

## **Advertising Value Equivalence – PR’s illegitimate offspring**

Tom Watson, PhD  
Professor of Public Relations  
The Media School  
Bournemouth University  
Poole, Dorset, UK BH12 5BB

Email: [twatson@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:twatson@bournemouth.ac.uk)  
+44 1202 961986

Corresponding Author: Tom Watson

### **Abstract**

Public relations measurement and evaluation have long been major practice subjects. From the late 1970s onwards they have been identified as an important issue for research and practice implementation (McElreath, 1980, 1989; Synnott & McKie, 1997, Watson & Noble 2007; Watson 2008). The evolution of public relations measurement starts much earlier, with some suggesting that media monitoring practices can be identified from the late 18th century onwards (Lamme & Miller, 2010).

Although the academic approach to measurement and evaluation has mostly favoured social science methodologies (Broom & Dozier 1990, Michaelson & Stacks 2011), there has been persistent and widespread practice use of Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) to express the value of public relations activity for decades. Recent data (Daniels & Gaunt, 2009) found that AVE was used by 35% of a large international sample of practitioners.

Early significant US practitioners, including Lee and Page, instituted media monitoring of programme outputs and AT&T developed sophisticated opinion researching to guide and monitor its communication activity (Cutlip 1994). Literature in the 1930s and 1940s indicate that these practices were extant, especially basic monitoring of media coverage (Batchelor, 1938).

However, there are indications that AVE was in use from the 1940s onward. Plackard and Blackmon (1947) refer to it in the US and provide an example of its calculation. In the UK, the first warning against AVE came in a 1949 edition of the IPR Journal (J. L’Etang, personal communication, January 10, 2011). Both sources thus indicate it was an established practice by mid-century, although it did not surface in professional or quasi-academic literature till the late 1960s. AVE was further operationalized by the emergence of computer based analysis, such as offered by PR Data, in the mid-1960s (Tirone, 1977). From that decade onwards, its use became

widespread, as indicated by industry coverage of awards and case studies and by award case studies.

Latterly, AVE has been directly challenged by the Barcelona Declaration's Principle 5 which stated that "AVEs are Not the Value of Public Relations" (AMEC, 2010). It added that AVEs "do not measure the value of public relations and do not inform future activity; they measure the cost of media space and are rejected as a concept to value public relations." Time will tell whether AVE is replaced by other, valid metrics.

This paper investigates the evolution of AVE, which has long been damned as illegitimate, and postulates whether it arose from clippings agencies, advertising planning practices or from other influences on public relations.

**Keywords: AVE, evaluation, measurement, public relations**

## Introduction

AVE is a disputed method of calculating the value of public relations activity in the form of editorial publicity. “AVEs are calculated by multiplying the column centimetres of editorial print coverage and seconds of broadcast publicity by the respective media advertising rates. In most applications, the total amount of coverage is ‘valued’ as if it was advertising, irrespective of its tone and content” (Macnamara, 2008, p. 1). Although widely used by practitioners, it has never been considered to be a valued research method in academic literature (Watson & Noble, 2007). Some commentators are highly critical of it. McKeown (1995) describes it as “an early attempt to assign spurious monetary values to media relations activities” (p. 149) whilst Philips (2001) refers to it as “voodoo”, “make-believe” and “inventive nonsense” (p. 227). However, it is widely used by practitioners, largely in product-oriented publicity activity. This author recent judged regional public relations awards in the UK (December 2011) and found that the vast majority of entries were setting objectives and measuring results in terms of AVE.

Public relations measurement and evaluation have long been major practice subjects. From the late 1970s onwards they have been identified as an important issue for research and practice implementation (McElreath, 1980, 1989; Synnott & McKie, 1997, Watson & Noble 2007; Watson 2008). The evolution of public relations measurement starts much earlier, with some suggesting that media monitoring practices can be identified from the late 18th century onwards (Lamme & Miller, 2010). Although the academic approach to measurement and evaluation has mostly favoured social science methodologies (Broom & Dozier 1990, Michaelson & Stacks 2011), there has been persistent and widespread practice use of Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) to express the value of public relations activity for decades.

