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Marketing's "Oscars": a citation analysis of award-winning articles

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to see whether it is possible to reliably detect, prospectively, superior intellectual contributions to marketing's literature.

Design/methodology/approach – Citation data accessed on the Institute of Scientific Information Web of Science were used to examine the impact of award-winning marketing articles with those of lead articles and non-lead articles in the same journal issues.

Findings – Award-winners gathered more citations than those for the two comparison groups. It is shown, however, that this finding should not be taken for granted. The peer review system frequently fails to identify high quality, innovative research.

Research limitations/implications – The paper only considers US marketing journals.

Originality/value – This is the only in-depth study of the impact of award-winning research in the marketing community.

Keywords Quality awards, Serials, Data analysis, Peer review

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Scholarly recognition in all fields comes mainly from publishing articles in quality, peer reviewed, journals. But the recognition so accorded can be expected to increase markedly for that select group of authors who win their discipline's most prestigious awards for published research. In marketing, such awards are offered annually by three leading journals – the *Journal of Marketing* (*JM*), *Journal of Marketing Research* (*JMR*), and the *Journal of Consumer Research* (*JCR*). The *JM,* for example, offers the Harold H. Maynard Award for that year's best article on marketing theory and thought, and the Marketing Science Institute/H. Paul Root Award for the best article furthering marketing practice. *JMR*'s William F. O'Dell Award is conferred on the author(s) of articles making significant long-term contributions to marketing theory, methodology, and/or practice, while the more recent Paul E. Green Award focuses on the latter. Finally, *JCR* also grants two prizes: the Robert Ferber Award is for outstanding dissertation articles, and the Best Paper Award is open to all work published in the journal.

The above awards are here dubbed marketing's "Oscars" because of the (approximate) correspondence between the author/actor and article/movie analogies. And like the Oscars® rendered by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the marketing tributes are based on the subjective judgments of one's peers. Usually, the marketing journal's Editorial Review Board (ERB) is responsible for deciding on the winners. Thus, for example, both the Maynard and MSI/Root Awards for *JM* are

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selected by a vote of that journal's ERB. A similar protocol is used for determining the winners of *JMR*'s O'Dell and Green Awards. *JCR*'s Best Article Award is singled out by its Policy Board (the 12 members of *JCR*'s sponsoring organizations) after they have received nominations from the 120 or so ERB members. The Ferber Award is chosen by three judges who are picked by the *JCR* editor.

In essence, then, ERB members serve in a variety of related capacities, including as subject-matter experts, critics, gatekeepers, and opinion leaders. And this raises an issue that is at the core of this paper: is it possible for individuals to consistently identify, a priori superior scholarly performance? In terms of choosing marketing's "Oscars," the question concerns the feasibility of selecting those articles that are expected to have a far-higher-than-average impact on marketing theory and/or practice. This is clearly a difficult task, but one that nevertheless is attempted by the ERBs of top marketing journals when choosing the "best" articles. This paper seeks to provide one means of evaluating the accuracy of marketing's "Oscar" selections using a measurable outcome – citation count data accessed on the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) Web of Science. While citation counts are an imperfect vehicle for gauging scientific impact, they are commonly accepted as the leading metric for doing so.

With this in mind, the next section of the paper examines the ability of the peer review system to recognize original, innovative research. After this, hypotheses are offered concerning the anticipated performance of marketing's "Oscars" vs that of non-award-winning research comprised of two comparison groups – randomly chosen lead and typical (i.e. non-lead) marketing articles from the same journals and years as the winners. Additional hypotheses explore whether the six award-winning groups themselves (*JCR*/Best, Ferber, Green, Maynard, MSI/Root, and O'Dell) differ with respect to the number of citations received, whether a possible halo or Matthew effect inflates citations of award-winning papers, and if non-empirical research outperforms empirical. The results of these hypothesis tests are then presented. We conclude that it is possible to discern high-quality research, but that such a process is daunting, by no means guaranteed, and subject to qualifications.

As an addendum, it is important to emphasize the very different natures of our paper and that by Stremersch *et al.* (2007), since the latter also address the effect of award-winning marketing articles on citation rates. But they do so only in cursory fashion. For example, they treat prize-winning research as a dummy variable, and it is one of some sixty independent variables specified in their full model of factors affecting citation rates. Moreover, they note only that award-winning research is statistically significantly associated with citation rates. Unfortunately, they provide no estimates of the citation rates themselves for award-winning vs other research – surely the very thing the reader wants to know. Finally, their account of award-winning work constitutes no more than three or four sentences in their article. Our paper, in contrast, provides a detailed analysis of the impact of marketing's "Oscars" on citations.

