



# FOCUS ON BUSINESS ABSTRACTS: CONSIDERATIONS OF RHETORICAL, LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL AND INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

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When, in previous studies, research article abstracts were examined across the disciplines, they were found to differ in such features as length, rhetorical organization, ways of using modality and explicit evaluation. The present study, however, aims to discover what is characteristic of abstracts within a single given discipline. In this article I present my preliminary findings from 40 abstracts taken from two international journals specializing in the field of business studies: the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* and the *International Business Review*, by comparing them to the previous data of interdisciplinary abstracts. I intend to characterize the business abstracts according to their rhetorical structure, to note their particular lexical and grammatical features, and to identify the participants in the research that the abstracts are promoting in order to discover the functional characteristics of business abstracts as a subgenre of academic writing.

**Keywords:** research article abstract, business abstract, rhetorical structure, lexico-grammatical features, voice

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Every Finnish student in higher education needs to write an English abstract in the course of their study. Language teachers have a general view of abstract writing, but it is uncertain whether that abstract structure is applicable to every discipline on the map of Finnish universities and polytechnics. The aim of the present study is to throw light on the formats and nature of business abstracts by comparing them to the previous data of interdisciplinary abstracts.

In my previous research, I have been looking into research article (henceforward RA) abstracts with special focus on such features as evaluation (Stotesbury 2003a) and the use of voice (Stotesbury 2003b). My approach in these studies has been inter-disciplinary, i.e., an examination of the variations that can be found between the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. In the present study, I

wanted to examine some abstracts in more detail, at a micro level within one discipline alone. Since at present I mainly teach English to business and economics students, I chose my data from the field of business studies.

## 2 DATA AND METHOD

The new data for this pilot study originates from two journals accessible through Joensuu University's electronic library: the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (JRCS)* and the *International Business Review (IBR)*. I chose 20 abstracts from the latest issues available in both journals. The *JRCS* abstracts date from 2002 and 2003, and the *IBR* abstracts from 2004. The previous interdisciplinary data was collected in 2000.

The business corpus, altogether 40 abstracts, is very small compared to the interdisciplinary study, which comprised 300 abstracts. The present study is a pilot study: a small but thick description of business abstracts, more particularly in the branch of marketing. The features examined in these 40 abstracts included textual properties, such as length and rhetorical structure; lexical and grammatical features, such as the use of tense, modality, and other lexical choices; and finally, interpersonal aspects as shown by the projection of authorial voice. The reason for choosing these particular features for examination derived from my previous abstract studies in which the above mentioned features seemed to epitomise the authorial effort in abstract writing. My method was discourse analytical. The lexical choices were found and word counts performed by using WordSmith Tools. In the following analysis, I contrast the findings of the business data with the interdisciplinary data.

## 3 ANALYSIS

### 3.1 LENGTH

According to my previous interdisciplinary study, the length of abstracts in the social sciences varied between 62 and 276 words, the range of which was more limited than in the humanities and the natural sciences (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Length of interdisciplinary abstracts in words (N=300)

|                  | Shortest abstract |   | Longest abstract |                             |
|------------------|-------------------|---|------------------|-----------------------------|
|                  | No. of words      | Journal   | No. of words     | Journal                     |
| Humanities       | 49                | <i>Commonwealth</i>                               | 360              | <i>Poetics Today</i>        |
| Social Sciences  | 62                | <i>Human Resource Management</i>                  | 276              | <i>Behavioral Disorders</i> |
| Natural Sciences | 20                | <i>Journal of the London Mathematical Society</i> | 560              | <i>Ecology</i>              |

The business journals of this study closely conformed to the social science finding, the length of the abstracts varying between 65 and 240 words, as shown in Table 2. Although there were natural variations in the abstract length, they seemed to be fairly unanimous about the number of words needed to put across the informational and promotional message abstracts produce. The first journal (*JRCS*) showed somewhat more variation than did the second (*IBR*), neither of them quite following the guidance given to the authors concerning the abstract, which in the case of the first journal stipulated ‘up to 100 words and in a single paragraph’, and in the second, ‘not exceeding 150 words’.

