
Editorial: Avoiding the pitfalls of *IJOEM* desk rejection

Editorial

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Introduction

Having been a senior editor at the *International Journal of Emerging Markets (IJOEM)* for a considerable time, I have now examined a substantial number of articles that have arrived at my desk and a large number of them have subsequently been desk rejected. While examining these articles, I found some common mistakes that seem to plague the desk-rejected articles. In this editorial, I wish to address these particular pitfalls that lead to desk rejection and hope that it will help the research scholars further improve their articles.

IJOEM aims to publish “rigorous theoretical and empirical research on emerging markets from multidisciplinary (economics, finance, marketing, and management) and multinational geographic perspectives.” The journal is unique in its position and scope regarding how it wants to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and practice. However, the fundamental tenets of a good article do not change. In this editorial, I wish to address some of those fundamental and unique aspects that authors should address before submitting their manuscripts to the journal. Adhering to these may increase their chances of success in publishing in general and at *IJOEM* in particular.

There are many reasons that an article gets desk-rejected in *IJOEM*. However, the three most common reasons for a determination of manuscript desk-rejection are (1) suitability, (2) rigor and (3) contribution. While these aspects may apply in the context of any journal, for *IJOEM*, they are particularly acute. I shall elaborate on them further in the next section of this article.

Suitability

There is one aspect that is bound to the unique nature of *IJOEM*. It pertains to the context of emerging markets. The journal’s title is a big giveaway in terms of suitability. Many journals have a vague or broad functionality focus on their own fields. For instance, the *Journal of Finance* and the *Journal of Marketing* will focus on their respective fields of finance and marketing. As an author, you would not submit your pure marketing paper to the *Journal of Finance* and vice versa. Similarly, when submitting to the *IJOEM*, you really need to think about emerging markets from the ground up and not just as a context. In the past two issues of *IJOEM*, authors have offered a number of interesting lenses for examining emerging markets. For instance, [Su et al. \(2022\)](#) examine how policy turmoil is affecting FDI flows in China. Similarly, [Ilyas and Rajasekaran \(2022\)](#) highlight offer novel consolidation policy-related recommendations based on their examination of the non-life insurance sector in India. Others have examined a number of comparative emerging markets in Europe and Central Asia ([Aristei and Gallo, 2022](#)), MENA ([Mdaghri, 2022](#)) and ASEAN ([Hui, 2022](#)) among others.

The first question an author planning to submit their manuscript to *IJOEM* needs to ask is the relevance of the study in the context of emerging markets. For instance, why should this study be carried out in emerging markets? Do emerging markets offer a unique lens for studying this phenomenon? Many manuscripts that get rejected tend to assume emerging markets as just another context and devote little attention to the differences and unique environmental forces that are at play, which sometimes hinder and other times promote unique practices. Ideas that capture such uniqueness enrich the field immensely. For instance, in their timely examination, [Das et al. \(2022\)](#) examine the relationship between oil price shocks



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and emerging stock markets, which challenges some of the stereotypes held in regard to the demand, supply and risk shocks among the oil-importing and exporting economies. Similarly, the business concepts of microfinance (e.g. [Chipeta and Deressa, 2016](#); [Fersi and Boujelbène, 2021](#)) and FDI arrangements (e.g. [Hakimi and Hamdi, 2017](#); [Bhasin and Kapoor, 2021](#)) are so unique to the emerging markets and have led to a plethora of innovations. For instance, [Park and Roh \(2019\)](#) recommend the need for a new theoretical lens for studying emerging market-based companies FDI motivations. Moreover, in their meta-analysis, [Villar et al. \(2020\)](#) highlight the FDI spillover effects and offer unique directions for future studies.

