Editorial

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Reflections on Publishing in the *Journal of Marketing*

V. Kumar, Vikas Mittal, and Neil Morgan

Academic research and publication hold vital positions in an academic's career. Publishing research serves a critical purpose in disseminating knowledge to information seekers, contributing to the body of knowledge, showcasing scholarship, and securing tenure/promotion. Although it is necessary to an academic's work and career, the academic publication process can present daunting challenges. For a premier journal such as the *Journal of Marketing* (*JM*), which publishes only the best work in the field of marketing and accepts only 7%–8% of all submissions, navigating the peer review process becomes all the more demanding. Amid these high stakes, it is essential that *JM*'s marketing scholarship is captured in its entire essence and presented to the readers in a timely manner. In this regard, it is necessary to nurture a positive and constructive approach to scholarship so that the body of knowledge can experience incremental gains. This editorial is a step in this direction.

In this editorial, we review the recurring feedback that emerged from the decision letters during our editorial term. Our goal is to offer a perspective that is based on our reflection and not what an "ideal" *JM* submission ought to be. We hope that such a perspective will benefit future contributors in better designing their submissions to *JM*. In doing so, we provide a synthesis of this review and organize this editorial as follows. First, we present a set of guidelines for crafting manuscripts for *JM* that are truly compelling and therefore can survive the "desk rejection" stage. In addition, we present a set of "survival tips" for authors to avoid some common mistakes that surface during the initial submission. Then, we offer guidelines on how to address reviewer comments. Finally, we provide directions for how to prepare the manuscript for resubmission.

Crafting Manuscripts for *JM*

At the outset, it is important to communicate what we mean by "crafting" manuscripts. We do not mean that the manuscript is merely well-written (i.e., linguistically proficient). It should go beyond that to include the *essential ingredients* of a submission: a combination of a well-positioned core idea, the incorporation of related theory/theories, the use of rigorous and relevant study methods, and the exposition of meaningful insights. While we recognize that writing is a critical element that can help or hinder the initial submission, it is not the ultimate touchstone by which to evaluate a manuscript, because it is possible for a well-written manuscript to hide errors in the study. Therefore, as long as the aforementioned essential ingredients of a submission are clearly discernible in the initial submission, the writing can be fixed and enhanced during the review process. So, what are the essential elements of an initial *JM* submission?

Essential Elements of an Initial JM *Submission*

To obtain a better grasp of crafting manuscript submissions for *JM*, we performed a content analysis of all decision letters to *JM* submissions during our tenure. Specifically, we focused on the "desk reject" letters. This exercise provided us the opportunity to identify the essential items in an initial *JM* submission that would likely enable it to perform well throughout the review process. Another way of looking at this exercise is to identify the weaknesses in a manuscript that, when avoided, would most likely enable it to progress past the desk reject stage. In this regard, we identify five essential elements exhibited by all submissions that were successful in passing this stage. We present these five elements in a constructive manner aimed toward helping readers craft initial submissions in the future, rather than using a passive, reporting style. We hope this will better serve future contributors to *JM*.

Positioning of the study. It is critical that the manuscript clearly identify its positioning within the marketing literature. This can

V. Kumar (VK) served as the Editor in Chief of *JM* from July 2014 to June 2018. He is the Regents Professor, Richard and Susan Lenny Distinguished Chair, & Professor in Marketing; Executive Director of the Center for Excellence in Brand and Customer Management; and the Director of the PhD Program in Marketing, J. Mack Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University. VK is also honored as the Chang Jiang Scholar at Huazhong University of Science and Technology; Fellow, Hagler Institute for Advanced Study, Texas A&M University; and Senior Fellow, Indian School of Business (email: vk@gsu.edu). Vikas Mittal served as a Coeditor of *JM* from July 2017 to June 2018. He is the J. Hugh Liedtke Professor of Marketing, Rice University (email: vmittal@rice.edu). Neil Morgan served as a Coeditor of *JM* from July 2017 to June 2018. He is PetSmart Distinguished Professor of Marketing, Indiana University (email: namorgan@indiana.edu).

be made evident in two areas. First, the "introduction" section of the manuscript serves a vital role. When the introduction does not adequately situate the study within the body of knowledge and practice of marketing, the clarity of the study can be called into question. As a result, the introduction must be precisely organized to present the objectives within the perspective of the marketing discipline and relative to marketing literature overall. Second, the "literature review" or "conceptual framework development" section becomes important in this regard. Often, manuscripts may cite several studies, including studies from other disciplines. However, if what was learned from this literature is not sufficiently established with respect to marketing, the manuscript rests on a shaky foundation. Furthermore, listing or mentioning all the literature that was reviewed is not informative; rather, a synthesis of the literature reviewed and how it is relevant to the current study is required. As a result, the literature review should be covered in a manner that enhances and informs the subsequent sections of the manuscript such as the hypothesis development, study design, and discussion of results.

