

Appendix - 1

MAG Scholar Journal Rating List - 2009

Research Method

Journal rating is a contentious issue. Over the last ten years, there has been an increasing amount of literature devoted to the topic of publishing in good journals. In New Zealand, the dawning of PBRF (Performance Based Research Funds) has raised awareness of the importance of publishing among academics. In other countries, an academic will 'perish' if s/he does not publish in top ranking journals within a specified timeframe. In many institutions academic progression is often based on the number of top ranking journal publications. Thus, a valid and reliable journal ranking list is of utmost value to academia. The focus of this study was to produce a journal rating list that the Marketing, Tourism and International Business academics and their institutions can adopt.

There are several methods used to evaluate and rank journals, each one has advantages and deficiencies. The impact factor method is widely used in scientific journals. However, quite a few articles and commentaries have identified inherent problems with the impact factor (Hasnall, Bollen and Hanson, 2007). For instance, long articles collect many citations and give high journal impact factors than short articles; journals with short publication lag allow many short-term journal citations and give high journal impact factors; there is no correlation between individual's journal articles and journal impact factors; authors tend to over-self-citation, etc. (Guerrero, 2001).

The 'perceived quality' of journals is another method used to assess the merit of articles published by academics. Although widely accepted, 'perceived quality' journal lists are collated by a panel of senior academics, as is the case with the *Australian Business Deans Journal List (DEANS)* or the *Association of Business Schools' Academic Journal Quality Guide (ABS)*. Both lists are intended to assist promotion/hiring committees, and grant review teams to evaluate the quality of the research output of academics. In New Zealand, while there is no such 'official' list, the panel members of the last two PBRF exercises used a combination of recognized perceived quality lists to evaluate academics' research output. However, a point of contention raised against perceived quality method is that the list is heavily biased towards those on the panel, as shown by a study carried out in 1988 that observed respondents who published in top journals tend to give low merit points to low ranked journals (Cudd and Morris 1988). There is also the tendency to grant a higher grade to journals in which one has published in (Extejit and Smith, 1990). Van Fleet et al. (2000) claim, if a panel is made up of professors and senior academics who have considerable top journal publications, then new and upcoming journals are disadvantaged from developing into quality journals as they get ignored. This disadvantageous positioning may then extend to academics who publish in such journals. Hence, the use of panels to create journal rating lists may be subject to self-preservation and predisposition bias.

Another method involves collecting rating scores from a sample of academics using survey research. The biases discussed when using a panel could still surface in this method but with a lesser magnitude. A more serious bias is introduced by anchors used in the questionnaire, which may not reflect the content quality of the journals. Other biases include item order effect and respondent fatigue. While item order effect could be controlled by randomization, the latter may be difficult to control as respondents are required to rate a large number of journals at the same

time. Another concern is that the journal list used in such rating exercises often is recycled from similar studies or contained journals that the researchers think are appropriate. In either case, the respondents have no input in the drawing up of the journal list.

For institutions, the journal ranking list used affects the funding it receives and, for academics, it plays a major role in their career advancement. Therefore, it is imperative to produce a rating list that is free of bias. Essentially this is the research focus initiated by MAG Scholar. To this effect a group of academics carried out a study, first of a series of journal rating studies, in October 2008. The study employed an approach that allowed the academics to nominate as many journals as they could possibly recall in a given category. Thus, through unaided recall, *top of the mind awareness* of a journal among the academics was produced. This is an established method extensively used in measuring advertisement effectiveness and brand recall. In the present case, it is used to assess the awareness of A, B and C grade journals amongst academics. Unlike aided recall, unaided recall requires mental processing of retrieving the stored encoded information without any cues. It is assumed that this would embody more credibility to the journal ranking list produced, given that academics are responsible for generating and disseminating knowledge and, in the process, have seen, read and/or published in the journals they nominate.

The sampling approach used was based on the Vox Populi (*Latin* for ‘voice of the people’) notion of Galton (1907) that suggests the intelligence of the masses far exceeds that of any single individual or of the experts. To implement the Vox Populi sampling approach, a sampling frame of academics was developed by scanning Marketing, Tourism and/or International Business departmental websites. For countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia, Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong, academics in Marketing/Tourism/International Business departments of all the universities in the respective countries were included in the sampling frame. For the United States, besides including the top 500 universities based on the Shanghai Jiao Tong Academic Ranking of World Universities List 2007 (ARWU), an additional 200 universities not in this list were included. For continental Europe, Japan, India, Africa, the Middle East, South America, and previously unmentioned Asian countries, we included those universities which were listed in both the Shanghai Jiao Tong ARWU and THES-QS World University Rankings 2007, plus another 200 universities not listed in either of these two Lists.

Academics from all levels (lecturers, senior lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, professors, and chair professors) were included in the survey. In total, 5336 academics from the five continents were approached via their email address. There were 425 ‘out-of office’ auto generated messages received, 390 “undeliverable” emails because of invalid email addresses and 232 ‘incomplete’ responses that could not be used. The survey successfully captured data from 538 academics who indicated the journals that they believed were A, B and C grade. The collective data of the 538 academics was compiled to produce a list, christened as the *MAG Scholar List*. Note: Further statistical analyses will be conducted to evaluate how valuable are these publications to the author’s academic career advancement, face value, self-esteem, and contribution to knowledge.

Brief Profile of Respondents

The number of respondents completed the online survey was 538. Of this, 45% of them said they had a promotion/career progression in the past three years. The most common level of promotion/career progression was progression along the lecturer/assistant professor scale (54%).

Next was from lecturer to senior lecturer (45%). In relation to salary increment, the average is 7% or US\$4048 per year. The percentage of respondents who believed “Publication” contributes to promotion/career progression is 52%, followed by “Teaching” (29%) and “Service” (19%). On the question about highest academic qualification, roughly 74% of the respondents held a PhD. Most of the respondents devote their teaching and research activities to “Marketing” (76%), “Tourism” (9%), and “International Business” (15%). Gender wise, male represents 73.4% of the total respondents. The United States of America has the largest number of respondents (33%), followed by UK (16.8%), Australia (15.9%), Canada (7.1%) and New Zealand (5.4%).

“The Collective Wisdom of 538 Academics can’t be wrong.”

MAG Scholar Research Team-Journal Rating Project
(Kim Fam, Mathew Parackal, Joe Chai, Zhilin Yang)

References

- Cudd, M. and Morris, J. (1988), ‘Bias in journal ratings’, *The Financial Review*, Vol. 23 No.1, pp.117-25.
- Extejit, M. and Smith, J. (1990), ‘The behavioural sciences and management: an evaluation of relevant journals’, *Journal of Management*, 16:539-551.
- Galton, F. (1907), ‘Vox Populi’, *Nature*, 75 (March 7): 450-451.
- Guerrero, R. (2001), ‘Misuse and abuse of journal impact factors’, *European Science Editing*, August, 27 (3): 58-59.
- Hasnall, V.C., Bollen, J. and Hanson, R.W., ‘Impact factor page rankled’, *ASBMB Today*, p.16-19
- Van Fleet, D. D., McWilliams, A. and Siegel, D.S., (2000), ‘A theoretical and empirical analysis of journal rankings: The case of formal lists’, *Journal of Management* 26, 839-861.