



Designating opponents in empirical research reports: the rhetoric of ‘interestingness’ in consumer research

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Abstract. Numerous studies have called attention to the importance of rhetoric in scientific writing by focusing on arguments presented in scientific debate articles. In contrast, citation analysis studies indicate that empirical research articles are generally nonconfrontational in criticizing the work of other researchers. How do empirical research reports establish opposing perspectives to argue against? One rhetorical strategy is to be ‘interesting’, which, according to Davis (1971), is the author’s attempt to contradict a taken-for-granted assumption of the reader. Scholars in management, marketing, and consumer research have also cited Davis’ conception of ‘interestingness’ as a characteristic of research that is more influential and intellectually creative. This article presents textual evidence from a volume of the *Journal of Consumer Research* demonstrating that a majority of researcher-authors of these articles use ‘interestingness’ as a rhetorical framing device in the abstracts, introductions, and concluding sections of empirical articles. However, an analysis of article citations and references suggests that these ‘interesting’ articles are neither more influential nor more innovative than other articles in the same volume. **Key Words** ● citation analysis ● Murray Davis ● rhetoric of science

Introduction

In recent years there has been an upsurge of interest in studying the writing styles of articles published in scientific and academic journals. A multi-disciplinary program has studied scientific writing from the perspective of the rhetoric of science (Blakeslee, 1994; Fahnestock, 1989; Gusfield, 1976; Selzer, 1993), social studies of science (Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Latour and Woolgar, 1986), and textual analysis

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(Bazerman, 1988; Swales, 1990). Locke and Golden-Biddle (1997) provide one of the first studies to examine rhetorical strategies used by management researchers writing in the academic journals of *Administrative Science Quarterly* and the *Academy of Management Journal*.

A particular concern of all these studies is the manner in which scientists argue and challenge each others' theories and research. Consequently, much of the attention of scientific rhetoric analysis is directed to scientific debate articles. For example, in the edited collection entitled *Understanding Scientific Prose* (Selzer, 1993), 17 contributors present 14 separate analyses of a single scientific debate article written by Gould and Lewontin (1979). A less scrutinized genre of scientific writing is the more common empirical research report, the mainstay of scientific publication. A major difference between an empirical research report and a scientific debate article is the nonconfrontational character of the empirical paper. In the next section a review of citation analysis studies indicates that negative and critical references of other works are relatively rare in the empirical report (e.g., Brooks, 1986; Cano, 1989; Hooten, 1991). The unaggressive character of the empirical research report is also reflected in the absence of replication studies intended to discredit or undermine the claims of other researchers (Easley, Madden, and Dunn, 2000; Hubbard and Vetter, 1996).

If empirical research authors do not deliberately antagonize other researchers and openly confront the theories, methods, and findings of other research articles, then how do they create rhetorical tensions in their writings? In other words, how do they establish opposing perspectives to argue against? One solution proposed by Murray Davis (1971) is to use a rhetoric of 'interestingness'. Rather than targeting a specific article or researcher as an adversary, the author identifies a taken-for-granted assumption as the opponent. The objective of the research article is to demonstrate that an overlooked assumption is in error, and what seems to be true is actually false, or vice versa.

Previously, writers in marketing, consumer research, and management have argued that the Davis theory of 'interestingness' has implications for distinguishing research studies that are more important or more innovative than other articles (Bettencourt and Houston, 2001; Daft, Griffin, and Yates, 1987; Hirschman, 1985; Weick, 1989). In this paper the focus is on 'interestingness' as a rhetorical strategy used by authors to frame and position their manuscripts. Articles from a volume of the *Journal of Consumer Research* are analyzed for applications of this rhetorical framing in comparison to other article positionings such as debates or replications. These articles are then examined for their relative importance or innovativeness using methods of citation and reference analysis.

Genre of the empirical research report

The empirical research article in academic journals can be analyzed as a genre of writing with a set of unique conventions (Bazerman, 1988; Swales, 1990). The idiosyncratic aspects of this genre of academic writing can be seen in contrast to



other forms of scientific communication such as laboratory reports (Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Latour and Woolgar, 1986) or science articles in popular magazines (Fahnestock, 1989). Medawar (1964) is an early writer who emphasizes that the genre of the scientific paper often misrepresents the nature of scientific investigation. Medawar argues the following points: scientific papers are retrospective formulations of previously completed research; they are stereotyped according to canons of form; deductive approaches are reworked into an inductive framework; and, a context of discovery is recast into a context of justification.

The empirical research report is designed to support the present research findings rather than attack the results of other scientists. The most consistent evidence of the unaggressive character of empirical research articles in academic and scientific journals is provided by citation analysis research. Numerous studies indicate that negative citations are relatively rare in empirical articles; negative citation refers to the criticizing, correcting, disclaiming or the disputing of the cited work. For example, a content analysis study by Chubin and Moitra (1975) finds only 5% of citations that are partially negative and no citations that are totally negative in a sampling of physics papers. In another content analysis study, Murugesan and Moravcsik (1978) find less than 10% of citations in which an author suggests uncertainty about the correctness of a cited paper. Spiegel-Rosing (1977) finds less than 1% of 2,309 citations negatively evaluate or attempt to disprove another work. Hooten (1991) classifies less than 8% of citations in a social science journal as negative in tone.

Studies of the motivations of citing authors ask researchers to categorize the purposes of each reference in published papers. For example, Vinkler (1987) queries authors' reasons for citing specific articles, and finds only one instance in 484 citations in which the author intends to completely refute another work. In Cano's (1989) study, authors classify only 2% of their references as negative, and also suggest that these negative cites are of low utility to the paper. Bonzi and Snyder (1991) examine authors' reasons for self-citing as well as citing other researchers in various disciplines; of all their reasons for citation, only 4% of citations are intended to critically analyze or correct earlier work. Shadish et al. (1995) investigate psychology researchers, and find negative citation motives to be the major reason for only 9% of references. For balance, research authors may often reference theories and results that provide comparisons and contrasts to their work. For example, articles representing minority opinions may be heavily cited by mainstream researchers, because these articles provide contrast to their own research (Peritz, 1992).

Another indication of the reticence of research authors to impugn other researchers is provided by studies showing the scarcity of replication research articles published in the business and social sciences (Easley et al., 2000; Hubbard and Vetter, 1996). The lack of published replications has been attributed to many factors such as editorial and reviewer bias against replication, uncooperativeness of the original researcher, and value systems emphasizing the importance of creativity. Researchers conducting a successful replication of a previous study may be deprecated for their lack of creativity and their minimal contribution of any-



thing new to knowledge. Researchers who are unable to replicate a previous result face many risks and must endure a burden of proof greater than the original researcher (Easley et al., 2000).

