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## Bridging the Journal Gap: How Increased AQ Demands have Pushed Marketing Publications to Capacity

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## Bridging the Journal Gap: How Increased AQ Demands have Pushed Marketing Publications to Capacity

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### ABSTRACT

As more Universities begin to stress academic publication as a way to conform to current Marketing Department and Business School standards of accreditation the need for additional outlets for scholarship has become a pressing concern for faculty. This paper examines the changes that have taken place in the environment and proposes some changes that need to occur to make the current model for academic success achievable. The reality in the market is that growth in journal outlets for academic publications has not kept pace with either the increased number of marketing faculty nor with the increased emphasis on research publication, particularly at the refereed journal level. Therefore academicians are faced with an increased need for publication and increased competition for the relatively limited slots available.

### INTRODUCTION

The traditional academic research dilemma has been to “publish or perish.” If a professor wanted to succeed in higher education it was not enough to just teach well, it was also important to advance the field. Since Plato and Xenophon, the two most notable students of Socrates, philosophers and academicians have been impelled to write, record, and publish (Baldwin-Smith 1997). This drive to publish was thrust upon professors as schools sought to create awareness and notoriety for their programs through academic publications (Katz 2010). Typically that was done through journal publications. Many schools wanted a quantifiable ability to state that their “professors are among the top in their field” more and more schools have sought outside indicators of that, most notably AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation. As recently as 2008, AACSB published a report on research from a task force charged with finding ways to “increase the overall value and visibility of business school research” (AACSB 2008b). The two components, value and visibility, cannot be separated, however, visibility can be enhanced by increasing the number of publications.

AACSB provides an exceptional opportunity for Business Schools around the world. It gives them the chance to show that they are among the elite in a way that is clear to incoming students, potential faculty, and other institutions. That drive to join the ranks of the elite has created a unique problem

for the faculty of those institutions. Accredited schools typically have a publication requirement for faculty in order to maintain accreditation. As the number of AACSB schools has increased, and the number of faculty overall has increased, the number of publications needed to either obtain promotion and tenure or simply to maintain accreditation, has outstripped the number of opportunities available as outlets for academic expression. This is further exacerbated by the increasing competition among PhD candidates to publish while in graduate school (Franke and Spanke 1996; Bengry 2010). There is an increasing expectation that newly minted PhD's will have at least one published journal article.

In the case of AACSB while requirements differ from school to school there is a clear preference toward refereed journal articles. This problem is further confounded by the fact that there is a void in the market. A faculty shortage exists that has left a vacuum in the market that is so pronounced that the AACSB has created a bridge program to help Universities convert Professionally Qualified (PQ) professors to Academically Qualified (AQ) status to address the problem (Damast 2007). This is further evidenced by the growing nature of the field. Between the academic years of 2001/2002 and 2007/2008, the percentage of marketing faculty (Full, Associate, and Assistant) increased by 2%, 7%, and 14% respectively, while the percentage of marketing instructors at the same 312 AACSB institutions in the U.S. increased by more than 50% (AACSB 2009-2010). As shown in Table 1, AACSB AQ/PQ Status in U.S. Schools, the increase in business school faculty is not being met by an equal increase in the availability of qualified people to teach it at the University level (AACSB 2008a).

**Table 1**  
**AACSB AQ/PQ Status in U.S. Schools**

Year	Total AQ	Total PQ	Total Not AQ/PQ	% AQ	%PQ	% Not AQ/PQ
2002-03	18,508	5,564	1,139	73.41%	22.07%	4.52%
2003-04	22,045	7,097	1,895	71.03%	22.87%	6.11%
2004-05	21,995	7,500	1,827	70.22%	23.94%	5.83%
2005-06	21,763	8,691	2,262	66.52%	26.56%	6.91%
2006-07	21,721	9,743	2,580	63.80%	28.62%	7.58%
2007-08	20,983	10,672	2,523	61.39%	31.22%	7.38%

Therein is the crux of the problem. Because the number of journals does not increase proportionate to the need of AQ faculty, academicians find themselves in the unsustainable position of needing more publications than there are slots in existing publications. This will ultimately lead to qualified (but no longer defined as Academically Qualified) faculty being either released or penalized with an extended course load. Something must be done to deal with the disparity. Amongst the AACSB's recommendations to address this problem was to consider a route to AQ status that would allow schools to reward "practice-oriented or pedagogical contributions" in addition to refereed journals. But even AACSB acknowledged that changing the incentive structure to accommodate that would be "challenging" (AACSB 2008b).

