International Journal of Market Research
Guidelines for authors

Thank you for your interest in submitting a paper to *IJMR*. These notes are intended to provide advice for prospective authors on the types of papers we publish, and to help authors increase their chances of being accepted for publication.

IJMR's vision

Founded in 1958, the aim of the *International Journal of Market Research* (*IJMR*) is to be the leading and authoritative source of information about excellent practice and new thinking in market research worldwide. As such, the *IJMR* provides a forum for practitioners and others to share and discuss all aspects of research: applications, methodologies, new technologies, technology transfer from related areas, solutions, strategic and management issues. *IJMR* is SSCI-ranked and is rated by the Association of Business Schools as a 2* journal.

Readers are looking for ways to make market research a more effective tool, and trust the integrity of the *IJMR* to provide them with leading edge and authoritative thinking that can be practically applied.

The *IJMR* is first and foremost a journal that publishes the best from academia and practitioners and whilst the primary audience is the professional researcher at all levels, the *IJMR* also seeks to encourage a dialogue between practitioners, academics and those in the business or public sectors who rely on the output from the market research industry to help them make effective decisions.

The editorial team is therefore interested in papers that are evidence based, clearly written and unambiguous; that are original and contain new and practical ideas. The style should demonstrate authority and expertise but be accessible to the wider audience. In particular, every paper must engage and stimulate readers, be relevant to their needs and ensure that the practical applications of the ideas and concepts within the papers are readily apparent.

Whatever the topic, the material published within the *IJMR* is written by experts in their field and all submissions are reviewed prior to publication by their peers to ensure that high standards and integrity are maintained.

In summary, the *IJMR* is the place to find new thinking in market research. The content is rigorously vetted, stimulating and essential reading.

Contributions published in *IJMR*

Contributions accepted for publication are generally one of the following types:
- An opinion piece or viewpoint - introducing an industry issue or providing a call to action, perhaps on a topic where the author feels that wider research evidence would be beneficial (e.g. outlining a new technique requiring more extensive validation);
- Specially commissioned (or submitted) review papers or digests summarising current best practice focussing on specific techniques, methodologies or current industry issues (e.g. impact of legislation);
- A case study describing a practical application of research, and the benefits derived by the end-user;
- Papers that advance methodological thinking through original academic or practitioner research;
- Descriptions of new models, research tools etc;
- A paper addressing a key issue faced by the industry;
- New technological developments or applications;
- An example of creative thinking that has helped resolve a challenging problem.

IJMR content
Contributions are welcomed for any of the three main sections within *IJMR*:

1. Formal papers
These constitute the main content within each issue. A paper under this heading will be heavily evidenced based, probably based on a methodological project and containing references to earlier published work on the particular topic. The main objective will be to either advance thinking on a key topic, or provide additional evidence to support or refute an existing theory. Papers in this category have a maximum length of about 5,000 words and will be formally assessed in detail using the traditional academic journal 'blind' peer review process with two referees.

2. Forum
This provides an opportunity for authors (e.g. practitioners) who wish to submit an article or 'thinkpiece' that, whilst providing evidence to support the argument put forward, limits this to the particular circumstances rather than to a wider context. Articles might be based on an example of 'best practice' market research; case study; new or emerging ideas, issues, topics and applications; background/context to market research; key issues facing the industry. The articles maybe based on presentations or papers delivered at conferences or seminars. These articles would be of a shorter length (1,500-2,500 words) and whilst still reviewed objectively by two referees, the criteria would be less demanding and based on whether:

- The argument or analysis is logical
- There is sufficient and appropriate evidence cited to support the case being made
- The article contains creative ideas or new thinking
- The content demonstrates the value of market research
- There are clearly defined conclusions, recommendations or lessons for practitioners
- The content is well presented, logically structured and readable.

3. Viewpoint
Each issue contains at most one Viewpoint. This is an opportunity for an author to state their views in no more than 500 words on a particular market research industry issue that they feel strongly about. *IJMR* may also publish brief responses from other readers to previous Viewpoints. The decision to publish is made by the Editor.

An author should indicate which of the above categories their article or paper is under when submitting, or the Editor may decide the most appropriate category for a particular contribution, either before or after review.

