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## Why Are Papers Desk Rejected at PAJAIS?: A Practical Guide to Avoiding Rejection

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### Abstract

*At PAJAIS, 50 % of the new submissions are desk-rejected. As the recognition of the journal continues to grow, we believe that authors certainly can make more improvements to lessen the chances of a desk rejection in the review process. With this in mind, the aim of this editorial is to suggest and provide our future authors with the reasons and actions commonly-related to this regard so as to minimize the possibility of getting a desk rejection. After all, we, as researchers, all long to publish high-quality articles.*

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## Desk Rejections

As you have noticed, this past year we have recruited 16 Senior Editors (SEs) to bring their expertise to the PAJAIS leadership team, and so we are deeply grateful for their time and valuable talent in driving PAJAIS to the next phase. In addition, from then on, we have established a review policy to focus on constructive development to enhance the quality of submitted manuscripts. As a result, our editors and reviewers have made a great effort to develop the manuscripts to meet PAJAIS quality standards. Statistically speaking, the acceptance rates at PAJAIS are now between 20% and 25%. We believe that this rate will be around 10% to 15% in the near future. Both our reviewers and SEs are considered valuable assets. Our major goal is to develop quality papers for PAJAIS. To that end, our SEs must evaluate the submitted manuscripts and make an ultimate decision about whether a submission has the potentials to pass through the subsequent review process for further publication consideration. Although there is already plenty of academic advice available on how to prepare a good paper (Hirschheim, 2008; Sarker et al., 2013), for those authors who are interested in targeting PAJAIS, we have discussed the issues about how to construct an effective abstract and how to prepare manuscripts for publication in PAJAIS (Jiang & Tsai, 2019a; 2019b). In this case, we encourage authors to read those guidelines with care before they submit their manuscripts to PAJAIS in order to increase the prospect that their manuscripts will be accepted for publication in PAJAIS.

In order to handle the large numbers of submissions in recent years, we have implemented tighter practices for desk rejections. A desk rejection is solely based on editorial screening to decide whether the submission meets or satisfies certain PAJAIS publication standards and requirements. A desk rejection indicates that the submission will not be moved into the peer-review process. This implies that once the manuscript is sent out for review, the chance of getting through the review process improves significantly. Currently, the desk rejection rate for PAJAIS is between 50% and 60% of all the submissions we receive. Our SEs consider the following key questions during their first screening:

1. Does the study fit the mission and scope of PAJAIS?
2. Is the study subject area relevant and so interesting to business?
3. Does the study communicate a new concept or re-shape an existing concept from the previously established findings?
4. Are the study design and data analysis processes rigorous?
5. Is the study adequate to make either potential or significant contributions to established theory?

If a manuscript fails to answer more than two of the five questions raised above, they are likely to be desk rejected by our SEs. In our efforts to develop manuscripts to an acceptable standard, this desk rejection policy helps our SEs and reviewers invest their efforts and time effectively. In doing so, all author(s) are also afforded the chance to save their wait time and find more suitable outlets for their manuscripts.

## Desk Rejections: Reasons & Causes

The manuscripts of PAJAIS must be finished works so that the review process can shape and improve the content and turn the submissions into polished ones for publication. An undeveloped manuscript is one that deals with a rough idea and initial findings, and yet it commonly lacks strong theoretical foundations, a state of the art search, or a comprehensive review of the current literature and related studies. This further leads to an unsuccessful attempt to have the manuscripts published due to a clear lack of a new and important contribution necessary to warrant publications. According to our editorial experiences, those desk rejected manuscripts typically share the following four main characters. First, the introduction fails to contextualize the study well. Second, the literature review lacks critical views about the competing discussions on the subject matter related to the research field. Third, the arguments provided to justify the methodological assumptions are not considered appropriate and feasible. Lastly, the theoretical discussion is too vague, and so provides an insufficient understanding of the key findings in relation to the existing literature. To target PAJAIS, we suggest that all author(s) have to read the editorial comment "*Getting Published in PAJAIS: A Practical Guide from the Editors Perspective*" (Jiang & Tsai, 2019a) as it outlines how PAJAIS submissions will be evaluated.

There have been many editorial comments made to examine the major causes of desk rejections (Kilduff, 2007; Kohli & Straub, 2011), and we have observed that the main reasons for desk rejections share a set of factors similar to those commonly associated with the manuscripts submitted to PAJAIS. Below, we provide a summary of the various reasons for desk rejections based on our experiences in relation to our editorial expectations at PAJAIS.

**Table 1 - Seven major reasons to get desk rejections at PAJAIS**

Questions	Causes & Reasons	Suggestions
Does the study fit the mission and the scope of PAJAIS?	<p><b>The leading cause:</b> The mismatch of scope.</p> <p><b>The main reason:</b> Many manuscripts are desk rejected due to the fact that the selection of topics does not suit the ultimate goal of PAJAIS. We desk reject those manuscripts considered outside the scope of our research because such a manuscript will not attract a readership for the journal.</p>	<p>Our journal aims to enhance the knowledge of the proposed /established information systems theory with its emphasis placed on the research conducted in the Asia Pacific Region. We do not limit our acceptance of papers to a consideration given only to the submissions that address the business problems with the Asia Pacific Region; however, a submission as such should clearly examine how their findings can enrich the existing knowledge so as further to benefit organizations in the Asia Pacific countries. Our website offers the practical and useful expert guidance in this regard on how we select and identify the range of the related research topics that would interest us as readers to a greater extent (<a href="https://aisel.aisnet.org/pajais/about.html">https://aisel.aisnet.org/pajais/about.html</a>). All author(s) should read these guidelines fully and carefully before submitting their manuscripts.</p>
Is the subject area of the study considered quite relevant and so interesting to business?	<p><b>The leading cause:</b> A weak introduction.</p> <p><b>The main reason:</b> The introduction frames the first impression regarding whether the editors and reviewers will read the remainder of the</p>	<p>The PAJAIS contributors must develop their studies and base them on the previous literature to jointly get involved in the conversation of the research community. We categorized the PAJAIS articles in our editorial comment "<i>Knowledge Profile in PAJAIS: A Review of the Literature and Future Research Directions</i>" (Jiang et al., 2019). This is to</p>

