

A Journal of Retailing Retrospective Based on *ISI Web of Knowledge*

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Abstract

In this article, we attempt two things. First, we begin with reviewing the three principal ways by which academic institutions make their quality assessments regarding different journals. We conclude this section with an assertion that citation-based measures of journal influence are the “most objective.” Second, we review the history of *Journal of Retailing* (from 1956 Issue 1 to 2009 Issue 2) using citation counts as a surrogate for quality assessment using the citation data contained in the *ISI Web of Knowledge* database.² We conclude with noting the recent impressive scores of the *Journal of Retailing* in terms of these citation scores and a discussion of what we perceive to be the next set of challenges for the *Journal of Retailing*.

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Introduction

As universities around the world demand greater accountability from their educational institutions, the issue of research quality has gained increasing significance, and the importance of creating marketing knowledge and disseminating it through scholarly academic journals has gained tremendous momentum. Even the so-called “teaching schools” of yesteryears are calling on their faculty to become more research active, and are increasingly including journal-level research productivity as a critical component for promotion and tenure decisions. Hence, journals “have become the primary medium to communicate scholarly knowledge in marketing, and the number of marketing-related journals has increased rapidly in recent years” (Baumgartner and

Pieters 2003, p. 123). Moreover, university administrators, who seek enhanced prestige and recognition for their departments, colleges or universities, see such research productivity as the passport to greater visibility. Further, this preoccupation with publications has become institutionalized through accrediting bodies like the AACSB which consider “the collective publication record [to be] an important element in the process of obtaining or retaining [such] accreditation” (Hult, Neese and Bashaw 1997, p. 37).

This trend has naturally led to the all important question of the pecking order of these journals, i.e., the relative prestige associated with publishing in different journals since the journals vary widely in terms of rigor, reputation and influence. “A scholarly journal is influential to the extent it publishes articles that contribute significantly to the exchange of ideas in some field of inquiry. This is variously referred to as influence, importance, impact or quality” (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003, p. 124).

This article begins with reviewing three principal ways by which academic institutions make these quality assessments regarding different journals. We conclude this section with an assertion that citation-based measures of journal influence are the “most objective.” Next, we summarize the citation trends in *Journal of Retailing* articles using the *Social Sciences Cita-*

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² As noted in the body of the article, we recognize that there are other sources of citation indices available for such retrospectives. We, however, decided to use the *ISI Web of Knowledge* because it tracked articles by publication year all the way from 1956 Issue 1 through 2009 Issue 2. Arguably, it is also the most widely recognized and authoritative source of citation appraisal.

tion Index (SSCI) (e.g., Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004), accessed via Thomson Reuter's *Web of Science*, which is part of the *ISI Web of Knowledge* for the period 1956 (Issue 1) through 2009 (Issue 2). We conclude with noting the recent impressive scores of the *Journal of Retailing* in terms of these citation scores and a discussion of what we perceive to be the next set of challenges for the *Journal of Retailing*.

Three Roads to Impact

As one may imagine, given the disparate disciplines and fields of enquiry that claim scientific credentials, the issue of journal quality has been addressed in diverse ways. There are three principal ways by which academic institutions make these journal quality assessments.

Listings of Publication Anatomy

First and the simplest approach is to consult sources like the annual editions of *Cabell's* (e.g., 2007–2008) *Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Management and Marketing*, which themselves are based on self-reported annual surveys of editors of the journals. These directories enumerate journal details (e.g., review procedures, number of issues, etc.) and journal statistics (e.g., turnaround times, acceptance rates, etc.). The intuition here is that journals with the lowest acceptance rates are of the highest quality. However, the problem with this metric is that ostensibly “lower quality” journals may get very large numbers of submissions which would result in low acceptance rates, whereas “superior quality” journals may not get as many submissions because their quality and reputation might deter submissions, thereby leading to deceptively higher acceptance rates. There is also the danger of moral hazard on the part of the responding editors. Moreover, not all editors respond to these annual surveys which means that some of the statistics reported in such directories may be dated.

