Standardization in Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation

David Michaelson and Don W. Stacks
What We Will Cover Today

• Why are standards important?
• What is a standard?
• Importance and benefits of standards
• Differences between standards and best practices
• History of standards in communication measurement
• Structure for a standard in public relations measurement
Why Is This Important?

• Movement in public relations & corporate communications to measure outcomes

• Change in understanding of how/what we impact

• Moving beyond “Best Practices”
Old Model

Return on Investment

Marketing
- Sales
- Responses
- Enquiries
- Costs

Advertising
- Reach
- Advertising value equivalency (AVE)

Public Relations
- Placement
- Clips
- Promotion
A Best Practices Approach

The Organization
Values, objectives, strategies

Activities
Messages sent by company

Outputs
Messages received by audience
Media analysis
Market research

Mediating Factors
Reputation & Relationships
Internal & external Stakeholder research

Outcomes
Audience choices/behaviors
3rd party endorsement
Recruitment/retention
Brand equity
Regulation

Outtakes
Audience perceptions
Content analysis
Survey research
Market research

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New Model

Financial Indicators
- Sales
- Responses
- Enquiries
- Costs

Reputational Indicators
- Credibility
- Reputation
- Confidence
- Trust

Stakeholder Expectations

ROE

Return on Investment

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What Is a Standard?

“An idea or thing used as a measure, norm, or model in comparative evaluations.”

SOURCE: Oxford English Dictionary
Why Are Standards Needed

• Operative phrase in definition of standards is “comparative evaluations”

• Key reason standard measures are essential element in public relations
Comparative Evaluation

• Basis of all standardized measurement systems

• Gauges absolute performance of programs and program elements

• Compares performance of prior and competitive programs
  - Within industry and category
  - Relative to other industries or categories
Value of Comparative Evaluation

• Determine if specific communication goals are met (absolute measures)

• Identify if changes in specific measures are significant based on the performance of similar programs or campaigns (relative measures)

• Measure progress and take corrective actions if needed to assure communications goals are achieved
Standards versus Best Practices

• Standards define and determine **WHAT** needs to be measured

• Best practices illustrate **HOW** to best meet the objectives of the standard
Standards versus Best Practices

• Best practices defined as:

“A method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark.”

• Best practices should not be confused with or used as substitute for standards
Standards in Communication Measurement

• Standards in communication measurement have existed for over a century

• Primary focus for standard measures traditionally paid communication—Advertising
Standards in Communication Measurement

• Earliest documented standard published in 1898 by E. St. Elmo Lewis

• Lewis described “four cognitive phases... buyers follow when accepting a new idea or purchasing a new product”

  – **A**wareness
  – **I**nterest
  – **D**esire
  – **A**ction
Standards in Communication Measurement
Adapting Standards for Public Relations Activities

- AIDA model emphasizes sales as an ideal outcome
- Public relations, by contrast, does not always look to sales as a desired result
Adapting Standards for Public Relations Activities

Standards for public relations measurement take three factors into consideration:

1. Communication objectives
2. Lifecycle or stage of the communication effort
3. Audiences for the communication
Communication Objectives

**BASIC** communication objectives for public relations efforts:

- **B**uild awareness
- **A**dvance knowledge
- **S**ustain relevance
- **I**nitiate action
- **C**reate advocacy
Communication Lifecycle

- **BASIC** objectives part of lifecycle of all public relations programs

- Successful public relations starts with building awareness and continues through each **BASIC** objective

- Each needs to be measured to determine if objective is being met
Communications Lifecycle

- Build Awareness
- Advance Knowledge
- Sustain Relevance
- Initiate Action
- Create Advocacy
Audiences

• Audiences include target market for communication as well as intermediaries (e.g., media and advocates)

• Social media key source for delivering messages through advocates
THE STANDARD MEASURES
The Standard Measures

- Measures must pass two basic tests
  - Validity
  - Reliability
The Standard Measures

• **Validity**

“The extent to which a research project actually measures what it is intended or purports to measure”

• **Reliability**

“The extent to which results would be consistent, or replicable, if the research were conducted a number of times”

SOURCE: Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research
The Standard Measures

Standard measures for public relations cover two areas:

- Target audience Measures
  - Outcomes
  - Outtakes
- Intermediary Measures
Outcome Measures

“Quantifiable changes in awareness, knowledge, attitude, opinion, and behavior levels that occur as a result of a public relations program or campaign; an effect, consequence, or impact of a set or program of communication activities or products, and may be either short-term (immediate) or long-term.”

