

Letter from the editor

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Demonstrating the impact of cases

Is *The CASE Journal (TCJ)* on the Australian Business Deans' List? What is *TCJ*'s impact factor? These are questions that I regularly get asked as *TCJ*'s Editor-in-Chief. The answers to these questions are "not yet, but we are working on it" and "cases do not get cited so a traditional impact factor is not possible to calculate." The driving forces of budget cuts and pressures to make higher education more affordable explain the increasing need to better demonstrate the impact of scholarly research. But how do we demonstrate the impact of case research and writing?

In January 2018, I was invited by Emerald Publishing to participate in a panel discussion on "Bridging the Research/Application Gap with Cases" at the AACSB ICAM Conference. The presentation slides can be accessed on the AACSB website. In preparing that presentation and attending other sessions at the conference, I began thinking about the challenges of measuring the impact of case research and writing.

Impact of case research and writing on stakeholders

Case research and writing can have multiple impacts for stakeholders such as students, faculty, academic institutions and the business community. For students, case research and writing is important in creating the pedagogical materials that permit active learning in business courses. Published cases provide students with a realistic facsimile of the world enabling them to practice skills such as critical and analytical thinking in an environment with few consequences. Cases compel students to view events from different perspectives, challenging them to think beyond their own experience to better understand the difficult trade-offs and choices faced by others.

For faculty, case research and writing can provide the means for enhancing intellectual vibrancy and currency. Conducting interviews and site visits in preparation for writing a case can satisfy a faculty member's curiosity to better understand the issues and operations of a firm or industry. Insights gained while conducting case research become illustrative examples in our teaching demonstrating either effective or ineffective practice. Instructors appear more relevant to students because they have direct exposure to current business practices.

For the business community, case research and writing has benefits that are often overlooked. By agreeing to become the focus of a case, businesses can show support for expanding student knowledge and development. In addition, the businesses might benefit from the case writing process itself. By thinking reflectively about issues during the case interview process, executives may come to new solutions to existing problems. Executives that attend classes when the case is discussed may also benefit from hearing student perspectives, analyses and recommendations. Case studies may also benefit firms in talent recruitment as students may be drawn to apply to companies they have studied.

For academic institutions, case research can promote more collaborations between businesses, faculty and students. These tighter connections between schools and businesses can be beneficial for donations, sponsorships, internships and other collaborative partnerships.

Cases have long been seen as valuable and necessary pedagogical tools; however, the scholarly contribution of cases is not as well established. Those who denigrate case research are often unaware of the research methodologies used to create cases and the rigorous peer review process used to evaluate them. While some headway is being made in strengthening the perception and validity of case research as a worthy scholarly contribution, we now must turn to examine how we demonstrate the impact of such work.



Impact metric for published cases

The section above gives ideas for demonstrating the impact of cases using qualitative measures, but will this be sufficient in today's higher education environment? Current practice in assessment of research impact focuses on utilization of metrics such as journal impact factors (JIFs) and journal rankings (such as the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) list). Evaluators (deans, tenure committees and accreditors) seem to prefer unambiguous metrics like citation counts or external journal rankings[1] both of which are not favorable to case research. Cases are seldom cited by other researchers as demonstrated by internal reports for *TCJ* that show a handful of cases with one citation each. Since JIFs are typically based on the "frequency of citations of an 'average article' in a particular year," (Clarivate, n.d.). JIFs do not provide a valid measure of quality for case journals. Currently, case journals are also not included in the lists of journal rankings such as ABDC, Harzing, Association of Business Schools, etc. This leads us to the question: what would be an appropriate indicator of the quality of a published case?

Many case researchers point to case usage as an indicator of the quality of a case. Cases that are widely adopted for classroom use may be considered of higher quality than published cases that are not as frequently adopted. Publishers and distributors of cases will sometimes give authors adoption counts if requested while others provide "best" or "most frequently downloaded" lists. Harvard Business Publishing designates frequently adopted cases as "most popular," while The Case Centre lists the "top 10 most popular inspection copies of the week."

At *TCJ*, the journal page[2] lists the "most read papers from this title" for the last seven days or the last year. The list is in rank order without showing the number of downloads or "reads." Internal reports shared with the editor show the number of downloads for the most popular cases for the year or for all time. For example, Brett Matherne and Jay O'Toole's case on Uber (published in September 2017) is listed as the most frequently downloaded *TCJ* case of all time with 850 downloads (a remarkable feat for a case that has only been out less than nine months). Because Emerald Publishing uses a subscription model for distributing *TCJ* cases, the significance of 850 downloads is even greater than it appears. For *TCJ*, a download indicates an institution (school or university) has downloaded the case. The number does not signify the number of students who studied the case. Each of the 850 downloads could represent usage by one person or thousands – we currently have no way of knowing. Emerald Publishing has agreed to work on improving the availability, validity and accessibility of data to enable *TCJ* authors to better demonstrate the impact (in terms of reach) of their cases.