Research questions. The practice of formulating good research questions and the outcome of generating impactful insights can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. The research questions addressed must be clearly articulated because they focus on particular study dimensions in the chosen line of inquiry and convey an understanding of the phenomenon and its evaluative approach. Therefore, the research questions need to be presented alongside an accurate and complete description of the research problem and its context for the maximum study impact. Furthermore, the motivation for the study has to be firmly established in a manner that naturally leads to the research question(s). A required precursor to correctly identifying the research questions is to understand the research problem. Van de Ven (2007) defines the research problem as "any problematic situation, phenomenon, issue, or topic that is chosen as the subject of an investigation" (p. 73). Many studies that were desk rejected during our tenure suffered from a lack of understanding of the research problem, which led to poor framing of the research questions. For instance, in addition to other issues, when the authors do not effectively grasp existing discrepancies or incongruities and/or when the authors' conceptualization and understanding of the study phenomenon is at odds with the extant theory/practice, the submitted manuscript invariably gets desk rejected.

Study purpose. Manuscripts must clearly state their purpose early on to clarify the goals of the study and set expectations. This is important both to inform readers about the topic and to keep them engaged as they read through the study. For instance, authors might state the purpose of the study toward (1) theoretical, (2) conceptual, or (3) empirical focus. Such an identification up front attunes readers to take note of the study's contribution. In communicating the study's purpose, it is important to present as complete a picture of the research problem as possible. One way to do this is to identify the foreground, background, focal area, and study context (Abbott 2004). For instance, consider a submission in the area of customer engagement. In this case, the customers are in the foreground, as this construct is firmly based on how customers engage with brands and/or firms. The other stakeholders (firms, suppliers, employees, etc.) would compose the background. The focal area in a customer engagement study would be, for instance, theory development, its role in managing customers, and its measurement. Furthermore, the regulatory framework, culture, technology, industry type (service vs. manufacturing), and the nature of the business setting (contractual vs. noncontractual), among others, would be considered the study context. When the purpose of the study is presented in such a manner, readers get a holistic view of the proposed study.

Contribution of the study. Rather than leave it to the readers' inference, it is important that authors clearly identify the study's contributions. Consider a key goal for *JM* during our tenure: to encourage "papers that address the most relevant managerial problems and propose the most appropriate and actionable method, while ensuring rigor to resolve it" (Kumar 2014, p. 1). Of course, given such a broad ambit, not all studies are likely to make the same type of contribution. In this regard, when evaluating whether to issue a desk reject decision, among other things, we considered identifying manuscripts along the lines of (1) contributing to theory development in understanding a phenomenon that affects the marketplace (this includes advancing theories that challenge existing theories), (2) developing new methods/models that perform better than existing approaches, (3) conceptualizing a business phenomenon or process to understand how it works, (4) identifying evidence-based moderating and/or mediating variables that determine future managerial actions, and (5) developing evidence-based strategies and/or tactics that firms can readily implement. Furthermore, a precursor to identifying the contribution is to present the extant knowledge in the focal area of research in an accurate manner. This helps substantiate the importance/validity of the proposed contribution.

Benefits of the study. The benefits of a study are ultimately what hooks people into reading the manuscript. Depending on the type of article, during the desk reject decision evaluation we considered benefits that might include, but are not limited to, (1) problems that are relevant and timely to the academic and business communities, (2) a study approach that involves all applicable forms of rigor (empirical, conceptual, and analytical), (3) conceptual/substantive insights and findings that make an incremental addition to the existing knowledge base, (4) actionable implications that will capture the attention of the practitioner community, (5) a study that closes gaps in the literature, and (6) any new investigation that furthers the marketing discipline. Moreover, because articles in *JM* typically address (1) relevant/pertinent problems regarded as such by *JM*'s audiences (i.e., practitioners and academics), (2) areas of marketing that have not received sufficient investigation, and (3) changes in businesses' social/political/cultural environment that affect the present and future of marketing, we also consider these features when evaluating a submission for the desk reject decision.

