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Sport management journals should be rated higher in journal ranking lists! Towards a better international recognition of the field

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ABSTRACT

Rationale/purpose: This article aims to evidence (1) that sport management journals are undervalued in journal ranking lists compared to journals from other fields and (2) how they should be valued, based on an analysis of citation impact indicators (CIIs) ($n = 326$ journals).

Design/methodology/approach: For aim 1, regressions are conducted. For aim 2, a "star system" comparable to the Academic Journal Guide (AJG) by the UK Association of Business Schools is applied to CIIs. The boundaries for the CIIs are selected so that the number of AJG 2021 journals in the different star categories aligns with the actual AJG.

Findings: Regressions show that sport management is undervalued compared to other fields. The application of the star system reveals that, out of 17 sport management journals, the rating of 11 of them based on CIIs is higher than in AJG, while the other six journals perform like in AJG.

Practical implications: The research can contribute to a better international recognition of sport management journals within the academic community if communicated to journal ranking lists.

Research contribution: This manuscript helps compare the impact of journals based on an original star system approach applied to CIIs that contributes to establishing meaningful boundaries.

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Introduction

As a field of study, sport management has considerably developed since 1987 and the first issue of Journal of Sport Management (JSM), its first academic journal (Gammelsaeter & Anagnostopoulos, 2022). Since then, the field has engaged in various forms of self-reflection, including papers in its leading journals (Gammelsaeter, 2021), and attempted to address some areas for improvement identified, e.g. the lack of contemporary qualitative research methods in sport management through a special issue edited by Hoeber and Shaw (2017) in Sport Management Review (SMR). Yet, it is only in 2022 that a special issue dedicated to the state of the art has been published by European Sport Management Quarterly (ESMQ). In their editorial, Gammelsaeter and Anagnostopoulos (2022) distinguish three approaches to research based on Chait et al. (2005): fiduciary, i.e. engaging with research meeting all the basic normal science criteria;

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strategic, i.e. building or strengthening our academic profiles while responding to incentive schemes within our universities; and generative, i.e. asking ourselves if we advance research that matters, and to whom it matters. Assuming that any academic publication meets the fiduciary mode, it remains a potential tension between the strategic and generative modes that can be seen as aiming for two different impacts, i.e. academic vs. development of sport and society (Gammelsaeter, 2021).

The premise of this paper is that both impacts are needed rather than in tension for the recognition of sport management as a field within the academic community. Sport management needs to contribute to the development of sport and society as a distinctive feature justifying its existence. At the same time, sport management needs to demonstrate its academic impact to be recognised within the academic community. If not, the risks are that sport management scholars may be incentivised to publish in other outlets, their research may not cover issues specific to sport management to fit with expectations from journals outside the field, and sport management may suffer from brain drain, lose its identity, and jeopardise its development. Yet, there is a lack of research focusing on the academic impact of sport management journals compared to other fields and how this translates into recognition within the academic community.

When it comes to academic impact, citation impact indicators (CIIs) are key performance measures for academic journals. They have been recently investigated for sociology of sport journals (Olive et al., 2023) and health and physical education journals (Sperka & Phillips, 2022), however similar attempts for sport management journals are still limited (Mills, 2021a; Scelles, 2021). Yet, it is of paramount importance that the sport management academic community understands their meaning and critiques their use as part of the efforts to position sport management (Mills, 2021b; Scelles, 2020; Stenling & Fahlén, 2022). This is especially important given recent controversies over rankings and measurement of productivity and impact in sport management, see e.g. the reactions from academic colleagues on Twitter regarding the sport management research contribution ranking released by the US based Sports Innovation Project late May 2022. This contribution ranking intends to provide "*a quantitative indication of how academic programs from around the world contribute to the scholarly discourse in the field of sport management*" (Sports Innovation Project, n.d.). It is based on the number of publications made by the different universities over the last 11 years in the three sport management journals (ESMQ, JSM, SMR) considered "A" (best ranking) in the Australian Business Deans Council's (ABDC) Journal Quality List. Criticisms included conflation between publication quantity and contribution to the field, and the list cementing social hierarchies and entrenching systemic racism and gender barriers, among others.

Another issue is the assumption that only publishing in ESMQ, JSM and SMR counts in sport management, based on a single ranking list. Although CIIs used in the present paper tend to confirm that these three journals are the most impactful in the field, they also suggest that other sport management journals are impactful compared to journals from other fields that are highly rated in journal ranking lists such as ABDC and the Academic Journal Guide (AJG) by the UK Association of Business Schools. Rather than opposing sport management journals, I aim to unite them by evidencing (1) that they are undervalued in journal ranking lists compared to journals from other fields and, (2) how they should be valued, based on an analysis of CIIs ($n = 326$ journals).

