



## EDITORIAL

# Publishing in management journals: The journal ecosystem and revising articles

Vanessa Ratten<sup>1</sup> , Ali Intezari<sup>2</sup>  and Aymen Sajjad<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Editor in Chief, La Trobe Business School, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia; <sup>2</sup>UQ Business School, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia and <sup>3</sup>Massey University, New Zealand

**Corresponding author:** Vanessa Ratten; Email: [v.ratten@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:v.ratten@latrobe.edu.au)

## Introduction

Management journals each have different norms and expectations depending on the publisher, editor, and editorial board. Therefore, it is important to understand the journal norms that govern each journal in terms of what is expected. Some journals have a rather constant and unchanging editorial board that includes major names in the field whilst others include emerging researchers and PhD students. This means the journal norms govern the way articles are reviewed and the timelines associated with this activity. Some management journals will automatically send new articles to existing editorial board members whilst others will use the keyword search feature to find reviewers. This means authors need to consider the whole review process in terms of what keywords they include on their articles in terms of the match with potential reviewers.

Sometimes management journals can be linked to an association like the Journal of Management & Organization and the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management. This means it is important to stay up to date and relevant with what is happening in that association in regards to the journal. Often the association will have an annual conference that authors can attend to meet the editors. This helps to understand directly what is expected in terms of being able to publish at the journal. Being able to talk to editors in person makes a difference as often more information is shared and direct questions can be asked. This helps to build a relationship.

Each management journal depending on the publisher will have referencing and other formatting guidelines. This is noticed immediately in terms of the way an abstract is stated and in how the references are formatted. It is important to follow journal policies with regards to formatting as it shows you have taken time and care in how your article is presented. As it takes a lot of time to write an article, doing minor formatting changes before submitting it to a journal is useful. This indicates you pay attention to detail and are concerned with presentation.

Before, after, and during the submission process for an article you should help with reviewing other articles for the journal. This shows you are a researcher in terms of demonstrating your analytical abilities. It is expected in most journals that you review especially after you have submitted an article to the journal. If you are not that familiar with a topic area you can highlight this in the review and say something along the lines of ‘based on my understanding’ to indicate this. Not all articles you are asked to review will definitely fit with your specialities but most will be related to this. Being fussy about what articles you review is not fair to the editors and review process if you have recently submitted an article. You can still comment on the structure, methodology, and approach of the article whilst mentioning areas that you do not know in detail. This shows you are willing to help and also

demonstrates your academic abilities. Often editors will be impressed by a reviewer and this will help the person build their reputation. Paying attention to detail and recognising improvements in a nice way is important. This means focusing on feedback as a positive process and way to improve. Reviewers can start their feedback in a friendly way by acknowledging how much work an author has done and then stating improvements. The way a review is written can make a difference in terms of how it is perceived by authors. This means considering what language to use and how it is written is important. Reviewing is a learning process that also helps a person to improve their own work. Thus, acknowledging that it benefits both the author and reviewer is important.

## Revising the article and responding to reviewers' comments

Ali Intezari, Associate Editor, *Journal of Management & Organization*

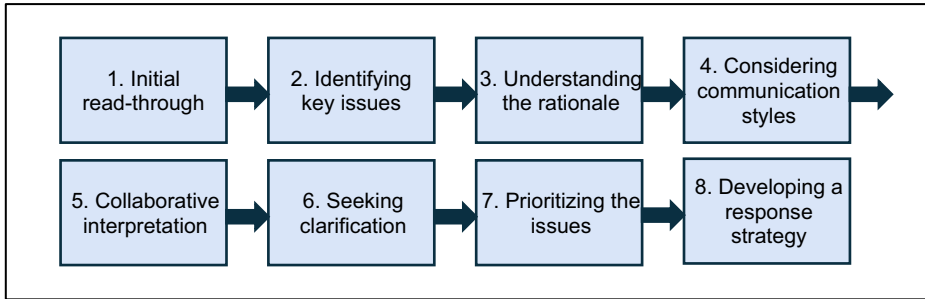
Revising an article and responding to the editors' and reviewers' comments are very critical steps in the process of publishing a journal article in social sciences, including the organisation and management discipline. The editors and reviewers are gatekeepers to protect the discipline from unworthy research, balancing the need for knowledge creation and dissemination in the discipline against the needs of the authors to publish their work (Herndon, 2015). This stage of the publication process serves two major purposes: first, improving the quality and rigor of the manuscript and, second, demonstrating the author's willingness to contribute to the scholarly conversation by engaging with constructive criticism. It is crucial to understand that reviewers' comments are meant to help refine and strengthen the manuscript. The comments provide an opportunity for both the manuscript improvement and for improvement as an author (Shaw, 2012). Therefore, responding to these comments thoughtfully and thoroughly can significantly improve the likelihood of acceptance for publication. Navigating through this process effectively requires a systematic and strategic plan.