Can peer review identify high-impact, innovative research?

Two sources of evidence, discussed below, indicate that peer review is not a particularly effective mechanism for recognizing innovative research. The first is the fact that many outstanding papers initially are rejected for publication. The second, and barely explored source, is that comparative assessments show prize-winning research fares little better than other work published in a discipline.

Initial rejection of important research

Following his inspection of 316 commentaries by authors of Citation Classic® articles, Campanario (1993) reported that only 18 of them (5.7 percent) claimed to have had difficulties in publishing their research. This would appear to ratify the soundness of peer review. But this is not how Campanario sees the situation. He remarks that these 18 "problematic" papers, some of them written by subsequent Nobel Prize recipients, were cited an average of 253 times, with values ranging from 105 to 530. In addition, they tended to feature innovative methods or theories, or supplied new interpretations of previous data. Far from being satisfied with the performance of the refereeing system, Campanario (1993, p. 357) had grounds for lament: "[. . .] but, precisely because of the great impact and importance of the papers involved, their rejection or delayed publication can have pernicious effects in a given discipline." Confirming this, three of the 18 problematic papers are the most cited from their respective journals.

In a later article covering both the natural and social sciences, Campanario (1995) describes how several highly influential efforts were rebuffed by one or more journals. Eight of these later earned Nobel Prizes, while an additional six became the most cited in the journals in which eventually they were published.

A further inquiry by Campanario (1996) also is illuminating. He examined a set of 205 Citation Classic® commentaries by authors of some of the most-cited physical science papers of all time, and found that 22 (10.7 percent) had problems getting published. During the period 1945-1988, these same works exhibited citation frequencies ranging from 1,675 to 9,390. Some of them were rejected by journal referees, usually because the findings were "not sufficiently important" or they "clashed with existing ideas or methods" (Campanario, 1996, p. 306). Two of the rejected papers became the most cited in the journals that published them, with 2,088 and 4,372 citations apiece. Another rejected paper, which one referee advised "should not be published in any journal," accumulated 1,675 citations (Campanario, 1996, p. 307).

Sometimes highly original submissions are turned down because reviewers fail to appreciate how they add to a discipline's body of knowledge. This seems to be the case in an example from economics. Gans and Shepherd (1994) asked over 140 leading economists (including all living winners of the Nobel Prize and the celebrated John Bates Clark Medal) to give examples, if any, where journals had rejected their papers. Over 60 percent responded. Gans and Shepherd's (1994, p. 166) survey "demonstrates that many papers that have become classics were rejected initially by at least one journal – and often, more than one."

We obtained via the Web of Science the total number of citations garnered by some of these classics from their inception through 2007. We also calculated their average citations per annum (ACPA) scores by dividing this total by the number of years since publication. Among these classics, with the above information in brackets, are Akerlof's (1970) work on the economics of information [1,725; 45.4]; Becker's (1965) theory of the allocation of time [1,553; 36.1]; Black and Scholes' (1973) option-pricing formula [2,740; 78.3]; Lucas' (1972) exposition of rational expectations [789; 21.9]; and Sharpe's (1964) capital asset pricing model [1,676; 38.1]. Despite such highly original and provocative works, Gans and Shepherd (1994) disclose that some of the responding authors told of enduring dismissive comments from referees: the results are "well-known and not interesting" (p. 172); "the ideas were 'already known' somehow"

(p. 173); and "referees tell me that it's obvious, it's wrong, and anyway they said it years ago" (p. 178).

Finally, Straub (2008) alleges that top journals reject good papers because editors are afraid to take risks. Understandably, editors are reluctant to overturn reviewer recommendations about publication decisions (but see Clark *et al.*, 2006; Clark and Wright, 2007, in this regard). However, Straub proceeds, the latter tend to focus on methods to the detriment of ideas. As an example of this tendency, had the editor of *Information Systems Research* followed reviewer advice he would not have published the most cited article, by far, in the information systems literature between 1990 and 2004 – DeLone and McLean's (1992) work on information systems success [432; 28.8]. Straub's (2008, p. vi) urging that "Good ideas should always prevail over good methods, all things being equal" is not the reaction of some disaffected scholar. He is the current editor of *MIS Quarterly*, and the above information comes from a recent editorial.

