

Eray Polat

# Publishing in Hospitality and Tourism Journals: Revisiting the Criteria Used by Leading Reviewers in Turkey

## Abstract

This study aims to identify the criteria reviewers use to determine whether to accept or reject empirical manuscripts and to define which criteria are more significant. In this exploratory study, which utilizes qualitative research methods, 16 members of the Scientific Committee of the National Tourism Congress of Turkey were asked to identify the primary areas they focus on when reviewing a manuscript. The data was analyzed using content analysis to determine the most significant criteria. The study identifies six criteria for acceptance and seven for rejection. The most important criterion for acceptance is the appropriateness and adequacy of the research method, while the most crucial criterion for rejection is methodological weakness. Other criteria influencing the reviewers' acceptance or rejection decisions focus on similar issues. The critical factor that distinguishes them is how the manuscript meets the requirements established by the reviewers. The study provided recommendations for future researchers.

**Keywords:** peer-review process, reviewer, manuscript evaluation criteria, scientific publication, academic journal, Turkey

## 1. Introduction

Academics are expected to possess specific characteristics, including teaching, service (in various committees, administrative services, etc.), and research. However, research and publication are the most important and defining characteristics (Lim, 2021). In academia, the phrase 'publish or perish' is widely used and accepted, emphasizing the importance of research over other responsibilities (Perdue et al., 2009). Furthermore, publishing offers various advantages, including personal achievement, enhancement of one's CV, improved reputation and position, and development of writing and communication skills (Ortinou, 2011).

Publishing is a crucial activity for the development and dissemination of knowledge, in addition to its benefits. However, it can be challenging to achieve publication in high-impact journals due to the peer-review process (PRP) (Polat, 2020). During this process, experts in the field or topic evaluate manuscripts, and those with weak, incomplete, or inappropriate content are eliminated. The goal is to enhance the quality of scientific publications and elevate current information to a higher standard (Leung et al., 2014).

PRP can serve several purposes. For authors, it allows them to strengthen a study and legitimize results by receiving peer feedback. For editors, it helps reduce bias and ensure quality through multiple rounds of peer-review. For journals, it creates a hierarchy in the publishing system, favouring those with a rigorous PRP over those without (Sabaj-Merueane et al., 2016; Stephen, 2022). The PRP serves as a self-regulating mechanism to ensure the quality of the publishing system (Horbach & Halffman, 2018). Due to the critical role played by PRP, manuscripts undergo rigorous screening and selection, resulting in only a small percentage (approximately 10% in social sciences) being published (McKercher et al., 2007). Therefore, researchers must consider the criteria for acceptance or rejection decisions. In this context, we aim to address the question: 'What do reviewers prioritize when deciding whether to accept or reject manuscripts?'

Eray Polat, PhD, Corresponding Author, Associate Professor, Faculty of Tourism, Gumushane University, Gumushane, Turkey; ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1470-4298>; e-mail: [eraypolat38@gmail.com](mailto:eraypolat38@gmail.com)

The review criteria generally assess the suitability of the study design for the research question, the appropriate selection of the sample and data collection techniques, the suitability of the data analysis techniques, and the straightforward interpretation of the results. Studies from various disciplines (Beatty et al., 1992; Beyer, 1978; Black et al., 1998; Garcia-Costa, Forte et al., 2022; Lent et al., 2015; Stephen, 2022) often analyze reviewers' judgments on the relative importance of these criteria. It is noteworthy, however, that there are few such studies in tourism scholarship. Yuksel (2002, 2003) analyzed the factors that reviewers deemed significant in making acceptance or rejection decisions. Similarly, Perdue et al. (2009) conducted a study on manuscripts submitted to the Journal of Travel Research (JTR), while McKercher et al. (2007) focused on rejection decisions and Leung et al. (2014) on acceptance decisions. Sanchez et al. (2019) investigated the definition of originality in PRP. Additionally, Sanchez et al. (2022) identified the characteristics of researchers who have achieved originality in this process.

