Publishing

How to avoid a desk-reject?

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Program

- Fri 19.00-20.30: Dinner
- Fri 20.30-21.30: Opening & introductions by participants
- Sat 09.00-12.30: Titles and abstracts (coffee break 10.30-11.00)
- Sat 12.30-13.30: Lunch
- Sat 13.30-17.00: Introductions (tea break 15.00-15.30)
- Sat 17.00-18.30: Experiences in journal submission process
- Sat 19.00-late: Dinner and free evening
- Sun 10.00-12.30: Conclusions (coffee break 11.00-11.30)
- Sun 12.30-13.30: Lunch
- Sun 13.30-16.00: Odds & ends (tea break 14.30-15.00)
- Can I please have two volunteers to take regular pictures?

The context

- Rising number of publications, scientific output doubles every 9 years
- Pressured editors & pressured reviewers
  - Remember: these are academics just like you, with many competing demands
- Increasing rejection rates
  - most journals in Business - even those that are not 4* - accept <10% of their submissions
  - Desk reject rates have increased dramatically and can be up to 70-80% for some journals
  - https://harzing.com/blog/2016/03/why-does-my-paper-get-a-deskreject-time-and-again

- It is relatively easy for editors to separate out the bottom 60% of the submissions
- It is also relatively easy to pick the top 1-5% of the submissions
- The difficulty lies between 5% and 40%
  - There might only be a small quality difference between manuscripts in this category, but the editor needs to make a binary decision: yes/no
- Our aim is to ensure that this binary decision falls into the “send out for review” category

Editorial decisions

1. Pick the right outlet for your paper (homework)
2. Craft a memorable and descriptive title
3. Ensure the abstract is easy to read and guides the editor to the “right” reviewers
4. Make the introduction a mini-version of the paper
5. End the paper on a high note with a strong conclusion and summary of contributions
6. Use references strategically
7. Write a good letter to the editor to help the editor see the paper’s contribution and pick the right reviewers
8. Unless you are a “natural” writer, get the paper edited/proofread

How to avoid a desk-reject

- Other elements are not discussed in the boot-camp but still important
  - Exact content details and length of different sections differ by discipline/ journal and research method, use your “model articles”
- Literature review
  - Make sure this is focused on your key concepts and research question(s) + demonstrates how your article fills a research gap; don’t meander, don’t waffle, don’t wander into tangentially related areas
- Methods
  - Provide a comprehensive discussion of the sample, measures, and method of analysis, explain any unusual samples/measures/analyses
- Results
  - Usually the most straightforward section that simply reports your results
- Discussion
  - Very important in Management (& Marketing?) journals with strict structure: summary, contributions to theory, managerial/societal implications, limitations & suggestions for future research
  - Usually less important and extensive in Economics, Finance, Sociology, History, but certain elements of the above might still be expected

Other manuscript elements

- A title needs to be descriptive:
  - Include the main concepts
  - If the country context is unusual, include the country
  - If the research method is unusual, include the method
  - Better to “prepare” reviewers than to spring a surprise on them
- However, a slightly unusual title combined with a descriptive sub-title might attract interest and make the paper memorable
  - “The benefits of being understood”, “Do I have to be one of you”, “Insider Knowledge or Insider Liability?”, “Does it matter who I am?”
  - “Won’t localize or can’t localize” (can’t cook, won’t cook)
  - Might matter more *after* publication, but could still make the paper stand out in the review process
- Differs by discipline
  - Economics and Finance seem to prefer shorter and less “quirky” titles
  - As for every aspect of the process: check your target journal

2. Memorable titles

The persistent myth of high expatriate failure rates

Are our referencing errors undermining our scholarship and credibility? The case of expatriate failure rates

Of Bears, Bumble-Bees, and Spiders: The Role of Expatriates in Controlling Foreign Subsidiaries

When Knowledge Wins: Transcending the Sense and Nonsense of Academic Rankings

Practicing what We Preach

The Geographic Diversity of Editorial Boards

Hablas vielleicht un peu la mia language? A comprehensive overview of the role of language differences in headquarters–subsidiary communication

Document categories in the ISI Web of Knowledge: Misunderstanding the Social Sciences?

Microsoft Academic (Search): a Phoenix arisen from the ashes?

Microsoft Academic: is the phoenix getting wings?

