

AUTHOR GUIDELINES SAJBMC

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Aligning Goals: Guidelines for submission to SAJBMC

The aim of this manuscript is to increase the chance of acceptance of a case submission to South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases (SAJBMC) by aligning the goals of the author with that of the journal. By analysing rejection data over past three years, the editorial team at SAJBMC has isolated the issue of desk rejection as the single most important criterion.

Desk rejection not only is often feared by authors and breeds disappointment but also generates frustration among the editorial staff of the journal. The purpose of this guideline is twofold. First, to provide some suggestions to authors in order to avoid desk rejections. Second, explain the aspired positioning of SAJBMC, its scope, criteria of inclusion and exclusion. The document includes two more sections: what constitutes a good case and types of teaching case studies.

Towards the end it also lists the basic information about the case and its authors that is required by the journal.

Significant shift

In the past issues the journal has published many descriptive cases in which the authors have narrated maybe the growth of a firm by showing performance figures over the years or provided the information of entry into a new market or chronologically listed the events of a new product launch. They did not answer the questions ‘How these were done?’ and ‘What does the theory say?’ Based on the feedback of the faculty fraternity the editorial team realised that such cases barely provide any learning apart from sharing new information. There is no merit in including such a case in the management courses.

SAJBMC identified a real big opportunity in improving its acceptance among the faculty community. It has been decided that gradually the journal will stop accepting cases that do not have theoretical linkages. In other terms if by using a case a faculty cannot teach either a concept or a framework or a model, a question arises as to why such a case be included in the course outline?

This shift has been successfully implemented with the August 2019 issue No. 8.2. From this issue onwards all cases have some connect with theory. Faculty will find that such cases make the interaction in the class more lively and help to cover theory as well.

Positioning of SAJBMC

SAJBMC aspires to known as a case focused research journal which

1. Publishes FRESH cases from South Asia
2. Selects cases with THEORETICAL LINKAGE to concept, framework or model
3. Reviews cases with an approach to IMPROVE rather than to reject
4. Provides support to CONNECT with THEORY
5. Responds QUICKLY: Revolving Door Desk review within 3-4 weeks and Transparent Peer review within 3-4 months

In short SAJBMC is a *bouquet of theory linked fresh cases from South Asia.*

What is a case study?

Case study is a research methodology, typically seen in social and life sciences. There is no one definition of case study research. However, very simply... 'a case study can be defined as an intensive study about a person, a group of people or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units'.

In doing case study research, the "case" being studied may be an individual, organization, event, or action, existing in a specific time and place.

Cases are of many types. However, ICMC/SAJBMC LIKES problem solving, decision focused and applied cases. ICMC/SAJBMC DOES NOT like only narrative cases

What is a good case?

GOOD CASES should demonstrate LINKAGE with theory, must have a PROTAGONIST, who is facing a DILEMMA, that UNFOLDS before the reader within first two paragraphs; case must have DRAMATIZATION, must suggest different ALTERNATIVES to solve the dilemma and is told as a STORY in a fashion that ENGAGES readers.

If the dilemma (also known as case issue) in a case is detected and alternatives to solve have been identified, the scope of literature review in a case is limited. Even for detecting alternatives the author should take a deep dive into data collected for the case and need not look outside.

Except in the case of financial dilemma, a well written case should not be data heavy and, hence, should not require elaborate analysis tools.

A DILEMMA is the heart of a case. Without a DILEMMA no case can be written. The DILEMMA should be placed before the reader within first two paragraphs of the case. The author should then suggest all the alternative paths that the protagonist can select?

The discussion of a case tries to bring out ‘WHICH’ of the alternatives will work better and why? A case does not seek to answer as to ‘WHAT’ or ‘HOW’ the protagonist should proceed. For finding answers to ‘WHICH of the alternatives?’ literature review is NOT NEEDED because all the options have been either identified or can be identified by delving deep into the case data. Generally, literature review is required to find answers to questions like ‘What can be done?’ or ‘How to proceed?’.

Scope of SAJBMC

It is divided into two parts: Inclusion and Exclusion. If the scope of submissions by authors remain within the realm of inclusion - what the journal wants, the chances of clearing the hurdle of desk review will brighten. At the same time authors should carefully avoid getting trapped into any of the exclusion criteria.

