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*'It Can Be Assumed That, If Our Conceptual Model Is Valid, Then...': The Construction of Multiple Identities in Economics vs. Marketing*

L'articolo presenta i risultati di uno studio comparativo sull'identità nell'ambito di due discipline affini quali economia e marketing. Sulla base di un corpus multidisciplinare costruito da articoli di ricerca autentici, l'analisi intende far luce sui principali elementi linguistici ricollegabili a tre dimensioni dell'identità: professionale, accademica e disciplinare (Crawford Camiciottoli 2007). Lo studio quantitativo e qualitativo dei *patterns* collocazionali delle parole chiave riconducibili all'identità mostra una sostanziale omogeneità disciplinare sotto il profilo della costruzione dei rispettivi profili accademici e professionali: infatti, tanto gli economisti quanto gli studiosi di marketing si presentano come esperti credibili nella conoscenza dei tecnicismi del proprio campo di ricerca e nella creazione di un rapporto dialogico attivo con i destinatari. Al contrario, i dati suggeriscono una distinzione epistemologica più netta in relazione all'identità disciplinare. Se infatti il marketing si caratterizza per i costanti rimandi alla natura empirica e sperimentale della disciplina, l'economia manifesta i tratti del ragionamento ipotetico quale elemento fondante della propria cultura disciplinare.

### *1. Introduction*

Identity has always represented a crucial organising feature of our social world and as such it has attracted careful consideration from many disciplinary perspectives. Despite its multifarious definitions, categorisations and conceptualisations, identity is commonly understood as 'who we are to each other', that is our personal self-image, self-concept or sense of self (i.e. individual identity), and our belongingness to or identification with the members of a social, institutional or organizational unit (i.e. collective identity). At first identity was treated by essentialist theorists as an a priori, "cognitive, socialised, phenomenological or psychic phenomenon that governs human action" (Benwell / Stokoe 2006: 3). Later on, however, the notion of identity has

undergone a radical reinterpretation and relocation: from the private, pre-discursive, inner realms of the human psyche to the more public, post-modern, social spheres of discourse. From the latter perspective, identity has been defined as the upshot of communicative practices and as a social 'artefact' that is created by the self and interpreted by others in discourse (Fairclough 1992; Sarangi / Roberts 1999; De Fina 2003). In line with such authors, Bauman (2001: 1) claims that identity is

an emergent construction, the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others.

The assumption of identity as a discursive category underlies a variety of studies all geared towards its examination as a collection of demographic, local and temporary positions and features – i.e. age, gender, race, social class etc. (see Bucholtz / Hall 2005). Concomitantly, research has also focused on the constructs of identity (e.g. institutional, organizational, corporate, professional, disciplinary etc.) and variations in its enactment across contexts, e.g. everyday conversations, institutional and professional settings and narrations (cf. Drew / Heritage 1992; Gunnarsson *et al.* 1997; Cornelissen *et al.* 2007; Crawford Camiciottoli 2007; Piironen / Timonen 2007).

In academic settings the construction of identity has been widely accounted for in oral discourse, talks, speeches and lectures (see Dyer / Keller-Cohen 2000; van de Mieroop 2005) but has been seldom examined in written discursive practices.

Thus, in an attempt to fill this gap, the present paper concentrates on a prototypical instance of institutional and academic discourse, namely research articles (RAs), and endeavours to shed some light on the different categories of identity which are simultaneously manifested in the writing of economics and marketing scholars.

The analysis of the different strategies deployed to craft identity in the two disciplines reflects a growing interest in cross-disciplinary studies (cf. Hyland 2000; Dahl 2004; Bamford / Bondi 2005; Hyland / Bondi 2006). In this respect, economics has been described as a theoretical, model-

testing and speculative science (Bondi 2005), whereas it is broadly accepted that marketing and business are more empirical, model-developing disciplines (Hemais 2001; Bondi 2006).

The two perspectives will be integrated and woven together to provide new insights into the concomitant enactment of three categories of identity in economics vs. marketing RAs: professional, academic and disciplinary identity. To put it more accurately, the focus will be on authors' self-presentation as experts exerting their authority in a community of practice (professional identity), as legitimate members of academia (academic identity) and as affiliates of a distinct community of scholars with its own values (disciplinary identity). As academics, RA authors will be specifically approached as proactive researchers (research-oriented academic identity) on the one hand, and as instructors capable of transmitting knowledge to less expert members of the same discourse community (instruction-oriented academic identity), on the other hand.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of a range of lexicogrammatical and metadiscursive elements will reveal combinations and concurrent realisations of a three-fold identity in written academic texts. Furthermore, the discursive features which enact professional, academic and disciplinary identity will be examined comparatively in an economics and marketing corpus. The results of this comparative study are discussed in Section 3 after a description of the materials under investigation and the analytic approaches adopted (Section 2).

