

Information Generation in Social Science Research through SSRN: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

The present study intends to analyze the efficiency of Social Science Research Network in respect to other contemporary open-access repositories, the features which brings uniqueness in Social Science Research Network, its indicators for ranking the scholarly researches which can be impactful on the scholarly world. Here in this study, ranking the impact of articles published in SSRN is done on the basis of highest download rate of the article in a year. The study also ponders over the effect of SSRN on scholarly publication of India; particularly its effect on Indian authors and also discusses some possible reasons for the shortcoming of scholarly publications in SSRN. It is also seen that the percentage of articles published by Indian authors who registered under international institutions is much higher in compare to that of Indian authors registered under any Indian Institutions. As open-access repositories are gaining a steady access towards Indian scholarly market, the researchers of not only social science discipline but also of pure science field whose purpose is to publish their research work which can be openly accessible to a large number of readers can go for SSRN.

Keywords: Social Science Research Network (SSRN), Open-access repository

0. Introduction

Academics are expected to produce research in their respected fields. Nowadays, it is also necessary to make his/her research publicly available by putting the research paper online to make it openly accessible. Social Science Research Network (SSRN) is a well-known specialized research network in the field of social sciences and humanities. SSRN is an open access "Green" repository which provides free posting and sharing of research material (e.g., conference papers, preprints, non-peer-reviewed papers) of the above stated subject areas. SSRN provides pre-prints or post-prints scholarly materials archived in an openly accessible repository which helps the scholars to develop their research and communicate their results worldwide. Scholars can upload the digital copies of their papers, free of cost to the SSRN website only by creating an account in SSRN. This website is easily accessible to all, Google searchable and need not require any special software to access it.

SSRN provides rankings based on all its indicators, mainly through downloads and citation indicators. The ranking indicators complement the paper's scholarly impact, including the quality of the peer-reviewed journals in which the work is published. Measuring the scholarly impact of the articles according to the maximum downloads of the paper in a year is a specialized feature of SSRN, which differentiates SSRN from other open access repositories as ranking of paper generally made from impact factor of the papers and the impact factors of the paper is generally based on h-index, g-index and other sorts of citation. But here in SSRN the papers getting frequent download gets maximum exposure for ranking. SSRN keeps a running count of the number of times each article gets downloaded. Also there is a unique indicator called PlumX¹ which calculate the usages, captures of the paper, and its mention on news, references, blogs, question and answers site, the paper's public availability on social media, the paper's citations and download rank of SSRN.

1. Objective

This study intends to:

- Analyze SSRN repository, its specific features if any which differs it from other open access repositories.
- To evaluate the top ranking journals published in SSRN with the ranking indicators used in SSRN.
- Comparing the availability of Indian authors' journal published with that of global ones in the field of social sciences and humanities.

2. Features of SSRN

2.1. Toll free:

- There is no need of paid subscription for creating an account in SSRN.
- Users can manage their contact information including their institutional affiliation and can submit unlimited number of papers.
- SSRN provides distribution of scholars' abstracts in relevant Subject Matter e-Journals (if eligible).
- Users can subscribe to any of SSRN's free Subject Matter e-Journals.
- SSRN enables searching for/viewing all abstracts and author pages on its site and can download papers present in the website.
- Users can view the SSRN Rankings for authors, papers, institutions and Subject Matter Networks.
- Users can view the references and citations tabs on a paper's abstract page.²

2.2. Toll access:

- Creating a Research Paper Series or becoming a Partner in Publishing.
- Submitting to/registering for a conference through SSRN's Conference Management Services.
- Some full text papers need fee for purchasing.

¹<https://www.ssrn.com/en/index.cfm/ssrn-faq/#plumx> (22nd August 2018)

²<http://support.ssrn.com/knowledgebase.php?article=26> (22nd August 2018)

- Purchasing an individual or site subscription to SSRN's fee-based Subject Matter e-Journals.³

3. Research questions:

- How data should be collected and what will be the indicators for ranking the articles of SSRN?
- Is there any special indicator which differentiates SSRN with other open access repositories?
- Is there any availability of articles by Indian scholars in the top ranked papers of SSRN?

4. Research methods

4.1. Choice of indicator for ranking

SSRN compiles ranking of papers based on total new downloads and citations. To get ranked a paper must be full text and publicly available on SSRN. Privately available papers are not considered in the ranking. In the present study for ranking the scholarly articles the indicator used is: Total New Downloads: This comprises total SSRN downloads of a paper during the last 12 months. This provides a measure of the current interest in a paper.⁴

4.2. Data collection

The table below shows the first 100 papers of SSRN out of its top 10,000 papers. The table comprises the values of total new downloads, number of authors, new downloads per author, the total number of downloads; total downloads per author, number of citations and total citations per authors. See Annexure 1.

