

Magazines will have to be considered very carefully when trying to establish the "impact" factor. AIR is neutral and amount read is probably more or less straightforward even though one could argue that the "average" problem also is present here. But when you for instance get into the numbers of pick-ups it will get tricky.

Time of exposure is very closely linked to repeat exposures. In daily newspapers the medium is almost every time consumed the same day. In magazines however time of exposure will vary a lot both depending on the title and different target groups. This is a weak spot in magazine print planning and needs to get a more operational focus.

8. Conclusions from the studies

8.1 The importance of the target audience

In all the research that we have been referring to we see the obvious importance of the target audience.

Unfortunately there is a tendency among planners to use extremely crude and badly defined target groups. The target group chosen in media planning obviously needs to reflect the advertiser's carefully selected target group.

And we as a research industry are perhaps not giving planners and advertisers the support they need if we do not “always” perform our research so as to offer more specific targets.

Erwin Ephron has stated that one of the positive side effects of mixed media planning is that it will bring “real” target audiences into television planning. We absolutely agree. We find it hard to understand how someone can dream of evaluating campaigns and not using target audiences but at best the crude proxy targets that tend to mislead us.

Not enough has been written on the subject of proxy targets but let us just state that the trend we see is that advertisers are increasingly aware of the need to treat different groups of people differently. We are today trying to recreate our clients’ (advertisers) segmentation (need, lifestyle, value etc) into the media databases using fusion, statistical methods etc. This is when the TGI kind of target group data is not enough to define the target.

The correctness of the target audience definition is crucial to the advertiser since it allows him to follow his target audience all the way from segmentation studies to the pre-testing of advertising and into the media-planning phase. The target audience can later be followed into tracking and brand research and ultimately into the client databases. But what is the point of creating specific concepts, products and creative treatment to people with different needs if we fail the advertiser in targeting them properly.

Therefore it seems strange that there exists a (death) wish in the print industry to move into the crude television GRP semantics. It does not make sense and it is contradictory to good planning and opposing their clients’ needs.

Craig Gugel at Optimedia showed in his ARF/Esomar paper in LA 2003 how velocity differs between magazines, even analysed in so large groups as male/female/dual audience. The question is of course if it is the kind of researched publication in the different gender groups or the target group in itself that bring these differences. But the important point in this context is that people behave differently which makes the target definition crucial.

“As with all other media the reach and response of specific targets is what matters”
(Hultén & Wilber ARF 2003)

We also know that with increasing reading frequency the possibilities of open eyes before an ad increases, and that reading frequency is the primary deterrent in all kind of print ad involvement studies. This is why it is a necessity to look into different target groups and treat them differently and to use different response functions on different sub segments in media planning.

8.1.1 Relevance is essential

We are constantly under heavy fire from different impressions around us. The brain protects us by screening out almost everything (at least in the authors’ case). What flies in under the radar is doing so on behalf of selective perception. We choose unconsciously what (advertising) we are to receive. This is also why relevance and thus target groups are essential.

Relevance is the strongest determinant to advertising exposure and there will be a very strong link between target group and the rate of response. And clearly the ones who are in the market of whatever will be a lot more likely to glance through the pages covering exactly that area.

When trying to outline routes to persuasion in advertising Petty and Cacioppo have pointed out factors that make a difference - the following factors were considered the most important:

- *Product area involvement*
- *Loyal/versus non-loyal target group*
- *New versus established product*
- *Type of campaign*

Once again a strong argument for the usage of trustworthy target groups.

Higginbotham & Cognac conclude in their WWRS paper on section research 1997:

“All of this type of analysis should be done against product specific as well as age, gender and lifestyle target audiences.

Even looking at the broadest category Adult 18+ challenges the practice of evaluating newspapers on the basis of total audience. While 81 % of USA 18+ read the paper main news, the most read section, delivers only 68 % of those people”.

In the Best Practice paper on Newspaper advertising from Admap they claim that:

“Small ads limit the effect solely to the ones who, almost, looking for this type of Ad”

This is yet another example of relevance and selective perception in work.

