Marketing Science

Editorial—Enticing and Publishing the Home Run Paper

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1. Introduction

It is with great anticipation and excitement that I wrote my first editorial as Editor-in-Chief of *Marketing Science*. I have taken this job with every expectation that I can bring the journal to even greater heights, learn as a scholar through your papers, and steer the discipline in a way that benefits all of our major constituents: established academic researchers, doctoral students, and practitioners.

Before laying out my vision for the journal, I would be remiss not to express, on behalf of the field, our gratitude to my predecessor, Steve Shugan, for his six years of service. As I have told many people before— "I have seen Steve eat, but I'm not sure he ever sleeps." His unwavering standards, strong desire to strive for excellence and not the bare minimum, and doing so with compassion is an excellent role model. He has made *Marketing Science* a premier quantitative journal (inside and out of marketing), which has high impact and readership. Steve, we all thank you!

Well before learning from Steve that the first issue of 2008 would be a reprint of the most-cited early *Marketing Science* papers, I felt that the "right" editorial to write was one in which you were encouraged, as authors, reviewers, and readers of the journal, to strive for the "home run." That is, if one had to encapsulate my vision in one short blurb, it would be that my intention is to provide every incentive to authors who strive to solve big problems, which is exactly what the author of the papers in this special issue accomplished.

Now, what many of you might be thinking at this point is: "Not that old, publish home run rah-rah stuff again—how does one do it?" Furthermore, what about the "old trade-off" between bigger papers being HARDER to get through the review process, and just counting-as-one? One of my goals for the journal is to create additional and new mechanisms that encourage authors to pursue ambitious projects and see them successfully through the review process. My approach to this goal forms the outline of

this editorial. Before I get to the specifics, let me preface my ideas with an important analogy with baseball—everyone (from any school or industry) can hit home runs! That is, I hope one of the reasons for my being selected as the new Editor-in-Chief is my deep respect for many approaches to research (listed alphabetically—intentionally signifying no preference ordering): analytical models, decision theory, economics, empirical IO, mathematical psychology, psychology, statistics, etc. These approaches are all welcome at *Marketing Science*. Hit YOUR home run, not mine!

First, let me discuss the changes at *Marketing Science* that have been implemented (or will be implemented soon) that will entice the home run paper. Second, let me provide you with recent examples (albeit there are many more) of home run papers in my area of research (Bayesian statistics) and explain to you why I see them that way. Finally, let me describe how the home run paper will involve both practitioners and doctoral students, populations that will not be forgotten, as I was once in both of those populations.

2. Enticing the Home Run Paper

To try to motivate authors to strive for home runs, *Marketing Science* will adopt the following policies; note that some of these involve procedural changes and some involve content changes.

1. We will strive to have two reviewers and two rounds for each paper (note that with an area editor and me, that means four people reading the paper). This will allow authors to both get their decision on their papers more quickly and allow reviewers more time to be thoughtful, as the "system" will be less burdened. When I say *strive* that is because the journal is reliant on you—as author and reviewer— to both respond deeply and sincerely to "revise and resubmit" decisions and as reviewers to provide "contracts" to authors that you intend to keep at later rounds. I am a big believer in "contracts" for papers.

This will lead to greater efficiency and a lowering of the cost of writing home runs. Tangentially related to this, my intention is also to increase the number of "desk rejections" to a level commensurate with other major journals (within and outside of marketing) to relieve the system of papers unlikely to succeed. No one wants a third or fourth round rejection, or a paper that could have been rejected much earlier.

2. *Marketing Science* is moving its paper submission, review, and tracking process (which many of you have used already) to Manuscript Central (mc.manuscriptcentral.com/mksc). This will relieve a huge administrative burden on all of us and allow me and my area editor team to spend more time on helping authors generate content-laden home runs. For you, the reviewer and author, it will also allow you to keep track of your papers more easily. Both Molly O'Donnell from INFORMS, who will act as Managing Editor, and Kate Kelley, who will act as Assistant to the Editor-in-Chief, will assist me in this process and will also be the points of contact for many of your e-mail (molly.odonnell@informs.org; kkelley@wharton.upenn.edu) and other questions.

3. A new reviewer form for *Marketing Science* has been added that explicitly asks reviewers a question (among others) as to whether the submitted paper is worthy of a discussion paper because of its *groundbreaking* nature. For those papers that are selected, you will receive the following guarantee. First, your ground-breaking paper will be the lead article in that given issue. Secondly, your paper will be moved up in the queue to get it out there faster. Third, it will become a discussion paper, typically with three experts asked to write commentaries and you the author to write a rejoinder. This will bring greater visibility to the work and one that is commensurate with its accomplishment. Also, this approach is in the spirit of keeping the impact factor of *Marketing Science* high, something my predecessor has spent a lot of time building.

