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Research performance of marketing academics and departments: An international comparison

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ABSTRACT

We report the results of an analysis of the research impact of marketing academics using citation metrics for 2263 academics in the top 500 research universities in the Academic Ranking of World Universities based in Australia and New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA. The metrics are computed for publications from 2001 to 2013, which were collected in 2014 and 2015. We also report the same metrics for all universities in Australia and New Zealand that employ more than 4 marketing academics. The results provide an objective measure of research impact and provide benchmarks that can be used by governments, universities and individual academics to compare research impact. In an appendix we rank the top 100 university marketing departments in the top 500.

CHINESE ABSTRACT

对在世界大学学术排名中位列前500强的来自澳大利亚、新西兰、加拿大、英国和美国的研究型大学的2264位市场营销领域的学者之研究成果的影响进行了研究，研究所使用的是引文指标，我们对该研究进行了分析并对分析的结果进行了报道。该研究是针对2001至2013年的出版物而进行的，这些出版物是于2014至2015年之间收集的。我们还对雇用4位以上市场营销学者的所有澳洲和新西兰大学使用同一标准进行了研究。研究结果提供了一个对学者研究成果所产生的影响的客观测量，同时提供了可由政府、大学和个别学者用来对研究影响进行比较的基准。在附录中，我们对前500强大学的营销系进行了排名，评出了前100个营销系。

1. Introduction

Research is one of the primary functions of any university, but assessing research and researchers is a vexed issue. Despite this, we live in an environment in which there is an increasing focus on assessing research performance (e.g. the Excellence of Research Achievement (ERA) in Australia, the Performance Base Funding system in New Zealand and the Research Assessment Exercise in the UK). In making these types of assessments the research metrics used matter. There is an old saying that you cannot manage what you cannot measure. This logic underlies much of the recent effort to assess researchers and to allocate research funds. While there is some truth in this statement, there is a downside because, once you measure something, many people try to manage the measures and this can lead to distortions and misleading information.

There are two major research performance dimensions – quality and impact. "Quality" refers to the degree of scholarship, which includes the significance and novelty of the contribution to knowledge, the complexity of the research problem addressed and the sophistication, complexity and novelty of the research methods. "Impact" refers to academic impact, its use and acceptance by other researchers which, it is argued, indicates the progress of science. There are other dimensions to impact (e.g. impact on society and business), but these are not considered here. An often-used proxy for quality is the prestige of the journals in which a paper is published, as reflected, for example, in the Australian Council of Business Dean's rankings (www.abdc.edu.au), although it is worth noting the caveat the ABDC puts on such an approach to evaluating quality, as they comment "journal lists should be a starting point only for assessing publication quality and should not constrain researchers to a

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particular domain. There is no substitute for assessing individual articles on a case-by-case basis" (http://www.abdc.edu.au/pages/abdc-journal-quality-list-2013.html). Some other indicators of an individual researcher's quality include membership of learned societies, the university from which they gained their doctoral degree, research awards, research paper awards, invited papers and invited keynote addresses.

Impact can be assessed holistically and qualitatively (e.g. as occurred in marketing in the last research quality assessment exercise in Australia). However, it is more commonly measured in terms of citation metrics, as it was for most of the science disciplines in the Excellence in Research Achievement (ERA) assessment. Indeed, citations are often suggested as the "gold standard" of scientific impact and used as a proxy for quality because quality and impact are linked. For example the ERA justifies the use of citation metrics, arguing: "the more frequently an article is cited the more it is contributing to the stock of knowledge" and"Citations generally provide similar results to traditional peer review processes and can serve as a proxy" (arc.gov.au/media/arc_presentations_archive.htm#2013).

A substantial literature exists about the validity (e.g. MacRoberts and MacRoberts, 1989), reliability (e.g. van Raan, 2005) and value (e.g. Bornmann and Daniel, 2008) of citation metrics and at what level of aggregation these metrics can be appropriately used (Seglen, 1997). While high quality papers or researchers are likely to have high impact, this is not always the case. Particular papers and researchers who do well on research quality measures (i.e. they have published many papers with a high percentage of them in A* and A rated journals) may not do as well in terms of citations. This can occur because it takes time for a contribution to be appreciated and because the citability of a paper depends in part on the number of active researchers working in the subject area and their citation behaviour (Li et al., 2015). As a result, research in specialised topic areas may have little chance of getting a high number of cites, such as macro marketing, historical studies, esoteric research methods.

