Reply to SK Goyal

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In the paper (Sharma, 2004), a reference was made to the details of the features considered in different models (Chowdhury and Sarker, 2001) and the paper by Viswanathan and Goyal (2000) was missed. Sometimes this may be due to a difference of 3–5 years between actual publication and the time when the work was started. There is no intention of ignoring the work of Dr Viswanathan and Dr SK Goyal, who has been a highly significant contributor in this field for a very long time.

It may not be proper to declare any approach superior or inferior on the basis of cost alone. Had cost been the only criterion, common cycle time approach would be inferior as compared to different cycle time approach if it yields a lower cost. But it is not so. The academic literature should be enriched with a variety of approaches. It may be left to the industrial users, which method they want to implement. If it is not convenient to implement different cycle time approach, the management may take a decision in favour of common cycle time, even if the cost is greater.

Similarly, the computed total cost may be less if production rates of all the items are optimized. In case the production rate of all the items is changed, it may not be convenient to implement, particularly in the short term and/or when the number of items in the family are more.

Finally, I thank Dr Goyal and Dr Viswanathan for initiating a useful discussion.

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Quarantine OCRA spam

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The operational competitiveness rating analysis (OCRA) method was proposed a decade ago (Parkan, 1991, 1994). Over the past years, the author of OCRA has applied it to measure the performance of production units. These

applications have been published in 15 papers in 14 highly regarded operational research (OR) and production economics (PE) journals (Parkan, 1991, 1994, 1996, 1999a, b, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004; Parkan and Wu, 1997, 1998, 1999a, b, 2000; Parkan *et al*, 1997). Ironically, OCRA has been proved to be flawed (Wang, 2006; Wang and Wang, 2005). The scientific issue of the faulty nature of OCRA has been made clear. However, researchers in this field might not realize the damage caused by the circulation of OCRA in such a broad scope over such a long time period. This note is to analyse the publication pattern of the OCRA papers by the same author (or the principal co-author), and to show that OCRA is a typical case of unhealthy publication. The purpose of this note is to maintain the OR/PE research directions as well as academic integrity in general.

Based on a comprehensive survey, the features of the 15 OCRA papers by the same author are summarized in Table 1. We have the following observations on their publication pattern.

- (1) OCRA by the same author has been published intensively in the OR/PE filed over the past 13 years.
- (2) While these OCRA papers were spread in 14 journals, only two papers were published in the same journal (JORS). The paper in JORS (2004) cited the similar paper in JORS that was published 7 years ago.
- (3) The first two papers (published in 1991 and 1994, respectively) initiated the OCRA method. Other papers after these were basically duplicated applications of the OCRA method to different data sets, to say the most.
- (4) Each paper after 1994 re-used a perceived proportion of the previous publications by means of a kind of 'cut and paste'.
- (5) Each paper cited the previous OCRA papers in random fashion, although the (1994) and (1996) papers were cited more times than others.
- (6) The papers after 1999 had many cross-citations (ie A cites B, and B cites A), or even loop-citations (ie A cites B, B cites C, and C cites A).

The repetition principle has been well observed in the academic world. A wrong method might be accepted by the society if it is repeated over and over again. On the other hand, the social memory seems to have a limited capability to recognize concurrent repetition, and/or decays too quickly to remember the repetition. We can find many annoying cases where two or three papers in different journals are suspiciously similar. However, the OCRA case is exceptionally unusual. Our observations raise many questions. How could a flawed method be circulated in so many journals for so long a time? How could nonoriginal papers with similar work be published over and over again? What is self-plagiarism? What is multiple submission? After all, what is the best way for this community to share knowledge?