Publishing on publishing: streams in the literature

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to propose and examine streams in the literature related to academic publishing, with a focus on works in marketing. The content of the works within each theme are then explored to identify what issues have been examined and their implications.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper is a literature review, drawing on 30 years of research on academic publishing in marketing. The review is designed to cover the underlying issues examined, but is not designed to be comprehensive in terms of all the works exploring each stream of research.

Findings – There are five main streams in the literature focusing on: rankings; theory and knowledge development; how to publish; criticisms of publishing; and other issues. Within each stream, a number of sub-areas are explored. The works tend to be fragmented and there is generally limited in-depth qualitative research within streams exploring the underlying assumptions on which publishing is based.

Research limitations/implications – The focus of the research is on the streams of works, rather than the findings within each stream and future research could explore each of these streams and sub-streams in more detail. Generally, the works appear to becoming increasingly sophisticated in terms of their analysis, which is only possible with the new technologies available. New metrics proposed in the literature that can be used to better understand publishing and additional qualitative research exploring some of the basic assumptions could also be explored.

Practical implications – The research suggests that some streams with regard to academic publishing may have reached saturation and future publishing in these areas will need to be innovative in its approach and analysis, if these works are to be published.

Originality/value – This paper is the first attempt to develop streams within the literature on academic publishing in marketing and thus draws together a diverse cross-section of works. It provides suggestions for directions for future research in the various streams.

Introduction

Academic theory is developed when one academic builds on the ideas of others; that is, knowledge is advanced in an iterative process (Chandy, 2003). Academics frequently explore
issues from different perspectives, with linkages of approaches advancing our understanding of the issue under exploration. As the body of literature grows, academics may seek to provide structure to the diverse discourse in a given area by undertaking an analysis of the previous work. For example, Cornwell and Maignan (1998) examined streams within the sponsorship area while Kilburne and Beckmann (1998) examined streams within the green marketing area. In other cases authors seek to more broadly trace the evolution of ideas over time within the marketing discipline (for example, Wilkie and Moore, 2003).

One area that has been extensively researched is academic publishing. This is understandable, given the importance placed on research and publishing. Not only does this type of research in this area allow us to understand how knowledge is advanced, but it also provides assessments of academics and provides insights as to how research and publishing can be improved. Research into aspects of publishing has been examined within most business disciplines and the research has approached the issue from different perspectives (for example, see the special issue of European Business Review, Vol. 18 No. 6, 2006).

There has, however, not been an attempt to develop a structure within the discourse on publishing within marketing or to develop a comprehensive structure for business generally. This paper seeks to develop this set of streams (and sub-streams) related to research on publishing. In doing so this work focuses on the research within the marketing domain, although it will also draw on some literature in other business disciplines. This work is not designed to be a comprehensive literature review of all that has been written on publishing within marketing or business, rather it seeks to discern streams in literature of the past 30 years only. The focus of this discussion is on drawing themes together rather than exploring the results within each study.

Any classification of research on publishing is made more complicated by the fact that many pieces of research could be classified within multiple streams. Nevertheless, there seem to be five main streams of research – rankings, theory and theory development, how to publish, criticisms of publishing, and other issues. These streams can be divided into sub-issues and in some cases researchers have undertaken extensive research within sub-issues within each theme, for example, there is extensive research on journal rankings. In other themes, the sub-issues are more fragmented. The following sections of the paper will provide an overview of each issue and their sub-issues. The focus of the discussion is on drawing the themes together rather than exploring the specific results within each study, although there is also some discussion of the research objectives of works examined. The implications and conclusions of this paper will summarise the material and identify opportunities for further research within themes.

**Rankings**

One of the most explored issues in regards to publishing on publishing relates to rankings. The works within this stream generally seek to rank journals, academics, or institutions in regards to the “highest” quality, most important, or most prolific, using a range of methodologies.