This section offers practical tips from an editor's perspective to help authors manage this process effectively. These recommendations provide insight into how authors can thoroughly address reviewers' feedback, preserve the integrity and coherence of their work, and improve the overall quality of their manuscript.

## Understanding reviewers' comments

Reviewers' comments typically fall into three categories: major revisions, minor revisions, and rejection with the possibility of resubmission. Major revisions often require substantial changes, such as revising the theoretical framework and clarifying the theoretical contribution, re-analysing data, gathering more data, or even conducting additional studies to address methodological flaws. These revisions may also involve restructuring the article by reorganising sections of the manuscript to improve clarity and coherence. Minor revisions, on the other hand, usually involve clarifications, corrections, and enhancements. These might include providing more detailed explanations, correcting minor errors, adding missing references, or improving the quality of figures and tables. In some cases, a manuscript might be rejected but with an invitation to resubmit after significant revisions. This indicates that the study has potential but requires substantial improvements. Reviewers often provide detailed guidance on both major and minor issues that need to be addressed before the article can be resubmitted. Authors should consider these comments as a roadmap for improving their manuscript.

Moreover, different reviewers may communicate their concerns in different ways. While some reviewers provide detailed feedback, others may be more concise in their writing and use brief and direct comments to highlight their concerns clearly. The types of feedback and the way that they are communicated require authors to ensure that they thoroughly understand and interpret the feedback appropriately. Misinterpretation can lead to inadequate revisions and potentially hinder the manuscript's chances of acceptance. Therefore, to understand the reviewers' concerns and their suggested changes, it is crucial to read the comments thoroughly and interpret them accurately.



**Figure 1.** Systematic approach to interpreting reviewers' comments.

### *Interpreting comments*

To ensure that reviewers' comments and suggestions are accurately understood and interpreted, authors should approach the feedback systematically. This would involve eight steps, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Interpreting reviewers' feedback begins with (1) an initial read-through. Authors should read the comments word-by-word multiple times. The aim of this initial read-through is to gain an overall sense of the comments and the core message that the reviewer is communicating. This step is followed by (2) more thorough readings to identify specific concerns and themes from each comment. Because reviewers might highlight areas that need substantial reworking or minor adjustments, categorising the comments into major and minor revisions can help prioritise the changes. It is also equally important to identify the aspects of the manuscript that the reviewers have praised. Authors should avoid compromising or undermining these parts when revising the manuscript to address other comments. It is a good idea to create a table with two columns. In the first column, provide a breakdown of the reviewers' comments and highlight the key points in each comment using different colours – green for the parts that the reviewers liked, yellow for minor changes, and red for the parts that require major revisions. In the second column, explain the actions you will take to address each comment. This table can later be used in the 'Response Letter' when submitting the revised version of the manuscript.

(3) The third step is understanding the rationale behind each comment. As reviewers are experts in the field, understanding why a reviewer made a particular suggestion can guide how to implement the changes effectively. This can be particularly challenging, as authors cannot communicate with the reviewers directly and, therefore, have to infer the underlying rationale solely from the provided comments. (4) The different writing styles used by reviewers can make this even more difficult. As such, it is crucial to consider that reviewers might convey their opinions in a variety of ways. While some may make brief, direct remarks, others may offer in-depth, long comments that may bury the issue within long explanations. In order to ensure that the primary issues are identified correctly and addressed effectively, both styles need to be interpreted carefully. (5) Discussing the comments with co-authors (or colleagues where the article is single-authored) can help the authors gain a more comprehensive understanding. Co-authors might have different interpretations that, when combined, give a clearer picture of what the reviewers are suggesting. (6) Nonetheless, attaining a clear understanding of the reviewers' intended suggestions may not always be straightforward. For this reason, there is no option but to seek clarification from the editor when the comments are unclear or ambiguous. Editors can provide additional context or explanation to ensure that the authors address the feedback accurately and effectively. This step is particularly important when reviewers' comments are vague or contradictory. (7) Once the comments are clarified and fully comprehended, the issues and concerns must be prioritised. This allows the authors to ensure that the most fundamental concerns are addressed and the article is foundationally robust before they turn their attention to fine-tuning the

details, such as presentational aspects, additional citations, and punctuation or typographical errors. (8) Finally, the authors should create a strategy for responding to each comment. They may decide to make the required changes, provide additional explanations, or refrain from making substantial changes.