Prospective authors should read the remainder of these guidelines before finally deciding which category they feel is appropriate for their contribution.

Occasionally, an individual issue will contain several articles on a theme, for example on one sector of the industry, different methodological perspectives on a single topic, in-depth reviews of issues within a geographical region, etc.

Submissions should not have been published, or under consideration for publication elsewhere, in whole or part either in printed or electronic form, nor should they be plagiarised versions of the author's, or anyone elses, previously published work.

Peer review process
All submitted papers and articles (other than submissions for Viewpoint) deemed by the Editor to be potentially suitable for *IJMR* are reviewed 'blind' by two referees (with authors'

details removed) prior to acceptance for publication. The referees are drawn from members of the Executive or Advisory Editorial Boards, or by other specialists in a particular field. Based on the reviews, the Editor will provide feedback to authors containing either suggested amendments necessary before the paper can be accepted for publishing, or reasons for rejecting the paper.

The peer review process now adopted for *IJMR* is based on an 'as-is' approach. Full details of the 'as-is' process, and the case for journals adopting this peer review methodology, are contained in the paper by Eric Tsang (University of Texas) and Bruno Frey (University of Zurich), 'As-Is Journal Review Process: Let the Authors Own Their Ideas', Academy of Management Learning & Education, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2007. The authors propose that instead of using a multi-stage process that not only leads to significant delays before publication but can sometimes pressure authors to change their fundamental position if they want to be published, journals should review papers from an 'as-is' perspective via a one stage peer review process. In addition to reducing the workload of all concerned, the Tsang & Frey believe a key advantage is that it lets authors own the ideas in their publications'. The *IJMR* should be a vehicle for authors' ideas - the peer review process is there to identify whether the argument is cogently presented, the evidence is appropriate and sufficient, and to assess whether the style, structure and language used is also appropriate for our readers.

For more information on the *IJMR* peer review process, see the Editorials in *IJMR* Vol. 49 No. 5 and Vol. 50 No. 1.

The editorial team is happy to receive outlines, or detailed summaries of proposed papers in cases where an author is unsure as to whether the proposed theme or content is likely to either appeal to readers or meet the stringent criteria for acceptance. Please email ijmreditor@warc.com.

Guidance for contributors
Before submitting a paper to *IJMR* we recommend that authors ask themselves the following questions:

- What is the key message for readers, and is this crystal clear?
- Who is the audience for the proposed submission?
- Is the paper only talking to a minority, or to those already converted to an idea?
- Why should researchers spend valuable time reading the paper?
- Can the content be applied by others in the real world?
- Is the evidence presented to support the theme sufficiently robust to make a convincing case?
- Is the methodology clearly described?
- Is the content clearly sign-posted and logically structured?

Style & readability
The *IJMR* has recently won a readability award, but the editorial team is continually working to ensure it remains welcoming and easy to read. In particular, we want to ensure that the Journal has practical relevance to the market research industry, rather than describing theoretical concepts or experiments that practitioners would find it difficult to apply in the 'real world'. Though some papers are of course technical, and others can be conceptually complex, the aim is to make the text as friendly as possible, consistent with providing the necessary information.

However, the editor can only do a certain amount with the text received in submissions, and therefore contributors must also help us achieve this goal. An editorial by the previous editor, James Rothman, highlighted some of the criteria looked for when publishing papers in the

IJMR. This advice is updated below. We hope this advice proves useful and helps authors produce papers or articles that meet the standards expected of the *IJMR*, and at the same time are appealing to readers.

Style
- Papers should be written in clear English and should not include any jargon that is not adequately explained.
- Papers do not have to include a comprehensive literature review just for the sake of it. The only references that are required are those to relevant papers. In particular avoid referring to papers that you have not read.
- Use examples or analogies to make your meaning clear.
- If you are going to present your research in hypothesis testing format, e.g. 'The research was designed to test the following hypotheses ...', make sure that the hypotheses are genuinely interesting and remember that readers will forget what your hypotheses are if, once they are defined, you only refer to them as H1, H2 etc.
- The same point applies to made-up variable names. Unless they are clear, repeat their definitions. Do not expect readers to refer back for the ones that they do not remember.
- If you have to use mathematical expressions, keep them simple. Anything that is at all complex should be placed in an appendix. Even then, avoid excessive subscripts and other complexities.
- Avoid using too many unfamiliar words. Give definitions for any that you have to use.
- Do not allow too many words to come between the subject and the verb in a sentence.
- Place new and unfamiliar information at the end of sentences, not at the beginning.
- Use words or phrases from the preceding sentence to link the two together. Place these at the beginning of the sentence.