What other measures could be used to demonstrate the impact of a case? Dan LeClair (2017), AACSB Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer, writes that the conversation about impact is already changing beyond counting journal articles to embrace stories "about how research has been or can be used in practice or policy, or how it has translated into a new course or program." He reports that deans are "talking about new ways to demonstrate impact such as reach/readership among practicing managers, software adoptions and adaptations, and case studies of applications." Although *TCJ* does not currently have the data to do so, it could be beneficial to know if a downloaded case was used in executive education and/or MBA courses as a way of showing impact among practicing managers.

Presentations at the AACSB Conference also stressed other metrics that could be used to demonstrate impact. Perhaps the most interesting and applicable of these other metrics for case authors may be social media mentions of research. Greater impact could be shown if authors knew that their cases were highlighted in blogs or in traditional social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or LinkedIn. Companies such as Altmetrics and Cabells aggregate data from multiple websites and online platforms to provide institutions, publishers and researchers with data on the online mentions of scholarly work. For this to be a successful way to demonstrate the impact of published cases, the existence of online conversations about case usage must exist. Instructors that adopt cases for use in their classes need to write about

them on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or LinkedIn. *TCJ* is committed to expanding its social media presence by establishing and actively utilizing accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn to start conversations about cases and their use. It is hoped that these conversations will be beneficial to authors in demonstrating the impact of their work and to instructors looking for suggestions for effective cases or for teaching tips. Look for e-mail announcements regarding the launch of these efforts and please consider participating in the conversations.

Another online source that might be beneficial to case authors for demonstrating the usage of their cases is the number of course syllabi that assign the case. The Open Syllabus Project[3] is creating a massive database of course syllabi (over 100,000 syllabi for business courses are now available) for cross curricula research on the content and evolution of academic fields. Cases listed on course syllabi reflect peer judgments of the value of the cases. Instructors use cases that provide valuable learning experiences and are compelling and engaging for students. Indicators of the frequency and context of case use through examining syllabi may produce useful information for valuing case impact. However, this measure is completely dependent on the number of faculty who share course syllabi with data sets such as the Open Syllabus Project and the completeness of the citation of the case on the syllabi. Complete case titles and author names would enable search engines to better identify course adoptions of particular cases.

***TCJ* and Emerald Publishing**

Many case authors were drawn to case writing because they wanted their scholarly work to matter – to have impact. The prevailing winds in higher education compel journals and publishers to assist authors in better illustrating the importance and impact of their work in the real world. Emerald Publishing is committed to helping *TCJ* authors (as well as all authors who publish in Emerald journals) to better demonstrate the meaningful impact of their research[4]. Working collaboratively, Emerald and *TCJ* are committed to “publish research which makes a difference” (Emerald Publishing Limited, n.d.) and to provide authors with innovative tools to more effectively celebrate the real world impact of case research. We also invite you to be part of the conversation. Contribute to the Real World Impact blog on Emerald’s website and/or e-mail me at: tcjeditor@gmail.com. This is your chance to be a part of the change!

In this issue

This issue includes six cases (see Table I) focused on a wide variety of companies, locations and issues. Each case has a strong Instructor’s Manual (IM) providing effective teaching strategies, theoretical linkages and complete answers and analysis to all discussion questions. *TCJ* IMs have been rigorously peer reviewed to ensure that adopting faculty can teach these cases as well as the authors.

This issue also features an article (see Table II) providing an extensive review of research studies performed in the classroom to evaluate and compare the use of the case method to the lecture method of teaching. The article provides both positive and negative evidence of the efficacy of the case method.

