ON A NAME CHANGE FOR THE *JOURNAL*

J. E. Epperson, C. L. Huang, T. T. Fu, and S. M. Fletcher

Abstract

Membership of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association (SAEA) was polled to ascertain the strength of support for changing the name of the *Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics (SJAE)* to eliminate the regional connotation. The general view was that a name change is unwarranted. The overall impression of our profession is that the *SJAE* is a high quality journal and that the name is not the crucial factor in promulgating this image but rather the continued striving for excellence. A number of profiles were developed to show that the ordered-response model may be used in predicting probabilities for those who would or would not likely favor a name change.

Key words: publication, quality, regional connotation, agricultural economics, ordinal probit.

Publishing in journals is an important issue that affects many facets of one's professional career and development. Broder and Ziemer (1982) suggested that agricultural economics faculty salaries are positively related to number of journal publications but negatively related to teaching loads. Thus, publishing in journals is important not only from the perspective of the "publish or perish" paradigm but also as a significant determinant of financial reward and well-being.

Not unrelated to journal publishing is the judgmental problem of the quality versus quantity issue. In judging the quality of a journal, one important factor has sometimes been neglected or ignored by some college and university administrations: the acceptance rate of manuscripts submitted to a journal for publication consideration. Lacy and Busch, and Colyer indicate that among nationally recognized journals, agricultural economics journals have a far lower publication acceptance rate, an average of 27.0 percent, than those of other agricultural disciplines, 72.5 percent.

In addition to low acceptance rates, the small number of professional journals and limited space and frequency of publication are other dimensions of the publishing paradigm that agricultural economists must contend with in competition with professionals of other agricultural disciplines. Colyer suggests that the regional agricultural economics journals were developed probably because of the lack of an adequate national journal publication base to serve the needs of the profession. Although regional agricultural economics journals have undoubtedly contributed to the much needed additional publication outlets for agricultural economists, development of regional journals has not been without some drawbacks. Reportedly, the administrative frameworks of some institutions foster discounting of articles from journals with regional names in promotion, tenure, and salary decisions.

MOTIVATION FOR THE SURVEY

The alleged problems that agricultural economists, especially in academia, have experienced with publishing in regional journals appear to be primarily associated with the unfavorable perception and image projected by titles of journals with regional identification. In a recent survey concerning the use and assessment of professional journals among agricultural economists at land-grant universities, Broder and Ziemer (1984) reported that in terms of perceived quality, regional agricultural economics journals generally ranked higher than most of the journals in the survey. Moreover, in terms of personal usefulness, regional agricultural economics journals ranked even higher. Particularly, the *Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics (SJAE)* was ranked second only to the

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American Journal of Agricultural Economics (AJAE) in terms of personal usefulness. Furthermore, when publication acceptance rates are examined, the acceptance rate of submitted manuscripts for the *SJAE* is near that of nationally identified agricultural economics journals. Only 28.4 percent of the manuscripts submitted during the periods from October 1, 1980 to September 1, 1983 were accepted and published in the *SJAE* (Editors' Report).

The quality perception problems of some administrators and professionals of other disciplines regarding regional agricultural economics journals has recently emerged as an open topic for discussion in regional agricultural economics associations. The Western Agricultural Economics Association (WAEA) has considered the possibility of a name change for its journal, the *Western Journal of Agricultural Economics (WJAE)*. In a memorandum, dated September 1, 1984, distributed to members of the WAEA, two reasons for a name change were suggested: "(1) the word 'Western' in the title implies a regional journal and articles in the *WJAE* were not given appropriate weight in tenure and promotion decision by those outside the profession; and (2) a name change might encourage more submissions from those in and outside the western region resulting in a stronger journal and increased membership in the WAEA."

Perhaps not coincidently, at the business meeting of the February 1985 Southern Agricultural Economics Association (SAEA) in Biloxi, Mississippi, feedback was requested concerning the possibility of changing the name of the *Journal* from the *Southern Journal of Agricultural Economics* to a name without the regional connotation. The membership was solicited primarily to respond to two related issues that were of interest and concern to the SAEA. Namely, should the SAEA change the name of its journal and, consequently, its policies governing the publication and representation of the Editorial Council?

Shortly after the meetings in Biloxi, the authors volunteered to poll the membership of the SAEA to ascertain the strength of support for changing the name of the *Journal*. The purposes of this paper are to: (1) provide a summary of the results of the membership survey on a name change for the *Journal* and (2) estimate a statistical model to provide further insights and analysis on the profiles of respondents.