In a circular fashion, one reason there are not enough AQ faculty is that PhD granting programs cannot keep up with the demand due to the pressure to produce published research (O'Reilly-Allen and Wagaman 2009). Resources are inadequate to accomplish both tasks effectively at many institutions. There are two possible courses of action that would adequately address this shortfall. One course of action is Bridging. Two bridging possibilities exist. One possibility allows faculty from disciplines outside of marketing, or even business, to go through a certification program that for AACSB purposes "bridges" them from PQ to AQ status. The other possibility is to "bridge" professionals who have the potential to be experts in the classroom through the same certification program (AACSB 2010a). "Bridging," while an admirable goal of increasing AQ faculty, still does not address the reality that these new AQs must still publish to maintain that status. Either schools

must work with AACSB to change publication expectations or more refereed journals need to be available for the expression of academic research and ideas.

As some researchers are apt to say when speaking of publication, it seems that all the low hanging fruit has been picked. By contrast, much of the research that is done today is not only more rigorous than research in the field forty, thirty, or even ten years ago, it also examines issues that have a greater body of supporting literature and require greater investment of time and resources. Unfortunately, many of these articles will languish and die as they go through the approval process at several journals until they either need such significant revision to keep up with the currently changing field that they get mothballed, or they become obsolete as other researchers publish similar topics in the intervening time. A task force looking at the impact of research in AACSB schools (AACSB 2008b) noted the lag time from acceptance to publication increasingly makes traditional journals “less relevant” given the speed in which new information is gathered and disseminated via the internet.

This is not an argument for publication of poor research and calling it a “journal hit.” For AACSB accredited schools, the ongoing quality of research must be assessed by faculty and colleges of business (AACSB 2008b). The necessity to keep rigor in journals is driven not only by accreditation agencies and their accredited schools but also by institutions themselves that are assessing journals for inclusion in their library resources based upon the value they provide as measured by the journals’ Utility, Quality, and Cost Effectiveness (Wilson 2010). It is an argument for providing the necessary number of outlets so that scholars who do good research can publish that work. That is one of the reasons that Promotion and Tenure (P&T) committees take not only the quantity of publications, but also the quality of the articles into account in their decisions. Nonetheless, a paper can be of high quality without landing in the *Journal of Marketing* (JM), or even one of the “top-tier” A-level journals.

The research playing field is not level; some universities give professors the benefit of research assistants and reduced course loads while other universities do not give professors these same benefits. In a 2009-2010 survey of incentives schools reported giving new hires: more than 23% reported giving research incentives for at least one year or more years; and more than 34% reported giving reduced teaching loads for at least the first year (AACSB 2010d). Many schools continue these incentives if faculty are able to reach and maintain set publication standards often tied to the quantity and the quality of the journals of the faculty’s publications.

This makes research worthy of the few top-tier journals very difficult for this later group. There is a need for journals that accept high quality work and provide venues for sharing ideas through submission, publication and readership. There can be only one JM. Even JM recognizes the need for more publishing opportunities, 2007 was the last year that the journal published only four volumes. Beginning in 2008, JM began publishing six volumes per year, clearly indicating that more opportunities for expression of ideas in the field are necessary.

Even with the expanded number of volumes, many marketing professors will never hit the *Journal of Marketing* or other top journals. Ph.D. students are encouraged to submit their research to JM, but JM publishes fewer than 50 articles a year, and often those slots go to the same top authors who visit its ranks repeatedly. Across the most recent twenty five issues of JM (beginning with Volume 71 in January of 2007), excluding editorials and book reviews, JM printed 240 articles. Across those articles there were 645 author contributions, with an average of 2.68 authors per article. Most authors, 62%, have only had one JM hit in the past four years, however, 88 authors have contributed to more than one JM article. Thirty authors have had three or more articles in JM over those twenty five issues. One author had ten articles in JM over that period.