Comparative assessments

To the best of our knowledge, only two investigations have compared the citation rates of award-winning with non-award-winning research. One is by Stremersch *et al.* (2007), whose limitations were mentioned earlier. The other by Lee *et al.* (2003), covering the period 1970-2000, compared the citations earned by award-winning papers published in the journal *Human Factors* with those acquired by non-award-winning articles in that same journal. Using the ISI database, they found that the thirty annual winners of the Jerome H. Ely Award in ergonomics were cited an average of 1.3 times a year (only citations in *Human Factors* were employed) vs 0.6 for 1,652 non-winners. Yet Lee *et al.* (2003, p. 226) were reluctant to claim anything more than a "[. . .] modest effect of the award on subsequent citation rate[s]." In fact, they emphasized that of the thirty articles with the highest citation counts in *Human Factors* during 1970-2000, only one (the 11th most frequently cited article) received the Ely Award. So, in a less-than-ringing affirmation, Lee *et al.* (2003, p. 231) cautioned: "The results suggest that the award process may not be able to select articles that will be the most highly cited, but that it can help differentiate them from those that are unlikely to ever be cited."

Hypotheses

If it is possible to determine high-impact scholarship, a difficult task as we have seen, then award-winning articles should attract more citations than other published work. The latter, here, consists of randomly selected lead and typical (i.e. non-lead) articles from the same journals and years as the award winners. Sometimes an award-winning paper is also the lead article in a journal. When this occurred another lead article was singled out randomly from the same year as the award winner to ensure no double counting.

Moreover, because lead articles generally enjoy a privileged status in many journals, and therefore signal additional quality, they might be expected to capture more citations than typical research. Empirical results on this issue are divided. Medoff's (2003) study of eight major economics journals found no statistically significant difference between citations acquired by lead articles over others. Conversely, van Dalen and Henkens' (2001) analysis of 17 demography periodicals, Stremersch *et al.*'s (2007) inspection of five preeminent marketing publications, and Judge *et al.*'s (2007) examination

of 21 management journals reported statistically significantly higher citation rates for lead articles vs those appearing later in a volume.

In light of the preceding evidence, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H1. A hierarchical pattern of citation rates is anticipated across the three categories of articles. Specifically, award-winning scholarship will earn more citations on average than lead articles, which, in turn, will outscore typical papers.

There are no pressing reasons to suggest why five of the six award-winning categories should outperform the others. An argument can be made, however, that the Ferber Award may collect fewer citations, on average, than the other five groups. This is because the Ferber Award is based on dissertation research. And while this work frequently is exemplary, it often is the winner's first journal publication. This prize is for those only just beginning their careers; winners of the other awards tend to be scholars possessing research skills cultivated over the years in the course of gaining extensive publication experience. Consequently:

H2. No differences are expected in the average citation rates of the Green, JCR/Best, Maynard, MSI/Root, and O'Dell award winners. But scores for these groups may be higher than those for the Ferber Award.

In evaluating the processes underlying the allocation of citations, two key viewpoints have emerged: the universalist (or normative) and the social constructivist (or particularistic). The universalist position assumes that science operates as a transparent system where authors are rewarded (e.g. by being cited by others) based on the quality of their scholarly efforts. In opposition, the social constructivists believe that authors are cited less because of the quality of their work, and more because of the positions they occupy within science's hierarchical structure.

Various studies have looked at the influence of universalism and social constructivism on citation flows. In an astrophysics setting, for example, Baldi (1998) recorded support for a universalist interpretation of the allotment of citations, and none for particularism. In the social and managerial sciences the findings are mixed. A study of the demography literature by van Dalen and Henkens (2001) showed that both universalist and social constructivist perspectives help explain citation frequencies, but they gave more weight to the former. Bergh *et al.*'s (2006) investigation of all articles published in the *Strategic Management Journal* (*SMJ*) from 1990 to 1999 reported that author characteristics have the most impact on procuring citations, thus underlining the importance of social constructivism. On the other hand, management (Judge *et al.*, 2007) and marketing (Stremersch *et al.*, 2007) studies have acknowledged the effects of both camps.

An important manifestation of social constructivism is what Merton (1968) labeled the Matthew effect, whereby certain authors tend to wield a disproportionate influence based on their reputations. It originates from the Gospel according to Matthew (25:29): "For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away." In particular, researchers may be expected to pay closer attention to the works of eminent scholars than to those less esteemed. Accordingly, the likelihood cannot be discounted that the citation-drawing power of marketing's "Oscars" is enhanced precisely because their selection as prize winners elevates both their and their author's visibility in the academic community.