Because peer-review standards and criteria vary by domain, it can be challenging to identify the most suitable criterion for evaluating criteria across different domains. Defining criteria domain-specific and enhancing their comparability is also crucial (Garcia-Costa, Squazzoni et al., 2022). It is essential to track changes in peer-review criteria made by publishers, journal editors, and boards and ensure that reviewers follow and accept them (Horbach & Halffman, 2018; Merriman, 2021). Additionally, monitoring any modifications to peer-review standards following Yuksel's (2002, 2003) research is crucial. Changes in the scientific world over time may be reflected in the criteria used to evaluate articles, and the importance given may differ (Horbach & Halffman, 2018). This study aims to fill the literature gap by examining scholars' thoughts in the field of tourism in Turkey. However, this study can provide a general framework for determining acceptance and rejection decisions in empirical manuscripts. Thus, it is anticipated that this will enhance the writing experience for researchers in the tourism and related fields and serve as a foundation for future research acceptance.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Peer-review in academic journals

Scientific journals are published to disseminate research results in the scientific field and review manuscripts from various perspectives (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2023). PRP has been used since the 18th century and became institutionalized after World War II. PRP is crucial in enhancing research quality, ensuring accuracy and reliability, and disseminating information. It is utilized by nearly all academic journals (Leung et al., 2014) and is considered an indicator of journal quality used in manuscript control (Yuksel, 2002).

PRP aims to enhance the accuracy and quality of information. However, journal editors are not solely responsible for this task. They rely on the evaluations and reports of reviewers to determine which manuscripts to publish. In the standard process, the manuscript proposal is first reviewed by the journal editor, who decides whether it is within the journal's scope and meets the author's guidelines. Manuscripts meeting the requirements are sent to reviewers (Curtin et al., 2018) who have expertise in the topic, volunteer to review, and have no conflict of interest with the authors. Inviting a reviewer is a common practice preferred by journals to reduce the workload of the journal's review board (Yuksel, 2003). Reviewers recommend whether the manuscript should be accepted, rejected, or published with revisions. Following these recommendations, the editor makes the final decision on the manuscript. Although the ultimate decision in the process rests with the editor (Stephen, 2022), the reviewers make the most critical decisions (Datta & Jones, 2018).

Research on PRP indicates that researchers and journal editors from various disciplines, including finance (Bailey, Hermason, & Tompkins, 2008), accounting (Bailey, Hermason & Lowers, 2008), marketing (Bailey et al., 2012), journalism (Curtin et al., 2018), and medicine (Snell & Spencer, 2005), generally have a positive perception of the process. Similarly, a positive perception is found in tourism (Correia & Kozak, 2017; Deale et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2014; Polat, 2020). However, several perspectives have criticised the process

(Guo et al., 2022; Horbach & Halffman, 2018). For instance, Peters and Ceci (1982) conducted a study based on these criticisms by submitting previously published manuscripts from psychology journals as new manuscript proposals to journals. Before resubmitting the articles, the authors' names and institutional details in the manuscripts were replaced with fictitious ones, and minor changes were made to the title, abstract, and Introduction. After these procedures, only three of the manuscripts were noticed, and eight of the nine manuscripts reviewed by the reviewers were rejected. This study sparked a robust debate against PRP and has been criticized in some respects.

Clark and Wright (2007) grouped these criticisms under three main headings. One criticism of reviewers is that they may use unbalanced, harsh, or rough language. Reviewers may focus solely on the manuscript's shortcomings and overlook its positive aspects (Clark & Wright, 2007). For instance, Şahin (2006) analyzed reviewers' reports in a Turkish educational science journal and discovered that reviewers used phrases like 'useless work' and 'did you think you were an authority'. McKercher et al. (2007) suggest that this practice can harm young researchers.

A second criticism is that reviewers may have biases that affect their evaluations (Ortinou, 2011). This can occur if the reviewer knows the author's identity or institution. Although the double-blind review process aims to prevent this, it is not always practical, particularly with the advent of the internet and technology (Guo et al., 2022). Reviewers may exhibit bias when authors present new ideas or practices, according to Sanchez et al. (2019, 2022).

Inconsistencies and lack of justification in reviews have also been reported (Prechelt et al., 2018), with referees' judgments sometimes conflicting. For instance, Starbuck (2003) found that the correlation among the 500 referee reports he reviewed as editor of the *Administrative Science Quarterly* was 0.12, consistent with many other journals. This can undermine trust in the process.

Reviewers are responsible for making critical decisions in PRP but are also subject to criticism. The quality of PRP depends on the reviewers' level of professional commitment, understanding, experience, and sacrifice. The quality of the process ultimately affects the manuscripts published and the journal's reputation. The rejection of high-quality manuscripts and the publication of low-quality manuscripts due to inadequate review can negatively affect the journal's reputation (Leung et al., 2014). Therefore, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the systematic review process, the criteria that influence reviewers' decisions, and their relative importance.