Survival Tips for the Initial JM *Submission*

The mere presence of all the aforementioned essential elements of a *JM* submission offers a manuscript the chance of advancing to the review process. Yet flaws or holes in the research that render the study less impactful or even questionable can be uncovered during the initial round of review. Drawing on a content analysis of first-round rejection letters, we present a few tips that can guide authors in crafting manuscripts that have a solid foundation and, therefore, a better chance of getting past the first round.

Adequate definition and measurement of constructs. A construct is defined as a conceptual term used to describe a phenomenon of theoretical interest, and a measure is defined as an observed score of a construct (Edwards and Bagozzi 2000). Because constructs are used to describe a phenomenon, they are best understood through the variables that affect/explain the phenomenon. Given this contextual nature, it is crucial that the constructs are clearly defined. In the case of conceptual articles, in which the measurement of constructs may not be demonstrated, the importance of construct definition is even more apparent. In studies that propose and measure constructs, precise definition helps readers more easily understand the construct and compare the measurement with the intended meaning of the construct. Overall, well-defined constructs serve a vital need in the understanding, creation, transfer, and advancement of knowledge regarding a specific phenomenon. In this regard, prior studies on construct development (e.g., Churchill 1979, MacKenzie 2003, Peter 1981, Teas and Palan 1997) can serve as good resource materials for scholars.

Include some level of analysis. All types of papers submitted to *JM* (i.e., conceptual, analytical, and empirical) must have at least some level of analysis. Clearly, all empirical and analytical papers lend themselves to the presence of a section on analysis and discussion on the focal area of study. However, the notion that conceptual studies can be devoid of analysis and discussion pertaining to their real-world implications is not consistent with *JM*'s standards. Typically, if the analysis/discussion section is written from a descriptive viewpoint (as opposed to using analytical argumentation), restates the proposed ideas/hypothesis, lacks well-thought-out reasoning of the real-world implications of the findings, or fails to address possible alternative interpretations, then the submitted paper may be considered weak by *JM*'s standards. A strong paper for *JM* would be one that highlights, through analytical means, the novel implications of the study that are of direct relevance to marketing practice, without stating the obvious/already-known inferences.

Generate novel insights. Authors must devote significant attention to the presentation and discussion of insights. Of course, insights that generate maximum impact tend to be unique, novel, and managerially relevant. In this regard, the insights must be discussed articulately while adding more clarity and nuance to the overall goal(s) and findings of the study. Insights are better served when presented alongside a discussion of the broader implications of the findings. This not only gives readers the appropriate perspective through which to understand the insights but also provides food for thought for practitioners regarding the future applications of the suggested insights. It is important to note that the review process can play a vital role in the generation and enhancement of insights. However, the review process can be helpful in this regard only if the initial submission contains some insights to begin with.

Clear and well-written manuscript. Although poor writing may not be a fatal flaw, it can be a major distraction from the fundamental contribution(s) of the study. Writing well does not necessarily imply the use of sophisticated language. In fact, in most cases, good prose and simple but effective sentence construction can work wonders for the manuscript. In this regard, especially in the case of nonnative speakers of English, it is essential to have the manuscript professionally copy edited before submission.

Highlight the study contributions. Academic scholarship extends beyond simply engaging in original research to include bridging theory and practice, integrating ideas from across disciplines, and effectively communicating research findings to the academic community (Boyer et al. 2015). In this regard, it is essential to clearly lay out the salient contributions of the study to showcase the paper's impact potential. Specifically, when the list of contributions is parsed on theoretical, methodological, and substantive grounds, the paper gains greater impact. Despite the importance of this aspect in any paper, the lack of significant contributions is a prominent reason cited by the reviewers for unfavorable decisions in the review process. So, how can authors better identify the contributions? One way is to get as much feedback from colleagues as possible throughout the course of planning, executing, and writing the study. Colleagues who are active researchers can offer valuable directions in identifying and eliciting study contributions. Feedback regarding how much interest the study's topic generates, the study's approach, the newness of the findings, and the implications of the findings for theory and practice can help the authors identify contributions.