Citation metrics have been criticised as measures of research quality because they can be inflated for the wrong reasons, such as when they are cited for their errors, because there are "rubbish citations" from low quality non-academic sources, or they are self-citations (Bornmann and Daniel, 2008; Smith, 1981). However, research into citation patterns indicates that these issues have little impact on summary citation metrics such as the h-index or the g-index (Harzing, 2010). A further issue is that of journals gaming the citation metrics by editors asking researchers to include more citations to papers published in their journal before a paper is published. This strategy can enhance the citation metrics of some journals and partially explain their rapid rise in perceived status (Seglen, 1997). However, this raises a somewhat different set of issues than the citation analysis of particular articles, authors or departments and is not the focus here.

Here, we use citation metrics to compare the research performance of marketing academics and marketing departments in the top 500 universities in the Academic Ranking of World Universities that are based in Australia and New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA. We also report the same citation metrics for all Australian and New Zealand universities. Our research extends previous studies of the performance of marketing academics in Australia and New Zealand (Razzaque and Wilkinson, 2007; Soutar, 2013). This paper is based on and extends the results presented at the 2014 Australia New Zealand Marketing (ANZMAC) Conference, which compared measures of the research performance of marketing academics in the top 500 universities in the world based in Australia and New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA. Here we include additional data, using the same citation metrics, for all universities in Australia and New Zealand, rather than just those in the top 500 research universities. This provides a more complete picture of the research performance of ANZ universities and how they compare to the benchmarks established for the top 500 universities. In addition, in an appendix we provide a ranking of the top 100 marketing departments in the top 500.

In the next section we describe the methodology used, followed by a description of the results for individuals and departments based on academic rank. We then describe the same citation metrics for all Australian and New Zealand universities, before offering some final comments about the role such metrics can play.

2. Methodology

Google Scholar (GS) citation metrics are used to measure the academic impact of individual researchers and marketing departments because GS "generally results in a more comprehensive coverage in the area of management (including marketing)" (Harzing and van der Wal, 2008, p. 72). Further, GS is publically available and includes more journals than Thomson's ISI or Scopus and it also includes non-English language journals (Harzing, 2010; Meho and Yang, 2007).

In order to compare like with like, we included academics employed in research intensive universities, which were defined as those institutions in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) in 2013 in which marketing was taught. We included those listed on university websites in May 2014. This resulted in a sample of 2263 marketing academics from 195 universities (123 from the USA, 27 from the UK, 22 from Canada and 23 from Australia and New Zealand). It is important to recognise that this means the benchmarks are likely to be higher than would have been the case if a random sample of all universities from these five countries had been included in the sample. Subsequently, we report the same citation metrics for all universities in Australia and New Zealand in which marketing is taught.

Following Soutar (2013), we focused on papers published this century (i.e. from 2001 to 2013) which served to standardise the comparisons and reduce age effects. Text books were excluded as they are often new editions of old books, making it hard to evaluate their real impact. However, research books, book chapters, journal articles and conference papers were included. We computed three citation metrics (the h-index, the g-index and the hg-index). The h-index is the number of papers that have at least that number of cites, so that an h-index of 10 indicates an author has published 10 papers with 10 or more citations. The g-index is the rank number of articles g for which there are g^2 number of citations. The minimum value of g is therefore h, which occurs when there are exactly h^2 total cites to the h articles.

Rousseau (2006, p. 4) points out that these two indices measure different things but, "taken together, present a concise picture of a scientist's achievements in terms of publications and citations." Taking this viewpoint Alfonso et al. (2010, pp. 394–5) developed the hg-index, which is the geometric average of these two metrics. They argue this index fused "the benefits of both previous measures (while minimising) the drawback that each one of them presented, as the hg-index softens the influence of a high g-index when the h-index is low." They also noted some additional benefits of the hg-index, namely:

- "It is very simple to compute once the h- and g-indices have been obtained.
- It provides more granularity than the h- and g-indices. This is especially interesting when compared with the h-index. As we have previously mentioned, to increase the h-index is difficult (more when the h-index is high) and it is usual to find that many different researchers have the same h-index with a very different number of total publications and cites. The hg-index provides a more fine-grained way to compare scientists.