The best way to deal with the reviewers and editors is to give them exactly what they want (Guyatt & Brian Haynes, 2006). Reviewers, however, are not always right, but this does not weaken their credibility (Balan, 2022). It is important to ensure that whatever strategy the authors use to address the comments, they communicate with the editor and reviewers politely. Authors may tend to say that the reviewers are ignoramus; however, using a defensive or confrontational tone would not help (Cummings & Rivara, 2002). Therefore, any disagreement needs to be expressed respectfully by providing solid reasons.

### *Revising the manuscript*

When revising the manuscript, the authors must ensure that the changes are well-integrated into the manuscript. Additionally, it is important that the authors maintain a detailed record of all changes so that they can use them to respond to reviewers clearly.

### *Consistency and coherence*

Whether the revision is major or minor, it is important that any amendment that the authors made to the manuscript during the revision does not interfere with or disrupt the overall coherence of the manuscript. Authors should carefully consider how the new information that is added to the original version of the manuscript is seamlessly fits with and integrated into the existing content. Major changes, such as extending or replacing the theoretical framework, adjusting the methodology, or realigning the discussion section, can create contradictions or disrupt the narrative flow. Therefore, the authors should review the entire manuscript and the adjustments that have been made to ensure the consistency and coherence of the tone, terminology, and arguments, as well as adherence to the journal's formatting guidelines. Cross-referencing related sections and checking for alignment between different sections of the manuscript can help maintain coherence.

### *Detailing revisions*

Keeping a detailed record of all changes made in response to reviewer comments is key to transparency when it comes to justifying the actions that the authors have taken to address reviewers' comments. Authors should document each change, what has been changed, why, and where in the manuscript. This can be in a table or a tracked changes document, so you can refer to it when writing the response letter. This helps reviewers and editors see at a glance how their comments have been addressed and that you are being diligent and responsive. It also ensures that no comments are missed and that all feedback is covered. This approach makes the revision process smoother and more likely to end in a positive outcome.

### *Crafting the response letter*

While tracked changes or highlights in the manuscript may show where changes have been made, they do not explain why those changes were made. For this reason, it is important to submit a response letter (cover letter) along with the revised manuscript to provide a clear description of and robust justification for the actions that have been taken to address reviewers' comments.

The cover letter consists of two sections. The first section is an overview of the revision, summarising the main changes in the new version. The second section is a table providing a detailed description of the actions taken to address the reviewers' comments. This table is an extended version of the one that has been created in Step 2, 'Identifying Key Issues' (Figure 1). The table breaks

down each comment into its smaller, addressable components so that the editor and reviewers can clearly see what has been addressed or responded to and how. Comments need to be addressed point by point. This would also show that you are not taking the reviewers' comments lightly and have paid close attention to each part of the comment to ensure that you appropriately address it. It is important to make sure that the changes that are explained in the response letter are consistent with and reflect exactly the changes made in the manuscript.

## Conclusion

Revisions and responses to reviewers' comments are essential and important parts of the publication process. The guidelines provided above can not only enhance the quality of the manuscript but also enable authors to demonstrate their commitment to engaging in constructive scholarly discourse to produce high-quality, impactful research. The revision process is an opportunity for authors to improve their work. Therefore, it must be approached positively and considered a crucial step towards successful publication.

## Selecting a suitable journal for publication

Aymen Sajjad, Associate Editor, Journal of Management & Organization

With the proliferation of journals and diverse criteria for assessing a journal's prestige, scholars are encountering growing challenges in selecting and disseminating their research findings in reputable publishing outlets. Meanwhile, academic scrutiny is increasing, and authors are expected to publish in credible journals as predatory or pseudo-journals that accept and publish low-quality articles in return for publication fees (or article processing charges) undermine genuine scholarship (e.g., Caporale & Zagarella, 2023; Laine & Winker, 2017; Lalu, Shamseer, Cobey, & Moher, 2017). Accordingly, selecting an appropriate target journal for publication is a critical undertaking that has significant implications for the researcher's credibility, reputation, and peer esteem, as well as employability and promotions in academia. Further, publishing research in top-ranked journals plays an important role in competitive research grant applications and country-level research evaluation frameworks.

As scholars continue to encounter mounting pressure to publish high-quality research in globally recognised journals in their respective fields, identifying relevant publication venues is a rather frustrating process involving considerable time and effort. To address this issue, most academic institutions have pre-defined criteria such as discipline-specific lists of leading journals and journal metrics to measure the quality of research work (Lindgreen, Di Benedetto & Brodie, 2021). While different criteria are used to measure the quality and impact a journal has on the research community and society at large, the journal impact scores and rankings often lack comparability across disciplines or databases. An established practice to evaluate research quality is to consider journal-ranking lists developed by subject matter experts based on subjective, qualitative assessments of published research contributions. At present, journal-ranking lists including the Financial Times – FT Top 50 Journal list, the Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality list, the Chartered Association of Business Schools' Academic Journal Guide list, the Harzing Journal Quality list, and the University of Texas at Dallas's UT Dallas list are widely used to determine a journal's prestige and quality. It is worthwhile to note that while there exist some variations in how various journals are ranked in different journal rankings, these rankings are generally consistent in classifying elite journals in the business and management discipline. For example, the Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Management, Journal of Management Studies, Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of Operations Management, Academy of Management Review, and Strategic Management Journal are invariably characterised as elite journals in all globally recognised ranking schemes.