Key Informant Perceptions of Journal Quality

The second approach relies on surveys to gauge journal quality (e.g., Hult, Neese and Bashaw 1997; Hult, Reiman and Schilke 2009). The premise of such surveys takes its rationale from the key informant methodology where the ostensive key informants are deans, department heads, faculty members, and academic and practitioner members of professional organizations. Under this approach, these informants are typically asked to rank or rate different journals according to their reputation and perceived quality. Supporters of this methodology note that such surveys can “capture the multifaceted construct of the perceived status of journals in a discipline” (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003, p. 125). Such perceived measures are expected to capture combined judgments about factors like the publication and editorial history of a journal, the quality of its editorial review board and reviewing process, and the size and the profile of its readership population, which are notoriously difficult to encapsulate by objective measures.

The detractors of this approach point to the following weaknesses of the key informant methodology for this task. Foremost, such estimates are inextricably tied with the quality of actual survey as *executed* (i.e., whether the appropriate population has been identified, whether sampling frames adequately represent that population, whether respondents identified in the sampling frames were correctly sampled, whether non-response biases and measurement errors may have led to incorrect results). In addition, there are the human foibles related to “strategic responses” or “self-serving responses.” The assessments may also be biased due to the lack of familiarity on the part of the respondents with certain journals, leading to underrating of unfamiliar journals and overrating of the more familiar journals (although some surveys do attempt to correct for the familiarity bias).

Moreover, a huge problem in this approach lies with the actual specification of the relevant study population. To determine journal quality from surveys, researchers should be the relevant population. After all, they are the ones who actually use the articles published in the various journals in their own research. However, most of these surveys sample administrators who use the journals for other purposes, namely as signals for the research quality of promotion and tenure candidates. They also use journals as indicators of the department's visibility.³

Another issue in these surveys is the number of journals that respondents have to rank or rate for a comprehensive, comparative assessment of publications without problems of respondent fatigue and the resultant unreliable responses and/or non-response biases.

All these concerns and issues have led the researchers to rely increasingly on bibliometric, objective measures of journal influence.

Bibliometric Indices or Citation-Based Analysis

This approach, as the label implies, follows the well-established procedure for examining knowledge exchange (and by inference, impact factor) by counting how often a particular journal article is cited by other vehicles of scholarly research. The premise here is that such counts are “objective” and not biased by (at least theoretically) self-serving perceptual data taken from key informant surveys. However, several criticisms have been leveled against these citation index based journal quality evaluations. Foremost, some scholars note that the more accurate term for such analysis is “reference analysis” (Cote, Leong and Cote 1991) in that such counts merely tally up the number of times focal articles appear in reference lists of scholarly works, and as such, are crude surrogate instruments for measuring the true influence of journal articles. Second, critics note that articles may be cited by authors for a number of reasons, including perfunctory citations, strategic citations (e.g., to appease editors, potential reviewers, etc.), and neg-

³ This may explain the presence of certain non-academic, but highly visible, publications in top ten marketing journal rankings.

ative or criticism-oriented citations (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003; Cote, Leong and Cote 1991). Hence, although such citations are expected to be overt expressions aimed at measuring true acknowledgements of intellectual indebtedness, a simple count of references does not capture the true scholarly impact of journal articles. In addition, an important article may be under-represented by such citation counts if only a relatively small number of scholars are working in the related content areas.

Although the above limitations are significant, citation-based indices are still thought to be less biased than subjective measures obtained by key informant surveys, and since they are more readily available, they are increasingly becoming the preferred method of judging journal influence in many disciplines (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003).

Two contemporary primary vehicles for such citation counts are (1) the *Social Sciences Citation Index* (SSCI), accessed via Thomson Reuter's *Web of Science*, which is part of the *ISI Web of Knowledge*, and (2) Google Scholar search routines. Neither of these is perfect or exhaustive.