	<p>manuscript. We desk reject manuscripts with poor introductions as they fail to provide a basis for the research to include the aims and objectives, research questions, scope of the study, justification, and essential definitions. A proper evaluation needs background information so that the reader can understand the context of the topic.</p>	<p>provide author(s) with the necessary details on how to connect their works with PAJAIS. It is important to know that a weak introduction to a manuscript fails to identify the scope of the research. To fail to do so reveals a gap in understanding the related studies and theories, which, in turn, increases the possibility of being desk-rejected by the SEs.</p>
<p>Does the study communicate a new concept or re-shape an existing concept into the previously established findings?</p>	<p><b>The leading cause:</b> A poor review of literature.</p> <p><b>The main reason:</b> the manuscripts considered not to delineate the boundaries between different theoretical frameworks or to justify their hypotheses/propositions are likely to be desk rejected. That is mainly because of a lack of theoretical explanations related to the literature within the scope of the study.</p>	<p>A literature review should provide a state-of-the-art search and review of the literature on the topic. This should focus on ideas, issues, arguments, and findings in the literature or current publications and not on single items or authors. A good literature review needs to highlight the discrepancy between what we know and what we should know when it comes to the key points of the subject area of the study. Also, all authors have to make it known that the focus of their literature review is on the key concepts in relation to the research questions and so this helps demonstrate how their manuscripts would fill a research gap.</p>
<p>Are the study design and data analysis processes rigorous?</p>	<p><b>The leading cause:</b> Problematic methods.</p> <p><b>The main reason:</b> The problem with a description and justification of the methodological assumptions is one of the major reasons why submission manuscripts are desk rejected by our SEs. A vague and unclear description of the methodology also reduces the overall quality and reliability of the study, leading to desk rejections.</p>	<p>It is vital to notice that a lucid explanation of the methods utilized can allow researchers to replicate the results of the original study and that appropriate analysis can also avoid a serious challenge posed to the credibility and validity of the research findings. Our expectation is that all submissions adopt appropriate methods and analyses. The accuracy and adequacy of using these methods should not be neglected.</p>
<p>Is the study adequate to make either potential or significant contributions to the currently or previously established theory?</p>	<p><b>The leading cause:</b> Limited contributions.</p> <p><b>The main reason:</b> The manuscript has the responsibility to assure readers that they learned something new. Most obviously, a desk rejected manuscript is considered weak on contributions when it does not offer substantial new knowledge to literature and practice. We desk reject a manuscript if it fails to advance and make a key contribution to current subject knowledge.</p>	<p>Hollenbeck (2008) indicated that authors could take two approaches, including <i>consensus shifting</i> and <i>consensus creation</i> to construct their new findings. One is to challenge the widely-held assumptions and provide suggestions for future research. In contrast, the other is to identify a lack of consistency in the literature and describe how the new findings can resolve the debate.</p>

<p>Does the study fulfill academic publishing standards?</p>	<p><b>The leading cause:</b> Non academic manuscripts.</p> <p><b>The main reason:</b> We desk reject those manuscripts considered out-of-line with academic publishing standards.</p>	<p>We suggest that all authors should read a few PAJAIS' recent papers so as to get an overview of the required structure (e.g. a main text introduction with the research questions posed, a literature review that addresses the research question, detailed methodological descriptions, etc.). Another two indicators are references and research methods. The quality and quantity of references can show that the manuscript has carefully reviewed the literature and are contributing new insights to the scientific community. Further, research methods must be detailed so that researchers can replicate the findings, and evaluate whether the methods justify the conclusions.</p>
<p>Does the author(s) resubmit a rejected manuscript to the same journal?</p>	<p><b>The leading cause:</b> Resubmission of a rejected paper.</p> <p><b>The main reason:</b> Resubmitting a rejected PAJAIS paper to the PAJAIS is not in line with the conventions of academic publishing.</p>	<p>We suggest that you should take into account the comments you have received from the rejections from PAJAIS and work on the improvements before submitting to another journal.</p>

In sum, we would like to highlight the importance of the top five leading questions, which our SEs consider essential important when it comes to the immediate decisions made by them on whether to desk reject the manuscripts submitted to PAJAIS or to accept them and send them out for reviews. In most cases, the Introduction part of the manuscript is a re-working of the research proposal, so it must highlight a specific research question and examine the reason why tackling such a question matters to both the theory and practice. In addition, all author(s) should identify the scholarly conversation and establish how such a conversation is deficient. It is also important to know that all authors must take effective approaches to problematize the concept of the research pertinent to the present literature. All authors should carefully present and describe the methods used to answer the proposed questions and clearly enumerate the contributions made to the current knowledge of a specific research field.

Based upon the issues raised above, in this paper, we aim to share the major reasons why those manuscripts submitted to PAJAIS for the past two years have received desk rejections. We deeply believe that if our potential authors can fully address those issues before submission, their manuscripts will be better prepared to afford a higher probability of a positive desk decision and a greater chance of eventual acceptance.

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