Editorial:
Current Issues in Business and Management

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We are delighted to publish the first volume of the Journal of Research Studies in Business & Management; compiling the first ever volume has been a rewarding experience. All the papers were researched and written by final year undergraduate students at Plymouth Business School, as the assessment for their individual research projects, which count as one sixth of their overall assessment for the year. 115 students submitted papers for assessment and, of these, 12 papers were accepted for publication after some minor edits or modifications were completed. In all cases, the first author is the student; the second author is the supervisor.

The papers here fall into 4 main topics; consideration of social issues which are affected by business; exploration of different aspects of buyer behaviour and consumer perceptions, employment issues and, finally, business challenges. Across these topics, we see the recurring themes of business ethics and digital media. These diverse areas give an insight into the key issues that students currently find interesting and important in the broad area of business and management.

There are 3 papers which cover social issues in business: In the first paper, Drakeford and Hudson Smith offer an interesting insight into the potential impact of mobile gambling, differentiating this new platform from existing platforms and highlighting the potential issues raised by *'instant accessibility'* to problem gambling. The second paper, by Thorpe and Lean, considers the legalisation of Marijuana in some US States, evaluating the perceived economic and societal benefits of legalisation, based on political persuasion, age and marijuana use. The final paper on social issues is by Gilbert and Phippen, looking at the impact of digital marketing on young children. This interesting paper considers the issue of internet adverts from both the point of view of children and their parents, considering issues of knowledge, sophistication and understanding and how these translate into different perceptions and courses of action.

The topic on buyer behaviour comprises 3 papers. The first of these, by Richardson and Morton, looks at the increasing role social media plays in tourism, focusing on how reviews on sites such as tripadvisor affect consumer perceptions and their buyer behaviour. Harle and Phippen’s paper on Business Ethics looks at how customers perceive ethical issues in the retail industry and try to identify some ways that these perceptions impact buyer behaviour. Simpson and Mortimore, meanwhile, consider the impact of direct mail on buyer behaviour; finding that, despite the move to digital advertising, there is still a place for direct mail in the advertisers’ toolkit.

3 papers looked at a range of employment issues. The first, by Talbot and Hudson Smith, focuses on the impact of taking time off after university – clearly a topic of some interest to students about to graduate. The paper identifies the type of activities that are deemed to improve soft skills and the value placed by employers on these activities. A totally different focus is apparent in the next paper, by Turner and Thornton, who look at the topical and controversial issue of executive pay and how this is linked to company performance. More focus on pay comes next, with Whitehead and Phippen’s paper on zero-hours contracts. This paper looks at the issues surrounding these contracts and the potential impact of new legislation to improve the practice.

Our final topic comprises 3 papers which consider a variety of contemporary business challenges. The first of these is Norman and Kabwe’s paper, which considers how to develop performance management as a continuous improvement process for employees to gain maximum benefit from the appraisal and feedback process. The
second paper, by Muncer and Kabwe discusses the messy processes involved with change management and how these can be improved with clearer communication and better planning, offering insights from a case study. Finally, Patmore and Haddoud offer insights into internationalisation in small businesses, focusing specifically on the attraction, motivations and difficulties facing SMEs entering the US market.

This collection of papers highlights the breadth of interests that a relatively homogenous group of Plymouth Business School students found interesting enough to base their final year research projects on. The methods cover everything from detailed case studies, to large scale surveys; from exploratory interviews to hypothesis testing.

The projects were researched and written from January to April 2015, so are necessarily limited in scope and scale. However, such a short timeframe means that all the work here reflects current thinking on some highly topical issues, giving it an immediacy often lacking in larger research projects, which often take years to for results to be published. It will be interesting to reflect on the developments when the next volume is published, next year. We hope that this journal will become not only a repository for the best student research, but will also offer insights into contemporary business issues which are of interest to students, over time.

I hope you enjoy the first issue.

Mel Smith

Editor JRSBM
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