Despite their limitations such as the lack of meaningful boundary differences, CIIs are widely consulted in a variety of institutional settings and policy contexts involving research evaluation and funding (Vîiu & Pãunescu, 2021). They can be used directly to assess the quality of journals and publications, for

example the French sport community focuses on the Scimago Journal Rank powered by Scimago from Scopus, while the Chinese academic community is incentivised to publish in journals with a Journal Impact Factor (JIF) powered by Clarivate from Web of Science. CIIs can also influence journal ranking lists such as AJG and ABDC. Ultimately, CIIs affect the recognition of journals and where academics submit and publish. Yet, I argue here that sport management journals are not recognised as they should.

CIIs and journal ranking lists: pros, cons, use and impact

Four CIIs are selected here: JIF; the CiteScore and the Source Normalised Impact per Paper (SNIP) powered by Elsevier from Scopus; and Scimago. The rationale for including these four CIIs is that they are based on Scopus and Web of Science that are the two largest and most well-known international scientific literature databases (Mason & Singh, 2022), they are the most commonly displayed by academic journals on their websites (e.g. all four CIIs are displayed by Taylor & Francis journals), and they are the four CIIs used by AJG to inform their journal ranking list (Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2021a). Journal ranking lists are then discussed.

JIF and CiteScore: straightforward but unreliable for field comparison

JIF and CiteScore are the most straightforward CIIs. They are simply the average number of times per publication the citable items published in a journal over a given period are cited over the same (CiteScore) or another (JIF) period. Their simplicity makes JIF and CiteScore easy to understand, with JIF being more often released by journals, used by universities and referred to by academics due to its anteriority (Garfield, 2006; McKiernan et al., 2019). For example, McKiernan et al. (2019) analyse how often and in what ways JIF is used in review, promotion, and tenure (RPT) documents of a representative sample of universities from the US and Canada. These authors conclude that use of JIF is encouraged in RPT evaluations, especially at research-intensive universities. However, different fields have different citation patterns, depending for example on their overall number of journals and publications, or the average size of their reference lists (Garfield, 1979). This makes comparisons between journals from different fields unreliable if they are based on JIF or CiteScore as these CIIs do not control for the differences across fields. Therefore, more sophisticated CIIs such as SNIP and Scimago are needed for more meaningful comparisons, as a journal may have lower CiteScore and JIF than another journal from another field, and yet performs relatively better (Colledge et al., 2010).

SNIP and Scimago: more reliable for field comparison but not perfect

SNIP is based on the idea of measuring contextual citation impact of scientific journals based on their field, with the advantage that the latter is not decided a priori but defined as the collection of papers citing the journal (Moed, 2010). Citations are normalised to correct for different citation practices in different fields based on the following principle: the longer the reference list of a citing publication, the lower the value of a citation originating from that publication (Journal Indicators, 2022). The normalisation is based on all journals on Scopus, with the median being 1, i.e. a journal with a SNIP above 1 performs better than at least half of the journals in the Scopus database (Waltman et al., 2013). Two drawbacks of SNIP are that it does not adjust for the percentage of reviews (usually more cited than original papers) in a journal and self-citations (Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2021a).

Scimago is based on the idea of transfer of prestige, i.e. it controls for the prestige of the journals where the journal under investigation is cited (Guerrero-Bote & Moya-Anegón, 2012).

Additionally, Scimago gives more weight to citations from "similar" journals. Similarity is the percentage of referenced publications shared with another journal. For example, Managing Sport and Leisure (MSL) has 80% similarity with SMR, 79% with ESMQ and 77% with Journal of Global Sport Management. The average Scimago is 1 across all journals. Besides, Scimago ranks journals per quartile in their Scopus subject area(s). These quartiles that are also apply by JIF subsequently influence where scholars submit and publish (Mason & Singh, 2022). This is even though a journal can be in the best quartile in one area and the lowest quartile in another area (Mason & Singh, 2022), as well as the lack of meaningful boundaries differences between quartiles, since the impact of a journal can be more in line with the impact of journals from another quartile than that of journals from its own quartile (Vîiu & Păunescu, 2021).

With Scimago, sport management journals are disadvantaged by the narrower focus (prestige) of their field compared to broader fields such as economics, finance, management, and marketing. This is a drawback of Scimago as it may result in self-perpetuating lists of so-called prestigious journals (Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2021a). More generally, careful attention needs to be given to the effect of indicators such as SNIP and Scimago, and their drawbacks, on journal ranking lists that can ultimately impact where our institutions expect us academics to publish.