METHODOLOGY

Survey

A questionnaire comprised of 12 questions was developed and sent to the members of the SAEA via the April 1985, *Newsletter*. A total of 1,038 questionnaires were distributed to members of the Association including both domestic and foreign. As of July 5, 1985, 243 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Five of the questions in the survey were opinion statements with possible choices ranging from 1, representing strong disagreement, to 7, representing strong agreement. One survey question pertained to the basis for the decision to submit a manuscript to a particular journal as opposed to other journals. Four profile questions were asked: occupation base, professional rank, years of experience, and regional inclination. The remaining two questions dealt with suggestions for alternative names for the *Journal* and suggestions for improving the awareness of the quality of the *SJAE* other than by changing the name.

Response Model

An analysis of survey results can help to answer questions such as who would or would not likely be in favor of the name change and what are the important factors that were influential in the respondent's choice. Insights can be gained from estimating a statistical model of qualitative choice using the survey data by estimating parameters in a distribution function representing probability of choice. The statistical model can be used to explain and predict choice probabilities based on certain responses and profile characteristics of the respondents. Various combinations of characteristics may then be simulated to observe the effects on the probability of favoring or not favoring a name change for the *Journal*.

In the survey, each respondent was asked to indicate his or her opinion with regard to a name change on a scale of 1 to 7, representing strongly disagree to strongly agree. Thus, a set of M alternatives from which only one alternative may be selected by each individual is specified. Assuming a well-

behaved preference function, U, which is maximized subject to certain constraints, the maximum utility attainable given each alternative j, U_{ji}, may be written as:

$$(1)\ U_{ji} = U(S_i, A_{ji}),$$

where S_i is a vector of attributes or characteristics for individual i, and A_{ji} is a vector of attributes for each element in the choice set (Trost and Lee). Thus, in the decision process, each individual respondent then compares the maximum utility attainable U_j for j = 1, ..., M and selects that alternative for which $U_j(.)$ is a maximum. For estimation purposes, a stochastic utility model is assumed. Furthermore, it is assumed that the indirect utility is linear and is comprised of a deterministic component and a stochastic component. Specifically, equation (1) may be rewritten as:

$$(2)\ U_{ji} = \beta'X + e_{ji}$$

where X is a vector of explanatory variables, β is a vector of unknown parameters that capture the impact of the explanatory variables, $\beta'X$ is the deterministic component, and e_{ji} is the random component of the model that assumes a distribution function of zero mean and constant variance. Equation (2) suggests that an individual i will choose alternative k if the probability that utility, U_{ki}, derived from choice k exceeds the utility from any other choice U_{ji}, for j = 1, ..., M and $j \neq k$. Stated formally,

$$(3)\ P_{ki} = \Pr [U_{ki} > \text{Max } (U_{1i}, \ldots, U_{ji}); \quad j=1, \ldots, m \text{ and } j \neq k],$$

where p_{ki} denotes the probability that alternative k will be chosen.

It should become evident that the U_{ji}'s are unobservable. In reality, the outcome of the decision process is observed, i.e., the selection of alternative k. Thus, let Y be the observed variable that represents the set of M alternatives and Y = k if observed with a given probability such as equation (3). Furthermore, assume that there is a set of constants such that $\mu_1 = -\infty$, $\mu M = +\infty$, and $\mu_1 < \mu_2 < \ldots < \mu M$. Following McKelvey and Zavoina, and Maddala, the probability choice model implied by equations (2) and (3) can be restated as:

$$(4)\ Y_i = \beta'X + e_i <=> U_{ki} > \text{Max } (U_{1i}, \ldots, U_{ji}); \ j = 1, \ldots, M; \ j \neq k$$

and

$$P_k = \Pr (Y=k) = F(Z_k) - F(Z_{k-1}),$$

where $Z_k = (\mu_k - \beta'X)/\sigma$, $Z_{k-1} = (\mu_{k-1} - \beta'X)/\sigma$, and F is the unit normal distribution function. The model as specified in equation (4) is known as an ordered-response model or more specifically, an ordinal or n-chotomous probit model since a normal distribution function is assumed.

Note that equation (4) is similar to a linear regression model. However, the underlying assumptions for equation (4) and an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) model are strikingly different by comparison. First, equation (4) implies a threshold concept that dictates the effects of an individual's choice and behavioral response. An individual responds with a certain choice when "utility" or "degree of conviction" exceeds some threshold level. Second, the utility threshold may vary by individual due to differences in personality, tastes, preferences, and the like. Third, any change in response is directly related to the estimated probability that a particular decision will be made.