Inclusions

1. Primarily South Asia focused cases
2. Preferred application domains: Sustainability, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Creativity, Ethical dilemma, Social inclusion and knowledge management. However, authors are encouraged to submit their scholarly work in other domains as well.
3. Journal prefers cases that
 - a. Deals with recent business or people related issues
 - b. Having strong linkages with theory**
 - c. Places dilemma before the reader within first two paragraphs
 - d. Includes controversy, contrasts, conflicts and other dramatic elements
 - e. Prefers problem identification, decision focused, application based of containing contextual dilemma (such as ethical issues).
 - f. All such cases will need the presence of protagonist
 - g. Has consent to publish from the target organisation
 - h. Are written using 5000 words or less – tables and figures included

Exclusions

The journal avoids accepting cases that

1. Are long – more than 8000 words
2. Are research articles and not cases
3. Cases without any link to theory
4. Are just narrative cases denuded of any learning outcomes
5. Deals with pretty old (more than five years) issues
6. Do not have clearly defined learning outcomes
7. Are merely descriptive (narrative) without any dilemma
8. Are written on single firms but do not have consent to publish
9. Are written with secondary data but have inadequate references
10. Are written with primary data but have too many footnotes or endnotes
11. Contain opinionated inferences without any evidence

12. Have intense literature review section resulting in too long list of references of past literature
13. Are poorly organised
14. Are written with too many language errors
15. Are teaching cases without any protagonist
16. Are heavy with data analysis

Evaluation of a case

A good case – particularly a teaching case – must have following elements (this section is inspired by the article Guidelines Management Teaching Case, Journal of Case Research and Inquiry, Vol 3, pp 236 – 272, 2017)

1. **Reality:** Authenticity is important for engagement
2. **Significance:** Underlying issues of the case must be important in theoretical or policy or practical terms.
3. **Comprehensiveness:** Should provide rich description of the context in which the organisation is embedded and people act.
4. **Alternative perspective:** Although case issues are often seen through the eyes of an individual decision maker, they can also be described from other perspectives.
5. **Backed by evidence:** A case is a story backed by evidence. The case writer's biases are kept – to the extent possible – out of the text.
6. **Reasonably complex:** Complexity – along with some ambiguity – maybe essential to the process of learning how to make quality decisions.
7. **Emotionally rich:** Some cases can quickly involve the reader emotionally.
8. **Engaging:** Emotionally rich cases are important to get the reader interested but it takes a well written case to keep the reader engaged from start to finish.

Types of teaching cases

Based on the type of information included in the case, how the information is structured, the research objectives, and what the case writer intended for the students to do with the case, cases can be categorised into eight types. Often final version of a case contains elements of more than one type.

1. **Critical incidents:** These short compact cases can be descriptive or decisional but they are brief, focus on one event or issue and little context. Generally found at the end of a chapter in a book or in Journal of Critical Incidents.
2. **Descriptive illustrative:** These describe actions that have been taken by an organisation. Some are purely descriptive seeking to inform the reader about an organisation and its policies. Some are intended to be memorable example of an organisation – positive or negative.
3. **Problem identification cases:** Primary purpose of such cases is to get students to prioritise information and identify, define or redefine a problem.
4. **Decision focused cases:** These require the reader to make a decision or advise the protagonist.
5. **Application cases:** The pedagogical goal of an application case is for students to apply a concept, theory, typology, calculation, framework or model and determine how well the theory fits the data provided in the case.
6. **Contextual issue cases:** These are used to explore the context around an (often) ethical or legal issue. So called ‘dark side’ cases fall in this category.
7. **Live cases:** In a live case some information is written – but is not written – instead it is provided orally by the firm's representative in a field visit or as a guest speaker in classroom. Another variation of a live case is a ‘living case’. In this format of the case students interact with the protagonist after they have written the recommendations. Student experience in such cases maybe different each time it is presented. These live cases can be of any type as described above.
8. **Cases in video, multimedia and other format:** The format of a case discussion is only limited by our imagination. Technology has made it feasible to use video

cases which bring realism into the classroom and engage students at different cognitive level.

Out of the eight types of cases, Decision focused, Problem solving and to some extent Application based cases will definitely require a well identified protagonist. The case issues should revolve around the protagonist whose decisions can influence the case issues and students can identify themselves with the protagonist while recommending decisions. The presence of a protagonist in other types of cases may help in discussion and understanding but it is not a must have feature.

(The partial text of the above section on types of cases has been drawn from Journal of case research and inquiry Vol 3, pp 236-272, 2017).

General issues

Following common errors also need careful attention of the author:

1. All submissions should only be in MS word document.
2. Follow APA style. Take extra care in the reference section. Check if all citations are appearing in the reference section and vice- versa.
3. Remove all notes. Convert them into citation and referencing. For a case written with the help of secondary data, end notes may be retained.
4. Ensure proper style of citation and referencing for materials downloaded from the website. Most of the journals follow ‘Retrieved from...’ and ‘Accessed on...’
5. Use UK English. Write ‘Analyse’ instead of ‘Analyze’. Write ‘Colour’ instead of ‘Color’.
6. All figures and tables should be in black and white. Colour displays are not acceptable.
7. Please remember that in a black and white print, reproduction of half-tone figures is of poor quality.
8. As much as possible avoid copy paste of tables and graphs. Redraw afresh. Copy pasted figures or tables are not accepted.
9. Each table and each figure should have table and figure numbers and titles. Separate numbering for tables and figures. Each table and figure must have source.

10. The entire document, including tables, figures, and graphs, must be in Times New Roman 12 point font size with 1.5 line spacing. Follow APA style
11. Exercise utmost care to avoid spelling and grammatical errors. Proofread the copy carefully. Take help of experts
12. The full document, including abstract, tables, figures, graphs and references, should not exceed 5000 words.
13. For the benefit of international audience, all financial figures expressed in any currency should have USD equivalent as well. Units of million and billion should be used.