Tables & figures
- These should be supplied on separate pages and at the end of the main text, not embedded within the text.
- Add commentaries and explanations to tables and charts.
- Each table and figure should be referred to in the text in numerical order as Table 1, Figure 1, etc.
- Tables may be laid out in whatever manner presents the data most clearly; however, think about the ordering of rows and columns and remember that it is easier to compare numbers by reading down a column rather than across a row.
- Use the minimum number of significant digits required to make your point.

Title
- Titles should not exceed 80 characters in total.
- Think about the title of your submission – does it reflect the key message within the paper (rather than simply describing a methodology); will it encourage readership; will it be easy to find your paper if someone is researching the topic on the internet using a key word search?

Abstract & Executive Summary
- Place an abstract at the start of your paper. This should be easily understandable by most researchers. Use a suitable phrase instead of any unfamiliar words. If you wish to use such words, place them in brackets after the phrase.
- Include a short section at the beginning, or the end, that clearly summarises either the practical applications of the content or the benefits to the audience of adopting the recommendations/conclusions contained within the paper.

Headings
- Use sub headings or other devices to 'signpost' the content and make the paper more readable.
- Do not number headings.

References
- All references to books, monographic articles and statistical sources should be identified at the appropriate point in the text by the last name of author, year of publication and pagination where appropriate, all within parentheses: (Smith 1974). Where a number of authors are cited in the same place, they should appear in the text in date order, oldest first, thus: (Smith 1974; Johns 1980; Peters 1999).
- References should be listed at the end of the article in alphabetical order as follows: Butler, D.E. & Stokes, D. (1969)

  Political Changes in Britain. London: Macmillan. Dixon, L.C.W. (1971) A dynamic trend analysis of the opinion polls predicted the correct result. *International Journal of Market Research*, **13**, 1, pp. 21–24.

- References to online sources should include an accession date. The online version of IJMR articles includes hyperlinks to sources, therefore URLs should be checked for validity before final submission.

Biographical note
A brief biographical note should be supplied, including full name, appointment, organisation, address and email.

Footnotes
These should be used sparingly and only for alternative observations.

Length
Try not to exceed 5,000 words (or 2,000 for Forum) in total (excluding the abstract and references).

Research samples
Where a paper is based on research conducted amongst a sample, the authors must provide evidence within the paper to show that the sample is representative of the overall population from which it was drawn. Preferably, authors should always describe the sampling frame, how the sample was drawn, the achieved response rate, any tests or follow-up research etc undertaken to validate the response compared to the population (especially important if the achieved response rate was low). Sample sizes should be sufficiently large to ensure that any key differences identified in the findings are statistically significant. Studies based on samples of students will not normally be acceptable, unless the authors can satisfactorily demonstrate that this is a truly relevant population group in terms of the research topic, rather than simply a convenient source of a sample. Where the research is based on qualitative methods, authors still need to describe how participants were selected /recruited and the rationale.

Summary
In summary, the key points that will improve an author's chances of being accepted for publication are:

- Include a clear summary of how the findings, conclusions, etc can be applied by practitioners (i.e. identify the practical relevance to readers).

- If you are not sure yourself as to the practical applications then it is all the more important that the paper has wide readability and is well structured to allow practitioners to be able to make the connections themselves.
- Ensure that the methodology, including sampling methods where relevant, is clearly described.
- Ensure that the argument presented within the submission is supported by adequate evidence. •Write in a style that engages readers and stimulates their interest.
- Choose a title for the paper that invites attention.
- Use sub-headings etc to break up large sections of text and to act as 'signposting' for the reader.

