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Insights into factors affecting Production and Operations Management (POM) journal evaluation

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Abstract

The paper extends the current literature on peer review journal evaluations by providing a number of insights based on the diversity of Production and Operations Management (POM) research. We provide peer review evaluations for POM research outlets, based on a sampling frame that includes a large number of POM researchers worldwide. More specifically, the paper develops and tests various hypotheses as to whether the perceived quality and relevance of a journal is affected by such factors as: (i) nature of research work (empiricists versus modelers), (ii) society membership, (iii) research productivity, (iv) geographical location, and (v) seniority. Our findings suggest that caution must be exercised when utilizing existing POM journal rankings, as some factors, particularly the difference between empiricists and modelers, may influence journal evaluation. These must be considered when addressing issues such as faculty promotions, tenure, and salary.
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1. Introduction

The end of last millennium brought about the establishment of Production and Operations Management (POM) as a key discipline in most business schools. Along with it came various efforts to evaluate the overall quality and/or relevance of various POM related publications. Given the broadly defined nature of POM related research, such efforts have focused on providing journal rankings that are based primarily on either peer perceptions (Saladin, 1985; Barman et al., 1991, 2001; Soteriou et al., 1999), citation analysis (Goh et al., 1996, 1997; Vokurka, 1996) or some combination (Vastag and Montabon, 2002; Gorman and Kanet, 2005). Regardless of the methodology followed, such efforts can be of aid to various stakeholders when making decisions on issues such as faculty promotion, tenure, salary, etc. As such, they eventually shape the future of research efforts which are, in turn, communicated to the research and practitioner communities.

Despite these efforts, today no universally accepted rank order for POM journals exists. Each approach providing journal rankings has various limitations (Vastag and Montabon, 2002) and despite the best approach debate in the literature (Mitchell, 1996) most

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share similar weaknesses. In our view, the most important of these weaknesses is that existing rankings do not take into consideration the diversity of POM research. In the case of perceived rankings, for example, different evaluations are expected to be obtained by an empiricist, compared to those obtained by someone whose research focuses on modeling. The nature of someone's research may introduce bias when evaluating a journal. Such bias has not been addressed in previous studies. Other sources of potential diversity such as geographic location, and other respondent characteristics such as seniority, individual productivity and professional membership, may introduce further bias in perceived rankings. Such biases must be identified and subsequently considered by stakeholders during their decision making process.

Overall, this paper explores the heterogeneity present within the POM global community with respect to perceived quality and relevance of journals. The study makes three contributions that extend previous work on POM journal evaluations. First, we demonstrate that differences exist among the way researchers in the POM field evaluate journals. Potential biases resulting from philosophical and methodological differences in conducting POM research are explored and discussed. Differences regarding the way such subgroups – for example, empiricists and modelers – evaluate the quality and relevance of journals are reported. Journal evaluation differences resulting from professional society membership, and geographic location are also examined. Such differences must be taken into consideration, especially since journal rankings increasingly drive tenure and publication decisions. We also provide insights on journal evaluations based on the research productivity of respondents and examine whether researchers that publish in a specific journal also provide higher ratings for that journal. Clusters of journals are provided that clearly demonstrate the above. Third, our study provides POM journal perceived rankings by considering feedback from a sample drawn from a large sample of researchers located in North America, Europe, and Asia. With very few exceptions (Soteriou et al., 1999), most existing studies focus only on researchers from the US, although "... many of the greatest contributors to the field of POM hail from outside of the US." (Young et al., 1996, p. 45).

The organization of the paper is as follows. Section 2 includes a brief literature review while Section 3 presents the hypotheses development. Section 4 presents the research design and further describes the survey instrument and sampling method used. Section 5 describes the results while Section 6 presents a discussion of our findings. Finally, Section 7 presents concluding remarks.

2. Literature review

POM journal evaluation studies that attempt to rank journals on the dimensions of relevance and quality have recently appeared in the literature. These studies provide journal rankings by employing surveys that seek the subjective opinion of academics (Saladin, 1985; Barman et al., 1991, 2001; Soteriou et al., 1999), by using citation analysis (Goh et al., 1996, 1997; Vokurka, 1996) or some combination of the above two methods (Vastag and Montabon, 2002; Gorman and Kanet, 2005; Olson, 2005).

The first POM journal evaluation study was carried out by Saladin (1985) who identified the most important journals in which POM academics publish their work, as well as the journals that academics and managers read. Later, Ansari et al. (1992) identified 164 publications that could be important to an academic or practitioner in the POM field.

Barman et al. (1991) surveyed members of the Decision Sciences Institute (DSI), whose primary research interest was POM and resided in the US. The results indicated that the most relevant journals in POM, as perceived by respondents, were the *Journal of Operations Management*, the *International Journal of Production Research*, and the *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*. Participants in that study placed on the top of the quality list the journals of *Management Science*, the *Journal of Operations Management*, and *Decision Sciences*. Soteriou et al. (1999) extended the journal list used by Barman et al. (1991) to include a total of 36 journals, and surveyed European POM researchers. These researchers were residing in Europe and were members of the Institute for Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS) or members of the European Management Association (EurOMA). Their study identified the *Journal of Operations Management*, the *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, and *Production and Operations Management*, as the most relevant journals in the field. In terms of quality, *Management Science*, *Operations Research*, and the *Journal of Operations Management* were placed on the top of the list.

Barman et al. (2001) sought to capture longitudinal changes in POM journal perceptions within the last decade. Ten years after their first study, they surveyed US-based academics members of the Production and

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