## 2.2. Evaluation criteria for reviewing

Review criteria and their importance do not differ between empirical and non-empirical reviews (Beatty et al., 1992). However, the discipline of the manuscript can cause changes (Garcia-Costa, Squazzoni et al., 2022). In a study of reviewers from four different disciplines, physicists rated originality the highest, while chemists rated reproducibility as the most critical aspect of the manuscript. Sociologists and political scientists rated manuscripts highest for logical rigour (Beyer, 1978). In marketing, reviewers primarily focused on the manuscript's contribution to the field (Beatty et al., 1992). According to Black et al. (1998), the evaluation criteria that are prominent in medical journals include the originality and significance of the research question, the strengths and weaknesses of the method, the presentation of the manuscript, and the interpretation of the results. Stephen's (2022) analysis of 1430 peer-review comments in social science found that reviewers mostly commented on methodology, theory, and writing quality.

In tourism research, reviewers primarily consider how much a manuscript contributes to the field's knowledge growth (Leung et al., 2014). They focus on the manuscript's contribution to the theory and its potential to guide future researchers. Additionally, Sanchez et al. (2019, 2022) emphasize the importance of originality and the need for researchers to answer the 'so what' question satisfactorily. The purpose of research should not be

solely to address gaps in the literature. Instead, there must be a clear and specific need to fill such gaps in the manuscript. Table 1 presents the evaluation criteria identified in previous empirical studies in the literature.

**Table 1**  
*List of evaluation criteria represented in previous literature*

Evaluation criteria	Beatty et al. (1992)	Black et al. (1998)	Bordage (2001)	Yuksel (2003)	Bornmann et al. (2008)	Rosenfeld (2010)	Leung et al. (2014)
<b>Research topic</b>							
Significance of the research topic	•	•	•		•		
The originality of the research topic		•		•	•		
Conceptual rigour	•						
<b>Literature review</b>							
Adequacy of literature	•		•	•			•
Methodology							
Methodological rigour	•	•		•		•	
Adequacy of data analysis	•		•		•		•
<b>Findings</b>							
Interpretation of the findings		•	•	•		•	
<b>Presentation</b>							
Logical organization	•	•	•		•		•
Readability	•			•			
<b>Contribution</b>							
Relevance to the target audience	•			•		•	•
Significant contribution	•		•	•	•	•	•
<b>Other</b>							
Ethical concerns					•	•	

Source: Updated from Leung et al. (2014).

Numerous studies have analyzed the mistakes that result in manuscript rejection. These errors can be classified into formal and content errors (Celik et al., 2014). Formal errors arise from non-compliance with the journal's guidelines. They can be rectified by making minor adjustments, such as correcting linguistic errors, rearranging tables and figures, and reformatting the manuscript to comply with the journal's publication guidelines. Content errors are structural errors in sections of the manuscript, such as the Introduction, Methods, Discussion, and Conclusion. They may require large-scale adjustments, such as improving the Introduction, adding further organization or discussion of the methods, or using new or additional statistical analyses and providing reinterpretations of the results. These errors can lead to other errors. For instance, incorrect configuration of the research problem can result in significant issues in subsequent topics, such as statistical methods or sampling techniques (Celik et al., 2014).

Lewis and Pizam (1986) identified ten common mistakes in tourism research, listed below in order of frequency of occurrence: The potential issues with the study include (1) a lack of construct validity, (2) failure to control for intervening variables, (3) unwarranted conceptual leaps, unsupported conclusions, and presumptive judgments, as well as a (4) failure to apply tests of statistical significance, (5) errors in sample selection, (6) failure to identify the problem or purpose of the research, (7) failure to capture the richness of the data, whether due to poor research instruments or inadequate statistical analysis, (8) failure to define or limit variables, (9) poor writing, and (10) failure to detect spurious relationships were identified as the main errors in research studies. McKercher et al. (2007) conducted a similar study and identified 17 categories out of 104 errors. The researchers found an average of 6.2 deficiencies or errors in the manuscripts. The most common errors were related to the method (74%), lack of contribution to the field (60%), and poor expression (50%). Yuksel (2002) also identified six main categories leading to rejecting empirical manuscripts, which touch on similar points. The manuscript must be original, the method is sound, and the results must contribute to and discuss theory and practice. Perdue et al. (2009) state that peer-reviewers of manuscripts

submitted to the JTR emphasize five key points: contribution, research question, literature review, clarity of writing, and methodology.

