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Published in:
12th International Conference on Cultural Economics

Publication date:
2002

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Stokmans, M. J. W. (2002). Patterns of newspaper consumption in the Netherlands. In *12th International Conference on Cultural Economics* Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.

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Patterns of newspaper consumption in the Netherlands

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Abstract

From a cultural sociological perspective, differences in preferences are explained by the social class of the individual. Recent research indicates that more and more people do not act according to their class. Especially individuals from the higher social classes can be characterized as omnivores. Applied to newspaper consumption, these findings suggest that people in the higher social classes consume high 'quality' newspapers next to newspapers of lesser quality while people in lower social classes only read low 'quality' newspapers. In the Netherlands, however, in the past media consumption was strongly determined by ideology. Given that newspaper reading is affected by socialization, as Bourdieu assumes, one would expect that, in the Netherlands, ideology is a determinant of newspaper reading as well.

These suggestions were examined by using a large sample (N= 1791) from the Dutch population. The results indicated that high social classes compared to lower social classes read more newspapers, read on average newspapers of higher quality (more complex), and read newspapers that are more diverse in quality. Regarding the effect of ideology, the results indicated that newspaper reading is also affected by religion if respondents are committed to their religion.

1. Introduction

Despite the strong turnout of the audiovisual media in the past two decades, in the Netherlands, newspapers are still an important medium to inform people about the world. On a daily base 4.5 million newspapers are distributed, which places the Netherlands in the top 10 of newspaper reading countries. In 1975 people read on average 150 minutes a week in a newspaper but the time spent reading newspapers has dropped to 120 minutes in 1995. The time spend reading newspapers has dropped the last decades (Knulst & Kraaykamp, 1996), the circulation has stabilized however.

Development in the newspaper market can be characterized as concentration of producers and title reduction. Since the mid-1980's the merging of publishing companies was accelerated; In 1985, 24 publishing companies were active on the newspaper market. This number has dropped to 9 in 1998. The number of newspapers which had an independent editorial staff has dropped from 49 in 1985 to 34 in 1998. This concentration in the press is often viewed as a threat to diversity in press. A smaller number of independent publishing companies and/or editorial staffs will result in lesser diverse opinions that are expressed in newspapers. This development can result in less revenues of newspapers. The revenues of newspapers depend on the number of readers as well as on the advertising market. If readers do not recognize their opinions or often disagree with the opinions in the newspaper, readers will eventually withdraw and the revenues of the newspaper drop. Lesser readers imply, on the long run, less revenues from advertisements. The size and composition of the readers as well as a close relationship between readers and newspapers are essential for attracting advertisements.

If newspapers get more alike, readers will either withdraw or notice that it makes no difference what newspaper is read, since all newspapers give him/her the same opinions. This

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viewpoint implies that one can expect small differences in the reader characteristics of different newspapers. Research does not confirm this suggestion; Readers of the five largest national newspapers differ strikingly in terms of social class.

The observation that, on the one hand, the average reading time of newspapers has dropped, and on the other hand, the concentration of the newspaper press, triggers the question about what people read what newspaper(s). Answer on this question can help publishing companies in their marketing decisions regarding the newspapers they publish, in the sense that the target market and the competitive position can be defined and the marketing mix coordinated to meet the needs of the target market. Furthermore, insight into the combinations of newspapers read, provides information to advertisers how to optimize their coverage goals which are part of the marketing communication objectives.

The research question will be investigated from the perspective that media use in leisure time can be regarded as a cultural practice in its own right in that it is indicative of people's lifestyles. In marketing, media use is often regarded as an expression of one's lifestyle. In other words: People with different lifestyles will use different media. Cultural sociological studies about cultural participation provide a theoretical framework that suggests what kind of people read what kind of newspaper(s).

