

AG.MA - OVERVIEW

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Synopsis

During the last two years, the German AG.MA has been concerned with two major problems. The first problem: the introduction of the average page exposure, or APX, as the measurement of an advertisement's exposure opportunity in the print media. And the second problem: the question of a possible validation of readers per issue data.

While average page exposure data were first published in the MA 92, along with the standard media exposure data, there are still many problems which face the validation of readers per issue scores. Research in this area is currently divided into in-home and out-of-home reading. In other words, the reading in one's own home of publications which have personally been purchased or subscribed to is analysed separately from out-of-home, pass-along reading. The goal of the in-home research is the creation of an instrument with which certain segments of the readers per issue can be compared with a publication's circulation.

In this context, discussion currently centres on the validity of the source of issue question per se and also within the context of the MA interview. At the current state of research, there are doubts over whether questions about the source of an issue can be used as an instrument for validation, because the additional question in the MA interview relating to the issue's origin influences the size as well as the structure of the readers per issue, and thus both variables do not seem to be independent of each other.

A model commission was therefore given the task of solving the problems associated with validating the question of the source of issue. Following initial research steps with out-of-home reading, further efforts in this direction were discontinued until the model commission have at their disposal the evaluation of the in-home research.

1. Introduction

The MA 92 was, as usual, carried out with one tranche for the electronic media and a second one for the print media. Television coverage figures provided by the GfK meter system were later merged into the electronic tranche.

In a parallel wave of 8,000 persons conducted in 1992, respondents were also questioned about the amount of a publication they had read. The resulting page exposure data were calibrated with the results of 4,500 copy test interviews and then subsequently merged into the print tranche. < Chart 1 >

All told, three data files are available: first, an electronic media data file which was created through the merging of GfK panel data. The basic data for radio and television were merged into the print media data file, thus making it an intermedia data file as well. And finally, there is the daily newspaper data file, created from the daily news- paper information in the electronic tranches as well as from the print media tranches of the last two years. < Chart 2 >

In the MA's questionnaire model, a general filter and a time filter initially produce the maximum readership scores. All respondents in a publication's maximum readership are then questioned about their reading frequency, and a further time filter then leads to the final readers per issue figures. These scores are obtained for around 150 consumer magazines by means of the "recent reading model." Daily newspapers are surveyed in a separate process for the various titles within the respective distribution areas with the help of title cards.

< Chart 3 >

Only the parallel wave of the print media tranche additionally asks the question about the amount read for all publications in the respective maximum readerships.

2. The AG.MA's Research Goals in the Last two Years

2.1 Average Page Exposure, APX

Since the MA 92, APX scores are also given along with average issue readership (AIR) data. It is now possible for magazines to analyse advertisement exposures along with media exposures. However, the road to this present situation was long and difficult. During the course of preparatory research, it became clear that a single-source survey into average issue readership and average page exposure was not possible, and that the original data from the respondents concerning the amount of a publication they read would have to be calibrated.

< Chart 4 >

2.2 Validation of the Readers per Issue

In Germany, as in other countries, from time to time doubts are expressed concerning the validity of the readers per issue figures - with all the consequences these doubts subsequently have on the average issue readership, and recently on the average page exposure as well. Hypotheses which attempt to explain the inaccuracies of readers per issue figures have thus far centered on the phenomena of replicated and parallel reading, as well as on prestige effects and memory lapse.

Thought was therefore given to developing a concept for validating readers per issue figures by means of a clear and unequivocal external criterion. A title's circulation can provide such a criterion for all in-home reading of titles personally bought or subscribed to. For all areas where only pass-along readers are found, merely observations are available as an external criterion. This is especially true of reading publications which one "comes across" outside the home.

Readers per issue can therefore be logically divided into two components, namely into readers of issues which they have purchased or subscribed to themselves, and into pass-along readers of issues which they have neither bought nor subscribed to. Two research directions were therefore prepared, corresponding to the two respective reader per issue categories. Initial studies have already been carried out for each direction:

A. Validation of reading in one's **own home** of titles which the respondent has either purchased or subscribed to himself, using the publication's circulation as an external criterion.

