Valuing Unlisted Shares: A Dual Approach to the Major Information Determinants

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Little is known about how professional valuation experts actually form judgements on the value of unlisted shares. This study examines the valuation process among Canadian valuators and the relative importance of each of the main information variables used in that process. A dual approach to the problem is adopted: (1) a major survey of 231 valuation experts and (2) a conjoint analysis experiment on 82 valuators using fabricated cases representative of realistic relationships. Both approaches conclude that while earnings prospects is the single most important factor in determining unlisted share values, the determination of value in the absence of a capital market is a highly complex process involving a host of information variables, many of which do not easily lend themselves to objective judgement.

Financial reporting has undergone such dramatic changes over the past decade as to be regarded by some to constitute an 'accounting revolution' [Beaver, 1981]. Much of the literature which has revolutionized thinking in financial reporting stems from developments in finance concerning capital market efficiency. New insights have been gained into the speed and effectiveness of capital markets in responding to information, the appropriate definition of risk and the methodologies for testing hypotheses concerning the information content of accounting numbers and risk-return relationships in capital markets (Kaplan, 1978).

In stark contrast to the above, very little of the work in efficient capital markets has yet been translated to the valuation of unquoted companies whose ordinary shares neither trade on an exchange nor over the counter. The observation of Rice (1955) concerning unlisted share valuation still holds true today: 'The importance of the problem... has been exceeded only by its neglect' (p. 367).

Why has this field of research become a 'no-go' area for managerial economists? It is surely not because it lacks relevance. Of the 700000 or so companies incorporated within the United Kingdom, only approximately 2500 (0.35%) have their ordinary shares listed on a Stock Exchange. Much the same picture emerges in Canada, where approximately 98% of companies are unlisted.

Academic neglect is, we suggest, the consequence of an inadequate methodology and the absence of a reliable data base. Lawson (1980) sums up the position well: 'There is no escape from the fact that financial theory is not yet able to boast of a fundamentalist multi-period model that can generate tolerable valuations for unquoted companies' (p. 99). In short, it is far easier to concentrate on the relatively small proportion of companies which have listing status, using well-tested methodologies and readily available published data sources.

This paper reports the findings of a study which employs two distinct approaches in measuring the importance of accounting and other information variables to professional experts in the valuation of unlisted shares.

LITERATURE

Considerable research has been reported in the capital market literature on the development and testing of valuation models. A summary of the earlier models is found in Keenan (1970).

The fundamental share valuation model is the dividend model (Gordon and Shapiro, 1956), which is simply an extension of the valuation model for individual capital projects. However, there is one important difference: the quality of information in share valuations is typically inferior, being based on highly aggregated, publicly available data. In practice, this approach concentrates on estimating the future dividend stream (often in terms of a constant growth rate) and the riskiness of that dividend stream as reflected in the cost of equity. Such estimates are commonly made by reference to 'comparable' quoted companies using

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dividend yields or price-earnings ratios. More recently, the capital asset pricing framework has enabled the researcher to view equity value as a function of:

- (1) A riskless stream of expected permanent earnings; (2) A measure of the cost of earnings risk; plus
- (3) A measure of growth opportunities (Litzenberger and Rao, 1971; Fama and Miller, 1972; Foster, 1977; Bowen, 1981).

The 'comparable' approach can also be employed within this framework. The cost of equity, which is the key determinant of share value, is found by reference to the market risk (or beta) of comparable listed companies engaged in similar types of business, having similar mix of trading and adjusted for differences in capital structure (see Sharpe, 1963; Gordon and Halpern, 1974; Fuller and Kerr, 1981; Gup and Norwood,

1982; Boatsman and Baskin, 1981). In a recent survey of methods used by UK investment analysts to appraise equity investments Arnold and Moizer (1984) found fundamental analysis to predominate with technical analysis a poor second and beta analysis hardly used at all.1 Within fundamental analysis the earnings-based approach, using the estimate of the 'true' PE ratio, was the primary method. Consequently, the profit and loss account was regarded as the most influential source of information for share valuation purposes. A share possesses value because it represents a claim

to future uncertain cash flows. Any information which alters investors' beliefs concerning the size and uncertainty of such cash flows must, therefore, be regarded as relevant information for share valuation purposes, although the costs of such information must also be considered. Reference has already been made to the considerable body of literature in efficient markets on the information content of accounting messages.²

Where investors act rationally and prices respond to all available information, there can be little justification for valuing shares at anything other than market value. However, where markets do not exist or are far from 'efficient' it is necessary to determine the relevant information which shapes the perceptions and beliefs of investors regarding the earnings prospects and dividend-paying ability of the firm.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to identify and measure the important variables, as perceived by Canadian valuation experts, in the valuation of unlisted shares. Three primary questions are examined:

(1) What information is generally required in such valuations?