## *2. Materials and methods*

This study is based on two comparable sections of a multi-disciplinary corpus of authentic research articles: the so-called HEM corpus. It consists of RAs from a range of specialised journals in history, economics and marketing. The first section (HEM-Economics) consists of 436 research articles published in ten journals: *European Economic Review* (EER), *European Journal of Political Economy* (EJPE), *History of Political Economy* (HPE), *International Journal of Industrial Organization* (IJIO), *International Review of Economics and*

*Finance* (IREF), *Journal of Corporate Finance* (JCF), *Journal of Development Economics* (JDE), *Journal of Economics and Business* (JEB), *Journal of Socio-Economics* (JSE), *The North-American Journal of Economics and Finance* (NAJEF). On the other hand, the second section (HEM-Marketing) covers a total of 322 articles taken from seven journals: *Academy of Management Journal* (AoMJ), *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ), *Business and Society Review* (BaSR), *Business Strategy Review* (BSR), *Journal of Marketing Research* (JoMR), *Journal of World Business* (JoWB), and *Marketing Science* (MS).

The two corpus sections were collected in a way that makes them both representative and suitable for comparative, cross-disciplinary examination. Each body of materials contains approximately 2.5 million tokens in a varying number of RAs (review articles, commentaries and editorials were not considered). The corpus is synchronic, since it is composed of all the issues of each journal published in the years 1999 and 2000. Moreover, it only includes full texts, omitting only footnotes, tables and references.

The study began with the identification of keywords, by comparing the economics and the marketing wordlists generated by the linguistic software package Wordsmith Tools (Scott 1998). The comparison of two parallel keyword lists (HEM-Economics vs. HEM-Marketing and vice-versa) led us to focus on the 150 most outstanding wordforms in each list. Among these, we picked out the terms that appeared to correspond to the three-fold construction of identity adopted for this study (cf. Crawford Camiciottoli 2007). Subsequently, we carried out a preliminary concordance-based survey (Sinclair 1996, 1998 and 2003) in order to verify whether the items provided significant evidence as to these three inter-related dimensions of identity.

Keywords were then concordanced with the aim of gaining insights into their collocational and phraseological patterns. The analysis sought to illustrate how the discursive construction of identity is shaped in two seemingly close disciplines, thus highlighting any major similarities or contrasts. In particular, the realisation of professional identity was studied by paying attention to the use of technical terms. Moreover, academic identity was explored at two levels: instruction-oriented identity (linked to dialogic episodes), and research-oriented identity (linked to specific research activities in each discipline). Finally,

disciplinary identity was observed in terms of the distinctive epistemological peculiarities of economics and marketing.

The findings presented in Section 3 show a substantial degree of homogeneity between the two disciplines from the viewpoint of both professional and academic identity. In contrast, they highlight remarkable differences in terms of disciplinary identity, whereby the largely empirical nature of marketing is opposed to the deeply-rooted hypothetical drive of economic reasoning.

### 3. Results

The creation of two related keyword lists – Economics vs. Marketing and vice-versa – allowed us to identify the main lexical items through which identity is conveyed in the two disciplines. Selected keywords are listed in Table 1 below with related raw frequency:

ECONOMICS		MARKETING	
Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
<i>Rate</i>	6,923	<i>Brand</i>	3,093
<i>Equilibrium</i>	4,268	<i>Were</i>	8,162
<i>Income</i>	3,585	<i>Organizations</i>	2,340
<i>Tax</i>	2,773	<i>Marketing</i>	2,021
<i>Inflation</i>	2,674	<i>Business</i>	3,681
<i>Fig.</i>	1,912	<i>Research</i>	3,846
<i>Paper</i>	2,066	<i>Was</i>	8,719
<i>If</i>	7,727	<i>Performance</i>	3,717
<i>Table</i>	4,405	<i>Subjects</i>	1,518
<i>Where</i>	3,984	<i>You</i>	1,342
<i>Case</i>	3,340	<i>Study</i>	3,139
<i>Since</i>	2,369	<i>Practices</i>	1,021
<i>Then</i>	3,252	<i>Managers</i>	2,552
<i>Suppose</i>	492	<i>Researchers</i>	753
<i>Assume</i>	1,225	<i>Our</i>	5,583

Table 1. Selected keywords and related raw frequency.

As mentioned in Section 2, a preliminary concordance-based survey provided evidence that these were both recurrent and indicative signposts of the three levels of identity discussed here. Subsections 3.1-3.3 present our findings concerning professional, academic and disciplinary identity respectively.