**Journal rankings**

Work about journal rankings seeks to identify the most prestigious journals and these rankings are purported to be surrogates for the quality of research. That is, high quality
journals publish high quality papers and contribute the most to knowledge, although some research has questioned these links (Starbuck, 2005). Having an agreed set of rankings can serve as a consistent signal for all academics about the value of targets (Van Fleet et al., 2000). Given that institutions have different objectives, the appropriateness of a rankings should differ based on who is using them and why (Hawes and Keillor, 2002; Polonsky, 2004).

Journal rankings have been developed in a number of ways: academics' perceptions (Hult et al., 1997; Fry et al., 1985; Theoharakis and Hirst, 2002; Mort et al., 2004; Kooijaroenprasit et al., 1998); citations within other leading journals (Baumgartner and Pieters, 2003; Bakir et al., 2000; Guidry et al., 2004; Harzing, 2005); library holdings (Polonsky et al., 1999); and whether the journals are used in PhD programs (Bauerly and Johnson, 2005).

These methods used to rank journals are important, and need to be considered when comparing them. While there has tended to be consistency in the rankings of “leading” journals across studies, the rankings diverge as one moves farther down the “pecking order” (Polonsky and Whitelaw, 2005). As well as different methods, rankings can also be affected by the researchers' academic level and the type of institution in which they work (Hult et al., 1997), their locations such as country or region (Polonsky and Whitelaw, 2006; Theoharakis and Hirst, 2002) and whether they are academic- or practitioner-oriented (Fry et al., 1985).

Some researchers have proposed alternative methods that can be used to assess academics' perceptions of journals such as using multiple item measures (Polonsky and Whitelaw, 2006) or new scaling approaches (Svensson and Wood, 2008). There are also problems when using citation-based rankings, as these may vary based on the selection of journals examined and the time frame explored. For example, a study of citations in international focused journals based on works appearing in JIBS would differ than a ranking study based citations of works in the Journal of World Business. One interesting issue that will affect citation-based rankings in the future is that, many journals now publish papers online well before they appear in print. In this case it is possible that articles could be cited before they are “published”.

What makes journal rankings even more complicated is that rankings change over time. Thus, the rankings based on citations or perceptions this year will not necessarily be the same next year. Rankings also vary based on whether one explores all journals in a discipline or a subset of journals in the discipline, for example, marketing journals compared to international marketing journals. Each sub-discipline will potentially warrant its own journal rankings. Rankings become even more complicated when one considers the inclusion of journals across business disciplines and or multi-disciplinary journals. For example, work in the advertising area is published in advertising journals, marketing journals, communication journals, economics journals as well as general business journals. Thus, any assessment of publishing in advertising would need to be broad (Ford and Merchant forthcoming).

In brief, there are many ways of assessing the rank of a journal and the rank should vary with the process and purpose.

**Rankings of academics**

A number of citation-based studies seek to develop rankings of individual researchers because they are seeking to identify the researcher's contribution to the discipline (Barry,
1990; Ford et al., 2001; Peng and Zhou, 2006; Cheng et al., 2003; Knight et al., 2000; Spake and Harmon, 1998) because it is suggested that those most cited have a greater “impact” on the discipline (Bettencourt and Houston, 2001b) or to determine who has published more articles (Bakir et al., 2000; Cheng et al., 2003). There is a limited assessment of how the works cited are used in others’ research and thus citations could be used positively (i.e. supporting or building on past work) or negatively (i.e. disagreeing or disputing past work). Being output driven allows these rankings to adjust for the number of authors, number of pages of an article or even the journals explored. There are also a range of metrics that are being proposed that can be used to rank an academic's publishing success and their ranking can change with each index (see Harzing, 2007).

There are two important problems associated with ranking academics based on citations or authorships: what journals are used to develop the rankings, as this will affect the citations and authorships, and over what time period are works considered. In regards to the journals and databases, some marketing works that examine rankings of authors focus on the narrowly defined leading journals (Bakir et al., 2000), whereas others may examine a broader cross-section of journals (Cheng et al., 2003; Zou, 2005). In regards to the timeframe of the each study, there will generally be more citations or authorships over time, thus older authors would possibly be expected to be cited more and thus would be viewed as being more influential. There are adjustments than can be made for time factors. For example, assessments can be limited to how frequently an author is cited within the first three years of a work being published that is traditionally used in the social science citation impact index (Svensson, 2008). This possibly assumes a rapid dissemination of information, which may or may not occur. It also assumes that the significance of results is immediately recognised in the literature, which also may not be the case.