B. Validation of reading **outside the home** of titles which one has not purchased or subscribed to himself through the use of observations and interviews. < Chart 5 >

Rolf Fleiderer will later describe the second approach.

2.2.1 Validating the Source of Issue Question

A prerequisite to validating readers per issue to the publication's circulation is having a valid question into the source of the issue. This means that based on the reader's claims concerning the source of the issues he has read, it should be possible to calculate circulation levels which can then be compared with actual circulation figures.

Such a procedure is of course only admissible when the test persons can accurately answer the question about the origin of the issues they read, i.e. if a validated evaluation criterion is thus created. If the question into an issue's origin is proven to be valid, the subsequent goal will be to have it integrated into the standard MA interview.

Therefore, in 1990, the survey "Heftherkunft 90" (Copy Source 90) of in-home reading was carried out by the German Infratest Institute. The survey includes all questions from the standard MA interview which produce readers per issue data along with a battery of additional questions.

< Chart 6 >

These questions concern

- o the numbers of the various issues which were read during the last four weeks
- o the place of reading
- o the age of the issue which was read last
- o the frequency of usage (was the issue read for the first time?)
- o the date of the last purchase
- o the source of the issue read last < Chart 7 >
- o what the respondent did with the issue

These questions were supplemented by a Pantry Check, where the actual presence of the issues still in the home was verified. This survey was carried out as a full household survey in order that the answers from the various household members could all be compared with each other.

The survey's most important result is that, in the framework of this test, the question into the issue source proved to be valid. The results of the study are consistent and plausible.

For verifying the accuracy of this segment of the readers per issue, the number of copies which the respondents claimed to have purchased themselves are now projected for the total population and then compared with the publications' actual single-copy circulation. For the readers per issue figures which were thus validated, there are "correct" figures, but there are also some which are overclaimed and likewise some which are underclaimed.

The hypothesis which attempts to explain the overclaiming of readers per issue is based on the phenomenon of replicated reading, especially with titles which are not regularly read. A summary explanation of the underclaiming phenomenon has not yet been attempted.

2.2.2 Validating the Source of Issue Question within the Framework of the MA Interview

The next step involves questioning the validity of the source of issue question **in the framework** of the normal MA interview. To answer this, the study "Feldtest 3000" (FT 3000), was carried out with 3,000 interviews. In this survey, for every title in the maximum readership, the source of copy question was asked following the questions in the normal MA interview which produce the readers per issue. < Chart 7 >

The question about the source of an issue is thus integrated into the question complex used for ascertaining coverage.

In contrast to the HH90 survey, which asked a battery of questions relating to the source of issue and where the respondents to a large degree became sensitized to this topic as the interview progressed, with Feldtest 3000 only one additional question was asked. Moreover, no full household survey was conducted as was the case with HH 90.

Consequently the results of Feldtest 3000 differ from those of HH90:

If one compares the readers per issue from both surveys, differences become evident concerning the size of the readers per issue as well as differences in their respective structures with respect to demographics and the regularity of usage.

Even where the readers per issue figures are at least quantitatively identical, there are still distinct and massive variances concerning the distribution of responses to the source of issue question on the source of issue scale. There are more self-buyers and fewer out-of-home readers in Feldtest 3000 as in HH 90. In other words, there is an overclaiming of self-subscribing and purchasing; the out-of-home reading is underclaimed.

The varying sizes and structures of the readers per issue between HH 90 and FT 3000 are evidently directly related to the additional question into the source of the issue.

Several effects can play a role here:

On the one hand, the volume of the interview increases during the course of a normal MA interview, thus causing an increasing burden on both the interviewer and the respondent. The resulting effects were

described in detail in the paper "Where less is more, a specific German experience" that I presented in Hong Kong in 1991.

And on the other hand, a certain learning effect caused by the mere presence of the source of issue question takes place among the respondents; in other words, the respondent develops a different awareness of the contents of the questionnaire than during a normal MA interview.