In July 2010, the public relations industry began the process of barring future use of Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) as a methodology for the measurement of public relations effectiveness with the adoption of the Barcelona Principles for PR Measurement (AMEC 2010). In the following year, AMEC used the term “outlawed” (AMEC 2011). In this set of seven principles supported by 92% of delegates at the Second European Summit on Measurement held in Barcelona in July 2010, principle 5 was that: “AVEs are not the value of public relations”. The statement supporting this principle said:

Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) do not measure the value of public relations and do not inform future activity; they measure the cost of media space and are rejected as a concept to value public relations.

This is the public relations equivalent to the Christian baptismal promise to ‘reject Satan and all his works.’ There has been an air of moral outrage about the longevity of AVEs despite their debunking by academic researchers and serious practitioners. Shortly after the event, Robert W. Grupp writing a commentary about the Principles for the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) commented that “The legitimate intent here is not to debate the validity of AVEs (which simply

measure the cost of media space) but to move beyond this measure once and for all” (IPR 2010). During the second half of 2010, other organizations in the public relations sector moved quickly to support the Barcelona Principles, especially in regard to AVE. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) supported the initiative (PRSA, 2010). In the United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute for Public Relations (CIPR), which represents individual members, and the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA), the trade body for PR consultancies and in-house communication departments, both decided on new policy to cease recognizing AVE as a valid measurement technique.

In November 2010, CIPR’s CEO Jane Wilson gave strong organizational support:

AVEs cannot be a part of serious business communication because they have no relevance to the value, financial or otherwise, of an organisation. They don't reflect what has actually been achieved. With any successful communications campaign there has to be a tangible result if it is to be deemed successful. Whether it's a product or a perception, something has to have shifted. (CIPR 2010)

CIPR undertook to lead policy on measurement and evaluation. It identified entries to its annual awards programme as the route to enforce its policy by stating that “AVEs will no longer be deemed an acceptable form of measurement and evaluation (M&E), and judges will be briefed to this effect when shortlisting each category's entries” (CIPR 2010). PRCA’s chair Sally Costerton announced that evaluation would be at the heart of best practices. In a news release, PRCA said.

Endorsing the AMEC-PRSA new evaluation framework, Costerton revealed that the PRCA will embed evaluation within its own Awards, and within Consultancy Management Standard - the global mark of PR professionalism, created by the PRCA, and adopted in more than a dozen countries around the world. (PRCA, 2010)

In addition to these national public relations organizations, the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management which is the umbrella body for national public relations professional bodies belatedly announced the Barcelona Principles as a new “global measurement standard” in April 2011 (Global Alliance, 2011).

Yet, only a year before the decision to outlaw the use of AVE, research had shown that it was a widely used metric. In Berlin in July 2009, the First European Summit on Measurement had been told that an international study of more than 500 public relations practitioners found that AVEs were the third most popular measurement method for judgment of communication effectiveness, after clippings counts and internal reviews, and the first amongst methods of judging the value of public relations activity. AVE had risen from fifth place to third in the five years since the previous study. Some 35% of respondents were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with it as a measurement tool and are very loyal to it (Daniels & Gaunt, 2009).

This aim of this paper is to explore the origins of the AVE by considering the development of public relations measurement and evaluation methods and theory and discussing possible influences and routes by which it became so obviously popular amongst practitioners. It will become apparent that it has never been given credibility by academics and serious practitioners (Macnamara 2006; Paine, 2003) and was not proposed by the pioneers of public relations in any major countries. Indeed, for over 60 years there have been warnings against its use. But it has thrived and grown to be one of the mostly used judgments of effectiveness. AVE really is an illegitimate offspring of public relations, without a family heritage and few credentials, but aligned closely to that slightly wild world of publicity and consumer public relations where communication management and Excellence theory are unknown concepts. Watson has referred to it as “a pernicious weed” (Geddes, 2011). However, a long tradition of media monitoring and of the use of clipping counts as a proxy methods of public relations effectiveness may give some clues as to its illicit origins.