In recent years, however, quantitative assessment measures (e.g., journal-level, author-level, and article-level metrics) are also gaining traction among academics to evaluate research quality and

impact (Lindgreen et al., 2021; Lindgreen, Di Benedetto, & Pieters, 2023). These matrices are sometimes perceived as blunt but impartial systems to evaluate the journal, author, or article impact due to their reliance on data-driven evidence rather than experts' judgement. In this regard, critics argued, 'to produce research with true societal impact, business schools must abandon one-size-fits-all journal list metrics in favour of diverse, personalised, mission-driven research objectives for each faculty member' (Lockett, 2024).

Journal impact factor or influence score providers such as Scopus and Web of Science databases offer distinctive metrics to evaluate journal, article, and author impact. Scopus metrics include journal-level metrics – CiteScore, SCImago Journal Rank, and Source Normalized Impact per Paper; article-level metrics – citation count, citation benchmark, and Field-Weighted Citation Impact; and author-level metrics – h-index and h-graph. Similarly, Clarivate Analytics Web of Science provides a range of author, article, and journal-specific metrics such as h-index, times cited, altimetric score, impact factor, Eigenfactor, and Journal Citation Indicator. Google Scholar metrics such as h-index and i10-index also provide scholars with a convenient and simple approach to understanding the impact and influence of their published work, whereas h5-index and h5-median are useful in assessing journals' impact in specific disciplines. While Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar metrics utilise quantitative measures to provide a transparent assessment of authors', articles', and journals' performance, they are often considered controversial due to the lack of attention to qualitative performance evaluation aspects. Thus, it is imperative that a more holistic approach involving both qualitative and quantitative criteria should be used to assess the overall research quality rather than solely relying on journal impact scores (Suiter & Sarli, 2019). In this regard, the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment also suggested taking a holistic approach to evaluating quality and impact and using metrics scores for context, not in a standalone fashion. For instance, ranking lists are adopting a similar approach including the Chartered Association of Business Schools' Academic Journal Guide, which is informed by metrics but not solely developed based on information revealed through various metrics.

Further, while some journals are not listed in the journal rankings lists or their impact factor scores are not provided by Scopus or Web of Science, this does not suggest low quality or a lack of scientific rigour. In this context, authors may consider additional criteria to assess a journal's credibility and academic standing including manuscript acceptance rate, peer-review process (i.e., double-blind review to ensure research rigour), turnaround time, reputation of editorial board members, affiliation of the journal with renowned research institutes and professional bodies, as well as publisher reputation, indexing status, and the overall journal coverage by major article databases such as Elsevier Scopus, Clarivate Analytics Web of Science, EBSCO, and ABI/INFORM Collection. Further, it is worthwhile to consider the ethical commitment of a journal. Credible journals demonstrate a firm commitment to promoting research ethics guidelines and adopting transparency and integrity measures and best practices. For example, the Committee on Publication Ethics' membership is now an integral requirement for quality journals to showcase their research ethics. Additionally, article promotion support and copyright issues also need to be considered at the time of journal selection as these issues affect the post-publication dissemination of scholarly work.

Compatibility between manuscript focus and the prospective journal's aims is another decisive factor in selecting a suitable journal. An author needs to be cautious in contemplating the fit between the journal and the manuscript. The manuscript needs to be well-aligned with the scope of the prospective journal. For instance, it is appropriate to submit a review article to a recognised journal that takes a more welcoming approach towards such research endeavours and publishes reviews and/or conceptual papers such as the *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *Academy of Management Review*, or similar research publishing venues. Additionally, some journals are more research methods-oriented such as *Organizational Research Methods*, which predominantly focuses on dissemination of methodological advancements in organisational theory and research practice. In a similar vein, research studies involving data sets and cross-cultural comparisons from specific



geographical and/or regional contexts can be submitted to journals that focus on management and organisational trends in chosen domains. For example, the Asia Pacific Journal of Management, the Australasian Journal of Environmental Management, and the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research aim to publish articles that explore contemporary issues with particular significance to the Asia Pacific region.

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**Vanessa Ratten**, Editor in Chief, Journal of Management & Organization.