If, however, the readers per issue are quantitatively and qualitatively different than those obtained through a normal MA interview, this also means that the results of the source of issue question, as seen in the framework of a normal MA interview, likewise differ from those of the HH 90 study.

This phenomenon is similar to the one we experience in determining average page exposure scores by means of an additional question into the amount read. Here, too, an additional question about the amount read influences the quantity of the readers per issue.

3. Conclusion

The additional question into the source of the issue on the one hand influences the size and structure of the reader per issue; on the other hand, varying reader per issue scores lead to different answers to the source of issue question.

The two variables thus appear to be not independent of each other. Therefore, only under very specific conditions is the source of issue question appropriate for validating the readers per issue by means of the publications's circulation.

A model commission has now been given the task of solving the associated problems. < **Chart 8** >

Research into out-of home reading will be tackled once the model commission has completed a final evaluation of the question into the usability of the source of issue question and has found a suitable algorithm.

Chart 1

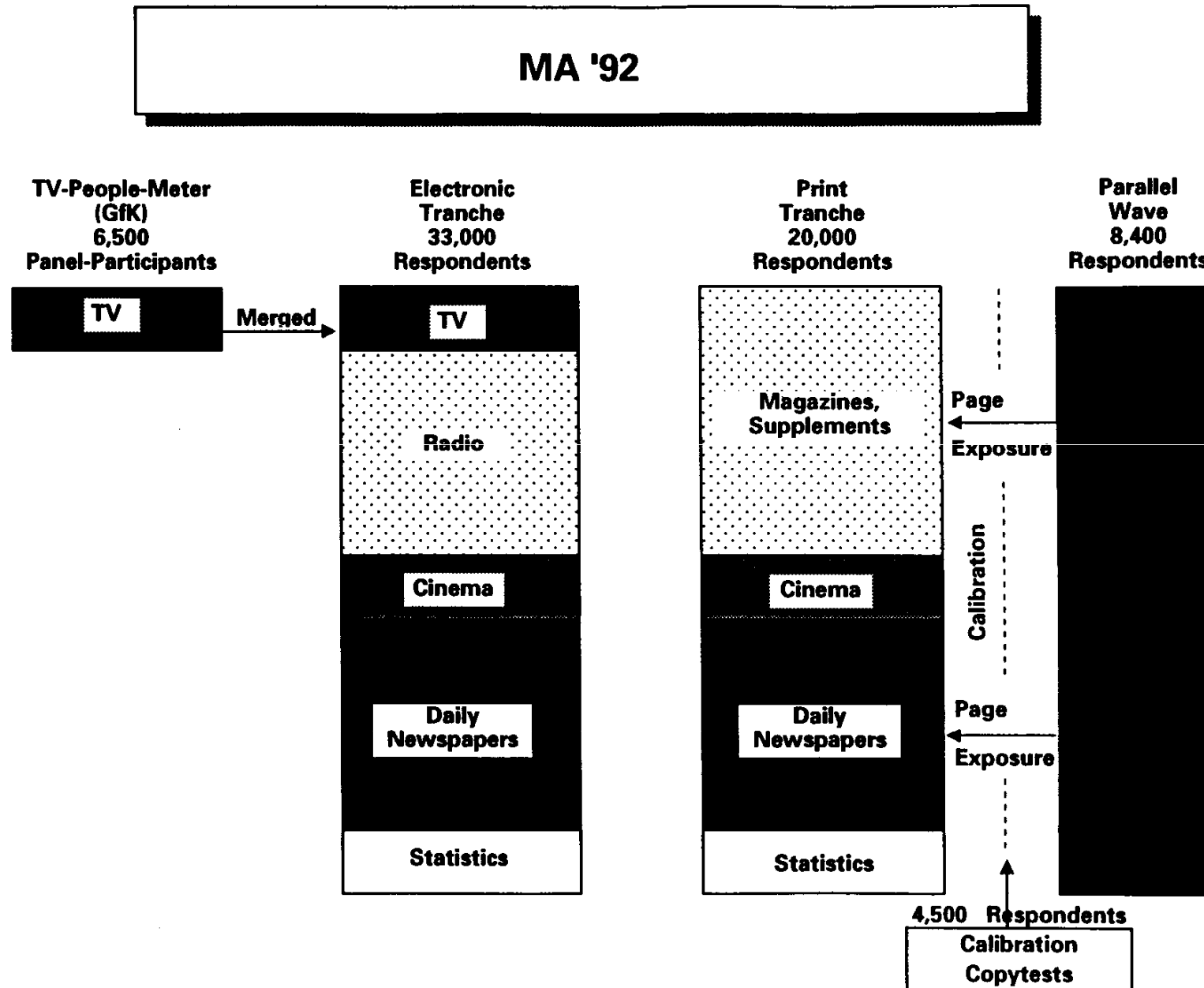


Chart 2

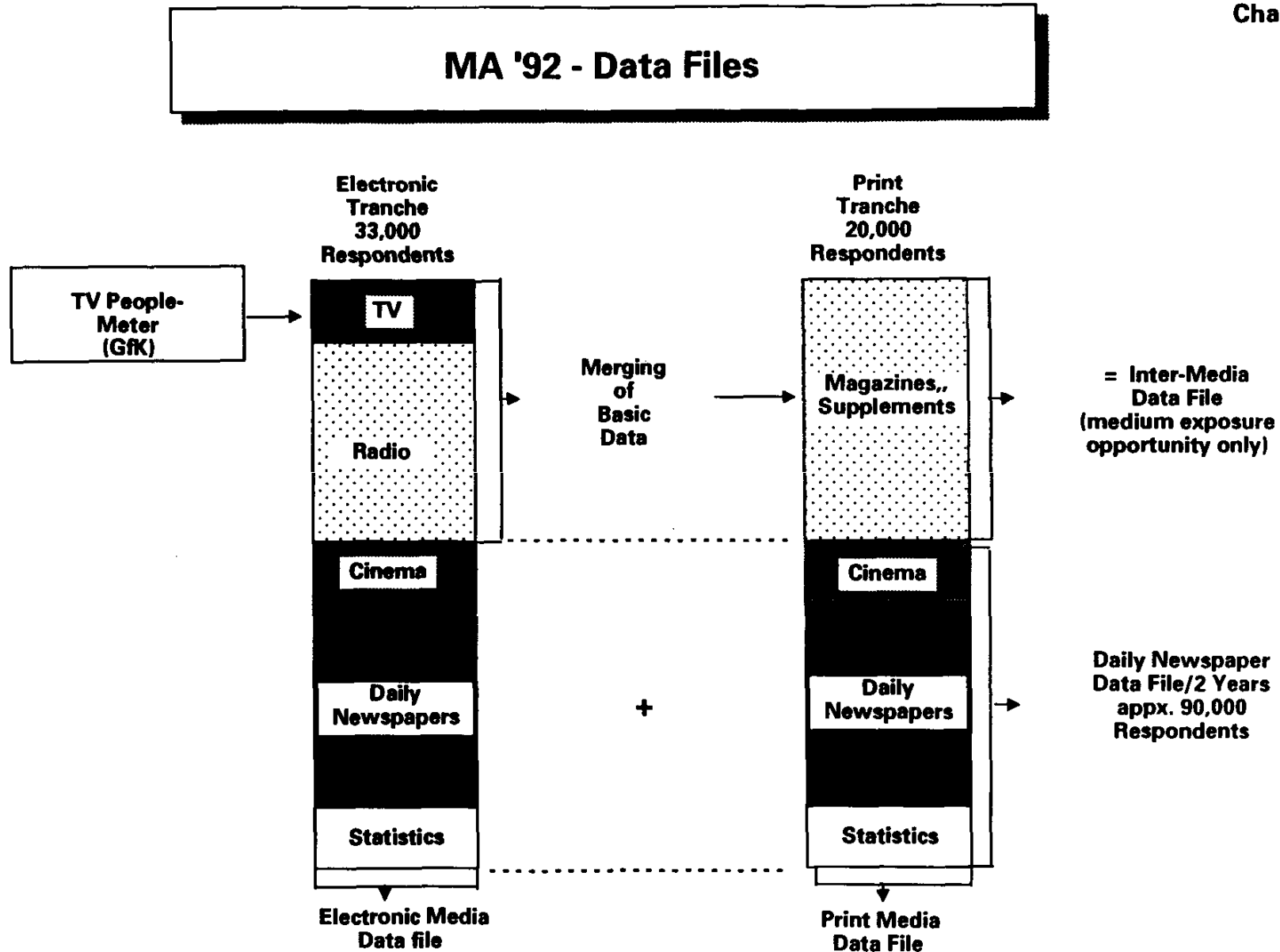


Chart 3

Questionnaire Design of the Media Analysis 92 (Magazines and Newspapers)

General filter:

unknown

known by name
only

had in hand before

Time filter:

monthly titles

within the last 12 months

1 to 2 years ago

longer

fortnightly titles

within the last 6 months

