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Eight factors for desk-review rejection at RAUSP's management journal

Despite being covered by several other publications (Ahlstrom, 2012; Linton, 2012; Sun & Linton, 2014; Ferreira & Falaster, 2016), the “one-million-dollar question” remains: How avoid a paper rejection? This issue is a very recurrent – and sometimes, controversial – theme among scholars and graduate students. Our journal has already called the attention to this matter in a previous editorial (Saes & Hourneaux, 2018).

Nevertheless, as we are frequently asked to explain why the papers are rejected so early and at a very rate – actually more than half of the submitted articles – we have decided to return to this subject in this editorial.

We have identified the eight main reasons for paper rejections as follows:

1. Non-adherence to the scope of the journal

RAUSP Management Journal is a management journal (sorry for the redundancy). Therefore, the themes and the literature on which the article is based must be from this field of knowledge, predominantly. Despite the broad thematic scope – all areas of management – it is very common for us to receive articles that actually should be sent to engineering, geography or psychology journals, where they clearly would have more adherences. Some of them do not have a single reference from the management literature. Of course, the “import” of theories and concepts originally from other areas is a common phenomenon in management. Nevertheless, the submitted articles must aim to be part of the literature in management, not elsewhere entirely.

2. Lack of contribution

It is expected that the article brings some kind of theoretical and managerial contribution – maybe also a methodological one. The most expected contribution in an academic journal is the theoretical one (Whetten, 1989; Corley & Gioia, 2011). The practical contribution has also gained importance in the most important journals (Bartunek & Rynes, 2017). Even if this contribution is modest, the article must add to the literature in the area.

3. Theoretical-only article

There is a requirement for publication in our journal that the article must be a theoretical-empirical kind, unlike journals such as *Academy of Management Review*, for instance, that accept the essay type. The essays published by *RAUSP Management Journal* are only the invited papers, included in the category “Thinkbox”.

4. Practical-only article

It would be the opposite of the item (3), but with the same decision. Articles that consist only of simple tool or procedural applications. One example is a study based solely on presenting a



bibliometric analysis, that does not meet item (2) is also rejected. Even if it is a literature review, there must be data collection and analysis in a structured and systematic way, developing contributions from the data. There are other specific outlets for practical-only contributions.

5. Articles without “intrinsic quality”

Articles that have severe and evident quality problems, mainly related to the items: contextualisation, objective, theoretical framework, methodology, analysis, results and conclusions. Or in some cases, the incompatibility among them, generating inconsistencies in the article as a whole (Sun & Linton, 2014). Besides, often the structure of the article also causes inconsistencies, leading to bad quality. Individually, the section that, in general, most leads to rejection is the methodology, the same way McKercher, Law, Weber, Song and Hsu (2007) pointed out.

6. Language and text coherence

Despite the possibilities for revision – sometimes for several rounds – and, often, even translation of the text, articles with written problems are also rejected in the desk review, as they are indicative of the (lack of) quality of the work. We must consider and respect the work and the time of the reviewers and send them only articles that can be read and understood.

7. Article without impact

The impact can be defined “as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia” (Research Excellence Framework [REF], 2014). Articles that do not meet the criteria of impact (besides the theoretical contribution, mainly) are also rejected. Generally, the impact has some relationship with what is included in the items (2), (3) and (4) (Bastow, Dunleavy, & Tinkler, 2014).

8. Article of no interest to our stakeholders

Articles that, although technically correct, will not draw the attention of any audience that may benefit from the journal are also rejected. The most common cases in this categories are: (a) case studies that do not generate any theory [also which falls under item (2)], (b) articles discussing old and consolidated themes, which do not contribute to the theory either (item 2), and (c) articles that have a sound method, but does not rise anything new to the field (Straub, 2008).

We are not considering some other issues here, such as problems with format, references, authors’ identification, etc. (for an extensive list of different reasons for a desk rejection, see Linton, 2012).

In summary, despite these criteria, it is clear that the process has some level of subjectivity, and it is not guaranteed to be error-proof, either. We hope to keep enhancing the quality of both the desk-review and the whole review processes at *RAUSP Management Journal* to the benefit of our readers and authors.

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