

DEVELOPING BENCHMARKS FOR EVALUATING FACULTY RESEARCH

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Benchmarking has become a popular concept within the corporate world. As accountability becomes ever more important within academe, the concept of benchmarking offers a useful perspective to academic units preparing for various types of evaluation. Benchmarks provide useful standards for comparisons that greatly enhance the validity of self-studies prepared for accreditation agencies such as the AACSB, evaluations conducted by a state Board of Regents or other legislative agency, periodic reviews conducted by a university's central administration, or evaluations conducted by other organizations responsible for judging performance. This paper demonstrates a type of benchmarking recently made possible by technological advances. The ABI/INFORM database is used to demonstrate the development of journal publication benchmarks for marketing faculty.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment of marketing faculty performance typically includes analyzing teaching and instructional responsibilities, scholarship and other intellectual contributions, and professional service. Both collectively and individually, it is exceedingly difficult to accurately rate faculty performance. Unfortunately, there are few cases in our profession in which the determination of merit is an easy task.

In Major League Baseball, on the other hand, any informed evaluator would rate the annual performance as "outstanding" for an individual who hit over .300 or for a team which collectively hit over .275. Such individual or collective "benchmarks" are very valuable because they greatly reduce ambiguity. The practice of benchmarking has become very popular within the corporate world and involves identifying the "best practices" of leaders within a field (Beasley 1995; Brown 1995). The identification of the performance levels for these leaders provides a useful standard against which others can then be compared (Caruana, Pitt, and Morris 1995).

Among marketing faculty members, such performance benchmarks are not currently recognized, easily identified, or generally accepted. The purpose of this paper is to describe a procedure for developing benchmarks to evaluate faculty research.

CURRENT EVALUATION SHORTCOMINGS

When a marketing department attempts to codify a faculty performance standard, the end result usually lacks tangibility, specificity, and precision. Rather than saying "the player who achieves a batting average in excess of .300 over the course of a season will be considered to be an outstanding hitter worthy of inclusion on our roster," we say things like "one of the many prerequisites for earning tenure is the development of a significant record of scholarship." Given the long time frames necessary for bringing some projects to completion, it is perhaps even more disturbing that "unwritten" as well as codified standards often change from year to year.

Most marketing departments depend upon an internal ranking system in order to evaluate individual faculty members. Cases of relatively high and relatively low productivity are identifiable within a given department through such ranking procedures. Even

so, external validity is uncertain because it is usually not known how a particular professor would have fared among other faculty members in a rating system used at another university. There are considerable variations between institutions as to the performance achieved by faculty members. In addition, the relative importance of evaluated criteria also varies.

In fact, some universities designate themselves as "teaching-oriented" or "research-oriented" institutions. Even in those rare cases where the criteria being evaluated are well specified, standards are often elusive and dynamic. The level of achievement that would qualify an individual, a department, or a college as "outstanding," for example, is simply unknown or is based on rating standards that are off target or outdated. In addition, perceptions concerning performance often vary widely among even competent, reasonable, well-intentioned raters because there simply are no adequate benchmarks.

A NEW CHALLENGE

The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) now requires each accredited college of business administration to develop a mission statement that specifies the relative emphasis it places on each of its strategic objectives. Broadly defined, such objectives generally fall into the categories of teaching, research, and professional service. Regardless of the institution's stated mission, experts believe that at many accredited institutions the actual weight given to research publications in journals and other intellectual contributions is greater than that placed on teaching or service in the evaluation process (Ehie and Karathanos 1994; Boya and Robicheaux 1992). This is especially true at doctoral granting institutions. A study by Robicheaux and Boya (1989) reported that research was more heavily weighted than other factors in decisions concerning promotion, tenure, and salary at doctoral granting institutions.

There is also evidence that greater emphasis is placed on research by marketing departments than is the case in other units within business schools (D'Onofrio, Slama, and Tashchian 1988; Teer and Wisdom 1989; Urban, Wayland, and McDermott 1992). Indeed, Burnett, Amason, and Cunningham (1989) found that

the most important factor in a marketing faculty member's salary level was research publications.