In Jansen & Van Den Bergs excellent WWRs paper from 2001 they describe how they are measuring all newspapers on a large sample in Holland. This allows for page traffic to be studied in the light of target groups. To incorporate this into the advertising model and fuse it with currency data could be an interesting breakthrough.

8.2 I am not an average person and there is no such a thing as an average ad

Alan Smith has over the years with great persistence tried to get researchers and advertising agencies to understand and accept that print campaigns cannot be judged on an aggregated level and on an average score.

He has argued that we must look at the ads that seem to work the best. These are the ads that show us what can be achieved in a good print advertising campaign. There are too many factors outside media’s control to ask print publishers to take responsibility for the final result.

Media are supposed to deliver the promised target audience. The communication means of media are already discounted for in the pricing of media.

If a lion hunts you and you ask the guy running beside you, if he knows how fast a lion runs? Rest assure you do not want him to be a media researcher and the answer to be: *“Well the average lion runs at x mph”*. You want to know the maximum speed, because there is no such thing as being hunted down by an average lion.

Judging the performance of any ad on an aggregated average level (in what media it may be) is as dangerous. We are not neglecting the fact that the information can be useful but it has to be used with caution.

Be aware of the average lion, because an ad is not an ad, a person is not a person, a product is not a product, a medium is not a medium and hence all GRP:s are not the same.

So how does this connect with page traffic? To be actionable planners want average scores for page traffic/read/noted for ads and pages in each medium. It makes life more easily understandable. The dilemma is that people, ads and campaigns are never really the same. We believe that observations of ads are - and should be analysed as - related to specific target markets.

Any average observation score for a particular medium has a wide variance, which might invalidate it for any general application.

Add to that the variance of observation of an advertising message (even within a target market) due to supreme or poor creative solutions, size of ad etc, and any average score might become useless as a forecast value to be used as a media weight in evaluation of media plans.

In their Best practice in newspaper advertising Admap states the following:

“Out of all this, it is possible to arrive at some rules that are so general as to be meaningless and tend to dictate a very boring formula for ad making”

We have to remember that media audience numbers is the major and primary concern of media houses, not of advertisers. Audience figures should just be one input in the media planning and buying process.

Peter Masson and Josephine Bucknull report on yet another pitfall when using aggregated average data.

“In using such aggregate data there is an assumption that all members of a vehicles audience will behave in an average or an aggregate way. Clearly this is not the case. Regular or primary readers are likely to have higher page traffic scores. And will also feature disproportionately in the early audience build up.

This will affect not only the shape of the OTS frequency distribution but also the audience profile over time since the primary readers will be demographically different from the secondary readers.”

In other words – be aware of averages and remember that people are different - the frequency scale might be a helpful tool to fuse data between surveys or to use when weighing page traffic probabilities but this needs to be combined with target group information data.

So in the end, using and analysing numbers is inevitable but media planning will of course still be much of a trial-and-error process. Media planning is about combining hard facts with gut feeling and experience. And advertising is just one component among many influences. In most cases the effect of the advertising is one of the weaker forces in the marketing mix.

As researchers we do not hesitate to use averages but we need to make sure that our clients understand the implications of using them.

8.3 Four levels of communication

To further stress the point – concerning media’s role and responsibility in the communication game – We will try to outline the four levels of communications suggested originally by the late doctor Jarko Cerha.

An advertiser can influence some parts of the communication but some he cannot. The distinctions that Dr Cerha made on the different levels of communication were the following:

Primary communication

This is the “built-in” ability of the product/brand/package/staff or service to communicate itself. This is the knowledge and impressions that the product itself transmits.

Secondary communication

Communication arranged (and normally paid for) by the sender; i.e. public relations, advertising, sales promotions etc. The uniqueness of this type of communication is that the sender decides what to say, when to say it, whom to direct it to, how to tell it, and how much money to be spent on the activity. He has however no saying in the interpretation of the activity.

Inter-personal communication

“Word of mouth” between individuals and editorially initiated communication in mass media. The sender cannot manipulate this type of communication, not in contents, nor in timing.

Distributive communication

This is the physical availability of the product/service in a network of retail outlets etc. Distributive communication depends on the physical distribution of the phenomenon. It can be shelf space or shop coverage for a product, number of branch offices of an insurance company or a bank.