**Table 2.** Length of business abstracts in words (N=40)

|                    | <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> (N=20) | <i>International Business Review</i> (N=20) |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Average            | 125  | 134   |
| Median             | 113  | 136   |
| Mode               | 90, 112, 134   | 169   |
| Range              | (240 – 69 = ) 171  | (182 – 65 = ) 117                           |
| Standard Deviation | 43.02  | 31.99                                       |

### 3.2 RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

Both the literature on academic writing and previous empirical studies indicate that abstracts abound in a variety of rhetorical organizations (see Table 3). The prototypical structure of experimental, informative abstracts is to start with a reference to the background; then, to point out

the research method; next, to continue with the main results; and finally, to conclude it with some comments or implications of the findings.

**Table 3.** Rhetorical structure in RA abstracts (according to the literature and empirical studies)

|  |  |   |  |  |   |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| Bhatia (1993)  | IMRD (e.g. Martin-Martin 2002)         | CARS model (Swales 1990) (e.g. Lorés 2004; indicative abstracts)    | Liddy (1988) (empirical abstracts)                                     | Dahl (2000) (scientific empirical abstracts)               | Abstracting Standards ANSI (1979) (e.g. Tibbo 1992)           | Santos (1996) (applied linguistics abstracts)   | Stotesbury (2003) (literature abstracts) |
| Introducing purpose; Describing methodology; Summarizing results; Presenting conclusions | Introduction Method Results Discussion | Establishing a territory; Establishing a niche; Occupying the niche | Hypothesis Purpose Subjects Methodology Results Conclusions References | Background Purpose Methodology Results Comments on results | Scope and Purpose Methodology Results Significant conclusions | Situating the research; Presenting the research; Describing the methodology; Summarizing the results; Discussing the research | Topic Argument Conclusion                |

Quite similar rhetorical structures were manifest in the present pilot study as well, as indicated in Table 4. It seemed, however, to be typical of business abstracts that they were sparing with the number of promotional moves and tended to omit the first or the final move of the prototypical organization of the abstract (see, e.g., Dahl’s structure in Table 3), that is, the description of background or implications. Thus, the method and results seemed to be the obligatory moves, and the purpose fairly obligatory since it was included in all but five abstracts out of the 40. In addition, the business abstracts contained some less frequent rhetorical moves, such as hypothesis and recommendation. As these moves only appeared once each, their significance in such a restricted sample was negligible.

**Table 4.** Most common types of rhetorical structure in business abstracts (N=40)

| Type 1 PMRC         | Type 2 BMR | Type 3 PMR | Type 4 PMRI  | Type 5 BPMR | Type 6 BPMRC        |
|---------------------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------|
| -                   | Background | -          | -            | Background  | Background          |
| Purpose             | -          | Purpose    | Purpose      | Purpose     | Purpose             |
| Method              | Method     | Method     | Method       | Method      | Method              |
| Results             | Results    | Results    | Results      | Results     | Results             |
| Comments on Results | -          | -          | Implications | -           | Comments on Results |

Table 5 shows the frequency of each of the six variations of organization. Thus, Type 1, i.e., Purpose-Method-Results-Comments-on-Results, proves to be the most common structure in the *International Business Review* (six occurrences), while the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer*

*Services* prefers the abstract core of Method-Results with either Background (Type 2), Purpose (Type 3) or both of them (Type 5) as an introduction.

**Table 5.** Number of occurrences of the **most common** types of rhetorical structure in business abstracts (N=40)

|  | Type 1<br>PMRC | Type 2<br>BMR | Type 3<br>PMR | Type 4<br>PMRI | Type 5<br>BPMR | Type 6<br>BPMRC |
|--|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> (N=20) | 1              | 3             | 3             | 1              | 3              | -               |
| <i>International Business Review</i> (N=20)              | 6              | 2             | 1             | 2              | -              | 2               |
| Total  | 7              | 5             | 4             | 3              | 3              | 2               |

