The future of *Marketing Letters*

Vision, review process, and a new type of paper—idea corners

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Marketing Letters is a unique and essential journal for the marketing discipline, with a focus on quick dissemination of interesting questions, topics, and findings. The journal has been built by nearly three decades of conscientious editors from a range of subfields in our discipline; dedicated policy board members, editorial review board members, and hundreds of ad-hoc reviewers; and, of course, the impressive set of authors who have chosen *Marketing Letters* for disseminating their work. All of these constituents have been committed to the journal's unique vision and positioning.

In recent years, we have given a great deal of thought to the journal's future and its value to the discipline. We discovered that we could do more to retain, reaffirm, and revitalize its founding vision, without having to reinvent the journal. Nearly 28 years ago, *Marketing Letters* was born from the vision of Don Lehmann. Don recognized that the discipline needed a journal that put interesting thoughts, topics, and findings into the marketplace of ideas in order for people to think about, discuss, and debate them. The journal's focus was on identifying and proposing early-stage topics, questions, and findings, as opposed to generating final answers and definitive conclusions. Don's two-page editorial launched *Marketing Letters* and adhered to his own standard that papers should be interesting and short! Some of his key principles were the following:

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- Papers should be interesting and intellectually provocative.
- The time to disseminate research should be short.
- The length of papers should also be short.
- Papers belong to authors, not reviewers.
- Experiments should focus on effect sizes and not significance levels.
- The journal values papers that are the first piece in a stream of research, which, as a result, may benefit from being more informal and speculative.
- Interesting papers will make readers say “I learned something,” “it made me think,” and “I wish I had done this.”

We wholeheartedly reaffirm these principles. Interesting papers may run counter to intuition or existing empirical evidence, overthrow existing theories, establish new theories, or highlight emerging opportunities for investigation. Papers must also apply suitable methods and be written clearly in order to easily communicate their ideas to everyone in our discipline. Literature reviews should be concise and focus only on clarifying the contribution of the paper. In the remainder of this editorial, we discuss how we will implement this vision going forward.

1 A new type of paper—idea corners

Purpose and positioning Our major initiative to revitalize the journal in a way that’s consistent with the journal’s founding vision is to launch a new type of paper, which will complement and be published alongside the journal’s current type of paper. In the spirit of identifying novel ideas that spark research and discussion, we introduce a new paper format titled “idea corner.” We view an “idea” as an initial thought, intended to stimulate or presage future research and a “corner” as a point at which significant change occurs. Each idea corner’s purpose is to highlight new and emerging topics, identify the research questions to be explored, provide a conceptual treatment of why a particular marketplace phenomenon is important, novel, and worth pursuing further, and provide some preliminary evidence of the phenomenon.

The impetus for this new paper format is the recognition that scholars regularly uncover new and interesting phenomena that deserve more systematic attention while it is still emerging and developing. In contrast, a more definitive piece of research may take years to appear and might not afford a full and broad view of the phenomenon and its promise for stimulating future research, discussion, and debate. Our goal is to identify and document an emerging phenomenon’s research potential *in situ*.

The idea corner format is also consistent with Don Lehmann’s 1989 vision:

While theory and tight papers are the appropriate long-run goal of research, it is important for interesting, provocative papers to be disseminated to stimulate future research. If in reading the articles [in this issue], your reaction is that

[they are] interesting and that you can see how to extend the work, then the journal has fulfilled its function of stimulating further research. Put differently, the journal is designed to stimulate further research rather than to publish definitive works.

Process *Marketing Letters* will begin accepting submissions of these new pieces in 2018. These submissions will complement the standard 5000 word submissions described below.

An idea corner paper should simply ask questions, suggest research topics, and provide some preliminary piece of evidence, either empirical or anecdotal, as to what a potential answer might be. The questions can be theoretical or empirical in nature. An idea corner paper should not be simply a literature review or methodological piece. These papers should be 1500 words or less and have a maximum of 10 references and one table and/or figure. We will be very sensitive to authors' interests in developing a more definitive piece for other journals (e.g., *JM*, *JMR*, *JCR*, *Marketing Science*). Our objective is to get a great idea out into the marketplace much in the same way that the proceedings of ACR conferences and the precursors to the Marketing Science conferences once did.