Review of 'interestingness'

In his 1971 article, Davis develops the provocative premise that 'a theorist is considered great, not because his theories are true, but because they are *interesting*' (1971: 309). Interesting theories are defined as those which contradict base assumptions of the audience, whereas non-interesting and insipid theories merely confirm what everyone already knows. Drawing on more than two centuries of social thought, Davis is able to illustrate his 'Index of the Interesting' (1971: 313–326) or 12 categories by which a large number of prominent social theories could be described. These categories apply to either: (1) the characterization of a single phenomenon in terms of its organization, composition, level of abstraction, level of generalization, stability, function, or evaluation; or to (2) the description of relationships among multiple phenomena in terms of their correlation, co-existence, co-variation, opposition, or direction of causality. For example, interesting propositions about the organization of a phenomenon may be of the form: 'What seems to be a disorganized or unstructured phenomenon is in reality an organized or structured phenomenon', or vice versa.

Scholars in marketing, consumer research, and management have all cited the Davis thesis that important theory and research may be characterized by the quality of 'interestingness' (Bettencourt and Houston, 2001; Daft et al., 1987; McKinley et al., 1999; Zaltman et al., 1982). For example, McKinley et al. (1999) cite several pieces of evidence suggesting that management and organizational theories regarded as important are often characterized by their novelty rather than successful empirical confirmation. Daft et al. (1987) investigate a similar proposition that the most important articles of a researcher would also be characterized by their 'interestingness'. In their study, established management researchers agree to some extent that their research is characterized by inverting the assumptions in the ways specified by Davis. However, the Davis model does not consistently discriminate the significant (important) from the not-so-significant research studies of these researchers.

Besides distinguishing important research, scholars in management, marketing, and consumer research have suggested that 'interestingness' is associated with research that is more creative and innovative. For example, Weick (1989) describes the Davis article as a call for 'opportunistic, flashy theorizing' (1989: 525). Zaltman et al. (1982) discuss the Davis article as an approach for those 'who dare to be noticeably different' (1982: 25). Hirschman (1985) uses the Davis article to distinguish the opposing scientific styles of the analytical scientist and the conceptual theorist 'who is continuously creating disarray in the scientific household' (1985: 230).

Davis (1971) proposes that 'interesting' articles often employ a rhetorical



writing technique of establishing a generally accepted assumption or practice as an opponent in the first sentences of the article – ‘It has long been thought . . .’. An important consideration is that the opponent is a taken-for-granted assumption instead of a specific scientist, theory, or research finding. Rather than engaging in debate or attempting replication, the ‘interesting’ author tries to undermine common-sensical, implicitly accepted, or undefined floating assumptions held by the audience, and catch the audience by surprise.

After the opposing assumption has been identified, the remainder of the article is then directed towards undermining the opponent and supporting the counter-assumption. In the conceptual development section, the author must establish that there are legitimate reasons for questioning this assumption. The author will enlist supporters by identifying theoretical perspectives favorable to the author’s cause. In the main body of the article, the theorist or researcher will endeavor to prove that the new assumption is true and/or the old assumption is false. In conclusion, the researcher refutes the old assumption, and then suggests practical consequences of the new assumption or new directions of inquiry. It is important to emphasize that for empirical research, the bulk of the article may be configured as a theory testing article with formally stated hypotheses and an appropriately rigorous methodology. This may be essential to establish the researcher’s credibility and the validity of the new assumption or the lack of validity of the old assumption (Zaltman et al., 1982).

Studies of the rhetoric of science, the history of science, and the social studies of science may emphasize that respected scientists frequently violate the recommendations of various ‘how-to-write’ guides and official manuals of style. This has spawned a new generation of style manuals influenced by these interpretations of scientific writing (e.g., Booth et al., 1995; Myers, 1990). In their style manual, Booth and colleagues note the contribution of Davis to the rhetoric of the empirical research article. These authors describe the importance of creating a common ground of shared understanding with the reader, and then disrupting the situation and signaling that the reader may have an incomplete or flawed understanding. These authors then speculate that this is a rhetorical pattern that introduces more than half of the research in the humanities and the social science; however, the authors provide no references to substantiate this proposition. This assertion by Booth et al. (1995) that ‘interestingness’ is a very common rhetorical format provides a challenge to the propositions that ‘interestingness’ is more associated with either important or innovative research.

This article will provide a more formal investigation of this claim that patterns of rhetorical ‘interestingness’ are common approaches for framing research manuscripts in the business and social sciences. In particular, the rhetorical strategies used by consumer researchers to position their manuscripts are examined. The application of rhetorical ‘interestingness’ for defining an opponent is compared to other adversarial article framings such as debate or replication articles and to non-adversarial approaches.



Examples of rhetorical 'interestingness'

The analysis in this paper examines the entire 1993–1994 volume of the *Journal of Consumer Research* for certain stylistic similarities in its 48 articles. The *Journal of Consumer Research* is considered as the leading journal dedicated to the study of consumer behavior. The journal is also very competitive and the editor reports an article acceptance rate of approximately 14% for this volume (Monroe, 1994). The journal has an interdisciplinary mission and may be considered as reflective of a broad social sciences perspective. The majority of the editorial board members and authors of the articles are affiliated with marketing departments and schools of business. The primary emphasis of the journal is on scholarly research, rather than developing implications for managers, public policy-makers, or consumer interest groups. More than 80% of the articles published in *JCR* are empirical studies, and about 8% of the articles are primarily theoretical papers.

The objective of this study is to classify the rhetorical positioning strategy of each article in this volume. The focus of the analysis is on the author's designation of a specific opponent or an opposing assumption. Articles that are positioned as debate articles or replication studies cite specific scientists and research articles in their introductory paragraphs (Hubbard and Vetter, 1996; Yearley, 1981). Articles using rhetorical 'interestingness' would target a taken-for-granted assumption as the opponent, rather than implicating another researcher or article. Authors may also use a non-adversarial strategy in which no opponent is defined.

The procedure in the present analysis is to start with the title, the abstract, and the introduction of each article, and to also work backwards from the article's concluding sections. These sections of an article are generally the primary positioning sections of the article, and the sections that detail the contribution of the article (Bazerman, 1988; Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997; Swales, 1990). For the classification of rhetorical 'interestingness', articles are identified in which the author begins the article by explicitly establishing a taken-for-granted assumption or identifying a generally accepted practice as a potential target. The second requirement for selection is the refuting or undermining of that assumption in the concluding sections; this reversal may also be summarily described in the abstract of the article.