## **THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLICATION**

For many academicians a Ph.D. is something that came from, among other things, spending countless hours in the “stacks,” which is to say the bowels of University research libraries, where finding articles related to the topic meant going through mountains of journals. Modern literature searches take advantage of electronic databases such as Lexis/Nexus, Proquest, ABI/INFORM and many others to bring all of those journals to researchers’ desktops. One of the reasons this is particularly significant is that even a journal that does not have an enormous library subscriber base can be just as relevant to researchers as one that does. Internet access means greater information access. An article that might have previously gone unknown because of lower library subscription rates now has the potential, given keyword searches, to be found “relevant” alongside the articles in journals that have enjoyed a larger subscription base. Universities, publishing groups, governmental agencies, and commercial entities are aggregating vast amounts of published works and making them accessible online (Roes 2001). In doing so, more information is more readily available than ever before, all of it through the convenience of the internet. There are no longer missed articles because they are not in “the stacks.”

Thus one of the benefits of current technology not only allows researchers quicker and easier access to literature, but allows researchers to access greater quantities of literature than previously possible. If the articles in a journal are relevant and of high quality then they are relevant regardless whether an author has access to a hard copy or a soft copy. The physical issue, while nice to flip through to learn about research that is on-going in the field, becomes far less important in terms of disseminating research to interested academicians.

Further, using a good database of academicians, a journal can target readers by emailing current issue tables of contents with links to the articles. Software programs like [didtheyreadit.com](http://didtheyreadit.com) provides feedback on whether an email was opened and how long it was open, while Google Analytics allows tracking of email receipts following hyperlinks in an email message. It would be possible to quantify how many people read each article by viewing the article’s page hits. Most academicians receive one or more journals, but there is no way to quantify which articles are read beyond the researchers who are later cited in the works of others.

AACSB has even addressed the issue of the role of technology in the report from its Impact of Research Task Force. The report addressed numerous issues and recommended a number of measures to address the current problems in the field (AACSB 2008b). One the problems is the shift in recent years to schools that claim to encourage articles that contribute to practice as much as, or more so than the traditional discipline-based scholarship. Despite this, the report continues, academic journal reviewers continue to put greater emphasis and therefore acceptance on discipline-based articles.

## **CURRENT PUBLICATION ENVIRONMENT**

The AACSB acknowledges that there is a serious problem in the publication environment in its analysis of the gap that exists regarding AQ status. In addressing this gap, current research tends to examine solutions that focus on increasing the pool of faculty through “Bridging” either from other disciplines to PQ and then ultimately to AQ (Damast 2007) or through programs that increase the number of candidates by targeting minority candidates, considering alternative faculty appointments, and other efforts to increase candidate pools (Swartz, Swartz, and Liang 2007). These efforts do not consider that once the candidates have an appointment their chances of maintaining AQ are dwindling (AACSB 2008a). It is not enough to increase the initial pool of faculty, it is equally important to increase the opportunities for those faculty to publish so they do not perish.

Other researchers have acknowledged that the current model has “(perhaps) an over reliance on peer-reviewed journal articles as the standard of measuring the research productivity of faculty” (Moss, Zhang, and Barth 2007). This problem is coupled with the increasing number of faculty and the increase in expectations for both volume and level of journal acceptances (Starbuck 2005). According to an AACSB report (AACSB 2008b), there are more than 25,000 academically qualified business school faculty in AACSB accredited schools who publish roughly 15,000 articles annually. Assuming that marketing represents proportionally the same amount of faculty as articles produced, the number of venues per faculty member is roughly 0.6 per year which would just cover the necessary requirements on three hits in five years. Moss, Zhang, and Barth (2007) estimated that due to considerations like acceptance rates and lag in the research journal pipeline that for a researcher “to have a 90% chance of publishing three journal articles over any given five year period the results show that they would need to submit an article every nine months, or submit 6.67 articles each five-year period.”

