

## 1.12b How South African methodology differs

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I am concerned here to describe briefly some of the aspects in which the South African approach to readership measurement differs from that of other countries.

Firstly, we give a card with several languages on it to the informant and if he can read a simple sentence then we have reasonable proof that he can read the headline of a simple advertisement. We next put a stand-up prompt card in front of the informant and we explain what we mean by readership: "that you have personally read or paged through all or part of a copy; it doesn't matter whether it was your own copy or somebody else's, and it doesn't matter *where* you read or paged through it."

The words we used came from depth research, asking the public to explain to us what they did, and we also showed film of a person reading and asked "How would you describe what this person is doing?". So instead of words such as 'looked at', 'looked into', 'going through', a publication, we found that the words used were 'read', or 'paged through'. The definition of readership is a complex one, and depending on the words you use you can get differences of 60–70%, which make the statistical side of sampling look like peanuts.

We use the double-sided card method, where the front of the logo card gives details of the publication, with a brief description and an M for monthly, W for weekly and so on, so that we can separate it. It is completely randomised and the answers to the questions are on the back of the card.

We have a sorting box and the informant is given the shuffled set of cards and sorts the cards into – 'Yes, I have read or paged through the publication in the past 12 months'. 'No, I have not'. By the way, the interview is done in 13 languages, so we have quite a problem.

The decision-making is completely in the hands of

the informant, the interviewer has nothing to do with it.

Once the cards have been sorted we bend the set of cards, so that the edges are staggered and it is possible to mark the back of the card, with the sorting having been done on the front of the card. That is done like this: the first sort is the 12 month filter and it is marked 'Yes' or 'No'. We then go to the 'When last' question, in which we have ten categories: 'One day ago', 'Two days ago', 'Three days ago', 'Four to seven' and so on. We then have the 'Frequency' question and we then have the 'Thoroughness' question, which is alternated with an 'Origin' question.

The main advantage of the double-sided card method is that the cards are completely randomised all the time, with one exception and that is with the 'Frequency' question. It can be proved that the 'Frequency' question must be time-linked. If you want to get a six point scale, you must have six weeks in your question, six months in your question, or six days in your question.

The survey itself covers multi-media data at the average life level and at the cumulative level. Our 'Recency' question covers all the replies from 'Yesterday' to '12 months ago'. So you can cut your cumulative data at any point you wish in the analysis and you can check whether the computer systems do in fact give the cumes that you get from the actual questioning. We produce multi-racial social economic data; multi-racial product usage data; cross-tabulations of product usage and media exposure; the facility to extract or isolate target audiences by level of consumption and media exposure patterns.

The survey appears in nine volumes, there are 11,000,000 facts in it. There are data on different racial groups and the cumes of different racial groups, and, as we say in Afrikaans, "It's a document with which you can kill if you had to throw it".