

# METHODS OF MEASURING THE EFFECTS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES APPLIED BY PR SPECIALISTS IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL WORK

**METODY I TECHNIKI POMIARU EFEKTÓW DZIAŁAŃ PUBLIC RELATIONS WYKORZYSTYWANE W BRANŻY PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to identify the ways in which Polish PR specialists measured the effects of their own activities in the last year and to analyze the universality of application of specific solutions. A comparative analysis was also conducted based on available research on the tools used by PR consultants. The research was conducted by means of an auditorium questionnaire during the Congress of Public Relations Professionals in 2019. The research sample was comprised of representatives of various organizations operating on the Polish market, 253 respondents in total. Analyses have shown that the use of broadly understood media monitoring is key support for people who build reliable relationships with the environment on a daily basis. It should be noted that the PR industry remains strongly committed to using the AVE indicator, despite the fact that both global and domestic industry organizations are seeking to limit its role in measuring PR effects.

**Key words:** public relations, measurement of the effects of PR activities, media monitoring, quantitative and qualitative research, challenges of the PR industry

## ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja sposobów, za pomocą których polscy PR-owcy dokonywali w ostatnim roku pomiaru efektów własnych działań, oraz prezentacja powszechności stosowania konkretnych rozwiązań. Przeprowadzona została także analiza porównawcza w oparciu o dostępne badania dotyczące narzędzi wykorzystywanych przez konsultantów PR. Podczas Kongresu Profesjonalistów Public Relations w 2019 roku przeprowadzono ankietę audytoryjną, w której próbę badawczą tworzyli przedstawiciele różnego typu organizacji działających na polskim rynku, łącznie 253 osoby. Analizy wykazały, że korzystanie z szeroko rozumianego monitoringu mediów stanowi kluczowe wsparcie dla osób zajmujących się na co dzień budowaniem wiarygodnych relacji z otoczeniem. Odnotowania wymaga fakt, że branża PR nadal jest silnie przywiązana do stosowania wskaźnika AVE, mimo że zarówno światowe, jak i rodzime organizacje branżowe dążą do ograniczenia jego roli w pomiarze efektów działań public relations.

**Słowa kluczowe:** public relations, pomiar efektów działań PR, monitoring mediów, badania ilościowe i jakościowe, wyzwania branży PR

## Introduction

In social sciences, and especially in sociology, a broad conglomerate of research techniques is used, which may have one of three main functions, i.e. exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Miotk, 2012, p. 28–29). There are also projects where researchers use a combination of these, e.g. for mixed research (Kawalec, 2014, p. 4). Methodologies applied in social sciences are also used in public relations activities so it is worthwhile measuring the frequency of their use by practitioners who care about the organization image. This is particularly important for the characteristics of trends and possible changes that take place in the service offer in the broadly understood communication consulting. According to K. Wojcik, there is a need for constant control of the effects of public relations activities, "however, no one is sure about the methods of measuring them, so one often hears that it is better to organize one PR campaign more than to analyze what already existed" (Wojcik, 2005, p. 809).

However, the growing interest in the role of research in communication processes makes research projects of a social and market character an increasingly important element of Polish PR activities, where the need to be authentic is gaining in importance (Antoszewski, 2016, p. 236). In the

case of the measurement of individual activities which aim at achieving results that are not distant in time, research works do not require specialized knowledge and can usually be conducted with own resources. On the other hand, a greater challenge for researchers is the analysis of long-term effects in the communication process, where often the synergy effect of tools has to be taken into account, which requires a well thought-out selection of techniques and indicators, ending with an advanced analysis of empirical data (Hajduk, 2019, p. 204). Therefore, it becomes necessary to include in research plans those areas which are the subject of the analysis, as well as its individual aspects and the temporal approach to communication (Strzyżewska, Rószkiewicz, 2002, p. 219.). The research presented in the article is aimed at determining the scale of activities of public relations specialists in the context of their measurement of the effects of their own work including specific solutions and barriers related to their application.

