

QUALITY EVALUATIONS OF MARKETING JOURNALS: STATUS AND TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an update of work reported by Browne and Becker (1977, 1979, 1985) on the "prestige" of journals that publish articles on marketing. The measure of the prestige of journals is "quality," as perceived by chairmen of marketing departments at AACSB accredited institutions. Since it is department chairmen who make the decisions which profoundly affect the careers of marketing academicians, their perceptions are of more than passing interest.

PURPOSE

This study is informed by several purposes, one of which was identified above. Research productivity clearly affects decisions on promotion, tenure, pay and whatever "perks" academic departments have available. Knowing the relative standing of many of the journals available for aspiring researchers should help clarify the "rules of the game." While this motivation is admittedly somewhat crass, it is of vital importance to the new assistant professor, looking for direction on ways to attain promotion and tenure.

Second, the findings of this study may be of interest to the editors and editorial boards of the journals. How do the perceptions of marketing department chairmen square with the perceptions of the journal editors? Is the journal already at the top, is it growing in stature, or is it perceived to be going downhill?

Third, the findings may be useful to department chairs. Department chairs, in common with all of us, may not know the relative standing of all journals, particularly those outside her or his fields of specialization.

Finally, this research -- and all academic research -- is motivated at least in part by what Veblen referred to as "idle curiosity." Indulging one's "idle curiosity" is the luxury, perhaps the great reward, that some degree of success in this world of publication affords us as academic researchers.

METHOD

Journal Selection

The first step in the research process was identifying a list of relevant journals. The basic list identified by Browne and Becker (1985) was used, with some modifications to reflect two changes. First, several new journals have begun publication since 1985, six of which were included in the present study: Journal of Consumer Marketing; Journal of Product Innovation and Management; Journal of Public Policy and Marketing; Journal of Services Marketing; Marketing Science; Psychology and Marketing. Some journals were deleted, either because they had terminated publication, or simply to make room for the new entrants in the field.

Discipline-based journals -- such as American Economic Review, American Sociological Review, and Journal of Personality and Social Psychology -- again were excluded owing to limitations on the length of the questionnaire. Most of the principal journals in other functional fields of business, such as Academy of Management Journal, and Journal of Finance similarly were excluded. While eliminating these journals clearly restricts the domain of this research, it is equally clear that asking respondents to evaluate all journals in which marketing faculty conceivably might publish their work would present an insurmountable task. The current list totals 52 journals, the same number as in the 1985 study.

Measures Used

A questionnaire alphabetically listing the 52 journals was used as the collection instrument. A four-level rating scale was used to evaluate the 52 journals. The levels of the scale are: I - highest quality; II - high quality; III - good quality; IV - low quality. Respondents also could select an "unaware" response category.

A simple mean evaluation was computed for each journal, which was then used to rank all 52 journals with respect to perceived quality. The authors recognize the questionable nature of the mean for

TABLE 1
FAMILIARITY AND QUALITY EVALUATIONS OF MARKETING JOURNALS
(ranked by familiarity)