For example, ISI Impact Factor Scores, though based on approximately 8600 peer-reviewed scholarly journals (Soutar and Murphy 2009, p. 150), are nonetheless based on the ISI listing which excludes certain journals (e.g., it is estimated that only about half of the Australian academic journals are included in it, Soutar and Murphy 2009, p. 150). Moreover, its critics point to lop-sided representation of journals in the ISI database (e.g., economics has over 150 ISI indexed journals while marketing apparently has fewer than 30, Soutar and Murphy 2009).⁴ Disputes also arise as to the nature of periodicals covered by ISI, for example, the selective and arbitrary inclusion and exclusion of certain conference proceedings (Cote, Leong and Cote 1991).

The above criticisms have led several marketing scholars to prefer Google Scholar search routines since Google Scholar "has a much wider 'footprint' because it searches databases from a very wide range of academic publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories, universities and other scholarly organizations" (Soutar 2007, p. 3516). In general, Google Scholar search routines return on an average 2.5 times as many citation counts as compared to the ISI database, and hence are perceived as providing a better indication of real influence of scholarly work (Soutar and Murphy 2009).

Despite these problems, however, the most popular citation-based measure of journal influence is the impact factor reported in SSCI accessed via Thomson Reuter's *Web of Science*, which is part of the *ISI Web of Knowledge*. Supporters of SSCI note that all the top journals are tapped by the ISI database. They also consider Google Scholar as being too liberal in counting citations⁵ and prefer the more conservative ISI estimates.

⁴ Cabell's *Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Management and Marketing* (1997–1998) listed 551 journals of which 59 contained the word "Marketing" in the title (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003, p. 123).

⁵ Google Scholar counts citations in such documents as curriculum vitae and course syllabi, for example. While the latter may be an indicator of article influence, the former are not.

We now turn to a review of the history of *Journal of Retailing* publications using citation counts as a surrogate for quality assessment using the citation data contained in the ISI Web of Knowledge (ISI Web of Knowledge 2009). Time-stamped 12:56 pm, September 27, 2009, the foregoing account summarizes a total of 2003 articles published in *Journal of Retailing* in the past 53 years (from 1956 Issue 1 to 2009 Issue 2).

Overall Description of Publication History

Journal of Retailing, much like most other journals has evolved over its 85 years of publication history.⁶ Its annual count of publications ranges from a low of 18 articles in year 1992 (under Charles A. Ingene's watch) to 71 articles in 1957 (under T. Dart Ellsworth's editorship). The average count of articles between 1956 and 1969 was 56.14 per year; this annual average dropped to 36.55 articles between the years 1970 and 1989; and the mean dropped again between the years 1990 and 2008 and 24.97 articles per year. In the 53 years of publications reviewed (i.e., from 1956 to 2009), the average annual count is 37.79 articles. Under our watch, from 2006 (Volume 82, Issue 3) to 2009 (Volume 85, Issue 2) (or 12 issues in all), a total of 106 articles have been published for an average of 35.33 manuscripts per year.

Citations were rarer for the 1950s articles (Table 1); the earlier articles also tended to be much shorter in length (for example, in 1956, *Journal of Retailing* published 47 articles with an average length of 4.2 pages; under our watch, the average article length is 13.35 pages). It is noteworthy that the 1956 issues were published in smaller pages (approximately, 8" × 6" in size) as opposed to the current journal which uses regular letter paper (about 11" × 8.5" in size). The journal paper size was changed under the stewardship of Dhruv Grewal and Michael Levy, who edited the *Journal of Retailing* from March 2001 through August of 2006.

Table 1
Citation counts of the 1950s articles.

Year	Total number of articles cited at least once
1956	None of the 47 articles
1957	2 of 71 articles
1958	7 of 67 articles
1959	3 of 63 articles

History of Citation Trends

As shown in Table 2, the very first *Journal of Retailing* cited article in the reviewed period was a 1957 article by Lebow titled

⁶ Founded in 1925, *Journal of Retailing* is the oldest marketing journal, and precedes *Journal of Marketing* (founded in 1936) and *Journal of Marketing Research* (founded in 1964) by 11 and 39 years, respectively. In the broad field of business, only the *Harvard Business Review* (founded in 1922) pre-dates the *Journal of Retailing*.