Journal ranking lists: a widespread impact on where we submit and what we value

With regards to journal ranking lists, the present paper focuses more specifically on AJG and ABDC. AJG is informed by CIIs but also a consultation with stakeholders to capture the quality of journals beyond their sole impact (Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2021a). AJG rates journals according to a star system (1, 2, 3, 4, 4*), with 1 being the lowest rating and 4* the highest rating; ABDC follows a similar process (Australian Business Deans Council, 2019b). The AJG list is widely used within UK business schools (Walker et al., 2019). Based on a sample of 1,009 academics from UK business and management schools, Walker et al. (2019) find that 67.0% use the AJG list almost every time or always when deciding where to submit. The percentage is 61.5% when framing or assessing a promotion case, and 65.6% when highlighting accomplishments in an appraisal. These percentages suggest a widespread impact of the AJG list on where academics from UK business and management schools submit and what they use when making a case about their accomplishments. The ABDC list benefits from a similar recognition not only in Australia but also beyond, e.g. in the US (Mills, 2021a; Seifried et al., 2019), suggesting a widespread impact of journal rank lists internationally.

I recognise that focusing on AJG and ABDC, i.e. two journal ranking lists from English speaking countries, means lists from other countries such as Denmark, France, Germany, and the Netherlands (see e.g. Harzing, 2022) are disregarded. This is a limitation of the present research. However, I believe that the process applied and its outcomes are still valuable for the international sport management community and not only colleagues based in the UK, Australia, and the US as part of the global recognition of sport management.

Material and method

To evidence that sport management is unfavoured compared to the top journals of other fields (aim 1), six ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions are tested to explain (1) AJG alternatively by ABDC, Scimago and SNIP, (2) ABDC alternatively by Scimago and SNIP, and (3) Scimago by SNIP, while controlling in each regression for the field with sport management as reference.

To evidence how sport management journals should be valued (aim 2), my approach is based on the application of AJG "star system"

and boundaries (i.e. the number/percentage of journals allocated by AJG in each star category) to CIIs and ABDC with a view to assist comparison specifically for this paper. By contrast with CIIs applying four quartiles (by definition equal, i.e. 25% of the journals are in the top quartile, etc.), in AJG and ABDC, 4* journals represent 7–8% of the sample, 3* journals 18–24%, 2* journals 32% and 1* journals 37–41% (Australian Business Deans Council, 2019b; Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2021b). My approach assumes AJG is "right" in the numbers of journals that should be represented in the different star categories. This can be identified as a limitation; however, I considered that any substantial variation to AJG could have been interpreted as my own subjective choice.

Dataset, fields, and sources

The dataset used in the present paper relies on 326 journals.[1] Sport management journals are benchmarked against top journals in AJG (all the journals rated 4 and 4*, as well as some journals rated 3) or based on CIIs in relevant fields. For example, International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics (IJSPP) is considered as a sport management journal, yet it can be associated to politics and relations (international) that are not part of AJG. I also included journals I am familiar with as contributor, reviewer or due to colleagues having published there, e.g. sport sciences and sociology journals. I acknowledge that the selection process is not exhaustive or random. However, it does not affect the subsequent results due to the specific method applied leading to boundaries robust to the addition or removal of journals.

The dataset includes journals from 30 fields as defined in AJG or, if a field is not specified in AJG (e.g. sport management) or a journal is not present in AJG, similarity from Scimago and ultimately Web of Science if a journal is neither in AJG nor on Scopus, see Table 1. Two sport management/sociology journals present in AJG are excluded from the analysis because they do not have any CII: International Journal of Sport and Society and International Journal of Sport Management, both rated 1 in AJG, the latter rated B (equivalent 2) in ABDC.

The data used are AJG 2021, ABDC 2019 and the four aforementioned CIIs 2021. The sources are Chartered Association of Business Schools (2021b), Australian Business Deans Council (2019a), Clarivate (2022b), Scopus (2022) and Scimago (2022).

Application of the AJG star system to CIIs

A few initial methodological considerations are needed before explaining the application of the AJG star system to CIIs. I replaced 4* in AJG by 5. Besides, since ABDC gives letters rather than numbers (A*, A, B and C) and has only one category for the top journals (A*) instead of two in AJG (4* and 4), I replaced letters by 4.5, 3, 2 and 1. It is also worth noting that, for journals such as MSL that are on Web of Science but do not have a JIF 2021 (i.e. emerging journals), the mock JIF 2021 as of 28th June 2022 was calculated.