The appropriate statistical procedure for estimating parameters is maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). The estimates obtained from MLE are consistent, asymptotically efficient, and normally distributed so that conventional tests of significance can be applied. In addition to estimating the coefficients associated with the independent variables, the n-chotomous probit model also estimates the threshold values or the cutting points of the ordinal scale, i.e., the μ_k's as defined in equation (4). It should be noted that estimation of the n-chotomous probit model involves a normalization procedure such that $\mu_1 = 0$ and $\sigma = 1$ so that equation (4) is indentified and unique parameter estimates are obtained.

RESULTS

Survey

A summary of responses to opinion statements is presented in Table 1. If one interprets scales 1-3 as disagreement, scale 4 as neutral or indifferent, and scales 5-7 as agreement, then results presented in Table 1 indicate that the majority of respondents agreed with all the statements except statement 3. Specifically, the results show that more than 60 percent of the respondents disagreed with the notion of changing the name of the *Journal* to eliminate the regional connotation.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF OPINION QUESTION RESULTS, SURVEY OF SAEA MEMBERSHIP, APRIL-JULY, 1985

Question number	Survey question	Scale[a] 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total respondents
		(frequency)							
1	The name of the journal often carries with it a certain perception regarding the quality of the journal.	19	13	15	35	60	60	39	241 (4.83)[a]
2	Assuming the journals are of equal quality, it is better to have in one's resume or promotion dossier an article in a journal without a regional connotation than an article in a journal with a regional connotation.	18	25	22	34	47	40	54	240 (4.68)
3	The name of the *Journal* published by the SAEA should be changed to eliminate the regional connotation.	76	44	26	32	22	17	23	240 (3.10)
4	The editorial policy giving preference in article selection to those addressing problems and issues of concern in the southern region should be eliminated if the regional connotation is removed from the name of the *Journal*.	42	30	20	24	29	34	58	237 (4.27)
5	In addition to present USDA representation, the Editorial Council should have national representation if the regional connotation is removed from the name of the *Journal*.	36	19	17	37	37	39	49	234 (4.42)

[a]Numbers in parentheses are simple averages of the scale of 1 to 7 with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 7 indicating strong agreement with the survey statement.

The responses to question 6 are summarized in Table 2. According to the number of responses, the decision to submit a manuscript to a particular journal was based largely on three criteria: relevance of the subject matter to readers of the journal, quality and prestige of the journal, and the probability that the manuscript will be accepted for publication. The dominant criterion by far was relevance of the subject matter to the readership.

A summary of the category profile questions is presented in Table 3. Not surprisingly, the respondent was likely to be employed in academia and located in the Southern United States. Further, a large proportion, 41 percent, of the respondents were full professors.

Question 9 pertained to years of experience as a professional agricultural economist. The number of responses for this question was 238 and the mean response was about 13 years with a range of zero to 52 years.

Suggestions for a name for the *Journal*, given that a new name would be appropriate, were solicited in question 11. Only those names where there was some agreement are presented in Table 4. Table 4 shows 11 suggested names by 77 respondents. In total, 65 different suggestions for a new name were provided.

Question 12 was the means to obtain suggestions for increasing the awareness of the quality of the *SJAE* without a name change. In total, 18 different suggestions were recorded. Only those 11 suggestions where there was some agreement are presented in Table 5. The top category was to maintain the high quality of the *Journal* with 56 respondents offering this same suggestion. Apparently, there is considerable agreement that continued efforts to maintain the high quality standards of the *Journal* will give it the appropriate position of prestige with time.

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF BASIS FOR DECISION TO SUBMIT A MANUSCRIPT TO A PARTICULAR JOURNAL, QUESTION SIX OF SURVEY OF SAEA MEMBERSHIP, APRIL-JULY, 1985

Basis	Number of responses[a]
Relevance of subject matter to readership	158
Quality and prestige of journal	70
Probability of acceptance	57
Editorial policy	10
Promptness of review and publication process	8
Helpfulness and quality of reviews	6
Discount regional journals	3
No response	26

[a]More than one response by individual respondents was not uncommon.

TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF CATEGORY PROFILE QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS SEVEN, EIGHT, AND TEN OF SAEA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY, APRIL-JULY, 1985

Category	Number of responses	Percentage distribution
Occupation base:	242	100
Government	32	13
Academia	190	79
Industry	9	4
Student	8	3
Other	3	1
Professional rank:	240	100
Professor	98	41
Associate professor	40	17
Assistant professor	46	19
Not applicable	56	23
Region of work location:	240	100
Southern United States	170	71
Other regions of United States	63	26
Foreign	7	3

Response Model

For estimating the model specified in equation (4), the following relationship was hypothesized:

$$X3 = f(X1D, X1A, X2D, X2A, X72, X83, X9, X101),$$

where the variables are defined as in Table 6. Results of estimating the hypothesized relationship using the ordinal probit model are shown in Table 7. Coefficient signs were as expected except for X83, professional rank, and X101, region of work location.

