



## Marketing Science

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## Editorial: Acknowledgments, Stocktaking, and Farewell

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As I conclude my six-year term as editor-in-chief (EiC), I acknowledge my gratitude to the editorial team and the field, take stock of journal initiatives during my term, and explain my optimism for the future of the field and the journal.

### Acknowledgments

Let me begin by thanking the senior editor (SE) team of Yuxin Chen, Avi Goldfarb, Ganesh Iyer, Puneet Manchanda (2018–2021), Peter Rossi (2016–2017), and Olivier Toubia (2019–2021) for their wholehearted dedication to the journal's success. Without such a dedicated and expert SE team; their attention to detail; and thoughtful, appropriate matching of papers with review teams, it would have been impossible to provide the consistently high level of quality and timely feedback that the journal provided during the last six years. The field and I personally owe them a deep debt of gratitude.

I also want to thank our stellar team of area editors (AEs), members of the editorial review board (ERB), and the ad hoc reviewers, who are the reason behind *Marketing Science's* extraordinary reputation for quality and consistency of feedback. I have been routinely amazed at the level of care and thoughtfulness that went into various AE reports as they synthesized review feedback. I am sure the thoughtful and constructive feedback of each reviewer motivated others on the review team to do the same, creating a positive feedback loop for a high-quality review process. Even when a paper was rejected, authors would often write thanking me for the quality of the feedback received and noting that it will help improve their work. I hope we will continue this positive trajectory of high-quality, constructive, and respectful feedback at *Marketing Science* and more generally as a field.

I want to thank the diverse set of authors from various areas of quantitative marketing who submitted to the journal. *Marketing Science* owes its premier

reputation in quantitative marketing because a large majority of quantitative marketing authors view it as their journal of first choice for submission. The editorial team not only took great pride in that reputation but also sought to continue to earn it, one paper at a time.

Finally, my sincere appreciation to the managing editors at INFORMS, Frances Moskwa (2016–2020) and Beatrice Allen (2020–2021), who managed the various administrative aspects of the journal. Fran showed me the ropes and tutored me on various aspects of the journal when I first took over. When she retired in 2020, I was worried about how I would manage my last year. But Beatrice managed the transition seamlessly. At Yale, Stacy Awe provided me with the ongoing support and tracking necessary to keep the papers moving along. I cannot imagine doing this job for six years without the help and support of each one of them.

### Taking Stock

In my inaugural editorial titled “The Exploration-Exploitation Tradeoff and Efficiency in Knowledge Production” (Sudhir 2016), I laid out my philosophy toward how as a journal and as a field we should “explore” new topics and methods, even as we “exploit” our current strengths. I also laid out how I would manage the review process at the journal to balance this exploration–exploitation trade-off for “efficient knowledge production.” The principles I outlined in the editorial served as my guide in setting priorities for various initiatives during my term.

I feel a great sense of reward and satisfaction in having accomplished goals I had set out for my term as EiC. Let me take stock of some the key initiatives.

### Frontiers

A primary reason I took up a second three-year term was to help launch the Frontiers section as a

prestigious subbrand of the journal. There was a general perception that the field needed to facilitate and incentivize scholars to compete on producing and publishing timely work with potentially high impact; the Frontiers section is a response to this need. See Sudhir (2018, 2019) for the strategy, positioning, and details about the section. I thank the *Marketing Science* advisory board for their constructive input in launching the section and particularly the committee of Preyas Desai (chair), Eric Bradlow, Jacob Goldenberg, and John Hauser, whose report served as a starting blueprint for this initiative. I am also grateful to countless others in the field for helpful conversations, clarification queries, and even pushback that helped me refine and distill the positioning of the section.

The plan for Frontiers was to use a differentiated format and an accelerated review process to encourage authors to invest and compete in time-sensitive research with potentially high impact and bring such research to market faster. A critical element for the success of the section was to be deliberate in publishing the initial papers so that those published would serve as exemplars for other authors and also be consistent with the long-term goals of the section. By ensuring that quality and rigor (often tucked in detailed appendices, given the short format) was given prime importance, we sought to ensure that Frontiers papers would be seen as high-status top-tier papers on par with—or even more prestigious than—regular *Marketing Science* papers, given their timeliness, importance, and high impact potential. For this reason, Frontiers papers are explicitly labeled so authors can receive credit for their investment.