Microsoft Academic is one year old: the Phoenix is ready to leave the nest

Health warning: might contain multiple personalities—the problem of homonyms in Thomson Reuters Essential Science Indicators

The mystery of the phantom reference: a detective story

- Many journals have strict word-counts for the abstract (usually 100-200 words)
- Abstract is crucial for an editor to decide which reviewers to ask, so include as many pointers as possible
- An abstract needs to include:
  - Research background [can be short/implicit]
  - Research gap [can be short/implicit]
  - Research topic/question
  - Theory you draw on [if any]
  - Research methods
  - Results
  - Implications for theory & practice [can often be left out in 100 word abstract]

3. Polished Abstract

- **Background/research gap:** Female academics continue to be under-represented on the editorial boards of many, but not all, management journals. This variability is intriguing, because it is reasonable to assume that the size of the pool of female faculty available and willing to serve on editorial boards is similar for all management journals.
- **Research topic:** Thus, we focus on the characteristics of the journal editors to explain this variability; journal editors or editors-in-chief are the most influential people in the selection of editorial board members.
- **Theory:** We draw on social identity and homosocial reproduction theories, and on the gender and careers literature to examine the relationship between an editor's academic performance, professional age and gender, and editorial board gender equality.
- **Method:** We collected longitudinal data at five points in time, using five-year intervals, from 52 management journals. To account for the nested structure of the data, a 3-level multilevel model was estimated.
- **Results:** Overall, we found that the prospects of board membership improve for women when editors are high performing, professionally young, or female.
- **Implications:** We discuss these findings and their implications for management journals with low, stagnant, or declining representation of women in their boards.

3. Example: long abstract

Metz, I.; Harzing, A.W.; Zyphur, M. (2016) Of journal editors and editorial boards: Who are the trailblazers in increasing editorial board gender equality?, British Journal of Management, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 712-726.

- **Background:** Employing expatriates who share an ethnicity with host country employees (HCEs) is a widespread expatriate selection strategy.
- **Research gap:** However, little research has compared how expatriates and HCEs perceive this shared ethnicity.
- **Research topic:** Drawing upon an identity perspective, we propose HCEs' ethnic identity confirmation, *the level of agreement between how an HCE views the importance of his/her own ethnic identity and how expatriates view the importance of the HCE's ethnic identity*, affects HCEs' attitudes towards ethnically similar expatriates.
- **Research method and results:** Results of two experiments show that HCEs' ethnic identity confirmation is related to HCEs' perception of expatriates' trustworthiness and knowledge-sharing intention.

3. Example: new concept

Fan, S.X.; Harzing, A.W. (2017) Host country employees' ethnic identity confirmation: Evidence from interactions with ethnically similar expatriates, Journal of World Business, vol. 52, no. 5, 640-652.

- **Background:** The importance of language differences in multinational companies (MNCs) can hardly be overlooked.
- **Research gap/topic:** This article therefore provides the first large-scale quantitative overview of language competencies, policies and practices in MNCs.
- **Method:** It is based on data from more than 800 subsidiaries, located in thirteen different countries with headquarters in more than 25 different countries, which were aggregated into four distinct home country clusters.
- **Results:** This comprehensive study allows us to differentiate prior conceptual or case-based findings according to home, host and corporate languages…
- **Implications for management:** …and to develop managerial implications which vary according to the different country clusters.

3. Example: data emphasis

Harzing, A.W.; Pudelko, M. (2013) Language competencies, policies and practices in multinational corporations: A comprehensive review and comparison of Anglophone, Asian, Continental European and Nordic MNCs, Journal of World Business, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 87-97.

- **Background:** When conducting international research projects, scholars face a myriad of challenges that reach beyond those encountered in domestic research.
- **Research topic:** In this paper, we explore the specific issues related to international survey research, focusing on the different stages of the research process that include defining the study population and gaining data access, survey development, data collection, data analysis, and finally publication of the results.
- **Method/results:** For each stage, we review the pertinent literature, provide illustrations based on examples from our own research projects,…
- **Implications:** … and offer possible solutions to address the inherent challenges by formulating suggestions for improving the quality of international survey research.

3. Example: review paper

Harzing, A.W.; Reiche B.S.; Pudelko, M. (2013) Challenges in international survey research: A review with illustrations and suggested solutions for best practice, European Journal of International Management, 7(1):112-134.