(2) What is the relative importance of each variable? (3) Is the valuation process for open-market valu-

ations the same as for notional valuations based on

24 Future dividends prospects

VARIABLE SELECTION

court case data, upon which all previous studies are based? Notional valuations include those for tax-

ation and estate planning purposes. Open valu-

actual or potential share

ations are for

transactions.

In selecting variables which may be considered important by valuators we follow the advice of Whittington and Whittenburg (1980) who, in a not unrelated study, argue that selection of variables should be based upon

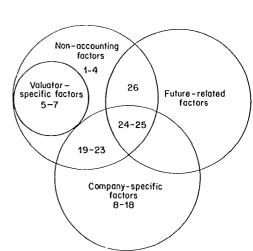


Figure 1. Variable categorization

Key to variables:

- 1 General economic conditions 2 Industry background
- 3 Market value of shares of comparable companies
- 4 Position of company in industry
- 5 Valuator ability
- 6 Valuator experience
- 7 Valuator judgement
- 8 Book value of net assets
- 9 Fair market value of net assets
- 10 Historical dividends
- 11 Historical earnings
- 12 Leverage
- 13 Liquidity
- 14 Presence of goodwill
- 15 Controlling interest
- 16 Minority interest
- 17 Size
- 18 Tax implications
- 19 Company background
- 20 Management
- 21 Presence of restrictive agreement
- 22 Prior recent sales of shares
- 23 Purpose of valuation
- 25 Future earnings prospects
- 26 Future industry prospects
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a review of the cases in the area and an examination of the literature.

Following earlier studies by Gill (1960) and Martin (1975), Kantor (1984) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the variables cited in 408 US tax court cases between 1946 and 1982 in valuing closely held com-

panies (reference to be provided later). The results of this study revealed that the judiciary relies heavily on objective, historical data (for example, previous sales of shares, historical earnings and book value of assets)

and on the testimonies by expert witnesses working either for the tax authority or the defendant. Empirical studies, based on court case data, have

used a variety of variables (see Rice, 1950; Johnson

et al., 1951; Grunewald, 1961; Bosland, 1964; Englebrecht, 1976; Jensen, 1978; Lathen, 1982). Most relevant to this study is the work by Englebrecht, who constructed a multiple regression model containing nineteen independent variables which collectively explained 86.5% of the variation in court case valuations. Statistically significant variables were book value, dividend-paying capacity, expert testimony, background of business, general economic conditions, market value of stock in comparable industries, minority interest and restrictive agreements. Based on these prior empirical studies, the analysis of US court cases, and standard texts,3 an information

set consisting of twenty-six variables was constructed

for use in the structured interviews and questionnaire,

employing the same definitions as Englebrecht (1976.

pp. 39-57). These variables are listed in Fig. 1.

SURVEY METHOD

responses.

ned and tested on a cross-section of twenty valuators. From the feedback obtained a final questionnaire was designed, asking respondents to indicate the perceived importance of the twenty-six variables given in the determination of the value of an unlisted

A seven-point Likert-scaled questionnaire was desig-

share. The population of valuators in Canada are, for the most part, members, associates or candidates of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Business Valuators (CICBV), Revenue Canada, employing 63 valuators, deals only in fiscal (notional) valuations. Question-

naires were distributed to these valuators. Usable responses were obtained from 36 of them, representing a 57.14% response rate for 'notional' valuators.

The CICBV distributed the questionnaire to all its 559 members actively involved in 'open' valuations. A total of 231 members completed the questionnaires representing a response rate of 41.32%. Overall, therefore, responses were received from 267 valuators out of a total population of 622, a response rate of 42.93%. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with 44

valuators to ascertain the reliability and validity of

SURVEY RESULTS

confidence.