### **Early monitoring practices**

Lamme and Russell’s monograph, *Removing the spin: Towards a new theory of public relations history* (Lamme & Russell, 2010) argues that from George Washington onwards, US presidents monitored newspapers in order to gain intelligence on what was being said about them and the views of fellow citizens. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many industries and groups also tracked media coverage and public opinion. They ranged from railroads to temperance societies and evangelists. In the US and UK, news cuttings agencies were established in the latter part of the century. From some of these, there is lineage to today’s international computer-based evaluation companies.

As the 20th century started, publicity agencies began to be formed in the United States. Cutlip (1994) dates the first to the Publicity Bureau in Boston in 1900. One of its major clients from 1903 onwards was American Telephone & Telegraph Company (AT&T) which was based in the same city. AT&T and its agency “early saw the need for systematically gauging public opinion ... collected and studied newspaper clippings from the nation’s press” (Cutlip, 1994, p. 18). It found that 90% were antagonistic. By modifying company behaviour and disseminating “real information through the press”, AT&T gradually reduced the negative coverage to “sixty percent and lower” (ibid, p. 18). In its work for railroad interests, the Publicity Bureau systematically monitored and influenced press coverage. Titled *The Barometer* it was a card index of the attitudes of editors, gained from visits, and media usage of publicity material. This allowed the agency to judge “whether a paper is “Good” or “Bad” from the standpoint of the railroads” (ibid, p. 21). Cutlip commented, somewhat tongue in cheek, that “public relations research is not as new as some think,” (ibid, p. 21).

One of the founders of US public relations practice, Ivy L. Lee, who formed two of the earliest public relations advisory firms, took the view that he was engaged in an art whereas another pioneer, Edward L. Bernays, saw public relations as an applied social science (Ewen,

1996; Tye, 1998). Lee, according to his biographer, considered that his activity was nondefinable and nonmeasurable. It only existed through him and was thus not comparable (Hiebert, 1966). Cutlip says Lee “constantly referred to his work as an art. In fact, Bernays was quoted in November 1940 as saying, “He (Ivy Lee) used to tell me that this was an artist’s field, that what he was doing would die with him” (Cutlip, 1994, p. 59).

Bernays presented public relations as an applied social science to be planned through opinion research and precisely evaluated. Ironically, there is very little discussion of measurement and evaluation of campaign effectiveness in his books and papers. The first book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, (Bernays, 1923) set the foundations for a systematic approach to public relations (Pavlik, 1987). Advertising and the publicity side of public relations both expanded rapidly in the 1920s driven along by the self-publicising efforts of pioneers such as Lee and Bernays and through several business books on publicity and public relations. Bernays’ books and Lee’s privately published *Publicity Some of the Things It Is and Is Not* (Lee, 1925) were well known along with R.H. Wilder and K.L. Buell’s *Publicity* (Wilder & Buell, 1923) and several other books. The latter two publicists defined publicity as “the organised and deliberate effort to enlist the support of the public for an idea, sponsored by any given group for any given purpose,” (ibid, p. 109).

Although cuttings agencies monitored press coverage for clients, there was little discussion of the measurement and evaluation of publicity or public relations activity. It was the former magazine editor, Arthur W. Page, who introduced opinion research into public relations and organisational communication at AT&T. Although AT&T had started using opinion polling shortly before Page joined it, he championed the use of surveys which were to be an important factor in developing a customer-facing culture at the telecommunications giant. “He deserves credit for recognizing the need for feedback and encouraging development of systems to gauge the moods of AT&T’s publics. Integration of formal feedback systems into the public relations function is one of his contributions to public relations practise” (Griese 2001, p. 122).