- **Background:** Thomson Reuter's ISI Web of Knowledge (or ISI for short) is used in the majority of benchmarking analyses and bibliometric research projects.
- **Research gap:** Therefore, it is important to be aware of the limitations of data provided by ISI.
- **Research topic:** This article deals with a limitation that disproportionally affects the Social Sciences: ISI's misclassification of journal articles containing original research into the "review" or "proceedings paper" category.
- **Method:** I report on a comprehensive, 11-year analysis, of document categories for 27 journals in nine Social Science and Science disciplines.
- **Results/implications:** I show that although ISI's "proceedings paper" and "review" classifications seem to work fairly well in the Sciences, they illustrate a profound misunderstanding of research and publication practices in the Social Sciences.

3. Example: different field

Harzing, A.W. (2013) Document categories in the ISI Web of Knowledge: Misunderstanding the Social Sciences?, Scientometrics, vol. 93, no. 1, pp. 23-34.

4. Introduction

- The role of introductions differs by discipline
  - In Economics they are often short, 1-1.5 page (double-spaced)
  - In Management & Marketing they are typically longer, around 3 pages (double-spaced)
  - In most disciplines they are a mini-version of the paper
- The abstract, introduction and conclusion are the three most important sections of the paper
  - Editors/reviewers read them to decide whether to desk-reject/ review a paper
  - Readers read them to decide whether they want to read the full paper (and sometimes only read these!)
  - It is not unusual to spend 1/3 of your writing time on perfecting these sections and write half a dozen versions

4. Components of intro

- Establish an area to research by:
  - Highlighting the importance of the topic (in **real** life), and/or
  - Making general statements about the topic, and/or
  - Presenting an overview on current research on the subject.
- Identify a research niche by:
  - Opposing an existing assumption, and/or
  - Revealing a gap in existing research, and/or
  - Studying the topic in a new context (but explain why this context is important)
- Just because something hasn't been studied before, doesn't mean it **needs** to be studied. You need to answer the "so what" question.
- Place your research within the research niche by:
  - Stating the intent of your study,
  - Outlining the key characteristics of your study,
  - Describing important results, and
  - Giving a brief overview of the structure of the paper.

- We have been working very hard today, so now it is time for some lighter work
- Let's share some of our experiences in the peer review/ publication process
- Smaller groups probably work best, so let's split up in three groups of five
  - We'll swap groups after half an hour
  - Two members of each group move "one up", two move "one down"
  - One senior will stay with each group
- Each group can decide how they want to run their session
- Running out of time?
  - No problem, we have dinner and the whole evening to talk

Intermezzo: sharing experiences

- Don’t *don’t* **don’t** end your paper with limitations
  - Do you end a meeting with a reminder of all the things you didn’t agree about?
  - Do you end a social occasion with all the things that you disliked?
- Most journals expect a concluding section or paragraph
  - Typically between 10 lines and 1 page
  - Includes concise summary of the entire paper
  - Reiterates your key contributions in a few sentences
  - Provides a strong final sentence with a key take-away, preferably indicating what you want to see changed as a result of your paper
- A reader should be able to grasp your key messages by reading only the abstract and conclusion

5. Conclusion

- **Summary of research topic:** Our comparative study of publications, citations, h-index and hIa across 146 academics from five major disciplines was the first to present a comprehensive longitudinal and cross-disciplinary comparison across three major sources of citation data: Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar.
- **Result 1 (data quality, factual):** Our longitudinal analysis showed a consistent and reasonably stable quarterly growth for both publications and citations across the three databases.
- **Take-away 1 (fairly boring, factual):** This suggests that all three databases provide sufficient stability of coverage to be used for more detailed cross-disciplinary comparisons.
- **Result 2 (application across disciplines, problematizing):** Our cross-disciplinary comparison of four key research metrics (publications, citations, h-index, and hI,annual - an annualised individual h-index) across five major disciplines (Humanities, Social Sciences, Engineering, Sciences and Life Sciences) showed that both the data source and the specific metrics used change the conclusions that can be drawn from cross-disciplinary comparisons.
- **Take-away 2 (advocacy, strong recommendation):** We thus argue that a fair and inclusive cross-disciplinary comparison of research performance *is* possible, provided we use Google Scholar or Scopus as a data source, and the recently introduced hI, annual - a h-index corrected for career length and co-authorship patterns - as the metric of choice.