Table 1 Cases in this issue

<i>Case title and target audience</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Synopsis</i>
Maison Maille: making mustard aspirational to younger consumers Audience: graduate students in brand management courses	Marie-Cécile Cervellon and Lea Lembo	This case introduces students to the heritage brand Maille. Dating back to 1747, this brand has managed to elevate the image of mustard from commodity to premium product, capitalizing on brand authenticity and adopting the codes and strategies of luxury brands. Present in supermarkets with a premium price positioning, Maille develops its image through creating an elaborate customer experience in its boutiques, as well as through a communication strategy based on storytelling. Yet, the core base of customers who identify as gourmets is aging. To sustain its development, Maille needs to gain appeal among younger generations of consumers, without betraying its identity
Yellow card: US Women's Soccer seeks pay equity Audience: upper level undergraduate human resource management, labor economics and employment law courses, specifically courses in human resource management, gender equity, business law and labor economics	Joanna Kimbell, Anne Macy, Emily Hammer and Denise Philpot	In April 2016, Julie Foudy, a former US Women's Soccer Player turned Sports Commentator, is challenged with explaining to soccer fans and the sports industry why current US Women's Soccer players are complaining about a lack of pay equity This case focuses on the challenges of proving discrimination in professional women's sports by exploring discrimination accusations within a collective bargaining environment of US Women's Soccer. The case explores theoretical foundations of wage and compensation packages differentials, group wage negotiations, conditions permissible under equal employment opportunity law, and the challenges that come with analyzing a wage discrimination claim. Students will apply foundational concepts of human resource management, time value of money, and analysis of legal ramifications of contract differences to a factual, timely sports management scenario
SmartPooch: pre-venture opportunity assessment Audience: undergraduate and graduate introductory entrepreneurship courses	Mark Rice	In an MBA capstone project course, a team of four mid-careers, working professionals had assessed the feasibility of a new venture idea. All four were dog-lovers who had been frustrated by the ineffectiveness of the various dog training programs and products in which they had participated. Their idea was to utilize a novel technology to assist dog owners in the training process. After completing the course, the team met to determine whether SmartPooch was just an interesting idea – or alternatively was a sufficiently promising opportunity that one or more of them would continue to explore it
Pritchett Controls: ten years into employee ownership Audience: undergraduate and graduate level courses in strategic human resource management, organizational development, and high performance organizations	Richard Hoffman, Wayne Decker and Frank Shipper	This case illustrates the rationale for adopting employee ownership, and difficulties in implementing employee empowerment beyond investment. In the beginning it focuses on why Jerry Pritchett, one of the co-founders of Pritchett Controls, decided to convert it to an employee-owned company. In the body of the case, it details the efforts of the company to operate under its new ownership structure in an increasingly competitive environment. Although Pritchett established employee owners, only selected High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) practices have been implemented. The issue the reader must grapple with is whether other HPWS practices should be adopted or not
The dilemma down under Audience: undergraduate or graduate courses related to negotiation and/or decision making, international management/strategy courses	Michael Ricco and Patrick Hultberg	The dilemma down under is a two-party distributive negotiation with integrative potential. A large airline, Transpacific Airlines (TPA), created an internal tour operator brand named Transpacific Vacations as a separate profit center. After licensing its brand to Global Tour Services and establishing operations in the UK, negotiations to take over the internal tour operations of TPA-Australia are about to begin. The case involves the negotiation between Mr Edwards, Representative of GTS, and Ms Bentley, Representative of TPA-Australia
Jigsaw Academy: outreaching the analytics market Audience: graduate level courses in entrepreneurship, sales and distribution management, strategic alliances and mergers	Tuhin Sengupta and Arunava Ghosh	In May 2016, Sarita Digumarti, Chief Operating Officer of Jigsaw Academy in Bangalore, India, faced a challenging situation. Jigsaw Academy provided online courses in data analytics and big data at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels for students as well as working professionals. It was perceived that plenty of students from premier institutions in India had a high level of theoretical knowledge about the process involved in number crunching and data analysis; however, the hands-on experience on actual business problems or actual data sets was a major limitation with these students. Given the rapid growth of the analytics sector and the limited number of academic institutions offering analytics courses, there was lack of availability of the right skills in the analytics market. Jigsaw Academy seized this opportunity and started offering relevant courses. Jigsaw Academy wanted to grow its brand equity and to achieve this through B2B collaborations and/or alliances. However, expansion through B2B had its own challenges. Given the competitive landscape of the analytics market, Jigsaw Academy wondered whether to opt for B2B channel, and if yes, the process to use in choosing potential B2B partners

Table II Article in this issue

<i>Article title and audience</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Abstract</i>
Exploration of the efficacy of the case method of teaching Audience: case method instructors and those considering adopting the case method	Marlene Reed and Rochelle Brunson	<p>Purpose: the purpose of this research was to identify studies that had been undertaken to determine the efficacy of the case method of teaching as compared to the lecture method in an academic setting</p> <p>Design: an extensive search of secondary sources to identify research undertaken within a classroom setting to determine the effectiveness of case teaching as compared to the lecture method</p> <p>Findings: the findings of this study indicated within the research reviewed the following positive results of case teaching noted by students: enhanced learning of the subject; heightened student engagement in the classroom, and the receipt of higher grades in some disciplines. The following negative results were also found: lack of understanding of course content and the method is more challenging and time consuming. In a national survey of faculty using the case method for the first time: develops strong critical-thinking skills, greater retention of course material and more active engagement in the classroom</p> <p>Limitations: the limitations were the inconsistency of variables measured in the study and the small sample sizes</p> <p>Value: a determination of the number of studies performed to evaluate the effectiveness of case teaching and their findings</p>

Notes

1. A list of various ranking or index methodologies can be found on the AACSB website at: www.aacsb.edu/knowledge/resources/journal_rankings (accessed May 8, 2018).
2. This list can be available at: www.emeraldinsight.com/action/showMostReadArticles?journalCode=tcj (accessed May 8, 2018).
3. The Open Syllabus Project is available at: <http://opensyllabusproject.org> (accessed May 9, 2018).
4. Read Emerald's Real Impact Manifesto is available at: www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/realworldimpact.htm (accessed May 8, 2018).

References

- Clarivate (n.d.), "Impact factor", available at: <https://clarivate.com/essays/impact-factor/> (accessed May 8, 2018).
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- LeClair, D. (2017), "5 Reasons for optimism about business school research", web log post, March 22, available at: www.aacsb.edu/blog/2017/march/5-reasons-for-optimism-about-business-school-research (accessed May 9, 2018).