When examining errors in tourism research, content-related errors are more noticeable (McKercher et al., 2007). Additionally, three prominent error themes relate to the significance of the research topic, its contribution to the field, and the methodology. These features can also enhance the manuscript's acceptability when presented in full. Perdue et al. (2009) state that the factors influencing positive or negative reviewer comments and acceptance or rejection of the manuscript are similar. The difference lies in the extent to which the manuscript meets these criteria.

### 3. Method

This paper aims to identify the criteria that reviewers of empirical manuscripts use to determine whether to accept or reject a manuscript and to decide which criteria are most critical. The study is significant in increasing acceptance rates, especially for young researchers.

The population for this exploratory research includes academics who are members of the Scientific Committee of the 20th National Tourism Congress. The annual congress is a significant event in the field of tourism in Turkey. The reviewers, who hold the title of 'Professor Doctor' and possess extensive experience in reviewing tourism research in Turkey, are expected to enhance the quality and inclusivity of research findings.

The 20th National Tourism Congress occurred from October 16-19, 2019. The Scientific Committee of the Congress consisted of 96 academics, resulting in an attainable population size of 96. Therefore, a complete count was conducted instead of a sample. The research instrument for data collection was distributed to all academics via email, which was the preferred method due to their dispersed locations throughout Turkey, making it impossible for them to convene simultaneously. Additionally, due to time and cost constraints, it is not feasible to visit each province individually. An initial email was sent on April 3, 2019, except for the five individuals whose email addresses were inaccessible (n: 91). By April 25, ten responses had been received, and a second email was sent to 81 individuals on the same day. The data collection process concluded on May 15, with an additional six responses obtained. Data collection was ended due to saturation (Fuchs, 2022), resulting in a 17% response rate from 16 participants (coded as k1, k2). Participant information was not disclosed in the study.

A brief questionnaire consisting of three open-ended questions, as utilized in Yüksel's (2002, 2003) research, was employed as the data collection tool. The questions were designed to elicit the top three criteria that reviewers employ when evaluating empirical manuscripts for acceptance or rejection:

- (1) Please specify the three most important criteria you look for when accepting an empirical manuscript;
- (2) Please specify the three most important criteria you look for when rejecting an empirical manuscript;
- (3) Do you have any additional comments or suggestions to improve the quality of empirical manuscripts?

This questionnaire was chosen because it consists of short and open-ended questions, which can increase the response rate and allow respondents to express their views freely without being constrained by a set format (Yüksel, 2002; Leung et al., 2014). Additionally, since there has been limited research on PRP in the hospitality and tourism literature, using an open-ended instrument may provide more insight into this topic (Deale et al., 2021).

The researcher used content analysis to analyze the qualitative data. Content analysis is a systematic technique that identifies patterns and trends in word usage, frequency, structure, and communication relationships within large amounts of textual data (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This method is preferred because it groups the text into comparable categories of meaning, going beyond simply counting words. This text aims to inform and explain the phenomenon being investigated (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Qualitative

content analysis can be approached through three distinct methods: conventional content analysis, directed content analysis, and summative content analysis (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Directed content analysis is commonly used to validate or expand upon a theory or theoretical framework, while summative content analysis aims to uncover the underlying meanings within the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Leung et al., 2014). Conventional content analysis is the most preferred type and is typically utilized in study designs to describe a phenomenon (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The study aimed to explore the criteria adopted by leading reviewers in Turkey. Conventional content analysis was considered appropriate for this purpose. This method involves identifying categories from the data rather than using predetermined codes. Therefore, each response was examined attentively to recognize categories and establish critical criteria.

At least two researchers participate in the data analysis to eliminate bias and reduce the chance of neglecting data (Yılmaz & Dixit, 2023). To ensure objectivity (Yildiz et al., 2023), an experienced independent researcher with expertise in qualitative data analysis provided support. The data analysis followed a three-stage process to guarantee validity and objectivity. The researcher first examined and classified the data according to the relevant questions. They then discussed any discrepancies in their classifications and worked to resolve them. Finally, the findings were reviewed and finalized. This method is assumed to provide the criteria for validity and objectivity.

To classify the criteria provided by the participants based on their importance and calculate their total scores, the first criterion has a frequency of three, the second criterion has a frequency of two, and the third criterion is multiplied by one according to Yuksel's method (2002).