This review will demonstrate the approach of rhetorical 'interestingness' is frequently employed in these consumer research empirical studies. Quotations indicating this textual strategy will be presented for 31 out of 48 total articles (65%) in volume 20. For each of these 31 articles, the first excerpt describes the targeted assumption which the authors generally have identified immediately in the abstract or opening paragraphs of the article. The second excerpt from the article details how the reversal of that assumption is highlighted as a contribution of that study; these excerpts are drawn from the concluding paragraphs or from the abstract. Abstract excerpts are frequently used in these quotations because of their economical wording. For these excerpts, the notations 'first sentence or first paragraph' or 'last sentence or last paragraph' refer to the first or last sentence or paragraph of the entire article.



Because these articles in their original and revised formats have been extensively evaluated by the editor and at least three reviewers, we can assume that none of these persons found the designated opposing assumption to be 'a straw man' or the claim of reversing that assumption to be unfounded. The 'interesting' articles have been divided into four categories, compatible with the Davis scheme, and appropriate to the specific discipline of consumer research: 'challenges to consumer common-sense'; 'challenges to public policy assumptions'; 'challenges to marketing and advertising practices'; and 'challenges to consumer research assumptions and practices'.

Challenges to consumer common-sense

Three articles in volume 20 of *JCR* are directed towards challenging some commonplace notions about consumer behavior. Davis argues that a young science should have a preference for denying old truths or platitudes as a means of distinguishing itself from common-sense understanding. Although consumer research is a relatively young science, this type of article is not common in volume 20 of the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

These three studies develop a common-sense assumption about consumption, and then perform a Davis-style reversal of the invoked assumptions. For example, Celsi et al. (1993: 1) use extensive description and a question to elicit reader assumptions about high risk activities such as skydiving:

As we imagine the thrill and marvel at this skydiver's courage or foolhardiness, we cannot help but wonder why she skydives. Why would an individual purposefully seek physical and psychic risk?

The primary purpose of this article, though, is to demonstrate that what seems to be an unusual activity with high risk is actually an everyday activity with normalized risk.

... we have grounded high-risk consumption in everyday behavior. (Celsi et al. 1993: 21)

Key findings indicate (1) an evolution of motives that explains initial and continuing participation in high-risk activities and (2) a coinciding evolution of risk acculturation that leads to the normalization of risk. (Celsi et al. 1993: 1)

Folkes et al. (1993: 467) also use a rhetorical question to create a common-sense assumption that product usage rates are fairly constant:

When pouring detergent into the wash, shampooing one's hair, adding coolant to the radiator, and so on, what influences how much of the product the consumer uses? Judgments about product effectiveness are probably the most important influences on usage.

They then present five experiments indicating that on-hand supply influences product usage rates.

Consumers tended to conserve diminishing resources so that the amount they indicated they would use generally decreased as the supply decreased. (Folkes et al. 1993: 467)



Using commonplace expressions, Swinyard (1993: 271) builds the supposition that mood can have a large effect on shopping intentions:

Each of us has had unpleasant shopping experiences, sometimes for no readily explained reason except that we were in a bad mood. . . . Mood states are present in virtually every shopping encounter, and could have a significant effect on shopping behavior. . . . The consequences of such outcomes on shopping intentions could be quite large.

Swinyard's results indicate that mood has only an indirect effect rather than a main effect on shopping intentions.

The results presented here suggest that the effect of mood on shopping intentions is primarily in interaction with other characteristics. In this study at least, mood had no main effect on shopping intentions. (Swinyard 1993: 277)

Challenges to public policy assumptions

Three articles contend with assumptions of Federal law and regulations. Because all three articles pertain to recent changes in Federal regulations, then these regulations are presumed to be effective in accomplishing their public policy aims. This effectiveness, however, is disputed by all of these researchers. For example, Barlow and Wogalter (1993: 147) examine mandated warning labels for alcoholic beverages:

Federal law currently requires that a warning appear on the labels of all alcoholic beverage containers sold in the United States . . .

The efficacy of common forms of alcoholic beverage warning labels is then challenged by their research.

These results show that the mere presence of a warning in advertising does not guarantee that it will be noticed, attended to, and remembered. Warning effectiveness depends on its salience and the medium in which it is presented. (Barlow and Wogalter 1993: 155)

Cole and Balasubramanian (1993: 157) target the revised nutritional information labeling format as an opponent. This article has a very similar first sentence to the Barlow and Wogalter (1993) article:

In 1990, when Congress updated the 1973 Food and Drug Administration labeling rule, it required food manufacturers to put more nutritional information on their labels.

Their research leads them to criticize the ability of consumers, especially older consumers, to process the revised formats of nutritional information.

. . . as new nutritional information becomes available on grocery items, will consumers of any age spontaneously use it to make better decisions? The answer appears to be no, unless the increase in the amount of label information is accompanied by effective consumer education efforts. . . . Our studies also show that, in contrast to younger shoppers, older consumers find it difficult to use label information even when given specific instructions to do so. (Cole and Balasubramanian 1993: 168)



Likewise, Peterson and Hoffer (1994: 657) target Federal regulations requiring automobile airbags and also economic studies supporting government mandated safety measures.

Over the past 25 years, a sizable body of economic literature has developed over the efficacy of government safety regulations. . . . Most researchers, however, have concluded that the benefits from various proposed or mandated safety appliances exceeded their cost . . .

Their analysis indicates that injury and collision losses have increased in airbag-equipped cars instead of the common assumption that injuries have decreased because of airbags.

The empirical analysis in the article indicates that both relative injury and absolute collision losses are never mitigated and usually worsen significantly for airbag-equipped cars relative to belt-only equipped models after airbag adoption. (Peterson and Hoffer 1994: 657)

Challenges to marketing and advertising practices

Six articles in volume 20 establish common practices or assumptions of marketers and advertisers as the targeted opponents. Excerpts from these articles describing the opposing assumption and the claims of overturning the assumption are listed in Table 1. Like the previous category, these articles provide examples of reversals in the Davis (1971) category of function, in which a phenomenon that is assumed to function effectively is shown to function ineffectively, or vice versa. For example, Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason (1993) begin their article by describing the marketer's assumption that imitation products should be similarly liked by consumers. Their study then demonstrates why 'me-too' products are often unsuccessful in gaining market share. The excerpts from this article also indicate a conscious use of the rhetorical strategy of 'interestingness' (see Table 1).

In a review and theory article, Crowley and Hoyer (1994) first describe the dominant advertising practice of using one-sided, positive-only persuasive messages, and then argue for the benefits of two-sided (positive and negative) persuasive messages. Koslow et al. (1994) first outline the benefits of Spanish-language advertising to Hispanic consumers, and then demonstrate unintended negative consequences of Spanish-language advertising.