5. Summary + advocacy

Harzing, A.W.; Alakangas, S. (2016) Google Scholar, Scopus and the Web of Science: A longitudinal and cross-disciplinary comparison, Scientometrics, vol. 106, no. 2, pp. 787-804.

- **Contribution 1 with implicit summary (methods):** We believe that our study has made two significant contributions. First, we showed that *any* study examining the impact of *any* distance dimension on *any* empirical phenomenon using *any* distance-based approach would need to include *several* carefully chosen home and host countries to be able to differentiate the effect of distance from the effect of home or host country context.
- **Contribution 2 with implicit summary (context)**: Second, we established empirically that home and host country context has a significantly higher explanatory power for entry mode choice, and quite possibly for many other International Business phenomena, than the Kogut and Singh based distance concept.
- **Advocacy (clear call for action)**: Consequently, we recommend that studies in International Business focus first and foremost on home and host country context and resist the temptation to use (cultural) distance as a catchall concept, thus avoiding an illusion of causality, …
- **Managerial implications:** … which ultimately hinders the potential of International Business research to provide useful guidance to managers on key International Business phenomena.

5. Future research focus

Harzing, A.W.; Pudelko, M. (2016) Do we need to distance ourselves from the distance concept? Why home and host country context might matter more than (cultural) distance, Management International Review, 56(1): 1-34.

5. Short conclusion

- **High-level summary:** In this article we have provided the first large-scale empirical analysis of the language barrier and its solutions.
- **High-level results:** Our conclusions mirror Feely & Harzing's conceptual article in that it is important to *"understand the language barrier well and to mix and match the solutions into a blend that is right for the company context"* Feely & Harzing's (2003:50).
- **High-level managerial implication:** Most importantly though, MNCs should take the language barrier seriously. Only then will MNCs be able to progress in tackling the language barrier and increase their competitiveness on a global scale.

Harzing, A.W.; Köster, K.; Magner, U. (2011) Babel in Business: The language barrier and its solutions in the HQ-subsidiary relationship, Journal of World Business, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 279-287.

- **Research background/gap:** To date, the expatriate literature has rarely focused on HCEs' experiences.
- **Research topic:** Based on the context of ethnically similar expatriate-HCE interactions, we have identified ethnic identity confirmation as a key factor that influences their relationships. We specifically focused on HCEs and investigated their ethnic identity confirmation.
- **Research method + high-level results:** Using both an experiment and a quasi-experimental method, we have demonstrated that HCEs' ethnic identity confirmation is an important facilitator influencing HCEs' attitudes towards expatriates.
- **Wider conceptual/theoretical implications:** This concept also captures an overlooked interpersonal dynamic - ethnic identity confirmation - among HCEs and expatriates who share the same ethnicity. It, thus, provides a promising new perspective in exploring interactions between expatriates and HCEs.

5. Mirroring intro + theory focus

Fan, S.X.; Harzing, A.W. (2017) Host country employees' ethnic identity confirmation: Evidence from interactions with ethnically similar expatriates, Journal of World Business, vol. 52, no. 5, 640-652.

- **Context 1:** An increased emphasis on formal research evaluation means that academics in more and more countries are expected to publish in top journals.
- **Context 2:** Their ability to do so might be compromised by the fact that the largest proportion of the gatekeepers in these journals are part of a dominant group.
- **Research gap:** It is therefore important to understand the level of international diversity in editorial boards as well as the factors influencing this diversity.
- **High-level results:** Our study, the first large-scale investigation of this phenomenon, found that encouraging progress has been made in the area of international diversity.
- **Action needed:** However, continued active management by editors, professional associations and individual academics alike is necessary to ensure that our editorial boards properly reflect the diverse management community.

5. Context + action focus

Harzing, A.W.; Metz, I. (2013) Practicing what we preach: The geographic diversity of editorial boards, Management International Review, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 169-187.

