

## Data Differences —XBRL Versus Compustat

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### Abstract

Miguel, 1977, Kinney and Swanson, 1993, and, Yang et al. 2003, suggest that accounting data provided by Compustat ([www.compustat.com](http://www.compustat.com)) differs, to some degree, from accounting data provided by some individual companies. A possible competitor to Compustat is XBRL (eXtensible Business Reporting Language) which is a worldwide standard for the publishing, exchange, and analysis of financial reports and data ([www.xbrl.org](http://www.xbrl.org)). Quoting Charles Hoffman, CPA (a.k.a., “The father of XBRL”), Tie (2005) reports that “XBRL will significantly improve the ability of CPA financial managers to distribute information to stakeholders precisely as reported, rather than as condensed or otherwise modified by third-party data aggregators to facilitate distribution.” In a related vein, Kern and Morris 1994 suggest that “[a]nalysts and researchers need to exercise great care when selecting databases and variables from those databases. These choices can affect the results of and the inferences drawn from empirical research in ways more than is anticipated by researchers.” In order to gain insights into the issue (i.e., modified versus “as reported” accounting data), accounting data provided by both Compustat and XBRL are analyzed. The results suggest that differences exist and that the reconciliation of such differences is not obvious.

Keywords: Compustat, Data Aggregators, Data Intermediaries, EDGAR/IDEA, Taxonomies, XBRL

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