

Scholarly book publishers in Spain: relationship between size, price, specialization and prestige.

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Introduction

The prestige of book publishers is an important element for the assessment of SSH scholars in Spain. Until 2012, that ‘prestige’ remained based upon subjective, individual judgements from assessment committees’ members. In order to provide a more objective reference for the prestige of book publishers, ÍLIA research group developed a ranking of book publishers (so called SPI) based on the opinion of almost three thousand experts from all SSH fields (Giménez-Toledo et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the factors underlying the perceived prestige are unknown. Some authors worked on the influence of marketing on the perception of books. Squires (2007) point out that ‘we should not underestimate the value or efficiency that the association with a specific publisher provides to its contents’. It is hypothesized that three factors (among others) might be related to the perceived prestige: size of the book publisher (number of titles published), specialization (share of titles in each discipline) and price of the books.

Objectives

The objective of this research is to test a linear relationship between prestige, size, specialization and price of books of book publishers in the case of Spain.

Variable definition:

- Prestige values: Scholarly Publishers Indicators (SPI, 2012).
- Size, price and specialization: DILVE (DILVE, 2013).

Data sources:

- Prestige: ICEE (Prestige measure based on extensive survey to researchers and lecturers; it is the indicator on which SPI ranking is based)
- Size: Raw number of different titles in DILVE for each discipline for each book publisher.
- Mean price: the average price of all the titles published by the book publisher in the period analyzed.
- Max. Price: the maximum price of a single title in the whole set of titles published by each publisher.
- Specialization: Maximum percentage of titles of each book publisher in any given discipline respect the total number of books published in that discipline in DILVE

Methodology

For a total number of 119 book publishers (this number was fixed so that the number of lost cases is minimized), their ICEE was retrieved from SPI (2014), and the size, mean price and specialization degree obtained from the extensive database DILVE, for the years 2004 onwards up to 2012. After a verification of the non normality of the distribution of all the variables, using Kolmogorov-Smirnov nonparametric tests, Spearman’s Rho was selected as the appropriate technique contrasting the linear association hypothesis. The correlation matrix for all the variables was calculated.

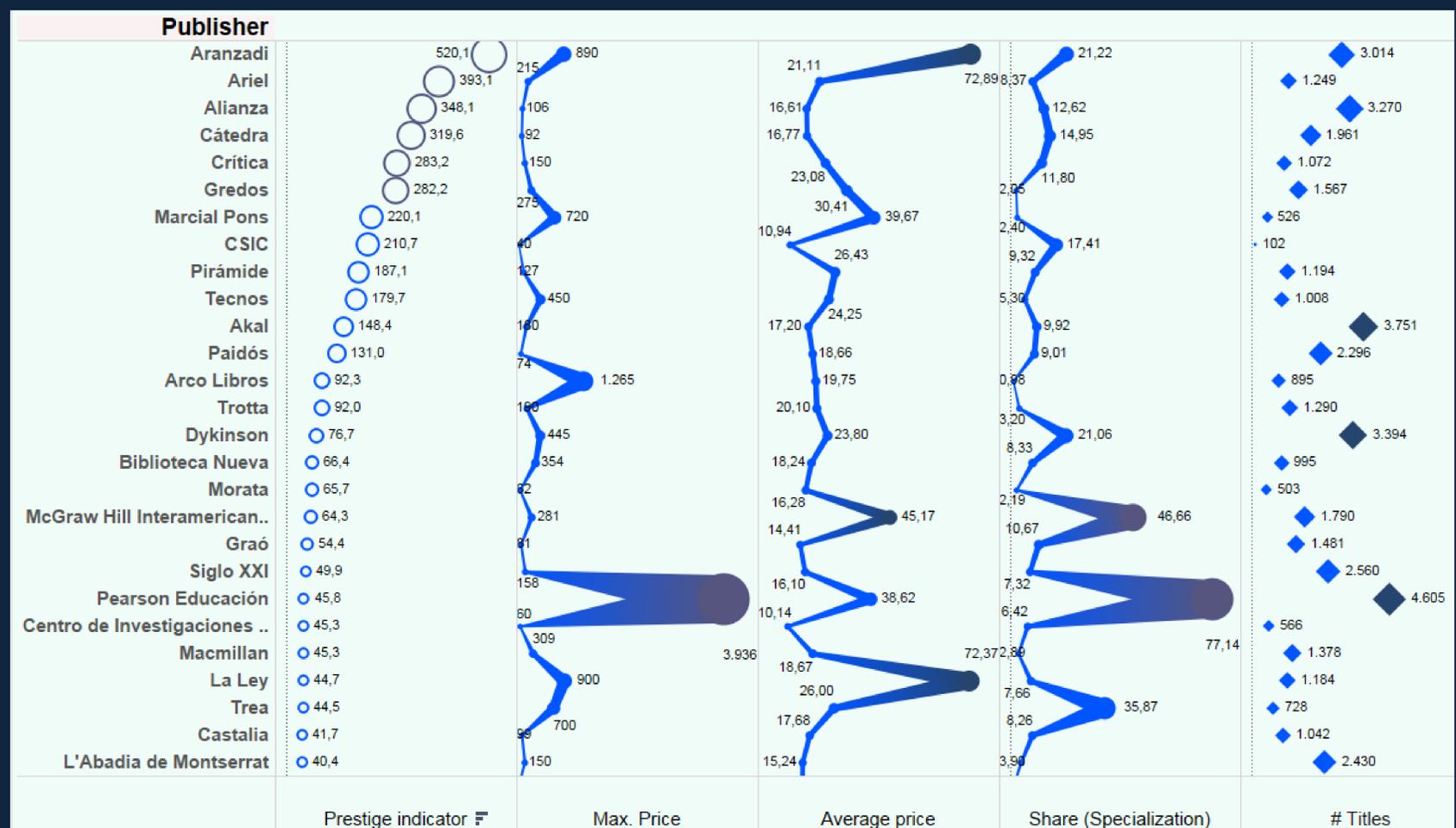
Results

Only significant results (p -value = .05) have been considered, since there is no reason for supposing any bias effect of n on the significance of the results (119, in all cases, this being the number of book publishers with no missing cases in any variable). The following table resumes these statistically significant correlations.

Table 1. Statistically significant correlations (Spearman’s Rho)

ρ Publisher Prestige, Raw Size	.269; $p < .05$
ρ Publisher Prestige, Max Price	.217; $p < .05$
ρ Raw Size, Max Price	.198; $p < .05$
ρ Raw Size, Average price	-.232; $p < .05$
ρ Raw Size, Max Share	.433; $p < .05$
ρ Max Price, Average price	.593 $p < .05$

Chart 1. Interactive chart displaying the values of the five variables analyzed.



Available at: https://public.tableau.com/views/PRESTIGEPRICESPECIALIZATIONANDSIZE/Sheet1?embed=y&:showTabs=y&:display_count=yes

Conclusions

The main conclusion which can be drawn from the results is the seemingly (at least linear) **independence** of the construct ‘prestige’ from **all the variables hypothesized** as potentially influential in the values given to book publishers by the experts.

Discussion

The fact that none of the variables analysed is linearly related to the perceived prestige of book publishers is consistent with the multi-component structure generally involved in the composition of a concept such as ‘prestige’. The existence of such a relationship between the intrinsic quality of the contents and the prestige of a publisher is plausible given that the use of books by those who have provided the prestige values presumably use the books as a source of information, leaving behind other subjectively perceived variables. Also, given the relevance of peer review for assessment processes (Verleysen & Engels, 2013) as well as for the quality of the contents, these filters might also influence the perceived prestige of book publishers.

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