## 4. Findings and discussion

Based on the results, the criteria for accepting manuscripts are divided into six subcategories, while those for rejecting manuscripts are divided into seven subcategories. Table 2 displays these categories according to their frequency and ranking. Accordingly, while (1) *appropriateness and adequacy of the method* and (2) *contribution and validity of the results* are the critical criteria in the acceptance of the manuscript, (1) *methodological weaknesses* and (2) *insufficiency and inconsistency of the literature review and theoretical framework* were identified as the most critical factors leading to the rejection of the manuscript. Before discussing the criteria that influenced the decision of acceptance or rejection, it is essential to note that participants were asked to indicate three criteria, although some provided more or less. As a result, there was variation in the total number of criteria that emerged.

**Table 2**  
*The criteria specified in the manuscript review process*

Criteria affecting the acceptance decision	1.	2.	3.	Total score
1. Appropriateness and adequacy of the research method	3	9	3	30
2. Contribution and validity of the results	2	4	10	24
3. Originality	5	-	-	15
4. Adequacy of the literature review and theoretical framework	3	2	-	13
5. Meet journal objectives	3	-	1	10
6. Clarity of writing	-	-	1	1
Criteria affecting the rejection decision				
1. Methodological weaknesses	6	9	2	38
2. Insufficiency and inconsistency of the literature review and theoretical framework	5	1	4	21
3. Failure to originality	4	-	-	12
4. No/limited contribution of results to theory or practice	-	3	5	11
5. Failure to meet journal objectives	2	-	-	6
6. Poor quality of writing	-	2	2	6
7. Faults in the presentation of the findings	-	2	1	5

## 4.1. The appropriateness and adequacy of the research method

One of the essential responsibilities of reviewers in evaluating manuscripts is contributing to determining the methodological framework in the manuscripts (Stephen, 2022). In parallel, Fagan (1990) and El-Serag (2012) state that this section is the most rigorously reviewed and commented upon by reviewers. The research results indicate that the manuscript's acceptance depends on the appropriateness and adequacy of the methodological framework. Failing to meet this criterion is the primary reason for manuscript rejection. Regarding manuscript acceptance, three participants ranked the appropriateness and adequacy of the research method as the most critical factor.

In comparison, three participants ranked methodological weaknesses as the primary reason for manuscript rejection. These results are consistent with previous studies by Bordage (2001), Perdue et al. (2009), and Datta and Jones (2018). One participant (k9) emphasized the importance of the method by stating that 'using the appropriate research method to answer the research questions is crucial for the acceptance of the manuscript'. In addition, another participant (k15) stated that 'there should be clear and understandable information about the method without leaving any questions unanswered'. Two participants (k10 and k16) provided feedback on the research methodology. Participant k10 emphasized the importance of ensuring the validity and reliability of the questionnaire used for data collection. Participant k16 suggested that the purpose of the research should be clearly stated. Yuksel (2002) highlights the significance of using proper research techniques, saying that even innovative manuscripts on exciting topics may be rejected if this is not done. McKercher et al. (2007) identified methodological weaknesses as the primary reason for manuscript rejection. They emphasized that presenting the method clearly to the reader is more important than using appropriate testing techniques.

## 4.2. The contribution and validity of the results

The contribution and validity of the results are crucial criteria for manuscript acceptance. They are also essential factors for rejection. Participants believe research results should contribute to theory, practice, and readership. One participant (k14) emphasized the need for theoretical contribution by stating that 'results should be presented in comparison with previous research.' When evaluating research results, it is essential to compare them with previous studies, consider supporting data, and highlight new insights. This can contribute to theory development and address shortcomings (Leung et al., 2014).

In addition to contributing to theory, studies should also benefit industry professionals and society. Some researchers conduct research solely to implement different statistical methods rather than to solve industry problems (McKercher et al., 2007). This can result in researchers 'recycling outdated studies (Perdue et al., 2009). Scientific research is expected to solve problems in industry or society rather than just temporary fixes (Clark & Wright, 2007: 614). Therefore, it is essential that the manuscript addresses a social problem and offers a potential cure, regardless of whether the research is theoretical or practical (Perdue et al., 2009). In this context, one participant (k9) suggested that the proposals presented in the study should be based on specific information rather than generalizations, while another participant (k12) recommended against submitting any particular recommendations as the manuscript may be rejected solely on that basis. In other words, recommending implications without conducting the study reduces its value and may lead to rejection.