Menon (1993) lists several examples of common questions used in marketing research asking consumers to recall and count the number of times they might use a product or patronize a service. This study then develops alternative procedures more effective than recall and count questions. The opponent for Tepper (1994) is the 'commonplace offering' of the senior citizen discount to elderly consumers. Senior citizen discounts are then found to elicit some negative reactions in elderly consumers. The advertising practice of spending large sums of money on non-exclusive celebrity endorsements is documented by Tripp et al. (1994). Their research then provides evidence that multiple endorsements diminish the celebrity spokesperson's influence.



Table 1

Challenges to marketing and advertising practices

Article	Opposing Assumption	Reversal of the Assumption
Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason (1993)	A common marketing assumption is that similar products will be similarly liked by the consumer. (First sentence, p. 100)	We began this paper by challenging the assumption that similar products are similarly liked. . . . The results of the study provide insights into why 'me too' imitation strategies may fail to obtain significant market share (Second to the last paragraph, p. 108)
Crowley and Hoyer (1994)	Most marketing communications (including advertising, personal selling, and public relations) attempt to influence consumers' brand preferences by presenting positive features of the brand or associating the brand with positive symbols. (First sentence, p. 561)	This article develops a framework that encompasses past two-sided persuasion research and incorporates additional theory and research on optimal arousal and attitude toward the ad to provide explanations for inconsistencies in previous findings. (Abstract, p. 561)
Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone (1994)	Spanish-language advertising increased Hispanic consumers' perception of advertiser sensitivity to Hispanic culture and people, and this perception in turn enhanced affect toward the advertisements. (Abstract, p. 575)	Yet, after controlling for perceived advertiser sensitivity, it was also found that advertising exclusively in Spanish decreased affect toward the advertisement. . . . exclusive use of Spanish in advertising may arouse Hispanic insecurities about language usage. (Abstract, p. 575)
Menon (1993)	'How many boxes of cereal have you purchased in the last six months?' 'How many times have you eaten in a restaurant in the last month?' . . . Consumer surveys often use such questions to determine the frequency with which respondents engage in different kinds of behavior. (First paragraph, p. 431)	The results from three experiments indicate that the regularity . . . and the similarity . . . of a frequently occurring behavior determine (a) the accessibility of the requisite information in memory, and therefore the process by which the judgment is generated, and (b) the accuracy of the associated frequency report. (Abstract, p. 431)
Tepper (1994)	As the most commonplace offering based on age-segmentation, the 'senior citizen discount' serves as a useful prototype for examining the elderly's responses to consumer offerings promoted with age segmentation cues. (Third paragraph, p. 503)	Depth interviews . . . reveal three levels of responsiveness to consumer offerings promoted with age segmentation cues: rejecting senior citizen discounts to avoid self-devaluation, rejecting senior citizen discounts to avoid stigmatization, and assigning positive meanings to the status that promotes senior citizen discount usage. (Abstract, p.503)
Tripp, Jensen, and Carlson (1994)	Millions of dollars are spent annually on celebrity endorsement contracts on the premise that source effects play an important role in persuasive communications. (First sentence, p. 535)	Through the use of ad stimuli in study 1, it presents the first systematic empirical evidence that the number of products a celebrity endorses . . . negatively influences consumer perceptions of the endorser and the advertising itself. (Conclusion, p. 546).



Challenges to consumer research assumptions and practices

The majority of the articles (19 out of 31) represent this genre, challenging other researchers' taken-for-granted assumptions on a variety of conceptual, substantive, and methodological issues. In the Davis perspective, the prevalence of this type of article indicates that consumer research has become a mature discipline. Table 2 presents excerpts from these 19 articles detailing the identification of the opposing assumption and authors' claims of successfully challenging this assumption. Besides designating a taken-for-granted assumption as the opponent, several of these articles emphasize a minority positioning against the majority of researchers in the field. Fahnestock (1989) observes that scientists have a penchant for describing their position as being the minority opinion struggling against the majority viewpoint, and she argues that the 'underdog' approach connotes newness and progress to the readers.

Five of these 19 articles investigate issues in consumer decision making, information processing, learning, and choice. For example, Huffman and Houston (1994) demonstrate that consumer memory is organized around experience-based goals rather than feature knowledge. Janiszewski (1993) challenges the assumption that attention is necessary for eliciting the mere-exposure effect. Janiszewski and Warlop (1993) challenge the assumption that classical conditioning applies only to the transfer of affective responses rather to more general forms of cognitive-based learning. Pan and Lehmann (1993) dispute underlying explanations of new brand entry attraction effects on brand choice processes. Munch et al. (1993) attack basic assumptions of the theory of reasoned action regarding the formation of consumer attitudes.

Five more articles in this category are directed towards researcher assumptions about the influence of advertising on consumers. For example, Goodstein (1993) attacks the assumption that viewers of advertising engage in intensive and motivated processing of the messages. A general belief that nonsubstantive advertising features are ineffective when consumers are thinking about advertising issues is challenged by Heath et al. (1994). In contrast to early studies suggesting the negative effects of advertising clutter on brand memory, Brown and Rothschild (1993) find no significant effect. Stern (1994) disputes the assumption that advertising drama is a unitary construct. Abeele and MacLachlan (1994) question current ad emotion measurement procedures, and suggest emotion process tracing instead of post-exposure, self-reported response measures.

Two studies in this group are similar in examining shortcomings of the survey measurement process. Morwitz et al. (1993) challenge the assumption that measuring intent will not have an effect on subsequent behavior, and also the presumption that intentions often have little relationship to behavior. This article is critical of both academic and practitioner market research presumptions. Simmons et al. (1993) attack the supposition that survey measurement reveals true or pre-existing attitudes.

