

JOURNALS OF QUALITY

By

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Measuring Research Quality

With the upcoming introduction of the research quality framework there has been much discussion about how to measure the quality of research and its impact. One traditional method has been to count the number of papers researchers have published and rank them depending on the quality and prestige of the journal in which they were published.

So how is the quality and prestige of a journal determined? Currently journals are ranked using methods that do not allow a consistent measurement of quality. Journals are evaluated on individual scales (e.g. rating scales) that have no common reference point and cannot be compared with each other empirically in a non-contentious way.

Method

Researchers in the Centre for the Study of Choice (CenSoC) at UTS have developed a method of measuring journal quality using a method called 'best-worst' scaling which allows the quality of journals to be measured using a consistent and empirically justifiable way. Because the method anchors the results to a common point, thus allowing meaningful comparisons between journals such as being able to say that journal X is twice the quality of journal Y.

With the full support and involvement of marketing societies throughout the world, the CenSoC researchers interviewed over 600 respondents over three months.

"Thus we have the most comprehensive set of ranking scores for marketing journals ever," said Professor Jordan Louviere, leader of the research team.

"Best-worst Scaling (BWS) is a measurement method based on a theory of how humans choose the two most extreme items in a set of three or more items. BWS assumes that a person examines the options in a set, and chooses the pair of options that exhibits the largest differences on the underlying subjective scale of interest. In this study, the underlying subjective scale is 'quality of a journal.'"

Each respondent was given nine sets of three journals each to rank and then their choices were combined with all other choices to give a quality score for each journal. The survey was implemented online in collaboration with Evaluation Solutions*.

"The study took into account a participant's familiarity with each of the journals, their home country and academic experience," Professor Louviere said. "We had sufficient numbers of respondents from North America (Canada and the USA), Europe and Australia-New Zealand to conduct separate analyses for these regions and to compare these separate analyses with the overall results."

Results

The results show that best-worst scaling is a very good method for measuring journal quality:

- The CenSoC rankings correlate with traditional quality rankings using other ranking systems
- The scores of each journal represent a ratio scale of journal quality which means that a journal with a score of 1.0 has double the quality of a journal with a score of 0.50 – something that no other ranking process allows
- There are few real differences in the evaluations of journals by marketing academics journals by region
- Journal scores are more reliable for the top and bottom ranking journals.
- As well as providing a very effective ranking of the journals, the technique also allows consistency in comparing journals and an assessment of the relative impact of one journal in comparison to each other journal.
- The tool can be an effective way to measure quality for research quality assessments such as the Research Quality Framework

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* Evaluation Solutions is a consultancy that provides an award-winning online survey platform, www.e-valuate-it.com, and survey implementation service for education, corporate and public sector environments. The company specialises in evaluation and diagnostic tools to empower clients with fast, intelligent and reliable feedback to benchmark and measure continuous improvement in key strategic areas of business. For more information, visit www.evaluationsolutions.com.

Evaluation Solutions implemented an online user experience for the journal ranking survey by integrating e-valuate-IT® with a CenSoC research tool.