SOURCE: Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research

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Outtake Measures

“Measurement of what audiences have understood and/or heeded and/or responded to a communication product’s call to seek further information from PR messages prior to measuring an outcome; audience reaction to the receipt of a communication product, including favorability of the product, recall and retention of the message embedded in the product, and whether the audience heeded or responded to a call for information or action within the message.”

SOURCE: Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research
Target Audience Measures

• Based on Communication Lifecycle
  – Awareness/Recall
    • Unaided
    • Aided
  – Knowledge
  – Interest/Relationship
  – Preference/Intent
  – Advocacy
## Awareness/Recall Measures

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Prototype Question</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer Administered (unaided)</td>
<td>Thinking back to what you have just <em>(read/observed/reviewed/saw)</em>, tell me the <em>(brands/products/services/issues/topics)</em> that you remember <em>(reading/observing/reviewing/seeing)</em>.</td>
<td>Open ended responses with prelist of likely responses and an open response field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Administered (unaided)</td>
<td>Thinking back to what you have just <em>(read/observed/reviewed/saw)</em>, place an X in the boxes for the <em>(brands/products/services/issues/topics)</em> that you remember <em>(reading/observing/reviewing/seeing)</em>.</td>
<td>Open response field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer Administered (aided)</td>
<td>Thinking back to what you have just <em>(read/observed/reviewed/saw)</em>, tell me if you remember <em>(reading/observing/reviewing/seeing)</em> about any of the following <em>(brands/products/services/issues/topics)</em>.</td>
<td>List of brands, products, services, issues or topics that are or could have been included in the communication. These are typically presented in a random order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Administered (aided)</td>
<td>Thinking back to what you have just <em>(read/observed/reviewed/saw)</em>, place an X in the boxes if you remember <em>(reading/observing/reviewing/seeing)</em> about any of the following <em>(brands/products/services/issues/topics)</em>.</td>
<td>List of brands, products, services, issues or topics that are or could have been included in the communication. These are typically presented in a random order.</td>
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## Knowledge Measures

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<tr>
<td>Interviewer Administered</td>
<td>Next, I am going to read you a series of statements about a <em>(brand/product/issue/service/topic)</em>. That <em>(brand/product/service/issue/topic)</em> is a <em>(insert category)</em> called <em>(insert name)</em>. After I read you each statement, please indicate if you “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “somewhat disagree,” or “strongly disagree,” with each statement about <em>(insert name)</em>.</td>
<td>List of attributes that describe the brand, product, services, issues or topics that are or should have been included in the communication. These attributes are typically read to respondents in a random sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Administered</td>
<td>Next, you are going to read a series of statements about a <em>(brand/product/service/issue/topic)</em>. That <em>(brand/product/service/issue/topic)</em> is a <em>(insert category)</em> called <em>(insert name)</em>. After you read each statement, please indicate if you “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “somewhat disagree,” or “strongly disagree,” with each statement about <em>(insert name)</em>.</td>
<td>List of attributes that describe the brand, product, service, issues or topic that are or should have been included in the communication. These attributes are typically presented to respondents in a random sequence if an online survey method is used. Answer categories are shown with each statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer or Self-Administered</td>
<td>Based on everything you have read, how believable is the information you just saw about the <em>(brand/product/service/issue/topic)</em>? By believable we mean that you are confident that what you are <em>(seeing/reading/hearing/observing)</em> is truthful and credible.</td>
<td>The response categories for this question are typically a scale that measures an overall level of credibility or believability. One of the most common and reliable scales consists of five points ranging from &quot;very believable&quot; to &quot;very unbelievable&quot; with a neutral midpoint.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Interest Measures

The response categories for this question are typically a scale that measures an overall level of interest. One of the most common and reliable scales consists of five points ranging from “very interested” to “very uninterested” with a neutral midpoint. The scale is similar to that used in the credibility or believability measure described in Table 1.

