

From the Editor

In *Arcadia*, a play by Tom Stoppard, a young scholar provides a passionate description of scientific endeavor.

The unpredictable and the predetermined unfold together to make everything the way it is. It's how nature creates itself on every scale, the snowflake and the snowstorm. It makes me so happy. To be at the beginning again, knowing almost nothing. (Stoppard 1993, p. 47)¹

Explanations of marketing phenomena, like explanations in the physical sciences, inevitably raise new questions. Because you are reading the *Journal of Marketing*, it is likely that you have felt excitement about your own efforts to advance the science and practice of marketing. The Journal is the “tangible manifestation” of these efforts by the entire intellectual community of marketing scholars and practitioners (Stewart 1999, p. 2). Consequently, I am delighted to be serving the community as editor of *JM*.

Objectives

The *Journal of Marketing* is the most widely circulated journal or magazine published by the American Marketing Association (AMA), and it continues to be the recognized leader in its field. Perhaps its vitality is due to a natural tension that arises from the AMA's two objectives for *JM*, namely, that articles be both scholarly (i.e., conceptually strong and theory-driven) and managerially relevant. In recent years, other business disciplines have begun to address topics that have traditionally fallen within the domain of marketing, such as supply chain management, quality and customer satisfaction management, and interactive information exchange. This phenomenon is perhaps unsurprising when the importance of cross-functional coordination to business success is considered. At the same time, marketing has become increasingly fragmented and specialized, with an attendant proliferation in marketing journals. Some people are pessimistic about the consequences of these two trends for marketing scholarship and practice. However, I believe an important opportunity exists for *JM* to enhance its role as the premier, broad-based journal that bridges the scholarly and the practical.

The *Journal of Marketing*'s aspiration of breadth represents a challenge to the entire marketing community—authors, reviewers, and readers. When people encounter a manuscript, they ask themselves: “How does this advance the science and practice of marketing?” This question demands an explicit comparison of manuscripts that differ widely in their topics, theoretical foundations, and methodological approaches—despite the lack of well-established objective criteria for such comparisons. It also requires a willingness to explore gaps in our knowledge of the marketing domain. I invite you to join me in facing this challenge.

¹Quotations from *Arcadia* are from the paperback edition published by Faber and Faber in 1993.

Content

The editorial policy of *JM* is very broad; it places few constraints on the topics of articles. Day and Montgomery (1999) organized a special issue of *JM* around four fundamental questions that distinguish marketing from other fields:

1. How do customers and consumers really behave?
2. How do markets function and evolve?
3. How do firms relate to their markets?
4. What are the contributions of marketing to organizational performance and societal welfare?

I believe that these questions will continue to be relevant in the years ahead. Marketing's breadth dictates that the portfolio or mix of articles published in *JM* should be eclectic. Thus, *JM* must attract and publish the best manuscripts available across the entire spectrum of marketing. Equally important, *JM* must publish significant new work, rather than work that revisits established research streams. Finally, it must value interdisciplinary work and the use of multiple research methods.

Clarity

The *Journal of Marketing* is widely circulated with a diverse readership that includes both practitioners and academics, including leading scholars and students who work in universities, profit and nonprofit organizations, and government institutions. Therefore, it is essential that articles communicate ideas clearly so that they can be extended by scholars and acted on by practitioners. Authors must clearly describe the contribution of their work to marketing knowledge and practice in ways that are meaningful to this diverse readership. If research is empirical in nature, technical details must not be permitted to overwhelm the substantive contribution of the manuscript. (In some cases, they might be summarized in an appendix, published or unpublished, so that the readability of the manuscript is not impaired.) For those intending to submit a manuscript to *JM*, I strongly encourage studying *JM*'s guidelines as well as the advice of previous editors about crafting articles (e.g., Stewart 2002; Varadarajan 1996a).

Emerging Topics

The *Journal of Marketing*'s content arises from the collective efforts of the intellectual community, so it is neither feasible nor desirable for the editor's personal preferences to influence the contents of the journal. However, in conversations with members of the marketing community, I have come to understand that the editor of *JM* can play a valuable role in identifying emerging new topics and underrepresented areas, thereby attracting high-quality manuscripts on important marketing topics. In my opinion, the following topics are (as yet) underrepresented in *JM*:

- *Linking marketing actions with customer behavior and financial outcomes*: customer asset management, brand equity, database marketing, direct/interactive marketing, and marketing metrics for decision makers.
- *Synchronizing multiple, complementary channels within an organization*: the role of electronic channels, the integration of Internet and Web-based activities within the communications mix, the harmonization of actions within value chains, two-way interactions within channels (i.e., customer or firm-initiated), and allocation of effort across products.
- *Understanding how markets function and evolve*: growth, innovation, new product development and the prediction of marketplace acceptance, the role of technology, electronic information exchange, electronic markets, networks, institutional arrangements and interorganizational governance, and implications of these phenomena for public policy and societal welfare.
- *Investigations of global marketing challenges*: the development of horizontal market segmentation strategies across borders, marketing strategies for emerging economies, and the role of networks.