Two studies examine the assumptions of customer satisfaction research. Mano and Oliver (1993) call into question the presumed cognitive basis of customer



Table 2

Challenges to research assumptions and practices

Article	Opposing assumption	Reversal of the assumption
Huffman and Houston (1994)	The use of goals as a basis for examining consumer behavior is not new. However goals have rarely been controlled in examining learning in consumer research. Instead, the typical procedure . . . is to direct subjects to pick the best alternative and to use their information acquisition and the outcomes . . . as the dependent measures. (Third paragraph, p. 190)	Results show that the information that consumers learn is organized in memory around the goal(s) that drives the experiences . . . contrary to predictions, subjects with no prior feature knowledge are quite adept at focusing on their goal in the choice process and at learning goal-appropriate information. (Abstract, p. 190)
Janiszewski (1993)	. . . most demonstrations of the influence of mere exposure on affective responses occur in contexts that encourage intentional processing of the target stimuli – the processing is goal directed and involved, albeit resource limited. . . . (First two paragraphs, p. 376)	The experiments can be viewed as direct evidence against a long-standing belief that preattentive operations have no influence on learning and that attention is necessary for the formation of sensory traces and mere-exposure-influenced affective responses . . . (Discussion section, p. 389)
Janiszewski and Warlop (1993)	Consumer research involving classical conditioning techniques has focused primarily on the transfer of affective responses . . . The emphasis on the transfer of responses can be attributed to the tendency of consumer researchers to view conditioning as a learning process, similar to that proposed by Pavlov . . . (First paragraph, p. 171)	Mechanisms and processes that support covariation learning, associative learning, attitude formation, memory formation, and the allocation of attention are all influenced by conditioning procedures. Perhaps it is time that conditioning researchers begin to recognize these relationships. . . . (Last two sentences, p. 187)
Pan and Lehmann (1993)	Though the major findings of the attraction effect have been shown to be stable . . . relatively little has been known about the causes . . . (First paragraph, p. 76) The speculated reasons include perceptual framing of the decision problem, evaluation processes used, and change in attribute attention/weight . . . (p. 77)	Thus, the findings in this article provide an alternative explanation for the process by which the attraction effect operates. (Second to last paragraph, p. 84)
Munch, Boller, and Swasy (1993)	To explain consumers' processing of product claims and attitude formation, past research has often relied on the theory of reasoned action as an organizing model. (Second sentence, p. 294)	Thus, consumers may never develop a product attitude, or their attitude may be developed on the basis of factors other than strategic product claim and evidence information. (Second to last paragraph, p. 301)

continues



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Table 2 (cont.)

Article	Opposing assumption	Reversal of the assumption
Goodstein (1993)	Early models of advertising processing assume that viewers notice and attend to many elements of an ad . . . In general, these models suppose that individuals view stimuli with great intensity and are highly motivated to process the material contained in persuasive communications . . . (Second and third sentences, p. 87)	This article supports that category-based reactions occur rapidly and are essentially perceptual. Therefore, if not drawn in immediately either by an ad's unique qualities or by a positive category evaluation, consumers may form schema-triggered impressions and ignore the rest of an advertiser's message. (Last two sentences, p. 97)
Heath, McCarthy, and Mothersbaugh (1994)	Primarily on the basis of research from noncompetitive settings, it is generally believed that nonsubstantive advertising features are ineffective when consumers are engaged in issue-relevant thinking. (Abstract, p. 520)	The results suggest that balanced competition can neutralize the effects of substantive features . . . These effects then empower nonsubstantive features to serve as heuristics and/or reduce the risk of postpreference regret. (Abstract, p. 520)
Brown and Rothschild (1993)	It has been suggested that increasing levels of clutter on television lead to diminished memory retrieval for advertised brands. (Abstract, p. 138)	The results suggest that clutter may not significantly affect an individual's true ability to remember what was seen. (Abstract, p. 138)
Stern (1994)	However, despite the emphasis on form, most prior advertising research has posited advertising drama as a monolithic construct opposite to 'lecture' . . . or 'argument' . . . (Second paragraph, p. 601).	This article identifies and analyzes two types of television advertising dramas: classical and vignette. . . . (Abstract, p. 601).
Abeele and MacLachlan (1994)	Typical of research on emotional ad response is the use of single, postexposure, verbal self-reports, as measurement procedures . . . (Second paragraph, p. 586)	Because of the transient nature of some emotions stimulated during TV commercials, measurement of emotional reactions at various points during an ad requires process tracing. (Abstract, p. 586)
Morwitz, Johnson, and Schmittlein (1993)	Does Measuring Intent Change Behavior? (Article title, p. 46) The road from reported intentions to action is rocky. As usually modeled in the behavioral sciences, statements of intended action often do not come to fruition. (First two sentences, p. 46)	The results reveal that the effect of merely asking intent to buy once is an increase in the subsequent purchase rate. (Abstract, p. 46) It is the practice of several market research firms to maintain large consumer mail panels and to routinely measure the panel households' intent to buy a variety of products . . . This finding is disturbing for those using intentions . . . to predict population (not sample) purchase patterns. (Conclusions, p. 59)

continues



Table 2 (cont.)

Article	Opposing assumption	Reversal of the assumption
Simmons, Bickart, and Lynch (1993)	Among the most ubiquitous of all forms of consumer research is the survey of consumers' beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and self-reported behaviors. A fundamental presumption of such research is that the answers given reflect what was already on consumers' minds . . . (First paragraph, p. 316).	The clear implication of our work, then, is that we as consumer researchers must be acutely sensitive to whether our measurement methods are responsible for creating the very phenomena they are assumed to illuminate (Last paragraph, p. 328).
Mano and Oliver (1993)	Previous conceptualizations of product satisfaction have been viewed as having a basis in cognitive evaluation. It is not surprising, then, that prior efforts to study satisfaction were based on ratings of product attributes, the cognitive processes of confirmation of expectations and inequity judgments . . . (First paragraph, p. 451)	Taken together, the results of the present study suggest that the satisfaction response is not easily tied down. It does not respond as a pure affect nor does it exist in the absence of feeling. It is apparently a complex human response with both cognitive and affective components, some of which are explored here. (Last paragraph, p. 465)
Gardial, Clemons, Woodruff, Schumann, and Burns (1994)	However, one might contend that the basic phenomenon, product evaluation, is the same for both pre- and postpurchase. If so, is separate theory necessary? If not, how should those theories differ?. (Introduction, p. 548–9)	While some similarities exist, the results show important differences between respondents postpurchase thoughts versus those from both prepurchase and satisfaction. (Abstract, p. 548)
Belk and Coon (1993)	The social sciences are dominated by a paradigm that views human behavior as instrumental exchange. It is not surprising that consumer research on gift giving has also been dominated by this exchange paradigm. (Abstract, p. 393)	The present research on dating gift giving among American college students finds support for two variants of this paradigm, but it also reveals an alternative paradigm of gift giving as an expression of agapic love. (Abstract, p. 393)
Otnes, Lowrey, and Kim (1993)	Since Sherry (1983) provided a framework that elucidated the stages of the gift-exchange process, researchers have examined the influence of myriad variables within these stages. However, most gift-exchange research conducted both before and after the appearance of Sherry's model could be described as 'giver-centric'. (First two sentences, p. 229)	Our interpretation reveals that our informants typically used different gift-selection strategies, depending on whether they perceived recipients as helping or hindering their ability to act as chameleons, and adapted their gift-giving behavior in order to express a particular social role to these recipients. (Summary, p. 239)

continues



Table 2 (cont.)

