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Article
Editorial

Journal of Choice Modelling

Provided in Cooperation with:
Journal of Choice Modelling

Suggested Citation: Hess, Stephane; Rose, John M. (2008) : Editorial, Journal of Choice Modelling, ISSN 1755-5345, University of Leeds, Institute for Transport Studies, Leeds, Vol. 1, Iss. 1, pp. 1-2

This Version is available at:
<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/66795>

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Editorial

Life is dominated by choices, with many of them having wide-ranging implications. The reason why some people choose to immunise their children whilst others do not may have significant implications on the health care policies adopted by nations. What characteristics of a product will result in a consumer selecting one brand over another may impact upon the success or failure of the product as well as the firms involved in their production. The preferences of individuals for the provision of various environmental protection measures of an estuary may impact upon the quality of life of generations to come. Each of these examples demonstrates a need to understand the choices that people make or are likely to make, and how the understanding of these choices may impact upon the lives of many. Thus, understanding preferences and the ensuing choices represents an important, if not one of the most important, fields of study that exist today.

The study and analysis of choice behaviour is not a new field. Its roots may be traced back to Louis Leon Thurstone, whose pioneering work over eighty years ago in psychometric measurement has proved highly influential, although this was not recognised at the time. It was another thirty years until Thurstone's work on allowing for stochastic variability in choices made it into the field of economics, where Jacob Marschak famously termed it Random Utility Maximisation (RUM). Thurstone's work eventually led to the development of the myriad of available choice models consistent with RUM in existence today. What is often forgotten is that Thurstone also worked on the development of experimental methods for collecting choice data and should in fact be credited with the conceptualisation and implantation of the very first stated preference survey.

Of course there have been many other brilliant researchers interested in the area of understanding choice behaviour, not all of whom work within the RUM framework. Two notable inclusions are the Nobel Prize laureates in the area of Economics, Daniel McFadden (2000) and Daniel Kahneman (2002). It should be noted that Daniel McFadden's first degree was in the area of Physics whilst Daniel Kahneman claims never to have taken a single course in economics; both facts should go some way to proving that the study of choice behaviour may truly be considered to be cross disciplinary.

The *Journal of Choice Modelling* is intended to promote the free and vigorous exchange of ideas among the worldwide community actively involved in the pursuit of understanding choice behaviour. Our purpose in setting up this journal is to be as inclusive as possible, allowing an equal voice between academics and practitioners, independent of discipline area, thus bridging gaps between theory and practice as well as across disciplines. Another important characteristic of the *Journal of Choice Modelling* is its open access nature. Academia in its broadest meaning describes the build up of knowledge and one of its aims should clearly



be to pass this knowledge on to other academics and practitioners. Here, the *Journal of Choice Modelling* joins a growing family of open access journals where papers are available free of charge to all readers. At the same time, the journal is using a peer review system of the highest standard to ensure only top quality material is published. Finally, to ensure the quickest possible turnaround, the *Journal of Choice Modelling* is published entirely online.

The response to the creation of the *Journal of Choice Modelling* has been exceptional. A large selection of leading choice modellers have agreed to serve on the editorial board and the editorial advisory board. Additionally, we have been greatly encouraged by the fact that some of the leading authors in the field have placed sufficient faith in the journal to submit their work for the inaugural issue. Many additional papers have already been received for subsequent issues and a number of special issues are also in the works.

Turning our attention to the actual contents of the inaugural issue, we have six papers looking at quite different issues. In the first paper, Chorus and Timmermans develop a model that can explain consumer preferences on the basis of the observed search for information on an alternative's attributes. In the second paper, Fosgerau addresses the important yet under-researched issue of specification testing of choice models and describes a nonparametric test that is able to detect general misspecification. In the third paper, Train looks at using EM algorithms to nonparametrically estimate mixing distributions in discrete choice models. LaMondia, Bhat and Hensher next develop an annual time use model for domestic vacation travel in the United States, based on a multiple discrete-continuous extreme value structure. In a paper concerned with stated choice surveys, Bliemer, Rose and Hess look at the relative performance of different simulation methods in the generation of Bayesian efficient designs. In another paper dealing with design issues, Louviere, Street, Burgess, Wasi, Islam and Marley show how combining advanced designs with additional preference information can facilitate the modelling of individual choices.

In closing, we would again like to thank the authors of the papers in this inaugural issue for putting their faith in this new journal. We would also like to express our gratitude to all referees for their efforts in providing important feedback on the papers. The same goes to all members of the editorial board and editorial advisory board for their support and for helping to promote the journal. We are hopeful that the *Journal of Choice Modelling* will go from strength to strength and will become the preferred forum for discussing issues related to the study of choice behaviour.

Stephane Hess & John M. Rose

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'S Hess' and the signature on the right is 'John Rose'.

Editors-in-chief
Leeds & Sydney, September 2008