These studies provide ample evidence to conclude that an important measure often used to evaluate the performance of marketing faculty is research publications in journals. Unfortunately, even though research publications are heavily emphasized in many evaluations, there is much ambiguity concerning appropriate performance standards. Most people agree that research is a critical factor in the overall evaluation of marketing faculty, but don't know how a given level of productivity rates because few useful benchmarks are currently available. Nevertheless, the evaluation must be done.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES USED

Scholarship and intellectual contributions can take many different forms, including articles published in academic journals, books, papers published in international, national, or regional proceedings, articles in professional or trade publications, monographs, chapters in books, cases, papers presented to various forums, book reviews, software, video recordings, and other types of research reports. A fundamental problem with the assessment of scholarship is the fact that the value of each research project cannot be treated equally. A good evaluation cannot consist of a simple "count" of projects completed. Quantity alone is not an accurate index of performance. It must be supplemented by a judgement of the quality for each project which is made by knowledgeable raters. One high-quality article in a well-known journal may have a much greater impact on the discipline than several mediocre articles in obscure journals with very limited circulation.

Nevertheless, Ehie and Karathanos (1994) reported that articles published in refereed journals constitute the most important factor in evaluation of **basic** scholarship. The most important factor in **applied** scholarship was articles published in professional journals. The third category of scholarship included in the AACSB's new taxonomy is **instructional development**. In addition to other forums, it would be reasonable to assume that articles published in

education-oriented journals (e.g., *Journal of Marketing Education*) represent an important indicator of achievements for instructional development scholarship. One would certainly hope that the quality and nature of the contributions would be considered in addition to a simple counting of the numbers published within a given time frame.

An earlier survey of marketing department chairs by Coe and Weinstock (1983), however, indicated that raters seldom judge an article's merits. Instead, they usually rely upon the perceived importance of the academic journal in which it was published. Since journal publication has often been given the most weight in evaluations of scholarship for marketing faculty members, determining the relative importance of each journal is a very significant issue.

Published lists of journal rankings are usually used for this purpose. These studies are frequently based on the results of perceptual studies of faculty and administrators within the field. An example within our discipline would be the recent survey conducted by Hult, Nees, and Bashaw (1997) or Heischmidt and Gordon (1993) to determine the relative ratings of marketing journals. Additional articles ranking marketing journals include studies by Luke and Doke (1987); Fry, Walters, and Scheuermann (1985); and Becker and Browne (1979). Presumably, one could weight the value of a given publication according to the perceptions concerning its importance ranking to determine its value in an assessment of faculty productivity.

There are many problems in applications of this technique. Journal rankings may list only a few of the top journals within rather broadly defined fields. For example, even though the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management* is the leading journal within the sales discipline, it might not be included in a listing of the top marketing journals. On the other hand, a marketing scholar who has the good fortune to publish an article in the *Journal of Business* would find that this outstanding journal with a less than 5% acceptance rate was not on the marketing list because its scope encompassed all of the business disciplines, not just marketing.

Furthermore, it is especially true in annual reviews that only a small percentage of faculty members publish articles within the discipline's top journals. In fact, the vast majority of marketing faculty members do not publish even a single article in the top three marketing journals over an entire career. When lists are limited to rankings of only the very top ranking journals, the result is that many academic journals of good quality are not included. Given the dynamic nature of our discipline, it is also true that any extensive ranking of journals (perhaps the top 50) would be at least somewhat outdated by the time it is published.

Such listings also exclude from consideration other significant forums for scholarship such as professional and trade publications. For schools which chose to emphasize applied scholarship in the AACSB taxonomy, publication in such forums may be an important aspect of its research activity. Likewise, education-oriented journals seldom appear on the lists of marketing journals, so schools with a focus on instructional development are unable to make good use of these rankings.