Rank	Journal Name	1989 (N=155)				1984 (N=119)			
		Familiarity		Quality		Familiarity		Quality	
		# Aware	Index	Score	Rank	# Aware	Index	Score	Rank
1	Harvard Business Review	155	1.000	1.74	6	119	1.000	1.55	5
2	Journal of Marketing	155	1.000	1.29	2	119	1.000	1.17	1
3	Journal of Marketing Research	154	0.987	1.26	1	119	1.000	1.20	2
4	Journal of Advertising Research	153	0.987	2.01	10	117	0.983	1.96	11
5	Journal of Retailing	153	0.987	2.01	11	117	0.983	2.07	13
6	Journal of Consumer Research	152	0.981	1.45	3	115	0.966	1.35	43
7	J. of the Academy of Mkg. Science	152	0.981	2.38	19	115	0.966	2.70	30
8	AMA Conference Proceedings	150	0.968	2.83	39	119	1.000	2.63	28
9	Journal of Advertising	150	0.968	2.20	14	114	0.958	2.28	17
10	Business Horizons	149	0.961	2.64	32	115	0.966	2.42	20
11	Advertising Age	148	0.955	3.49	50	112	0.941	3.36	43
12	Marketing News	145	0.935	3.68	52	117	0.983	3.55	47
13	Journal of Health Care Marketing	144	0.929	2.62	29	71	0.597	2.85	35
14	California Management Review	143	0.923	2.29	16	115	0.966	2.17	14
15	Journal of Marketing Education	143	0.923	2.78	35	104	0.889	2.95	36
16	Sloan Management Review	142	0.916	2.24	15	106	0.891	2.04	12
17	Journal of Business	141	0.910	1.94	8	113	0.950	1.84	8
18	Journal of Consumer Marketing	140	0.903	2.83	40	*	*	*	*
19	Journal of Business Research	140	0.903	2.20	14	107	0.900	2.24	15
20	Decision Science	138	0.890	2.00	9	105	0.882	1.91	9
21	Journal of Macromarketing	138	0.890	2.57	24	99	0.832	2.51	24
22	Public Opinion Quarterly	137	0.884	2.11	12	107	0.899	1.94	10
23	Management Science	136	0.877	1.49	4	105	0.882	1.53	4
24	Sales and Marketing Management	132	0.852	3.27	46	105	0.882	3.34	42
25	Journal of Consumer Affairs	132	0.852	2.63	31	98	0.824	2.62	27
26	J. of Personal Selling & Sales Mgt.	130	0.871	2.61	28	91	0.765	2.99	38
27	European Journal of Marketing	129	0.832	2.53	22	84	0.706	2.55	25
28	Direct Marketing	128	0.826	3.38	47	74	0.622	3.66	50
29	Industrial Marketing Management	127	0.819	2.58	25	86	0.723	2.57	26
30	Industrial Marketing	121	0.781	2.79	38	101	0.849	2.57	26
31	Journal of Mkg. Research Society	120	0.774	2.33	17	83	0.697	2.25	16
32	Marketing Science	119	0.768	1.82	7	*	*	*	*
33	Akron Business & Economic Review	118	0.761	3.39	48	91	0.765	3.36	43
34	Journal of Services Marketing	118	0.761	2.78	36	*	*	*	*
35	Psychology and Marketing	111	0.716	2.62	30	*	*	*	*
36	Journal of Public Policy & Mkg.	110	0.710	2.43	20	*	*	*	*
37	Operations Research	107	0.690	1.68	5	81	0.681	1.63	6
38	Baylor Business Review	98	0.626	3.47	49	68	0.571	3.51	45
39	Business Topics	89	0.574	3.16	44	88	0.739	2.97	37
40	Journal of International Mkg.	88	0.568	2.60	26	40	0.336	2.73	33
41	Journal of Product Innovation Mgt.	83	0.535	2.66	34	*	*	*	*
42	Int'l J. of Physical & Materials Mgt.	80	0.516	2.66	33	57	0.479	2.72	32
43	Journal of Int'l Business Studies	76	0.490	2.37	18	46	0.387	2.50	21
44	Journal of Leisure Research	77	0.497	3.12	42	49	0.412	3.10	39
45	Quarterly Review of Marketing	75	0.489	2.91	41	57	0.479	2.79	34
46	Logistics & Transportation Review	72	0.465	2.61	27	48	0.403	2.50	21
47	Business Management	66	0.426	3.15	43	38	0.319	3.13	40
48	Transportation Journal	64	0.413	2.56	23	46	0.387	2.50	21
49	Journal of Industrial Economics	58	0.374	2.50	21	27	0.227	2.40	18
50	NC Review of Business & Economics	49	0.316	3.49	51	41	0.345	3.66	50
51	Marketing in Europe	42	0.271	3.17	45	26	0.218	3.19	41
52	Omega-Int'l J. of Management Sci.	41	0.265	2.78	37	33	0.277	2.64	29

very minor reversals in rank: 1) JMR and JM switch places, with the former moving into first place; 2) Operations Research and HBR switch places, with the former moving into fifth place. Indeed, with the exception of a newcomer and the movement of JAR to tenth place, the top ten are almost identical to those of five years ago.

Quality Movements: Up and Down

While there has been little overall change in perceptions of quality, substantial change has taken place in the evaluations of individual journals. The Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science made the greatest positive move, from 30 to 19 on the list. Following close behind was the Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, which moved from 38 to 28. Some journals took the elevator down, including Business Horizons, which fell from 20 to 32, and Industrial Marketing, which declined from 26 to 38. The AMA Conference Proceedings continued the downward spiral reported in 1985, falling over the most recent period from 28 to 39.

