

Citation Indicators and the Classification System of the Publication Forum: Formulation, Meanings, and Comparison in Communication Journals

This paper takes a look at three different ways of ranking scientific journals in the field of communication by impact or quality. The main point of interest in the paper is Thomson Reuters' journal impact factor. However, to be able to compare the journal impact factors to Google Scholar's h-index and the classification system of the (Finnish) Publication Forum in a meaningful way, it is necessary to understand how exactly the other two measurements function, as well. Thus, the first part of the paper aims to explain how journal impact factor, h-index are calculated, how the Publication Forum estimates the quality of a journal, what purposes each ranking serves, and what limitations they have.

In the latter part of the paper, I compare journals in the field of communication by how they do in different rankings and to what extent the results coincide from one ranking to another. Google Scholar's h-index and Thomson Reuters' journal impact factor are citation-based quantitative indicators of scientific impact and could thus be expected to yield similar findings. This hypothesis holds true to some extent but there are also considerable anomalies, which can be explained by considering the different methods of collecting data. As the Publication Forum uses a four-tier classification system to qualitatively estimate the scientific output of publications, it is a natural that their ranking differs more from the purely citation-based indicators. The differences, however, are not as great as may have been expected, although anomalies do occur.

These three different indicators of impact and quality are sometimes used as evidence of the superiority of one journal over another. Furthermore, considering that the value of a researcher's scientific output is sometimes evaluated by not only on the merits of their research but by where they have published, it is pertinent for a researcher to understand what the different indicators measure and what are their defects.