### 3.1. Professional identity

As regards economics, the writer's self-construction as an expert in a position of authority essentially takes the form of specialised lexis instantiated by terms such as *equilibrium*, *rate*, *income*, *tax* and *inflation*. These appear to denote the object of the discipline, by specifying the main topics on which research in the field is centred. More specifically, a closer look at the collocational patterns of keywords reveals that economists' professional identity hinges on the in-depth study of quantities and variables. This is suggested by chunks like *in the Nash equilibrium* (30 occurrences), *real exchange rate* (141), *capital income tax* (24) and *welfare cost of inflation* (38), in which both pre- and post-modifying elements suggest increasing precision as to the technicalities the economic discourse community ordinarily deals with.

Furthermore, it is significant that economists carve out their niche of expertise by measuring, forecasting and explaining the underlying mechanisms that determine the variables to be observed in greater detail over time. This aspect is interestingly emphasised by the bundles *rate of inflation* (58) and *level of income* (24) – arguably two of the most widely reiterated entities in economic analysis – as well as *correlation between inflation and...* (17). The latter is particularly illuminating since it informs the disciplinary effort to disclose the cause-effect relations that govern inflationary phenomena within economic systems.

Similarly, the use of semi-technical terminology provides revealing insight into the business RA authors' enactment of professional identity. Marketers rely on appropriate (albeit not strictly technical) terms in order to display knowledge of the discipline, to disambiguate specific concepts and to present their research in an accurate manner. A personal ethos of expertise arises from a diversified repertoire of specialised lexical items which denote the analytic focus of marketing research, such as *brand*, *organizations*, *marketing*, *business*, *performance* to name but a few.

An inspection of the wider linguistic co-text suggests that these keywords are deployed together with pre- and post-modifiers to form more complex phrases which ‘detail’ highly specific research topics such as brand-related variables (e.g. *brand choice*, 87 occurrences; *brand equity*, 82; *brand switching*, 52; *brand loyalty*, 38; *brand memory*, 38; *brand preference/preferences*, 42; *brand penetration*, 20; *brand image*, 18), or current business specificities and tendencies (e.g. *international business*, 74; *global business*, 43; *local business*, 12; *internet business*, 48; *new business*, 46; *online business*, 23; *web business*, 10; *traditional business*, 5).

Emblematic signposts pointing to the competence and authoritativeness of business professionals can also be seen in references to the demanding research they are called upon to carry out. Specifically, marketing experts’ analytic efforts turn out to be directed substantially at the examination of *performance measures* (80 occurrences), *outcomes* (38), *effects* (30), *implications* (14), the identification of *best practices* (95), and the analysis of *management* (91), *business* (56), *environmental* (52) or *organizational* (26) *practices*. In doing so, marketers do not simply endeavour to find out the implications that the adoption of certain measures or practices has for organisational performance and outcomes. They also devote considerable effort to discussing less practical, more research-related issues and to engaging in scientific, methodological and theory-building debates. The implementation of professional identity in academic settings makes sure that economists and marketing experts represent themselves as legitimate members of a discourse community capable of transmitting disciplinary knowledge to non-expert members. This is the core of the academic identity reviewed in 3.2.

### 3.2. *Academic identity*

A parallel may be drawn between marketing and economics in that in both academic identity unfolds at two major levels, i.e. instruction-oriented and research-oriented. As for economics, the dialogic episodes substantiating instruction-oriented moments are primarily signalled by the use of the keywords *paper* and *since*. The former often occurs within metadiscursive expressions such as *In this paper, we* (156) and *the \* of the paper is organised / proceeds / develops as follows* (109),

where the wildcard \* stands for a range of semantically inter-related nominal elements – e.g. *remainder* (36), *rest* (30), *structure* (7), *plan* (6) and *organisation* (4). But *since* is also recurrently embedded within evaluative statements bearing on the main components of the author's research: this is corroborated by the colligation of the connective with the adjective *important* and with the nouns *assumption*, *finding*, *results*, *model*, *implications* and *conclusion* (29 occurrences altogether).

Corpus insights on the use of *paper* and *since* thus show that economists act as instructors who actively negotiate with readers the organisation of the RA (cf. 1 below) and its most relevant methodological choices (2):

- (1) In this paper, we analyze the relative pricing of shares with differential voting rights among a sample of firms listed on the Korea Stock Exchange (KSE). (JOCF)
- (2) The median size of the target to the bidder is somewhat larger than that reported by Jarrell and Poulsen (1989, Exhibit 1) for acquisitions in the 1970s and 1980s (though not the 1960s), which is expected since we sampled the acquisition targets from firms covered by Value Line. (JOCF)

The two extracts above illustrate some regular trends in the data. First of all, the exclusive use of *we* referring to researchers/instructors themselves vis-à-vis the readership, which was seen to be an almost uniform element in the economic sub-corpus. Secondly (example 1), the present tense following *in this paper, we*, which typically characterises structure outlines in introductory sections, as opposed to the past and present perfect tenses overwhelmingly distributed in discussions and conclusions. Finally (example 2), *since* co-occurs with *we* – 59 times altogether – in textual sequences where the main concern is to justify the results and/or grounds of the author's methodology: this applies to 52.5 per cent of occurrences.