Demonstrate generalizability. The generalizability of findings is important for two key reasons. First, evaluating the law-like quality of the finding helps advance marketing knowledge. Second, practitioners benefit from such generalizations, as future implementations and managerial actions can be safely planned on the basis of this knowledge. When studies progress toward generating generalizable results, they contribute to the body of knowledge regarding a particular phenomenon. However, authors are also advised to recognize the limits to generalizations, the conditions that might apply, and the exceptions to generalizations. Such an approach would provide practitioners a reliable context on which to base their managerial actions and provide scholars a credible knowledge point to configure their research.

Provide clear data sources. Studies submitted to *JM* go through a rigorous review process. The reviewers, among other things, pay keen attention to the data and data-related aspects of the study. As a result, authors need to discuss the data used for the study in the initial submission. A clear depiction of the data may also facilitate the identification of additional analysis in the review process that the authors can pursue as they revise the manuscript. *JM* has experienced a steady and significant increase of submissions and readership from outside the United States that use data from non-U.S. settings. This development also necessitates the accurate description of data so that the reviewers understand the data that is being used and thereby appropriately evaluate the study and its conclusions. In other words, authors who submit to *JM* must be aware that they are addressing a global audience and must prepare the manuscript accordingly, so as to not leave any segment of readers behind.

Report effects with the levels of significance. The test of significance is an important validation tool for the authenticity of the study findings. Essentially, the statistical significance provides the right perspective to understand the hypothesis formulation, the study method(s) used, and the reported results, with respect to the topic of inquiry. Despite the importance of statistical significance, submissions to *JM* occasionally report findings without the levels of significance. This places an undue stress on the review team in ascertaining the validity of the study. In addition, some scholars have also called for more education on the understanding and correct usage of statistical significance in marketing research (Hubbard and Armstrong 2006; Sawyer and Peter 1983). Therefore, authors are strongly advised to include the levels of significance (with standard errors) when reporting the results.

Addressing Specific Issues in JM *Submissions by Study Type*

During our review of the decision letters, we were able to discern several recurring issues for rejected manuscripts, and we present them next. While the *JM* review team does an excellent job of identifying the issues, the overall review process would be well-served if authors proactively acknowledge and avoid these issues. As mentioned previously, an informal review of the study by the authors' peers (before the paper is submitted to *JM*) would help identify these issues. We categorize these issues by type of study.

Common Issues in Empirical Studies

All studies submitted to *JM*—whether conceptual, empirical, or analytical—are expected to adhere to the most rigorous methodological guidelines in the field of marketing scholarship. However, empirical studies that claim primarily empirical contributions are expected to be especially methodologically airtight, and, ideally, to break new ground in empirical research. Unfortunately, there are a few major empirical shortcomings that recur frequently in *JM* submissions, each of which researchers should work especially hard to avoid. They are as follows:

Self-selection bias. When conducting a survey, it is important to collect a sample of respondents that is free of bias and, to the best of the researchers' ability, truly representative of the target population. Most commonly, survey research is undermined by the problem of self-selection bias, wherein participation in the survey is determined by the participants themselves. Effectively, this results in a skewed and nonrepresentative sample, given that the group of people who choose to opt out of the survey will not be accounted for. It is imperative that researchers work to eliminate self-selection bias through a rigorous survey procedure and by running checks on the sample after it has been collected.

Unobserved heterogeneity. When modeling a specific market research phenomenon, it is important that authors account for the differences among the cases being studied. Differences that are accounted for by the covariates can be described by the term "observed heterogeneity." However, any heterogeneity that is unaccounted for—chiefly, unmeasured variation among cases or among relevant but omitted variables—is known as "unobserved heterogeneity." When authors do not adequately control for unobserved heterogeneity, the likelihood of erroneous inferences from the analysis increases.

Endogeneity. Endogeneity can arise from unobserved heterogeneity, and this refers to an instance in which some unobserved variable also correlates with the independent variable in the statistical model. Such a condition implies that something other than the independent variable was responsible for driving the observed effects. Sometimes, solving an endogeneity problem is simply a matter of identifying the missing variable, measuring it, and incorporating it into the model. Other sources of endogeneity can be more difficult to account for (e.g., it might arise from causal simultaneity, in which case no amount of control variables can correct for the issue).