1/2 to 1 year ago

longer

weekly titles

within the last 3 months

1/4 to 1/2 year ago

longer

dailies

within the last 2 weeks

2 to 4 weeks ago

longer

Frequency

1

2-3

4-5

6-7

8-9

10-11

12

Readers per issue:

monthly titles

within the last 4 weeks

1 to 2 months ago

2 to 3 months ago

longer

fortnightly titles

within the last 14 days

2 to 4 weeks ago

4 to 6 weeks ago

longer

weekly titles

within the last 7 days

8 to 14 days ago

2 to 3 weeks ago

longer

dailies

yesterday

2 days ago

3 days ago

longer

Chart 4

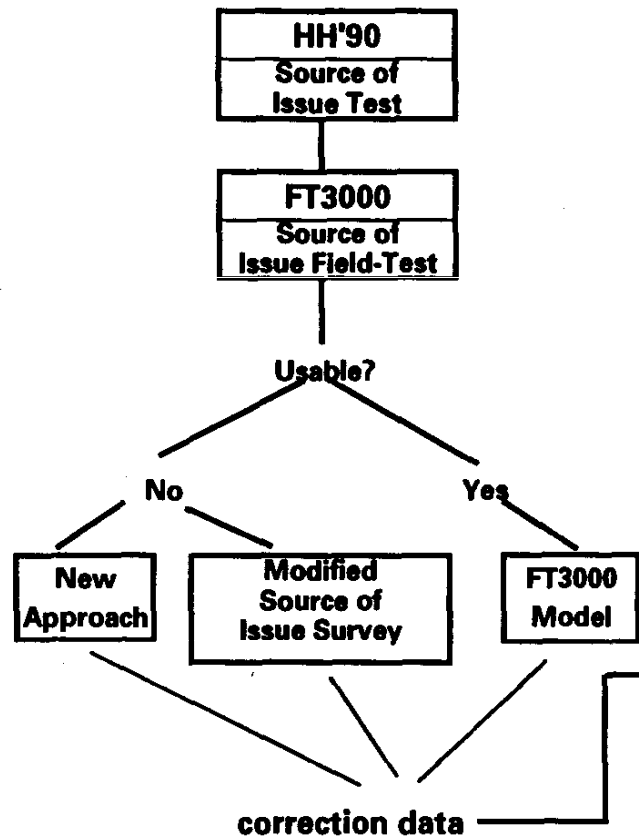
Gross Coverage: Readers per Issue in %

	MA '90	Parallel Wave	Difference	Index MA '90 = 100
Sample size	6,518	10,156		
Consumer magazines (138)	430	399	- 31	93
Monthly magazines (74)	157	145	- 22	92
Fortnightly magazines (18)	40	34	- 6	86
Weekly magazines (46)	233	219	- 14	94

