Alternative metrics and the transformation of news audiences

University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 23 January 2014

Dr Neil Thurman
The evolution of audience measurement

CIRCULATION
OF THE
LIVERPOOL MERCURY.
We are sure our friends, and the advertising public will be gratified with the following weekly average circulation of the Mercury, carefully drawn up from our stamp stock book and printing account.

WEEKLY AVERAGE SALE OF PAPERS
EVERY FRIDAY.

First half-year, 1846 .................... 8257
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Figure 2. Online web statistics report, Philly.com
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The number of the third quarter is the common average, excluding altogether the large extra sale of papers on the occasion of Prince Albert’s visit to Liverpool. Had that excess been added, the average of the quarter would have amounted to 9657 each week.
“I am writing for three people in England and you are not one of them.”

Peter Jay
"Oh, we're writing for the editor of course. He's the audience."

"My wife, she's the critic".

Reporters, quoted in Hetherington (1985: 37-8).
Editorial staff often “laugh in the face of public discourse, of democracy; letter writers are rarely discussed in a language other than the idiom of insanity.”

“cranks, nuts,” or “crazy bastards.”

“way out in the Ozone.”

‘Aggregated collaborative filtering’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEBSITES</th>
<th>Contextual</th>
<th>Most read</th>
<th>Content category</th>
<th>User location</th>
<th>How found</th>
<th>Media type</th>
<th>Social use</th>
<th>Time accessed</th>
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<td>Y Y Y</td>
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<td>Y Y Y</td>
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<td>TimesOnline.co.uk</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y Y Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>WashingtonPost.com</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Y Y</td>
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</table>
Taloussanomat's newsroom

“Your story is flying! In 12 minutes you have got 500 readers”
– sub editor, Taloussanomat, 11 July 2008
“if the visitor numbers are low [the news desk] will publish some populist story like about David Beckham’s underwear to get reader figures up quickly”

– multimedia journalist, Taloussanomat
Newspaper Advertising Revenue Adjusted for Inflation, 1950 to 2012

Source: Newspaper Association of America

Carpe Diem Blog

The University for business and the professions
Gawker Media ‘big boards’ show live unique visitor totals for top stories along with whether each story’s traffic is trending up or down.
Gawker Media ‘big boards’ show live unique visitor totals for top stories along with whether each story’s traffic is trending up or down.
Watched “pretty obsessively” with a “hawk eye”

-- MacGregor, 2007

- Catering to lowest common denominator of tastes
- More soft news with high entertainment values
“We track costs … by writer against uniques [unique users] and share that data with site editors-in-chief”

-- Scott Kidder, vp of operations at Gawker.

“The bigger the audience, the more you get paid .. the more loyal your audience — the more repeat visitors — the more you get paid.”

-- Anonymous Forbes executive

“84% said they monitored web traffic on a regular basis”

(31%) of editors said they use online metrics to plan content production

(n=318)

- Vu, 2013
“Journalists … felt content to ignore metrics … “I think it’s because we are not concerned with commercial [things]”.”

- Quoted in Usher, 2013.
- Boczkowski and Mitchelstein *The News Gap*
media audiences have been described as “institutionalized”, defined in particular ways, “using analytics tools and perspectives that reflect [media organizations’] needs and interests”

- Napoli, 2011: 3.
Players in the audience marketplace

- Media Publishers
- Audience Measurement Organisations
- Advertisers
- Consumers of advertisers’ products and services
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- Audience Measurement Organisations
- Advertisers
- Consumers of advertisers’ products and services

Brands: Nielsen, comScore, Experian, ABC, RAJAR, BARB
Players in the audience marketplace

Media Publishers

Audience Measurement Organisations

Advertisers

Consumers of advertisers’ products and services
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**Every Friday.**

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136,407 PEOPLE READ

The Listener

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

All enquiries to: Head of Advertisement Department,
ABC re-launches Spiders & Robots service
This new service is available industry wide

Find out more

Latest News
53,277 July-September 2013
- ABC re-launches Spiders & Robots service for the industry
- The value of content verification