'Best practice' papers

So what makes a good paper? Firstly, an author needs to ensure that they have fully read these Guidelines. Secondly, the submission needs to be thoroughly proof read. Again, too many submissions contain typographical errors or major incorrect usages of English. If English is not your first language, then find someone to check your script. Next, ensure that you ask a couple of your peers to critically review the paper – common in academic circles, but not always the case with practitioners. When writing the paper, keep the reader in mind – you need to 'sell' your ideas to readers and ensure that they see clear benefits in your work. The objective should be not just to inform, but to create change by presenting a convincing, evidence based, well structured case. Always ensure that your literature review, if you have one, is both up to date and relevant. Wherever possible ensure that sources include references to past *IJMR* papers, or others that relate to market research based examples. Obviously, the research design needs to be sufficiently rigorous (see in particular the section above on Research Samples). If there are any limitations in your research – be honest about them. Finally, ensure that the paper includes clear conclusions or recommendations, especially practical advice and guidance to readers – what should they do differently as a result of reading the paper. It might be helpful to look at past 'best practice' papers, such as those that have been awarded the annual MRS Silver Medal or won the David Winton award.

In conclusion, a few words about topics. Key is that a submission covers issues relevant to market research, rather than to the more general field of research in marketing. For example, if a paper is based on empirical research, then the methodology needs to reflect the principles and standards expected in market research. In a submission to *IJMR*, the research methodology might well be the focus of the paper (it will certainly need to be described in sufficient detail to judge whether or not it is sufficiently robust), rather than simply a means to an end. Many papers we receive are much more suited to marketing journals, as the focus is on the potential implications for marketers or academics interested in this broader field. A key objective is to encourage a closer relationship between academic and practitioners, and one way to do this is to publish papers that have a practical relevance in the practitioners' world. Similarly, a good case study needs to contain conclusions focused on the role played by the research, and ideally some broader lessons for those readers working in other market sectors. Also, if the paper focuses on research conducted in one geographic region, are there any more generalised lessons or conclusions for researchers working in other regions. Highly theoretical papers have a role, but only if there are some clear practical, applications.

Prospective authors may also find the following document of value:

- Comments, Edited by Professor John Ford, *International Journal of Advertising* Vol. 24 No. 2 (2005).

This contains the views of referees on what they look for when reviewing submissions.

Publishers of IJMR

IJMR is published six times a year for the Market Research Society (MRS) by Warc.

The MRS is the world's largest international membership organisation for professional research practitioners. In total it serves over 8000 members in more than 50 countries. (www.mrs.org.uk).

Warc's other products and services include the information service warc.com, Admap magazine, the International Journal of Advertising and the Journal of Advertising Research. (www.warc.com)

Readership
Every issue of *IJMR* is distributed to:
- 3,000 full members of the MRS
- 700 paying subscribers (worldwide)

IJMR articles are also available to:
- Over 50,000+ users of Warc.com (worldwide)
- Thousands of subscribers to Ebsco Business Source Premier (worldwide)
- A number of online services which abstract and index *IJMR* articles.

Therefore, by being published in *IJMR*, contributors are exposed to a significant international audience of:
- Market research agencies
- The media
- Client-side researchers and marketers
- Consultants
- Advertising agencies
- Marketing academics.

How to submit
When you submit your paper at www.editorialmanager.com/i-j-m-r, it is essential to provide all the details requested on the online form. These details include: a full title; an abstract not exceeding 150 words; contact details of the corresponding author and, where relevant, co-authors; and finally the relevant classification(s) of your paper. Please attach a fully blinded version of your paper as a 'Manuscript'. If you wish to send in a covering letter, title page or author biography, you may do so as a 'Covering Letter'. Once you have done this you can then assign a description to each element, such as 'Biography'. You can submit figures as a separate document or within the text of the manuscript, but please ensure that all figures and pictures are in an editable format (i.e. not a .jpg).

IJMR appreciates the time and energy required to prepare a paper, and we are grateful to all our contributors. While we receive far more submissions than we can publish, we are always looking for new sources of important and useful ideas. Thank you for your interest.

Peter Mouncey
Editor-in-Chief

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