The target in steady state was to get about 20% of submissions and publications at *Marketing Science* in the Frontiers section (i.e., publish about 10–12 papers a year). The premise of this 20% target for Frontiers was that as a field, it will reflect that 20% of our publishing effort has an exploratory focus, and that will lead to healthy knowledge production over the long term.

By the end of September 2021, we have published or accepted 13 Frontiers papers in three years out of a total of 148 submissions, with 9 papers still in process. This is about a 10% acceptance rate—lower than for regular papers but not surprising, as authors were figuring out how to choose relevant questions and the appropriate writing style for this section. In the last 12 months, Frontiers submissions were 66 out of 468 total submissions, roughly 14% of submissions. In 2021 alone, we have thus far accepted 5 papers by the end of September. Submissions have come from a wide cross section of the discipline—in terms of topics and methods, junior/senior faculty, and range of schools. Not only do we have highly regarded tenured faculty publishing in Frontiers; I am even more gratified to see that junior faculty are submitting and successfully

publishing some of their most innovative work in Frontiers. The submission rate to Frontiers is growing at a steady pace, and I expect that we will reach our steady state goals relatively soon, as authors better understand the positioning of the section and see more exemplars of successful papers.

### Special Issues

In the spirit of exploration and integration of new topics into the field, in my first term, I announced four special issues on mobile technologies, health, consumer protection, and field experiments. I am grateful to all of the SEs who worked on these special issues for their efforts. I hope these special issues encourage marketing scholars to pursue research on these important topics, but it generally broadens the exploratory scope of topics marketing scholars consider as relevant and important to our field. For example, I have felt that it is very important that we expand scope to embrace sustainability issues and entrepreneurship in our research.

The special issue on health produced a wide range of interesting papers, and this has already produced follow-up submissions around health topics. The special issue on field experiments was very successful in bringing a rich set of papers addressing behavioral, digital marketing, and marketing strategy questions. In particular, real-time automated adaptive experimentation in digital field settings is paving the way for more efficient learning about markets.

I am particularly proud of the special issue on consumer protection (with a conference in partnership with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)), which has led to a visible impact in terms of new papers often noting and even motivated by regulatory implications (not only consumer or managerial implications). Though COVID upended our plans for the follow-up conference, I expect that a marketing conference in partnership with the FTC will become a regular fixture in our field.

### Outreach to Computer Science and Machine Learning Methods

*Marketing Science* has been at the leading edge of various stages of the data revolution over the last 40 years. During this period, we have built deep substantive and methodological strengths by deepening our interface with the basic disciplines of economics, statistics, and psychology. In the last decade, with the massive increase in volumes of data—especially in real time through sensors and the Internet of Things, the massive increase in unstructured data (text, audio, video), and advances in artificial intelligence—the need for marketing scholars to interface with computer science and machine learning has become vitally important.

During my term, *Marketing Science* embraced this interface with gusto. Recognizing that it is often

extremely challenging to publish papers using new paradigms and disciplinary methods, where there are no exemplars of “success,” we paid active attention to how these papers were processed and ensured that good papers with potentially impactful contributions did not fall through the cracks. Given the relatively small numbers of people with expertise and sympathies in the early stages of a field, we chose AEs (occasionally guest) and reviewers who either had machine learning expertise or were strong and open-minded scholars. SEs sought to provide guidance and constructive support to nurture novel papers with good ideas to publication. Many papers were accepted during the last six years, and the interface with computer science and machine learning now has strong roots in our field. It is likely to be a growth area over the next decade, with significant exploratory potential and long-term impact.

As much of the “big data” relevant for marketing are generated by humans, it should be a great opportunity for the marketing field with its traditional social science expertise in economics and psychology to combine these with our emerging strengths in computer science. This could be a differentiating aspect to help us be at the leading edge of substantive and methodological developments as it relates to marketing problems. I hope we will be ambitious and tackle bigger problems that any one of these disciplines with their specialized single-field expertise would not be able to address. I hope there will be more frequent multidisciplinary collaborations among scholars to tackle bigger problems. Furthermore, broader social science issues at the interface of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) around privacy, bias, and ethics are becoming part of mainstream research in quantitative marketing. As a journal, *Marketing Science* is well prepared and positioned to embrace and lead this revolution in marketing.