## **Methodological approach**

In this article there are references to the research on the condition of the public relations sector in Poland, which since 2017 has been periodically carried out by the Department of Social Communication and Public Relations at the University of Warsaw and Exacto research team. One of the thematic blocks in the 2019 edition concerned the measurement of the effects of public relations activities, with particular emphasis on the methods used by specialists in their tasks. An important issue of the study is also the identification of problems that hinder effective measurement. The content of the main hypothesis is: public relations specialists use different ways of measuring the effects of their work, although the range of solutions used is influenced by professional experience, including the place of employment and seniority of respondents. The analyses carried out in this article are also aimed at checking whether certain trends can be found in PR specialists' activities in the context of the selection of measurement tools. The above has also been recognized as a complementary objective of the publication. For the correctness of the conducted analyses, a research hypothesis has been

adopted, which is: Public relations specialists use different ways of measuring the effects of their work, although the scope of applied solutions is influenced by their professional experience.

The research, referred to by the authors of this publication, was conducted by means of an audit survey in April 2019 during the Congress of Public Relations Professionals. The research sample (253 persons) was composed of representatives of various types of organisations operating on the Polish market. The common denominator of the respondents' professional profile was their interest in the issues of public relations, crisis management and the performance of tasks related to building and maintaining permanent relations with the strategic environment. Among important metric variables from the survey, which were used in this study, the distribution of frequency in relation to the place of employment is worth noting (employees of private companies — 36%, public companies — 36%, public relations agencies — 24%, NGOs — 4%), seniority in the industry (under 5 years — 23%, 5–9 years — 28%, 10–14 years — 21%, 15 years and more — 28%), and completed PR studies (14% graduate). Interestingly, almost all respondents have higher education (99%), of which 10% have at least a PhD degree. Many respondents work in the public relations sector, despite having completed other higher education studies. This is a trend characteristic for the entire public relations community in Poland. Other studies conducted in this area indicate the existence of strong PR relations with journalism, management and marketing. Generally, more than half of people who work in the PR industry on a daily basis (53%) have this type of theoretical preparation for the profession (other than PR) (Łaszyn, 2016, p. 102).

The sample profile from the PR industry health survey is complemented by information on the prevalence of women (65%) over men (35%), and the distribution of occupied positions (executive — 25%, mixed — 54%, managing — 21%). The surveyed specialists are mostly employees of large companies, where employment exceeds 250 people (48% of cases). The others work in SME sector companies of different sizes. The article contains analyses based on statistical description, cross-tables and non-parametric statistical tests. The rho Spearman's

and Kendall's tau-b coefficient was used to show the strength of the correlation.

During the implementation of the research project, a technique was used which, according to the authors, allowed for the collection of full data used for analysis. This auditing technique has contributed to the elimination of typical problems that occur in quantitative research, such as the extended time for data acquisition. The conducted research has also given rise to the search for further research areas in the area of measuring the effects of public relations activities to be carried out by the team.

This article may be useful for the readers of the journal, which is mainly addressed to the employees of research institutes, universities, research centres and institutions supporting science and research, because of the analysis of an important element of image management of all entities, which is the measurement of the effects of image activities.

## **Difficulties with effective measurement in the PR industry**

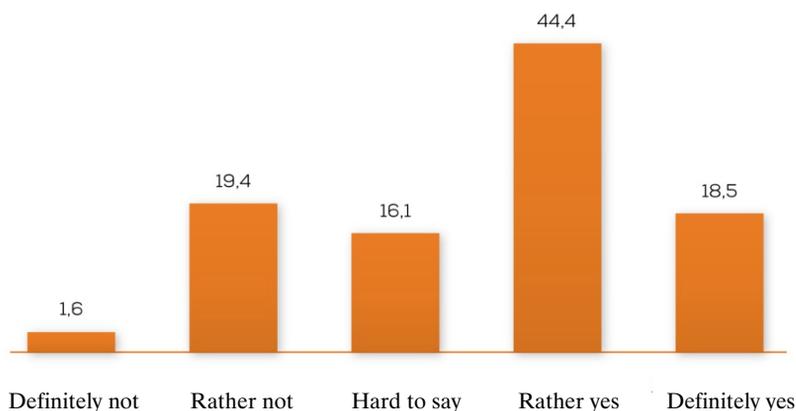
The problem with precise estimation of the effects of work of specialists and public relations agencies is inherent in the industry functioning. Among the main obstacles in making decisions on the implementation of evaluation projects are: the level of complexity, costly implementation of such projects, lack of methodological awareness of clients, rare cooperation of companies with specialized PR agencies (a problem visible especially in crisis management), consolidation changes on the media market, and the conviction among many managers that public relations is focused only on media relations. Such an approach makes the aim of activities undertaken by campaign specialists to achieve a broad overtone. Other goals, apart from the measurement of media effects, are set aside. Despite a wide range of challenges, the first Polish survey on the assessment of the effectiveness of PR activities (2003 survey by Anna Miotk) showed that as many as 89% of the surveyed Piar.pl users were of the opinion that such a measurement was necessary. The arguments supporting the above thesis included issues

related to the credibility of the actions, the need for feedback, and the presentation of the result in a numerical form (Miotk, 2012, p. 185).