Field experiments. It is always commendable for researchers to try their hands at ambitious field experiments, which, unlike conventional laboratory experiments, are conducted in real-world settings and presume to capture the naturalistic behavior of participants. However, field experiments are prone to several pitfalls that must be avoided to meet *JM*'s methodological standards. For instance, conducting experiments outside of a controlled lab environment makes it difficult to control for extraneous variables, which may result in a study with invalid results.

Common Issues in Conceptual Studies

All studies submitted to *JM* are expected to be conceptually and theoretically rigorous. The conceptual framework, the nomological validity of the constructs, and the theoretical grounding conferred by the literature review must all be cogently and thoroughly established up front. However, a study that primarily aims to make a compelling conceptual contribution must demonstrate particularly fastidious logical development of its ideas and comprehensive familiarity with the relevant extant literature. The most common issues in these studies are as follows:

Does not justify the selection of constructs. It is essential that any rigorous conceptual research paper clearly define and justify its focal constructs. If the foundational constructs are not properly motivated, then the proposed theoretical framework of the manuscript is likely to fall apart. The embeddedness of the proposed constructs within a clearly organized theoretical stream or schema is referred to as that construct's "nomological validity." This extends not only to conceptual definition but also to operationalization. This may correspond to, for instance, ascertaining whether the dimensions and subdimensions of the construct are properly defined and measured. When *JM* submissions are reviewed, the soundness of the constructs is one of the key criteria on which each study is evaluated.

No valid arguments for the propositions/hypotheses. When formulating hypotheses, it is important that the predictions are properly justified. This means that the hypotheses should be compelling, logically sound, and demonstrably testable. However, it is all too common that hypotheses are written tautologically, in an ad hoc manner, as if the results were determined in advance of the actual predictions. Moreover, studies may also suffer from (1) hypotheses that are redundant, and (2) proposed effects that have already been established by the relevant extant literature. In effect, a conceptual study submitted to *JM* is likely to fare better in the review process when the hypotheses are reasonably surprising and not simply intuitive.

Lacks information on how to measure the constructs. As noted previously, it is fundamental that the constructs are clearly measured in terms of their composite dimensions and subdimensions covered in the literature. In addition, an operational consistency must be established between the proposed measure and precedent measures from the extant literature. It is one thing to be able to conceptually define a construct—it is entirely another to operationalize a construct such that it can be empirically modeled.

Needs additional insights. The most important hurdle that must be cleared by all *JM* submissions is that of a clear and compelling contribution. A paper may yield one or more novel insights or incrementally advance the extant understanding of a given topic, but if the contribution is not sufficiently extensive, it may not pass the muster of *JM* reviewer team. Often, it is evident that a given topic or data set has the potential to yield more insights than the authors illumined. It is always important to consider the full scope of one's research area and optimize its contributive value.

Does not include the study benefits/beneficiaries. It is important, especially in conceptual papers, to pinpoint one's intended audience (i.e., who stands to gain the most from the research). If the authors undertake the effort to position compelling conceptual ideas within an extant theoretical stream, then they should be able to explain the implications of the research within the same stream and point to future research directions. Furthermore, the practitioner implications must be clearly delineated in the study.

Common Issues in Analytical Studies

Analytical studies broach both conceptual and empirical approaches, but they are primarily leveraged toward the solving of specific managerial problems using a rigorous analytical framework. These strategic papers involve the application of research concepts and methodology to real-world marketing problems, bridging the divide between theory and practice. True to their name, these studies absolutely hinge on the strength and rigor of the analysis and problem solving. The common issues with analytical papers include:

Does not validate the assumptions. Many authors, in developing the conceptual stories of their respective manuscripts, resort to assumptive or conjectural language that requires substantiation. Without proper validation, assumptions become weak links in the explanatory chain of the narrative—often, reviewers will counter assumptions with possible alternative ideas or explanations, demonstrating the flimsiness of unsubstantiated supposition. In light of this, it is recommended that authors back their research assumptions with robust theoretical support.

Lacks managerial insights. One of the key attributes of *JM* is its status as a top managerial journal with a pronounced focus on practical relevance. It is one thing for a paper to propose theoretical insights and build on the academic literature in a given field, but it is another thing to solve the managerially relevant problems that face marketing firms on a day-to-day basis. It is important that there are actionable managerial implications that can be gleaned from the findings of any given analytical manuscript.