The question is to what extent is each type of communication responsible for success in the marketing of a product? One could argue that there are more forms of communication than the above but that is not the point. The point we want to stress here is that the media only marginally can be the explanatory factor for success – or the scapegoat for failure.

Advertising is thus just one component of many in the marketing mix. It cannot be held responsible for effects related neither to characteristics of the product, nor to distribution and sales promotion related activities etc.

Ingemar Lindberg describes in his Bordeaux paper from 2002 the following situation:

Imagine yourself an advertising activity for “the friendly shop”. What happens to the campaign if the staff of the friendly shop does not behave in accordance with the purpose of the campaign? How many shops is a customer willing to visit in order to buy a brand that advertising has made her interested in trying? What power has advertising versus a massive, negative word of mouth campaign? To what extent can different communication activities realistically contribute to achieve different communication goals?

9. Responsibilities

What about responsibilities? Is the observation of ads and mental response to them really the publisher's responsibility? We should make a clear distinction concerning what is the responsibility of the media and what is the advertising's responsibility. And we must not mix up sales tools and responsibilities.

No one really cares more about if advertising works than the media carrying the advertisement. For example there has been a number of excellent involvement studies that show that the more involved the reader is the more likely is the possibilities to a positive ad recognition score. It is by the way interesting to note that the factor most predicting a high ad recognition figure is reading frequency, this could easily be used in modelling.

This is excellent information to the seller, buyer and the planner.

But it is not necessary information if your aim is to equate television and print OTS. It is however a strong argument for the media, but if an "involvement" score is applied generally it obviously would need to be added for all media.

We do at times feel that media too often get the blame for non-working advertising.

One has to remember that by the time the ad reaches the paper, a number of careful considerations already have been taken. Objections have been raised and overruled, segmentation studies have been done and focus groups have had their say. Creative solutions have gone back and forth but now every one is ready to reap what they have sown.

And then, if the advertising fails, who will get the blame?

Obviously - the guy at the end of the line. The Media. If there had been something wrong in an earlier stage, someone should have seen it. Nobody did. So let us all blame the messenger. It is not a wonder why publishers get a bit paranoid over their responsibilities and whether ads work or not.

We believe that the reach of the paper should be expressed as open eyes before an open page. Whether that person has read something on the page or not does not matter in the delivery of OTS. It is the opportunity to see that counts.

"A newspaper has the responsibility to offer a platform for advertisers to reach their advertisers to reach their audiences. And in this way making people open certain numbers of pages within the newspapers so that they have the opportunity to see an ad.

Whether an advertisement on a certain page is consequently seen is dependent on the size, use of colour, format and content of that advertisement. These last variables are the responsibility of the advertiser" (Jansen & Van Den Berg WWRs 2001)

It seems reasonable that media should only be expected to provide planning devices, for the advertiser's allocation of his advertising budget, between and within different categories of media vehicles.

Effect measurements should be the advertiser's responsibility.

10. Summary:

- There is overwhelming proof that in a newspaper the average issue audience is virtually impossible to obtain for any advertiser. Therefore it is obvious that print will have to come to terms with and meet the advertiser's need for better and more accurate planning data.
- Newspapers are like a smorgasbord and certain people read certain topics. It is an active self-selection process where the reader is in control. Since the readers of a newspaper show such a great variance it is an absolute necessity to use proper target audiences to understand the real page traffic patterns.
- We have a deep understanding of the mechanics of page traffic and read and noted studies – The dilemma is that the figures are most often displayed on an average level. This means that when the planner is weighing down the newspaper readership with the average score he is actually down weighing it too much, since the target group due to relevance and selective perception is a lot more probable to have open eyes in front of a page with a topic that interests them. This means that newspaper section readership data and page traffic studies can help planners to increase both reach and frequency by giving them the opportunity to place ads more strategically in the paper and also for the publisher to make the most of the paper.