### 3.3 LEXICAL REALIZATION OF RHETORICAL MOVES

A quick data-based run by the WordSmithTools concordancing programme provided the following quantitative information on the lexical realization of the rhetorical moves. As regards the **purpose** of the study, Journal 1 (*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*) used *this article* once, *this paper* 9 times, and *the/this study* 14 times, while Journal 2 (*International Business Review*) mentioned *this article* 5 times, *this/the paper* 14 times and *the/this study* 12 times. The **method** section of Journal 1, in turn, used *question* twice, *analysis* 5 times, and as the reporting verbs *investigate* 3 times and *examine* 7 times, while Journal 2 mentioned *question* once and *analysis* 6 times. A further vocabulary item referring to method in Journal 2 was one mention of *methodological issues*. The research method verbs of Journal 2 included *investigate* 8 times, *examine* 5, and *address* 3 times. As regards the **results** section, this label occurred 15 times and *findings* 3 times in Journal 1, whilst only *results* was used in Journal 2 with as many as 13 occurrences. The **implications** of the study were suggested in 6 abstracts of Journal 1, whereas Journal 2 made only one mention of implications. The same information is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Lexical items used to signal the rhetorical organization of business abstracts (N=40)

| Rhetorical function | <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i><br>(N=20) |                       | <i>International Business Review</i><br>(N=20)   |                            |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|
|                     | Lexical items   | Number of occurrences | Lexical items  | Number of occurrences      |
| Purpose             | this article<br>this paper<br>the/this study                | 1<br>9<br>14          | this article<br>this/the paper<br>the/this study   | 5<br>14<br>12              |
| Method              | question<br>analysis<br>to investigate<br>to examine        | 2<br>5<br>3<br>7      | question<br>analysis<br>methodological<br>issues<br>to investigate<br>to examine<br>to address | 1<br>6<br>1<br>8<br>5<br>3 |
| Results             | results<br>findings   | 15<br>3               | results  | 13                         |
| Implications        | implications  | 6                     | implications   | 1                          |

The above data makes no significant differences discernible between the two journals since the rhetorical functions are signalled with nearly identical lexical items in both journals with only some slight variation in their frequencies.

The rhetorical moves of background and comments on results are not usually labelled in abstracts; hence, these could not be traced by means of the WordSmith Tools in the present analysis. Possibly because of the frequency of the implications move in Journal 1 (*JRCS*), only 4 instances of the comments on results moves were found. These turned out rather vague and indicative in nature as one abstract told the reader that *conclusions and implications are discussed*, while two others declared that *these results are discussed/commented on and recommendations are made*. The only informative comment was given in a relative clause following the results: *which indicates that the predictions of ... may be inflated and that the experiential aspect of ... should not be underestimated*. Interestingly, this comment also includes a recommendation.

The comments on results moves in Journal 2 (*IBR*), however, numbered 10 and included such signals as: *contribute, support, corroborate, point to, found no evidence, has important prescriptive lessons for, a common interpretation is, such comparisons reveal, and this is the first study in ... pinpointing*. It seems that comments on results and implications are mutually exclusive since Journal 2 labelled implications only once.

In view of the layout of the abstract, RA abstracts, especially in the social and the natural sciences, usually consist of a single paragraph. That was the case with the present business abstracts as well, since only one abstract in Journal 1 had multiple paragraphs (numbering four), and two abstracts in Journal 2 (two and three paragraphs each). As mentioned above in section 3.1, Journal 1 had requested a single paragraph. Hartley (1994), while experimenting with different ways of enhancing the

readability of RA abstracts, has promoted paragraph division as one of the possible methods. Interestingly, the authors of a recent (2004) abstract in the *British Journal of Psychology* have followed that instruction and divided the abstract into four conceptual paragraphs, according to the rhetorical moves, labelled as Objectives, Method, Results, and Conclusions, which have been further highlighted by the use of boldface. This seems a good practice well worth recommending to novice abstract writers. Nonetheless, the style sheet of an academic journal should be the ultimate authority on the questions of the length, layout and rhetorical organization of abstracts.

### 3.4 USE OF TENSE

The early research in the 1960s into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was particularly interested in the frequencies of different grammatical structures used in scientific articles (cf. a seminal article on ESP by Barber 1962; reprinted in Swales 1985: 3–14). Manuals of academic writing followed suit enthusiastically, attempting to interpret the frequencies and turn their data into prescriptive rules governing different structural features. Consequently, a Finnish book on academic writing (May 1993: 30) presents the typical distribution of the use of different tenses in RA abstracts, as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Use of tense in abstracts (according to May 1993: 30)

|                | Future | Present | Past | Perfect | Modal or otherwise |
|----------------|--------|---------|------|---------|--------------------|
| Purpose        |        |         | X    |         |                    |
| Target group   |        |         | X    |         |                    |
| Method         |        |         | X    |         |                    |
| Results        |        |         | X    |         |                    |
| Conclusion     |        | X       |      |         | X                  |
| Implications   |        | X       |      |         | X                  |
| Recommendation |        | X       |      |         | X                  |