Moving from instruction- to research-oriented configurations of academic identity, the data drew our attention to the keywords *fig.*, *case* and *table*. The abbreviation *fig.* colligates with the verbs *show* (316 entries), *illustrate* (112) and *depict* (93); what is more, it occurs in a wide range of clusters, the most frequent of which are *as shown in fig. #*



(31) and *can be seen in fig. # (7)*. These 4-grams show that economists make use of visual representations in order to reinforce their claims; in particular, they refer to figures when they introduce explanatory remarks whereby they cautiously venture to interpret patterns in the data. This regards 38.7 per cent of occurrences of *as shown in fig. # (12/31)* and is exemplified below:

- (3) Finally, as shown in Fig. 1, the plot of the CR40–40 series mimics the pattern of the CR50–40 series, although the changes are less dramatic. This is probably due to the fact that a CR4=40% cutoff is somewhat weak in terms of segmenting industries into a non-competitive group. (IJOIO)

In most cases, explanations such as that foregrounded in (3) are marked by the use of hedging – cf. *This is probably due to* above – and only in a limited number of occurrences do we find evidence of assertive formulations such as *it is clear that*. A cautious assessment of data is reflected also by the most frequent cluster of *case*, i.e. *it \* the case that* (22 entries). The chunk is employed by economists in order to express their view about crucial cause-effect relationships qualified as more or less likely depending on the modal operator the writer opts for. The most frequent modal verb is *may*, exemplified in (4) below; here the writer seeks to unveil the direct relationship between private agents and government equities on the one hand, and the risk factor related to interest rates on the other:

- (4) Specifically, it may be the case that the larger the share of private agents and government equities and debt instruments issued in international portfolios, the greater the risk factor will be and, hence, the higher will be the interest rate that domestic borrowers will have to pay on international borrowings. (JOEB)

In addition, the expression of a credible research-oriented academic identity in economics is inevitably related to the role played by statistical models of reality in the discipline. This rather controversial point will be taken up again in Section 4. For the time being, it is important to note that the prominence of the keyword *table* has much to do with the occurrence of the four-word cluster *the results in Table #*

(44), through which the writer recalls quantitative data in order to play safe and move more confidently among economic variables. In this respect, *the results in Table #* significantly collocates with the verb *show* – a signal of high authorial commitment to the linked proposition (Swales 1990, 2004) – in 19.2 per cent of occurrences:

- (5) The results in Table 3 show that the mean (median) debt to total firm value ratio of the combined firm increases significantly from 32.9% (30.7%) to 38.4% (36.6%). The mean (median) increase in leverage is 5.5% (5.4%) with a standard deviation of 15.3. The maximum change in leverage is 64.9% while the minimum is - 25.8%. (JOCF)

Alternatively, the cluster may be embedded in evaluative statements (10.6 per cent), typically characterised by the use of positive or negative evaluative elements:

- (6) In general, the results in Table 6 are quite encouraging: in eight cases, the results are completely compatible with the conceptual bottom-up framework used here, in ten cases, the results do not conflict with the model, and in only two cases are the results conflicting.(JOSE)

The study of the collocational context of *fig.*, *case* and *table* suggests that economists strategically craft their academic identity also in the role of arguers. In this vein, they discursively construct themselves as credible research personae who formulate hypotheses, flesh out conclusions and express evaluations by relying on statistical/quantitative data or categorisations of reality stemming from carefully selected case descriptions.

The comparison drawn between economics and marketing in terms of academic identity attempts to unravel the more cryptic differences and confirm some of the more settled similarities between the two disciplines. From the perspective of instruction-oriented academic identity, patent, personal and interactive dialogic episodes permeate more conspicuously marketing research articles in comparison to economics texts. When describing studies and discussing resulting outcomes, marketing academics establish a dialogic rapport with the

reader. This is testified by the pervasiveness of the first-person pronoun *we* (13,260 occurrences), the possessive adjective *our* (5,583 entries) and the more impersonal *researchers* (753), which all index the instructor, together with the substantial frequency of *you* and *managers* (1,342 and 2,552 occurrences respectively), which point to an audience that needs to be ‘educated and trained’.

Marketing academics project themselves into the text either personally or impersonally, in an attempt to distance themselves from (and simultaneously to align with) the less expert readers, to guide them through the unfolding experiment as well as the reasoning process, and, more rhetorically, to gain their consensus on the conclusions drawn in the RA.