Article	Opposing assumption	Reversal of the assumption
Corfman and Lehmann (1993)	The assumption is often made that negotiators are concerned solely with maximizing their own gain from a transaction and that any interest bargainers have in their opponents' potential payoffs is purely strategic. (Second paragraph, p. 124)	This study confirms that individuals systematically consider other parties' payoffs in evaluating their own satisfaction with potential settlements. (Summary and Conclusions, p. 134)
Moorman and Matulich (1993)	Theory development overviews the interdisciplinary literature on health and proposes that health motivation independently influences consumers' preventive health behaviors while the effect of health ability on health behaviors is moderated by the level of health motivation . . . (Abstract, p. 208)	However, mixed results suggest that high levels of ability and motivation are not always critical precursors of health behaviors; instead, the impact of these characteristics depends on the particular health behavior and the specific health ability characteristic. (Abstract, p. 208)
Ross and Creyer (1993)	Interpreting Interactions: Raw Means or Residual Means? (Title, p. 330) Although most researchers utilize the raw means that are the output of most analysis packages. . . . (Abstract, p. 330)	We examine why and under what circumstances it is appropriate to use residual means to examine interactions. (Abstract, p. 330)

product satisfaction. Studies of the rhetoric of contrasts used in scientific article-writing have focused on the researcher-author's ability to control not only the description of the author's perspective, but the description of the opponent as well (Anderson, 1986). As an example, the article by Gardial et al. (1994) describes an opposing assumption that prepurchase and postpurchase product evaluations are similar. In this author's opinion, this contention could be challenged as a 'straw man' position that is not reflective of the customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction literature. Yet Gardial et al. (1994) are able to control the presentation of the opponent, and use rhetorical questions to shift responsibility to the reader to describe how prepurchase and postpurchase are different. Gardial and colleagues then use a qualitative technique to elicit some unexpected ways in which customers have different recollections of their prepurchase versus their postpurchase evaluations.

Two articles using qualitative methodologies examine researcher assumptions about consumer gift-giving. Belk and Coon (1993) argue that agapic love should displace the paradigm of instrumental exchange in gift-giving. Otnes et al. (1993)



utilize the term 'giver-centric' to describe typical assumptions of consumer researchers investigating these behaviors; they then question the overemphasis on giver characteristics in studying gift-giving behavior.

The remaining three articles in this group of 19 represent a variety of topics. For example, the assumption of individual gain maximization in negotiations is countered by systematic competitiveness and concern with the other parties' payoff according to Corfman and Lehmann (1993). Based on an extensive review of health literature, Moorman and Matulich (1993) extract a general theory that is then reversed by an accompanying empirical study. Finally, the common data analysis practice of using raw means to interpret interaction effects is questioned by Ross and Creyer (1993).

Other types of article framings

Implicitly 'interesting' articles

The next four articles have been classified as implicitly rather than explicitly 'interesting' articles. Davis suggests that 'interestingness' can also work on more subjective levels by subtly challenging implicit or tacit preconceptions of the readers. In some cases, an opposing assumption or contrasting perspective is implied by means of a provocative title rather than an explicit description. For example, 'River Magic: Extraordinary Experience and the Extended Service Encounter' (Arnould and Price, 1993) suggests contrasts with mundane experiences and ordinary service encounters of limited duration; however, these are not elaborated upon in the article. The title of Peracchio (1993) asks the question 'Is a Picture Really Worth a Thousand Words?', but the author does not articulate the 'no' position for challenging.

For some articles, mixed results prevent the authors from making a complete reversal of their opposing perspective. Mazumdar and Jun (1993) investigate the marketing practice of price bundling with the premise that consumers may perceive greater savings with multiple price decreases rather than a single price decrease. Moderating factors did not allow these authors to make a clear challenge to the price bundling practice. Lynn et al. (1993) develop a potential assumption reversal that macro-level cross-country differences rather than individual level factors are more influential on consumer tipping practices. A reversal of the level of analysis is one of the categories of interesting propositions in Davis (1971), but mixed results hinder the formation of a clear reversal in this study.

Debate articles

Volume 20 of the *Journal of Consumer Research* includes three debate articles. A debate article uses a different rhetorical format of critiquing a specific article or researcher. The author of a debate article is attacking the formal or explicit assumptions or interpretations of another researcher, and is trying to undermine



the credibility and integrity of the opponent's position. Some classic argumentative objectives in scientific debate articles are to criticize the opponent with accusations of theoretically inadequate positions, empirical baselessness, improper activity, misapplication of terms, overlooking of important material, and employment of bad reasoning (Yearley, 1982).

Darley and Lim (1993) criticize a paper by Shimp et al. (1991) on the influence of demand artifacts in consumer research experiments. The Darley and Lim paper also includes an example of what MacRoberts and MacRoberts (1984) and Brooks (1986) call the 'dissembling tendency' for making negative references, by simultaneously complimenting and criticizing the article.

In a recent insightful article on demand artifacts in consumer research, T. A. Shimp, E. M. Hyatt, and D. J. Snyder . . . provided an appraisal of demand artifacts. In this article, we critically evaluate some of the assumptions and conclusions of Shimp et al.'s analysis . . . (Abstract, p. 489)

There are several claims and assumptions in Shimp et al. (1991) that, in our opinion, are untenable. (Second paragraph, p. 489)

An obvious risk in writing a confrontational article is that the opponents will be given an opportunity to respond and counterattack. In the same issue, Shimp et al. (1993) present their rejoinder.

A Critique of Darley and Lim's 'Alternative Perspective' (Title of article). This reply challenges W. K. Darley and J.-S. Lim's conclusions that an earlier article of ours misleads consumer researchers about the role and treatment of demand artifacts . . . (Abstract, p. 496)

An article by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) is a critical review of introspective methods of research with a conclusion that 'researcher introspection has severely limited potential to contribute to future research in consumer behavior' (1993: 339). The focus of much of this article is on a single article by Gould (1991). Subsequent articles by Gould (1995) and Holbrook (1996) provide rejoinders to this critique.

Replications and extensions

No article in this volume describes itself in its positioning paragraphs to be a replication of a previous research study, supporting previous findings of the scarcity of replication (Easley et al., 2000; Hubbard and Vetter, 1996). Some of these articles are positioned as extensions of previous research. For example, the influence of positive affect is extended to variety seeking behavior by Kahn and Isen (1993). Holbrook (1993) provides a follow-up study reanalyzing previous data to refine a psychographic measure of nostalgia proneness. Oliver (1993) integrates new factors of attribute satisfaction and dissatisfaction into a general model of post-purchase response. To encourage more replications, the *Journal of Consumer Research* now includes a section dedicated to 'Re-Inquiries'.