Cultural sociological perspective

Cultural sociological studies about cultural participation suggested a strong relation between the stratification system and lifestyle. Inspired by the work of Wever (1946) and Veblen (1899) sociologists developed a view that the ranking by stratification variables such as income, occupation, and years of schooling, parallels the ranking of status groups which is based on their appreciation of the arts, letters, their styles of clothes and language, and their

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use of leisure time (Gans 1974; 1985; Bourdieu, 1984; Ganzeboom, 1985). The importance of cultural indicators in the identities of occupational groups has been documented by Hughes (1958) and by Bensman & Lilienfeld (1991). Bourdieu (1984, 1985) gave theoretical foundation to these ideas, by suggesting that cultural capital is passed on by class socialization. Cultural capital determines how arts are perceived and appreciated and is invested in crystallizing and in maintaining the status hierarchy (MiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

The most salient characteristic of those at the top of the status hierarchy is patronizing the fine arts, displaying good manners, wearing the correct cut of clothes, using proper speech, maintaining membership in the 'better' churches, philanthropic organizations and social clubs. Those in the middle of the status hierarchy, tend to imitate those above them but without the requisite knowledge of taste standards or the resources in time and money needed to fully participate. The resulting middle-brow taste culture is characterized by light music, romantic painting and literature, the ready made versions of the high fashion clothes of the previous season, and a simplified, if prudish, etiquette (Gans 1974). About the lifestyle of people at the lower end of the status hierarchy is less agreement. The bottom has been characterized in two distinct ways: As a set of district tradition-bound taste cultures based in ethnic, racial and religious customs, or as an undifferentiated mass (Brooks 1958; Wilensky, 1964).

In this paper we will investigate whether the upper class reads the 'better' newspapers, while the middle class reads a 'simplified version' and the lower class newspapers of lesser quality. As will be argued when discussing the quality of newspapers, the regional papers in the Netherlands are not necessarily of low quality, since we take the stand that the quality of newspapers is based on the proportion of (political) information versus amusement (see also Bakker & Scholten, 1999). By focusing on the complexity of the contents of newspapers

cultural capital can explain differences in newspaper reading. People with more cultural capital are better equipped to read complex (high quality) newspapers than people with lesser cultural capital. Since Bourdieu assumes that people of higher social classes have more cultural capital than people of lower social classes, it can be suggested that people of high social classes read complex ~~newspapers~~. *high quality*

However, research by Peterson (1992) throw some doubt upon the elite-to-mass theory. His study indicates that high status groups do not only participate more in high status activities, they tend to participate more often in most other kinds of leisure activities as well (DiMaggio, 1987; DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Peterson & Hughes, 1984). In effect, elite taste is no longer defined as the expressed appreciation of the high art forms and a corresponding moral standard. Because status is gained by knowing about, and participating in many if not all forms, the term 'omnivore' is used by Peterson (1992) to describe this type of lifestyle. This lifestyle may well go along with the reading of the 'better' newspapers as well as regional newspapers; the readers are informed about global matters and politics as well regional matters and politics.

The low status groups, on the other hand, do not practice a omnivore lifestyle according to Peterson's research. Their lifestyle can neither be characterized as mass, in the sense that status groups at the low end of the status hierarchy do not participate in ~~same~~ activities. It *the* should be characterized as univore which implies that occupation groups at the base tend to participate in a few or just one activity of the same kind. Since the lifestyle cannot be labeled as mass, it implies that there is no consensus about the 'appropriateness' of the leisure activity for this status group. Instead there is an increasingly large number of alternative forms having more or less equal taste value.

If, as Bourdieu indicated, socialization affects newspapers reading then religious orientation may affect newspaper reading as well as social class. In the Netherlands several national newspapers can be characterized according to their religious signature. Since the fifties this religious signature became less prominent however. Still one may find an effect of religion on newspaper reading because newspaper reading is passed on by socialization. Some support for this suggestion is given by research of Den Boom & Neijens (1996). Their study indicates that on average newspaper readers read the same newspaper for about fifteen years. About half of the respondents indicated that they read the same newspaper as the one read in the parental home.

These considerations can be summarized into the following hypotheses regarding newspaper reading:

- H 1: The higher the status groups of an individual, the more newspapers he/she reads.
- H 2: The newspapers read by high status groups are diverse in terms of their 'quality'.
- H 3: The newspapers read by low status groups are of low quality.
- H 4: People prefer the newspaper with the religious signature that matches their religious orientation.