**Institutional rankings**

Rankings of institutions are often based on aggregation of authorship data using citations or articles authored (Bakir et al., 2000; Chan et al., 2006; Ford et al., 2001; Linton, 2004). However, variations can occur based on time frames examined, what journals are accessed and the measurement approaches used (Spake and Harmon, 1998). A further complication might be that aggregating individual academics performance generally does not take account of the size of the institution (Bakir et al., 2000) or philosophical approach of the institution (Polonsky, 2004). Thus, ranking of institutions may result in comparing apples and oranges (Udell et al., 1995). It is also possible that rankings based on academics' publishing are based on one or two prolific people. When those people move, the affiliation in the articles does not vary. Thus, if Academic X is highly productive and then moves from Institution A to B, one would not see a change in the publishing performance immediately because the articles published while the individual was at institution A remain at institution A in perpetuity.

There are a number of other rankings of institutions that regularly take place. These are often multi-dimensional rankings using both objective data and perceptual information. For example, there is the ranking in the Times Higher Education Supplement (2004) and the Shanghai Jiao Tong University rankings institutions globally (Institute of Higher Education Shanghai Jiao Tong, 2008). In countries such as the US there may be rankings of institutions offering specific types of programs such as the top MBAs (US News & World Reports, 2008). It should be noted that there are criticisms of the methodology used within each approach, although this occurs with any ranking system. In some cases the rankings are also for the
overall institution, rather than a specific program or discipline and there may be variations across disciplines within an institution.

A more recent type of governmentally sanctioned ranking has occurred within several countries, for example, UK, HK, NZ (Allen Consulting Group, 2005), and are used to direct government funding. These assessments have different methodologies, but generally rely heavily on publication performance of individuals within the institution. Academics have researched the results to better understand how such assessments affect publishing outcomes (i.e. Bence and Oppenheim, 2004; Easton and Easton, 2003; Daizel, 2005). One criticism of government ranking has been that some institutions have “bought” high profile academics (sometimes even for short periods), through paying higher salaries, to work for the institution and raise its ranking. This type of activity can distort any rankings.

Institutional rankings not only can direct government funding (Allen Consulting Group, 2005) but can also be used to market an institution to its stakeholders. Students want to attend the best institutions globally or within a region. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many students travelling between countries are very concerned with the institutions international ranking. Rankings may also be used to attract new staff, as there may be a desire of people to work at leading institutions. This may be especially true of rankings based on publishing, as potential employees may believe that there will be benefits to them, i.e. collaboration with leading academics. There may also be benefits in fundraising as donors (industry or alumni) might be more likely to give to highly ranked institutions. Thus, the institutional benefits of rankings are possibly more important than are the implications for ranking individual academics.

**Theory and knowledge development**

Academic publishing is primarily concerned with the development of theory and extension of knowledge. Reviews of the literature by their very nature review previous published and sometimes unpublished works. There are also more focused pieces that seek to trace the development of theory, practice or even particular journals, over time.

Some works trace the developments in the literature and often appear as part of editorials, where editors and others discuss the development of a journal (for example, Churchill and Perreault, 1982; Malhotra et al., 2005; Muncy, 1991; Muncy and Eastman, 1998; Rust, 2005; Schlegelmich, 2003; Shugan, 2006; Wittink, 2004; Zinkhan, 2003; Zinkhan, 2006). These types of articles look at trends in topics and methods within journals over the years (Malhotra, 1996; Passadeos, 1985; Russell and Martin, 1976; Schlegelmich, 2003; Yale and Gilly, 1988), who contributed most to the journal (Malhotra et al., 2005; West, 2007), or the disciplines where authors were based (Muncy and Eastman, 1998). In some cases these pieces not only review the past, but also are used to identify issues appropriate for future enquiry, new methodologies or questions that warrant exploration (for example, Hunt, 1990; Stewart, 1999; Stewart and Zinkhan, 2006; Zinkhan, 2003).

