
Editorial: Property research – be practical and be useful

Editorial

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Introduction

In this issue, we are publishing two Real Estate Insights that look at the current state of real estate academia. These papers, “Identifying Career Strategies for Property Academics” and “The Future of Property Research” are discussing the need for the new generation of real estate academics to seek out a career path that meets both the publication requirement of the universities and, yet at the same time, does not forget the importance of good practical research that can be used in, and have an impact upon, practice.

As an editor of this journal for over 40 years, I would like to add my insights to these papers, and that if you are a young researcher today, you have a unique opportunity of establishing yourself as a thought leader in real estate.

So I want to be encouraging but, in so doing, I need to flag things that you should avoid. Things that, sadly, too many real estate academics are now doing.

Numbers alone aren't the answer

It is interesting that during my time as the gatekeeper for the review of submissions to this journal, I have seen a distinct change in the type of papers that I am receiving. Too many submissions do not say anything. They look like they are good research, they are presented in sections but, when read in detail, there is no substance to what they are saying.

All published papers need to add to the body of knowledge. They need to have a purpose and, ideally, they need to help the reader undertake their work in that topic with great understanding and insights.

The biggest culprits of the failure to say anything are quantitative papers that simply analyse a (new) dataset to show correlations that everyone in practice understood and knew already. Quants papers are great and important and can be substantial in helping us understand property markets and investment strategies, but they have to be research into an area where there is a need for research. Too many of the submissions I see are researching a topic that is so miniscule that no one in practice needs to know the answers.

How to get published

The problem with erroneous or premature submissions was getting so great that the team at *JPIF* have published a note on “how to get published”. The full content of which can be found on the *JPIF* website at:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/jpif/notes-how-get-published

But I have repeated some of the pertinent points here.

- (1) It may seem an odd thing to emphasise but make sure that your paper says something. This answers the “so what?” question. Too many submissions are produced “by rote” and are more simple descriptive data analysis (or heavy econometric analyses) that add nothing to the existing literature. A strong quantitative analysis is not sufficient to warrant publication in itself; the analysis needs to be relevant and pertinent as the Editorial Board will want to see evidence on how the analysis and the results can be applied in practice. This is a key requirement for *JPIF*.



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- (2) Before a paper can be sent for review, it needs to:
 - Incorporate all the existing literature on the topic from both real estate journals and other related disciplines.
 - Provide a full exposition in the introduction and conclusions on why your paper is important.
 - The conclusions should be a substantive part of the paper.
 - Always link your paper to practice. Show how your work can improve the market understanding of property investment and practice.
- (3) Read previous papers from *JPIF* to get a sense of the style and structure of papers that have been accepted.

Be practical, be insightful and be good at what you know

All the above should be self-evident, but it is the final part that is most often missing. The real estate industry is crying out for good, independent and rigorous research. There are numerous industry bodies worldwide that are keen to fund research that is both insightful and useful to the profession. If you, as a young researcher, can take this on-board and provide that service, it will not only increase your likelihood of being published, but it will help you develop a name for yourself within the industry.

Real estate is a practical subject. The purity of number-crunching is only useful if the research undertaken helps to answer questions that are current in the market today. This may be the advancement and restrictions imposed by ESG; the positive use of AI; the changing behavioural use of property in retail, offices and logistics etc.

If, as a young researcher, you become a leading scholar on these and other topics, then you will have a bright future ahead of you in the real estate industry.

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