We argue that research problems are only interesting relative to some external audience. Interesting academic research should impact, at least, that external audience. Hence, we should target our research toward specific external audiences. Several foreboding trends that exacerbate the urgency of this targeting are discussed. To facilitate the targeting task, a partial list of fifteen possible audiences for academic research in marketing is identified. We discuss some of them, including practitioners, in detail. For example, we conclude that, for our research to be interesting to practitioners, practitioners must have the ability to improve and to make better decisions with enhanced understanding. Finally, we strongly suggest that we focus our research on fundamental problems in marketing. These are problems with the property that external audiences would first look to the marketing literature for answers.

(Academic Research; External Audiences for Research; Practitioners and Academic Research; Marketing Discipline)

A Definition for Interesting

Few journals are willing to publish uninteresting manuscripts. Before publishing any research manuscript in a peer-reviewed publication, some evaluator must find the research interesting. One of the most devastating of all the criticisms directed against any manuscript by any evaluator is that the research is uninteresting. Other criticisms, including fatal errors in the analysis, inadequate data, incom-plete consideration of the past literature, and inde-cipherability, are all trivial in comparison. Indeed, although the remedies for these latter criticisms might be both tedious and arduous, the remedies are usually straightforward. The method of making research more interesting is far less so. One of the most onerous messages an author receives from an editor is that the manuscript requires revisions to make the research more interesting (often by enhancing the contribution). It seems, therefore, essential to have some guidelines for determining the level of interest a manuscript elicits.

Providing an operational definition of interesting is difficult but necessary. To begin, let us realize that no research findings are innately interesting. Research findings are only interesting to some audience for some reason. In other words, research is interesting only relative to an audience. Some audience must judge the research as interesting within the context that they define. For example, the research finding that capacity constraints change the nature of competition might interest regulators more than the news media. There are many possible audiences (discussed later), but we hope our research will interest at least one of them.

Of course, research creates interest in many ways. One of the best ways to interest an audience is to have significant impact on that audience. Hence, truly interesting research often has the potential to significantly impact a specific audience. In other words,