These topics do not form an exhaustive list of articles that are appropriate for *JM*. For example, customers are central to marketing, and there is a great deal that we do not know about how customers make judgments and decisions over time and in different market contexts (Lehmann 1999). In addition, these topics are not mutually exclusive. For example, improving our understanding of how firms can leverage new technology and manage information as an asset is a common theme shared by all these topics. The rapid change in our economic environment virtually guarantees that new and important topics will arise during my tenure as editor.

Upcoming Special Section

In general, I am willing to consider proposals for an externally funded special section. A special section of *JM* can be valuable in that it can

- Focus attention on an emerging or underrepresented aspect of marketing,
- Stimulate research and manuscript flow on a topic, and
- Provide a forum for discussion among academics and practitioners (e.g., through an accompanying conference).²

A special section is already underway. In December 2001, I received a proposal from the Marketing Science Institute (MSI) to sponsor a special section on the topic of "Linking Marketing to Financial Performance and Firm Value." My discussions with Donald R. Lehmann, Executive Director of MSI, convinced me that a competition, culminating in a special section of *JM*, could achieve these goals. A call for papers and proposals was published in *JM* and *Marketing News*, with a competition deadline of May 2002. Under my editorial supervision, the standard (double-blind) review process was used. Winning papers were announced in July 2002. Authors of selected papers and proposals presented papers at an MSI conference in Dallas in October

2002. Authors of winning papers have been invited to revise and resubmit their papers by February 2003, for potential publication in a special section of *JM* to be published in 2004.

Editorial Process Issues

I am very grateful to the past editors of *JM*, who left a rich legacy to the marketing community (Kerin 1996). I especially thank my predecessor, David W. Stewart, for his assistance and counsel during the transition period. My initiatives entail modest changes in editorial emphases and processes that I inherited.

First, the *JM* office at Vanderbilt University has shifted to electronic processing of manuscripts and reviews, through our Web site, <http://mba.vanderbilt.edu/jm/>. Hard copy manuscripts and reviews are still accepted, but (regrettably) they may take longer to process. Authors are encouraged to submit and track their manuscripts online, and reviewers are encouraged to submit their evaluations online or by e-mail. I hope that these new electronic processes will be convenient for both authors and reviewers, especially those who live or work outside the United States. Judging by reports from other academic journals, it is likely that the majority of our manuscripts and reviews will be processed electronically. Our office accepts manuscripts as PDF files only, and our new electronic procedures preserve the double-blind feature of the review process. The Web site is also a repository of information regarding *JM*'s history, awards, manuscript guidelines, members of the Editorial Review Board, the table of contents for the next issue, and so forth.

Second, I will pay special attention to the Executive Summaries that accompany manuscripts that are accepted for publication. These summaries are used in other AMA publications and on the AMA Web site (marketingpower.com/JM). It is important that executive summaries are crafted to be interesting and valuable to marketing scholars and practitioners.

Third, it is my goal that every author who submits a paper benefits from the review process by receiving constructive and timely reviews and courteous treatment from the reviewers and editor. I will usually assign three reviewers to each manuscript, but sometimes I will assign a fourth reviewer as a mechanism for coaching new reviewers (typically junior faculty). I will make a decision on the disposition of most manuscripts after the first round of reviews. If there are subsequent revision and review cycles, I will provide guidance to authors on how to resolve any conflicting viewpoints expressed by reviewers.

Fourth, my goal is to recognize the important contributions made by *JM* Editorial Review Board members and ad hoc reviewers. It is AMA policy that two Editorial Review Board members must evaluate each submitted manuscript, so they carry a heavy burden. I intend to respect their expertise, time, and effort. In addition, I will continue the practice of past editors who have annually recognized outstanding reviewers with awards at the annual Editorial Review Board meeting and have invited high-performing ad hoc reviewers to join the Editorial Review Board during my tenure (e.g., Varadarajan 1996b).

²Lusch (1999) provides a useful "blueprint" for the announcement, processing, and evaluation of proposals for a special issue or section of *JM* and for the development of a special issue or section.

A Final Thought

In *Arcadia*, scientific endeavor is portrayed as a process of recognizing order in a world of chaos. At the heart of the process, however, is the fundamental humanness of our search for knowledge. “Comparing what we’re looking for misses the point. It’s wanting to know that makes us matter”

(Stoppard 1993, p. 75). The marketing community is diverse in its approach to marketing questions. However, reader or author, academic or practitioner, all want to know more about marketing phenomena. I hope some answers can be found in *JM*.

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Editor

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