Other non-adversarial articles

An example of an article positioning that espouses harmony rather than conflict is an interdisciplinary integration article. For example, Kardes et al. (1993) is an integration of experimental and econometric methods and of a psychological approach with a cognitive economics approach. Boulding and Kirmani (1993) is an integration of economic signaling theory and a psychological based approach. Frenzen and Nakamoto (1993) integrate individual decision-making into a word-of-mouth network.

The main message of the integration articles is compatibility and mutual benefits of multiple approaches, whereas the Davis (1971) approach is adversarial with an emphasis on discipline rivalry. One of the categories of the Index of the Interesting is to demonstrate that what is assumed to be a sociological phenomenon is actually a psychological phenomenon (e.g., Freud's theory of war) or a presumed psychological phenomenon is really sociological (e.g., Durkheim's theory of suicide). The integrative approach is more appropriate to the interdisciplinary mission of the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

The remaining articles in this volume also do not take a confrontational stance in their positioning paragraphs. Fisher (1993) examines the empirically untested assumption that indirect questioning is effective in reducing social desirability bias. Raman (1994) develops a formal probabilistic model that substantiates the intuitions of other researchers about the value of replication research. Hirschman's (1994) study of consumers and their animal companions is on a topic previously neglected by consumer research. Babin et al. (1994) develop a measurement scale to meet the needs of researchers interested in hedonic and/or utilitarian consumption values.

Analysis of importance and innovativeness

Thirty-one of the 48 articles of volume 20 feature an explicitly stated form of 'interestingness' in the primary positioning paragraphs of the manuscript. This study provides initial support for the speculation of Booth et al. (1995) that 'interestingness' is a common rhetorical pattern in social sciences research. However, researchers have also proposed that 'interestingness' is associated with importance and innovativeness of the article. These assumptions have been voiced in management (Daft et al., 1987; McKinley et al., 1999; Weick 1989), marketing (Hirschman, 1985; Zaltman et al., 1982) and consumer research (Bettencourt and Houston, 2001). In this section, the 31 'interesting' articles are compared to the other 17 articles in this volume that did not use this rhetorical format.

Three measures are used to assess the importance of an article. The first measure is the total number of citations to each article from the date of article publication until January 2003. Article citation counts are downloaded from the Institute of Scientific Information's *Web of Science* which is the online version of the *Social Sciences Citation Index*. These 48 articles garnered a total of 1141



citations during this period. The second measure of article importance is the article's order of placement within an issue which reflects the editor's judgment of article importance at the time of publication. Each of the four issues in this volume contain 12 articles. The third measure of article importance is the length of the article in terms of number of published pages. For a competitive and prestigious journal with constraints on size of issue, the contribution of the article must be proportional to the length. The length of the article reflects the judgment of the reviewers as well as the editors as to the significance of the article. For these 48 articles, page length ranged from 6 to 25 pages.

As proposed by Bettencourt and Houston (2001) and Tellis et al. (1999), the innovativeness of a journal article may be inferred by an analysis of the intellectual diversity of the references cited within an article. Although the *Journal of Consumer Research* is an interdisciplinary journal, the studies by Bettencourt and Houston (2001) and Tellis et al. (1999) find that *JCR* is generally not more diverse than other leading journals such as the *Journal of Marketing* or the *Journal of Marketing Research*. The 48 articles in this study contain a total of 2349 references which are classified into five mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories: references to other articles in *JCR* or to the *Proceedings of the Association of Consumer Research (ACR)*; references to other marketing, advertising, or consumer journals; references to psychology journals; references to the journals of other disciplines; and references to non-journal sources such as books. Intellectual diversity in references is suggested by the references to journals of the other disciplines and to non-journal sources (Bettencourt and Houston, 2001). Articles that are less diverse, and presumably less innovative, would have a large number of references to other *JCR* or *ACR* articles, to marketing and advertising articles, or to psychology articles which have been the proximal disciplines for consumer research.

Table 3 lists the 48 articles by the categories of this study as well as article citation counts, order in issue, page length, total references, and proportion of diverse references (other discipline journals and non-journal sources). Table 3 also presents the correlations of these measures of article importance and innovativeness. The importance measures are generally highly correlated. For example, the order in the issue has a correlation of $-.706$ to page length indicating that the first articles are generally longer and the last articles in the issue are shorter in length. Article citations are most closely related to article page length. The proportion of diverse references is not related to article citations or order in the issue suggesting a divergence between these measures of importance and diversity.

To investigate the relationship of 'interestingness' to importance, a one-way anova was conducted using two groups of 31 'interesting' articles and the 17 other articles. Results indicate that there are no significant differences between these two groups on either article citations, order within issue, or page length. The largest difference in means is for article citations (mean of 'interesting' articles = 20.68; mean of other articles = 29.41), although this difference is not statistically significant.

To examine the relationship of 'interestingness' to the innovativeness and intellectual diversity of the article, two-group anovas were also conducted on the



Table 3

Assessment of article importance and innovativeness

Article type Authors	Citations as of 1/03	Order in issue	Total pages	Total references	Diverse references
Articles that use rhetorical 'interestingness'					
<i>Consumer 'common sense'</i>					
Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993	69	1	23	86	73.3%
Swinyard 1993	26	7	10	51	21.6%
Folkes, Martin, and Gupta 1993	11	9	11	16	43.8%
<i>Challenges to public policy assumptions</i>					
Cole and Balasubramanian 1993	20	12	13	23	39.1%
Barlow and Wogalter 1993	14	11	10	43	62.8%
Peterson and Hoffer 1994	4	12	6	19	100.0%
<i>Challenges to marketing and advertising practices</i>					
Menon 1993	26	6	10	32	43.8%
Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason 1993	17	7	11	42	42.9%
Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone 1994	14	6	11	41	70.7%
Tripp, Jensen, and Carlson 1994	13	3	13	38	34.2%
Tepper 1994	11	1	17	41	41.5%
Crowley and Hoyer 1994	9	5	14	46	32.6%
<i>Challenges to research assumptions and practices</i>					
Mano and Oliver 1993	61	8	16	40	15.0%
Belk and Coon 1993	43	4	25	162	82.1%
Goodstein 1993	38	6	13	43	37.2%
Huffman and Houston 1993	35	2	18	39	17.9%
Otnes, Lowry, and Kim 1993	30	4	16	50	54.0%
Moorman and Matulich 1993	28	3	21	173	64.2%
Morwitz, Johnson, and Schmittlein 1993	26	3	16	38	34.2%
Simmons, Bickart, and Lynch 1993	21	11	14	31	45.2%
Janiszewski 1993	18	3	17	46	17.4%
Gardial, Clemons, et al. 1994	17	4	13	45	28.9%
Janiszewski and Warlop 1993	13	1	19	44	38.6%
Heath, McCarthy, & Mothersbaugh 1994	13	2	15	46	15.2%
Corfman and Lehmann 1993	12	9	14	76	59.2%
Pan and Lehmann 1993	11	5	11	35	31.4%
Stern 1994	11	8	15	58	67.2%
Munch, Boller, and Swasy 1993	9	9	9	23	34.8%
Brown and Rothschild 1993	8	10	9	17	29.4%
Ross and Creyer 1993	8	12	9	16	31.3%
Abeele and MacLachlan 1994	5	7	15	29	34.5%
Articles that do not use rhetorical 'interestingness'					
<i>Implicitly interesting articles</i>					
Arnould and Price 1993	91	2	22	98	71.4%
Lynn, Zinkhan, and Harris 1993	27	10	11	52	63.5%
Mazumdar and Jun 1993	9	7	10	40	22.5%
Peracchio 1993	3	8	13	36	30.6%