Aggregated results of the questionnaire responses are reported in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 provides statistics concerning the perceived importance of the selected variables by the 231 'open' valuators and Table 2 provides the responses of the 36 Revenue Canada valuators involved solely in 'notional' valuations. A review of these tables leads to certain observations. First, future earnings is the most important variable in forming an opinion on share values. Both parametric and non-parametric statistical tests found future earnings to be significantly more important than any other variable. The next most important variable for both groups is the fair market value of net assets. These findings support the impression gained from interviews, that while valuation experts generally favour an earnings-based approach to valuation they also seek to support the outcome by reference to the asset-based valuation method, particularly where there is insufficient information to forecast

Second, the determination of value is a highly complex process, involving a host of information variables which are useful in forecasting the future earnings stream. Almost all the survey variables are perceived to be of some importance. The low importance attached to the valuation purpose given by notional valuators is to be expected, as they only conduct fiscal valuations. However, the position is little better for open valuators; it appears that they are not particularly influenced by whether the shares are to be valued for merger, transfer, prospectus, insurance, stock options, taxation or other purposes. Little attention is also given to dividends. It would be incorrect to assume from this that the dividend models in the early valuation literature (see Williams, 1938; Molodovsky, 1959; Gordon, 1962; Solomon, 1963) are ignored. Dividend and earnings-based models are fully reconcilable, so it matters little whether earnings or dividends are the main focus of attention.

the future earnings stream with any degree of

The third observation concerns the level of agreement between 'open' and 'notional' valuators as to the importance of information variables. The authors are not aware of any other studies in the non-court case area. Madeo (1979) acknowledges that use of court case data introduces a sample bias since those valuations that go to court are in some respects different from those where decisions are reached without litigation. A high degree of association was found between the two groups.4 As might be expected, notional valuators place greater emphasis on objectivity, as witnessed in the higher importance attaching to prior recent sales of stock and historical earnings and the lower weighting

given to management ability. Fourth, the low standard deviations for most variables indicate a strong level of agreement in responses. This, in turn, suggests that valuators are reasonably

Table 1. Degree of Importance	: Open	Valuators		
Variable	flank	Mean*	Standard	Sample
		importance	deviation	size
Future earnings prospects	1	1.087	0.325	231
Fair market value of net assets	2	1.381	0.753	231
Future prospects of industry	3	1.403	0.595	231
Management	4 5	1.478 1.526	0.718 0.945	228 228
Valuator judgement Controlling interest valuation	6	1.648	0.986	230
Minority interest valuation	7	1.677	1.047	229
Valuator ability	8	1.689	1.013	228
Valuator experience	9	1.707	0.972	229
Presence of restrictive agree-			0.004	
ment	10 11	1.806	0.981 0.967	222 229
Tax implications General economic conditions	12	1.908 1.961	0.987	229
Historical earnings	13	1.991	0.732	231
Company background	14	2.013	0.941	230
Prior recent sale of shares	15	2.108	1.088	231
Liquidity	16	2.130	0.906	230
Presence of goodwill		0.400	4.403	005
(intangible value) Position of the company in the	17	2.138	1.197	225
industry	18	2.165	1.010	230
Leverage	19	2.188	0.891	229
Industry background	20	2.352	0.940	230
Market value of comparable				
companies	21	2.370	1.196	230
Purpose of the valuation	22	2.613	1.443	230
Size	23	2.800	1.047	230
Future dividends prospects Book value of net assets	24 25	3.124 3.529	1.726 1.652	226 227
Historical dividends	26	3.896	1.660	231
OVERALL MEAN		2.103		
*Importance was scaled from very im		,		
Table 2. Degree of Importance:	Notion	al Valuators		
Table 2. Degree of Importance: Variable	Notion Rank	Mean*	Standard	Sample
			Standard deviation	Sample size
Variable Future earnings prospects	Rank 1	Mean* importance 1.111	deviation	size 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets	Rank 1 2	Mean¹ importance 1.111 1.333	0.319 0.478	36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability	Rank 1 2 3	Mean* importance 1.111 1.333 1.389	0.319 0.478 0.688	36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares	Rank 1 2 3 4	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609	36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings	1 2 3 4 5	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878	36 36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry	Rank 1 2 3 4	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609	36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings	1 2 3 4 5 6	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809	36 36 36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.694	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.771	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.694 1.771	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091 0.843 0.898	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 3
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management Liquidity	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.771	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management Liquidity Presence of restrictive agree-	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.694 1.771	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091 0.843 0.898	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 3
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management Liquidity	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.771 1.778 1.917	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091 0.843 0.898	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 3
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Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management Liquidity Presence of restrictive agreement Position o' the company in the industry Leverage	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.771 1.778 1.917 1.943 2.200 2.222	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091 0.843 0.898 0.841	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 3
Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management Liquidity Presence of restrictive agreement Position o' the company in the industry Leverage Size	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.771 1.778 1.917 1.943 2.200 2.222 2.257	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091 0.843 0.898 0.841 0.938	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 3
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Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management Liquidity Presence of restrictive agreement Position o' the company in the industry Leverage Size Company background Industry background	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.771 1.778 1.917 1.943 2.200 2.222 2.257 2.333 2.361	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091 0.843 0.898 0.841 0.938	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 3
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Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management Liquidity Presence of restrictive agreement Position of the company in the industry Leverage Size Company background Industry background Book value of net assets Market value of comparable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.771 1.778 1.917 1.943 2.200 2.222 2.257 2.333 2.361	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091 0.843 0.898 0.841 0.938	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 35 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36
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Variable Future earnings prospects Fair market value of net assets Valuator ability Prior recent sale of shares Historical earnings Future prospects of industry Valuator judgement Minority interest valuation Presence of goodwill Controlling interest valuation Valuator experience General economic conditions Management Liquidity Presence of restrictive agreement Position of the company in the industry Leverage Size Company background Industry background Book value of net assets Market value of comparable companies Tuture dividends prospects Tax implications Historical dividends	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	Mean' importance 1.111 1.333 1.389 1.472 1.528 1.556 1.583 1.611 1.639 1.694 1.771 1.778 1.917 1.943 2.200 2.222 2.257 2.333 2.361 2.667 2.806 3.500 3.611 3.778	0.319 0.478 0.688 0.609 0.878 0.809 1.131 1.202 0.762 1.215 1.091 0.843 0.898 0.841 0.938 0.901 0.898 0.852 1.095 1.046 1.287	36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 36 3
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homogeneous in their beliefs and perceptions concerning the variables influencing share value.