### Board Memberships

An overt goal of mine was to increase the diversity of representation on the board in terms of schools, substantive topics, methods, and gender. Whereas the first three were easier to accomplish, the last one was more challenging, as there were relatively few tenured quantitative women faculty in 2016. Nevertheless, I increased the percentage of women faculty on the ERB and AE board to 22%, from 8%. This compared favorably with the 20% of women among authors who submitted to the journal in 2017. As the share of (tenured) women faculty continues to increase, we should expect even greater balance.

A second change that I sought was to have term limits for SEs, AEs, and ERB members. With term limits, membership on boards is not seen as “recognition” for past accomplishment and ongoing productivity but as a period of voluntary service to the field by scholars

who have made a certain threshold level of contributions to the field and are therefore qualified to serve in gatekeeper roles. Term limits naturally create board turnover, allowing younger faculty more opportunity to join the boards. Furthermore, with a culture of term-limited voluntary service and natural turnover, ERB and AE roles will be spread more widely across more faculty not only at *Marketing Science* but also across our leading journals. This enriches the field by not only constantly rejuvenating the reviewer/AE/SE pool but also making the field more open to diverse ideas. With time, it will ensure stronger and wider bench strength in the field for editorial work. For these reasons, INFORMS now has an official policy of mandated turnover in the boards of all its journals.

### The Future

The outlook for the field of marketing science and the journal has never been better. The rapid growth in the availability of data and interest in analytics have made the field of marketing science more relevant than ever in industry. Our doctoral students are in great demand in industry, and there is greater cross-pollination of ideas between industry and academia, as several scholars are spending sabbaticals and short leaves of absence in industry. As the premier journal for quantitative marketing, *Marketing Science* is ideally positioned to translate its traditional rigorous scholarship with wider application in industry, as several of our faculty now directly interface with industry.

While I noted that big data/AI and the interface with computer science and machine learning has already taken strong roots in the field and at the journal, I believe there are bigger changes in store for our field. The field of marketing has traditionally been balkanized into the three subfields of *quantitative marketing*, *consumer behavior*, and *marketing strategy*, with limited interactions between these silos. I predict that as a result of the big data revolution, these silos will break down, and marketing science will become increasingly relevant to study consumer behavior and marketing strategy questions. This breaking down of silos should lead to an explosion of research questions and insights that can revolutionize both academic marketing research and the practice of marketing.

Real-time consumer measurement of consumption through sensors with great contextual information should lead to rich possibilities for studying consumer behavior questions with quantitative methods. In fact, there is substantial demand in industry to link richer behavioral understanding with observational big data. Similarly, as organizational data move out from departmental silos into common firmwide “data lakes,” traditional questions in marketing strategy around how the marketing organization should be organized

for maximum effectiveness will be amenable to analysis with quantitative and econometric modeling rather than just traditional survey-based research. I strongly believe the next decade will be the golden age for the field of marketing strategy, with novel ways of addressing important strategy questions using observational data. I believe our doctoral students in quantitative marketing and marketing strategy will lead these changes to expand the field of marketing science. I hope *Marketing Science* as a journal will also be prepared to embrace this expansion.

In short, there is a lot to be positive and excited about the future of *Marketing Science* the journal and marketing science the field.

## Conclusion

It has been an honor and privilege to be entrusted the responsibility of shepherding *Marketing Science* as EiC

over the last six years. The journal is a jewel of our field thanks to the illustrious work of each of the former EiCs, who built on the solid foundations laid by their predecessors and expanded the journal to embrace new methods and topics so that it remains at the leading edge of substantive and methodological progress of the field. As the journal completes its 40th anniversary in 2021, I hope I am passing on this jewel a bit more polished and brighter than I inherited it to my successor, Olivier Toubia. I wish Olivier the very best and am confident that he will take the journal to greater heights.

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