
New Zealanders fail to heed Neil Shepherd-Smith’s cry to "put the poor beast out of its misery"

Neil Shepherd-Smith’s paper of November 1, 1993 to the M.R.G. Conference in Amsterdam "Average issue readership - there is something wrong!" ended with the statement: "The recency method has had a good run, but surely it is now time to put the poor beast out of its misery."

Over the last few years we have been trying to explain to New Zealand media and agencies that the AGB/MRS readership survey results based on the "recency" method are significantly inflated. In addition, due to the confusion of the NZ Woman’s Weekly, Australian Women’s Weekly and English Woman’s Weekly, the AGB/MRS readership estimates show inconsistent relativities.

Attached is a paper sent to all Members of the Association of New Zealand Advertisers Inc., the latest Roy Morgan and AGB/MRS readership estimates and a comparison of readership and circulation figures for NZ Woman’s Weekly, Woman’s Day (NZ) and New Idea (NZ).

Because New Zealand media buyers are unwilling to approach readership measurement rationally, the country is essentially without an acceptable readership "currency".

Yours faithfully,

Gary C. Morgan,
EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN.

Attach/1
The contract for the National Readability Survey was to measure **average-issue** readership. At the ANZA meeting last week AGB/MRS agreed that their survey measures something significantly different from **average issue readership**. The term "reading occasions" was used by AGB/MRS - however this description is not strictly correct either. The survey measures reading and re-reading of any issue in the particular time period. However, while a person who reads a particular issue of a weekly publication once, and then again within the **next** week is counted twice, a person who reads a weekly publication on each of seven days in the **interviewing** period is counted only once. Obviously what is measured is a "blancmange" of **replicated** reading and **confusion**.

The following chart shows clearly why the AGB/MRS "recency" methodology has failed, and why there was a need for the "Great Debate".

**NZ Weekly Magazine Readership and Circulation Relativities**
The AGB/MRS attempt to understand and rationalise their unrealistic figures for NZ Woman's Weekly (6.5 readers-per-copy) using something they called "primary" readership was interesting but unearthed even more problems with the AGB/MRS inaccurate "recency" method.

It will be recalled that critics of the "recency" method point to two problems:

- inflation; and
- confusion

The AGB/MRS "primary" readership experiment provided an excellent demonstration of both.

1. Inflation

Primary readers or purchasers number twice the circulation, i.e. according to AGB/MRS there are two buyers (not readers) for every copy printed.

Clearly there is inflation.

We ignore the "fix up" provided whereby AGB/MRS tried to sell the notion of using only "primary" readers who were regular readers (i.e. readers of the last 4 issues) to compare against circulation.

2. Confusion

AGB/MRS demonstrated that according to their data NZ Woman's Weekly had substantially more secondary and tertiary readers than Woman's Day and New Idea. This is simply restating exactly the problem their database has. There is no reason why NZ Woman's Weekly should have more secondary or tertiary readers - a more rational explanation is that confusion is likely to be greater among "secondary" and "tertiary" readers than "primary" readers or "regular primary" readers.

The AGB/MRS "blancmange" readership estimates have no place in media planning. They do NOT measure average issue readership nor, as mentioned earlier, is it clear what they measure. National Advertisers who buy NZ Woman's Weekly using AGB/MRS figures are paying too much.

AGB/MRS have, through their experiment, demonstrated clearly that a problem exists. We await eagerly and with great interest their proposed means of solving the problem. We were unsure from the presentation whether the proposed solution was to use "regular primary readers" as the New Zealand readership currency, or whether AGB/MRS have returned to the drawing board to try again.
AGB/MRS gave those attending the ANZA meeting a paper by Timothy Joyce titled "Recent Reading". On page 7 it states:

"Full through-the-book was developed over a number of years as a highly rigorous procedure. It has a number of great merits. It establishes the audiences of specific magazine issues directly. It uses a recognition procedure which should, ideally, minimize confusion between different magazines and different issues. It is easy to see how it would seem especially suitable for a highly graphic weekly magazine such as the old Life...... it certainly is regarded as an ideal technique by those who do favor a recognition approach."

No more needs to be said!

Yours faithfully,

Steve Burns
GENERAL MANAGER
## Latest Roy Morgan and Media Research Services Readership Estimates

### New Zealand Magazine Readership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication:</th>
<th>Roy Morgan</th>
<th>AGB:McNair</th>
<th>Media Research Services (Conducted jointly by AGB &amp; NRB)</th>
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<td>Reader (% of population ('000s))</td>
<td>Reader (% of population ('000s))</td>
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NA - Not asked

* Specific-issue result conducted September-November 1993
### New Zealand Magazine Readership

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<td>Jul '91-Jul '92 Reader</td>
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<td>% of population 14+ years</td>
<td>% of population 14+ years</td>
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### New Zealand Newspaper Readership

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<td>14+ years</td>
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