Implementation is not feasible. Many submitted analytical studies that aim to solve a managerial problem may overlook the real-world contingencies of the focal industry or international market and propose solutions that realistically cannot be implemented. Many of the reviewers for *JM* have considerable real-world industry experience and aim to nudge these authors into a more comprehensive understanding of managerial practice. Remember, a solution that is theoretically sound does not necessarily mean that it can be implemented.

Lack of empirical/simulation support. In addition to the empirical shortcomings noted previously, analytical papers are often beset by experimental designs and simulations that fail to adequately align with the real-world circumstances of the research context. The parameters for a research simulation might be too constricting and specific, and therefore the observed effects may not prove generalizable or managerially meaningful. Moreover, it is always a possibility that the hypothesized solution is not supported by the empirical portion of the manuscript, in which case the research usually needs to be reformulated.

Lacks added complexity in derivations. In analyzing a managerial problem and proposing a solution in the form of a new metric, it is important that the computational rigor is adequately nuanced and complex. Many papers submitted to *JM* feature analytical models that are overly simple and lacking in variables and/or equations that might capture additional nuances and contingencies. Looking out for such missteps is likely to result in a more accurate and comprehensive metric. Furthermore, *JM* reviewers often request robustness checks. Authors must bear this in mind and proactively provide such checks in the initial submission.

To this point, we have presented our observations and suggestions on how to craft initial *JM* submissions that can pass the desk rejection stage and the first-round review. In the next section, we discuss how to effectively address reviewer comments from the review process.

Addressing the *JM* Reviewer Comments

An invitation to revise a manuscript is a privilege extended to the authors of a small subset of manuscripts that survive the initial round of processing. It implies that more than one person involved in the review process—the Editor, Coeditor (CoE), Area Editor (AE), and reviewers—are supportive of the manuscript. When evaluating the revised manuscript, reviewers often provide a candid assessment of the revision effort in their private comments to the CoE and AE. Our thematic assessment of these comments reveals guidelines for successfully addressing reviewer comments.

Provide a Summary of the Overall Revision Strategy

The opening section of the reviewer notes should provide a one- to two-page page summary of all the major changes in response to the reviewer comments. This summary should start with a bulleted list of the specific changes in the positioning, contribution, and theory of the paper. This section should also highlight any new practical or managerial insights that emerged as a result of the revision. Finally, this summary should catalog major changes in the analysis, such as addition and deletion of studies in behavioral papers, additional models estimated, robustness checks for empirical/modeling papers, and a brief description of any appendices added. The goal of this summary should be to provide the review team—especially the CoE and the AE—with a road map for how they should approach the revised paper and what they can expect from it.

Use the AE Letter as a Revision Roadmap

Rather than act as a fourth reviewer, the AE typically synthesizes the reviews and focuses the authors' attention to the critical issues that should be addressed. Most AE letters will not cover every point raised by the reviewers. That a specific point is covered in the AE letter is an indication of its importance to the revision. Therefore, be sure to summarize your specific response to that point in your response to the AE and specify where in the reviewer response and/or manuscript you provide a more detailed answer. It is not a good idea to cut and paste answers for specific reviewer comments in the response to the AE. While the response to the reviewer comment can be more detailed, typically the response to the AE is a shorter summary.

Provide a Response to Each Reviewer Comment

A typical *JM* review will have comments that are numbered. Authors should reproduce each comment in bold and then provide their answers beneath each comment. Though this may sound tedious, it is helpful to the reviewers who do not have to flip back and forth between the reviewer comments, the authors' response, and the manuscript. The answers should be specific and should cover the "spirit of the comment." As an example, if a reviewer asks authors to elaborate on the practical implications of the findings, it is not enough to respond by saying, "We have expanded the implications in the 'Discussion' section." Rather, the response should provide the page number and section along with a précis of the implications in the manuscript. This level of specificity helps the reviewers connect the responses to the manuscripts.

Go Above and Beyond What Is Asked for, Without Inundating the Reviewers

Reviewers raise a lot of points and may seek information that may seem obvious or nitpicky to the authors. Rather than getting vexed by such requests, the authors should remember that members of the review team are neither as familiar nor as embedded in the paper as the authors. Many aspects of the paper that seem clear and obvious to the authors may seem ambiguous, perplexing, and even occluded to the reviewers—they are reading and reacting to the manuscript for the first time. As such, it is possible for reviewers to miss, misread, or misinterpret some of the information. In such a case, the authors should not only provide the specific information but also elaborate on the larger backdrop of the information context.

