



In through the out door

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The first editorial written by an incoming editor offers readers a healthy mixture of reflection, homage, and squinty-eyed peering into the future. Mine will be no different. The journal is in excellent shape as I begin my first full year as Editor-in-Chief (EIC) of the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)*, thanks in very large part to its outstanding three-year guidance by Rob Palmatier. He has placed the journal on a strongly positive trajectory for the future, and I am both honored and a bit intimidated by the thought of following in his footsteps.

As I approached the writing of this editorial, I wanted to take a somewhat different tack from that followed by most editors, perhaps using a unique metaphor to drive home an inspirational message. However, allusions to batch processes, cheese moving, and jazz stylings all proved elusive. Instead, I decided to stick with something more familiar: my all-time favorite rock and roll band, Led Zeppelin. (For the Zeppelin faithful among you, you will see reference to various major tracks seeded throughout this review.)

Using track titles that resonate with authors, reviewers, and editors everywhere (e.g., “Dazed and Confused,” “Good Times Bad Times”),¹ Zeppelin integrated blues chords with seemingly frenetic rock rhythms. Their tracks are deceptively straightforward yet exhibit a deeper complexity to the discerning ear.² This is also the essence of groundbreaking academic papers: clear and compelling storytelling (the seemingly

simple) combined with the meticulous use of strong theory and rigorous methodology (the richly complex).

In the sections that follow, I focus first on a brief description of the current state of the journal. This is followed by discussion of (1) the *JAMS* review team, (2) the review process, (3) how to avoid desk rejection, and (4) the editorial directions I plan to pursue.

State of the journal: “Celebration Day”

As mentioned above, *JAMS* is currently in excellent shape. During his editorship, Rob Palmatier was able to successfully get *JAMS* added to the *Financial Times (FT)* journal list, a list of the world’s top 50 business journals (including six from the marketing discipline). Overall, *JAMS* performs very well on a variety of performance metrics:

- Relative to the full list of 50 *FT* journals, *JAMS* ranked third overall in 2017 (and first among marketing journals) for its two-year impact factor of 8.488. Even when corrected for self-citations, *JAMS* has an impact factor of 7.607, above all other marketing journals included in the list.³
- Submissions to *JAMS* continue to grow, rising from 319 in 2007 to 582 in 2017, and well over 600 in 2018. The average turnaround time for all papers (including desk rejections) was 23 days in 2017, and 49 days for papers completing a first round of review (reviewers, AE, and EIC).
- International diversity is strong, with papers submitted from around the globe. In 2017, 34% of all submissions came from North America, 31% from Europe, and the balance from other regions.

¹ Both tracks can be found on *Led Zeppelin*, released in 1969. This is arguably rock and roll’s greatest first album.

² Perhaps the best example of this is “Kashmir,” a track with a time signature that combines duple and triple meter; the drums and vocal melody are in bars of 4/4 and 2/4 time, whereas the guitar riff is played in cycles of 3/8 time.

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³ Data on the 2017 impact factors were retrieved from the Clarivate *Journal Citation Reports* via the Web of Science database in July 2018.

The review team: “Houses of the Holy”

The current *JAMS* review process was put in place in 2015, shortly before the transition in editorship from Tomas Hult to Rob Palmatier. This change added an Area Editor (AE) component into the review process, providing deeper knowledge across substantive and methodological domains, and greater publishing and reviewing expertise. It has resulted in the journal having greater editorial capacity to deal with the growing number of submissions. Overall, I believe that the current system works well, and I do not foresee any major changes in the near future.

However, in order for *JAMS* to run effectively and be successful, it is critically important to have reviewers, editorial review board (ERB) members, and AEs who are committed to providing timely, high quality feedback to authors. *JAMS* is very fortunate to have an excellent set of scholars participating at all levels of the review process, and I would like to thank everyone for their patience in responding to multiple requests over short time periods (as happened this past summer when two special issue deadlines were scheduled almost directly on top of one another). As we move forward, I will be looking to add new AEs and ERB members, as well as increasing the overall size of the reviewer base.

The review process: “How Many More Times?”

My vision for *JAMS* includes ensuring a review process that is fair, and that strikes an appropriate balance between rigor and relevance. With respect to review fairness, *JAMS* already has a very good reputation. My aim is to refine this process by emphasizing—particularly to the AEs, but to reviewers as well—the need for a constructive mindset. Carol Saunders, former editor of *MIS Quarterly*, creatively described reviewers and editors with this mindset as “diamond cutters,” individuals looking for the research gem buried in a lump of coal (Saunders 2005). Instead of asking “What is wrong with this paper?” and looking for fatal flaws, the diamond cutter approach focuses on assessing what can be done to make the paper publishable in an appropriate forum (whether in *JAMS* or another journal).

JAMS seeks papers with findings that are meaningful, clear, unique, and robust. This means that relevance and rigor are both important. Placing an over-emphasis on rigor can have two pernicious effects on manuscript flow. First, emphasizing complexity (in the name of “sophistication”) leads to an insistence on “cutting edge” techniques, and can result in lengthened review cycles, or even rejected papers, despite minimal differences in the results found using alternative approaches. Second, many scholars who are considering submitting their work to *JAMS* may decide to send it elsewhere if they feel they do not have the requisite skills. Following Lehmann et al.