Absent such heightened recognition, citations for these works might be lower. It is difficult in general to assess whether such a halo or Matthew effect operates on the citation counts of prize winners. But a unique opportunity for a simple, reasonably direct test for the existence of this phenomenon is made possible in the case of the O'Dell Award. Unlike the other prizes which are given shortly after publication, beneficiaries of the O'Dell Award are announced five years after the article has appeared in print. So an indication of a potential Matthew effect is to compare citations gathered by O'Dell Award winners for the years prior to their being honored with those obtained subsequently. Other things being equal, the latter should be higher if a halo effect is in play. (Note that a test of this hypothesis would be compromised if citation counts are among the criteria for selecting the O'Dell Award. But this is not the case for the O'Dell or any of the other awards.) Therefore:

H3. Higher average citations will accrue to O'Dell winners for the five years following receipt of the award than for the five years preceding it.

Some historical data reveals that many marketing articles that have attained "classic" status are of a non-empirical, conceptual nature. This is shown in a number of anthologies. Thus, for example, 33 of 38 (87 percent) articles in Enis *et al.*'s (1995) *Marketing Classics: A Selection of Influential Articles* are non-empirical. Likewise, 35 of 40 (88 percent) listings in Thompson's (1981) *The Great Writings in Marketing* is not fact based, nor are all 52 entries in Sheth and Garrett's (1986) *Marketing Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. The preponderance of non-empirical research in marketing's archive of seminal works is something also experienced in the management literature (Judge *et al.*, 2007; Rynes, 2006). Tellingly, the *Academy of Management Review*, which publishes no empirical research, has had the highest impact (citation) score of any marketing or management journal (Bettencourt and Houston, 2001). It currently ranks third in citation impact among business journals, behind *JM* and *MIS Quarterly* (Rust, 2008).

Four data-based studies have addressed the issue of whether non-empirical or empirical research generates more citations. They yield discrepant results. Following an analysis of all articles published in *SMJ* from 1980 to 1999, Phelan *et al.* (2002) concluded there were no differences in citation rates between the two categories, an outcome echoed in Stremersch *et al.*'s (2007) marketing study. In contrast, Bergh *et al.*'s (2006) examination of all articles contained in *SMJ* during the period 1990-1999 discovered that non-empirical work outscored empirical. Finally, Judge *et al.* (2007) state that non-empirical (and meta-analytic) review articles enjoy higher citations than others in the management literature.

After weighing the above information, we postulate the following:

H4a. Non-empirical award-winning articles will earn more average citations than their empirical (including both quantitative and qualitative data) counterparts.

H4b. This same effect is expected to translate to all non-empirical and empirical articles in this study.

The performance of marketing's "Oscars"

The results in this paper are based on the analysis of ACPA scores, excluding self-citations, for some 343 full-length articles appearing in the *JM*, *JMR*, and *JCR* from

their year of publication through 2007. The year 2004 was chosen as the cut-off point for article inclusion in the study, thus allowing the more recent of them a minimum of three years (2005-2007) in which to gain citations.

The *H1* predicted that award-winning research should exhibit higher citation rates than randomly selected lead articles, which themselves should outperform randomly chosen typical (non-lead) articles. There are 159 marketing "Oscars," 92 lead articles, and 92 typical articles in the sample. There are 92 lead and 92 typical articles because these data were gathered for each year from the inception of the earliest awards established in each of the three journals through 2004; *JM* = 35 articles, *JMR* = 31 articles, and *JCR* = 26 articles for a total of 92 lead and typical articles.

The ACPA scores for award-winning, lead, and typical articles were compared. Because these scores are positively skewed, a square root transformation was employed which reduced the degree of skewness in the data for the prize-winning (1.9-0.8), lead (1.5-0.2), and typical (2.8-1.1) groups. Therefore, all statistical analyses in this paper were carried out on the transformed data but the results in the text, tables and appendices present ACPA scores in the original scale.

Table I shows that award winners (6.6) receive over twice as many citations per year as lead articles (2.9), and over three times more than the typical article (1.8). Analysis of variance indicates that these differences are statistically significant ($F_{2,340} = 55.1$, $p < 0.0001$). Subsequent investigation employing Duncan's multiple range test revealed statistical differences at the 0.05 level between the means of all three groups, thus supporting *H1*. This would appear to suggest that it is possible to use citation count data to recognize outstanding research, a topic returned to later.