ABC QuickView
- Members and paid subscribers click here
- New subscribers contact abcpost@abc.org.uk

Member benefits
Find out what we can do for you...
- for media owners
- for agencies & advertisers
- for everyone

Need some help?
- Call us or email us
- Jargon buster

Certificate Finder
Access to latest certificates are available to all

Latest Reports
(12/12) Monthly Multi-Platform
(06/12) National Newspapers

Upcoming Reports
(17/01) National Newspapers
(23/01) Monthly Multi-Platform
Sugar or Sand?
“rates based upon readers and not upon [circulation] figures are what advertisers should expect to pay.”

(Correlate any unit of production into the next column.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>• Circulation (physical copies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Readership, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>• Min-by-min physical presence in room when TV is on ('people meter'), etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>• Individuals who say they’ve listened for least least 5 mins / week (questionnaire), etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>• Unique Users</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Page views, etc</td>
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Physical presence in room when TV is on ('people meter'), etc.
Radio

- Individuals listening for least least 5 mins / week (questionnaire), etc
“although many advertisers, media organizations, and media planners are aware of the limitations of audience measures, they seldom consider these limitations in day-to-day practice. As long as all participants in the transaction treat the data as accurate, the inherent unreliability of the data has no significant effect on the exchange. The marketplace conveniently overlooks the estimated nature of all measures and instead perceives and treats them as the ‘truth’ (Gitlin 1983).”

- Napoli, 2003: 82
“the audience marketplace illustrates two countervailing forces. On the one hand, the desire for better quality in audience measurement persists, because better measurement means a higher-quality product (something generally desired by both advertisers and media organizations). On the other hand, the audience marketplace wants a single parsimonious currency, something achievable only when the provider of audience data is a monopoly”
- Napoli, 2003: 20
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Measurement Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Min-by-min physical presence in room when TV is on (‘people meter’), etc</td>
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</table>
| Newspapers | Circulation (physical copies)  
               | Readership, etc |
| Internet | Unique Users  
               | Page views, etc |
| Radio   | Individuals who say they’ve listened for least least 5 mins / week (questionnaire), etc |
Dödlig svamp angriper svenskar efter tsunamin
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Fifteen years ago, The Telegraph brand reached one in five of the UK population per year. Today, it reaches one in three.

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/advertising/ (6 June 2013)
• Monthly Page Views / Impressions
• Monthly Unique Users / Browsers
• Interactive features (e.g. games / data visualization) not page based
• Long online video session = single ‘page view’
Incompatibility of newspapers’ standard print/online audiences metrics

- Online metrics - monthly
- Online metrics – measure pages read and browsing devices
- Print metrics - daily
- Print metrics - measure physical copies distributed / readership

Newspaper Audiences
• Time spent reading
• Daily popularity
“our media system is migrating towards a post-exposure audience marketplace … in which traditional exposure metrics will lose their predominant position [and may be] ….supplanted by other dimensions of audience behaviour [this]... may have dramatic implications for the process of cultural production”

- Napoli, 2011:15
• **Time spent reading**

  • **Online** – available from a variety of commercial providers:
    • Nielsen – mainly panel based tracking
    • Hitwise – data from ISPs
    • ComScore – mainly panel based tracking
  • **Print** – available in the results of face-to-face reader surveys (e.g. UK National Readership Survey)
• **Daily Popularity**

  • **Online** – number of daily online ‘sessions’ can be sourced from a variety of commercial providers (e.g. Nielsen, in this case).
  
