

Papers Discussed Or Paper Disgust?
An Irreverent Proposal for a Standardized
Approach to Discussant Comments for CSDCB Papers

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ABSTRACT

Many paper presenters take themselves too seriously. Many discussants do too. This paper proves empirically that there is equally grave danger in frivolity. It also suggests a standardized multiple choice approach to making discussant comments about CSDCB papers if one may take tongue firmly in cheek.

INTRODUCTION--RATIONALE FOR THE PAPER

Anyone who has ever attended a conference at which academic researchers have presented papers is familiar with the responsibilities of the "discussant" or "chairperson." One major responsibility, for example, is to make various types of noises or signals while waving a wristwatch or at least to squirm in visible discomfort when a paper presenter goes beyond the time allotted to the presentation. Often the signalling of the chairperson serves as a delightful distraction for the audience from the unpleasantly long presentation, of interest only to the presenter and his/her coauthor.

A second major responsibility of the chair or discussant is to say something about the papers. Comments about papers and/or presenters should reflect two basic things: (1) that you have read the papers, (2) that you know much more about the topic than the author(s)--that's why you have been asked to be a discussant. Right? The first requires that you quickly skim through the papers to find the most important buzzwords and then look those up in an index of a consumer behavior text. Find several references to these buzzwords and match those against the references in the paper. Wherever the authors don't have that citation in their reference list you have them! They've missed a landmark study, etc. You have proven your superior expertise.

But to make comments efficiently about papers which are equally uninteresting is not an easy task. It is with this in mind that the following is suggested as a means for standardizing the comments that typically are made by discussants. To some extent, certain of the proposed statements are situation-bound; that is, they were specific to the setting in which CS/D papers were presented at Bloomington in 1979. But the basic framework can be used by any discussant charged with commenting on CS/D papers at future conferences.

METHODOLOGY: THE STANDARDIZED APPROACH

In order to avoid preparation time the following is suggested as a standardized (multiple choice) approach to making comments about CS/D conference papers. The discussant should make some comments about at least five elements (attributes) of the presentation. If one uses numbers instead of letters for each of the alternatives, one could weight the attributes to indicate their unimportance and then multiply those unimportant weights times the numbers circled and sum the products to come up with a weighted multiattribute fishbait index of dissatisfaction with the whole business.

¹If you weren't at this conference, don't knock this paper. If you were, don't knock it either. We don't have discussants on discussants' papers.

$$\text{Fishbait Index} = \sum_{i=1}^n (\text{UNO}_i) (\text{PU}_i) \quad (1)$$

The five major elements (attributes) which deserve mention are: 1. The Sample; 2. The Literature Review; 3. Data Analysis; 4. The Study Itself; and 5. The Presentation. The standardized format for discussant comments on each of the five topics is as follows:

1. The sample
 - a. consists of sophomore third sex fine arts majors and is not representative of all consumers.
 - b. consists of university professors and is not representative.
 - c. consists of thirteen respondents and is a bit small.
 - d. consists of 13 third sex working woman fine arts university professors and is projectable only at conferences.
2. The literature review
 - a. should include references to my ten publications about my class' marketing research project.
 - b. should include references to Sears Roebuck's training manual for complaint department employees.
 - c. should include references to the unpublished constant complaining of complaining behavior conference attendees.
 - d. should include references to the well known early published work regarding sex differences in complaining behavior--Job's wife complained; he didn't. Why?
3. The data analysis
 - a. suffers from too small cell frequencies.
 - b. suffers from a lack of testable hypotheses.
 - c. suffers from multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity.
 - d. suffers from nonmonotonicity and overcompensatory linearity.
 - e. All of the above.
 - f. What data?
 - g. What analysis?
4. The study itself
 - a. was done before and is published in the 5th annual CSDCB proceedings.
 - b. was done before and is published in our school's faculty newsletter.
 - c. was done before and is published in the JOURNAL OF IRREPRODUCIBLE RESULTS.
 - d. hasn't been done yet but we hope it will be by the time these proceedings are published.
 - e. should be translated into French; it loses something in the original.
5. The presentation
 - a. should have been shorter.
 - b. should have been longer.
 - c. should have been louder.
 - d. should have been softer.
 - e. should have been set to piano accompaniment (as some of the other papers were).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It can be seen from the data presented that the well known Day/Hunt Inequality holds here. If there is an area of white space in the CS/D proceedings that is not equal to a refereed paper, some equally innocuous material will fill that place (Day and Hunt 1982; see also Hunt and Day 1983; see Day Hunt for Oliver after 1980). The basic questions remain for future researchers to answer: Will I ever get satisfaction? Where can I complain about some stupid review? When will the conference be held at some place other than an airport terminal or a dormitory? What types of expectations (predictive or normative deficit?) might we have regarding the two-factor theory of the disconfirmation of assimilation-contrast effects on a nonlinear compensatory model of complaining by people who have to hear or read these papers?

REFERENCES

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_____, "Discussanting Expectations," paper presented previously.

_____, "What Expectations Might One Have About Discussing?" Proceedings at some local conference.

_____, "Getting the Most Mileage Out of a Paper in Times of Energy Shortage: Discussants Expectations," Proceedings of a regional energy conference.

_____, "Public Policy and Disgusting," similar paper invited by a friend who got a grant for a conference at some nice place.

_____, "Just Cussing About Discussing," rejoinder to discussant's comments on paper about discussants, in press.