To assist comparison, I then applied the AJG star system to CIIs. Table 2 shows the boundaries I selected for the application of stars, while Table 3 provides the number of journals per star rating based on the application of the boundaries I selected. I chose the boundaries for the different CIIs displayed in Table 2 so that the numbers of AJG journals in the different star categories for each CII as displayed in Table 3 are equal to the actual numbers of journals in the different star categories in AJG within the sample I selected (internal consistency). For example, for JIF, 48 journals are 5*, including 44 AJG journals, like the number of 5* journals in AJG; the other four journals with 5* are not

[1]The full list of journals is provided as supplemental material 1, together with their AJG, ABDC and CII scores, except JIF as academics and universities are not permitted republication (Harzing, 2022).

Table 1. Overview of fields covered.

Fields	Number of journals included	Number of journals included that are in AJG 2021
Accounting	6	6
Business (International)	4	2
Economics	52	48
Education	4	1
Entrepreneurship	4	4
Finance	11	10
History (Business)	4	4
Human Resources	9	9
Information	13	11
Innovation	4	4
Law	18	0
Management	15	15
Marketing	11	10
Multidisciplinary	5	0
Operations (Management)	4	4
Operations (Technical)	5	5
Organisation	4	4
Politics	6	0
Psychology (General)	18	14
Psychology (Workplace)	10	9
Public Administration	10	9
Public Health	8	0
Regional Studies	5	5
Relations (International)	4	0
Sector (other than Sport Management)	26	25
Social Studies	16	9
Sport Management	17	12
Sport Sciences	15	0
Sport Sociology	14	0
Strategy	4	4
Total	326	224

listed in AJG. It must be noted that the numbers of journals in each star category are not strictly equal between AJG and the four CIIs. This is because I favoured meaningful boundaries over numbers strictly equal (Vîiu & Păunescu, 2021). For example, for Scimago, there are 46 5* journals instead of 44 because the 45th and 46th ranked journals have a score closer to the 44th ranked journal (5.077 and 5.021 vs. 5.094) than the 47th journal (4.907). Due to the selection process applied, highly rated journals (at least 3*) are overrepresented compared to other journals. However, there are enough journals representing the different star categories so that I could establish meaningful boundaries.

Descriptive statistics and correlations between indicators

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations between the different indicators used in the sample before I applied the star system to CIIs, i.e. based on the actual values for CIIs. Journals not in the lists were excluded here rather than allocated 0 as done later in the results. Average scores for the journals in the sample are fairly similar between AJG (3.53) and ABDC (3.51). Besides, the correlation between AJG and ABDC is strong, although not perfect (0.74). Correlations are lower between AJG or ABDC and any CII (0.52 and less) than between one CII and one other (0.56 and more). This is understandable as AJG and ABDC assess journals not only based on their impact. AJG is more strongly correlated with Scimago (0.52), suggesting that prestige is an important element in the assessment made by AJG, although the correlation between AJG and SNIP is also close to 0.5 (0.48). The highest correlation is between JIF and CiteScore (0.88), which is logical since both indicators are based on raw rather than normalised citations.

Results

This section presents the results of the regressions tested, before developing the application of the

Table 2. Boundaries selected by the author for the application of stars.

	5*	4*	3*	2*	1*	0*
AJG 2021	4*	4	3	2	1	Not in the list
ABDC 2019	A*		A	B	C	Not in the list
JIF 2021	9.5 & +	4.5–9.499	3–4.499	1.8–2.999	0.5–1.799	0.5– or no JIF
CiteScore 2021	13 & +	6.3–12.9	4.1–6.2	2.8–4	1–2.7	1– or no CiteScore
SNIP 2021	3.9 & +	2.4–3.899	1.6–2.399	1.2–1.599	0.5–1.199	0.5– or no SNIP
Scimago 2021	5+	2.25–4.999	1.2–2.249	0.55–1.199	0.25–0.549	0.25– or no Scimago

Table 3. Number of journals per star rating based on the application of the boundaries selected by the author.

	5*	4*	3*	2*	1*	0*
AJG 2021	44	95	41	23	21	102
ABDC 2019	123 (119 AJG)[1]		73 (64 AJG)	35 (21 AJG)	13 (7 AJG)	82 (13 AJG)
JIF 2021	48 (44 AJG)	114 (97 AJG)	57 (40 AJG)	46 (24 AJG)	42 (15 AJG)	19 (3 AJG)
CiteScore 2021	48 (44 AJG)	114 (97 AJG)	62 (41 AJG)	34 (21 AJG)	46 (20 AJG)	22 (1 AJG)
SNIP 2021	52 (44 AJG)	108 (96 AJG)	58 (42 AJG)	36 (22 AJG)	51 (17 AJG)	21 (3 AJG)
Scimago 2021	49 (46 AJG)	98 (93 AJG)	59 (43 AJG)	55 (24 AJG)	46 (17 AJG)	19 (1 AJG)

[1]119 AJG means 119 journals rated 4–5* based on ABDC are in AJG, not that 119 journals rated 4–5* based on ABDC are also rated 4-5* in AJG.

star system to sport management then sector (other than sport management) then management journals. This is because sport management is part of the broader sector field while it can also be considered as part of the broader management field. The section ends with an overview of the star system across all 30 fields analysed.