Meta Data: Information for submission to SAJBMC

To all authors who submitted a case to SAJBMC, this document will be mailed even before the desk review stage. Purpose of this additional step is to help authors to understand the basic expectations of the journal and give them an opportunity to recast their submission or decide to withdraw. It is hoped that this process will reduce the chance of desk rejection.

The elements of information that are required by the journal have been listed below:

1. Title of the case
2. Authors' name, designation, organization, full postal address, e mail, mobile. (For each author separately)
3. Source of data
4. Consent obtained: Yes/No
5. Category of the case: Teaching or Research
6. Type of the case: (out of the above listed eight types; a case may have elements of more than one type):
7. Course/s in MBA/PGDM syllabus in which this case can be used:
8. For each course describe which theory – either concept or framework or model can be taught with the help of this case
9. Minimum three learning outcomes for each course: Good learning outcomes are focused on what the learner will know or be able to do by the end of a defined period of time and indicate how that knowledge or skill will be demonstrated.

10. Minimum three names of potential reviewers from the same area as the case is written with name, designation, organization, Full address, e-mail id and areas of expertise.

The above information needs to be submitted as an attachment in MS word to the main case.

Link with theory

SAJBMC does not publish Teaching Note. At the same time the journal will henceforth (from issue of August 2019) accept cases with strong theoretical linkage. The teaching note contains two essential information: the link to theory and case questions. SAJBMC authors are expected to write cases that show theoretical foundations (link to theory). Somehow the authors should describe the concept or framework or model that can be taught in different management courses by using the case to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Brief references of seminal type should be cited without indulging in a detailed literature review. The word limit for this section is 500.

There could be following three variations of incorporating theoretical linkage:

Option 1

The case can be written in a manner so as to reflect the purpose. A case on repositioning, new product launch, 4Ps of marketing can be written in this manner.

Option 2

A case written for the purpose of covering a framework or a model may need introduction and explanation of the framework/model within the case itself. At the end connection of the framework with the selected variables in the case may be useful to highlight the application. If the author has written a case on creating a service mindset, the section heading will be ‘Service Mindset’ and references to main theories should be given here. Similarly, if a case describes how a service failure incident was recovered, the framework for service recovery should be included with few references.

Option 3

In yet another case the author may be interested in placing a dilemma before the reader such as if the firm had adopted ambidexterity, it could have faced the turbulent times with agile strategies

and may have come out winning. In such a case it is advised that the theory of ambidexterity be added at the end of the case with citation of a few seminal works.

If the teaching note is not published, every case must end by raising a few questions to involve the reader and help him in reflecting on the case issues. Such questions also help in triggering discussions in a class. These questions normally form a part of teaching note.

Desk review

Every case submitted to SAJBMC is put through Desk Review to check following characteristics that must be present:

Is it a case or a research paper? A typical research paper is characterized by the presence of an extensive literature review to establish the research gap and research questions (and/or hypotheses). If the submission is a research paper, reject. The case is open (the name of the firm is disclosed) or disguised. Reject if disguised. The case is written with primary or secondary data. The journal prefers case with primary data. If written with secondary data, check if the issue can be probed with secondary data. For example, behavioural or strategic issues cannot be probed with secondary data. Next comes the types of the case. The journal wishes to receive cases with problem identification, decision focused, application based or containing contextual dilemma (such as ethical issues). If the case is simply narrative, reject. Is it linked with theory – concept, framework or model? Which theory? If not, can the case be modified to incorporate some theory? Which theory? Can the linkage be improved? How to improve? Finally, Grammarly is run to detect and remove the common mistakes and language is edited.

Peer Review

Only those cases, that possess potential to be converted to a publishable form, are taken to the peer review stage. If the author is willing to work upon the suggestions for improvement, the case will not be rejected. Only if the author is either unable to comply with the suggested changes or not willing to, the case will be rejected.

The approach of SAJBMC for peer review stage is to ensure *quick response* (to be completed within three weeks), *theory linked* (to check if it is present or not and to suggest if it can be

improved) and *review to improve* (to suggest at least two strengths to build on further and two weaknesses to work upon)

In a case following four features must be present in right intensity: Culmination of the content in a dilemmatic situation, Identification and relevance of protagonist, Identification of issues to be resolved and Dramatization of the work especially at the introduction section.

A case discussion can be enriched by introducing the perspectives of different stakeholders who are involved directly. How each will be affected by the decision in the case may heighten the interactions in a class.

So, what is a GOOD CASE?

GOOD CASES should demonstrate LINKAGE with theory, must have a PROTAGONIST, who is facing a DILEMMA, that UNFOLDS before the reader within first two paragraphs; case must have DRAMATIZATION, must suggest different ALTERNATIVES to solve the dilemma and is told as a STORY in a fashion that ENGAGES readers.