To examine the current publication environment there are two streams of data that need to be considered. The first is the number of marketing faculty members currently publishing (or trying to publish) in order to maintain their Academic Qualifications and the number of articles that they need to publish to do that. The second consideration is the number of outlets for that research and the number of articles each of those outlets needs to publish. If these two variables are not increasing at the same rate then this indicates a disparity that needs to be addressed. Evidence indicates that this is the case.

This is a trend that is not simply an issue for Marketing. As previously illustrated in Table 1: ACCSB AQ/PQ Status in U.S. Schools, AACSB estimated that between the academic years of 2002/2003 and 2007/2008 the number of business professors who were AQ in the U.S. increased from 18,508 to 20,983. While that might indicate that with more than 2,000 professors joining the AQ ranks that AQ status, and the publication opportunities necessary to maintain it, are keeping up with the field, the opposite is the case. During that same period the overall percentage of AQ professors dropped from 73.4% to 61.4%. Over the course of only six academic years the ranks of professors in the U.S. who were considered AQ decreased by 12% (AACSB 2008a).

Not only have AQ professors decreased as a percentage of all professors, the number of U.S. business faculty who were listed as either AQ, PQ, or neither AQ nor PQ increased from 25,211 to 34,178, an increase of almost 36% (AACSB 2008a). While these numbers reflect all business faculty they should accurately reflect the growth in Marketing faculty since Marketing growth has either kept pace with, or surpassed, overall Business School growth during the last decade.

According to the information provided by AACSB, as of Fall 2010 there were 478 AACSB schools in the U.S. (AACSB 2010c). Even if some of these institutions do not have marketing departments they have marketing courses and there is pressure for the faculty who teach those courses to have AQ status or it impacts that school’s accreditation renewal. There are also an additional 142 schools that are listed in the directory of marketing faculty. While not all non-AACSB schools have aspirations of becoming AACSB accredited, many do, and those that do not often have publishing requirements. Furthermore, even if an institution does not have publishing requirements, if a faculty member desires mobility then publication is a necessity regardless of institutional demands.

The average number of marketing faculty per institution listed in the directory of marketing faculty is 7.38. The range is from 1 to 28. If the average number of Peer Reviewed Journal (PRJ) articles is three every five years and the average authors per accepted paper is 2.44, then there are a required minimum number of accepted articles per year of 1,120. At an average of 32 articles per year published in the typical journal to meet this goal would require 153 journals with an average acceptance rate of 23.3%. The American Marketing Association lists 118 marketing journals. Cabell’s lists 110 journals that specifically include marketing or a marketing specific term (Cabell’s does list

other journals in its “Marketing” book, but this includes journals such as the Global Economy Journal) (Cabell 2000-2010). Given the weight of the AMA it is reasonable to accept its number of 118 journals, but even with that higher number there is a deficit of 35 journals available just to meet minimum publication requirements.

The number of necessary journals increases even more substantially when considering that many institutions have an expectation not of three in five, but of one PRJ each year. If 50% of the institutions exhibit that expectation then this would require outlets for 1,493 articles and 47 additional journals to meet the needs of marketing faculty to stay AQ under these assumptions. These numbers do not take into account calculations to allow that many faculty members publish more than one article per year. Nor does it take into account the trend toward the increasing number of marketing professors (AACSB 2009-2010). The reality is that there are a number of prolific authors who consistently publish far beyond these levels. This tends to increase the deficit in available journal opportunities. While many more journals are needed, an important element that each of those new journals will need to address is its perceived value. Increasing the total number of journal outlets to meet the estimated needs may seem daunting, but more challenging will be assuring that these venues are also meeting the rigor necessary to be deemed worthy for P&T and accreditation decisions.

One measure of perceived quality of a journal is its acceptance rates. The acceptance rate breakdown for the 110 journals listed in Cabell’s is shown in Table 2: Cabell’s Acceptance Rates. One benefit of acceptance rates as a measure of quality is that they provide a singular quantifiable justification that is easily applied across journals and disciplines. This simplifies P&T and college level committees’ assessment of journal quality across a variety of disciplines.

