PAMS research out in October

The first PAMS (Publisher Audience Measurement Survey), conducted by the Publisher Research Council (PRC), will provide media owners, agencies and marketers with an accurate new reading currency in South Africa for the first time in 40 years.

The PAMS currency measures will be combined with four other studies that the PRC are conducting this year, which will ensure the most complete measurement of reader audiences, across all platforms, to inform effective advertising investment.

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The PRC refer to its research as reading research, not the traditional readership research. "The difference is subtle, yet crucial," says Peter Langschmidt, research consultant to the PRC. "Reading is more behavioural. It is platform agnostic and covers all forms of reading on screens and paper, unlike readership which was ink on fingers."

"AMPS provided us with very 'enthusiastic' readership figures. Although we do not know what the new PAMS methodology will deliver, it has been designed to address the high readers per copy (RPC) figures that were in AMPS. The PRC and its members are fully aware that 'readership' figures may show a decline, but, whatever the new data reflects, it will be a more accurate reflection of the truth."

The PRC members and publishers have embraced the need to move away from solely measuring exposure to paper,

towards measuring reading on every platform; paper, tablets, phones, computers, PDF documents, etc. "We will offer agencies and clients audiences to each platform individually and an unduplicated aggregated audience."

PAMS results will be fused with the Establishment Survey (ES), which in turn is linked to TAMS and RAMS. This will provide media planers with the ability to compare different media platforms and channels, for example Huisgenoot audiences with radio broadcaster 94.7 Highveld. "As such, by the end of the year we will have what we previously had in AMPS, it will just be conducted in four discrete surveys that are combined after the fact, which is in line with global best practice."

Nielsen, PRC's research partner, scoured the world for innovative 'gold standard' reader audience measurement and the PAMS questionnaire uses input from The Netherlands, New Zealand and Australia. "We have also made changes that maximise the advantages of tablet interviews and address the uniquely South African heterogeneous readers," explains Langschmidt.

Sample designed around reader universe

In order to provide quality data to inform effective advertising investment, the sample is designed around the reader universe, which upweights urban areas and down weights rural ones. This top 60% of the market accounts for over 85% of consumer and advertising spend.

PAMS will be introducing a reading research flooding methodology. The sample will comprise of 10,000 core face-to-face interviews supplemented by 10,000 'flooded' interviews with other household members. This combined sample of 20,000 will be larger than the AMPS reader sample. "This is no mean feat, since our members' revenue is declining, but we are able to give advertisers a bigger sample size," says Pula Mmesi, researcher at the PRC.

"It's not just all about the numbers when planning an advertising campaign. It's the ability of the written word, on any platform, to deliver a quality reader and the ability for said reader to recall what's been read and advertised," concludes Langschmidt.

The research will be released in October 2017. For more information, go to www.prc.za.com.