

Navigating the Academic Publication Landscape: Reflections on Peer Review, Editorial Practices, and Research Quality

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ABSTRACT

The academic publication landscape in marketing and management has changed greatly in the past decades. In this interview, Professor Adamantios Diamantopoulos reflects on increased competition in top journals, the rise of open-access outlets, higher methodological standards, and more complex editorial structures. Drawing on his experience as an author, reviewer, associate editor, and editor, he discusses changes in peer review, editorial roles, and the challenges of desk rejections and reviewer competence. The discussion also covers artificial intelligence's impact on authorship, reviewing, and data generation. The interview offers practical insights for scholars navigating a more competitive, complex publication environment.

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Over the years, how have you seen the publication process evolve in top-tier marketing and management journals? What do you consider the most significant changes in shaping this process? (Maria Gabriela, Jonny Mateus, and Renata Andreoni)

Adamantios Diamantopoulos: The publication process in top journals has changed notably in the past decades. One major shift is the increase in academic journals, especially open-access ones. Technological advances have made it much easier to start journals, including some of dubious or predatory quality. At the same time, there is an increased pressure to publish across the globe. Academic careers are increasingly evaluated by publication output, intensifying competition for space in reputable journals. This competition has also expanded geographically. Countries, such as China, have invested heavily in higher education and research, leading to a growing number of high-quality submissions to international journals. Furthermore, expectations regarding research quality have increased considerably. Authors are often expected to provide multiple studies, diverse data sources, and stronger theoretical contributions. Journals also increasingly demand clear managerial implications, reflecting broader debates about the relevance of management research.

In some cases, however, these expectations may become excessive. It is not uncommon to see papers that include numerous experiments or very complex empirical designs to meet high publication standards. Another emerging issue is the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence tools. AI is beginning to influence many aspects of academic work, including data collection, literature reviews, writing assistance, and even the preparation of peer review reports. While these tools may support researchers, they also make the publication process more complex and competitive, introducing new ethical and procedural challenges. In this context, the rise in submissions has also changed editorial structures. Previously, journals had one editor and a few reviewers. Now, many journals employ multiple editors, associate editors, and large reviewer pools. This helps manage volume but also adds complexity for authors navigating reviews.

In summary, navigating today's academic publication landscape requires adaptability and awareness of heightened standards, technological advances, and enhanced competition.

How do you define the role of the reviewer, and how should authors understand it? (Maria Gabriela, Jonny Mateus, and Renata Andreoni)

Adamantios Diamantopoulos: Reviewers are often described as gatekeepers, but this characterization is misleading. In my view, the primary role of reviewers is to help improve the paper. Of course, this assumes that the submission meets a minimum standard. Papers that clearly lack fit with the journal or contain fundamental flaws (e.g., poor writing) should ideally be desk-rejected before entering the review process.

When a paper is suitable for review, feedback should be constructive. Criticism is essential, but it should be accompanied by clear explanations and concrete guidance on how to deal with the issues in the paper. Simply stating that something is problematic without explaining why does little to help authors improve their work. Bearing this in mind, editors play a central role in the review process. Rather than simply relaying reviewers' comments, they must critically evaluate them and exercise judgment when reviewers raise incorrect or misguided points. Decision letters should therefore reflect the editor's own assessment and thoughtful consideration of all the reviews. At the same time, the growing number of submissions places pressure on journals to identify reviewers quickly, sometimes leading editors to invite reviewers with limited expertise in the topic or method. This can further complicate the evaluation process.

Importantly, editors should clarify to reviewers that they are advisors, not decision-makers. The responsibility for accepting or not a paper ultimately lies with the editor. Some journals even instruct reviewers not to recommend acceptance or rejection but to focus on evaluating the manuscript.

Overall, effective collaboration between reviewers and editors, focused on manuscript improvement and critical evaluation, enhances publication quality and fairness.

From your experience, what fundamentally distinguishes a manuscript that gets published from one that does not? (Maria Gabriela, Jonny Mateus, and Renata Andreoni)

Adamantios Diamantopoulos: In many reputable journals, desk rejection rates are often well above 60%. Two main reasons typically explain this outcome. The first is a lack of fit with the journal. Authors frequently submit papers that do not align with the journal's scope. A study conducted in a specific country, for example, does not automatically qualify as an international marketing paper unless it engages with theoretical constructs relevant to international contexts, such as consumer xenocentrism. The second reason is poor presentation. Some manuscripts are poorly

structured or unclearly written, making the argument hard to follow. Editors may see sending such papers to reviewers as unproductive.

On the other hand, successful manuscripts must share three key qualities: novelty, interest, and importance. They should offer something new, address a topic that engages readers through an interesting twist or perspective, and make a meaningful contribution to theory, methodology, practice, or policy. These elements should be highlighted very early, in the introduction.