The reality of business abstracts turned out to be quite different, however, as can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Use of tense in business abstracts (N=40)

|                     | <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i><br>(N=20) |      |                     | <i>International Business Review</i><br>(N=20) |      |          |
|---------------------|---|------|---------------------|--|------|----------|
|                     | Present   | Past | Other               | Present  | Past | Other    |
| Background          | 10  |      | 1 (perf)            | 8  |      | 1 (perf) |
| Purpose             | 13  | 1    |                     | 17   |      | 1 (mod)  |
| Hypothesis          |   | 2    |                     | 1  | 2    |          |
| Argument/Claim      | 1   |      |                     | 4  | 1    | 1 (mod)  |
| Method              | 12  | 7    |                     | 19   | 1    |          |
| Results             | 14  | 5    | 1 (fut)             | 18   | 4    |          |
| Comments on results | 5   |      | 1 (perf)<br>3 (mod) | 10   |      | 1 (mod)  |
| Implications        | 4   |      |                     |  |      |          |
| Total               | 59  | 15   | 5                   | 77   | 8    | 4        |

Whereas Table 7 argues that the past tense is the typical tense in abstracts, the first columns of both business journals in Table 8 indicate, however, that it is the present tense that occurs most often in the business abstracts. Thus, the first journal (*JRCS*) displays 59 occurrences in the present tense as opposed to 15 occurrences in the past. The second journal (*IBR*) boasts as many as 77 occurrences of the present tense and only 8 occurrences of the past. The past tense use seems to have clustered especially in the moves of purpose, method and results, all of which are prescribed to be in the past tense, according to May. While May does not consider the perfect and future tenses at all possible in abstracts, according to Table 7, the business abstracts show a few occurrences of the perfect tense and one incidence of the future as well.

### 3.5 THE VOICE IN ABSTRACTS

As the final feature of the business abstracts, I looked at the projection of voice in the abstracts. Concerning the roles of the participants in research, it seemed interesting to count the number of potential voices in the various abstracts. Although it is uncertain which of the authors, in the case of multiple contributors, actually wrote each abstract, the first step in the analysis was to calculate the number of possible abstract authors. Since the abstracts are no doubt seldom drawn up by all the writers of the RA, the following tables instead present the total number of the contributors to the RA.

**Table 9.** Number of RA/abstract writers in interdisciplinary abstracts (N=300)

| No. of writers ( <i>I-12</i> ) | Hum (N=100) | SocSci (N=100) | NatSci (N=100) |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1                              | 90          | 43             | 15             |
| 2                              | 8           | 33             | 39             |
| 3                              | 1           | 15             | 15             |
| 4                              | 1           | 5              | 12             |
| 5                              |             | 2              | 9              |
| 6                              |             | 2              | 4              |
| 7                              |             |                | 3              |
| 8                              |             |                | 2              |
| 12                             |             |                | 1              |

Table 9 shows the case of the interdisciplinary abstracts, according to which, 39% of the natural science RAs were co-written by two researchers, the humanists proving to be the lone wolves in RA writing, since as many as 90% of the humanities RAs were written by a single scholar, and only eight articles by two. The social scientists were half-way between the two extremes. Naturally, the reason for these discrepancies originates from the different traditions of research prevalent in the different disciplines. Natural scientists commonly work in large research teams, which also publish together.

**Table 10.** Number of RA/abstract writers in business abstracts (N=40)

| No. of writers | <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i><br>(N=20) | <i>International Business Review</i><br>(N=20) | Total<br>(N=40) |
|----------------|---|--|-----------------|
| 1              | 6   | 5  | 11              |
| 2              | 6   | 12   | 18              |
| 3              | 5   | 3  | 8               |
| 4              | 3   |  | 3               |

Table 10 shows the situation of the business abstracts, which conforms to that of the social science RAs in general, the *International Business Review* in particular, showing quite similar trends in distribution to that for the social sciences in Table 9.