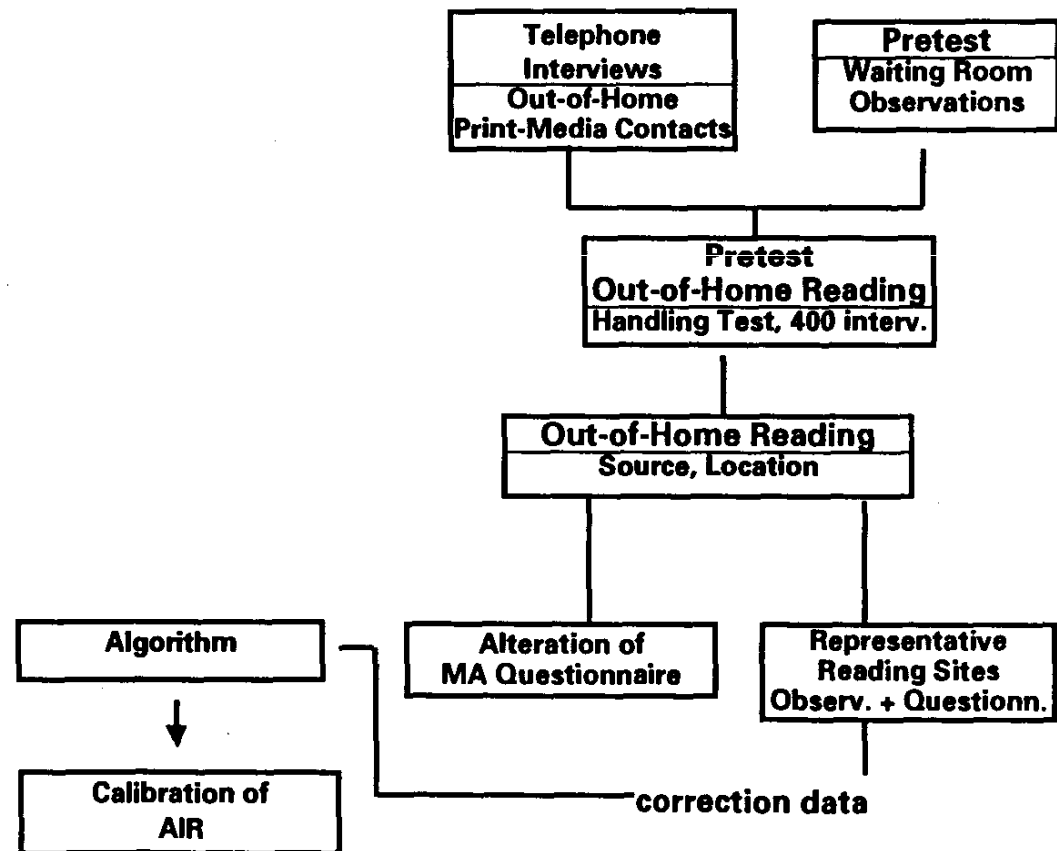
Chart 5

Validation of Readers per Issue

IN-HOME READING



OUT-OF-HOME READING



HH 90: Survey Programme

all questions leading
to readers per
issue

+

for all titles in the maximum readership:

- the numbers of the various issues which were read during the last four weeks
- the place of reading
- the age of the issue which was read last
- the frequency of usage (was the issue read for the first time?)
- the date of the last purchase
- the source of the issue read last
- what the respondent did with the issue

+

Pantry-Check

Chart 7

Source of Issue Question

- A Was in a readers' circle folder
 - B Was circulated in the company, was laying around in the company
 - C Happened to find it; was laying around in a waiting room, cafe, hotel, barber-shop, etc.
 - D Found at friends, acquaintances
-
- E Free copy
 - F Received as a present, borrowed from friends and acquaintances, another person brought it along
 - G Was included as a loose magazine or newspaper insert
 - H Receive it automatically as club membership magazine or from savings bank, etc.
 - J Subscribed by the household; brought by delivery-boy, mail, etc.
 - K Was bought by someone who does not regularly live in the household
 - L Bought it myself
 - M Another household member bought it
 - N Can't say anymore

Chart 8