Similarly, digital expansion and adoption within emerging markets is worth examining (for a review, see [Rana et al., 2022](#); [Roy et al., 2022](#)). Consumers within emerging markets have comparatively lesser means, and at the same time, there are huge income inequalities present ([Piketty, 2015](#)). Such contextual constraints lead to unique consumption behaviors that need further investigation. In addition, due to a variety of institutional structures and logics that operate uniquely within the emerging markets, there are a vast number of opportunities for scholars to examine these markets (e.g. [Ding et al., 2016](#); [Monticelli et al., 2018](#)). On a grander scale, how sustainability, social responsibility and long-term environmental challenges are viewed within emerging markets by institutional actors, consumers, organizations and governments offers substantial avenues for future research (e.g. see, [Majumdar et al., 2021](#); [Dartey-Baah and Amoako, 2021](#); [Nguyen and Thanh, 2021](#)). Thus, important opportunities exist in examining the novelty, uniqueness and grand challenges that exist within emerging markets across the functional silos of management and their inter-disciplinary integration.

IJOEM is not a replication journal. Many manuscripts are desk rejected because authors do not take the uniqueness discussed above into consideration. They find a study in another journal that has identified a conceptual or empirical model and conduct their examination in an emerging market. They do not take into consideration the complexities of emerging markets within their framework. Such studies that are predominantly replications do not fulfill the journal's aims.

Suitability is a fundamental condition. It should be clearly built within the abstract, the introduction and the positioning of the article. The article should capture what it is that we know regarding the examined constructs and theories through prior literature. But, at the same time, it should demonstrate what it is that we know and do not know within the context of emerging markets for the said constructs and theories that will enhance our learning. In doing so, the authors will be able to not just expand the current theoretical lenses but also inform practice in a meaningful manner.

Rigor

As an editor, I tend to observe articles that have excellent analysis more often than not. And thus, the challenge is not generally with the analytical aspects of the article. The major rigor-related challenges lie in the front sections of the article. Conveying the central meaning rigorously is as important, if not more, than just conducting rigorous analysis and assuming that the article will be accepted because of that.

The authors need to think from the article from a reader's perspective. Why would they care about reading this article? Will they do so because you have used fancy analytical techniques, or will it be because you are asking an inherently interesting research question? This is why rigor in writing the front sections, including the introduction, the literature review and methodology, is important.

So, how can you demonstrate such rigor in these front sections of your manuscript? The rigor of your introduction will be captured in how you highlight why the study's topic matters for both theory and practice. For an introduction that sticks, [Heath and Heath \(2008\)](#) offer six fundamental principles: simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility, emotionality

and story. Rather than making your idea as esoteric as possible, think of the multi-disciplinary readership of the journal and simplify it. The more people can understand your idea, the more they will be encouraged to read. As discussed earlier, the emerging market context, if integrated properly, will fulfill the unexpectedness criterion. Similarly, using existing literature, you can certainly demonstrate the concreteness of your ideas through theoretical grounding and add credibility to your article. With the final two aspects, your article becomes art as well as science. How you build a connection with your reader through your story will generally decide the direction a reviewer and the editor will take with your article. It will ultimately decide if the reader will engage with your article or not. Grant and Pollock (2011) suggest three pertinent questions for building an engaging introduction: “Who cares?”, “What do we know, what don’t we know, and so what?” and “What will we learn?” These questions, when integrated with the six conditions for stickiness, will surely deliver rigor upfront for your article.

Many of the desk-rejected articles demonstrate weak engagement with prior research. A fundamental element of building a strong narrative is to engage in a constructive dialog with existing literature and not just who said what. Approaching literature in a constructive, critical and rigorous manner tends to offer the required balance between prior research and the novelty of the article. Many authors tend to engage with the literature review section superficially by citing a lot of articles but not really understanding their underlying logic. Moreover, many tend to use what I call a “pick-and-mix” approach, wherein they only select arguments that favor their work and do not engage constructively with the alternative narrative that exists in the field. Some of these become quite apparent when authors are dealing with multi-dimensional constructs such as trust, attitude and/or loyalty. Similarly, inter-disciplinary constructs such as sustainability, corporate social responsibility need much deeper examination beyond the functional silos. *IJOEM* readers are well-rounded in their understanding of such constructs and thus expect the authors to demonstrate a broad and deep understanding of contemporary debate. A key to developing rigor in your conceptual development is to look beyond the citations and results within prior literature and focus on the theoretical debate and issues that are being addressed. A coherent argument that builds on prior theoretical advancement supported by sound logic and grounded in practice is always welcome by readers.