(2011), I believe that a more complex method should not be required unless the results are expected to be materially changed if the more complex approach is used. Finally, I would add that unnecessary complexity can create obfuscation and lack of clarity, inhibiting dissemination of the work once published.

Avoiding desk rejection: “Communication Breakdown”

Although a wide variety of problems can undermine a manuscript and lead to desk rejection by the EIC, most papers that fail to enter into the *JAMS* review process do so because they belong to one of two main groups. First, manuscripts that are not positioned to match the journal’s editorial focus will typically be desk rejected. Research submitted to *JAMS* must include meaningful managerial insights. This often requires the inclusion of key performance outcomes and/or managerial intervention variables in the study design.

Second, manuscripts may be desk rejected for failing to provide a significant contribution. For example, papers looking at main effects only, that use single-source data alone (often inflating common method bias), or that settle for use of convenience samples often fail to be published (e.g., see Hulland et al. 2018). Furthermore, papers that simply test a well-known theory in a new empirical context offer a minimal incremental contribution.

One additional piece of advice I offer to prospective authors is to know what the journal is looking for. Finding related papers that have already been published in marketing strategy journals such as *JM* or *JAMS* provides authors with information that can help improve the positioning and exposition of their own work. Furthermore, finding these publications can help authors be sure that they are addressing an interesting, managerially relevant issue.

Editorial directions: “Your Time Is Gonna Come”

Thought leaders conferences and special themes

Over the past four years, *JAMS* has actively focused on specific marketing domains, putting together targeted “Thought Leaders” conferences and associated special issues. The domains chosen to date tend to be fast growing, are important to managers, and/or are under-represented in *JAMS*. Researchers have been very responsive to this initiative, resulting in active conference participation and large numbers of manuscript submissions to the special issues.

Two of the targeted special issue domains (“Customer Engagement” and “Service Marketing Strategy”) have

already been published in *JAMS*, and four more initiated under Rob Palmatier's editorship are at various stages of completion. The "Consumer Journeys" special issue (edited by Rebecca Hamilton and Linda Price) is targeted for publication in early 2019, to be followed later in the year by the "Marketing Strategy in D3 Environments" special issue (edited by Shrihari Sridhar and Eric (Er) Fang). Special issues relating to the domains of "Emerging Markets" (edited by Rajendra Srivastava and V. Kumar) and "Generalizations in Marketing" (edited by Mark Houston and John Hulland) are both currently slated for *JAMS* publication in 2020.

As EIC, I plan to continue to use these targeted conferences and special issues, which encourage both new authors and established researchers with different domain interests to contribute their work to *JAMS*. Currently, I have two special issues planned. The first addresses the domain of "Innovating in the Digital Economy."⁴ A Thought Leaders conference around this topic is scheduled to be held in Milan, Italy, in June 2019. Submissions to the associated special issue (co-edited by Alina Sorescu and Martin Schreier) will be welcomed beginning May 1, 2019, with a final deadline of September 1, 2019. A second special issue, involving invited paper submissions, is organized around the theme "The Future of Technology in Marketing."

Content domains

Under my editorship, *JAMS* will continue to be open to a wide range of topics, theories, and methodologies. The journal is now committed to publishing sixty articles a year, and we are looking for high quality research that is conceptually strong, methodologically rigorous, and managerially relevant.

JAMS is particularly interested in well-developed and well-written conceptual papers, review papers (both methodological and theoretical), and meta-analyses. By synthesizing existing literature, integrating diverse ideas within a single framework, and otherwise advancing marketing theory, these papers summarize a body of emerging research and provide guidance for future work (Hanssens 2018; Grewal et al. 2018; Palmatier et al. 2018). These papers help to establish the methodological and theoretical boundaries of marketing's domain. Furthermore, theory- and methodology-based review articles often have a greater long term impact on the field than do many empirical studies. *JAMS* has consistently been more open than other top marketing journals to publishing this type

of work. This is a unique position that I will continue to emphasize as an editor.

One specific area I would like to emphasize more is that of "consumer-based strategy." Consumer-based strategy is informed by strategic insights about consumers that come from data generated at the individual consumer level, and that are based on the consumer as the unit of analysis.

Finally, *JAMS* will continue to place a strong emphasis on serving as a bridge between the scholarly and the practical. This is what sets *JAMS* apart from many other academic marketing journals. The target audience for *JAMS* articles is thoughtful marketing academics and practitioners who are knowledgeable about the state of the art of the topic areas covered in the journal, and who are concerned with both marketing theory and practice. Thus, managerial implications will continue to be a very important part of any study published in the journal. Furthermore, *JAMS* encourages the submission of work that reflects the pressing contemporary challenges faced by marketers, particularly field-based conceptual/theoretical papers.

Conclusion: "The Song Remains the Same"

I am honored to serve as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. I embrace fully the challenge of continuing the journal's strong, positive growth in terms of both the number of submissions it receives and its increasing scholarly impact. I look forward to stewarding *JAMS* in its role as a leading publication outlet for top quality, high impact, and managerially-relevant research in marketing as we collectively climb our "Stairway to Heaven."

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⁴ Details for both the conference and the special issue can be found on Springer's *JAMS* journal page (www.springer.com/jams).