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1.5(a) Changes in the Dutch National Readership Survey (1)

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT AND WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM NOP 1982?

Following pilot studies in 1980/81 and a stability test at the beginning of 1982 a new national readership survey was carried out in 1982.

The pilot studies were conducted by ISK, a social communication and marketing research bureau in Amsterdam, and were mentioned at the first symposium in New Orleans.

The stability test at the beginning of 1982 was conducted by NV v/h NSS (Dutch Foundation for Statistics). Its objective was to find out which of two questioning methods for investigating the readership of magazines and newspapers would be the most stable, in relation to the results of the pilot studies and of the NOP survey of 1979.

The first questioning method — direct questioning — had been used in 1979 and former years, and was used in the stability test with a sample of about 700 persons. The second questioning method — indirect questioning — was used in the stability test also with a sample of about 700.

We were warned by the results of this stability test that the reach of magazines and newspapers would be higher than in 1979, and that this increase in reach would be more than the result of changes in circulation. It held for both questioning methods, although more for the indirect than for the direct.

We had at the outset constructed a decision model for choosing between the direct and indirect questioning, and on the basis of the results of the stability test and of the decision model the indirect questioning method was chosen for the Dutch National Readership Survey of 1982.

The main differences between the Dutch

national readership survey of 1979 and that of 1982 are shown in **Table 1**.

There were thus a lot of differences between 1979 and 1982, supplemented by a closer watch on the procedure in 1982 than in 1979 and by a still more intensive training and instruction of interviewers.

The results surprised the advertising market; Average Issue Readership reached a very high level, on average about 40% higher than in the 1979 survey. And there were more critics in the press than in the market. These critics doubted the validity and the objectivity of the survey and of the questioning methods used — both wrongly for the most part, in my opinion. There was more care for validity and objectivity than ever before, and we have probably measured the reach better. The problem is, what is the use of these additional readers, and whether we need them. This in fact is a media-planning problem; the only thing we have to concern ourselves with is the measurement of reach in the most precise way possible. What we have learnt also is to investigate how we can avoid the telescoping effect which is more present with indirect questioning than with direct.

What have we still to learn? The market (agencies and advertisers) have to formulate better, in the frame of a planning model, which data they need, to formulate their marketing problem. It is, in our opinion, a great merit of the 1982 survey that it has demonstrated this in a very sharp way. With good formulation of the marketing problem, the quarrel between the ad hoc method and the panel method becomes less problematic; which one to use is a question of the data we want and of the use of the data for the objectives we aim at in the planning field (or in the marketing field). A good planning model is the starting point for a good research model, not the quarrel between ad hoc or panel.

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TABLE 1

	1979	1982
research bureaux	NV v/h NSS NIPO B.V.	Interact B.V. Veldkamp B.V.
sample size	9,930	7,614
sample frame	National Dwellings Register	Postcode System (Zip Codes System)
filter question	Did you ever read or look into...? (direct questioning)	When read for the last time (indirect questioning)
sequence of questions	1. filter question total reach 2. reading intensity 3. reach in last interval 4. yesterday reading 5. frequency question 6. reading place 7. copy source	1. reach question total reach and average reach 2. frequency question 3. reading intensity 4. reading place 5. copy source
reading intensity	how usual	last time
reading frequency	how many usually	how many out of the last 12 copies
reading place	10 categories	8 categories
copy source	13 categories	13 categories
rotation	none (fixed sequence of titles)	complete rotation for all national titles
number of national titles in questionnaire	79	82
regional titles	measured at title level	measured at title level; reported as one 'artificial' title
period of measurement	four waves during the year	one wave 2nd quarter of the year
total reach	ever read or look into	readers in last 12 intervals
average reach	read or looked into, last interval	read or looked into, last interval
segmentation method	Belson/Agostini	A.I.D
processing bureau	Sobemap, Brussels	Büro Wendt, Hamburg
tabulating bureau	Sobemap, Brussels	Sobemap, Brussels