It was hypothesized that those of assistant professor rank would favor a name change to enhance the odds that articles published in the same journal without the regional connotation would not be discounted in promotion and tenure considerations. Apparently, a name change for the *Journal* is generally viewed by responding assistant professors as detrimental. One explanation might be that assistant professors are concerned that competition for manuscript acceptance will increase, thus, reducing the odds of successfully publishing in the *Journal* without the regional orientation.

It was expected that respondents located in the Southern United States would tend to favor the name change since the *SJAE* is considered more prestigious than most of the other journals in the profession (Broder and Ziemer, 1984). The notion was that a name change would alert all disciplines to the high quality of the *Journal*, already recognized by the agricultural economics profession. It appears, rather, that the dominating factor may be regional identification, however weak.

As previously indicated, using the parameter estimates in Table 7, the probability that the value of the dependent variable will fall in each of M categories, ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree, can be predicted. Further, various combinations of respondent characteristics and responses can be simulated in order to observe the effects on the predicted probability of the degree of favoring or not favoring a name change for the *Journal*.

Results of the probability analysis are presented in Table 8 for purposes of illustration. However, to simplify the presentation, the threshold scales were reduced from seven to three: do not favor a name change, neutral, and favor a name change.

TABLE 4. SUMMARY OF NAME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE JOURNAL ASSUMING A NEW NAME WOULD BE APPROPRIATE, QUESTION 11 OF SAEA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY, APRIL-JULY, 1985

Name	Number of suggestions
Journal of Applied Agricultural Economics	26
Agricultural Economics Journal or Journal of Agricultural Economics	15
Agricultural Economics Review or Review of Agricultural Economics	12
Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics	6
Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics	4
Journal of Agricultural Economics Research	4
Journal of Applied Economics	2
National Journal of Agricultural Economics	2
Journal of Food and Fiber Economics	2
Journal of Southern Agricultural Economics	2
Journal of Agricultural Economics: Research, Teaching, and Extension	2

TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING THE AWARENESS OF THE QUALITY OF THE *SJAE* WITHOUT A CHANGE OF NAME, QUESTION 12 OF SAEA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY, APRIL-JULY, 1985

Suggestion	Number of suggestions
Maintain high quality	56
Revise review process	19
Maintain regional emphasis	11
Publish more applied articles	11
Increase awareness of administrators	10
Open *Journal* to nationally oriented articles	8
Upgrade appearance of the *Journal*	5
Do not try to duplicate other journals	4
Make the *Journal* a source of current issues	4
Document *SJAE* articles referenced in other works	3
Publish summary of review process and acceptance rates in proceedings issue[a]	3
Publish collection of articles on selected topics	2
Divide *Journal* into two parts: Section (1), theory and Section (2), applications/extension	2

[a]Editor's reports containing summaries of the review process and acceptance rate are published in July issues of the *Journal*.

TABLE 6. VARIABLES IN THE RESPONDENT PROFILE MODEL, SAEA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY, APRIL-JULY, 1985

Variable name	Survey question or description	Measurement	Mean[a]	Expected impact
X3	The name of the *Journal* published by the *SAEA* should be changed to eliminate the regional connotation.	Scale of 1 to 7[b]	3.17	
X1D	The name of a journal often carries with it a certain perception regarding the quality of the journal.	1—Do not agree 0—Neutral and agree	0.20	−
X1A	(")	1—Agree 0—Neutral and disagree	0.66	+
X2D	Assuming the journals are of equal quality, it is better to have in one's resume or promotion dossier an article in a journal without a regional connotation that an article in a journal with a regional connotation.	1—Do not agree 0—Neutral and agree	0.27	−
X2A	(")	1—Agree 0—Neutral and disagree	0.60	+
X72	Occupation base	1—Academia 0—Other	0.80	+
X83	Professional rank	1—Assistant Professor 0—Other	0.20	+
X9	Years of experience as a professional agricultural economist	Amount reported	12.95	−
X101	Region of work location	1—Southern United States 0—Other	0.67	+

[a]Because of incomplete data, only 225 of 243 observations were used to compute means and estimate the model.
[b]1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree.

