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**Title**

Playing the ranking game : media coverage of the evaluation of the quality of research in Italy /

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**Abstract**

University rankings have raised huge interest in the social sciences because of their methodological foundations and impact. Rankings have also gained popularity in the media system. In this article we analyze the coverage offered by the media to the Italian Research Evaluation exercise—VQR 2004–2010. Even though this evaluation did not have university rankings as its main goal, it did include this kind of information in conformity with the law requirements and intention of the government to use the ranking for the purpose of funding allocation to universities. After the presentation of the results, we examined all the articles published in newspapers, magazines and specialized websites in order to understand what type of information had been extracted from the evaluation exercise and offered to readers. A set of descriptive hypotheses on the structure and dynamics of the media coverage of VQR information at the aggregate level was tested by a content analysis of the articles. We found that the enormous amount of information produced by the VQR

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project was virtually ignored and that ranking type is the only information that finds its way into the media. The article concludes by suggesting implications for future evaluation exercises and related communication strategy.(HRK / Abstract übernommen) Blasi, Brigida, E-Mail:  
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