The study on the condition of the public relations industry from 2019 confirmed that effective measurement of the effects of PR activities is a difficult task. In this case, effectiveness should be understood as "the extent to which planned projects, campaigns or a comprehensive strategy have been implemented and the results achieved" (Tworzydło, 2006, p. 125). Nearly 2/3 of the surveyed specialists (63%) described the above issue as a challenge which the Polish PR has to face at present. It means that there is a significant awareness and conviction about the necessity of taking up this challenge. The opposite opinion was expressed by 21% of respondents who do not see a problem with effective assessment of their work.

During the study, 32 statements describing various problems/challenges/hazards were tested. In the ranking taking into account the total positive response rate ("definitely yes" and "rather yes"), the issue of difficulties with effective measurement of the effects of PR was classified very high (7th place). This result can be interpreted as a significant challenge for industry. It should be pointed out that this is also a clear signal regarding the needs of PR consultants in terms of challenges that cannot be ignored<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Do you consider the difficulties with effective measurement of the effects of PR to be a challenge that the public relations industry in Poland is currently facing (N = 248, as percentages)**



Source: authors' own research.

The distribution of opinions on the perceived difficulties in effectively measuring the effects of public relations did not depend on the profile of the sample ( $p > 0.05$ ), however, those who graduated from public relations most often pointed out the existence of such barriers (76%). In the group of PR practitioners who did not conduct measurement activities in the twelve months preceding the survey, the percentage of positive responses was the lowest (44%).

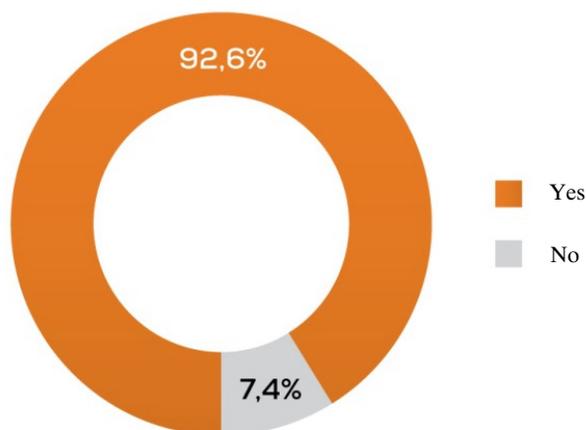
The problem of measuring the effects of public relations activities often influences the relations and cooperation of client companies with agencies or specialists dealing with professional communication. This cooperation largely depends on the resources that the clients intend to allocate to public relations activities. Analyses have shown ( $p < 0.001$ ) that the difficulties in assessing the effects of PR activities remain in positive correlation with the declining affluence of the portfolio for PR activities ( $\rho = 0.294$ ), moreover, this was the strongest of the correlations obtained. The observed regularity is consistent with the latest edition of the International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO) report, in the light of which the most serious problem of the global PR services sector is the process of limiting funds by companies seeking support in various public relations task areas (ICCO, 2019, p. 19). Moreover, the more often the respondents described the subject matter of measuring the effects of PR as a challenge for the industry, the more often they pointed out the high rotation and outflow of specialists to other industries ( $\rho = 0.260$ ) with simultaneous problems with recruitment of new staff ( $\rho = 0.259$ ), ignorance of the essence of PR among business environments ( $\rho = 0.243$ ) and blurring of identity and lack of visible indication of what in fact PR is ( $\rho = 0.209$ ).