Regressions

The results of the six regressions are available as supplemental material 2. They confirm that sport management is unfavoured compared to the top journals of other fields. In the three regressions explaining AJG, most other fields represented in the list have a significant positive impact compared to sport management, an exception being sector in the model explaining AJG by ABDC. This indicates that, compared to ABDC, AJG tend to favour other fields over sector and in particular sport management. The two regressions explaining ABDC tend to confirm that sport management (but not sector) is unfavoured compared to other fields, although there are slightly fewer cases of significant positive impact for these other fields. By contrast, the regression explaining Scimago by SNIP only displays three fields with a significant positive impact compared to sport management, i.e. economics, finance, and marketing, while the positive impact for management is not significant, although its *p*-value (16.4%) is not far from 10%. This confirms that these four broad fields are advantaged with Scimago compared to sport management (and other fields).

Star system applied to sport management journals

Table 5 presents the star system applied to the 17 sport management journals included in the dataset. Consistent with the regression results, AJG is "tougher" towards sport management journals than ABDC: only six journals have a similar rating, vs. seven having a lower rating in AJG and four being in ABDC but not in AJG. This suggests a better recognition of sport management journals in Australia than in the UK, although sport management is still unfavoured in ABDC. Besides, almost all 17 journals (16) perform at least as well with Scimago as in AJG, with even nine journals performing better despite this indicator being assumed to disadvantage sport management journals compared to other CIIs. For example, SMR and JSM are 3* with Scimago vs. 2* in AJG. The only exception is ESMQ, 3* in AJG vs. 2* with Scimago. However, ESMQ is 3* with SNIP, which should arguably be considered in conjunction with Scimago for a field like sport management, as per the results of the regression explaining Scimago by SNIP and the different fields. With Scimago, ESMQ seems to suffer from not been as "similar" to SMR and JSM as these two journals are between each other: ESMQ is 75% similar to SMR and 62% similar to JSM vs. SMR and JSM

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and correlations between AJG 2021, ABDC 2019 and CIIs 2021 in the sample used.

	Mean	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.	Correlations				
					ABDC	JIF	CiteScore	SNIP	Scimago
AJG	3.53	1.19	1	5	0.74	0.34	0.31	0.48	0.52
ABDC	3.51	1.11	1	4.5		0.44	0.43	0.51	0.49
JIF	5.54	4.18	0.12	27.78			0.88	0.76	0.56
CiteScore	7.53	5.63	0	40.6				0.81	0.58
SNIP	2.67	1.84	0.175	12.34					0.79
Scimago	2.89	3.45	0.125	31.35					

Note: All correlations are significant at the 1% level.

being 85% similar. In other words, SMR and JSM support each other in terms of being cited by prestigious sport management journals (hence increasing their Scimago), while this is less the case with ESMQ. Consistent with this, in the calculations of JIF 2021, ESMQ benefited from 28 citations in SMR and 13 in JSM (41 citations overall for 126 citable items), JSM from 58 citations in SMR and 24 in ESMQ (82 citations overall, twice more than ESMQ, despite fewer citable items, 87), and SMR from 50 in ESMQ and 34 citations in JSM (84 citations overall, more than twice more than ESMQ, despite slightly fewer citable items, 124). It seems fair to consider ESMQ as a 3* journal, as done by AJG but also ABDC.

Based on the idea of considering the best rating between SNIP and Scimago (SNIP/Scimago afterwards), the last column in Table 5 informs about the best rating across both CIIs for each journal. Eleven sport management journals perform better than in AJG, while the six other journals perform similarly. SMR is 4*, while JSM is 3* like ESMQ. MSL is 2*, together with IJSPP, International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship, Journal of Sport & Tourism, Journal of Sports Economics and Sport Marketing Quarterly (all instead of 1* in AJG, except Journal of Sports Economics). When replacing AJG by ABDC, only three journals perform better with SNIP/Scimago than ABDC (SMR, IJSPP and Women in Sport and Physical

Table 5. Stars applied to sport management journals.