Lacking prior justification, *H2* states that no statistically significant differences are expected between the mean citation magnitudes of five of the award-winning groups, the possible exception being the Ferber Award which may score lower than these. Table I gives the ACPA scores for all groups. From highest to lowest they are as follows: *JCR*/Best (8.5), Maynard (8.1), MSI/Root (6.5), O'Dell (6.2), Green (5.3), and Ferber (4.0). This hypothesis also is upheld. For example, the means of the six groups are statistically significantly different at the 0.10 level ($F_{5,153} = 2.0$, $p = 0.09$). Of particular interest, Duncan's multiple range test confirmed the equality of the means of the hypothesized five groups, which were significantly higher than that for the Ferber Award at the 0.05 level.

Thus, far, it has been established that marketing's "Oscars" on average outperform other work, in terms of collecting citations, published in the *JM, JMR,* and *JCR*, and (Ferber Award excepted) are on par with one another. Table II showcases the 20 most cited award-winning articles. This table reveals that the Maynard and MSI/Root honorees are responsible for 13 of them, with *JCR*/Best (4) and O'Dell (3) making up the balance.

With astonishing averages of 30.8 citations per year apiece, Kohli and Jaworski's (1990) MSI/Root Award-winning essay on market orientation and Day's (1994) Maynard prize-winning paper on "The capabilities of market-driven organizations" tied for first place. Third in rank is the oldest contribution to the top 20, Alba and Hutchinson's (1987) *JCR*/Best paper "Dimensions of Consumer Expertise" (26.5). Another older article, Maynard winner Zeithaml (1988), occupies fourth place for her model of customer perceptions of price, quality, and value (25.9). By way of contrast, a recent piece on the evolution of marketing logic by Vargo and Lusch (2004) also won the Maynard Award

Statistics	Award-winning articles	Lead articles	Typical articles	Individual award-winning articles					
				Maynard (*JM*)	MSI/Root (*JM*)	Green (JMR)	O'Dell (*JMR*)	Best (JCR)	Ferber (*JCR*)
ACPA	6.6	2.9	1.8	8.1	6.5	5.3	6.2	8.5	4.0
Standard deviation	6.1	2.4	2.2	7.8	7.0	2.6	4.3	6.5	3.1
95% confidence interval (±)	0.9	0.5	0.4	2.6	2.3	1.6	1.5	2.8	1.2
Sample size	159	92	92	34	37	11	31	21	25

Table I.
ACPA results

Rank	Authors	Award (publication year)	ACPA scores[a]	Total citations	Empirical article?
1	Kohli and Jaworski	MSI/Root (1990)	30.8	554	No
2	Day	Maynard (1994)	30.8	431	No
3	Alba and Hutchinson	*JCR*/Best (1987)	26.5	557	No
4	Zeithaml	Maynard (1988)	25.9	518	No
5	Vargo and Lusch	Maynard (2004)	22.8	91	No
6	Keller	Maynard (1993)	22.7	341	No
7	Alba *et al.*	MSI/Root (1997)	22.6	248	No
8	Fournier	*JCR*/Best (1998)	22.2	222	No
9	Webster	MSI/Root (1992)	20.0	320	No
10	Boulding *et al.*	O'Dell (1993)	19.7	296	Yes
11	Rust *et al.*	MSI/Root (2004)	18.5	74	Yes
12	Mahajan *et al.*	Maynard (1990)	16.4	295	No
13	Simonson and Tversky	O'Dell (1992)	15.3	244	Yes
14	Muniz and O'Guinn	*JCR*/Best (2001)	14.3	100	No
15	Srivastava *et al.*	Maynard/MSI/ Root (1998)	13.7	137	No
16	Hunt and Morgan	Maynard (1995)	13.4	174	No
17	Mittal and Kamakura	O'Dell (2001)	13.3	93	Yes
18	Rindfleisch and Heide	Maynard (1997)	13.3	146	No
19	Friestad and Wright	*JCR*/Best (1994)	13.2	185	No
20	Day and Wensley	MSI/Root (1988)	13.2	263	No

Note: [a]The ranking of articles with the same ACPA scores at one decimal place was decided by the higher second decimal place

Table II.
The 20 most cited award-winning articles

(22.8) to round out the top five. One of the articles in Table II had the distinction of winning both the Maynard and MSI/Root awards. This was 15th-ranked Srivastava *et al.*'s (1998) portrayal of market-based assets and shareholder value (13.7).