AT&T continued to monitor media, although the examples are much less prevalent than the use of opinion surveys. Page’s biographer, Noel Griese, identified two studies of the use by newspapers of “clipsheets” (broadsheets with several AT&T news items which editors would select and send to typesetters) in 1932 and 1933. These were measured by the number of items published and the total of column inches of coverage. “Whilst the column inches of publicity a corporation gets are not a reliable indicator of the amount of good will being built, these studies show AT&T’s practice of systematically evaluating public relations devices” (Griese 2001, p. 153).

Page created a “public relations laboratory where PR successes and failures were gathered, studied and the lessons learnt passed on to his colleagues at AT&T” (Broom and Dozier, 1990, p. xi). This approach continued after his retirement in 1947 until the telephone monopoly was broken up in the late 1970s. It is notable, however, that AT&T was not measuring

the results of communication activity (Tedlow, 1979). Page used the term 'public relations' in an organisationally holistic manner with a strong emphasis on the corporation understanding "the overall relations with the public it served" (Griese, 2001, p. 195). In 1938 he explained it further: "The task which business has, and which it has always had, of fitting itself to the pattern of public desires, has lately come to be called public relations" (ibid, p. 195).

Tedlow's discussion of the nascent relationship of advertising and public relations may indicate formative influences on evolution of AVEs. He argues there was a tension between advertisers who bought media space and could "be absolutely certain that the message appeared therein. When he hired a publicity man to concoct a stunt, he could not be sure whether or how the papers would carry it" (Tedlow, 1979, p. 171). Later he discusses the media owners' dislike of press agents, whom they called "space grabbers" (p. 177). They were not only recruiting their journalists to better-paid jobs but they were also able to get coverage in their pages at the third of the cost of advertising space. "One estimate was that if a press agent could deliver equal lineage to an advertisement at one-third the cost of paid space, advertising would end and with it newspaper revenue and reader confidence" (p. 177). In the first 30 years of the last century in the US, there is an obvious connection in the minds of advertisers, media owners, press agents and publicists that there is a relationship that expresses value equivalence between media coverage and advertising, whether it is in the fears of the media owners or the press agents and publicists panning for business from clients. It is not a large step for informal methods of calculating values from press clippings provided by myriad city-based and regional services to be introduced without reference to social scientists or experts in statistical validity. In the absence of specific archival information indicating a start date or action that creates AVEs, this is a thesis that can be considered.

### **Media analysis by government**

By the late 1930s, a wide range of measurement and evaluation methods were being used in the United States, notably by various levels of government. Batchelor, writing in 1938, gave two examples of the monitoring and interpretation of media publicity.

The Roosevelt Administration gives close attention not merely to the technique of publicity dissemination but also to the manner of its reception. In other words, it watches carefully all changes in the political attitudes of a community. The sum of these numerous local impressions constitutes, of course, a barometer of national opinion that possesses great value. (p. 212) [The method of data collection is not identified by Batchelor]

He also discussed Toledo Associates, which was a "cooperative publicity effort, sponsored by local business interests" set up to promote the city of Toledo, Ohio during the Great Depression.

Toledo's experiment in cooperative industrial publicity became an unqualified success. Ninety-one per cent of more than 72,000 clippings, representing newspaper circulations totalling more than one and half millions, were regarded as favourable to the city's interests (p. 214).

So it can be seen that at high levels of national and city government, measurement and evaluation were taking place using methods that are still in place today.

### **Media evaluation practices to 1950**

From early times, PR practitioners and organisations had monitored press coverage of their own and others activities. In 1942, Harlow wrote that public relations practitioners and their employers "should not be impressed by sheaves of press clippings" (p. 43) as a volume indicator of what was going on. Many books on public relations across the initial 40-50 year period discussed measurement of the volume of coverage, its length in column inches and whether it was positive or negative. Plackard and Blackmon gave this (dubious) advice in 1947: "The publicist must learn the art of "pepping up" publicity results. Publicity clippings as such are not sufficiently interesting to show to a client. However, they can be dressed up or dramatized in unusual ways" (p. 299). Examples given included "trick photography" by blowing cuttings up and then printing large sheets of folded card on which they were placed; graphic presentation of cuttings beneath newspaper mastheads; and displays on large display boards, especially in hall corridors, all in order to emphasise the volume.

