

Editorial: How to get your article published in *SBR*

Editorial

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Since I became the editor-in-chief of *Society and Business Review (SBR)* in January 2020, I have seen an exponential increase in the number and quality of submissions to the journal, with papers from across the globe on various topics. Given our aspirations to elevate the quality of the journal further, this trend is a welcomed one. However, this also implies higher levels of rejections of unsuitable manuscripts. In this editorial, I aim to shed light on what successful authors do base on my two decades of academic writing, being an editor of two journals, sitting on the editorial board of another three and the existing literature on the topic. This advice can also be seen as a general one on publishing successfully and could, therefore, help emerging scholars.

Preparing the article for submission

Before submitting a paper to any journal, it is best to understand its aims, scope, foci, guidelines and style. Most journals detail their topics of interest, which is essential to read. At *SBR*, our aims and scope were changed when I stepped in, focussing more on the role of business in society. Consequently, the journal is more interested in corporate social responsibility (CSR) papers than general articles on business and management. *SBR* looks for empirical and theoretical articles on CSR, business ethics, sustainability, corporate political activism, responsible management education, sustainability (including sustainable development and the SDGs), social entrepreneurship and stakeholder theory. I often receive papers of good quality outside this scope, and these manuscripts are not sent out for review. Further, when submitting an article to a journal, it is essential to follow its guidelines on formatting, style, word limit and referencing. Most academic journals also ask that figures and tables be included at the end of the paper with an in-text indication of where they should be added (i.e. insert Table 1 about here).

I would also strongly suggest examining past papers on the same topic from the target journal. This step is vital for several reasons. Firstly, one must ensure that the study area aligns with the journals' aims and scope while also adding something new to the existing body of knowledge. Secondly, it is critical to creating a "discourse" with previously published papers in the same journal, perhaps even take their direction for future research or continue the work other authors have begun. Thirdly, examining recently published manuscripts from the same journal can act as a guide for formatting, referencing, language and style. Looking at papers that already underwent the rigorous submission process, review, revisions and acceptance can help authors learn from other people's journeys.

It is also crucial to pay attention to the structure of the paper. Most academic articles in social studies include several key sections: abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion and references (Audisio *et al.*, 2009). Diverting from this structure is possible, but it might decrease the likelihood of acceptance. The abstract must be concise, let the readers know what this paper is about, explain why this is important and attract them to continue reading. The introduction is usually approximately two pages long, building the backdrop for the whole paper. It discusses focus and importance, main issues and gaps, the study and its contribution. In this context, it is essential to understand how to set a "hook" for the paper so that reads would continue to read it (Grant and Pollock, 2011).



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The literature review should be up to date, covering the relevant published articles. Do not overuse self-citations, as it implies a lack of knowledge of what others have written. It is critical to move beyond who said what and to organise the relevant literature in an exciting and novel way. Methods should be transparent and include all the relevant information on the procedure, processes, sample, data collection and analysis – qualitative or quantitative. An increasing number of journals now demand that authors add tables and figures that disclose the study's process. Results should be thought provoking and novel, rigorous and honest, insofar as the article makes a genuine contribution to knowledge. Finally, a good discussion ties the findings to the literature covered earlier to offer novel insights and interpretations. It needs to include implications for practice, limitations and directions for future research. Ending the paper with a solid and sound conclusion could make it more memorable and better cited.

It is also helpful to find the correct language for the article (Chernick, 2012). Using keywords from the field and emerging concepts could make the paper more appealing, read and cited. In SBR, such keywords align with our aims, including CSR, social entrepreneurship and social impact. Additionally, language should be sensitive, inclusive and unoffensive, so authors should, as an example, avoid gender-biased terms such as “manpower”.

Finally, when the manuscript is ready to be submitted, there is one more indispensable step. A cover letter is essential to ensure that the editor can see what the paper is about, how it fits the journal and that the authors have taken the time to prepare their manuscript for this specific outlet. A cover letter should always be addressed to the correct editor with their name, detailing what this paper is about and how it fits the journal. It is better if the cover letter also describes how the new manuscript works into the emerging body of knowledge in the journal and in general and what its contribution is.

After the paper is submitted

If the paper passes the initial editorial screening, the editor deemed it good quality and suitable for the journal, it is then sent to the reviewers. It is important to emphasise that this process takes time. Everyone wants their paper reviewed, but not many are willing to review. *SBR*, like most other journals, rely on the goodwill of scholars who contribute their time freely to ensure the quality of scholarly work. It may take time to find reviewers and receive their reviews, particularly during a global pandemic. Authors need to be patient and wait for their results, which usually fall under the following categories: major/minor revisions, reject and accept.

Most papers that undergo the blind peer review at *SBR* receive major revisions after their initial submission. This outcome poses an excellent opportunity to receive meaningful feedback on the article and revise it accordingly. While many authors resent the criticism (a humorous Facebook group, “Reviewer 2 must be stopped” has nearly 50,000 members), it is beneficial to approach it with the gratitude it deserves, as anonymous academics volunteer to help an author they do not know for no credit. It is imperative to read their comments carefully, address each one or offer additional explanations.

Subsequently, a letter of revisions is crucial to show the editor and the reviewers, who usually review the same paper again. Such a letter demonstrates that comments were taken seriously and explains how the authors addressed each. Ignoring reviewers' comments is not a good strategy for those who want to get the paper accepted. As a manuscript may undergo several rounds of revision and resubmission, the above is true for every round.

Conclusion

Conducting a rigorous study may take years to accomplish, and publishing its results in a good journal is not easy. Undergoing the correct steps, from preparing the manuscript and cover letter to revising and resubmitting, requires academic capabilities, resilience and patience. I once heard a fellow academic say: “We are not in the business of publishing papers but in the business of dealing with rejections”. Hopefully, these guidelines will help emerging academics to deal with rejections less and achieve full acceptance in our journal.

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