In order to test these hypotheses we should pay attention to the operationalization of status group and religious orientation of people. Furthermore, the 'quality' of a newspaper as well as its religious signature should be determined.

2. Data and method

For this study we made use of the survey data that are part of the Dutch Time Budget Survey of 2000. This survey is commissioned and organized by the Social and Cultural Planning Office, with the financial support of several ministries and trade organizations, and carried out

by Intomart. The respondents are selected by means of a cluster sampling procedure; First municipalities were selected, then addresses within these municipalities, and finally, per address, a respondent 12 years of age or older was randomly selected. In total 1.813 respondent participated in the research and due to missing data, about 1.791 respondents were included in this study.

In the hypotheses four constructs are mentioned. The operationalization of these constructs will be discussed successively.

Status groups

According to Bourdieu (1984) the position of an individual in society is determined by the amount and composition of his/her capital: The means on the basis of which a class can maintain, defend and enhance it's position. Bourdieu distinguished three kinds of capital. Firstly, economic capital. Indicators of this kind of capital are income, wealth, and occupation. Secondly, cultural capital, indicators of which is educational level. And thirdly, social capital, with the indicators inherited dispositions and family relations. Since occupation is regarded as the most important determinant of behavior, the occupational level of the individual is regarded as the most prominent indicator of social class (Bakker et al. 1997). If occupation is regarded as the only indicator of social class, it is assumed that the other indicators mentioned (for example educational level) correlated perfectly with occupation. However, this is not the case ($r = 0.516$, $p < 0.05$ in this study). Therefore, we used two indicators to determine social class: Occupational level (ISEI classification) and educational level of the individual (7-levels). These indicators represent two kinds of capital: Economic and cultural capital.

An individual was allocated to a social groups by means of cluster analysis (K-means). This cluster procedure resulted in 10 groups that were of substantial size and differed significantly on educational level or occupational level (except groups 1 - 9, 1 - 10, and 2 - 4 regarding educational level and groups 1 - 4, 1 - 5, 4 - 5, and 2 - 7 regarding occupational level. In Table 1 a description of the ten groups in terms of educational level, occupational level, engagement in work, gender, and age if given.

International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status

Table 1: Description of the social groups distinguished

	size	educational level	ISEI	engaged in work	% male	age
group 1	114	5.96	28.47	45% working / 33% student	49.6	36.18
group 2	372	3.91	48.04	59% working	46.7	40.12
group 3	157	6.33	55.76	70% working	51.8	42.10
group 4	207	3.76	30.61	61% working	46.4	41.34
group 5	272	1.66	30.14	44% working/28% pension	48.6	50.87
group 6	91	6.90	75.32	68% working	67.7	39.48
group 7	202	1.91	47.69	33% working / 26% student	33.7	39.49
group 8	123	3.32	65.56	42% working/29% pension	57.3	46.88
group 9	166	5.75	68.37	63% working	58.0	47.14
group 10	86	6.09	42.62	63% working	38.2	40.63

Table 1 indicates that educational level and occupational level do not correspond perfectly. Group 1 for example has a large discrepancy between educational and occupational level. Their occupational level is quite high, however their occupational level is relatively low. This discrepancy can be attributed to the relative low age of this group and the largest percentage of students. It suggests that this group consists of people who have just started their carrier. Group 7 on the other hand has a relatively low level of education compared to their occupational level. This group encompasses a substantial percentage of women, a substantial

percentage of students, and is also relatively young. This may suggest that this group started working at a relatively young age (with a low educational level), worked his/her way up in the company or looked after the children, and is now looking for a new challenge. Group 8 also has a low educational level compared to their occupational level. However, these people are relatively old and a substantial proportion of this group has already retired. This indicates that this groups is at it's end of it's very successful carrier. Group 10 can be characterized as highly educated but lags behind in occupational level. This groups consists mostly of women who are about 41. This groups may be characterized as a 'lost generation'.