**Table 2**  
**Cabell’s Acceptance Rates**

Acceptance Rate	# of Journals
Less than 10%	7
11 - 20%	34
21 - 30%	38
31 – 50%	22
Not reported	9

(Cabell 2000-2010)

Depending on the source of surveys, there are only 30 to 40 top rated PRJs in marketing. This further reduces the number of top ranked journal opportunities. In 1997 Hult et al. looked at the ranking of top marketing journals in Doctoral granting institutions and Non-Doctoral granting institutions. They compiled a list for each type of institution and then gave an overall ranking of the journals. With no surprise, the number one journal across the three rankings was The Journal of Marketing. In fact, the top three journals across the rankings were the same with Journal of Marketing Research and Journal of Consumer Research ranked two and three respectively. In all there were 41 journals ranked.

An alternative approach to measuring quality of journals is through the use of citation-based measures that capture the impact of an article based upon the number of citations of that article in the two year period following its publication. Baumgartner and Pieters (2003) looked at the influence of the top journals in marketing and found that of a total of 49 journals, there was a disproportionate level of influence concentrated in a few selected journals. Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Consumer Research, Harvard Business Review, Management Science, and Advances in Consumer Research, held more than 60% of the influence in the most recent time frame examined. Even in research examining the worldwide perception of all marketing journals, the Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Consumer Research

and Marketing Science are considered the top marketing journals. Management Science ranks well everywhere except Europe (Theoharakis and Hirst 2002). Clearly, the top most tier of marketing journals has been relatively stable across time and populations but as those will only accommodate a small number of articles needing an outlet each year, there are opportunities for additional publications.

The net difference between what is being produced and what can possibly be accepted has created a void for which there is no quick solution. The results of that disparity are that academically rigorous papers that would be of interest to other researchers never make it to publication. With more than 376 Bachelors of marketing degree programs, 106 MBA programs offering marketing, and 70 marketing doctoral programs in the U.S. (AACSB 2010b), the number professors trying to publish at least three in five means that with only 118 journal outlets it should be obvious that no matter how high quality the research is there are not enough places for that research to be published. No serious academician would argue that there should be lax standards for academic contributions. An acceptance from a journal that publishes anything it receives regardless of the contribution or quality of work is as meaningful as a mail-order degree. But there *is* a genuine need for more outlets for the significantly increased volume of research that is being undertaken by marketing academicians.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As we have attempted to demonstrate in this analysis, the scholarship landscape in business has changed over time resulting in an imbalance in the number of journals available and the needs of the market. Between the growing population of marketing faculty, and the enhanced emphasis on scholarship to meet ever-increasing research standards, there is a mounting shortfall of publication outlets in marketing. The problem is straightforward and it affects all business school faculty, tenured and untenured alike, there are not enough accepted outlets for research that will satisfy the publication needs of faculty. While the number of faculty expected to publish at some level has grown each year, publishing opportunities have not grown in equal proportion. The supply and demand is becoming increasingly out of balance. While some might hold the belief that the marketing journal universe is currently overextended, one only needs to look at the growing gap between research outlets and publishing requirements to see that a deficit exists.

Faculty members struggle more than ever to remain Academically Qualified under AACSB guidelines, and to publish at a level that satisfies the expectations of their institution. Specifically, faculty are faced with greater challenges to publish in research outlets that are considered “acceptable” by Accreditation committees, and by Promotion and Tenure committees.

Given the current situation, and the trend towards escalating publishing demands, there is clearly a case to be made for adding marketing journals to meet market needs. Increasing the capacity of research outlets for quality work will not compromise the existing rigor necessary for publication, rather it only creates new forums for authors to add insight to the field. In particular, journals that have a central focus or theme would be a welcome addition as research and interest areas continue to branch out into new domains. Academicians need to be open to the need for additional academic expression and not dismiss accepted publications to “new” journals as being of little value to the discipline. There was a time when the Journal of Marketing was a new journal. That does not mean it failed to influence academicians in the field.



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