## 4.3. Originality

The third criterion for manuscript acceptance is originality, which five participants identified as the most critical factor. Failure to meet this criterion may result in the rejection of the manuscript, as the researcher risks becoming a 'recycler' rather than contributing to theoretical progress. Finding an exact formula for

originality is challenging but crucial for successful publication. Sanchez et al. (2019) identified five categories for examining originality: approach, title, method, theory, and results. This research also supports the idea that tracking industry issues can contribute to originality, as noted by two participants (k2, k8). Achieving uniqueness within the subject title and results is possible through this approach. This issue can positively influence industry professionals' views of scientific research. Participant k15 suggests approaching research problems from an unexamined theoretical perspective to achieve scientific progress rather than copying existing research. This can result in an original manuscript. Participant k13 suggests carrying out experimental studies to ensure originality. Experimental design is a research method used in marketing and psychology to reveal causal relationships. It is also well-suited for studying tourism (Fong et al., 2016).

#### 4.4. Adequacy of the literature review and theoretical framework

The fourth acceptance criterion and the second rejection criterion are related to the literature review and the theoretical framework of the manuscripts. A good literature review in manuscripts can open the door to the robust development of research ideas, the communication of discussions in the literature, the correct selection of measurement tools, the increased validity of the results and the strength of the theoretical framework (Yuksel, 2002). Perdue et al. (2009) argue that a literature review is not merely a list of previous studies. Researchers should demonstrate the relationships between their review and previous studies, how these studies contribute to theory development, and how they relate to the topic. Therefore, Participant K14 considers the adequacy of the literature review as an element that can enhance the quality of the study's discussion section and increase the likelihood of acceptance. However, two participants (k5, k12) have expressed concern about the absence of theory in the manuscripts, a common issue in tourism research. Yoo et al. (2011) suggest that researchers focus excessively on methods, particularly data collection, and overlook theory development.

Additionally, literature reviews are often plagued by plagiarism, which is primarily the responsibility of journal editors (Rosenfeld, 2010). Nowadays, journals either investigate or require authors to report on the issue of bias before submission. According to Participant K14, reviewers pay particular attention to this matter, and manuscripts that contain bias are likely to be rejected and returned to the author. Therefore, researchers preparing manuscripts on niche topics should be especially vigilant in avoiding bias. Top-tier journals send manuscripts to experts and reviewers who work in the field. These individuals are skilled at detecting plagiarism (McKercher et al., 2007).

#### 4.5. Meet journal objectives

Editors reject manuscripts that do not fit the journal's scope (Winck et al., 2011). This failure is typically manifested in three ways: (1) being inappropriate for the journal's readers (wrong journal), (2) not fitting any category of publication within the journal (wrong format), or (3) not following the journal's instructions for submission (Winck et al., 2011). Three participants identified this issue as the primary criterion for manuscript acceptance, while two identified it as a reason for rejection. Participant k4 suggested that failure to meet the journal's objectives could be interpreted as a preliminary sign of random research, which could influence the editor's approach to the manuscript from the outset. Yuksel (2003) suggests that the editors may think the manuscript is being prepared for any journal rather than a specific one.

Another concern raised by participants is the overall flow of the manuscript. Many journals follow the IMRaD (Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion) structure (Datta & Jones, 2018). While this issue pertains to editorial review, the manuscript's focus on an innovative topic may cause editors to overlook it and send the manuscript to reviewers. However, it is essential to note that peer reviewers also consider this. For instance, Participant K5 stated that one reason for rejection was the article's failure to adhere to the journal's writing rules.



## 4.6. Clarity of writing

One participant mentioned that clarity of writing is a criterion for manuscript acceptance, while two participants stated that incomprehensibility of writing would lead to manuscript rejection. According to Bornmann et al. (2008), this criterion is the most frequently mentioned topic in referee reports. It is essential to make the manuscript's language understandable to ensure the ideas, findings, and results are understandable. Effective communication of ideas is crucial, regardless of how innovative they may be (Yuksel, 2003). Referees often question the value of a manuscript if the language used is unclear or does not follow proper grammar rules, leading to potential rejection even after just one sentence (McKercher et al., 2007). Non-native English-speaking researchers face significant challenges when submitting manuscripts to English-language journals. Mungra and Webber (2010) found that almost 44% of the issues faced by Italians in English-language journals were language-related, such as incorrect word choice and grammatical errors.