For example, suppose a reviewer asks for the correlation between measures of two constructs that are posited to be distinct. In addition to providing the correlation between the measures of the two constructs, the authors may also want to run checks on discriminant validity to help assuage the reviewers' concern. If a reviewer asks for robustness checks for an empirical/modeling paper, the authors may want to report all the different models in tables appended to the reviewer notes. This level of responsiveness signals openness, a willingness to go above and beyond the minimum ask, and a desire to seek additional feedback from the reviewers. Reviewers appreciate such a stance; it smooths the process of interacting with the authors and helps the reviewers better evaluate the revised manuscript.

Review and Proofread the Revision Notes

Authors typically spend a lot of time fine-tuning their manuscript, but not the reviewer notes. This can be a mistake. Reviewers will spend just as much, if not more, time on understanding and reading the reviewer notes as they will on the revised manuscript. Inconsistent responses, spelling/grammatical errors, and other signs of carelessness can negatively affect reviewer evaluations of the revised manuscript. Finally, authors should always maintain a respectful, professional, and courteous tone in their responses addressing each reviewer in the first person, without using a passive voice (in other words, adopt a conversational tone). Once the revision notes are finished, authors should set the document aside for a few days. Then, revise it again to ensure it embodies all the aforementioned features.

Treat the Review Process as a Developmental Dialogue

Because the reviewer's task is to provide a critical evaluation, the review can sometimes come off as overly negative to authors. Rather than respond to the review emotionally, the authors should ensure that the responses are factual, logical, and respectful. If the authors disagree with an issue raised by a reviewer, it is not enough to simply argue with the reviewer. Rather, the authors should try to understand *why* the reviewer is raising a particular issue—perhaps the explanation or logic in the manuscript is unclear, perhaps the constructs need to be defined better, and so forth. The authors' response should clarify their understanding of the issue, how it has been addressed, and the resulting change(s) in the manuscript (rewriting, additional analysis, new data, improved discussion, etc.).

Reviewing for *JM* is a privilege that is extended to thought leaders and experts in our field. Reviewers and AEs volunteer their time in service of the discipline. While no review is perfect, almost all reviews are helpful. Authors of published manuscripts, after a few years, almost always attest that the review process, though arduous, improved the manuscript in many different ways. To benefit from the review process—improving the manuscript and increasing the chances of its acceptance—authors submitting their work to *JM* should keep these guidelines in mind when addressing reviewer comments. Having discussed how reviewer comments can be addressed, in the next section we explain how authors can prepare their manuscripts for resubmission.

Preparing the Manuscript for Resubmission to *JM*

Resubmission is the next stage in a manuscript's development. After the first round of reviews, it is not unusual for a revised manuscript to have changed radically from that which was initially submitted and reviewed. The direction of the AE and CoE and the questions, comments, and ideas from the reviewers frequently lead to significant changes in the manuscript. It is important that authors therefore not only rethink what goes into (and is omitted from) the revised manuscript but also treat it as an entirely new version of the paper. Many problems with resubmitted manuscripts are related to "legacy" problems originating in the initial submission that survive the authors' manuscript revisions. In addition, although a paper can survive an initial submission in spite of not being very well written, it rarely survives multiple rounds without substantial improvements in writing and presentation. From this perspective, authors may benefit by keeping several things in mind as they revise their manuscript for resubmission.

Telling the Story

As with the initial submission, the authors must spark the reader's interest in the research question they aim to answer in the study. In doing so, however, it is important that the revised manuscript does not "bury the lede." It is generally a good idea to foreshadow the key results in the introduction and then elaborate on these later in the manuscript. In motivating the study, examples can be useful and often help establish the relevance of the research early in the manuscript. However, authors need to be very sure of the facts surrounding the example and their interpretation of them. In telling any story, internal consistency in the logic of arguments is key, so this requires particular care and attention in revising the manuscript. It is also generally true that a "picture is worth a thousand words" (and sometimes more). Figures can be very useful in succinctly communicating a great deal about any research study. It is also helpful in effective communication if the manuscript is not written defensively but rather presents a positive framing of any arguments. Most sentences in a revised manuscript, even in theory development and hypothesis argumentation sections, generally require no reference support. However, limiting the number of references in a single sentence or argument can be helpful in this respect. No manuscript needs more than three references to support a point—and then only if the point is particularly counterintuitive.