The discussion of the development of ideas within journals is useful, especially when these are leading journals in a discipline. For example, Green et al. (2003) found that the Journal of Marketing Research was initially more practitioner-focused but has shifted to have a more academic emphasis. In other cases these historical works span a broader set of journals or seek to trace the development of theory and practice. For example, Wilkie and Moore (2003) examined the scholarly research in marketing by developing various periods of research
where they too found significant shifts in the emphasis of research, in terms of topics and focus. On the other hand, Werner (2002) examined the importance of issues in the literature by reviewing the topics discussed in articles within a five-year period, rather than looking at longer trends. Svensson (2006) and Svensson and Wood (2007) followed a similar approach, although rather than focusing on content of topics they focused on changes in the use of various methods and found that leading marketing journals tended to focus more on quantitative research approaches. The focus on developments in methods was also included in Green et al. (2003) who also found that over time research academic works in the marketing research area increasingly rely on modelling and other complex analytical techniques. Others such as Akinci et al. (2007) examined how one specific technique, logistic regression, was used over time and found that there were a number of instances where the process had been applied, but was currently under used.

Sivadas and Johnson (2005) took an alternative view to examining theory development and examined where marketers were drawing their theory from (marketing journals or other disciplines), they found that marketers draw on a range of material, both with marketing and outside marketing. Additionally, they found that marketing knowledge is transferred into other disciplines. As well, citation networks and the link between citations in the discipline has been examined by other researchers (Bettencourt and Houston, 2001a,b; Morlacchi et al., 2005; Passadeos et al., 1998; Peiters et al., 1999), with a suggestion that marketers draw on other literature and this ensures that academics are building on theory, rather than reinventing theory. These works also identify that “marketing theory” has significantly contributed to other disciplines.

Another area that has been explored within theory development is the global inclusion of ideas into academic literature. It has been suggested that failure to be global may result in some theoretical and practical issues being overlooked (Boyacigiller and Adler, 1991; Doktor et al., 1991; Thomas et al., 1994), with the suggestion being that a lack of global inclusion limits the development of theory. Researchers have explicitly examined global inclusion in publishing (Hyman and Yang, 2001; Polonsky et al., 2006; Rosenstreich and Wooliscroft, 2006; Svensson, 2005). Other research has also explored globalisation of theory, although it was not the focus of these other works (Wilkie and Moore, 2003). Generally, it has been found that there tends to be a US dominance of the literature, which has been decreasing over time. This lack of globalisation in publishing has been raised as a criticism of the process and will be discussed latter in this paper.

The scope of research on theory development is diverse and other issues have also been examined. For example, Olk and Griffith (2004) examined whether special issues of journals assist in advancing theory in a given direction. They found that special issues potentially accelerate knowledge dissemination, which may take longer if works appear in traditional issues.

**How to publish**

There are a surprising number of works across marketing and other business disciplines that discuss how academics can improve their research and publishing (Perry et al., 2003; Gilmore et al., 2006; Jonnson, 2006; Summers, 2002), as well as texts (Day, 1996; Huff, 1999). These works guide authors and potential authors are significant because of their theoretical importance, but also because they improve the quality of discourse. Such works sometimes are run as special sections of journals (Journal of the Academy of Marketing...
Science, Vol. 31 No. 3, 2003) can be the result of special sessions at conferences (Polonsky et al., 1998), are stand alone pieces (Perry et al., 2003) or comment pieces by journals editors and others (Stewart, 2002; Twedt, 1977; Vadrajan, 1996; Zimmerman, 1989).