Remarkably, some of the authors shown in Table II have won prizes more than once. These include Alba, for work referenced above, and for Alba *et al.*'s (1997) MSI/Root award on interactive home shopping (22.6). Day likewise has earned two places on this list. One prize has already been acknowledged, while the other is the MSI/Root Award to Day and Wensley (1988) for providing a framework for diagnosing competitive superiority (13.2). Finally, Zeithaml appears in Table II on three occasions. One of these has been referred to previously. The second, Boulding *et al.*'s (1993) description of a dynamic process model of service quality (19.7) won the O'Dell Award. The third entry is for Rust *et al.*'s (2004) account of the return on marketing (18.5) which took the MSI/Root Award.

H3 allows a test of the Matthew effect of author prestige influencing citation counts. This is accomplished by comparing citations for the O'Dell winners for the years prior to and after receiving the award. *Ceteris paribus*, post-award scores should exceed those before the winners were announced if a Matthew effect is present. Support for *H3* and a Matthew effect for the O'Dell Award is seen when comparing the ACPA scores for the winners over the five years before (4.3) and after (6.8) the granting of the prize in a one-tailed test ($t = 2.6$, $p = 0.01$). It must be pointed out, however, that the O'Dell pre-award score nevertheless surpasses those for lead (2.9) and typical (1.8) articles given in Table I ($F_{2,208} = 18.2$, $p < 0.0001$).

Owing to their dominance in various anthologies, coupled with other research findings, *H4a* predicts that conceptual, non-empirical award-winning articles will gather more citations, on average, than their empirical peers. Of the 159 award winners, 68 (43 percent) are non-empirical with an overall ACPA score of 8.0. The corresponding figure for the 91 empirical award winners is 5.5. The difference between these two means in a one-tailed test is significant at the 0.10 level ($t = 1.4$, $p = 0.08$) providing limited support for *H4a*. In the dataset as a whole, 123 (36 percent) articles are non-empirical. They attained an ACPA score of 5.5. The equivalent score for the 220 empirical contributions is 3.6. A one-tailed test shows that the mean differences are statistically significant ($t = 2.2$, $p = 0.01$), thereby validating *H4b*.

Discussion

That award-winning articles generate more citations on average than others is a testament to the procedures used in their selection. But this does not mean that these protocols are without limitations. This is shown in two ways. First, there are many award winners with only modest citation rates. Second, there are many non-award winners with outstanding scores. These two themes are examined below.

Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of ACPA scores for the 159 award winners. Seven percent (11/159) of them are cited less than once a year on average, while 16 percent (26/159) are cited fewer than twice per annum, or about the average score obtained for typical research (ACPA = 1.8). About 31 percent (50/159) of winners have ACPA scores below three, putting them on par with lead articles (ACPA = 2.9). Nor are these 50 award winners necessarily restricted to older works where it is reasonable to expect citations to diminish over time. All told, some 54 percent (86/159) of prize winners are cited less than five times a year. And as must be in a positively skewed distribution, the median ACPA score (4.5) is less than the mean (6.6).

Nevertheless, much excellent research (in terms of citations garnered) has not been chosen by the various selection committees. For example, while the grand ACPA score for the 159 prize-winning articles is 6.6, the equivalent result for the top 159 non-award-winning articles published in the *JM, JMR,* and *JCR* is more than twice this magnitude at 14.7 ($t = 12.0$, $p < 0.0001$).

Consider, further, the 20 top cited non-award-winning papers published in the *JM*, *JMR*, and *JCR* (Table III). Of note, only the top four award-winning works – by Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Day (1994), Alba and Hutchinson (1987), and Zeithaml (1988) – would merit inclusion in this list. In first place in Table III, with total and ACPA scores in brackets, is Morgan and Hunt's (1994) description of the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing [966; 69.0]. Second through fifth places belong to Fornell and Larcker's (1981) work on structural equation models [1,549; 57.4], Churchill's (1979) suggestions for developing better measures of marketing constructs [1,233; 42.5], Parasuraman *et al.*'s (1985) conceptual model of service quality [903; 39.3], and Armstrong and Overton's (1977) estimation of non-response bias in mail surveys [1,215; 39.2]. Note also that most of these papers are relatively old, yet still are able to maintain stunning counts.

