

# **On becoming a high impact journal in international business and management**

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Version January 2008

Accepted for *European Journal of International Management*, vol. 2/2

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# ON BECOMING A HIGH IMPACT JOURNAL IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

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## **What is a high impact journal?**

It should be the aim of any academic journal – or academic researcher for that matter – to make an impact. Although publishing high-quality papers is a noble aim in itself, if these papers do not have any impact, the activity would seem rather pointless. However, it is not easy to define impact or measure it objectively. Our first question should be “impact on whom?”: other academics, students, managers, or the public at large. Traditionally, many academics in management have been most concerned with the impact of their work on other academics, and this is certainly what seems to be most highly rewarded in many universities. Unfortunately, impact on practitioners and students is very difficult to quantify, although Puffer’s contribution provides many suggestions on how to facilitate knowledge transfer to practitioners as part of the mission of a scholarly practitioner journal. Therefore, this short editorial by necessity focuses on the more limited academic impact only, assuming that at least some of the high academic impact papers will also have an impact on practice.

## **How to measure academic impact?**

In terms of academic impact, the traditional yardstick of journal impact has been Thomson ISI’s Journal Impact Factor (JIF). The JIF is calculated by dividing the number of citations to articles published in the journal in question in the previous two years by the number of articles published in that journal in the previous two years. Over the past decades, bibliometric researchers have identified many problems with the JIF (see Harzing & van der Wal, 2007a/b for a summary). Most of these centre on the overly short timeframe of JIFs and ISI’s lack of comprehensive citation coverage. The

former means that the JIF is really only appropriate in disciplines such as biochemistry and molecular biology that are characterised by a high number of citations and short publication lags (Cameron, 2005). The latter refers to the lack of coverage of citations in books, conference and working papers as well as citations in journals not included in ISI<sup>1</sup>; the lack of inclusion of journals in languages other than English in the ISI database; and the US bias in the journals included in the database. ISI's lack of comprehensive journal coverage is particularly important in the field of International Business/Management where only two journals are ISI listed (*Journal of International Business Studies* and *Journal of World Business*).<sup>2</sup> In this editorial, we therefore use another data source (Google Scholar), which has been shown to have a more comprehensive coverage in this field (Harzing & van der Wal, 2008a). The analyses reported in this paper were conducted in September 2007 using "Publish or Perish" (<http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm>).<sup>3</sup>

### **What is the academic impact of international business journals?**

So what is the academic impact of international business/management journals? Dubois & Reeb (2000) provided a comprehensive ranking of journals publishing papers in the area of international business. Of this list, I only included the so-called mainstream international business/management journals in my analysis. Journals in the area of international marketing (e.g. *International Marketing Review*) or international economics (e.g. *International Trade Journal*) for instance were excluded.

Table 1 lists the seven mainstream journals in International Business/Management ranked by journal h-index<sup>4</sup> for the period 2000-2005. I further report the average journal impact factor for 2002-2006, the latest available (2006) JIF, the g-index<sup>5</sup> and the average number of citations per paper. In conducting the analyses, I manually excluded duplicate titles (i.e. titles that also appeared inaccurately

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron reports that in 1997 it was estimated that the SCI covered a mere 2.5% of the world's scientific journals.

<sup>2</sup> International Business Review was included in ISI in 2005. It's first JIF will be for 2007 (published in 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Publish or Perish is a software programme that retrieves academic citations using Google Scholar, then analyses these and presents a wide range of citation metrics in a user-friendly format.

<sup>4</sup> The h-index was introduced by Hirsch (2005) and is defined as follows: A scientist (or journal) has index h if h of his/her (its) Np papers have at least h citations each, and the other (Np-h) papers have no more than h citations each.

<sup>5</sup> The h-index ignores the number of citations to each individual article beyond what is needed to achieve a certain h-index. In order to give more weight to highly-cited articles Leo Egghe (2006) proposed the g-index. The g-index is defined as follows: Given a set of articles ranked in decreasing order of the number of citations that they received, the g-index is the (unique) largest number such that the top g articles received (together) at least g<sup>2</sup> citations.

referenced in Google Scholar and hence received few citations). These adjustments did not impact on the h-index and g-index, but did result in a marginal rise in the citations-per-paper metric.