These works cover many core issues in publishing such as targeting the right journal (Perry et al., 2003), how to develop arguments (MacKenzie, 2003; Parasuraman, 2003; Smith, 2003; Voss, 2003), how to deal with revisions (Holbrook, 1987; Taylor, 2003), the complexities associated with collaboration (Polonsky et al., 1998), etc. In a few instances works on publishing are research driven, that is they undertake content analysis of published works to identify commonalities amongst articles (Brown et al., 2006, p. 24). Where they found that the majority of works published (75 per cent) have multiple authors and generally “alphabetical ordering (of co-authors) is positively correlated with quality”. As such, the research suggests that a particular publishing approach or strategy approach may be more successful, i.e. more works published use the approach. Understanding the publishing process is difficult, especially for those new to academia, and may be a bit of a mystery for established academics as well. Criticisms of the process will be discussed in the next section. To overcome the “black box” of the editing and reviewing process some editors and others have developed editorials that outline how the process will work under their editorship (Hunt, 1990; Wittink, 2004) or how these should generally work (Gilmore et al., 2006).

The double blind review process is held up to be an objective assessment of research quality (Taylor, 2003) and there are a number of works designed to assist academics to be effective reviewers (Woodruff, 2003; MacInnis, 2003; Nakata, 2003). However, the systemic research on publishing has found some worrisome results. For example, Armstrong (1990) and Starbuck (2005) have reported that they and other researchers have found that there was limited agreement from reviewers on manuscript quality. Peters and Ceci (1982) undertook an experiment were they changed the authors and affiliations of papers already published within journals and then resubmitted the “new” paper to the same journal, only to find that many of the papers were rejected and few were identified as being recycled Other researchers have also found the review process to be less consistent (Saunders and Hirst, 2000) making publishing partly the luck of the draw, based on who reviews your paper.

**Criticisms of publishing**

Given that publishing is the currency of academia one would hope that it is fair, open and transparent, and allows the fullest dissemination of research. Discourse on publishing, where the status quo is criticised is potentially seen as “sour grapes” and potentially is harder to get published. However, critical works on the academic process are under-rated as these works can result in improvements to the process, although they tend to generate responses from those defending or explaining the system, i.e. suggesting those criticising the system are wrong.

One of the main themes in the criticism literature relates to the perception that publishing in leading journals, published in the US is a closed shop (Brinn et al., 2001; Rosenstreich and Wooliscroft, 2006) or that academics place too much emphasis on a few “top” journals (Svensson and Wood, 2008). One interpretation of this view is that US academics are ethnocentric (Svensson, 2005) and thus non-US perspectives or paradigms are harder to publish (Brinn et al., 2001).
Most research on the location of authors has found a majority are based in the USA (Chan et al., 2006; Polonsky et al., 2006), although there is an increase in non-US participation. Other properties of evidence of a bias against non-US academics in journals is the fact that many have editorial boards dominated by US academics (Rosenstreich and Wooliscroft, 2006; Svensson, 2005), and that non-US journals are underrated in journal rankings (Katerattanakul and Han, 2003). In response, there have been articles from academics outside the US that these biases are illusionary (Homburg, 2003) and some editors have explicitly stated in editorials that they wish to broaden editorial review boards and be globally inclusive in regards to content (Rust, 2005).

Moreover, there are some potential biases in regards to types of content. For example, Stremersch and Verhoef (2005) found that articles by non-US authors were less cited than US authored articles. They suggest this lack of citations could support the view that US academics are ethnocentric or that the issues examined by non-US academics are deemed to be less relevant. Other authors have found that certain topics (educationally focused works) are considered less valuable even when these works are published in leading journals (Straughan and Albers-Miller, 2000).

Another area of criticisms associated with publishing relates to whether journals and academic publishing serves the needs of all constituencies. Works have questioned whether academic writing is relevant for business (Armstrong, 2004; Baldridge et al., 2004; Nyilasy and Reid, 2007; Razzaque, 1998; Skapinker, 2008; The Economist, 2007), which is often purported to be one of academia's target audiences. Research has suggested that managers tend not to read academic journals (Fry et al., 1985) and in fact academics and practitioners view theory differently (Baldridge et al., 2004). This identifies a conflict in objectives, as in many cases academics focus on high “quality” outlets, rather than on outlets that disseminate meaningful information to managers (The Economist, 2007; Hubbard and Armstrong, 1994). Thus, all journals have value (Shugan, 2003), even if they achieve different objectives and target different audiences.