  • **Print** – daily print readers: derived from the results of face-to-face reader surveys (daily ‘readers per copy’ x daily circulation).
• Time spent reading
• Daily popularity
### Time Spent Reading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience \ Channel</th>
<th>Print</th>
<th>Online</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>RQ4</td>
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### Popularity:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Audience \ Channel</th>
<th>Print</th>
<th>Online</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>RQ5</td>
<td>RQ6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>RQ7</td>
<td>RQ8</td>
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</table>
Sample: 12 UK National Newspapers

- 2 middle market (Daily Mail, Daily Express)
- 5 popular / tabloid (Sun, People*, Mirror, Daily Star, Daily Record)
- 5 quality / broadsheet:
  - 3 free to access (Independent, Guardian, Telegraph)
  - 2 with paywall (FT, The Times)

- Monday-Fri, Saturday and Sunday print editions and their online channels (excluding ‘apps’) were considered

* - Sunday-only newspaper
UK National Readership Survey
UK Audit Bureau of Circulations
Note: Nielsen page views give the zero percent baseline. The data series represent the percentage difference between that baseline and the number of page impressions registered by ABC.
Av. daily readership per print copy (2011)

Results: Domestic Popularity

Lower estimate

Av. no. online sessions / day (2011)
Results: Domestic Popularity, 2011

* Due to the 2011 closure of the Sunday edition of The Sun—The News of the World—the print component of these figures relate to The Sun’s Monday–Saturday editions only.
† The People publishes in print on Sundays only.
Domestic popularity. Changes 2007-11

Estimated changes in the combined print and online 'popularity' of 12 individual UK national newspaper brands (based on their domestic readerships), 2007–2011

*Due to the 2011 closure of the Sunday edition of The Sun—The News of the World—the print component of the 2011 figure relates to The Sun’s Monday–Saturday editions only.
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*Due to the 2011 closure of the Sunday edition of The Sun—The News of the World—the print component of the 2011 figure relates to The Sun’s Monday–Saturday editions only.
Results: Domestic Attention

• Time spent reading, 2011, 12 UK national newspapers

Estimated Online reading time (excludes ‘apps’) (minimum)

Estimated Print reading time
Results: Domestic Readership – time-spent-reading, 2011

- The Times
- The Sun
- The People
- The Independent
- The Guardian
- Financial Times
- The Daily Telegraph
- Daily Star
- Daily Record
- Daily Mirror
- Daily Mail
- Daily Express

- Estimated print reading time
- Estimated online reading time (excludes ‘apps’)
*Due to the 2011 closure of the Sunday edition of The Sun—The News of the World—these figures relate to The Sun's Monday–Saturday editions only.
Overseas time-spent-reading (print & online)

*The Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday, and MailOnline*
Comparison of monthly page impressions recorded by Independent.co.uk and The Independent's iPhone, Android, and Blackberry 'apps'

* Excludes automated page impressions
Results: Domestic Readership – time-spent-reading, 2011 (no apps)

- The Times
- The Sun
- The People
- The Independent
- The Guardian
- Financial Times
- The Daily Telegraph
- Daily Star
- Daily Record
- Daily Mirror
- Daily Mail
- Daily Express

Estimated print reading time
- Estimated online reading time (includes 'apps')

Billions (10^9) of minutes / year
Results: Domestic Readership – time-spent-reading, 2011 (with apps, est.)

- The Times
- The Sun
- The People
- The Independent
- The Guardian
- Financial Times
- The Daily Telegraph
- Daily Star
- Daily Record
- Daily Mirror
- Daily Mail
- Daily Express

Estimated print reading time
Estimated online reading time (includes 'apps')

Billions (10^9) of minutes / year
Conclusions

• Success of ‘quality’ newspapers (+Daily Mail) in reaching out to online readers
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For the year 2011

- The Independent
- The Daily Telegraph
- Daily Mail

Domestic print reading time
Domestic online reading time
Overseas print reading time
Overseas online reading time

Billions (10^9) of minutes / year
Billions (10^9) of minutes / year

For the year 2011

The Independent
Domestic print reading time
Overseas print reading time
Domestic online reading time
Overseas online reading time

The Daily Telegraph

Daily Mail

0 20 40 60 80 100

The University for business and the professions
### Key information

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EU CLEARS $1.2BN FRENCH AID TO PEUGEOT ARM

Brussels approves first instalment of $7bn in planned state guarantees and requires carmaker to propose restructuring plan for its entire business