In addition, a ten year study of citation data by Cronin and Overfelt (1994) indicated that research rankings derived from perceptual studies may not be valid indicators of a journal's contribution to, or its status within, the field. An alternative method is to perform citation studies in an attempt to determine how often published works are cited by other authors. This is a well developed practice in other fields, but not within marketing. Most marketing faculty members are not even listed in the commercially available online electronic databases such as the *Social Science Citation Index* or the *Science Citation Index*. Consequently, for most of the people within the marketing discipline, these reference sources are not of much value. It is useful for perhaps only the top 5 percent of the researchers within the marketing discipline who are listed and can compare their credentials to other faculty members who also rank within that upper strata.

Citation analysis is often difficult to implement. Several years pass before an article's impact can be accurately assessed. In addition, choosing not to rely

on commercially available sources such as the *Social Science Citation Index* and developing one's own listing is time-consuming, expensive, and onerous to accomplish. Even when all of this is done, identifying the relevant benchmark is difficult.

AVAILABLE BENCHMARKS

Despite all the difficulty in providing accurate and reliable measures of productivity, marketing faculty members both individually and collectively are now being held more and more accountable by an increasing number of constituencies. There are few currently available benchmarks. Some journal articles identify research productivity rates for faculty members and are of considerable value in developing benchmarks. Each of these studies provides a basis for the comparison of faculty performance that may be useful in some situations.

For example, Bergmann and Grahn (1989) conducted a study on research productivity in which professional selling and sales management faculty members were surveyed. They collected 50 usable responses (40% rate of return) and reported the mean, median, and standard deviation for the number of: articles published, national conference presentations made, regional conference presentations made, and discussant activities engaged in over the past five years. While one might expect nonresponse bias to be a concern because of a higher rate of participation in the study by the more active researchers, the article gives a useful indication of activity over a wide range of publication forums.

Englebrecht, Iyer, and Patterson (1994) conducted a study documenting the publication activity of 541 recently promoted accounting faculty members. The research was based on data in *The Accounting Index*, a comprehensive compilation of the accounting literature encompassing more than 250 journal and 450 book publishers. To the extent that the index is a valid indicant of research productivity, this article provides a very useful set of benchmarks for evaluating the research productivity of faculty within that particular field.

Gordon and Purvis (1991) provided an analysis of publication activity within what they considered the top 12 journals for the field of industrial relations. While far less comprehensive than the previously described study on accounting faculty, the Gordon and Purvis (1991) study provides useful information within the field of industrial relations and could be adapted to other fields. This methodology of limiting the analysis to the top 12 journals, for example, may be particularly appropriate in the evaluation of faculty members at research-oriented universities in which faculty are encouraged to target scholarly output for only the top journals within the field.

In addition to these journal articles, Bergiel and Thistlewaite (1994) provided a very useful reference. Cumulative publications (including a listing "by author") in annual proceedings as well as journals sponsored by what was then called the Midwest Marketing Association were reported. This provides a useful basis for comparison of research productivity within that association's publication outlets. In a similar manner, Ford and Honeycutt (1994) distributed on disk an index of all articles included in the Academy of Marketing Science Proceedings. They included a listing by author, and displayed the ranking of authors from highest to lowest, making it possible to identify where a given faculty member ranked within that single forum over the years.

Other associations have also developed similar cumulative indices. Each is useful within that narrowly-defined area. Unfortunately, such single forum indices do not encompass enough publication outlets to provide a comprehensive and universally applicable benchmark.

AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE FOR BENCHMARKS

Even though each of the above studies has made an important contribution to our understanding of research productivity, the current demand for greater levels of accountability and the mission-based accreditation procedure now used by the AACSB make it clear that alternative indicators of marketing faculty performance are needed. The present study

demonstrates the development of one such measure of publication productivity among marketing faculty. It examines the records of research publications using an online, computerized database known as ABI/INFORM.

This database is currently the most comprehensive one available for bibliographic information on business publications. Beginning with the year 1971, ABI/INFORM indexes articles in over 900 business and trade publications. This system now represents a viable alternative means for determining research productivity benchmarks which have only recently become available. Other than the Englebrecht, Iyer, and Patterson (1994) study of promoted accounting faculty utilizing *The Accounting Index*, the present study using ABI/INFORM is much more comprehensive than any of the previously published research.