The final observation concerns the role of accounting messages in private valuations. Historic accounting

ing messages in private valuations. Historic accounting numbers barely feature in the top half of Table 1, historic earnings being ranked a lowly thirteenth. An analysis of the means of accounting versus non-accounting variables is provided in Table 3. It will be seen from this table that for open valuators the non-accounting variable group is a significantly more important information set.

CONJOINT EXPERIMENT

The insights gained from the survey discussed in the foregoing section were then validated by conducting experiments on a smaller sample of the same population of valuation experts.

Following discussions with executives of the

Following discussions with executives of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Business Valuators and Revenue Canada, a sample of 82 valuers was selected for purposes of the study. Of these, 38 were employed within Revenue Canada involved exclusively in 'notional' valuations for tax purposes. The remaining 44 participants were drawn from seven of the practising firms regarded as being most heavily involved in valuation work. The latter group was

specifically requested to consider the experiment in terms of 'open valuations'. A typical data collection

exercise involved three steps: an open interview of the

valuation process adopted, examination of the documentary evidence supporting recent unlisted share valuations and the card-ranking (conjoint) exercise. Meetings lasted, on average, approximately 2 hours. Several of the 26 variables used in the original survey could be eliminated because of the form of the specific task presented to valuators. For example, the valuations to be performed were for all shares (not minority or controlling interests), and for either tax purposes (if a

court case valuation) or for buy-sell purposes (if a non-

court case valuation). This reduced the number of

variables to 17.

signed-rank test

Conjoint analysis is a powerful analytical tool used in measuring judgements of rank-order quality. The basic task required valuators to rank, according to value, a number of cards conveying data representing fictitious companies. Conjoint analysis then decomposed the overall responses so that the relative im-

Table 3. Mean Importance of Accounting and Other Variables

Variable categorization	Open Sample	Notional Sample	Full Sample	
Accounting data	2.302	2.216	2.290	
Non-accounting data	1.950	2.141	1.977	
Wilcoxon matched-pairs				

0.299

Fair market value of net assets 30% above industry average
 Future dividends prospects favourable

1. Book value of assets 30% above industry average

5. Future earnings prospects favourable6. Future prospects for the industry favourable7. General economic conditions favourable

2. Company background favourable

Figure 2. Card example

portance (or utility) of each information variable could be inferred.

In this particular valuation experiment each variable

17 variables, three were repeated in more than one deck

The LINMAP package (see Srinivasan and Shocker,

1981) was used to analyse the data. Aggregated results

of the conjoint experiment are presented in Table 4.