### **First sight of AVE?**

Advertising Value Equivalence makes what may be an initial appearance in text in 1947 in the US and 1949 in the UK. The nature of the references makes it clear that it was an extant practice. There may be earlier references but they are not recorded in bibliographies such as organised by Cutlip (1965) or in the numerous texts on public relations that burgeoned in the post-World War 2 period. This paper does not claim the example to follow is the very first reference but it indicates that the use of AVE may have arisen from publicity practices carried out alongside advertising and have been promoted by clippings agencies seeking to add value to clients. Plackard and Blackmon, referred to earlier, introduce the concept of AVEs in their book, *Blueprint for Public Relations*, rather tentatively. After discussing valuable results from the "intangible realm – definitely present but not readily measured – namely good will, making friends, instilling confidence", etc (p. 4), they introduce the notion of valuing media coverage:

Only in a general way can these benefits be valued in dollars and cents. Newspaper publicity on a certain national institution may reach 100,000 inches. If all the publicity is good, an equal amount of space may be said to be worth \$100,000. However, if the publicity is badly done, it could be more harmful than no publicity. (ibid, p. 4)

But later in the book, their cautious tone changes and Plackard and Blackmon provide an concrete example from a named clippings agency of the dollar valuation of media coverage, using the advertising value equivalent method:

From the results of his publicity thus obtained in the form of newspaper cuttings, he can much more effectively measure its value.

The following table is based on newspaper clippings supplied a company by the Allen Press Clippings Service. Although, like other services, Allen cannot guarantee 100 per cent return on material presented, the coverage is complete enough to present a satisfactory picture of the amount of space devoted to Company X throughout the country.

Translated into dollars and cents value to Company X at a column-inch rate of \$1.06 (an average for large and small daily papers throughout the nation), the 169,629 column inches of material published in 1 year would be worth approximately \$179,806.74 if purchased as display advertising. Even eliminating 50 per cent of this amount to allow for unfavourable mentions (of which there were very few) and stories not wholly devoted to Company X, the projection would result in a value of almost \$90,000 being ascribed to the editorial space (p. 295)

It is notable that this exemplar uses a single national average metric for the calculation of AVE, which is in itself a considerable task in the late 1940s when data collection was much more difficult than it is today. More recent practices, aided by computerised databases, will calculate the media coverage according the rate cards or cost data for the specific media. Another point to note is that no multiplier is added to the calculation, unlike current practices.

After this reference was found, the author undertook an online search to identify whether the Allen Press Clipping Service still existed some 64 years after the book was published. An firm with the very similar name of Allen's Press Clipping Bureau was identified in San Francisco and an email enquiring about the Plackard and Blackmon reference was sent to it. John N. McComb, the third generation owner of the business replied that the firm had not prepared reports or calculations like those in the book. "I have not seen the example given. To my knowledge Allen's did not supply Ad Equivalence Reports in the 40's, 50' or even the 60's. I have worked here since 1958." (Personal correspondence, February 2011). Mr McComb, before replying contacted a fellow veteran, Irving Paley, who had owned the American Press Clipping Bureau and the International Press Clipping Bureau in New York City. Mr Paley who had worked in the clippings businesses from 1947 "had not heard of Ad Equivalence Reports at that time. It may have been that an individual client asked for such a report and spelled out specifically what it was ... Certainly the formula used portrayed very little except a guesstimation of value. However the idea did catch on" (ibid).

So, although a specific example AVE was found in text, it was not possible to validate its accuracy by reference to the clipping organisation named. As John N. McComb notes, “idea did catch on”.