6. The role of references

- 90-95% of the references are simply there to support your arguments on a sentence-by-sentence level
- However, you can use references strategically, especially in the introduction
  - Reference key and recent publications in the journal you submit to
    - …but do so for legitimate reasons, not to "flatter" or "bribe" the editor
    - https://harzing.com/resources/publish-or-perish/tutorial/paper-submission/pre-submision-check
  - Reference the editor/reviewers (only if appropriate!)
  - Reference core methodological publications that align with your research philosophy
    - Every research method has its own core authors (e.g. Miles & Huberman for qualitative data analysis)
  - Reference core theoretical publications (e.g. Bourdieu social capital, Tajfel social identity theory)
- Used in this way references are "signposts"
  - They are signals that you are part of the same conversation
  - They are shortcuts that can save you hundreds of words

- Some journals allow you to pick your Associate Editor
  - Mainly content based, so usually the choice is obvious
  - If you have more than one AE in your area, research their work carefully
  - Check whether the AE has published in your field
- Some journals ask for reviewer suggestions
  - These CANNOT be your co-authors, friends or anyone else who might have a conflict of interest
  - Editor will generally use at least one of these
  - Name at least 3-4 reviewers, but 5-6 is ideal as ½ to ¾ will refuse
  - Pick at least half from the editorial board
  - Feel free to explain why you picked them
  - Check whether your reviewers have published in your field
    - Don't include gratuitous citations, editors and reviewers will see through this, but always ensure you cite relevant work

7. Editor and reviewers

- This is **not** optional nor an afterthought to be written in a hurry!!
- Include the usual formulation about research ethics (not submitted to another journal etc., look at the website for exact details)
- Explain why you decided to submit your manuscript to that particular journal and why it is worth the editor's time to consider it
  - Why would your paper be of interest to the readers of that journal? How does it contribute to the conversation?
  - What are the strengths of your paper? What are its main contributions?
  - Why is the research site/method particularly interesting/relevant?
- List who would be appropriate reviewers for the paper and why?
- Treat the editor with respect
  - Make sure that you use the current editor's name – and spell it correctly. Avoid writing "Dear Editor"
  - Triple check: don't use the name of the editor or journal that you submitted to on your first try
  - Remember the editor is an academic just like you, only **MUCH** busier. Make their life easier, not more difficult

7. Letter to the editor

- Very few of us are "natural" writers
  - Every paper can benefit from a language edit
  - This is true even for native English speakers!
  - A good editor improves your English and clarifies your writing
- If you are a non-native English speaker language editing is essential
  - English is a relatively simple language to speak
  - But, … it is a very difficult language to write correctly (even for some native speakers!)
  - In my opinion the only way to learn is to read, read, and read …
  - … and write a lot, but try to learn actively while writing

8. Language editing

- Many languages do not have articles or do not differentiate between definite and indefinite articles; distinction between these is crucial in academic writing (East Asian, Finnish)
- Many languages have fewer tenses than English; again distinction between tenses is crucial in academic writing (East Asian)
- Word order in the sentence in English is different from that in many other languages (incl. similar ones such as German and Dutch)
- Punctuation can completely change the meaning of a sentence in English (German)
- English vocabulary has more nuances and more subtle nuances than many other languages; there are sometimes a dozen words meaning almost, but not quite, the same
- Some words in English can have two virtually opposite meanings (e.g. sanction)
- We have a great resource at the business school
  - David Kernohan, who is not only an excellent editor, but also enjoys editing. Please do get in touch with him, he is expecting your email!

8. Common problems

9. More things you should do

- Get your name and work known, it might give you the additional 10% needed to change the binary decision from no to yes
  - Network at conferences:
    - https://harzing.com/blog/2017/11/whats-that-conference-networking-thing-all-about
  - Use social media strategically:
    - https://harzing.com/blog/2017/05/cygna-building-your-academic-brand-through-social-media
- Get (senior) academics who published in the journal as co-authors
  - Yes their input in the actual writing might only be 10%, but it may be the 10% that changes the binary decision from no to yes
- Before submission get a "friendly reviewer", an academic in the field who can give you the same kind of feedback reviewers can, but is "on your side"
  - You need good networks to achieve this as you are asking for a BIG favour. You also need to be willing to return the favour.
- Get advice from peers, not just seniors
  - Anyone can read an abstract and introduction
  - Boot-camp participants should be prepared to read a colleague's work
- Once in the R&R phase, put yourself in the shoes of the reviewers every single time, don't try to "set them right"
  - If they don't understand something, you have to write more clearly or mention it at a different place in the manuscript