The introduction is often underestimated. It must quickly answer the 'so what?' question by explaining why the study is interesting, important, and new. In many ways, the introduction resembles a form of 'speed dating' with the reviewer: authors have only a short space to convince readers of the paper's value. A compelling introduction that clearly states the paper's contribution early is therefore crucial for creating a strong first impression and increasing the chances of publication.

Another common reason why manuscripts fail to be published is weak theory. Some papers combine multiple constructs without clearly explaining why they belong together. Others rely on tautological/obvious hypotheses or present internally contradictory arguments. Also, in many cases, authors introduce several theories instead of maintaining a clear focus on one or two. Strong papers build on a coherent theoretical framework rather than drawing loosely from unrelated theories.

Conceptual clarity is also critical. Constructs must be clearly defined, and their operationalization must match those definitions. Misalignment between conceptualization and measurement can represent a fatal flaw.

Methodology and analysis are important as well, but in top journals, they are often considered 'hygiene factors.' Researchers are expected to demonstrate methodological competence and avoid problems such as overinterpretation or unjustified generalization.

Receiving critical reviewer comments can be emotionally challenging for many authors. Based on your experience, how should scholars approach and respond to reviewer feedback? (Maria Gabriela, Jonny Mateus, and Renata Andreoni)

Adamantios Diamantopoulos: Strong emotional reactions to reviewer feedback are understandable. However, the first step is not to rush to respond. Authors should take some time, revisit the reviews later, and approach them with a calmer perspective. Remember, reviewers critique the manuscript, not the author. Recognizing this helps authors address feedback constructively.

When preparing a revision, authors should remain professional and polite regardless of the tone of the reviews. Responding defensively rarely leads to positive outcomes. They should 'keep their eyes on the prize': the goal is not to prove the reviewer wrong but to improve and ultimately publish the paper.

Authors should address all comments carefully and in detail, including those raised by the editor and associate editor. A response letter should be positive, acknowledge that the paper has improved as a result of the review process, and thank the reviewer team. It should clearly explain what changes were made and where they appear in the manuscript. In most cases, it is advisable to follow reviewers' suggestions whenever possible. Additional analyses, references to the literature, or theoretical clarifications often strengthen the paper and show commitment by the authors.

There are, however, situations in which suggestions may be infeasible or technically incorrect. In such cases, authors should respond respectfully and explain their reasoning clearly. Ultimately, viewing reviewer feedback as a beneficial process and as an opportunity for improvement increases publication success and leads to stronger research outcomes.

How should scholars approach rejection strategically? (Maria Gabriela, Jonny Mateus, and Renata Andreoni)

Adamantios Diamantopoulos: Rejection is a normal part of academic publishing. In fact, scholars who receive the most rejections are often also those with the most publications. Over time, authors develop resilience toward this process. When deciding how to proceed after rejection, the decision letter should be read carefully. In some cases, editors reject the paper in its current form but indicate that they would consider a substantially different version that addresses the major flaws identified by the reviewers. In such situations, resubmitting to the same journal may be worthwhile. If the decision letter does not suggest this possibility, submitting to another journal is usually the best option. However, authors should revise the manuscript carefully before doing so.

Reviewer pools often overlap across journals, so the same reviewer might see the manuscript again. If it appears unchanged, this signals poor responsiveness. In summary, strategic revision and careful attention to reviewer and editor feedback after rejection can turn setbacks into publication opportunities. At the same time, the review process always contains an element of unpredictability, and it is very difficult to know what will be the fate of a specific paper at a particular point in time. Reviewer perspectives vary, and sometimes strong work may be rejected simply due to circumstances.

Given that many reviewer critiques focus on insufficient theoretical contribution, what defines a strong theoretical contribution? (Maria Gabriela, Jonny Mateus, and Renata Andreoni)

Adamantios Diamantopoulos: To be honest, if there were a simple formula for what constitutes a strong theoretical contribution, writing academic papers would be much easier. The question of what theory is and what counts as a theoretical contribution has been discussed extensively in the literature for decades, with classic papers such as [Bacharach \(1989\)](#) and [Whetten \(1989\)](#) offering different perspectives. More recently, papers such as [Lim \(2026\)](#) have attempted to synthesize these discussions. So there is no single answer to this question.

What I can say, however, is that the theoretical component of a paper is usually the most challenging part, and it is also the part that attracts the most scrutiny from reviewers. Authors often struggle to justify their choice of theoretical lens or to show how their arguments extend existing knowledge.