For both notional and open valuers, future earnings prospects was the single most important factor, ac-

counting for, on average, approximately 22% of the

had two possible levels, as shown in the Appendix. Participants were presented with three decks of cards, each deck consisting of eight cards, and each card representing a fictitious company for valuation. Their task was to rank the cards within each deck according to value. Each card described a company in terms of seven of the 17 variables, using one of the levels specified for each variable. An example of one such card is given in Fig. 2. Cards within a particular deck had the same seven variables with varying levels. Of the

CONJOINT RESULTS

of cards.5

variation in valuations. Its overriding importance in valuation terms is evidenced by the observation that it has a percentage three times greater than its closest competitor.

It will be seen that while historic accounting information (such as historic earnings, dividends and book value of net assets) do have a bearing on share

ation (such as historic earnings, dividends and book value of net assets) do have a bearing on share valuations, even their collective importance is less than that of the highest-ranked variable.

Comparison of importance weightings for open and

notional valuator groups (using the *t*-test for sample proportions) revealed a considerable level of agreement. Only two variables produced significant differences (future earnings prospects and industry background), suggesting that open valuations generally involve greater investigation into softer information sources (e.g. profits forecasts) and the wider environment in which companies operate.

In general, the results of the conjoint experiment

support those of the wider survey. Comparison of rankings reveals rank correlation coefficients of 0.75 for notional and 0.47 for open valuation, both significant at the 0.05 level.

		Total		tional	c)pen
Attribute	Mean (%)	Ranking ^a	Mean (%)	Ranking*	Mean (%)	Ranking
Future earnings prospects	21.57	1	18.15	1	24.70	1
Position of the company in						
the industry	7.13	2	7.61	2	6.71	2
Management	6.56	3	6.83	3	6.30	3
Future industry prospects	6.04	4	6.66	4	5.51	7
Historical earnings	5.92	5	5.75	6	6.06	4
Presence of goodwill						
(intangible value)	5.88	6	6.36	5	5.47	8
Fair market value of						
net assets	5.67	7	5.49	8	5.80	5
General economic conditions	5.37	8	5.66	7	5.12	9
Leverage	4.96	9	5.09	10	4.82	11
Book value of net assets	4.73	10	4.38	12	4.99	10
Industry background	4.66	11	3.56	14	5.56	6
Company background	4.21	12	3.49	16	4.80	12
Presence of a restrictive						
agreement	3.89	13	5.16	9	2.82	16
Size	3.78	14	4.59	11	3.08	14
Historical dividends	3.74	15	4.36	13	3.20	13
Future dividends prospects	3.10	16	3.34	17	2.90	15
Liquidity	2.79	17	3.52	15	2.16	17

SUMMARY

should not seem particularly surprising; Beaver (1981) points out that under perfect market conditions, earnings and value are really two sides of the same coin. However, the determination of value in the absence of a capital market appears to be a highly complex process involving evaluation of a host of information variables, many of which do not easily lend themselves to objective measurement.

The findings of the main survey and conjoint experi-

ment broadly support the variables considered important in prior empirical work and court cases. Earnings prospects is the single most important factor in the

determination of the value of an unlisted share. This

Table 4. Relative Importance of Attributes

Business valuators, as information intermediaries, hold reasonably homogeneous beliefs and perceptions regarding the information content of accounting and other variables in determining unlisted share values. Only relatively minor differences in the importance of

these variables appear to occur between open and notional valuations. It is hoped that the findings of this paper offer a basis for future work in an important but neglected area of

finance. We do not pretend that such research will be easy, particularly in view of the finding that accounting

mited importa	nce in the
F ATTRIBUT	TES AND
Levels	
1	2
30%*	30%₺
F	U
30%ª	30%♭
F	υ
F	Ū
F	Ū
F	ũ
30%*	30%
	F ATTRIBUT 1 30%* F 30%* F F F F F

30%

F

F

Strong

No

Yes

30%

30%^b

U

U

U

Weak

U

Yes

Nο

30%

Leverage (total debt + total assets)

Liquidity (Current assets + current

Presence of a restrictive agreement

Position of the company in the

*30% above industry average.
b30% below industry average.
F: Favourable.

obtained.

Historical earnings

liabilities) Management

Industry background

NOTES

- 1. For a description of these approaches see Glover (1983).
- 2. The interested reader will find useful surveys of informational
 - content studies in Kaplan (1978) and Beaver (1981).

Beach (1972).

- Two such standard works are Baynes (1973) and Ovens and
- 5. A fuller description of the methodology outlined will be found in Kantor (1984). The number of trials required reduces to only eight for each deck using the fractional factorial design of Addelman (1962, Plan 1).

A Spearman rank correlation coefficient of 0.786 was

Presence of goodwill (intangible value)

U: Unfavourable.

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