As was mentioned briefly earlier, the review process itself has also been criticised in the literature and several studies have found that there is in fact limited agreement amongst reviewers and there is some randomness in the system (Armstrong, 1990; Starbuck, 2005; Saunders and Hirst, 2000). In other cases reviewers and editors may assess works differently based on the author or their institution (Peters and Ceci, 1982). More concerning, is the early criticism of Armstrong (1995) and Hubbard and Armstrong (1994) who suggest that those that deviate from traditional theory, or those that suggest deficiencies in others research are harder to publish, stifling innovation.

There also is a new stream of criticism emerging related to academics and editors seeking to use their influence in the publishing process to increase the “prestige” of journals, by requiring authors to include citations to works within their journals (Clark and Write, 2007; Macdonald and Kam, 2007). That is, an editor or reviewer “requests” material in the journal to be cited in a work to be published in that journal, which increases the impact index of that journal, but not the true impact of the works being cited. Adding citations is of course is a sound request when the works relate to the theory discussed within the academic work, but would seem to be less “appropriate” if these additional works are unrelated to the article's content. With academics increasingly relying on publishing metrics related to citations to demonstrate “impact” or “quality” (Harzing, 2005), there may be a range of behaviours that could arise, which do not reflect contribution to knowledge (Macdonald and Kam, 2007).
While governments and academics want to assess or rate academics' research, these various methods for quality assessment have also been criticised (Bence and Oppenheim, 2004; Daizel, 2005; Easton and Easton, 2003; Harzing, 2005). A full discussion of this issue would be worthy of a paper on its own. This literature is important, as it is the fundamentally question how does one assess research quality? It has been suggested that there are problems relying on existing biometric criteria of citations (Harzing, 2005; Starbuck, 2005), although new biometric measures are being proposed that better assess the quality of research in regards to its influence on knowledge development (Harzing, 2007). Thus, while “quality measures” such as the social science citation index (SSIC) may have been useful in the past, newer web based measures that are boarder in scope may be more appropriate (Svensson, 2008). The variations of the definition of quality and its measure are the primary reason for the large volume of ranking based papers. Developing a globally recognised approach that all academics agree on and is applicable across disciplines may be a holy grail in the quality assessment debate.

Other issues

Another issue is how new technologies will affect publishing. At the most basic level is a question as to where electronic journals fit within the existing academic publishing paradigm (Harter, 1998; Slagell, 2001). While some argue that this allows for a quicker dissemination of ideas (Polonsky et al., 1999; Zinkhan, 2004), others suggest that these journals could potentially have lower quality (Hahn et al., 1999; Hynes and Strecher, 2005). This later criticism may be lessened as most journals publish both electronically and in hard copy, thus, e-only journals may be more acceptable. There is limited examination of the use of these resources and how it impacts publishing related issues.

With access to more detailed biometric data from systems such as Google Scholar (Google, 2008) or Harzing's Publish or Perish system (Harzing, 2007), there are opportunities for examining publishing in detail. For example, Stremersch et al. (2007) undertook a rigorous analysis of factors that impact on whether articles are cited, including factors about the individual, journal and article. It is unclear if this type of analysis can be undertaken without the support of advanced analytical techniques and new citation tracking tools.

Van Fleet et al. (2000) took yet another perspective on publishing and examined the departmental factors that affected whether a university department adopted a list of journal rankings. The fact that there may be differences in lists used is important, especially when considering that one goal of lists is to codify expectations. If there is not one common list used amongst departments, then there can be no codification of targets, that is, people will not understand what is valued.

Polonsky and Whitelaw (2005) undertook more fundamental research exploring what defines a quality research output and they then argued that the dimensions of prestige, relevance to theory, teaching and practice should be used as the measure of the value of research. Revisiting basic assumptions of what defines quality or impact is something that should be undertaken and will then serve to affect the ratings allocated to journals, which in turn influences institutional quality, at least in terms of research.

Implications
There are five streams of research examining academic publishing. What can we learn in regards to research within each stream?