### **AVEs in the UK**

In the UK, public relations was a post-World War 2 phenomenon. The first press agency, Editorial Services, had been set up by Basil Clarke in London in 1924 (L’Etang 2004) but the establishment and real growth of public relations came as a result of journalists and propaganda experts coming out of government and the armed forces in 1945 with knowledge of news management and propaganda methods. The Institute of Public Relations (IPR) was set up in 1948, mainly by governmental communicators in information officer posts, as the first step to professionalise their area of activity (ibid). From its outset, issues of evaluating public relations were discussed in the IPR’s *Journal*: mostly as methods of collation of cuttings and transcripts, and how to do it cheaply (J. L’Etang, personal communication, January 10, 2011). Unlike the US with its interest in social sciences and university education, there was a strong anti-intellectual streak in the IPR. This was expressed by its 1950 President Alan Hess who inveighed against “a tendency for too much intellectualisation and too much market research mumbo-jumbo” (L’Etang, 2004, p. 75). So the discussion of public relations practices was often a ‘belt-and-braces’ consideration of practical issues. In 1949, shortly after IPR started and began to issue its *Journal* to the membership, the topic of valuing media coverage by advertising costs arose in the form of advice against its use by a founding member, F. Murray Milne,

F. Murray Milne (Wholesale Textile Association) emphasised that there should be no rivalry between public relations and advertising. It was a grave mistake for the PRO to try and evaluate his work at so many column inches calculated at advertising rates. (IPR Journal, 1949, p. 4)

Later in the same edition, Milne again advised against the method:

‘Press cuttings are never measured in column inches and assessed at advertising rates. This practice has done more to undermine public relations than any other. (IPR Journal, March 1949, p. 7)

A reasonable conclusion from Milne’s advice to fellow practitioners is that a form of AVE was already in use in the UK’s fledgling public relations sector and that it was already causing concern to industry leaders. L’Etang (2004) notes that the IPR “publicly disapproved of this method [AVE] for more than half a century. Originally their disapproval was rooted in the desire to separate the public relations occupation from that of press agency” (p. 114). The author’s interviews with Tim Traverse-Healy, one of the few surviving founders of the UK and international public relations sector in the immediate post-World War 2 period, did not identify this form of measurement as a matter that was of interest to the British and European founders of the International Public Relations Association which came into being in 1955, after five years of

negotiations. Their agenda was on higher issues such as ethics and recognition of professional standards.

In 1954, IPR returned to the subject in a discussion of measurement of editorial publicity. The unnamed author comments:

Totting up column inches in terms of advertising still goes on. As Alan Hess [a former IPR President] has pointed out, matter of advertising nature should never be submitted for editorial use and, if it is, goes straight on the spike. Cheese cannot be compared with chalk. What matters in editorial publicity is whether the release is being read by the right people and whether they are reacting favourably (IPR Journal, October 1954).

### **Hidden expansion**

By the 1950s, it can be argued that AVE was known to practitioners and probably to academics who were in touch with organisations, agencies and alumni. However, it remains an underground practice. It is not mentioned, even with a warning, in leading texts of the time, such as the first edition of Cutlip and Center's *Effective Public Relations* (1952) or in Edward L. Bernays' texts of the period – *Public Relations* (1952) and *Engineering of Consent* (1955). Cutlip and Center discuss media analysis methods mainly by reference to audience measurement and message reception rather than clipping counts. Cutlip's public relations bibliography (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1965) has a sub-section on Program Research and Evaluation covering 159 articles which started in 1939 and continued to the mid-1960s. There are 15 articles on mass media measurement and two on the effectiveness of clipping services.