In order to come to an ordering of status groups, we will weight the ordering on the basis of occupation level most prominently, since in sociological studies occupation is often regarded as the most important determinant of a person's attitude and behavior (Bakker et al, 1997). The ordering of the groups according to occupation and educational level as well as the ordering in status groups used in this study is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Status groups distinguished

	size	ordering based on ISEI	ordering based on educational level	status group (chosen ordering)
group 1	114	1	7	2 9
group 5	272	2	1	1 5
group 4	207	3	4	3 10
group 10	86	4	8	5 16
group 7	202	5	2	4 12
group 2	372	6	5	6 17
group 3	157	7	9	8 23
group 8	123	8	3	7 19
group 9	166	9	6	9 24
group 6	91	10 x2	+ 10	10 30

Religion

In the Time Budget Survey religion is asked for by one question with precoded answers. The religious categories distinguished were: (Roman) Catholic, Reformed Church, Protestant, otherwise reformed, Islam, Hindu, no religion, and another religion. None of the respondents indicated to be Hindu. Only 60 respondents indicated to be a member of a religion not mentioned in the precoded list. For these respondents religion is regarded as missing. This resulted in the following 6 religious groups (see also Table 3). Most people indicate to be (Roman) Catholic and the least respondents regard themselves followers of the Islam.

Table 3: Religious groups distinguished.

	(Roman) Catholics	Reformed Church	Protestant	otherwise reformed	Islam	no religion
% of sample	25.8%	11.4%	4.1%	2.5%	1.1%	55.1%
commitment	2.42	2.08	1.95	1.64	1.52	

Table 3 also indicates the commitment people feel to their religion (strong = 1, no commitment = 4). Regarding 'Western European' religions, these average commitment scores indicate that (Roman) Catholics are least committed to their religion, while the 'otherwise reformed' are most committed.

In the introduction, it was suggested that the bottom of the status hierarchy may be characterized as set of district tradition-bound taste cultures based in religious customs. In Table 4 the religion of each status group is given. If religion customs are more pronounced in lower status groups then the percentage of people who indicate to be not religious should increase as status increases. Table 4 suggests that this is probably the case, since about 45% of the lower status group indicate to be non religious while about 70% of the highest status groups indicates to be non religious.

Table 4: Religion of the status groups. (In percentage)

	Roman Catholics	Reformed Church	Protestants	otherwise reformed	islam	no religion
status group 1	306	159	29	5	47	453
status group 2	318	82	36	62	5	497
status group 3	246	92	63	21	3	576
status group 4	295	128	28	22	0	527
status group 5	180	164	0	90	0	567
status group 6	259	116	43	18	6	558
status group 7	221	137	71	37	0	534
status group 8	213	62	41	0	0	684
status group 9	270	113	54	27	0	536
status group 10	145	45	38	49	28	695

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The newspapers

Before going into differences in newspapers, we will describe what newspaper titles are active in the Dutch market. In the Netherlands, there are seven national newspapers:

- a. *Algemeen Dagblad*: Neutral, no explicit political or religious signature.
- b. *De Telegraaf*: An independent conservative and political right oriented newspaper. It has the largest circulation.
- c. *NRC Handelsblad*: An independent, moderate progressive evening paper.
- d. *de Volkskrant*: Founded as a Catholic newspaper.
- e. *Trouw*: Founded as an orthodox Protestant newspaper. Nowadays it can be characterized as progressive protestant.
- f. *Nederlands Dagblad*: Newspaper for Reformed Christians
- g. *Reformatorisch Dagblad*: Founded as a Reformed Christian newspaper

The last two newspapers mentioned have a strong confessional signature. Since both newspapers have a very small circulation, they will be grouped into one category: The confessional newspapers.

Next to these seven national newspapers there are two national papers that are not exactly newspapers, since they appear only five times a week (not on Saturdays): the Metro and the Spits. These 'newspapers' are distributed for free at railway stations. They can be characterized by given short newsflashes without background information. Since both newspapers are quite similar, we will regard them members of the same group. These newspapers can be regarded as neutral in terms of religious signature.

Next to these national newspapers there are about 35 regional newspapers. The distinction national, regional indicates that national newspapers tend to provide more detailed information on national and foreign politics while regional newspapers attend more to local (province or county) matters. This does not mean that all regional newspapers have a smaller circulation than national newspapers; Only the four biggest national newspapers have a larger circulation than all regional newspapers, while the nine biggest regional newspapers have a larger circulation than the three 'smallest' national newspapers. We will regard all regional newspapers as one category as was done in research by Van Rees et al (1999), Van Eijck & Van Rees, (2000) and Kraaykamp (1993).