Rigorous methodological explanation is another key aspect that is generally missing in many of the desk-rejected articles. Many authors do not apply the same level of rigor in explaining and elaborating their methodology as they may have done for the front sections of the article or the analysis. Methodology plays a critical role in editors and reviewers making a decision regarding your manuscript. Many times, methodology raises more questions in reviewers’ minds, and this may taint their outlook in terms of the rigor applied throughout the article. Authors sometimes tend to copy and paste methodological sections from comparable articles rather than presenting their methodology and analysis in a way that is appropriate and complete. For instance, many survey-based articles do not provide relevant details beyond their participants’ demographics, such as the data collection method, participant contact method, incentivization, measurement items and filler information, among others. This leads to missing tables and figures or sometimes duplication of unnecessary information. Similarly, for experimentation, many studies fail to provide appropriate manipulation checks. Sometimes authors do not include measurement items in their studies and provide references to studies from which the items were borrowed. However, they do not discuss how the items were adopted contextually and/or linguistically. Such omissions show a lack of rigor. When authors try to conceal and/or omit relevant information, the incomplete information generally affects reviewers’ judgment negatively. A major issue also pertains to examining common method bias challenges (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Many authors assume that common method bias can be addressed by conducting a Harman single-factor test.

However, they do not consider other procedural and statistical remedies that are discussed in extant literature (see [Podsakoff et al., 2003](#); [Williams et al., 2010](#); [Williams and McGonagle, 2016](#)). Offering complete and clear information helps the editor and reviewers make more informed judgements and, in turn, helps the authors in their research journey.

Contribution

The final pivotal point for desk rejection that I would like to highlight is contribution. Many authors fall into this trap by predominantly describing their findings and sometimes just repeating those findings with a statement of corroboration or contradiction with prior research. While that is important, the contribution section is really a chance to convince the reader about the underlying value of your research and strengthen your message. While it offers closure, your reflections will help toward an improved theoretical understanding in the field and, most importantly, pave the way for future research. Even if your study's contribution is incremental, you need to clearly demonstrate the novelty that you bring.

The above may be true for any article, but for *IJOEM*, the expectation will be to set out the unique contextual contribution, particularly for the emerging markets. Some of the questions to ponder include: how does your article improve our understanding relating to the constructs overall and in particular within emerging markets? What unique contextualities are observed through this lens of emerging markets? How do the existing theories, principles and frameworks hold in this unique context and why or why not? For instance, [Paul \(2020\)](#) provides a unique lens for examining marketing in emerging markets and offers several pertinent directions for future research. What do those refinements mean for researchers and practitioners within emerging markets and globally? For example, [Rottig \(2016\)](#) offers highly relevant insights for managers of MNCs in regards to the unique institutional environment of emerging markets.

Interestingly enough, some articles do not address the above questions at all but then make sweeping contribution claims that go well beyond their study findings. The over-claiming is observed to be rife in articles that are mostly replication studies, as they have not thought carefully about suitability and rigor from the conceptualization stage itself. Thus, when conceptualizing the article itself, the authors should start thinking about the implications from the ground up. Such a simple approach will avoid any future heartaches from desk rejection.

Conclusion

Publishing in unique journals such as *IJOEM* is a joy. However, while conceptualizing and executing their study, many authors do not take the journal's positioning and/or the debate within the field into account. Suitability, thus, becomes the first pitfall for many desk-rejected articles in *IJOEM*. While many cross this first threshold through a narrative that fits, they fail on the front of rigor in writing, positioning, review and methodology. While I tend to see a vast majority of articles using appropriate analysis techniques, the suitability and rigor lead to desk rejection consistently. Moreover, poor rigor is also observed when authors do not follow the journal submission guidelines. Finally, when authors think of contributions as an afterthought, they tend to stumble at the final hurdle of desk rejection. With this editorial, my hope is that researchers and future contributors to *IJOEM* will avoid such pitfalls and increase their chances of success.

May the force be with you!

Paurav Shukla

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