

MAGAZINE RESEARCH IS DYNAMIC AND INNOVATIVE

At FIPP's International Research Forum held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands on 15-16 February, it was determined that magazine research worldwide is more dynamic and innovative than it has ever been. There is activity investigating the use of magazines, how they interact with other media and the cost-effectiveness of magazine advertising.

Magazine researchers are responding to the increasingly complex media world by creating new studies of how people are using media today, and by demonstrating the continuing value of magazine advertising – included in a mix with the web and television.

Forty-five research professionals from magazine publishing companies in 14 countries gathered for two days to discuss ongoing research studies and issues. Five of the major issues discussed were:

- The increase in a media mix – especially among young people
- The need for more studies of how marketing campaigns benefit from using magazines in combination with the internet (and other media)
- The arrival of multimedia mega-databases for planning marketing campaigns across many platforms, including digital media
- Using the internet as a data collection method and showing how magazines and websites can complement each other in offering improved functionality to consumers
- New methods for tracking how readers' eye movements reveal how they consume magazine ads

A more extensive review of the Research Forum, and copies of the papers delivered, will be published in the research section of FIPP's website shortly.

The Research Forum was generously hosted by FIPP member publisher Sanoma Uitgevers to whom FIPP extends its thanks.

Source: FIPP

FREE TO EXPRESS



No region in the world has undergone a metamorphosis on the same multidimensional scale as the Gulf," says Dr Lubna Al Kazi, assistant professor of sociology at Kuwait University.

This would include the media of the Arabian Gulf. Though the print media in the Gulf states have different origins and histories, the overall impact has been felt throughout the region. Khaled Al Maeena, editor-in-chief of Jeddah-based Arab News, emphasises Saudi Arabia's experience with print media: "The first newspaper appeared in Makkah in 1908." He says 1924 saw the launch of Um Al Qurra, the country's official gazette, and many other newspapers.

Fast forward to 2007 and we find that Saudi Arabia has 12 daily newspapers (there are 35 newspapers in the Gulf).

According to Al Maeena, the media in the region has reached a stage of maturity on par with media around the globe. "Yes, there are certain subjects we never spoke of because they were considered social taboos. But right now, with the new age group (50 per cent of the population is under 30), many, including women, have different goals and aspirations, ideas and visions."

Several factors go into shaping news. However, Al Maeena points to the new leadership in the region as a major influence: "Most states have new leaders and they have been recognised as 'agents of

change'. Many would like to see their countries as passengers on the road of life. Not bystanders."

However, the Gulf states have been criticised in the past for not providing complete freedom of expression. Al Maeena says that restrictions on the media come from a "section of people who don't wish

freedom for the press; not from a government body". This section of people does not like the media focusing on certain issues but in the case of Saudi Arabia, "good journalists" are not discouraged.

Al Maeena quotes King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz: "Write what you want but with accuracy." This would include topics such as corruption, labour issues, education and water concerns — all new topics as far as the Kingdom is concerned.

The editor-in-chief of one of the region's leading English newspapers believes that the press in Saudi Arabia is free but "maybe not in the same sense as in the US ... but then again, we have different values".

Over the airwaves

In the Arab world, the electronic media started in the 1960s with state-owned television channels that, while not dishing out propaganda, offered "very dull local programmes, and re-runs of old Egyptian serials and censored American ones", Al Maeena says.

The scene has changed today and the governments of the region find themselves competing with privately owned channels to report the news. This change was brought about by the advent of satellite channels, particularly CNN, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

There was a call for speedier, more accurate news. It was at this point that Arab entrepreneurs "grasped the opportunity to capitalise on the new trend and set up television channels that, while not overturning the boat, do sometimes rock it". There are numerous examples of privately owned channels such as Al Arabia, LBC, Future TV and Al Manar.

The written word

"Books were always under suspicion" and were banned in certain places, according to Al Maeena. However, things are different today and one can order any book from one's living room (via Amazon or Horizon), he says.

Al Maeena is optimistic about the future of the media in the Gulf because there are enough "brave journalists [around] ... And there are many of them [half of whom are women]."

Source: Gulfnews

Middle East Publishers' Association (MEPA).

Dubai Media City, Office No. 6, Media Business Center, 2nd floor, Building No. 2,
P O Box: 502038, Dubai, UAE. Email: mepa@mepa.cc, website: www.mepa.cc