Regarding the national newspapers some differences in quality is acknowledged. Most research indicate that *De Telegraaf* and *Algemeen Dagblad* are more popular while *NRC Handelsblad*, *de Volkskrant*, and *Trouw* are regarded as quality press (Knulst & Kraaykamp, 1996; Bakker & Scholten, 1999). This distinction is made on the basis of the proportion of (political) information versus amusement. Quality press is characterized by an unadorned

layout, more attention to politics, economics and science. The popular newspapers attend more to gossip, sensation and entertainment.

A further differentiation between newspapers can be made by attending to the amount of prior knowledge needed to comprehend news items. Newspapers differ in the extent they call on world knowledge that is regarded as generally known between their readers (which is the most important indicator of complexity of a text (Stokmans 2002)). According to Bourdieu one can maintain or enhance status by a cultural practices (reading a newspaper) not performed by most people since most people do not have the capital (here prior knowledge) to appreciate the activity. In the research of Kraaykamp (1993) an ordering of the national and regional newspapers was conducted in terms of complexity by experts. It was indicated that the ordering of most to least complex is: *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, confessional newspapers, regional newspapers, *Algemeen Dagblad*, and *De Telegraaf*. *Metro* and *Spits* were not included into the above mentioned ordering, since these newspapers were launched in 1999. We feel that metro-spits can be characterized as least complex since it contains mainly newsflashes of predominantly amusement news items.

3. Results

In this section we will describe the newspaper reading patterns of the ten status groups distinguished (Table 5) as well as the newspaper reading patterns of the grouping based on religious background (Table 6).

Table 5 indicates that some individuals of a status group read more than one newspaper, since the percentage do not add to 100 per status group. Furthermore, regional newspapers are read by about half or more of the individuals of all status groups. According to the hypotheses formulated one can expect an increasing percentage of readers of the quality newspapers

(*NRC*, *Volkskrant*, and *Trouw*) if status increases. Table 5 suggests that this may be the case, only status group 5 deviates from this pattern.

Table 5: Newspapers read by each of the status groups

	s-g 1	s-g 2	s-g 3	s-g 4	s-g 5	s-g 6	s-g 7	s-g 8	s-g 9	s-g 10
NRC	1%	3%	2%	2%	11%	3%	6%	17%	17%	40%
Volkskrant	3%	8%	5%	1%	26%	8%	15%	30%	28%	43%
Trouw	1%	3%	2%	1%	8%	2%	6%	4%	11%	12%
confessional	0%	6%	1%	2%	7%	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%
regional	59%	62%	62%	61%	60%	68%	48%	58%	65%	41%
AD	14%	13%	17%	8%	16%	19%	17%	17%	16%	15%
Telegraaf	25%	30%	33%	29%	37%	28%	35%	20%	21%	17%
Metro-Spits	6%	14%	8%	6%	21%	10%	15%	19%	17%	16%
none	23%	13%	17%	25%	9%	12%	14%	5%	7%	5%

- s-g stands for status group.

Table 6: Newspaper reading by the religious groups

	(Roman) Catholics	Reformed Church	Protestant	otherwise reformed	Islam	no religion
NRC	4%	7%	3%	7%	0%	9%
Volkskrant	7%	8%	9%	8%	7%	18%
Trouw	2%	8%	23%	7%	0%	2%
confessional	0%	6%	4%	43%	0%	0%
regional	74%	63%	63%	43%	11%	56%
AD	9%	21%	12%	11%	22%	17%
Telegraaf	26%	26%	18%	11%	11%	30%
Metro-Spits	9%	10%	8%	15%	21%	13%
none	14%	11%	14%	9%	60%	15%

Inspection of Table 6 suggests that religious background has a small effect on newspaper reading. When the reading of newspapers is deviated according to religious background is was

expected that the Roman Catholics would read predominantly *de Volskrant*. This is not the case, Catholics read predominantly regional papers and *de Telegraaf* regarding the national papers. The same counts for members of the Reformed Church. On the basis of the signature of the newspapers one could expect that they would read *Trouw* or confessional newspapers. However, they read predominantly regional papers and *de Telegraaf* or *AD* of the national newspapers. The Protestants read predominantly regional papers and *Trouw* as national paper. On the basis of the signature of *Trouw* it was expected that Protestants would prefer this newspaper. The 'otherwise reformed' read predominantly the confessional newspapers. This was as expected on the basis of the signature of the confessional papers. Since no national Islamite newspaper is active in the Netherlands, people of the Islamite church have no newspaper that parallels their religion.