4.3. Data analysis

The top 100 values as extracted from SSRN's top papers ranking is based on total new downloads which is the current downloads of a paper in last 12 months. The other values in table 1 comprises-

- Number (#) of Authors: The number of authors of a paper
- New Downloads per Author: The number of downloads in the last 12 months per author for a paper.
- Total number (#) of Downloads: Total lifetime SSRN downloads for a paper.
- Total Downloads per Author: The number of lifetime downloads per author has received for a paper.
- Total number (#) of Citations: The total number of times a paper has been cited by other papers in SSRN's eLibrary.
- Total Citations Per Author: The total number of times that a paper has been cited by other papers in SSRN's eLibrary divided by the total number authors.⁵

³<http://support.ssrn.com/knowledgebase.php?article=26> (22nd August 2018)

⁴https://hq.ssrn.com/rankings/ranking_data_explain.cfm?id=10 (22nd August 2018)

⁵https://hq.ssrn.com/rankings/ranking_data_explain.cfm?id=10 (22nd August 2018)

There is a limited amount of papers published by Indian authors. Out of 150 authors of the top 100 papers published in SSRN only 6% is Indian authors. The table below shows the contribution of Indian scholars in compare to that of global researchers in top 1000 papers published by SSRN and ranked according to “Total New Downloads” ranking indicator.

Table:2- Presence of Indian scholars in compare to that of Global scholars

No. of Papers	Indian scholars	Global scholars	Total authors	% of presence of Indian scholars
100	9	141	150	6
101-500	48	551	599	8
501-1000	52	754	806	6.45

It is also seen that, the proportion of articles published by Indian authors who registered under international institutions are much higher in compare to that of Indian authors registered under any Indian Institutions. Papers submitted to SSRN by Indian scholars co-authored with other global scholars published through global institutions are frequent. Single authored publications from Indian Institutions are customarily less.(Dutta & Jana, 2018)

Table: 3- Publication of Indian scholars from Indian and International Institutions

No. of papers	Published from Indian Institutions by Indian authors	Published from International Institutions by Indian authors
1000	21	39

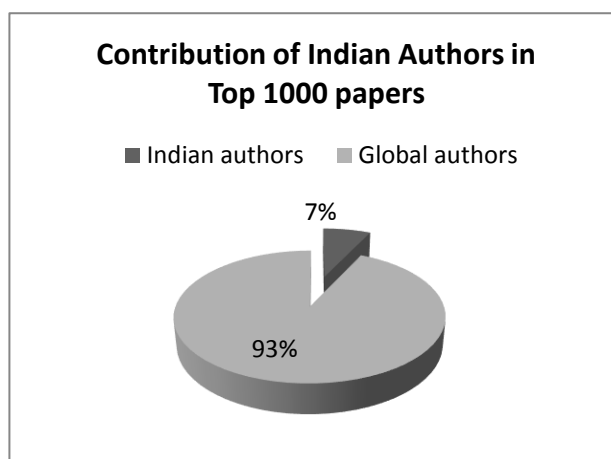
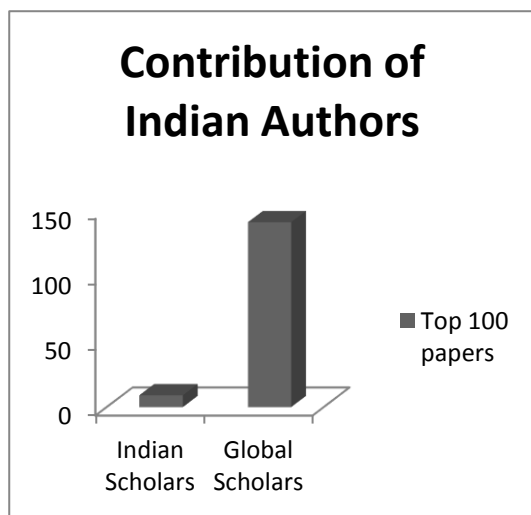


Chart 1 and 2: Comparison between Indian and global authors’ contribution towards SSRN

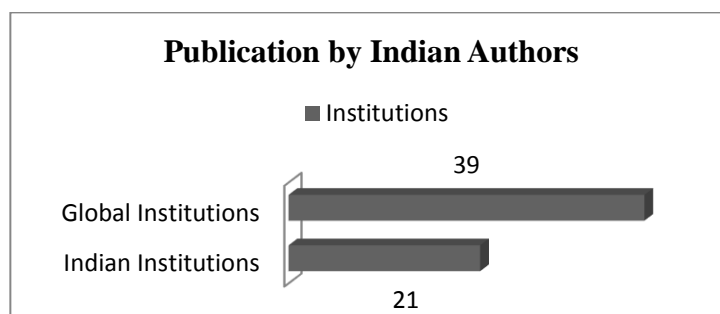


Chart 3: Comparison of publication of articles by Indian authors

5. Conclusion

There is a minimal amount of contribution of Indian authors towards paper publishing through SSRN. Indian authors also co-authored with global authors and generally percentage of paper submitting of Indian authors with authorisation from International Institute is more in compare to that of publishing through authorisation from Indian Institutions. This may be due to lack of awareness and interest of Indian scholars, mainly of Indian Institutions to submit their research paper in SSRN. Out of first 100 papers from total 150 scholars, only 4 Indian authors submitted their papers from Indian Institution's authorisation. Mainly Indian scholars of international Institute's authorisation are more interested in submitting their research work in SSRN.

SSRN (2018) provides 812945 research papers from 386975 researchers in its e-library from almost all disciplines, mainly social sciences, humanities, applied science, life science, physical science, health science.⁶As it is open access, Indian authors whose goal may be to self-publish his/her research article on the internet, SSRN is an answer as SSRN provide this facility.

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⁶ http://hq.ssrn.com/rankings/Ranking_display.cfm?TRN_gID=10 (22nd August 2018)

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