## Frequency of PR effects measurement

On the basis of the conducted research, it has been identified that the conviction of the need to measure the effects of public relations activities is strongly rooted in the consciousness of public relations professionals, despite the difficulties previously reported with the effectiveness of conducting such activities. Over the last 12 months, almost 93% of the

surveyed PR consultants measured the effects of their activities (Figure 2). The observed result is very high and indicates growing professionalism of managers in this respect. The change of attitude in the strategy of companies is indicated by the results of 2006 — at that time only 59% of the biggest Polish companies measured their public relations activities, and the measurement consisted mostly in the analysis of press publications, which were often done on their own (Tworzydło, 2007, p. 5–7). However, if we separate from the research sample only entities employing at least 250 employees ( $n = 116$ ), we can observe that as many as 94% of the representatives of this group gave answers which prove the activity in the area of public relations activities measurement. Both indicators cannot be compared in direct relation to each other, although the change trend is noticeable.

**Figure 2. Have you measured the effects of your public relations activities in the last 12 months? (N = 243)**



Source: authors' own research.

Coming back to the survey conducted in 2019, it is visible that the relatively most often (which is due to the specificity of the workplace) the measurement of PR effects is conducted by persons employed in PR

agencies — 98%. A similar percentage was noted among entities, in which an image crisis occurred last year (96%). What is more, among companies which did not have to undertake crisis management activities, the above percentage was significantly lower — 89% ( $p = 0.026$ ). The results confirmed that the image crisis is a kind of catalyst to actively assess the effects of public relations activities. It intensifies analytical activities, triggers the need to observe the environment, has an impact on management decisions based on in-depth analyses and continuously obtained data from the environment.

**Table 1. Frequency of measurement of the effects of public relations activities on internships and workplaces in the PR industry**

Response categories	Seniority in the PR industry <sup>a</sup>				Place of employment <sup>b</sup>		
	<5 years	5–9 years	10–14 years	≥15 years	PR agency	Private company	PR agency
	N=52	N=64	N=48	N=64	N=57	N=86	N=85
No measurement of PR effects in the last year	15,4%	3,1%	8,3%	3,1%	1,8%	5,8%	10,6%
PR effects were measured in the last year	84,6%	96,9%	91,7%	96,9%	98,2%	94,2%	89,4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

<sup>a</sup> chi-squared test = 8.679;  $p = 0.034$ ; V Cramer = 0.195

<sup>b</sup> chi-squared = 4.464;  $p = 0.107$  (no significant statistical differences)

NGOs were rejected because of their under-representation ( $N = 8$ ) in the analysis.

Source: authors' own research.

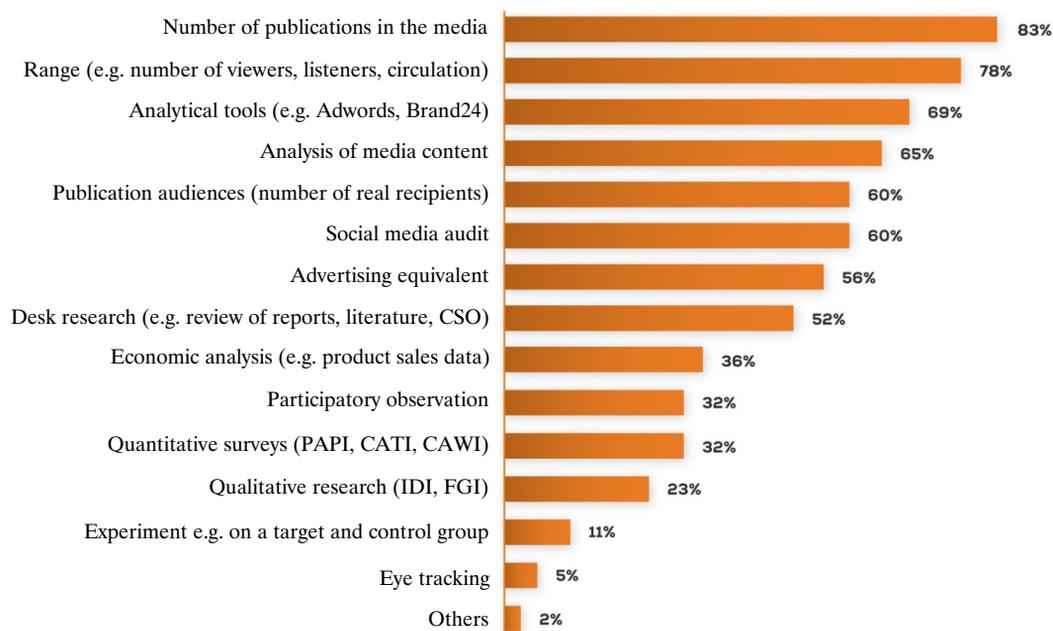
The division of the sample by length of service in the industry has shown a significant variation in the frequency of measuring the effects of public relations activities. The persons with the shortest relationship with the PR industry (under 5 years) less frequently declared that they measure the effects of their activities (85%). In the remaining groups the results

oscillated between 92–97%. This may be related to changes in the perception of people implementing communication projects and the belief (growing with experience) that properly conducted communication should be based on professional analysts.