If the preference for a national newspaper is viewed relative to the commitment to the religious orientation, it is not so surprising that (Roman) Catholic and members of the Reformed Church do not prefer a newspaper that parallels their religious orientation, since those religious groups are least committed to their religion. Therefore we conclude that hypotheses 4 that states that people prefer the newspaper with the religious signature which matches their religious orientation, is supported by the data for those who are committed to their religion.

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get better.

The hypotheses about the number of different newspapers read, the complexity of the newspapers read, the dispersion in complexity of the newspapers read by the status groups distinguished can't be tested by inspecting the reading percentage of the status groups as indicated in Table 5, since they regard reading patterns of individual consumers. Results regarding these hypotheses are presented successively.

5.1. Number of newspapers read by each status group

According to hypotheses 1 the higher status groups would read more newspapers than the lower status groups. Table 7 shows the average number of newspapers read by individuals of each status group. Visual inspection of Table 7 indicates that this expected pattern is grosso modo correct. Only status group 5 (group 10), status group 2 (group 1), and status group 4 (group 7) disturb this pattern. However we had a problem with indicating the status position of these groups, since the ISEI and their educational level differed quite a lot.

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Table 7: Newspapers reading patterns of the status groups.

	status group	average number of newspapers read	average complexity of newspapers read	dispersion of complexity
group 5	1	1.09	3.49	0.45
group 1	2	1.39	3.61	0.79
group 4	3	1.30	3.40	0.62
group 7	4	1.08	3.43	0.57
group 10	5	1.84	4.08	1.06
group 2	6	1.38	3.53	0.68
group 8	7	1.43	3.65	0.96
group 3	8	1.67	4.35	1.19
group 9	9	1.77	4.42	1.16
group 6	10	1.86	5.41	1.31

↳ alleen de status

When testing the difference in the average number of newspapers read by each status group by means of an ANOVA it indicated that the status groups differed in the average number of newspapers read ($F_{1780,9} = 14.27, p < 0.05$). Differences between the status groups were tested by the post hoc tests of Games-Howell¹. Table 8 indicates with an '#' if two status groups

¹ The Games-Howell statistic was chosen because of heterogeneity of variances and the relatively large sample size per ($n > 50$) (Maxwell & Delaney, 1990:185)

differ significantly ($p < 0.05$). According to this analysis status group 2 differs with no other status group on the average number of newspapers read. Status groups 1 and 4 read significantly less newspapers than status groups 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. And status groups 5, 8, 9, and 10 read significantly more newspapers than status groups 1, 3, 4, and 6.

Table 8: Significance of Games-Howell post-hoc test regarding average number of newspapers read (#), average complexity of newspapers read (&), and diversity of newspapers read (!)

	s-g 1	s-g 2	s-g 3	s-g 4	s-g 5	s-g 6	s-g 7	s-g 8	s-g 9	s-g 10
s-g 1					# !	# !	# !	# & !	# & !	# & !
s-g 2								&	&	&
s-g 3					# & !			# & !	# & !	# & !
s-g 4					# & !	#	#	# & !	# & !	# & !
s-g 5						#				&
s-g 6								# & !	# & !	# & !
s-g 7								&	&	&
s-g 8										&
s-g 9										&

- s-g stands for status group.