Marketers establish their more expert status by showing that they are the ‘knowledge keepers’, while others are petitioners for advice, information and help. Specifically, RA authors’ consistent claims of superior knowledge are encoded in their self-evaluation as critical agents able to explain, clarify and motivate their experiments (for this *epistemic self*, cf. Dyer / Keller-Cohen 2000: 294). Instantiations of the epistemic self can be recognised in the occurrence of *we*, *researchers* and *our* \* (the wildcard stands for semantically similar, epistemological and research-related meta-elements such as *results*, *model*, *study*, *finding*, *analysis*), whose range denotes either mental processes signalled by cognitive verbs such as *argue*, *believe*, *predict*, *assume* (cf. 7 below, our emphasis), or verbal acts (e.g. the discourse verbs *suggest*, *claim*, *explain* and *indicate*, cf. Malavasi / Mazzi, forthcoming) as in examples (8-9):

- (7) Researchers argue that key aspects of international strategic capabilities derive from managers’ cognitive processes that balance competing business, country, and functional concerns (Perlmutter, 1969; Prahalad & Doz, 1987; Kogut, 1985; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989, and Hedlund, 1993). (JOWB)
- (8) Our study contributes to the literature on market orientation (Deshpande et al. 1993, Jaworski and Kohli 1993, Day 1994) by suggesting a way to infer the market orientation of a firm—namely, by measuring its marketing capability. We suggest that a superior market orientation should be reflected in a higher marketing capability. (MS)

- (9) Our empirical results indicate that the costs of product proliferation dominate any demand increases (i.e., the net market share impact of product proliferation is negative). In addition, our results suggest that firms with only products that have newer technology tend to have higher prices but smaller market shares. (MS)

These extracts exemplify the ways in which academics highlight the superior business knowledge they possess and build a credible, reliable persona while distancing themselves from non-experts.

Practices of ‘self-aggrandizement’ and differentiation between the ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ dimensions intermingle with the endeavour to align with readers, instruct them and create solidarity. For this purpose, the exclusive *we* used to convey a sense of power over the interlocutor is rejected in favour of inclusive *we*. This pronominal reference, together with the engagement marker *you* and the impersonal nominalization *managers*, is deployed by RA authors to pull readers into the discourse at certain crucial points, to invite them to play an active role in the empirical cognitive process and to agree upon research outcomes and their validity.

The inclusive *we* is used whenever academics mention shared knowledge claims (10), refer to procedural steps (11), guide the reader through the article (12), or suggest particular interpretations with questions and imperatives (13).

- (10) As already noted, much of this is cultural. Culture, as we all know, is a very big topic, but, undaunted, a team from Lex compiled a long list of bullet points about its culture, and then asked in each case “How might this be different?” (BSR)
- (11) As we noted previously, however, deceptive advertising effects also have been reported for attributes that are not featured in the advertisement (Pechmann 1996). (JOMR)
- (12) As we can see from Table 2, the length of work experience varies from between I and 12 years in both the first and the second groups, and there is little difference in mean years in the department between the two. (AOMJ)

- (13) What are the distinctive paths to industrial reform chosen by China and Russia, and how can we explain these choices? (JOWB)

The other party is portrayed as a ‘beneficiary’ of instructions and recommendations, as the hub around which hypotheses are generated and predictions made. This is corroborated by high-modality constructions in 2- and 3-grams (see examples 14-17), such as *you can* (81 occurrences), *you have to* (42), *you would* (25), *you need* (22 entries), or *managers should* (38), *managers need* (25), along with hypothetical, prediction-related forms such as *if you are* (25), *if you want* (12) and *you will* (54).

- (14) You can get some short-term positive result but the long-term may be negative. For the expatriates, sometimes they do not care much about the long-term. (JOWB)
- (15) I believe, based on business experience, that you need to develop a profit-oriented culture early in the company’s life and that if you do, it will serve you well. (BSR)
- (16) International managers should establish an infrastructure that moves ideas, experiences, and cultural practices across boundaries and subunits within a globally integrated net work. Sharing experiences and mindsets through training programs, efficient communications systems, and clear information transfers is crucial. (JOWB)
- (17) Similarly, if you increase the sales and marketing capacity of the firm without increasing production capacity, you will end up with unserved (and dissatisfied) customers. (BSR)

The enactment of instruction-oriented academic identity relies on a dual strategy. Marketing experts emphasise their superior status of knowledge and simultaneously depict themselves as instructors capable of guiding the reader through the article and recommending ‘best practices’ to marketing practitioners. Additionally, apart from their self-presentation as skilled instructors, academic identity is built on the strength of marketers’ description as competent proactive researchers, i.e. *agente selves* (Dyer / Keller-Cohen 2000: 294). Signals of the so-

called research-oriented academic identity can be spotted in the co-occurrence of the exclusive *we* form (which exclusively indexes researchers) and a diversified repertoire of research verbs (e.g. *use, find, examine, test, observe*):

- (18) Second, our research examined how the innovation was presented, taking us a step closer to understanding how change first occurs in institutional environments. [...] We investigated how the decision, once made, was presented (ASQ).