Table 2
Historical citation trends.

Category	Article
First cited article	“THE CRISIS IN RETAILING” LEBOW, V. Volume 33 (1957) Issue 1 Times Cited 1
First multiple citation article	“OBJECTIVES AND BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MMA” JONES, R.I. Volume 34 (1958) Issue 1 Times Cited 4
First article cited more than 10 times	“MEASURING THE CUSTOMERS IMAGE OF A DEPARTMENT STORE” WEALE, W.B. Volume 37 (1961) Issue 2 Times Cited 11
First article cited more than 100 times	“MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION OF SATISFACTION PROCESSES IN RETAIL SETTINGS” OLIVER, R.L. Volume 57 (1981) Issue 3 Times Cited: 191
First article cited more than 200 times	“STORE ATMOSPHERE – AN ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH” DONOVAN, R.J. & ROSSITER, J.R. Volume 58 (1982) Issue 1 Times Cited: 217
First article cited more than 300 times	“REFINEMENT & REASSESSMENT OF THE SERVQUAL SCALE” PARASURAMAN, A., BERRY, L.L. & ZEITHAML, V.A. Volume 67 (1991) Issue 4 Times Cited: 366
Article with highest citation counts	“SERVQUAL – A MULTIPLE-ITEM SCALE FOR MEASURING CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY” PARASURAMAN, A., ZEITHAML, V.A. & BERRY, L.L. Volume 64 (1988) Issue 1 Times Cited: 1340

“The Crisis in Retailing” (this was cited once); the very first *Journal of Retailing* article cited more than once was a 1958 article by Jones titled “Objectives and Basic Principles of MMA” (this was cited 4 times). The highest cited *Journal of Retailing* article ever is the Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) paper titled “SERVQUAL – A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality” (as of 12:56 pm, September 27, 2009, it had been cited in 1340 scholarly journal articles).

Citation Trends under Our Watch (2006 Issue 3 to Present)

As noted above, a total of 106 articles have been published in the *Journal of Retailing* under our watch from 2006 (Volume 82, Issue 3) to 2009 Volume 85, Issue 2). Of these 106 articles, 95 (or 89.62%) had been cited at least twice as of 12:56 pm,

September 27, 2009. Eight-five of these 106 (or 80.2%) articles had been cited three or more times; the modal citation count frequency across these 106 articles was 4 and the mean citation count was 5.45 by this same date and time. The most cited article published under our watch is the Lusch, Vargo and O’Brien (2007) paper titled “Competing Through Service: Insights from Service-Dominant Logic” Volume 83 (Issue 1). As of 12:56 pm, September 27, 2009, it has already been cited 23 times.

Conclusions

This review brings us to the inevitable question of *Quo Vadis Journal of Retailing*, the oldest academic journal in business? It would be nice to have a crystal ball to see the future impact of *Journal of Retailing* on scholarship in 5–10 years hence. As we note in the editorial of this issue, the *Journal of Retailing* reached a major milestone in 2009 with its one year SSCI Impact Factor score for 2008 of 4.095 which puts it ahead of the erstwhile perennial leader, the *Journal of Marketing* (with a corresponding Impact Factor of 3.598). In terms of the analogous five-year Impact Factor, *Journal of Retailing*’s score stands at 4.978, which is second to only *Journal of Marketing*. This Impact Factor score of 4.095 also catapults the *Journal of Retailing* to rank 4 among all business journals excluding economics, and to rank 6 among all business journals including economics.

Clearly, the next set of challenges for *Journal of Retailing* would be to overcome the inertia effects in the academy and win the psychological and sociological battle with the deans and universities that still rely on Key Informant Perceptions of Journal Quality to judge journal impacts. Wish us well and we hope you will enjoin the fray on our behalf by: (1) promoting the *Journal of Retailing* to department heads and deans as a top outlet for high quality research in marketing; and (2) submitting your best retailing-related research (defined very broadly, see Brown and Dant 2006) to the *Journal of Retailing*.

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