Analysing the methods of evaluating the effects of public relations specialists work, we observe that the price and time needed to obtain results play a key role in the selection of specific solutions. The predominant use of indicators available in packages offered by media monitoring companies. The number of publications and coverage is very popular (these were the only answers that received over 75% of the indications). Analytical tools, such as Google Analytics or Brand24, are used by 69% of the surveyed specialists. A similar percentage of the respondents (65%) in assessing the effects of their work is based on the analysis of media content, which is, however, time-consuming. This is due to, among other things, the need to build categorization keys or to independent analysis of material overtones, as the algorithms for this option turn out to be faulty. In the range of solutions used, it is worth noting that the publications have reached the public and social media audit, as 3/5 of the respondents declare that they have been used during the last year. The advertising equivalent — despite many discussions and awareness of its calculation defects (New Marketing, 2017) — is still used by 56% of respondents. The scale of using this tool depends on where the consultant is employed. Relatively most often the AVE indicator is counted by employees of PR agencies (86%), before PR specialists employed in private companies (56%) and in the public sector (39%).<sup>2</sup>

The distribution shown in Figure 3 shows that people working in the field of PR are less likely to use solutions which require considerable financial outlays and are complicated in terms of the schedule and implementation itself. These are methods and techniques, where it is required to have appropriate methodological competence and extensive research infrastructure. Only 5% of specialists, when determining the methods of measuring the effects of public relations activities, paid attention to eye tracking, 11% to experimentation, and 23% to qualitative research in the form of individual interviews or focus groups. Survey techniques are slightly more popular, as on average every third respondent uses them. A similar percentage pointed to participatory observation.

**Figure 3. Ways used by PR professionals to measure the effects of public relations activities in the last 12 months (only "yes" percentage)**



Source: authors' own research.

The experience of respondents has a significant impact on the approach to research projects. The longer the work experience, the more active the respondents are in conducting PR effects measurement using various techniques and methods.<sup>3</sup> Those who have been associated with the industry for the longest time (at least 15 years) achieved the relatively highest average in terms of the applied solutions over the last year (7.58). This is also related to the number of clients served, as the level of experience determines the structure of the offer, range of services and processing capacity of the agency. A larger cross-section of measurement techniques also distinguishes a group of people holding managerial positions in their organizations (mean score of 7.45), before executive-managerial positions (6.56), ending with strictly executive positions (5.63). The observed differences in average values were statistically significant ( $p = 0.008$ ).

The research showed that representatives of the PR industry apply various techniques and methods which are used to measure the effects of their activities. This may result from diversified communication goals, e.g. for campaigns, and wide access to tools. When deciding on analyses with the use of precise indicators, the work place and experience of the consultants play an important role. The process of determining whether a given activity has had the intended effect may include the analysis of various indicators, although media monitoring is the most common practice. In the light of research, media monitoring can be regarded as a fundamental element of measuring the effects in the public relations industry.

**Table 2. Scope of solutions used in the measurement of the effects of public relations activities on Seniority in PR**

Seniority in PR	Average number of techniques used <sup>a</sup>	N
Below 5 years	5,29	52
5–9 years	6,44	64
10–14 years	6,69	48
15 years and longer	7,58	64
Total	6,55	228

<sup>a</sup> Kruskal-Wallis H Test = 15.493; p < 0.001.  
 In the survey 14 different solutions were tested. If a given respondent did not select any of them, their result was 0 points. If all answers were marked, 14 points could be obtained.

Source: authors' own research.