The empirical essence of marketing and the proactive nature of business academics are confirmed by the adjectives which pre-modify *research* and the characterisation of *subjects*. In detail, *research* collocates with adjectives such *empirical* (86 occurrences, cf. 19), *experimental, quantitative, scientific* (14 cases altogether), whereas *subjects*, interpretable as an overarching category encompassing regular shoppers, students and ‘ordinary’ people, becomes a key principle underlying marketing examinations. *Subjects* indeed either *responded, reported, evaluated, or were asked and tested* (20), while their *attribute beliefs* (21), *expectations* and *commitment* were *analysed* and *measured*:

- (19) Third, empirical research in the management field documents that decision makers tend to consider risk in terms of negative outcomes or hazards rather than as variance in outcomes, as reflected by standard risk measures (e.g., Baird & Thomas, 1990; March & Shapira, 1987). (AOMJ)
- (20) Procedure Designers participating as subjects were tested individually. (JOMR)
- (21) To examine H[SUB 3], subjects’ attribute beliefs were analyzed using a 2 (brand usage) x 2 (ad type) x 2 (attribute set) x 3 (attribute characteristics) mixed ANOVA. (JOMR)

Hence our evidence supports the view that marketing activities rest on both practical and research-related issues. This discipline combines indeed a focus on theoretical debates about models, concepts, implications and market experiments with a commitment to practical ends, a concern

for the application of theories to the ‘real’ world of companies and to the development of strategies instrumental to their performance-related improvement.

In line with the considerations presented in the entire section, the realisation of academic identity rests on a sound disciplinary identity; indeed, scholars can successfully instruct and argue only on the basis of how they present their disciplinary affiliation to a distinct community with its own values and epistemology.

### 3.3. *Disciplinary identity*

The disciplinary identity of economics is inextricably related to hypotheticality as a central epistemological property. The presence of hypothetical markers among the top 150 items of the economics vs. marketing keyword list is considerable, since it comprises *if*, *where*, *then*, *suppose* and *assume*. The most significant clusters with *if* are examples of widely used reasoning techniques in economics.

Most notably, economists proceed from simplified schemes and/or models: these are designed in order to represent salient aspects of reality, and in doing so they admit some elements purported to be necessary for demonstrating other elements through a set of shared methodological rules (Schumpeter 1908). Economists thus draw conclusions in the form of propositions (theorems) they derive from other propositions assumed as valid (axioms). This operation is made transparent by the frequent use of the cluster *if and only if* (149 entries), which is employed within inferential sequences signalled by elements such as *thus*, *therefore*, *hence* and *it follows that*:

- (22) A firm has no incentive to deviate from the proposed equilibrium [...]. Thus, for the low-quality seller one must have that  $p^*=q_l$ . For the high-quality seller it must be the case that  $(p^*-c)=\max\{q_l-c, (q_h-c)/2k\}$ . Therefore: Proposition 2.  $(p^*, *)$  is a no-advertising pooling equilibrium if and only if: (a)  $p^*=q_l$  (b)  $p^*=q_l(e)$  (d)  $*=e=0$ . (IJOIO)

Similarly, economists are accustomed to projecting the audience into a world governed by empirical laws. As Menger (1985) argues, economics falls short of exact laws prescribing that given consequences

invariably ensue from a specific set of presuppositions. Rather, economists avail themselves of empirical laws implying that the co-presence of given circumstances is, as a rule, followed by other consequences, the difference between exact and empirical laws being that the former are valid anywhere and at any time, whereas the latter are subject to exceptions and limitations linked to the peculiar aspects of each market.

From a discursive point of view, this is achieved through a variety of forms by means of which writers speculate about the correlations between economic phenomena with increasing degrees of generality and abstraction. Thus, for instance, we see that economists circumspectly consider the balancing and counter-balancing of factors at play through the cluster *if, on the other hand* (89) and the colligation of *then* – whose top collocate is, predictably, *if* – with the following continuum of epistemic modals: [*if*]...*then* + *would* (38), *can* (12), *may* (12), *must* (11), *is/are expected to* (9), *could* (8), *should* (8), *is/are likely to* (5). Examples (23) and (24) show the use of *if, on the other hand* and the colligation of *then* with *would*, which accounts for 36.9 per cent of the total modal range listed above:

- (23) [...] linkage effects on the host country are likely to be positive if (i) the good that multinationals produce uses intermediate goods intensively; (ii) [...] If, on the other hand, these conditions are reversed, the underdeveloped host country may be hurt, and the multinationals may end up creating enclaves among developing countries. (JODE)
- (24) If the residuals are independent across countries, then one would expect to see about one out of the 15 ( $1/15=0.066$ ) t-statistics below the 5% critical value -3.75 under the null of no cointegration. (EJOPE)

An alternative option is for the writer to frame reality, as it were, within the boundaries of highly abstracted worlds in which readers are invited to engage. This is the case of the phraseology of *suppose, assume* and *where*. *Suppose* is often used in reader-oriented explicit exhortations – *suppose that* (268) and *let us suppose that* (5); interestingly, these imperatives are often accompanied by lexicalisations that strengthen the



hypothetical flavour of the statement, i.e. *for simplicity, for convenience, for technical reasons, to keep matters as simple as possible, to simplify our analysis*, mostly in sentence-initial position (example 25 below). A similar use is documented for *assume* – cf. *assume that* (82) and *let us assume that* (21); an additional peculiarity of this cognition verb lies in its collocation with exclusive *we* (583 tokens) as well as with either measurable entities – cf. *profit* in (26) – or general economic subjects expressed in the plural – e.g. *banks* in (27):

- (25) To simplify our analysis, suppose that every firm has an identical work morale of employees, and workers' subjective preferences over the psychic benefit are symmetric across all firms. Therefore, the loafing worker hired by any firm will provide a lower level of effort eL. (EJOPE)
- (26) We assume that this profit is the payoff to firm *i* if it does not join the cartel. We also assume that if firm *i* joins the dominant cartel, then its payoff is  $d(k)$ . Thus the payoff function of firm *i* is given as (6). (IJOIO)
- (27) In this section, we assume that the banks do not know, but make inferences about it from (a) observing a noisy private signal and/or (b) observing the behavior of other banks in response to their noisy private signal. (IREF)

Although intuitively more obscure to get at, the discourse function of *where* may match that described above for *suppose* and *assume*. The most recurrent cluster surrounding the item is *the case where the*, which collocates with the imperative *consider* in as many as 41.5 per cent of entries (17/41). Besides, *where* may also be embedded in the bundle *in a world where* (10 entries), with its prominently negative semantic prosody (50 per cent). The parallelism between the phraseology of *where* discussed here and *suppose/assume* is illustrated in (28-29) below:

- (28) Consider first the case where the IS curve intersects with the LM curve on its horizontal section. Then, a rise in the money supply affects neither the interest rate nor employment, since only the positively sloped section of the LM curve will shift to the right, whereas its horizontal section will remain unchanged. (HOPE)

- (29) My model assumed that, on the policy dimension where voters differ, government policy would be set equal to the position advocated by a majority in the legislature [...]. But in a world where most parties are very corrupt, a new small party of committed corruption-fighters would probably be, among all parties, the least likely to be invited into the governing coalition. (EER)

Data from HEM-Economics indicate therefore that the profile of scholars from this disciplinary background is that of subjects aiming at a description of economic reality through representations based on discursively shared writer-reader assumptions. Moreover, evidence suggests that reality is depicted through an epistemological magnifying glass warranting observations that relate factors at work to a variety of propositions (chiefly hypotheses, axioms and theorems), thereby benefiting from a widespread adoption of dummy variables.

Analogously, the identity of marketing academics as affiliates of a distinct community with its own specific values turns out to be forged by the epistemological traits of the discipline itself. Accordingly, in contrast with the hypotheticality emblematic of economics, the common epistemological thread running through the marketing research articles is ‘concreteness’ of an applied, empirical, experimental nature.

The distinguishing marks of business academic identity focused on in Section 3.2. show that the epistemological peculiarities of marketing are to be recognized in a mixture of practice, theory and research. Marketing has been widely regarded as a discipline characterised by “a concrete nature, [by] a concern with the application of concepts to the immediate situation of firms and to their products” (Hemais 2001: 40), and by substantial interest in the implications of marketing variables and trends for human activities.

The reiterated co-occurrence of *research* with *empirical*, *scientific*, *experimental* and *quantitative*, as well as its less frequent combination with *theoretical*, *interpretative* and *qualitative* (cf. example 19) further suggests a clear preference for empirical surveys (see Bondi 2006). This is also substantiated by the tendency of exclusive *we*, which indexes uniquely RA authors, to collocate with research-oriented reporting verbs (18). Furthermore, the experimental, applied gnoseology of marketing is evidenced by the prominent part played by narrative signals and in particular by past tense verbs.

A comparison of wordlists in the corpus suggests a marked difference in use of the past tense of *be*, i.e. *were* (8,162 occurrences) and *was* (8,719) in marketing and economics research articles.