**Rankings**

The assessment of research quality will continue to be researched, for some evaluation of the journals where people publish will always be of interest. There will always be new ways of looking at the data, different time periods to explore and even different sub-groupings or regional assessments such as the Australian Business Deans Council's (2008) rankings of journals within business. It is unlikely that there will ever be a globally unified view of all marketing academics (or academics in any one discipline) as to the appropriate rankings of journals. The best we may hope for is some general agreement on broader categories of journals (A, B and C), although here too there will be disagreement on the margins and there will also be changes over time. It will increasingly be more difficult to publish pieces on rankings and they will most likely become more complex methodologically.

In regards to evaluating individuals, there will continue to be research exploring how individuals have contributed to theory, but like journal rankings these will be increasingly difficult to publish because the focus will shift to broader discussions of impact and quality. More important work will take place in the area of assessing and ranking institutions and departments. While the rankings are important in all countries, interest will of course be heightened where governmental funding is linked to publishing.

One area that does need more exploration is how do we define impact, quality or performance? Research that seeks to develop measures that can be agreed by academics within given countries will then enable the assessments, of journals, individuals and institutions to be undertaken. Thus more discourse is needed regarding how we measure the contribution and impact of academic research and publishing in regards to theory and practice (Polonsky and Whitelaw, 2005).

**Theory and knowledge development**

Research within this area will continue to be of interest, as there will be new theory and perspectives integrated within disciplines. It does appear that more complex processes of tracing developments whether they are citation networks or impact of disciplines will increasingly use new measures and analytical processes that are now available. The question of global applicability or even regional applicability of theory will most likely be an issue that becomes increasingly explored, especially as organisations (and academics) from non-Western countries become more important in the global economic environment. It is unclear if the experiences, practices, views or experiences outside the US are reflected in global discourse. At the most basic level, there will increasing be research examining whether theory is applicable in other contexts. This implies that advances in theory will come from existing theory integrating new perspectives, east to west and west to east.

**How to approach publishing**

In the business literature, the same type of advice on publishing articles has been written in different disciplines and journals and is revisited periodically. One might possibly question the need to publish such pieces more than once, as it would be hoped that those needing advice would refer to the literature, although in the case of comments by editors the pieces
are important as they frequently identify new directions in a journal or identify topics of interest (Hunt, 1990).

The fact that such works regularly appear may suggest that there may be gaps within academic training or professional development. If this is the case, then having works appear on how to publish, while potentially repetitive, educate those continually entering academia. There may be opportunities to have hyperlinks to such works within the journal, appearing on web pages related to the scope of the journal or guidelines for authors. If academics were indeed marketers they would heed the advice of editors and write papers accordingly. The other works exploring the characteristics of publishing are indeed important, although one might argue that this identifies what has been successful in the past, rather than identifying what should be successful in the future.

**Criticisms of publishing**

These works are diverse in terms of their focus. They are extremely important in regards to discourse and should not be dismissed as “sour grapes” from those who have not been successful. Early in the development of academic publishing journals frequently included critiques and rejoinders. This discourse contributed to the development of the discipline and well-crafted works criticising aspects of the process should be equally valued.

If there are perceptions within the academic community that there are problems with the system these warrant discussion and investigation. Research has found some support for some criticisms, such as innovative ideas are harder to publish (Armstrong, 1995; Hubbard and Armstrong, 1994), there tends to be a higher concentration on US-based academics in leading journals (Polonsky et al., 2006) or that the reviewing process is potentially biased (Macdonald and Kam, 2007; Starbuck, 2005). There may of course be reasons for some of the results and which do not mean the system is broken, although others would propose that it is broken.

Given the high stakes associated with publishing (i.e. publishing performance is translated into institutional rankings which have marketing and possibly funding implications) it is no wonder that people want to ensure that it maintains its academic integrity. Improvements continually occur and discourse on the potential weaknesses will hopefully stimulate improvements and advances. For example, the criticism that new metrics are being distorted by academics and journals padding citations (Macdonald and Kam, 2007), may, if this becomes the norm, lead to a movement away from traditional impact scores based on all citations to develop new ways to measure or assess the contribution of works (Harzing, 2007). Thus, criticism of the academic process certainly has a valuable place in the publishing arena.