	AJG 2021	ABDC 2019	JIF 2021	CiteScore 2021	SNIP 2021	Scimago 2021	Best SNIP/Scimago
European Sport Management Quarterly	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
International Journal of Sport Communication	0	2	2	1	1	1	1
International Journal of Sport Finance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing	1	2	0	1	1	1	1
International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
Journal of Applied Sport Management	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Journal of Global Sport Management	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Journal of Sport & Tourism	1	2	0	2	2	1	2
Journal of Sport Management	2	3	3	3	2	3	3
Journal of Sports Economics	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Managing Sport and Leisure	1	2	3	1	1	2	2
Sport, Business and Management	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Sport Management Education Journal	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sport Management Review	2	3	4	4	4	3	4
Sport Marketing Quarterly	1	2	2	3	2	1	2
Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

Activity Journal) vs. 11 journals performing similarly and three performing better in ABDC (International Journal of Sport Communication, International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing, and Journal of Applied Sport Management).

Star system applied to sector (other than sport management) journals

Table 6 presents the star system applied to the 26 sector (other than sport management) journals included in the dataset. As for sport management journals, they tend to perform better based on the best rating across SNIP and Scimago compared to AJG. This is the case for 15 journals vs. 11 journals having a similar rating. This suggests that the overall sector field might suffer from ratings lower in AJG than what they should be, consistent to some extent with the earlier regression results.

As for sport management journals, ABDC is more in line with SNIP/Scimago than AJG for sector (other than sport management) journals: four journals perform better in ABDC, 15 similarly and the remaining seven underperform in ABDC. It is worth noting that across 22 subjects (fields) in AJG, the sector subject is one of only four subjects without an equivalent 5* journal, together with business history, entrepreneurship, and regional studies. Yet, Tourism Management seems a strong contender based on the present analysis. This seemingly "tough" treatment of the sector field is also present in JIF, with only 57 "Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism" journals with a

Table 6. Stars applied to sector (other than sport management) journals.

	AJG 2021	ABDC 2019	JIF 2021	CiteScore 2021	SNIP 2021	Scimago 2021	Best SNIP/ Scimago
Annals of Tourism Research	4	4.5	5	4	4	4	4
Current Issues in Tourism	2	3	4	4	4	3	4
Energy Journal	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
Food Policy	3	2	4	4	3	3	3
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	3	3	4	4	3	4	4
International Journal of Hospitality Management	3	4.5	5	4	4	4	4
Journal of Destination Marketing and Management	1	3	4	4	4	3	4
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research	2	3	3	4	3	3	3
Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education	1	2	2	2	2	1	2
Journal of Leisure Research	0	3	2	2	2	2	2
Journal of Service Management	2	3	4	5	3	4	4
Journal of Service Research	4	4.5	5	5	4	4	4
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	3	4.5	4	5	4	4	4
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	2	3	4	4	3	3	3
Journal of Travel Research	4	4.5	4	5	4	4	4
Leisure Sciences	2	3	4	3	1	2	2
Leisure Studies	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Nonprofit Management and Leadership	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Tourism Geographies	2	3	5	5	4	4	4
Tourism Management	4	4.5	5	5	5	4	5
Tourism Management Perspectives	2	3	4	4	4	3	4
Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice	3	4.5	4	4	3	3	3
Transportation Research Part B: Methodological	4	4.5	4	4	4	4	4
Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment	3	3	4	4	3	3	3
Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review	3	4.5	5	4	4	4	4

JIF vs. 74 emerging (so without JIF), while for example the sport sciences field has 87 journals with a JIF vs. 36 emerging, the economics field has 380 journals with a JIF vs. 190 emerging, and the management field has 226 journals with a JIF vs. 166 emerging.

Star system applied to management journals

Table 7 presents the star system applied to the 15 management journals included in the dataset. The best rating across SNIP and Scimago is a perfect predictor of the AJG rating for nine out of the 15 journals. In three cases (Business Ethics Quarterly; European Management Review; and Harvard Business Review), AJG is 1* better than SNIP/Scimago, while in three other cases (International Journal of Management Reviews; Journal of Business Ethics; and Journal of Business Research), AJG is 1* (for the last two journals) or 2* (for the first journal) lower than SNIP/Scimago. International Journal of Management Reviews publishes a high percentage of reviews that are more cited than other articles (19 out of 48 articles in 2019 and 2020, i.e. almost 40%). AJG seems to control for this advantage for the journal. Overall, AJG for management journals is more in line with CIIs than for sport management (and more generally sector) journals. Besides, AJG is slightly more "generous" with management journals than ABDC based on the present sample: four journals have a better rating with AJG vs. 11 with a similar rating.