Reframing Study Contributions

As with the first round of review, failure to build and communicate a clear and compelling set of contributions from a study is one of the most common reasons for second-round rejection. From this perspective, authors should answer the following questions in the revised manuscript. To what specific phenomenon/theory does the study contribute? What new knowledge emerges as a result of the study, and why is it important? To whom and under what conditions is it important? What should *not* be inferred from the study's results? Articulating the answers to these questions is key to a successful revision effort. In addition, authors would also be well-advised to pay greater attention to the "future research" implications of their study. Too many revisions treat this as a "throwaway" section that is "boilerplate" in nature (and remember that that "limitations" $\neq$ "future research"). *JM* is seeking high-impact research (generally viewed through the lens of future citation potential), and setting up others' future research is a great way to help achieve that. As a result, the revised manuscript should try to directly answer the following: What new research questions are now worth studying as a result of this study?

Produce an "Advanced Draft"

Producing an advanced draft should include revisiting everything about the new version of the paper. Not just the implications section—who should care, why they should care, and what they should do/think about differently as a result—but also the "mechanics" of the paper. For example, it is often worth revisiting the paper's title and abstract not only to reflect changes made during the revision but also to evaluate its ability to communicate to the broadest set of readers in the event that the paper is accepted. It is also essential to make sure that there is a clear flow of logic from paragraph to paragraph and from section to section. Consistency in terminology is key, and this is often a cause of confusion and frustration when terms used in the original submission are inadvertently left in the revised manuscript. Again, to ensure clarity in communication, authors are well-served to think about the revised manuscript as an entirely new paper.

Polish the Manuscript

There is a reason that Editors and senior academics talk about "crafting" vs. simply "writing" a manuscript. A finished article is not merely a case of the authors writing down in the revised manuscript what they have done in their study; rather, it is the building of a compelling case for the revised research idea, its execution, and implications. All of this is judged by readers (initially the review team) and therefore must be written with the audience in mind. This is easy to say, but often difficult for authors to accomplish because they effectively "know too much" about the study, its details, and its history. Thus, when the authors have an advanced draft of their revised manuscript it can be very helpful to ask others to read the draft and highlight the top three "bumps" (i.e., things that do not flow well from one sentence, paragraph, and section to the next). Once these have been identified and smoothed out, it is often a good idea to then set aside the revised manuscript for a week or more.

Final Acid Test(s)

Finally, authors should consider answering a checklist of questions from a reader's perspective. Get a colleague (preferably more than one, and those with some experience of publishing in top journals—preferably *JM*) to read the revised paper and then explain to you:

- What is the research question addressed, who cares about this question—and why?
- What does the study reveal about what phenomenon/theory that was not known before, why is that important, and to whom?
- Who should do what differently, and why, as a result of the study?
- What new questions does the study suggest are now important/worthwhile for future research that were not considered so before?
- If this manuscript were to be rejected by the *JM* review team in this round, what do you think the most likely reason would be?

If the revised manuscript passes the acid test questions from seasoned readers, and the answers to the last question do not provoke a further rewrite of at least some of the paper, then the revised manuscript is likely to be ready for resubmission. As a final task, the authors should revisit the response notes to the reviewers, AE, and CoE and ensure that page numbers and any quotes from the revised manuscript are consistent with the final version.

In Closing...

We thank the marketing community and the AMA for giving us the opportunity to serve our field. We could not have done our jobs without the support of the authors, reviewers, AEs, Guest Editors of Special Issues, the Senior Editor, the Vice President of Publications, the AMA staff, and, last but not least, our respective universities. While our sole intention was to serve the community in a conscientious manner, the lift in the impact factor during the four-year term from 3.8 to 7.3 has been personally enriching and rewarding. We owe big thanks to the authors and the review team for working toward a common goal of producing papers of high impact, thus causing the impact factor to rise sharply. *JM* is a flagship journal in the field, and it has been an honor to serve in an editorial capacity of this prestigious publication. We offer our salute to the entire marketing community as we pass on the editorial responsibilities to the new editorial team. We wish them grand success in continuing the great legacy of *JM*.

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