

Stop Using ‘subjective’ to Refer to Bayesian Analyses (Comment on Articles by Berger and by Goldstein)

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I agree with Jim that it is easier to sell Bayesian reference analysis by calling it ‘objective’. In this respect, wouldn’t it be very useful for the general acceptance of Bayesian methods to stop calling them ‘subjective’ and use perhaps more benign terms like ‘contextual’ or ‘conditional’ (on the person or people or agent performing the analysis, assumptions made etc.)? We could say, for example, “...the conclusions of this study are based on a contextual statistical approach” (to mean of course a Bayesian approach) as opposed to: “...the conclusions of this study are based on a subjective statistical approach” By means of changing only one word, widely regarded as pejorative in many scientific and non-scientific environments, certainly the latter phrasing is far more appealing, and yet, I believe, not misleading to represent what a Bayesian approach is.

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