Records on ABI/INFORM include the author's name, title of the article, journal name and citation, abstract, subject headings, and notes. Searches can be conducted by author, title of article, journal name, keyword, or company name. The database is not available in print, but is available in online and CD-ROM versions.

Searching by author's name provides a summary of all the author's publications that appear in ABI/INFORM. Because ABI/INFORM contains so many business publications, it provides a reasonably consistent measure of journal publications for any given author. While there is no qualitative indicant of whether any particular publication is "refereed" or not, the database does provide a useful measure of publication activity across a wide spectrum of journals. Unfortunately, proceedings articles, books, chapters in books, cases, and other important forms of scholarship are not yet indexed.

THE CURRENT STUDY

Analyzing ABI/INFORM to determine the total output of a given university's marketing department enables a comparison among institutions. Consequently, these findings provide useful benchmarks to gauge the performance of faculty members both collectively and

individually. The current study analyzes the journal publication productivity of marketing faculty at the ten universities in the Mid-American Conference (MAC) using the ABI/INFORM database. The MAC provides a useful grouping of large, state-assisted universities within the Midwest. These universities have many similarities. Each is AACSB accredited, offers graduate business degrees, and devotes comparable resources to the athletic budget. Nine of the ten institutions do not offer doctoral programs in business administration with Kent State University being the exception.

A list of marketing faculty members and their academic ranks (professor, associate professor, or assistant professor) was obtained from the 1994-95 edition of the Career Guidance Foundation's *College Catalog Collection* on microform. These lists were verified by telephone calls to the marketing departments at each MAC university. Persons with the rank of instructor as well as those on visiting appointments were excluded from the analysis.

Searches by author name were conducted on ABI/INFORM over a two-day weekend period in the Summer of 1995. No updates occurred on the database during this period. Searching by author's name results in two possible outputs. If there is an exact match, ABI/INFORM lists only those publications containing that author's name. If there is more than one author listed with the same name, an alphabetical list of authors' last names appears. For this study, searches were conducted by entering the last name and the first letter of the author's first name. This provided a listing of all authors' names with this match, including variations that occurred with some authors' names. For instance, some authors have citations with and without a middle initial and several have citations with and without "JR" after their names. There was only one instance in this study in which two authors with the same name were listed. A verification of the journal citations in the library and with the *Business Periodicals Index* clarified this discrepancy.

Citations on ABI/INFORM list only the first author's name in the author field. There is an alternative author field which lists any additional authors.

Conducting a search by author name will retrieve records that contain the author's name in either the main author or the alternative author fields. In this study, two counts were made for each author. First, a total count of the number of citations that appear was made. This number is displayed as soon as the author search is conducted.

Secondly, a point system was developed to handle multiple authorships for each article analyzed. If there was only one author (the author searched) a value of "1" was assigned. If there were additional authors, a fraction of "1" was assigned. For instance, if there were a total of four authors, a value of 1/4 was given. The rationale for this scoring follows. First, single authors have presumably devoted more time and effort to that research. Second, multiple authors often are affiliated with the same institutions. Giving full scoring to each author in these instances would thus serve to inflate the institutional score by giving multiple credits for the same publication. In addition, each article makes a certain contribution to the field and this very simple, easy to administer system credits each coauthor with an equal share.

RESULTING BENCHMARKS

In an effort to provide alternative methods for analyzing the resulting data from this study, results are presented based on both the number of citations as well as the number of points assigned. Results are presented for the unit collectively as well as based on the average per faculty member. Each university must decide which of these benchmarks is the most meaningful for the evaluation decision under consideration.

The process of benchmarking involves identifying the best practices of leaders within a given field (Goldwasser 1995). Consequently, even though the analysis covered all ten universities within the MAC, the results are shown for only the top five universities (or the upper one-half) in this article. A total of 615 articles were included in the ABI/INFORM data base for a total of 132 faculty members then working at the ten universities. Table 1 shows the ranking of the top leading MAC institutions based on the total number of publications by their respective marketing faculty

members. The values ranged from a high of 144 at Kent State University to a low of 11 at another MAC school. With 615 total publications and ten universities in the database, the average number of publications per university was 61.5.