## Media monitoring and... nothing long

The research proves that media monitoring is a key element in supporting the assessment of the effects and changes that take place in the environment around the image of the institution under investigation. The application of media monitoring is an important component of the process of securing an entity. Its application causes that "the company will not miss any important mentions about its products and services, which appear around the clock in all types of media — from TV to social networking sites" (ZFPR, 2019, p. 31). The research shows that as much as 92% of the public relations specialists surveyed used media monitoring to a greater or lesser extent over the past year. Such a high percentage of indications confirms the thesis on the significance of media reports in the philosophy of media intelligence, as well as informs about the importance of this tool in the process of measuring the image and effectiveness of media activities<sup>4</sup>. The main reasons that arouse so much interest in media monitoring include competitive package prices, a wide range of such solutions on the market, closed time frames, the speed and concreteness of analyses expressed by means of many indicators (a simple numerical form) or the possibility of constant and precise modification of the message based on data from media reports.

**Table 3. Use of media monitoring in relation to crisis experiences**

Response categories	Has there been a crisis situation over the last 12 months <sup>a</sup>	
	No crisis has occurred	Crisis has occurred
	N=104	N=124
No media monitoring	11,5%	4%
Media monitoring	88,5%	96%
Total	100%	100%

<sup>a</sup> chi-quadrat = 4.618; p = 0.032; Phi = (-0,142)

Source: authors' own research.

The widespread use of media monitoring cannot be surprising, especially if we look at the specifics of the tasks currently performed by public relations consultants. They must have knowledge of market analysis tools (target group of the survey with strong representation of agency employees). For that reason, public relations specialists cannot afford to omit the content and results of media reports. Access to media monitoring, however, is only half of the success, as lasting relations with media representatives are equally important (Interaktywnie.com, 2018, p. 43). In this particular case, experience and seniority in the industry counts, as these are elements that determine the quality of cooperation with journalists. Research showed that the relatively highest percentage of affirmative answers in the question about the use of media monitoring was among people working in PR agencies (98%) and those with the longest seniority — 15 years and longer (97%).

The implementation of media monitoring is also dependent on the occurrence of communication crisis situations. Monitoring is more often used by people who have experienced image crises in companies. Therefore, it can be said that the presence of image problems increases the vigilance of the managerial staff. This, in turn, translates into the frequency of PR effects measurement by means of media monitoring (the difference between groups oscillates at the level of eight percentage points). The reasons for this state of affairs lie in the very definition of media monitoring which is strongly oriented towards support in crisis management. It is a process of constant reading, observing and listening to media content. However, the key role in monitoring is played by identifying, recording and analysing content that takes account of key words or directly concerns a specific topic (Comcowich, 2010). According to PRESS-SERVICE Media Monitoring data, about 85% of their clients order monitoring related to image sensitive topics (potential crisis content) in addition to the classic media reporting service (Tworzydło, Łaszyn, Szuba, 2018, p. 85).

The widespread use of media monitoring in the research sample also has a statistical impact on the moods of the respondents who constitute an important voice of the PR industry in Poland. The more often the coverage<sup>5</sup> and the number of publications<sup>6</sup> (basic indicators of most media reports) were measured, the stronger the respondents stressed that they had no difficulty in conducting effective measurement of results. It probably results from the

possibility of expressing the result for coverage and number of publications in a simple numerical form. This is also confirmed by the fact that in the case of the remaining indicators tested in the survey and related to media monitoring (overtones, AVE, publication reach) there were no similar trends as they are more complex or controversial in terms of the reliability and methodological basis of measurement.

One example of the above problems is the advertising equivalent indicator which is supposed to show how much money would have to be spent on publication/emission of a given material if it were to be an advertisement. The PR industry declares that it is abandoning the use of AVE due to lack of reliability (the problem of price list valuations), uniform calculation standards and too much simplification of reality. It is also accused of not reflecting the real value of communication activities, which, however, does not necessarily affect the frequency of its use (once again, it is worth quoting the very high percentage of AVE use among PR agencies per year — 86%). The agency's clients often expect direct reference to finance, which results in AVE being included in media reports (service tailored to the client's needs).

The experts' skeptical attitude towards AVE is confirmed in the context of the most prestigious award in the industry. In the Golden Clips competition there is a special award in the "effectiveness" category, where the project with the highest effectiveness confirmed by measurable effects is awarded. What is important, it is stated in the regulations that "applications presenting the campaign effect measured by the AVE (Advertising Value Equivalency) indicator will be automatically excluded from this category".<sup>7</sup>

Marginalizing the importance of the advertising equivalent from the PR measurement methodology is now a trend in the global communication services sector, as industry organisations are taking an increasingly stringent stance on the use of this indicator. As an example, the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) campaign with its much-spoken name "Say No to AVEs" can be cited (AMEC, 2019) or the new standards for members of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), which prohibit the use of AVE measurements while imposing sanctions on those who violate this prohibition (CIPR, 2017).