Whose voice is, then, projected in the abstracts? Table 11 indicates that, as far as the interdisciplinary abstracts were concerned, it was the natural scientists who revealed their own voice most often. Somewhat surprisingly, the humanists turned out to be the most likely to conceal their identity behind the passive, and behind impersonal and metaphorical constructions. This may, of course, derive from the more subjective research methodologies of the humanists, and thus, function as their device for creating an impression of greater objectivity. Among the social science abstracts, 27% showed authorial presence in the abstract.

**Table 11.** Occurrence of *I/we/our* in interdisciplinary abstracts (N=300)

|        | Abstracts with 1 <sup>st</sup> person | Total number of abstracts |
|--------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hum    | 18                                    | 100                       |
| SocSci | 27                                    | 100                       |
| NatSci | 42                                    | 100                       |

As Table 12 indicates, the business abstracts were not unanimous in their revelation of the author's identity. In the case of Journal 1 (*JRCS*), only three authors (i.e., 15%) used first person references, and in the case of Journal 2 (*IBR*), the corresponding figure rose to 11 (55%), the average for the business abstracts being 35%, which is closer to the natural science abstracts than those of the social sciences in the interdisciplinary study. This finding suggests that sub-disciplinary and inter-journal variations may cause considerable discrepancies in small samples as the present.

**Table 12.** Occurrence of *we/our* in business abstracts (N=40)

|   | we | we & our | our | Abstracts with personal references | Total number of abstracts |
|---|----|----------|-----|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> | 2  | 1        | -   | 3                                  | 20                        |
| <i>International Business Review</i>              | 6  | 2        | 3   | 11                                 | 20                        |

The obvious occasions for using *I* or *we* in academic writing are those where the author makes references to research design, explains the collection of data, or recounts the research process. According to Tang & John (1999), ‘this particular role [recounting of the research process] is often signalled by the pairing of first person pronouns with what Halliday (1994) calls material process verbs (i.e., “doing” verbs like *work*, *read*, *interview*, *collect*), frequently used in the past tense.’ The following two tables, 13 and 14, show which reporting verbs most often accompanied the first person references in these studies:

**Table 13.** Instances of most frequent reporting verbs used with *I/we* in interdisciplinary abstracts (N=300)

| Hum      |                    | SocSci   |                    | NatSci      |                    |
|----------|--------------------|----------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Verb     | No. of occurrences | Verb     | No. of occurrences | Verb        | No. of occurrences |
| argue    | 2                  | argue    | 6                  | examine     | 8                  |
| find     | 2                  | observe  | 4                  | find        | 5                  |
| present  | 2                  | use      | 4                  | show        | 5                  |
| suggest  | 2                  | find     | 3                  | investigate | 4                  |
| ask      | 1                  | outline  | 3                  | use         | 4                  |
| assess   | 1                  | show     | 3                  | consider    | 3                  |
| conclude | 1                  | compare  | 2                  | construct   | 3                  |
| consider | 1                  | conclude | 2                  | measure     | 3                  |

Although the sample of reporting verbs in Table 13 is rather limited, some tentative differences may, nevertheless, be pointed out. The verb *argue* was only present in the humanities and social science abstracts, the natural sciences resorting more to such verbs as are needed in describing the actual technicalities of the research process. The other verbs in the humanities column also signify mental processes, as do most of the social science verbs. (For more details of the reporting verbs in the interdisciplinary abstracts, see Stotesbury 2003b: 269–272.) The findings of Table 14, in turn, seem to be situated somewhere between the social science and natural science abstracts of Table 13.

**Table 14.** Instances of reporting verbs used with *we* in business abstracts (number of occurrences in brackets if other than 1)

| <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> (N=20) | <i>International Business Review</i> (N=20) |
|--|---|
| examine (2)  | find/found (3)                              |
| discuss  | develop (2)                                 |
| focus  | address                                     |
| rank   | claim                                       |
|  | examine                                     |
|  | present                                     |
|  | propose                                     |
|  | study                                       |
|  | surmise                                     |
|  | test  |
| Total occurrences of reporting verbs: 5                  | Total occurrences of reporting verbs: 13    |

Table 14 indicates that there is a clear difference in the use of the first person plural pronoun in the two journals. The abstracts of Journal 2 (*IBR*) resort to personal reporting more than twice as often as those of Journal 1 (*JRC*). Moreover, references to *our results* are made seven times in Journal 2, while Journal 1 does so only twice. Table 15 reveals the rhetorical location of the reporting verbs or phrases revealing the first person.

