Statistics and Actuarial Science Seminar

Title: A very Dutch scandal: Did overhyped stats ruin Dutch appetites?

Speaker: Fengnan Gao (University College Dublin)

Date: Thu 2nd November 2023 at 3:00PM

Location: E0.32 (beside Pi restaurant)

Abstract: Applying simple linear regression models, an economist analyzed a published dataset from an influential annual ranking in 2016 and 2017 of consumer outlets for Dutch New Herring and concluded that the ranking was manipulated. His finding was promoted by his university in national and international media, and this led to public outrage and ensuing discontinuation of the survey. We reconstitute the dataset, correcting errors and exposing features already important in a descriptive analysis of the data. The economist has continued his investigations, and in a follow-up publication repeats the same accusations. We point out errors in his reasoning and show that alleged evidence for deliberate manipulation of the ranking could easily be an artifact of specification errors. Temporal and spatial factors are both important and complex, and their effects cannot be captured using simple models, given the small sample sizes and many factors determining the perceived taste of a food product. The talk is based on the cover story of Significance, the August 2023 issue.

https://gaofn.xyz/static/papers/23$_sIGN_scandal_cover_story.pdf$