One common mistake is combining too many theories in a single paper. Authors sometimes draw on several theoretical perspectives and attempt to merge them into a single framework. The result can resemble a 'Frankenstein model,' in which the theoretical foundations lack coherence. In most cases, it is preferable to build the argument around one overarching theory or, at most, two clearly complementary perspectives. Combining theories that are conceptually unrelated usually weakens the theoretical foundation rather than strengthen it.

Another important aspect of the theoretical contribution is clarity about the insights the paper aims to provide. Many studies simply propose that one variable has a positive or negative effect on another. While this may be empirically testable, it can lead to rather uninteresting theoretical claims. For example, instead of merely arguing that country of origin influences willingness to pay, our paper ([Montanari et al., 2026](#)) offers a more interesting theoretical proposition: changes in country of origin lead to asymmetric changes in consumers' willingness to pay. In other words, consumers may be less sensitive to improvements in country image favorability than to declines in the latter. This type of argument adds conceptual richness and provides a more meaningful theoretical contribution.

Another issue I often observe is the proliferation of hypotheses. Some papers present very large numbers of hypotheses, sometimes 15 or more, including multiple mediators and moderators. In such cases, it becomes difficult to understand the core theoretical argument. I generally favor fewer hypotheses that are clearly motivated and theoretically meaningful. A well-focused set of hypotheses often conveys the paper's central idea more effectively than an overly complex model.

Related to this is the confusion between literature review and theory development. Simply summarizing what previous studies have found does not constitute a theory. Theory development requires building a logical argument that leads to specific, testable propositions. The discussion must be structured to explain why the proposed relationships should exist, rather than merely reporting prior findings.

Finally, as I mentioned before, it is essential that the theoretical contribution be clearly communicated in the introduction of the paper. If the theoretical argument is overly complex (e.g., too many hypotheses) or buried deep in the manuscript, reviewers may struggle to see the contribution. In many ways, the clarity of the theoretical message determines how easily reviewers can understand, and ultimately appreciate, the paper's value.

How do you see the role of artificial intelligence in academic publishing? (Maria Gabriela, Jonny Mateus, and Renata Andreoni)

Adamantios Diamantopoulos: Artificial intelligence is becoming an increasingly important issue in academic publishing. Personally, I prefer not to rely on such tools, because I truly enjoy writing. Nevertheless, the growing presence of these tools raises several challenges for the research community.

One major concern is the lack of clear rules and guidelines regarding acceptable AI use. Some journals now require authors to disclose whether AI tools were used during manuscript preparation, much as they do for conflict-of-interest declarations. However, consistent standards have not yet emerged. AI also raises questions about research productivity. Extremely high publication outputs reported in some cases raise concerns about whether AI-assisted production may be influencing scholarly output.

In addition, AI may affect the peer review process. There have already been instances where reviews cited references that did not exist, suggesting possible AI-generated content. Such situations can create serious problems for editorial decision-making. Beyond writing assistance, AI raises questions about data authenticity and intellectual contribution. If AI tools play a role in generating theoretical arguments or empirical data, transparency becomes essential. For these reasons, clearer policies regarding the use of AI in research, writing, and reviewing are urgently needed.

What advice would you offer younger researchers? (Maria Gabriela, Jonny Mateus, and Renata Andreoni)

Adamantios Diamantopoulos: If I had to offer some advice to younger researchers, I would emphasize three points. First, never be discouraged by the fate of a specific paper. Rejection is a normal and inevitable part of academic publishing. There is a great deal of uncertainty and noise in the review process, and the fate of any individual paper can depend on many factors beyond the author's control. Some scholars may experience early success and assume that publishing will always be easy, only to face several rejections later. Over the course of a career, perseverance is essential.

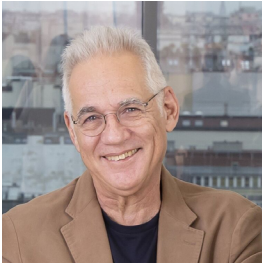
Second, treat the review process as a learning opportunity. Many authors view reviewer comments primarily as obstacles, but they can also be valuable sources of feedback. If authors engage seriously with the comments they receive, even when the paper is rejected, they can improve both the manuscript and their own research skills. Over time, this learning process helps scholars become more effective researchers and writers.

Third, I believe it is important to work on topics that genuinely interest you. While it may sometimes be tempting to pursue projects opportunistically simply because they might result in a publication, a long academic career is much more sustainable when researchers focus on questions they find intrinsically interesting. Intellectual curiosity provides motivation and satisfaction that go beyond the goal of publication itself. In the end, academic research is a long-term endeavor. Persistence, openness to learning, and genuine intellectual engagement with one's research topics are, in my view, the most important ingredients for a successful and fulfilling career.

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