TABLE 7. COEFFICIENT ESTIMATES AND STUDENT t-VALUES FOR THE N-CHOTOMOUS PROBIT INDEX EQUATION, SAEA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY, APRIL-JULY, 1985

Explanatory variables[a]	Estimated coefficients	Student t-values
X1D	−0.300453	−1.0709
X1A	0.375569	1.6578
X2D	−0.361921	−1.3553
X2A	0.777782	3.3952
X72	0.199678	0.9752
X83	−0.439647	−2.0017
X9	−0.032744	−3.2946
X101	−0.121611	−0.7696
Intercept	0.527646	1.4493
μ_1	0.000000	—
μ_2	0.596725	6.9320
μ_3	0.957067	9.2650
μ_4	1.44352	11.7947
μ_5	1.86359	13.3956
μ_6	2.28456	14.4461
−2 X log likelihood ratio	89.0940	
Degrees of freedom	8	

[a]Explanatory variables are defined in Table 6. The u's represent the threshold values or the cutting points of the ordinal scale of the dependent variable, equation (4).

TABLE 8. PREDICTED PROBABILITY FOR ACADEMIC RESPONDENTS OF A PARTICULAR PROFILE WHO WOULD OR WOULD NOT LIKELY FAVOR A NAME CHANGE, SAEA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY, APRIL-JULY, 1985

Profile	Do not favor name change		Favor name change	
	Evaluation at means for quality and résumé opinions[a]	Evaluation at 1's for favorable quality and résumé opinions[b]	Evaluation at means for quality and résumé opinions[a]	Evaluation at 1's for favorable quality and résumé opinions[b]
Assistant professor, 2 years experience, South	0.617	0.383	0.216	0.425
Assistant professor, 4 years experience, South	0.642	0.409	0.197	0.399
Assistant professor, 2 years experience, outside South	0.570	0.338	0.253	0.473
Assistant professor, 4 years experience, outside South	0.596	0.362	0.233	0.447
Not assistant professor, 10 years experience, South	0.548	0.317	0.272	0.495
Not assistant professor, 20 years experience, South	0.673	0.442	0.175	0.367
Not assistant professor, 10 years experience outside South	0.500	0.276	0.314	0.543
Not assistant professor, 20 years experience, outside South	0.628	0.394	0.208	0.414

[a]Mean values were used for X1D, X1A, X2D, and X2A in computing values for X3, the dependent variable, Table 6.

[b]Ones were used for X1A and A2A and zeros were used for X1D and X2D in computing values for X3, the dependent variable.

Eight respondent profiles are depicted in Table 8: an assistant professor with 2 and 4 years experience located in and outside the South, and academic respondents who are not assistant professors with 10 and 20 years experience located in and outside the South. Probabilities for not favoring and favoring a name change are presented in Table 8 for each respondent profile according to two selected evaluations for the opinion variables concerning the association of perceived quality with a journal name (X1D and X1A). In one instance, mean values were used for X1D, X1A, X2D, and X2A, while in the alternative case, ones were used for X1A and X2A and zeros were used for X1D and X2D. In the latter situation, the respondent profile encompasses agreement with the notions that perceived quality is associated with a journal name and that one prefers and article in a journal without regional identification, quality constant, for a resume or promotion dossier.

For all profiles depicted in Table 8 with X1D, X1A, X2D, and X2A evaluated at mean values, predicted probabilities were 0.500 or greater that the respondent would not favor a name change. However, in the other case where X1A and X2A were evaluated with ones and X1D and X2D were evaluated with zeros, the predicted probabilities changed substantially, The predicted probabilities for not favoring a name change across all presented profiles dropped by about 0.23 while the changes in predicted probabilities for favoring a name change were similar in magnitude though in the opposite direction.

Based on the results shown in tables 7 and 8, the respondent in favor of the name change appeared to fit the following profile. He or she tended to believe that the name of a journal often carries with it a certain perception regarding the quality of the journal (that it is better to have in one's resume or promotion dossier an article in a journal without a regional connotation than one with regional identification, given equal quality), was not an assistant professor, but in apparent contrast was relatively young in career development—a rather limited segment of the SAEA membership sample.

CONCLUSION

Apparently, the general view of the respondents, which may be considered representative of the SAEA membership, was that

a name change for the *Journal* to eliminate the regional connotation is unwarranted. The senior members of our profession and assistant professors alike tended to see merit in the current regional name. Concern regarding the discounting of articles from journals with regional names in promotion, tenure, and salary decisions by administrators did not appear widespread in the Southern region of the United States. It may very well be that publication in the *SJAE* is generally seen as an avenue towards promotion and tenure by assistant professors. Apparently, the general impression of our profession is that the *SJAE* is a high quality journal and that the name is not the crucial factor in promulgating this image but rather the continued striving for excellence.

In conclusion, the survey respondents may very well choose a name not having a regional connotation for a journal at its inception. However, in general they do not favor changing the name of the *SJAE* which they perceive as having an established standard of high quality.

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