4. Finally, there are numerous opportunities to use modern technology to spread the message from our papers. Thus, my hope (albeit, it won't be realized immediately) is that via our website, http://mktsci.pubs.informs.org, (i) authors will provide their data (if appropriate) and a description thereof, hence increasing the chances that it will be used and cited by other authors—that is what makes a home run; (ii) we will have discussion rooms for papers where questions, comments, etc. can be posted and maybe even answered by the authors; and (iii) if warranted, we can have an expert in a given area have a sit-down Q&A with the authors that can be digitized and Web/pod-casted out to a broader audience. The possibilities are fun to think about, and we will be looking for your creative ideas to make this happen.

3. Pointing Out Exemplary Home Runs

There is, of course, no simple answer to the question of what makes a paper a "home run." Some are papers that answer a long-standing question in an area, while others pose new questions that we had never thought to ask. Yet others allow us to see existing problems and solutions from a new perspective. But regardless of the source of the contribution, to me a common thread is that all home run papers trigger the reaction, "I wish I had thought of that." Or sometimes, paradoxically, "I could have thought of that idea, it is so simple." Well, not surprisingly home run papers have that aura of simplicity—but usually that is due to hard work on the part of the authors. Let me briefly point out two recent research papers in my area that have "changed my thinking" (not a bad definition for a home run), and why. Hopefully, by pointing out home runs it makes it easier for all of us to hit them.

One of the big open issues in marketing, and this was even a topic of a recent editorial by Steve Shugan (Shugan 2004), is endogeneity. There are many approaches to address it, but typically they involve the use of instruments or simultaneously modeling via structural approaches the supply-and-demand side (Yang et al. 2003). However, what did us "Bayesians" have who did not want to impose structural assumptions and that would use existing computational frameworks? Well, a recent paper by Manchanda et al. (2004) "tells us what to do"—simply add a second piece onto the likelihood function (which unconditions on the independent variable level of selection) reflecting the relationship between the assignment of the independent variables' values and the parameters of interest. This is similar in spirit to the joint modeling work of Bronnenberg and Mahajan (2001), but it opens up all-new avenues for handling nonrandom independent variables in an already established Bayesian computational framework.

A second paper I would like to mention briefly, and it is also directly in alignment with a very valuable research area for *Marketing Science*—mathematical modeling of behavioral processes—is Gilbride and Allenby (2004). In this paper, the authors implement, within a Markov chain Monte Carlo framework an approach to infer (derive a posterior probability) for the type of decision process (conjunctive, disjunctive, or compensatory) that a given respondent is utilizing. The beauty of this paper is that this is done by augmenting the parameter space with latent indicator variables, a well-established framework but never applied to this important problem. It is a very clever way to "walk around" customer decision space and is a nice blend between mathematics, statistics, and theories of consumer processing.

4. Home Runs Can and Should Involve All of Our Constituents

It is crucially important for *Marketing Science* to fully engage established academics, practitioners, and doctoral students. The intention is to utilize the following *tactics* to make this happen. More tactics, to follow, will come from your suggestions that will be solicited.

1. The aforementioned discussion papers will typically have three discussants. The plan is that some subset of these three discussants will be experts from other disciplines (economics, psychology, statistics, etc.) and/or practitioners if the paper has an applied contribution. This will bring increased visibility and credibility to these papers ("home run value," if you will) and signal that *Marketing Science* has very broad theoretical and practical interests.

2. The journal will reach out to the Marketing Science Institute (http://www.msi.org) and to the ISMS Practice Prize committee to determine ways in which to forge a true partnership. This includes both the identification of important problems and also practitioner reviewers and potential authors who want to get involved. The broader our readership becomes and the more potential for impact we have, the greater the number of *total* home runs we can hit as a field.

3. I will strongly encourage authors to write 1- or 2-page "discovery summaries," which will be posted on our website and targeted for quick reading that may be particularly useful for a doctoral student and practitioner audience. This will give readers the chance to familiarize themselves with the topic at a high level, then read about it in detail if the paper is of interest to them.

4. The review process at *Marketing Science* will be compensatory. That is, there are many kinds of great papers. There are papers that are technically beautiful, add to our theory, and are "clean." We want those papers. However, there are also papers that try to tackle big important problems and don't have "every *i* dotted." We want those papers too! A paper does not need to answer every question (some great papers simply raise more questions than they answer), nor does it need to compare itself to every benchmark model out there. Great ideas can stand on their own merits.

5. Summary

This is our journal, not my journal. At times, we may try what seemingly are "crazy ideas." Some, indeed, may not work. However, please be assured that my goals are the same as yours: publishing great papers, providing fair and constructive feedback to authors, and making the field even stronger than it is. You will constantly be asked for your ideas and help, and I believe that my consultative style will not only become evident but also improve everything we do.

Now it is time for me to deliver on the job you have entrusted me with.

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