Overview of star system across all 30 fields

Table 8 provides an overview of the star system results across all fields. As an illustration about how to read the table, the economics field is selected. Out of 52 journals, 23 have a higher rating with SNIP/Scimago than in AJG, 24 are as expected and five have a lower rating than in AJG. This suggests that AJG controls for economics being a broad field (even broader than management) advantaged by Scimago, which is evidenced by more stars with Scimago than SNIP for 14 journals while this is the other way round for two journals only. Overall, out of the 326 journals analysed, 154 have a better rating with SNIP/Scimago than in AJG and 130 the same rating. These numbers include journals not in AJG. Out of the 224 AJG journals, 67 have a better rating with

Table 7. Stars applied to management journals.

	AJG 2021	ABDC 2019	JIF 2021	CiteScore 2021	SNIP 2021	Scimago 2021	Best SNIP/ Scimago
Academy of Management Annals	5	4.5	5	5	5	5	5
Academy of Management Journal	5	4.5	5	5	5	5	5
Academy of Management Perspectives	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
Academy of Management Review	5	4.5	5	5	5	5	5
Administrative Science Quarterly	5	4.5	5	5	5	5	5
British Journal of Management	4	3	4	4	4	3	4
Business Ethics Quarterly	4	3	4	3	3	3	3
European Management Review	3	1	3	3	2	2	2
Harvard Business Review	3	3	5	2	0	2	2
International Journal of Management Reviews	3	3	4	5	5	4	5
Journal of Business Ethics	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
Journal of Business Research	3	3	5	4	4	4	4
Journal of Management	5	4.5	5	5	5	5	5
Journal of Management Studies	4	4.5	5	4	4	4	4
Management Science	5	4.5	4	4	4	5	5

Table 8. Overview of star system results across all 30 fields.

	Best SNIP/Scimago vs. AJG 2021			SNIP vs. Scimago 2021		
Fields	Better than AJG	Same	Lower than AJG	SNIP better	Same	Scimago better
Accounting	0	4	2	1	4	1
Business (International)	2	2	0	2	2	0
Economics	23	25	5	2	36	14
Education	1	0	3	2	2	0
Entrepreneurship	3	1	0	0	4	0
Finance	2	7	2	1	8	2
History (Business)	1	0	2	2	2	0
Human Resources	2	4	3	0	7	2
Information	6	4	3	6	7	0
Innovation	2	1	1	1	3	0
Law	14	4	0	6	11	1
Management	3	9	3	2	11	2
Marketing	1	9	1	2	6	3
Multidisciplinary	5	0	0	0	3	2
Operations (Management)	1	2	1	0	3	1
Operations (Technical)	1	3	1	0	2	3
Organisation	2	2	0	1	2	1
Politics	6	0	0	2	4	0
Psychology (General)	8	4	6	3	14	1
Psychology (Workplace)	1	8	1	0	8	2
Public Administration	1	7	2	5	5	0
Public Health	8	0	0	1	6	1
Regional Studies	1	3	1	0	5	0
Relations (International)	4	0	0	4	0	0
Sector (other than Sport Management)	15	11	0	5	17	4
Social Studies	7	5	4	2	12	2
Sport Management	11	6	0	4	10	3
Sport Sciences	12	3	0	5	8	2
Sport Sociology	10	4	0	3	9	2
Strategy	1	2	1	0	4	0
Total	154 (67 in AJG)	130 (115 in AJG)	42	62	215	49

SNIP/Scimago than in AJG, 115 the same rating and 42 a lower rating. Based on SNIP/Scimago, 12 additional journals are 5*, five additional journals 4*, 11 fewer journals 3*, three additional journals 2*, 10 fewer journals 1*, and one journal is 0*. These differences with AJG slightly mitigate my initial assumption that AJG is "right" in the numbers of journals that should be represented in the different star categories since more journals are 4-5* based on SNIP/Scimago.

Overall, although I acknowledge that a more exhaustive picture and insights external to CIIs such as those collected from stakeholders by journal ranking lists would be useful to further validate the results, Table 8 confirms that sport management (and more generally sector) journals should benefit from a better recognition in AJG.