As Table IV shows, the ACPA score of 19.4 for the top 20 award-winning papers is substantially below the 34.3 attained by their 20 non-award-winning counterparts ($t = 5.8$, $p < 0.0001$). Indeed, every statistical comparison in Table IV between the performance of the top 159 award-winning and non-award-winning works, by

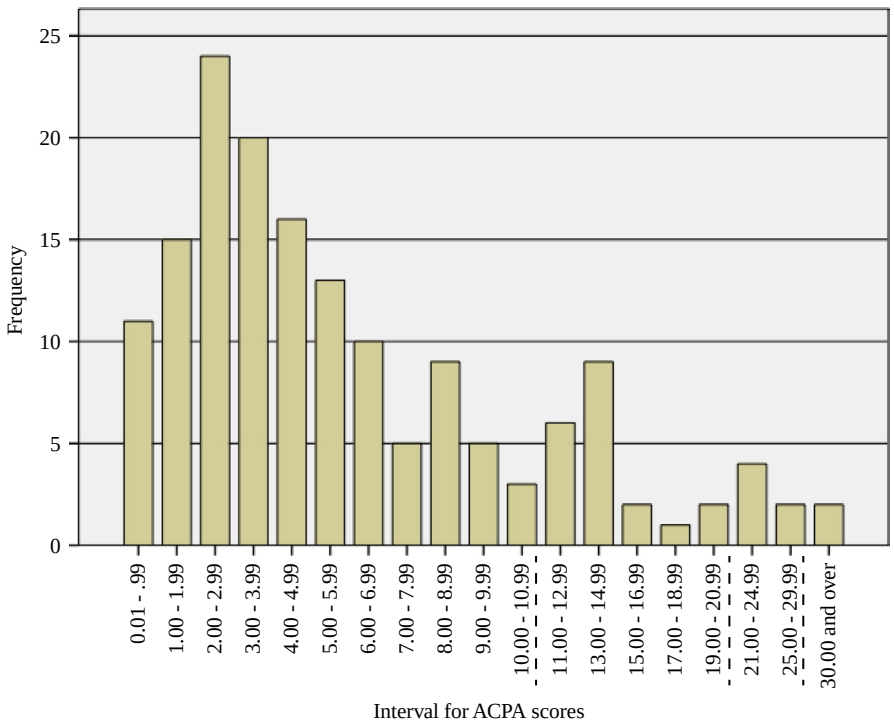

Figure 1.
ACPA scores for award winners

20-article cohorts, confirms this trend. So, high impact research is missed by the prize-winning search committees.

Moreover, there is information, given by an analysis of O'Dell winners, indicating the possible existence of a Matthew effect. This is troubling inasmuch as it lends credence to the social constructivist accusation that what is written may not be as important as who writes it. Clearly, this is a knotty problem, because better-known authors/institutions are expected to produce superior work. Nonetheless, the fact that ACPA scores are significantly higher for the five years following receipt of the O'Dell Award (6.8) compared with the five years prior to it (4.3) cannot be ignored.

Of additional concern, some evidence attests to a greater citation-earning propensity for non-empirical, conceptual research. In this context it is instructive to note that fully 16 of the 20 most-cited prize-winning articles in Table II are non-empirical, highlighting their disproportionate prominence at the very pinnacle of marketing's most honored works. Only nine of the 20 most-cited non-award-winning articles published in *JM*, *JMR*, and *JCR* (Table III) are non-empirical, but they constitute four of the top five, and six of the top ten, places. Unfortunately, Hubbard and Lindsay (2002) demonstrate that, over time, empirical research is systematically displacing non-empirical contributions. With the percentage of non-empirical work in parentheses, they show the following trend for the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s: *JM* (51, 39, and 26 percent), *JMR* (18, 14, and 9 percent), and *JCR* (31, 22, and 19 percent). Based on a 50 percent simple random sample of issues for each year from 2001 to 2007, our estimates of the incidence of published non-empirical research extend this monotonic