- Page traffic studies should be used in three different ways. The first is obviously to produce some sort of probable advertising exposure level on a target group. The second is to guide the advertiser to the most probable spot in the newspaper where his ad will meet his target audience. From Holland we got reports saying that only 12 % of the researched ads were placed in what could be described as an appropriate setting. Even if this is just one piece of evidence it makes us a bit uncomfortable. Thirdly it is an editorial tool to help create a newspaper where the loss between AIR and page looked at is a minimal as possible in the target group. By doing this newspapers can get a lot better when it comes to placing topical ads where they are most likely to meet the eyeballs of a prospective buyer. Page traffic studies are a way of improving the editorial content so that it will benefit advertisers who can be placed in a more appropriate setting. One could envision a sort of “internal” optimising program in which the planner could select the target audience and get a recommendation on where in the newspaper success is most likely. This would then become a positive loop.
- A better editorial content and order would mean better-placed ads, which would enhance print’s results in tracking studies, which will improve the whole situation for print. Since it would display the effectiveness of the media.
- Read and noted studies should be developed as to guide the advertiser not only to the best place to put the ad but also in the best format etc that works according to the target audience. Read & Noted studies are by no means useless. They can give us a deeper insight into the mechanics of the ads and communication is created “between” page traffic and the ad.
- Experiments have been done in Denmark and in Holland to get more qualitative data in media planning tools applying accumulation and breakdowns on target groups. However, in this context it is extremely important to remember that we do not mix up the publisher’s responsibility (open eyes in front of open pages) with the advertiser’s responsibility of creating advertising that works in the context the publisher are delivering.
- *“Too little weight is put behind most print schedules”* (Tony Jarvis/Mediacom WWRS 2001). Would it not be ironic if the overestimation of AIR figures were the reason why print gets less weight than they should? This does not imply that there is something wrong with AIR as a measurement tool but it seriously points out the fact that planners use it in the wrong way. And the target audience is essential when we are evaluating page traffic or communication.
- People are different - a fact we have understood a long time ago but we are still trying to fit the individuals into average scores. We should be very careful when we are using average scores to explain the world.
- In magazines averages received on page traffic studies are probably a lot more accurate than in newspapers. In a magazine there has already been a selection process. The persons reading a certain magazine are by definition already sharing at least an interest with the other readers. The variance of readers of the magazine are a lot less than in the case of a newspaper. Thus average scores are probably a good enough substitute for something that might turn out to be immeasurable.
- We need to understand the mechanics of media planning vs. evaluation. The objectives are very different and the two disciplines should not be confused with each other.
- There is a political dilemma whereas planners and advertisers do not mind figures that are relatively low whereas media rather want measurement systems that maximize readership / page traffic and recognition scores. A problem is that this might “force” publishers into cruder measurement systems than ever. Trying to maximize the number of contacts delivered with no value of what kind of contacts that actually are delivered.
- The publishers’ need to open up and accept new currency levels. Yes - they will have to accept lower levels but it could actually lead to positive effects because it will be obvious that a heavier print pressure is necessary than the AIR figures suggest. And thus heavier print schedules will be bought and guess what – The advertisers’ results will get better and thus print actually might strengthen their case by producing lower figures.
- Planners are known to have very strong opinion in the public arena – however back in the office they do not really seem to want any changes, which complicates the logistics of media planning. Unfortunately the incentive system for planners most often value speed and quantity instead of the qualitative part of the job they perform. Media agencies need to take a stand and decide in what direction they really want to evolve. Are they primarily in the logistics business or in the communication game?
- Advertisers need to remunerate planners according to the qualitative work they actually are performing and media need to be paid a premium when the numbers suggest that this should be the case.

- Is it possibly so that we in our quest for the truth have penetrated the issues deeper than it is possible to do? The relevance to the client is directly opposing our possibility to measure it. Could it be that the more exact our figures get the less sense they make due to the fact that the variance in what we have measured is larger than the phenomena that we are trying to measure?

PS!

When we started writing this paper we did not realize that we just opened Pandora's box. Page traffic studies and the usage of APX scores in media planning seem from a researchers perspective not to be awfully complicated.

This is unfortunately not true. When we looked at the issue from an advertisers perspective and with communication in mind we soon realized that this is a lot more complicated than applying average scores on average groupings of newspapers.

We hope that if nothing else we have shed light on the complexity of the issue and by that implied that we should be aware of the average lion – you might be its next victim.

DS!

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