As Table 1 shows only two of the seven mainstream International Business/Management journals are ISI ranked. These two journals do indeed appear to be the highest impact journals in terms of the h-index and citations-per-paper metric. However, the main distinction appears to be between *Journal of International Business Studies* on the one hand and the other International Business/Management journals on the other hand. In fact *International Business Review* has an h-index and citations-per-paper mean that is not substantially different from *Journal of World Business* and its g-index is even slightly higher.

The citations-per-paper impact metrics for *Management International Review* and *Journal of International Management* are fairly high as well. In fact they are not much lower than the bottom two journals in the list of top-20 management journals included in Harzing & van der Wal (2007a), let alone those of ISI-listed journals lower down the ranks such as *Services Industries Journal* (mean citations-per-paper 3.30) and *Total Quality Management and Business Excellence* (mean citations-per-paper 3.03). Given these results, it would seem quite artificial to make a distinction between ISI-listed journals and non-ISI listed journals as many journals that are not ISI listed might actually have a higher impact on the field than journals that are ISI listed.

Table 1: Mainstream IB journals ranked by h-index

Journal Title	h-index	g-index	CPP	JIF	JIF
	2000-2005	2000-2005	mean	2002-2006	2006
Journal of International Business Studies	40	67	24.68	1.529	2.254
Journal of World Business	21	28	9.07	0.759	0.627
International Business Review	19	31	8.87	---	---
Management International Review	16	25	7.15	---	---
Journal of International Management	15	22	7.14	---	---
Intl Studies of Management & Organization	12	19	5.07	---	---
Thunderbird International Business Review	10	16	2.27	---	---

JIF = ISI Journal impact factor

cpp = citations per paper

### **EJIM's future as a high impact journal**

What are the lessons we can draw from this analysis for the future of EJIM as a high-impact International Business/Management journal? The first – slightly pessimistic – lesson could be that there is quite a lot of “competition” in the field and that it might be difficult for a new journal to establish itself. However, EJIM has identified a unique niche. First of all, it is a journal that focuses on “*fostering an understanding of issues in international management theory and practice in the newly expanded European arena – including the underrepresented regions of Northern, Central and Eastern Europe*” Although *International Business Review* and *Management International Review* are also journals published out of Europe, they do not have a specific European focus in their mission. Second, EJIM is more explicit than other journals in welcoming qualitative and interdisciplinary contributions and sees this as a way to introduce a more European perspective in the field of international business/management.

The second lesson we can draw is that although an ISI ranking might be “nice-to-have”, it should not be considered to be the exclusive gold standard for journals. Several successful and long standing IB/IM journals – MIR is in its 48th volume, TIBR in its 50th volume – do not have an ISI ranking. Given EJIM's focus on Europe as well as its mission as a bridge journal, it would make more sense to look towards Google Scholar citations as a broader measure of impact. Journals such as *European Journal of Political Economy*, *European Management Journal*, *European Journal of Marketing* and *European Financial Management* are not ISI listed, but do have a very respectable citation count in Google Scholar and one that is higher than that of many journals that *are* ISI listed (Harzing & van der Wal, 2008b).

The third and final lesson is one that is of paramount importance for *any* new journal. Editors and editorial board members should be advocates for the journal and be very active in their efforts to bring the journal to the attention of its potential readers and contributors. In my view, the EJIM editorial team has made an excellent start in this respect in its first year. I look forward to the day I can include EJIM as one of the high-impact journals in International Business/Management.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Executive Editor Vlad Vaiman for giving me the opportunity to express my views on journal impact in the context of international business and management and Associate Editor Nigel Holden for suggesting the commentaries in this issue.

## Biographical note

Anne-Wil Harzing is Professor in International Management at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Her research interests include international HRM, expatriate management, HQ-subsidary relationships, cross-cultural management and the role of language in international management. She has published about these topics in journals such as *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Human Resource Management*, and *Organization Studies*. Anne-Wil is Associate Editor for the *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* and is on the editorial board of *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Management International Review*, *International Business Review*, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *European Journal of International Management*, *Human Resource Management*, *European*

*Management Review*, and *The International Journal of Management Reviews*. In the past, she has also acted as Departmental or Associate Editor for the *Journal of International Business Studies* and the *Australian Journal of Management*.