5.2. Complexity of the newspapers read

According to hypothesis 2 the higher the status of a group the higher the complexity of the newspapers read. The average complexity of the newspapers read is given in Table 7. Visual inspection of Table 7 indicates that the hypothesized pattern is grosso modo correct. Only status group 5 (group 10), status group 2 (group 1), and status group 1 (group 5) disturb this

je had ook het meest complexe paper voor individuen. de gem. complex paper.

pattern. When testing the difference in the average complexity of the newspapers read by each status group by means of an ANOVA, it indicated that the groups differed in the complexity of newspapers read ($F_{1523,9} = 32.93, p < 0.05$). The significance ($p < 0.05$) of the post hoc Games-Howell comparison of each pair of status groups is indicated by an ‘&’ in Table 8. This test indicates that status group 10 read the most complex newspapers of all status groups. The status groups 3 and 4 read significantly less complex newspapers than status groups 5, 8, 9, and 10. The status groups 1, 2, 6, and 7 read significantly less complex newspapers than the status groups 8, 9, and 10.

5.3. Dispersion in complexity of newspapers read

According to hypothesis 3 the higher the status group the more diverse the newspapers read are in terms of complexity. The diversity in complexity was operationalized as the standard deviation of the complexity of the newspapers read by an individual. The average of the diversity is given in Table 7. Visual inspection of Table 7 indicates that the hypothesized pattern is grosso modo correct. Only group status group 5 (group 10), status group 4 (group 7), and status group 2 (group 1) disturb this pattern. When testing the difference in the average complexity of the newspapers read by each status group by means of an ANOVA, it revealed that the groups differed in the diversity of newspapers read ($F_{1523,9} = 12.14, p < 0.05$). The significance of the post-hoc Games-Howell statistic ($p < 0.05$) is indicated by an ‘!’ in Table 8. These post-hoc tests showed that status group 2 didn’t differ in diversity of newspapers read from any other status group. Status group 1 read significantly less diverse newspapers than status groups 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. Status groups 3 and 4 read significantly less diverse newspapers than status groups 5, 8, 9, and 10. And status group 6 is significantly less omnivore than status groups 8, 9, and 10 (and more omnivore than status group 1).

6. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that newspaper reading is partly determined by religion especially when the respondents are committed to their religion. Overall we saw that (Roman) Catholic and members of the Reformed Church are less committed to their religion than Protestants and members of otherwise reformed churches. Sometimes it is suggested that religion customs are more pronounced in lower status groups than in higher status groups. Results of this study support this suggestion, since about 45% of the lower status group indicated to be non religious while about 70% of the highest status groups indicated to be non religious. This interaction of religious traditions and social status may affect the results regarding the complexity of newspapers read by each of the status groups, since the religious newspapers are moderate in complexity. The effects of social status on newspaper reading are in the expected direction: Higher status groups read more newspapers, they read more complex newspapers, and they read more divers newspapers. This effect is significant despite the leveling off effect of religious traditions.

These results indicate that social class is a useful variable for segmenting the newspaper market: Higher social classes prefer complex national newspapers next to regional newspapers and lower social classes prefer popular national newspapers or a regional newspaper.

However, some critical remarks about this study can be made. The results of this study assume that the assignment of individuals to social class was appropriate. As was indicated in this paper, the assignment of social class is troublesome. First of all it is unclear how many social status groups should be distinguished. In this study we chose ten groups which differed in ISEI or in educational level and were still large enough to regard them as substantial groups. However, this number is more or less arbitrarily chosen. If the sample was of a smaller size, ten groups may be too much (resulting in too small groups). Furthermore, it is

not clear how stable these segments are. In other words, if in an other sample of about equal size respondents are clustered on the bases of ISEI and educational level, will the same groups emerge?

A second important issue is the ordering of the groups according to their social status. In this study two indicators of social status were used. Since the correlation between these indicators isn't perfect, the question of weighting one of the indicators more heavily than the other can be posed. In this study we argued that ISEI index should be more decisive in determining social status, since sociological studies assume that occupational level is important for ones lifestyle. However, one can question whether the ordering is as supposed. Some results indicate that this may not be the case. Some social status groups did not react as suggested by the cultural sociological perspective. These groups were also problematic when assigning social status because of a large discrepancy between occupational level and educational level. So, is the theory ~~X~~ right and is the operationalzation of social status wrong, or is it the other way around. Further research should attend to these stratification questions.

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