Apart from media monitoring, the consultants also use the achievements of sociological research methodologies to assess the effects of public relations activities. However, specialists with more professional experience have greater confidence in the research, which can be seen in the frequency of their use. A relatively best result in this respect was achieved by a group of respondents with at least fifteen years of experience, where half of them conducted quantitative and/or qualitative research in the field of social sciences during the last year. The group of specialists connected with the public relations sector from 10 to 14 years of age — 41% — scored less well in this respect. Even worse was the group with the least professional experience — only 30%. A similar result (26%) was recorded in the 5–9 years of seniority. It is also worth noting that people employed in agencies are more willing to measure the effects of their work using sociological research techniques (55%) than specialists working in teams responsible for public relations of companies from the private sector (34%) and public sector (27%).

**Table 4. Frequency of quantitative and/or qualitative research on the borderline of social sciences in relation to seniority in the PR industry and place of employment**

Response categories	Seniority in PR <sup>a</sup>				Place of employment <sup>b</sup>		
	<5 years	5–9 years	10–14 years	≥15 years	PR agency	Private company	PR agency
	N=52	N=62	N=46	N=62	N=56	N=83	N=83
No quantitative and/or qualitative research	62,9%	74,2%	58,7%	50%	44,6%	66,3%	73,5%
PR research was applied	30,8%	25,8%	41,3%	50%	55,4%	33,7%	26,5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

<sup>a</sup> chi-squared test = 9.065; p = 0.028; V Cramer = 0.202.

<sup>b</sup> chi-squared = 12.444; p = 0.002; V Cramer = 0.237.

NGOs were rejected because of their under-representation (N = 8) in the analysis.

Source: authors' own research.

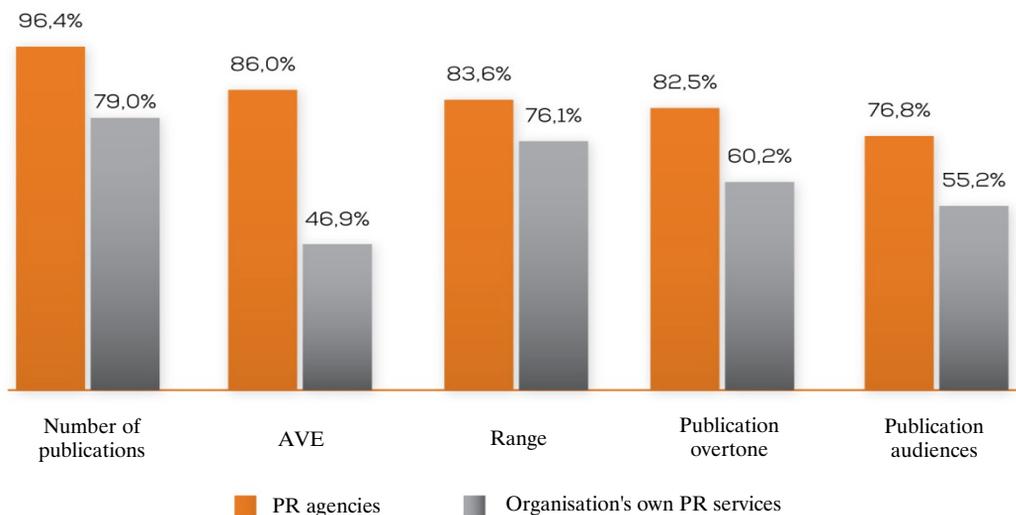
The year-round review of the activities of the surveyed PR specialists is dominated by a holistic approach, combining media monitoring with quantitative and qualitative research, as well as analysis of source data. Nearly 3/5 of the respondents use several methods at the same time when assessing the effects of their work, which has a positive impact on the reliability of individual analyses. The use of triangulation in the measurement of PR effects is more common among people:

- with completed public relations studies (70% vs. 58% without PR studies); also respondents with doctoral degrees were more likely to use the holistic model when measuring the effects of their work (63%) than other respondents (57%),
- holding senior positions in the company's organisational structure (67% — managing, 62% — executive, 44% — executive),
- having employment in PR agencies (77%) compared to PR specialists from private (58%) and public (46%) companies,
- with longer seniority in the industry (69% among those working for at least 15 years, while in the remaining groups the percentages were below this limit — range 46–61%).