Table 2 reports the rankings for the top 5 universities based on the average number of publications for faculty members at each institution. These values ranged from a high of 14.40 at Kent State University to a low of .61. The weighted average number of publications per faculty member over all ten universities was 4.66.

Using the point system described earlier in this article results in the findings reported shown in Table 3. The total number of points assigned per university ranged from a high of 80.82 points for all of the marketing faculty members at the University of Toledo to a low of 4.66 for all of the marketing faculty members at another MAC school. A total of 344.27 points were assigned over all ten universities. The average number of total points per school was 34.43.

Table 4 shows the results based on the average number of points assigned per marketing faculty member. These scores ranged from a high of 7.42 for the "average" faculty member at Kent State University to a low of .26 for the "average" faculty member at another MAC school. The weighted average number of points per marketing faculty member over all ten universities was 2.61.

Since the ABI/INFORM database goes back to 1971, a university with a higher proportion of senior faculty should have more publications. Table 5 presents the number of faculty members at each academic rank in the marketing departments for each of the ten institutions. There are some differences in the distribution across ranks for the universities in the MAC. For instance, Central Michigan University has a higher proportion of Professors within its mix, while Ohio University has a higher proportion of Assistant Professors.

For the institutions included in the study, the number of full professors ranged from two to ten, the number

Table 1
Total Number of Publications

Rank	University	Total Number of Publications
1	Kent State	144
2	Toledo	113
3	Western Michigan	76
4	Akron	67
5 (tie)	Ball State	49
5 (tie)	Bowling Green State	49

Table 2
Average Number of Publications Per Faculty Member

Rank	University	Average Number of Publications
1	Kent State	14.40
2	Toledo	6.28
3	Akron	5.58
4	Ball State	4.90
5	Western Michigan	4.75

Table 3
Total Number of Points Assigned

Rank	University	Total Number of Points
1	Toledo	80.82
2	Kent State	74.15
3	Western Michigan	36.00
4	Akron	33.73
5	Ball State	28.65

Table 4
Average Number of Points Per Faculty Member

Rank	University	Total Number of Points
1	Kent State	7.42
2	Toledo	4.49
3	Ball State	2.87
4	Akron	2.81
5	Bowling Green State	2.27

Table 5
Distribution of Marketing Faculty by Rank

University	Professor	Associate	Assistant	Total
Akron	7	4	1	12
Ball State	4	4	2	10
Bowling Green State	2	6	4	12
Central Michigan	10	0	3	13
Eastern Michigan	8	4	6	18
Kent State	2	3	5	10
Miami	3	10	3	16
Ohio	2	1	4	7
Toledo	9	5	4	18
Western Michigan	9	2	5	16

of associate professors ranged from zero to ten, and the number of assistant professors ranged from one to six. The proportion of faculty at each level would presumably affect the overall results of this study. One would assume that faculty at higher academic ranks would have more publications in the database. An analysis of the results at each of the academic ranks may therefore be more useful than attempting to compare entire institutions, especially if a school's proportion of faculty among the three ranks is disproportionate to the other MAC institutions.

Tables 6, 7 and 8 break down the aggregate data from Tables 2 through 5 into separate categories based on the academic ranks of professor, associate professor, and assistant professor. The leading five universities based on total number of publications within each rank are shown. An analysis of this data is useful for comparing faculty members of the same rank at similar institutions. Within the MAC, the average number of total publications listed in the ABI/INFORM database per marketing faculty member was 6.43 for "full" professors, 4.49 for associate professors, and 2.03 for assistant professors.

The information in this report should be analyzed carefully. Evaluators and others using this information should note that journal articles constitute only one of several important criteria that are included in the research evaluation process. In addition, only the quantity of publications are reported without an assessment of quality. The results do, however, provide publication

benchmarks and can be used for comparing individuals within departments as well as for evaluating the collective performance of institutions on this important indicant of scholarship.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the current study should be emphasized. This is the first study to examine computerized databases to develop benchmarks for the evaluation of marketing faculty members. Additional studies are needed in order to establish better and more universally applicable standards. A very important factor to consider in developing benchmarks is the aggregation of institutions. To be sure, this has been an exploratory study and groupings of various universities are needed for other applications. For example, one could cluster institutions by state or by market area. Or those universities holding a particular category of accreditation could be considered as a group.