**Table 15.** Moves in which 1<sup>st</sup> person references are used in business abstracts (N=40) (the number of occurrences in brackets if other than 1)

| Purpose | Method  | Claim            | Results   | Comments on results                   | Implications  |
|---------|---|------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| address | examine (2)<br>test (2)<br>develop (2)<br>study<br>rank<br><hr/> our analysis is conducted<br><hr/> the study conducted by the author [= 1] | claim<br>propose | find (2)<br>found<br>surmise<br><hr/> our results show/<br>indicate/<br>suggest | our results support previous findings | we discuss the possible implications of our results on theories |

As Table 15 shows, and Tang & John (1999) suggest, most first person references take place in the method move. The same move also includes one more impersonal reference, *the author*, which reveals the person [I] couched in some veil of obscurity. This is, in fact, the only case when a reference was made in the business abstracts to a single author.

#### 4 TO CONCLUDE

In the present pilot study, I compared two sets of data: the interdisciplinary abstracts and the mini-corpus of business abstracts. It was notable that many of the features found specific to the social science abstracts in the interdisciplinary study were also found in similar proportions in the business data. These findings included the rhetorical structure, the projection of authorial presence through the writers' voices in the abstracts, in particular, as well as some lexical affinities, such as the use of reporting verbs.

In this pilot study, I did not tackle the issue of evaluation in abstracts (for more details of evaluation in the interdisciplinary abstracts, see Stotesbury 2003a). Yet it is worth mentioning that in the interdisciplinary study, I found only 18 natural science abstracts out of 100 with no incidence of explicit evaluation, 3 in the social sciences, and 1 in the humanities. In the present business corpus, I discovered only one such abstract, which is reproduced in the appendix (Abstract 1) and contrasted with a more typical abstract with a number of explicitly evaluative

lexical items (Abstract 2). The high rate of attitudinal lexis in the RA abstracts testifies to the promotional and persuasive function of this genre.

The next step in the research process is to expand the present business data, which comprised abstracts from marketing journals, with four other sets of data to include abstracts from four further fields in which my students are majoring, that is, accounting, economics, law and economics, and management. It remains to be seen whether the new data will reveal subfield-specific differences within an important sector in the social sciences, that is, business and economics. This kind of study will be valuable for a practising ESP teacher since the teaching of abstract writing should be carried out according to the specific conventions of the subfield rather than the more general guidelines of academic writing manuals.

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## Appendix

Abstract 1 (cases of **implicit**<sup>1</sup> evaluation underlined)

This article attempts to evaluate the incidence of the national origin of companies and uncertainty on the choice between cooperation and merger-acquisition. The empirical study conducted by the author is based on a sample of 4632 interfirm linkages established by French and German companies. It reveals that the alliance mode decision is influenced by the institutional and cultural environment of companies and by the level of uncertainty resulting from the technological and psychic distance between parent companies. Moreover, the comparison of alliance strategies developed by French and German companies show different perceptions and responses to situations of uncertainty.

Abstract 2 (cases of **explicit** evaluation in italics)

Immigrant consumer behaviour is a topic of *burgeoning interest* to academics, planners, and marketers because of the *importance* of consumption in an urban economy, the growing ethnic diversity in metropolitan areas, and the rise of urban and suburban ethnic business activities. This paper examines middle-class Chinese immigrants' preferences between the mainstream economy and the Chinese ethnic economy that comprises businesses owned and operated by Chinese immigrants. In situations where Chinese businesses and mainstream businesses carry a similar product mix and offer competing services, the consumption pattern of Chinese immigrants reflects a preference between the two economies. The study reveals a *dynamic* picture of Chinese immigrants' consumer behaviour, with preferences ranging from a high concentration of patronage for Chinese travel agencies to a mix of visits to both Chinese and mainstream supermarkets. Logistic regression models reveal that ethnic identification is the *most important* factor in the choice of shopping venues although individual characteristics, the spatial structure of supply, and store attributes also play a role. The study yields *important* theoretical, planning, and managerial implications.

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of implicit evaluation in academic writing is attributed to Hunston's (1993) research. She argues that since we are working in the context of good and valuable research, the reporting of research is implicitly evaluative *per se*.