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<td>Interviewer or Self-Administered</td>
<td>After <em>(seeing/reading/hearing/observing)</em> this material would you say you are “very interested”, “somewhat interested”, “neither interested nor uninterested,” “somewhat uninterested” or “very uninterested” in this <em>(brand/product/service/issue/topic)</em>?</td>
<td>The response categories for this question are typically a scale that measures an overall level of interest. One of the most common and reliable scales consists of five points ranging from “very interested” to “very uninterested” with a neutral midpoint. The scale is similar to that used in the credibility or believability measure described in Table 1</td>
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Interest Measures

- This product is a value for its price
- The product has been presented honestly
- Based on what I know of it, this product is very good
- This product is something that is like me
- Based on what I know of it, this product is an excellent choice for me
- Based on what I know of it, I find this product quite pleasant to use
- This product is used by people in my economic class
- I think the product is very consumer unfriendly
- People who buy this product are very much like me
- I think this product is very reliable
- This product reflects my social background
- I would purchase this product because it reflects my lifestyle
- This product is awful
- People who use this product are culturally similar to me
# Relationship Measures

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<tr>
<td>Interviewer Administered</td>
<td>I am going to read you a series of statements about the (brand/product/service/issue/topic). There are no right or wrong answers, we are interested in how much you agree or disagree with the statements. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree? Place an X in the box that best represents your answer for each statement.</td>
<td>The response categories for this question are typically a scale that measures an overall level of agreement. One of the most common and reliable scales consists of five points ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” with a neutral midpoint. The scale is similar to that used in the interest measure described above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Administered</td>
<td>Please respond to the following statements about the (brand/product/service/issue/topic). There are no right or wrong answers, we are interested in how much you agree or disagree with the statements. Place an X in the box that best represents your answer for each statement.</td>
<td>The response categories for this question are typically a scale that measures an overall level of agreement. One of the most common and reliable scales consists of five points ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” with a neutral midpoint. The scale is similar to that used in the interest measure described above.</td>
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## Preference/Intent Measures

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<td><strong>Interviewer Administered</strong></td>
<td>I am going to read you a list of different (brands, products, services) that you can buy at your local store follows. Which one of these (brands, products, services) do you prefer most?</td>
<td>List of brands, products, services, issues or topics that are or could have been included in the communication. These are typically presented in a random order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Administered</strong></td>
<td>A list of different (brands, products, services) that you can buy at your local store follows. Which one of these (brands, products, services) do you prefer most? Place an X in the box that best represents your answer</td>
<td>List of brands, products, services, issues or topics that are or could have been included in the communication. These are typically presented in a random order.</td>
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<td>Interviewer or Self-Administered</td>
<td>Based on everything you have (seen/read/heard/observed) about this (brand, product, service, issue, topic), how likely are to (purchase/try/support) this (brand, product, service, issue, topic). Would you say you are “very likely”, “somewhat likely”, “neither likely nor unlikely,” “somewhat unlikely” or “very unlikely” to (purchase/try/support) this (brand/product/service/issue/topic)?</td>
<td>The response categories for this question are typically a scale that measures an overall level of intent to take a specific action. One of the most common and reliable scales consists of five points ranging from “very likely” to “very unlikely” with a neutral midpoint. The scale is similar to that used in the credibility or believability measure described in Table 1</td>
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# Advocacy Measures

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<td>The response categories for this question are typically a scale that measures an overall level of agreement. One of the most common and reliable scales consists of five points ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” with a neutral midpoint. The scale is similar to that used in the interest measure described above.</td>
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<td>Please respond to the following statements about the <em>(brand/product/service/issue/topic)</em>. There are no right or wrong answers, we are interested in how much you agree or disagree with the statements. Place an X in the box that best represents your answer for each statement.</td>
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Advocacy Measures

• I will recommend this (brand, product, service, issue, topic) to my friends and relatives
• People like me can benefit from this (brand, product, service, issue, topic)
• I like to tell people about (brands, products, services, issues, topics) that work well for me
• Word-of-mouth is the best way to learn about (brands, products, services, issues, topics)
• User reviews on websites are valuable sources of information about (brands, products, services, issues, topics)
Intermediary Measures

Three specific measures:

• The presence of basic facts in the third party or intermediary story/message

• The presence of misstatements or erroneous information

• The absence or omission of basic facts that should be included in a complete story
Applying Best Practices

• Standards not a substitute for applying best practices in data collection

• Sources for best practices
  – “Primer of Public Relations Research”
QUESTIONS
Standardization in Public Relations
Measurement and Evaluation

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