**Other issues**

There are a range of “other issues” that have been and could be explored in regards to academic works on publishing, especially given the increasing ease of exploring publishing using new tools and metrics. In addition, more complex types of analysis are available. One would also hope that more qualitative examination of publishing issues would occur, which would allow some basic assumptions about publishing, to be re-visited.
Given that much of the discussion relates to improvements in discourse and research, it is surprising that there is not more research examining specifically at how one can improve the quality and outcomes, i.e. experimental designs where interventions are designed to improve outcomes. Such research is extensively used in many disciplines and we expect this of works in leading journals. Within business and marketing such experiments are used to explore the impact on organisational performance, consumer behaviour etc. There has not been extensive exploration of the issue in regards to publishing and given the strong emphasis on the scientific process this would be one area that might be explored in the future.

Conclusions

The review of publishing on publishing has identified that there are five broad themes:

1. rankings;
2. theory and theory development;
3. how to publish;
4. criticisms of publishing; and
5. other issues.

They can be further divided in to a number of sub-issues. There is extensive research within each stream taking different methodological and theoretical perspectives. Generally, there appears to be an increased use of new techniques to explore the issues and in the future more complex designs may be required if works are to be successfully published.

In particular, research on rankings should focus on better understanding the impact of research. This is significantly more important than focusing on rankings, which will basically be disputed because there is no agreement of the underlying definition of value. It is highly unlikely that one model will be developed as it would need to be sufficiently flexible to enable differences in organisational objectives to be considered. One does not want to compare a research-focused institution with a teaching focused institution, thus models of impact or quality, need to allow such flexibility to be incorporated.

Understanding the knowledge development process is another area that needs more research. This does need to go beyond developing network models of citations or seeing what disciplines draw on or contribute to marketing. More fundamental work is required to better understand how theory is crafted, why is it that one discipline does not better utilise theory from others? What is it about academic discourse that forces some areas to be more insular or less willing to be innovative?

The role of globalisation in theory development also needs to be further explored. Is theory being exported, leading to criticisms of ethnocentrism? Or is theory more adaptive where it takes into consideration differences within regions. Alternatively, should theory in fact be global, where it draws on best ideas from where ever they may come, thus Western thinking integrates approaches from other regions and visa verse? Such global theory development needs to be more seamless, as there are often discoveries in western thinking, where they all of a sudden recognise that other approaches from other regions and disciplines have salience.

In regards to how to publish, guidance for those new to academia is warranted, although it is unclear if additional pieces are warranted. The research on publishing success is indeed important, as it should guide those undertaking research. However, it may be the case that
this identifies deficiencies, i.e. some types of research or activities are undeservedly undervalued.

The works on criticisms should be taken seriously. In marketing classes we commonly tell students perceptions are reality. Thus does the same hold when individuals question the research processes? In the future it is highly likely that journals, as we know them today will disappear, as articles can be made available to academics as they are reviewed. The internet will enable more dissemination of untested (i.e. having not gone through the review process) ideas. While academics may be able to assess the quality of such works, it is unlikely that our students will be able to make such assessments. As such, internet dissemination may make it more difficult in regards to teaching, if we want students to rely on materials of a “recognised” quality.

As for exploring other issues, one is limited by their imagination. It would be hoped that these will use more advanced biometric techniques to re-examine issues explored previously and this would provide new insights. Incrementalism of research should be avoided, as there are opportunities to make significant advances, rather than add a slightly new slant to an issue.

Across all areas what tends to be less discussed is the practical applications of research results, which is how can this be systematically integrated into academic training and publishing, such that activities are improved. In particular scientific experiments exploring changes in activities and outcomes are under explored, although there have been some (Peters and Ceci, 1982; Saunders and Hirst, 2000). There are certainly opportunities to explore a range of publishing related issues more scientifically and such examinations will increasingly be expected when publishing on publishing.

References


**Further Reading**


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