Discussion and conclusion

Towards a better international recognition of sport management journals

The analysis highlights the absence of sport management journals rated 4-5* in AJG and its unfairness based on CIIs. This is an issue if public investment in research in the UK allocated based on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) overvalues 4* over 3* papers, having in mind that the rating of a paper strongly depends on the rating of the journal (Pidd & Broadbent, 2015). As suggested in introduction, this can lead to brain drain for sport management and ultimately jeopardise its identity and development. One may argue that this is a UK specific issue rather than related to the international recognition of sport management

journals. However, I believe that such international recognition requires defending our field everywhere in the world. Besides, the UK case may be comparable to situations elsewhere. The current study may give the impression that I am critical towards a supposedly lack of recognition of our field in the UK. Yet, it is still better than in France where, despite the existence of three lists in economics and/or management (CNRS, FNEGE and HCÉRES), only four sport management journals are represented, only in one of these lists (FNEGE) for three of them (JSM, SMR and Sport Marketing Quarterly) with the lowest rating, while Journal of Sports Economics is in two lists (CNRS and HCÉRES) with a rating equivalent to 2*. At the international level, there is also some evidence that sport management (and more generally sector) journals suffer from a "tougher" treatment than other fields when it comes to allocate a JIF or not. This will end in 2023 since all Web of Science journals will receive a JIF (Clarivate, 2022a).

The present paper provides a basis for a better international recognition of sport management and more generally sector journals, following the path of ABDC in Australia, although it is still unfair towards sport management. For example, in AJG, the sector field could have a 5* journal (i.e. Tourism Management); sport management could have a 4* journal (i.e. SMR). I acknowledge that the quality of a journal does not rely solely on its impact (other factors include, e.g. peer reviewing quality and acceptance/rejection rate), however this is an important indicator that predicts well for example the rating of management journals in AJG. It is hoped that the current research can contribute to a better international recognition of sport management journals as part of the broader ongoing debates about our field highlighted in the introduction. The next steps will be some discussions internal to sport management and, if in agreement that the field should be better valued, communications with journal ranking lists.

Contribution of the research to broader scientific discussions

Beyond the specific case of sport management, the present research contributes to broader scientific discussions, in particular the meaningfulness (or lack of) of ranking journals per impact category. Issues have been raised recently in relation to the use of quartiles by JIF and Scimago, e.g. the lack of meaningful boundary differences between quartiles (Mason & Singh, 2022; Vîiu & Pãunescu, 2021). Besides, the use of quartiles assumes that the number of journals in the different impact categories (e.g. high, quite high, quite low, low) is equally distributed. This is not consistent with journal ranking lists such as AJG and ABDC. The originality of the present study is to align the boundaries with the distribution in journal ranking lists, more specifically AJG here. As acknowledged previously, this assumes that AJG is "right" in its distribution, which can be debated and is mitigated in the current research by using the best ranking between SNIP and Scimago. Yet, to some extent, relying on the distribution in journal ranking lists represents a way to address the issues with the lack of meaningful boundary differences between quartiles.

I recognise that my approach does not fully remove the lack of meaningful boundary differences. For example, with my star system applied to Scimago, I considered Sport, Education and Society 3* since its Scimago is above 1.2 (1.211), while it is as close as that of European Journal of Sport Science (1.182) assessed 2* than that of Government and Opposition (1.240). Certainly, the differences in quality between some journals considered 3* vs. 2* in journal ranking lists are also minimal, yet this can make an important difference in whether scholars will consider a submission in a journal or not, depending on their institutions' expectations. It is therefore paramount to debate the impact of CIIs and journal ranking lists on scholars' behaviours (McKiernan et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2019) and to acknowledge the possibility of publishing high quality research in journals

that are not considered among the top ones. This is especially important given that the impact of a journal does not automatically make that of an article.

Limitation: journal and article impact are two different things

Although the present research defends the need for a better international recognition of sport management journals based on the application of a star system to CIIs that contributes to the broader scientific literature, I believe it is important to conclude the manuscript with a warning against assessing the quality of an article based on where it has been published. Alongside the limitations of the present research identified previously, a limitation of the analysis based on CIIs is that they rely on the average impact of the articles published in a journal. Such average can be driven by the most impactful or "star" articles. This means that the average impact of the journal does not represent the impact of any article published in this journal. At a publication level, this suggests the need to look at the individual impact of the article rather than the journal impact. As for journals, raw citations are impacted by citations patterns in different fields. Scopus provides the Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) sourced from SciVal which corrects for this weakness of raw citations, as well as the type of document, e.g. article vs. review, and the year of publication (Snowball Metrics, 2012). Similar to Scimago for journals, FWCI has an average of 1, i.e. a value above 1 means the article is more cited than expected.

As for journals, I acknowledge that impact is not the sole indicator of quality for publications. For example, in the Research Excellence Framework applied in the UK, impact is one out of three key indicators of quality, together with originality and rigour. Yet, article impact remains an important criterion. As such, FWCI has the potential to be a useful indicator. However, it relies on the field(s) of the journal where the article is published as defined by Scopus, with e.g. sport management journals allocated to different fields. This suggests the need for a critical assessment of the fields allocated by Scopus and their impact on FWCI before endorsing this indicator and using it.

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