In Germany, the public relations pioneer Albert Oeckl discusses public relations research methods in his 1964 book, *Handbuch der Public Relations* (Handbook of Public Relation) including quantitative approaches such as coding of media coverage but not of valuation in the AVE style. In the UK, the IPR's first text book, *A Guide to the Practice of Public Relations*, barely discusses evaluation in a chapter on media relations noting only that "the volume of press enquiries may indicate that the field is one of widespread public interest and concern" (p. 62) and recommending that analysis of press enquiries be undertaken regularly (IPR, 1958). In 1969, Frank Jefkins, the most prolific UK authors on public relations, also inveighed against the use of AVE in his typical trenchant style:

Nor is there any sense in trying to assess an advertisement rate-card value on editorial coverage, saying these inches would have cost so much if the space had been paid for, for the elementary reason that no-one would use the same space, the same quantity of space, or perhaps even the same media for advertising purposes. There is no logical basis for financial evaluation, although it is true that a count of inches does indicate that there was a substantial coverage of the story, and circulation figures – and readership figures, too – could be totalled to show the possible number of subscribers or readers who had an opportunity to read the report or see the pictures (Jefkins, 1969, p. 227)

Another British author, John Crisford, also attacked the valuation of “free space” as being “just plain silly”, like Jefkins indicating that it was being used widely, if not in common practice:

Should cuttings be counted? The practice of totting up column inches in the editorial columns, working out the advertising rates for a similar amount of space, and then claiming that the press office has produced so many pounds worth of “free space” is just plain silly. Statistics should, however, be kept – not to compare like with unlike, but to compare like with like” (Crisford, 1973, p. 59).

By the mid-1960s, however, there is anecdotal evidence that AVEs were being widely used by public relations operations in major organisations. John W. Felton, former CEO of the Institute for Public Relations, recalls his own working experience in a major corporation:

Way back in 1966, when I was in the product publicity unit of US Steel in Pittsburgh, PA, our boss Tex Wurzbach, counted product clips we generated and equated the space we “earned free” to the amount that the same space would have cost if we had purchased it as ads. He justified our budgets for photos, travel, etc by using the amount of space we got “free” might have cost if ads had been placed. That’s not quite the same as multiplying by some number such as six but it is part of the same concept of AVEs ... We generated a huge amount of clips so you can imagine how big the ad costs might have been if we had paid for that much space in major publications. He always got big budgets for us to spend! (Jack Felton, personal correspondence, December 2010).

Other practitioners also recall the industry use of AVEs in the 1970s and 1980s as being “in place” when they started work in agencies and organisations (L. Williams, personal correspondence, December 20, 2010; D. Michaelson, personal correspondence, December 20, 2010; S. Overcamp, December 21, 2010). Media measurement companies which had been formed from clippings agencies were also using AVEs by the mid-1970s. “Media values were pretty much in place when we got involved with BurrellesLuce in the 70s, but generally they were produced by agencies ... and generally with a multiplier” (J. Waggoner, personal communication, February 9, 2011).

US industry veteran Mark Weiner has commented (M. Weiner, personal communication, February 16, 2011) that PR industry growth in North American and Europe in the 1960s and 1970s was a key reason for the introduction of measurement services. Consumer public relations rapidly developed in the 1950s and 1960s in the post war economic boom, aided by the widespread access to television which had also fostered advertising’s expansion. The major US public relations groups (Barnet & Reef, Burson-Marsteller, Hill & Knowlton) needed world-wide monitoring and management systems that gave systematic data back to HQs. These developments led to the emergence of the service industries, especially in the measurement of PR activity. A pioneer was PR Data, formed from an internal General Electric operation by Jack Schoonover, It was the first to use computer based analysis – using punch-cards and simple

programmes (Tirone, 1977). It was soon followed by other providers, mainly press cuttings agencies which became evaluators. Weiner says that the calculation of AVEs was amongst the services offered by PR Data, although not the primary service. By improving the speed and accuracy of calculation, these businesses enabled the wider use of AVE which became a mainstream topic, aided by practitioner commentators. From the late 1960s onwards, the advertising value was often enhanced by multipliers. Ruff (1968) was one of the first to claim that non-advertising publicity could provide greater value than advertising. He undertook comparative study of product inquiries in which promotional messages for a new product were distributed by publicity in key media and through print advertisements. “Ruff calculated publicity outperformed advertising for that ... product by a seven to one ratio, but noted that for some publications the ratio was only 2.5 to one, and for others, the reverse was the case and advertising outperformed by publicity by a 2.5 to one ratio” (Macnamara, 2008, p. 2). These claims of public relations multipliers linked to AVEs were endorsed in public relations and marketing communications trade press and journals (Strenski, 1980; Bumsted, 1983).