The analysis of the concordances of the two forms in business texts reveals their frequent presence in passive constructions overwhelmingly describing the experimental procedures adopted in marketing research. Indeed, the inspection of collocates shows that some of the most frequent nominal forms preceding *were* and *was* are *subjects* (280 occurrences), *respondents* (138, cf. example 30 below), *data* (129), *variables/variable* (117/75), *participants* (107), *effects/effect* (70/53), *measures/measure* (54/52), *study* (110), *model* (55), *performance* (47, see example 31) to name but a few.

- (30) For each behavioral parameter, we created a direct measure, where the same respondents in the clinic were asked to self-report their behavior. In addition, we created an indirect measure, where respondents were asked to estimate the probability that they would be engaging in a particular behavior beyond a certain duration (say two weeks). (MS)
- (31) In addition to the process variables, two separate outcomes were assessed. First, team performance was measured at a group level as each group's number of correctly completed justifications for a particular medium choice [...] (AOMJ)

The nature of marketing as a bridge joining research and practice, fieldwork, case studies and tasks with a practical purpose is additionally substantiated by the variety of research-oriented verbs which follow *were* and *was*. Some revealing instantiations of this category of reporting verbs can be recognised in forms such as *used* (329), *measured* (192), *found* (131), *conducted* (118), *obtained* (99), *assessed* (86).

- (32) The questionnaire completed by the designers started with an open-ended measure that asked them to describe any mental pictures they had during the design exercise. These responses were used to assess the success of the customer incorporation manipulation. (JOMR)
- (33) A field study was conducted in the seven units of the food services department at a large midwestern university. The human resources activity examined was the performance evaluation process. (AOMJ)

The practice- and research-oriented epistemology of marketing, as testified by the previous examples, is a peculiarity that does not simply distinguish business from other disciplines but determines the ways in which marketing academics signal their disciplinary affiliation.

Evidence suggests that marketers tend to build an identity of themselves as proactive scholars attempting to provide substantial contributions to the academic debate on marketing theory, methodology, etc. Data from the marketing RAs indicate that academics with a business background enact an identity which see-saws from that of a researcher to that of a practitioner. Marketers tend indeed to privilege factual reasoning, simulations of realistic business practices, case studies, surveys, interviews and observations of 'real events', in an attempt to show their practical implications for firms and to suggest rules of best practice to companies.

#### *4. Conclusions*

The findings of this paper show that identity is a complex phenomenon, a multi-layered, stratified dimension that may vary from one discipline to another. The analysis of a sample of representative keywords suggests that there are both similarities and differences between economics and marketing in the process of identity construction. To begin with, a parallel may be noted between the two as for the construction of their respective professional and academic profiles: thus, economists strive to present themselves as credible arguers who both master the technicalities of the field and shape their reasoning by relying on statistical data and categorisations of reality. Similarly, marketing scholars present themselves as expert researchers who skilfully carry out their market-related investigations by laying special emphasis on a dialogic rapport with the audience. Indeed, evidence indicates that marketing analysts may even be more widely concerned than economists with the need to lead the audience along with their argument, in order to strengthen their reputation when recommending business-oriented good practices.

By contrast, the sharpest contrasts between economics and

marketing appear to be associated with disciplinary identity. On the one hand, marketing is constantly characterised by references to the empirical and experimental nature of the discipline, where factual reasoning, observations and measurements are the main resources at the analysts' disposal. On the other hand, economics contains references to hypothetical reasoning as a constitutive factor of disciplinary epistemology, where highly-valued practices are introduced as a representation of reality by means of assumptions and observations resting on more abstract propositions and dummy variables.

Overall, the results presented in Section 3 point to identity as a strategic element in the disciplinary structuring of knowledge. In economics, the well-rooted use of statistical methods appears to underlie the belief that everything can be objectively observed and therefore measured. This view has been repeatedly challenged since the birth of economics as an established field of research: discussing the discrepancy between the neoclassical and the Austrian school in this respect, McCloskey (1985) observes that in spite of their self-perception as experts, economists are better defined as "persuaders". As a result, they should not dismiss the inherently argumentative/persuasive construction of their disciplinary discourse as a peripheral aspect containing questionable appeals to the emotions.

The implications of the research outlined in this paper will be better evaluated when our analysis is extended to further data. Obviously, the keywords selected in the study are not the only lexical signals on which the construction of identity may centre. However, their considerable frequency and analytical potential make them representative of the texts investigated here. Finally, it should be added that the three kinds of identity, which were kept separate for the sake of clarity, may overlap. As pointed out in 3.2, for example, disciplinary identity is an element underlying academic identity, for authors can only instruct their readers by drawing on what they have constructed (Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli, personal communication). Hopefully, further research will help gain insights into the construction of identity in other disciplines, for instance by integrating the three dimensions elaborated by Crawford Camiciottoli (2007) to make a comparison of soft and hard sciences.

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