Rank	Authors	Journal (publication year)	ACPA scores[a]	Total citations	Empirical article?
1	Morgan and Hunt	*JM* (1994)	69.0	966	Yes
2	Fornell and Larcker	*JMR* (1981)	57.4	1,549	No
3	Churchill	*JMR* (1979)	42.5	1,233	No
4	Parasuraman *et al.*	*JM* (1985)	39.3	903	No
5	Armstrong and Overton	*JMR* (1977)	39.2	1,215	No
6	Jaworski and Kohli	*JM* (1993)	36.0	540	Yes
7	Dwyer *et al.*	*JM* (1987)	35.0	735	No
8	Anderson and Narus	*JM* (1990)	32.1	577	Yes
9	Hoffman and Novak	*JM* (1996)	31.6	379	No
10	Narver and Slater	*JM* (1990)	31.3	563	Yes
11	Doney and Cannon	*JM* (1997)	31.3	344	Yes
12	Ganesan	*JM* (1994)	30.9	433	Yes
13	Cronin and Taylor	*JM* (1992)	30.2	483	Yes
14	Gerbing and Anderson	*JMR* (1988)	29.3	586	No
15	Zeithaml *et al.*	*JM* (1996)	27.8	334	Yes
16	Steenkamp and Baumgartner	*JCR* (1998)	25.7	257	Yes
17	Sheppard *et al.*	*JCR* (1988)	25.6	512	Yes
18	Slater and Narver	*JM* (1995)	25.5	332	No
19	Belk	*JCR* (1988)	23.1	461	No
20	Petty *et al.*	*JCR* (1983)	22.9	572	Yes

Note: [a]The ranking of articles with the same ACPA scores at one decimal place was decided by the higher second decimal place

Table III.
The 20 most cited non-award-winning articles

Twenty-article cohorts	Award winners[a]	Non-award winners[a]	*t*-value	*p*-value[b]
Top 20	19.4 (5.9)	34.3 (11.4)	5.8	<0.0001
21-40	10.6 (1.5)	19.3 (1.4)	18.3	<0.0001
41-60	7.2 (0.7)	14.6 (1.1)	26.3	<0.0001
61-80	5.2 (0.5)	12.0 (0.6)	39.7	<0.0001
81-100	4.0 (0.3)	10.5 (0.4)	58.5	<0.0001
101-120	3.0 (0.3)	9.5 (0.3)	69.0	<0.0001
121-140	2.1 (0.3)	8.9 (0.2)	66.1	<0.0001
141-159	0.8 (0.5)	8.2 (0.2)	26.1	<0.0001

Notes: [a]Standard deviations are in parentheses; [b]*p*-values are reported at the <0.0001 level for convenience, but are far smaller than this

Table IV.
ACPA comparisons of 159 award-winning and top 159 non-award-winning articles

decline: *JM* (5.6 percent), *JMR* (8.1 percent), and *JCR* (8.6 percent). When expressed in terms of the amount of journal space, in pages, devoted to non-empirical articles, these figures are lower still: *JM* (5.0 percent), *JMR* (3.7 percent), and *JCR* (5.9 percent). Published non-empirical research is a dying breed. And this, despite the fact that 20 years ago the AMA Task Force on the Development of Marketing Thought (1988) called for greater emphasis on such papers. Disturbingly, it is a plea that has fallen on deaf ears.

The above discussion on the disappearance of non-empirical contributions in the *JM*, *JMR*, and *JCR* has two major implications. First, it exaggerates the citation frequency of empirical vs conceptual research. As Teigen (2002) explains, the majority of citations in journal reference lists are only five to ten years old. If this is the case, then empirical work is virtually all that remains to be cited in marketing's recent literature, thus skewing the findings with regard to *H4a* and *H4b*.

Second, it is allied to the relevance of the work published in marketing journals for practitioners. It is understandable why the latter mostly ignore the contents of journals that focus almost solely on empirical research dealing with specific situations that are of no direct concern to them. Conceptual articles, on the other hand, because of their greater generality, are more likely to appeal to practitioners and academics alike.

Conclusions

It is informative to revisit the question raised at the outset of this paper: is it feasible to recognize, prospectively, extraordinary intellectual accomplishments? The pattern of results obtained in this study concerning prize-winning work in marketing would appear to suggest that it is possible to identify at least some of those articles that are likely to be more influential than others within the discipline – award winners (6.6) received on average higher ACPAs than lead articles (2.9) and typical research (1.8). This is no mean feat, and certainly no foregone conclusion. Indeed, our results run counter to a literature illustrating the difficulties involved in detecting, from the outset, remarkable work.

However, that many award winners have mediocre citation scores, and many non-award winners boast stellar records, shows there is room for improvement in the selection of marketing's "Oscars." Of course, the same could no doubt be said about those dispensing the statuettes in Hollywood.

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Note: Only articles that appear in the narrative are listed in the references. The editor, however, was supplied electronically with a list of all 343 articles involved in this work.

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