Coming back to the discussion on the AVE indicator, interesting information is provided by a comparison of the frequency of use of selected media monitoring measures by people employed in public relations agencies only and its comparison with the situation when an organization has its own PR structures, e.g. PR department, spokesperson, communication manager (Figure 4).

The relatively largest deviation occurs when analysing the frequency of the advertising equivalent use. Agencies use this indicator almost twice as often as public relations professionals working on the client side. The intensive work of the agency's consultant with media reports results from the specificity of tasks and the number of supported campaigns for many clients. The sheer number of orders and execution per year determines the diversity visible in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Indicators used in the media monitoring package by PR agencies in the last 12 months (N = 57)**



Source: authors' own research.

## Summary

Analyses have shown that the use of broadly understood media monitoring is a key support for people who build reliable relations with their environment on a daily basis. The most frequently used indicators included the following elements of media reports: the number of publications, the range achieved and the overtones of materials. Regardless of the researcher's preferences in the area of selection of specific measurement methods, it should be remembered that in order to speak about effective measurement in PR, it must be carried out in a measurable manner. In practice, this means that the results obtained can be compared with the previously assumed effects without any problems and on an interim basis (Tworzydło, 2006, p. 125).

PR consultants more often use the methodology of quantitative research to assess the effects of their work. At least one of the pools of techniques, i.e. PAPI, CATI, CAWI, was used by 32% of respondents in the last year.

A smaller percentage of respondents — 23% decided for qualitative research in the form of IDI and/or FGI. The classic desk research (52%) and the related economic analysis of financial data (36%) are very popular. The greater popularity of these two solutions results from the possibility of almost immediate commencement of the survey, easy extension or narrowing of the analysed documentation and, most importantly, costs, which are relatively low compared to surveys or time-consuming expert interviews. In order to better diagnose the situation, it is worth recalling the results of surveys among manufacturing companies within the scope of applied forms and instruments of marketing communication (by G. Hajduk 2015/2016). Only 16% of industrial companies declared that in the last three years they have conducted market and/or marketing research with the support of external entities (Hajduk, 2019, p. 224).

Despite the reported difficulties in measuring PR effects, respondents are willing to use many indicators. The main hypothesis assuming that public relations specialists use different ways of measuring the effects of their work, although the scope of applied solutions is influenced by their professional experience, should be verified positively. Responses of PR specialists indicate the domination of a holistic approach in their assessment of the effects of their own work, as a common combination of media monitoring with quantitative and qualitative research and source analysis was identified (58%). Additionally, the results confirmed that the image crisis is a kind of catalyst for active assessment of the effects of public relations activities, e.g. under the influence of past crises companies are more willing to invest in media monitoring.

The effects of PR activities are measured mainly by the agency's employees — 98%, which results from the specificity of the workplace. On the other hand, persons with the longest work experience have a high indicator which illustrates the average number of evaluation techniques used in practice (7.58). A similar result was noted among persons employed in management positions (7.45). PR agencies performed even better in this respect — 8.30.

Among the industry representatives, relatively high confidence in the controversial AVE indicator is still visible, as its application oscillates at the level of 56%, although in the group of agencies it increases by as much as 30 percentage points.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> List of the most important challenges for the PR industry (top 10): instrumental use of PR in politics (73%), competition from other disciplines (68%), price pressure (68%), limited client funds for PR activities (67%), ignorance of the essence of PR among business environments (66%), focus on new technologies and digital communication (66%), difficulties with effective measurement of PR effects (63%), increasing tendency to carry out PR activities with the company's own resources rather than by external agencies (62%), maintaining appropriate quality of consultants (61%), education system not adapted to the needs of the PR industry (60%).

<sup>2</sup> chi-quadrat = 34.515; df = 4; p < 0.001; V Cramer = 0.276.

<sup>3</sup> rho Spearman = 0.266; p < 0.001; N = 228.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://psmm.pl/katalog/pl/raporty-medialne> (accessed 12.12.2019).

<sup>5</sup> tau-b Kendall = (-0,127); p = 0,031; N = 235.

<sup>6</sup> tau-b Kendall = (-0,152); p = 0,010; N = 236.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://zlotespinacze.pl/kategorie/> (accessed 12.12.2019).

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