Papers will be reviewed by one editor and one reviewer from the editorial review board. Reviews will be 150 words or less. Criteria for acceptance will simply focus on whether a significant portion of the readership will be newly stimulated to think about the topic and questions outlined. Papers will be reviewed once with a decision to either (conditionally) accept or reject. Accepted papers will appear in the first issue after acceptance. Submissions will be handled through the journal's editorial manager, by simply denoting idea corner on the paper's title page.

2 Enhanced visibility and recognition for authors

The journal's efforts to promote discussion and debate will now continue beyond publication in two ways. First, beginning in 2018, we will launch a Best Paper Award for papers published in the preceding calendar year. Second, we will distribute a quarterly email with the table of contents of the next issue and a list of recently accepted papers. This email will be sent to all editorial review board members, researchers publishing in *Marketing Letters* over the preceding 3 years, and any other researchers who would like to receive these notifications.

3 Review process changes

Papers should be interesting for a broad cross section of marketing academics and practitioners, as opposed to only basic psychology researchers or mathematical modelers. Other fine journals, also necessary for our field, are outlets for these more specialized types of papers.

Brevity remains key A “short” paper means a 5000 word limit for the abstract, main text, and references. The abstract itself should be no more than 150 words. Papers may have up to four tables and/or figures.

Choice of editor Beginning in 2018, authors will have the option to request a specific co-editor or receive the default random assignment that is the current practice. Each editor will decide whether the paper should be sent out for review. The review process is typically terminated at this point for over 50% of submissions. This desk rejection rate helps us better manage and preserve the resources of our world-class editorial review board and provide fast feedback for papers that are consistent with the journal’s positioning as well as for papers that are not consistent with this positioning.

Minimal rounds of review The percentage of papers passing this initial screening will increase as authors submit papers consistent with the journal’s vision and positioning (short, interesting, novel, provocative papers). Papers that pass the editor’s initial screening will be evaluated by two reviewers. Reviews are typically shorter than other journals’ reviews with the goal being to emphasize interesting ideas and certify the methods employed. This approach is also consistent with the principle that papers belong to authors and not reviewers. Our goal is to (conditionally) accept or reject a paper by the second round of reviews.

Quick dissemination and publication We want to move papers from initial submission into the idea marketplace as quickly as possible. Over the past 2 years, our publisher, Springer Nature, has been generous in reducing a large backlog of papers. Once papers are accepted for publication, it takes only a few weeks for copyediting and typesetting before they are published online. Papers are published in print approximately two issues after acceptance. Our goals for reviewing time are 20 days or less for papers returned by an editor and 60 days or less for papers sent out to reviewers.

Data policy The data policy for *Marketing Letters* submissions will follow Springer Nature’s type 1 procedure, where data sharing and data citation are encouraged, but not required. The complete statement on the journal’s data policy is available at <http://www.springernature.com/gp/authors/research-data-policy>.

Editorial review board changes At this time, we’d like to offer our sincere thanks to editorial review board members who have elected to step down, in many cases after years of selfless, dedicated, and thoughtful service to the journal: Joe Alba, Chris Allen, Adam Alter, Rajesh Bagchi, Rajeev Batra, Jonah Berger, Meg Campbell, Joseph Cote, Hubert Gatignon, Chris Janiszewski, Carl Mela, Vicki Morwitz, William Ross, Derek Rucker, Terry Shimp, and Dilip Soman. We are also tremendously grateful to the large number of editorial review board members continuing their service as well as to new members who will be joining the board. Keep an eye out for their names in the print journal and on our website.

4 Conclusion

The rationale for *Marketing Letters* is as strong as ever. In fact, one could argue that the current duration and complexity of the review process at other journals make its role more important for our discipline than ever. The advancement of our field rests upon generating interesting, provocative ideas and getting those ideas into the marketplace rapidly in order to be debated, tested, refined, and sometimes rejected. The steps we have outlined in this editorial commit *Marketing Letters* to continue to fulfill this vision upon which it was founded.