

**“Should We be Rewarded for Publishing Useless Papers in Good Journals”
Comment on the Biggest Pack of Rankers You’ll Ever See**

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I agree with Dann’s comment that overall rankings of journals have little value. However, he could have gone further, as rankings within topic areas are not useful. Perhaps they are even harmful, because they provide an easily quantifiable but invalid measure of the value of a paper. Slovic and MacPhillamy (1974) showed that decision makers use easily quantifiable measures to compare alternatives even when they regard them as invalid.

Many colleagues agree with my view that most academic papers published in major marketing journals are useless. Why, then, do we give people credit merely for publishing in good journals?

I believe that we should instead assess the value of contributions to marketing practice. Citations, despite their problems, have been regarded by courts of law as the best measure of usefulness. Those who publish in good journals have a substantial advantage because they reach a wider audience and they do so with more authority. So, journal quality is reflected in citation counts. In light of this, perhaps we should *deduct* points for researchers who take up space in journals and have nothing to show for it in terms of citations, or applications by practitioners.

My favored recommendation, however, is that researchers should explain why their contributions are important. Their findings should be put in annual reports, websites, and resumes. Personnel committees ought to make judgments of the importance of the findings. Schools should report the findings in their press releases and annual reports. *Business Week* should rank schools on the basis of these findings. And journals should periodically list the important discoveries that they have published.

Having spent 40 years in business schools, I have seen little evidence that they are interested in whether research leads to useful findings. On the contrary, discussions of usefulness seem out of place, and this is becoming more prevalent over time. For example, when I was last reviewed for promotion, I was advised to omit my findings from my case as they were upsetting to some people on the personnel committee. Since then, however, I have continued to follow my own advice – see <http://jscottarmstrong.com>.

References

Slovic, Paul and D. J. MacPhillamy (1974), “Dimensional Commensurability and Cue Utilization in Comparative Judgment,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 11, 172-194.