### **1980s – Academic input**

Following on from the initial conferences and academic journal discussion late in the previous decade, US journals came alive in the 1980s with papers on research-based measurement and evaluation methods from leading academics such as Glenn Broom (Broom & Dozier, 1983), David Dozier (Dozier, 1984, 1985), James Grunig (Grunig & Hickson, 1976; Grunig 1979, 1983). From the consultancy side, Lloyd Kirban of Burson Marsteller (Kirban, 1983) and Walter Lindenmann of Ketchum (Lindenmann, 1979, 1980) were prolific and drove the subject higher on the practitioner agenda, whilst from the media analysis side, Katie Delahaye Paine announced her first publicity measurement system in 1987 and went on to establish the Delahaye measurement business. In the UK, White (1990) undertook the first study of practitioner attitudes amongst member consultancies of the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA) and offered recommendations on ‘best practice’. All these authors emphasised the need for public relations to be researched, planned and evaluated using robust social science techniques. It was particularly fostered by Broom and Dozier’s influential *Research Methods in Public Relations* (Broom & Dozier, 1990).

By the early 1990s, public relations measurement and evaluation was a leading research and professional practice topic (McElreath, 1989; White & Blamphin, 2004; Synnott & McKie, 1997). There were major practitioner education initiatives in several developed countries, many linked closely to the Excellence Theory expression of public relations as communication management. However, AVEs became even more popular with the Porter Novelli agency reporting in 1999 that AVEs were considered by clients as one of the top five measures to convince budget-holders and decision-makers. “Very often high-level managers – and especially financial controllers – like this measure since it gives them results in the language they speak: dollars. And, as a result PR managers are often forced to use this criterion” (Leinemann & Baikaltseva, 2004, p. 59).

The late 1990s also saw the launch of extensive national campaigns to promote best practice in measurement and evaluation. The public relations consultancy bodies, PRCA and ICCO, its international offshoot, published booklets and were followed by other industry bodies separately or cooperatively. The major UK initiative was PRE-fix, a partnership between PRCA and IPR (UK) with PR Week, the weekly trade magazine. It ran for three years and was accompanied by seminars, research, online resources and best practice case studies. AMEC, then the Association of Media Evaluation Companies, was formed as a UK trade body. It is now the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communications with members in 38 countries, which also indicates the expansion of the measurement and media analysis service industry. In the US, the IPRRE formed the Commission on Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation in 1999, which plays a major role in undertaking practice based research and disseminating it. AVEs were ignored or argued against by all these bodies.

There were further industry educational initiatives in the UK in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's first decade with the CIPR preparing a version of its previous document that targeted media evaluation. The service business of media measurement and PR effectiveness evaluation grew rapidly, mainly with corporate clients. It ended with the adoption of The Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles at the European Measurement Summit in June 2010 (AMEC, 2010). The Barcelona Declaration demonstrates that PR measurement and evaluation is an important and growing service business and a long way from the local and regional cuttings agencies of 50 to 100 years ago.

As noted earlier in the paper, measurement practice as evidenced by the author's personal experience in the UK is that AVEs live on without a metaphorical Barcelona Principles stake in their heart. Their appeal is simplicity and a monetary outcome, as noted by Leinemann and Baikaltseva (2004), which is favoured by managers. As Watson (2012) has commented: "Perhaps this signifies an immature profession, which is unconfident in its practices" (p. 17). It may also signify that the universe of public relations has for some time been separate into two distinct parts: Publicity and "PR" – a short-termist tactical approach that relies on intuition, past experience and crude metrics; and Communication Management or Organizational Communication which employs social science-led planning, research and evaluation methods in search of mutual understanding. The survival of that "pernicious AVE weed", despite 60 years of well-researched warnings against its use, cannot be underestimated.

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