## 4.7. Faults in the presentation of the findings

Criteria for presenting findings were only mentioned concerning the manuscript rejection. Two participants ranked it as their second priority, while one ranked it as their third. Participants generally express opinions on which values to present and how to present them logically after statistical data analysis. Participant k7 emphasizes the importance of ensuring compatibility between the findings and other study sections, as they are all interrelated. This highlights the need for the findings section to serve as a link between the different sections. This finding is consistent with Kozak's (2001) explanation. The author analyzed the reviewers' reports of the articles submitted to *Anatolia*, which were published in Turkey. He noted that articles with negative reviews of the findings section were rejected.

# 5. Conclusions, limitations and further research

The human decision-making process can sometimes be irrational, non-rule-based, and intuitive due to various internal and external influences. Therefore, it can be argued that PRP, a human decision-making process, is also far from perfect (Ortinou, 2011). PRP is essential for science to expand its boundaries with different perspectives rather than proceeding in a uniform line. However, the responsibility of researchers in PRP can be complicated by subjectivity in the judicial process. Researchers need to understand reviewers' evaluation criteria and their relative importance clearly. This knowledge can contribute to the publication of studies and enhance researchers' skills. The research asked 16 reviewers to state the key areas they consider when reviewing a manuscript.

Six categories were identified as the criteria considered by reviewers when accepting a manuscript. The most crucial of these is the appropriateness of the method used. Scientific manuscripts are distinguished from other manuscripts by the technique employed. Therefore, researchers should plan issues such as sample selection, choice of data collection instruments, or determination of data analysis techniques before starting the research. Returning to the initial step in quantitative research can be difficult and sometimes impossible (Yuksel, 2002). Failing to plan adequately can result in a flawed study from the outset.

The technical preparation of manuscripts according to scientific rules is essential but insufficient to obtain positive reviewer comments. It is equally important that the language used in the manuscript is clear and understandable, with a logical flow of information. Even if the manuscript is of high quality and makes significant contributions to the field, it will not be an asset if it is not comprehensible. Researchers are primarily responsible for expressing information clearly to their audience (Yuksel, 2002). To ensure a logical flow and integrity, it is recommended that manuscripts follow the IMRaD structure and maintain coherence between sentences, paragraphs, and sections. This writing style facilitates the location of information for all readers, editors, reviewers, and researchers.

Adhering to methodological rules in the manuscript can increase the adequacy of the second and third criteria for manuscript acceptance, namely contribution and validity of results and originality. It is important to note that researchers should not solely focus on filling gaps in the literature, as this does not guarantee publication. Research must have a clear purpose, contributing to the field's theoretical and practical aspects. Otherwise, researchers may face the 'so what' question, even if the research is original. For instance, investigating how the amount of tea a hotel employee consumes daily affects their performance may capture authenticity. Still, it does not contribute to the field in practice or theory.

The research found that manuscripts were rejected based on seven criteria. The most significant were methodological errors, inadequacy and inconsistency of the literature review and theoretical framework, and lack of originality. When presenting the results of a literature review, it is essential to critically analyse the literature and describe the relationships between the concepts discussed in the manuscript from a theoretical perspective. Acting as a reporter and simply explaining the concepts as if they were a book is inappropriate. Reviewers expect a critical evaluation of the literature. This process can establish the theoretical framework and eliminate any deficiencies or errors in the theories. Finally, using different perspectives may also enhance originality by allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts presented in the research.

Upon examining the acceptance and rejection criteria for manuscript evaluation revealed by this research, it can be concluded that similar points generally emerge. This finding is consistent with previous literature. Perdue et al. (2009) emphasize that the factors influencing reviewers' decisions focus on similar issues. The main factor revealing the difference between acceptance and rejection decisions is the extent to which the manuscript meets the reviewer's criteria.

This study has limitations. The primary limitation of the research is the collection of data from a limited sample. Collecting data from a larger sample in the future may allow for the emergence of different criteria for evaluating manuscripts and diverse perspectives. Furthermore, this study did not differentiate between reviewers and editors, although it acknowledged the presence of editor participants. It is widely recognized that reviewers are not the sole decision-makers in the PRP process. The assessments of editors, who also hold a crucial role in this process, are equally significant in determining the acceptance or rejection of a manuscript. In this context, analyzing editors' perspectives can expand and diversify the recommendations of researchers to improve their writing experience.

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Submitted: February 05, 2023

Revised: January 24, 2024

Accepted: February 28, 2024