Another very important issue which must again be emphasized is that counts within the ABI/INFORM database do not reflect the quality of a given publication. There are wide variations in the impact that a given article can have and this must be a part of any reasonable evaluation process.

In addition, there are many excellent publication outlets that are not included within the ABI/INFORM database. Some very useful journals are excluded for unknown reasons. Even more important, though, is

Table 6
Benchmarks for Faculty at the Rank of *Professor*

University	Total Number of Publications	Average Number Of Publications	Total Number of Points	Average Number of Points
Kent State	91	45.50	47.70	23.70
Toledo	67	7.44	52.07	5.79
Akron	48	6.86	24.24	3.46
Western Michigan	47	5.22	21.58	2.40
Central Michigan	44	4.40	26.91	2.69

Table 7
Benchmarks for Faculty with the Rank of *Associate Professor**

University	Total Number of Publications	Average Number Of Publications	Total Number of Points	Average Number of Points
Bowling Green State	36	6.00	17.77	2.96
Kent State	36	12.00	17.17	5.72
Toledo	33	6.60	22.34	4.47
Miami	27	2.70	14.75	1.48
Akron	18	4.50	8.99	2.25

*Central Michigan University is not been included because they reported no faculty members at this rank at the time of the study.

Table 8
Benchmarks for Faculty with the Rank of *Assistant Professor*

University	Total Number of Publications	Average Number Of Publications	Total Number of Points	Average Number of Points
Western Michigan	24	4.80	12.42	2.48
Kent State	17	3.40	9.28	1.86
Toledo	13	3.25	6.41	1.60
Bowling Green State	11	2.75	8.00	2.00
Ohio	6	1.50	2.83	.71

the fact that books, papers presented at conferences, cases, software, video tapes, and other types of scholarship are not a part of the database. ABI/INFORM does not attempt to compile any forum other than journals and trade publications.

Other refinements are needed and hopefully can be provided by future research in the area. For example, the current study utilizes the publication records of

only the current faculty with no consideration given to people who no longer work at a given school. A marketing department which had recently lost a highly productive scholar, for example, would not receive any credit for that scholar's activity while employed by that school. This is perhaps unfair because many articles are read years after the initial publication and each still identifies that scholar's place of employment at the time of publication.

In addition, databases such as ABI/INFORM generally add more titles over time and discontinue old titles as disciplines change. Therefore, the coverage of titles is not uniform over time. This could cause problems based on when the study is conducted. It is hoped, however, that this article sparks a series of studies in which additional benchmarks are provided.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study provide research benchmarks which are interesting and useful for some institutions as well as for some individual faculty members in the field of marketing. By considering this data collected from a number of institutions and from faculty members at different ranks, marketing faculty can compare their own publication records to those of faculty members at other institutions.

Previously, this process has not been possible except on an informal, anecdotal basis. Collecting the data on which to develop these benchmarks from each institution or from each individual would have been extremely difficult, perhaps close to impossible. Questions of confidentiality would certainly have been a constraint to the collection of the data even if the institution very much wanted to share it in order to obtain the final results. With ABI/INFORM, the information on each individual faculty member is publicly available online to anyone with access to the database.

The analysis of bibliographic databases can provide a general idea of faculty productivity over a wide range of journals. For example, in the present study Kent State University ranked first among the MAC marketing departments for total number of publications, average number of publications per faculty member, and for the average number of points per faculty member. This result was not unexpected, as it is the only doctoral granting institution within the study.

These results are also consistent with those reported by Boya and Robicheaux (1989). Analyzing the total and average numbers of publications under each academic rank shows an increase in both total and average numbers from the ranks of "assistant" to

"associate" and from "associate" to "professor." This increase is expected as faculty with higher rank should also accumulate more publications over time.

Finally, the limitations of this study must again be emphasized. When analyzing faculty research productivity, the benchmarks provided by this study should be used only in conjunction with other important performance data. No single source provides an adequate basis for evaluation.

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