continues



Table 3 (cont.)

Assessment of article importance and innovativeness

Article type Authors	Citations as of 1/03	Order in issue	Total pages	Total references	Diverse references
Articles that do not use rhetorical 'interestingness' (cont.)					
<i>Debate articles</i>					
Wallendorf and Brucks 1993	24	1	21	128	60.9%
Darley and Lim 1993	5	11	7	32	18.8%
Shimp, Hyatt, and Snyder 1993	2	12	7	17	5.9%
<i>Replications and extensions</i>					
Oliver 1993	89	5	13	47	25.5%
Kahn and Isen 1993	44	6	14	44	22.7%
Holbrook 1993	25	5	12	33	57.6%
<i>Other non-adversarial articles</i>					
Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994	49	11	13	68	23.5%
Boulding and Kirmani 1993	36	8	13	34	55.9%
Kardes, Kalyanaram, et al. 1993	33	4	14	44	36.4%
Fisher 1993	24	10	13	39	23.1%
Hirschman 1994	23	9	17	48	66.7%
Frenzen and Nakamoto 1993	10	2	16	45	60.0%
Raman 1994	6	10	11	55	58.2%

Correlations of these measures

	Citations	Order	Pages	References	Diverse Refs.
Article citations	1.000				
Order in issue	-.310*	1.000			
Total pages	.500**	-.706**	1.000		
Total references	.381**	-.429**	.734**	1.000	
Diverse references	.089	-.052	.290*	.435**	1.000

N = 48 articles

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

various categories of references. Results again indicated that there are no significant differences in references for the 'interesting' articles relative to the other articles. Specifically, there are no significant differences for numbers and proportions of *JCR* and *ACR Proceedings* references, numbers and proportions of marketing and advertising references, numbers and proportions of psychology references, numbers and proportions of references to journals of other disciplines, and numbers and proportions of non-journal references. There are also no significant differences for the proportion of diverse references measure reported in Table 3.



Discussion

In summary, these analyses indicate that 'interestingness' is a commonly applied rhetorical strategy in a consumer research journal which supports the contention of Booth et al. (1995). However, analysis does not support the contentions of management, marketing, and consumer research scholars who suggest that the presence of 'interestingness' distinguishes research studies that are more influential or intellectually creative.

Rather than signaling importance or innovativeness of the article, the development of 'interestingness' in the positioning of an article provides other benefits. The first benefit is that it circumvents any criticism or impugning of other researchers. Myers (1993) and Barton (1995) both argue that the reason for the noncontentious character of the empirical research article is the prevalence of a rhetoric of politeness. Although academics engage in intellectual competition, Barton (1995) argues that strong criticism of an opponent would be highly impolite and would violate the solidarity of the academic community. Myers (1993) argues that criticism is much rarer in scientific genres than in humanities disciplines. Scientists are concerned not only with offending other researchers in the same field, but also with appearing to behave in an inappropriate scientific way. Rather than incurring the risks of engaging in debate, the main risk that the 'interesting' author faces is an accusation that the author has created a 'straw man' assumption as an opponent.

Besides minimizing direct attacks on other persons or articles, this framing strategy also circumvents the need to overly praise the articles of other rival researchers in setting up the research propositions. This rhetorical strategy enables researcher-authors to make their studies appear more innovative rather than tied to pre-existing literature. Hubbard and Lindsay (2002) suggest that marketing scholars have a preoccupation for asserting the originality of their research.

Studies in the rhetoric of science suggest that research authors actively work to construct the novelty and originality of their knowledge claims (Blakeslee, 1994; Fahnestock, 1989; Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997; Myers, 1990). Swales (1990) and Bazerman (1988) examine studies of the reading habits of scientists as they struggle to cope with voluminous amounts of new information. These studies suggest that scientists may engage in a rapid scanning of research articles to quickly ascertain what is new and novel about this particular study. Swales discusses the similarities to the process of reading the newspaper. The simple reversal described by this article framing provides an attention-getting and easily processed lead and summary of the article.

Future research is necessary to ascertain whether the textual strategy of 'interestingness' is characteristic of other marketing journals. The *Journal of Consumer Research* is primarily a scholarly journal directed to an audience of academics. Academic readers may have very large zones of 'interestingness' for entertaining certain intellectual possibilities, because their training has encouraged them to be skeptical and critical towards all knowledge claims (Mitroff, 1987; Zaltman et al., 1982). Mitroff (1987) argues that managers and people in organi-



zations have not been trained and are not particularly willing to operate in the 'interesting' zone. Consequently, more applied business journals that stress pragmatic implications of research and have a substantial practitioner readership may place less of a premium on being 'interesting'. Besides audience factors, the editors and the reviewers of a particular journal may also be instrumental in encouraging this type of article positioning as a stylistic feature of a journal.

Proponents of rhetorical analysis (e.g., Booth et al., 1995) and textual analysis (e.g., Swales, 1990) stress the importance of studying scientific writing to provide better instruction of students learning the genres of academic writing. For example, Swales describes the difficulties of novice researchers or students with English as a second language in learning the literary conventions of American journals. Gusfield (1976) is one of the early writers to argue that scientific methods courses should include the study of literary techniques as well as statistical procedures. Davis (1971) subscribes to a similar view in that he claims only to be formally describing a model that he believes many social scientists intuitively or inadvertently follow. Davis argues that a conscious awareness of the importance of defining and then denying audience assumptions would 'increase the Interesting Quotient (I.Q.) of their discipline relative to the Interesting Quotient of other disciplines . . .' (1971: 338).

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