Quality of New Journals

How well do new journals fare? That depends on the journal, and a great deal of variation is evident in the quality evaluations of relative newcomers. Marketing Science got off to an absolutely blazing start, ranked in seventh place in its first showing. Journal of Services Marketing and Journal of Consumer Marketing were ranked, respectively, 36 and 40. Between the top and bottom sets of newcomers were Journal of Public Policy and Marketing at 20, and Psychology and Marketing at 30.

DISCUSSION

While the findings largely speak for themselves, some interesting inferences perhaps should be emphasized. That is, what characterizes the most and least respected journals on the list, and what may account for some of the changes that have occurred over the five year period since the last evaluation?

When You're Hot, You're Hot

The top ten journals include the obvious top Marketing publications -- JM, JMR, and JCR -- plus JAR, which has wavered in and out of the top ten. Three of the top

ten -- Management Science, Operations Research, and Decision Science -- are the top journals in the management science/quantitative methods field. An additional quantitative newcomer, Marketing Science, is ranked seventh, and the Journal of Business (ranked 8) is the most quantitatively-oriented general business journal. Only the Harvard Business Review, of the top ten, publishes purely "qualitative" pieces. The pattern conforms to Browne and Becker's observation (1985) that there is a strong bias toward quantitatively-oriented work in Marketing. The number of top quality options to the researcher working on brand-switching models or perceptual mapping may be far greater than the vehicles available to the writer on public policy or macro-marketing questions.

And When You're Not, You're Not

The journals at the low end of the quality scale also still share the characteristics identified by Browne and Becker (1985). They tend to be trade journals and general journals published by lesser-regarded business schools. The reader can mentally substitute a number of other publications for Akron Business & Economic Review or Advertising Age; those two can be viewed as representative of their genres. As Browne and Becker asked in 1985, is there any point to publishing in such journals at all? That question, of course, can not be answered here, but will depend upon the views of one's particular institution.

The Times, Are They A'changin'?

While there was very little change in overall ranks, a few journals did change dramatically. In the cases of JAMS and JPSSM, the significant increase may be attributable to increased awareness of the journals, coupled with their maturation. The increase of the Journal of International Business Studies, both from 1977 to 1985 and 1985 to 1989, could be the consequence of the increasing interest in things international.

The decline of the AMA Conference Proceedings is difficult to explain, other than the obvious interpretation that the papers presented at AMA meetings have been suffering a decline in quality. Or, the evaluation of the AMA Conference may be colored by poor presentations at the meetings; we all have experienced presentations that were obviously ill-

prepared. While that is a problem far from peculiar to Marketing, it is something that should be of concern to the AMA.

Finally, Marketing News has been in a secular decline since 1977, suffering a further drop from 43 in 1985 to 52, last place, in 1989. The News, over the years, may have taken on a format which is simply of less relevance to academic members of the AMA. At the extreme, some pieces in the News may be seen as vehicles for consultants and research firms to promote their services to practitioners.

What's New?

Browne and Becker (1985) predicted an increase in the number of journals available to Marketing writers. Given the increasing number of Marketing programs, Marketing faculty, and increasing demands on publication, the slots in available vehicles would prove inadequate. Consider, for example, that a total of roughly 120 slots were available in 1989 in JM, JMR, and JCR combined; balance that against perhaps 2,500 Marketing faculty with some interest in publishing in these prestigious journals.

Browne and Becker predicted that submissions to top journals would increase; in the field of economics, the experiences of the AER surely support that contention. However, Browne and Becker also predicted that most of the new opportunities would appear in journals aimed at very specialized sub-fields or to provide opportunities for papers that might be rejected by the best journals. That contention has not been totally supported. Some new journals may immediately attain very high levels of perceived quality, as in the case of Marketing Science. Other journals may grow and mature over time, as in the apparent cases of JAMS and JPSSM. Conversely, some of the new entrants indeed were ranked quite low. It is safer to say, therefore, that new journals will emerge to fill gaps, and what those gaps will be only time will tell.

(literature and references available upon request)