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EDITORIAL COMMENT

The importance of the reviewer's role in the development of innovation research: Guidelines for constructive contributions

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Introduction

The peer review process is essential to ensure the quality, rigor, and relevance of scientific publications. The *International Journal of Innovation* (IJI), a journal dedicated to disseminating research on innovation with an emphasis on emerging markets, values the thorough and constructive contributions of its reviewers. These professionals play a crucial role in the selection and improvement of published research, directly contributing to the journal's scientific excellence.

This editorial commentary addresses the role of reviewers within the specific context of the IJI, offering practical guidance especially aimed at early-career researchers and doctoral students who are beginning to engage in the manuscript evaluation process. More than merely judging submitted works, the reviewer acts as a strategic partner to authors, providing constructive recommendations that strengthen the methodological and theoretical quality of the research under review.

Recognizing the importance of this role means understanding the direct influence that reviewers have on the advancement of validated scientific knowledge. Well-conducted reviews elevate the quality of published articles and contribute to the academic career development of the reviewers themselves.

The Review Process

The editorial process begins with a preliminary analysis conducted by the technical team, followed by the editors, known as a desk review. This stage determines whether the submitted manuscript aligns with the journal's scope and demonstrates sufficient merit to proceed. At this initial stage, many manuscripts are rejected due to insufficient contribution, thematic misalignment, or evident methodological flaws. Manuscripts approved in this screening are then forwarded for peer review by subject-matter experts, typically two or three reviewers (Serra & Ferreira, 2016; Ferreira, 2014).

Reviewers are responsible for examining scientific relevance, originality, methodological rigor, and expository clarity. The process occurs under the double-blind review system, ensuring anonymity for both authors and reviewers, minimizing possible biases (Bailey, Hermanson & Louwers, 2008; Bornmann & Daniel, 2007).

After receiving the reviews, the editor formulates a decision based on the recommendations received, which may result in rejection, request for substantial or minor revisions, or approval (although approval without adjustments rarely occurs). It is up to the editor to synthesize the reviewers' comments and highlight to the authors the critical issues that need to be resolved in a potential resubmission (Ferreira, 2014; DiPiro, 2013).

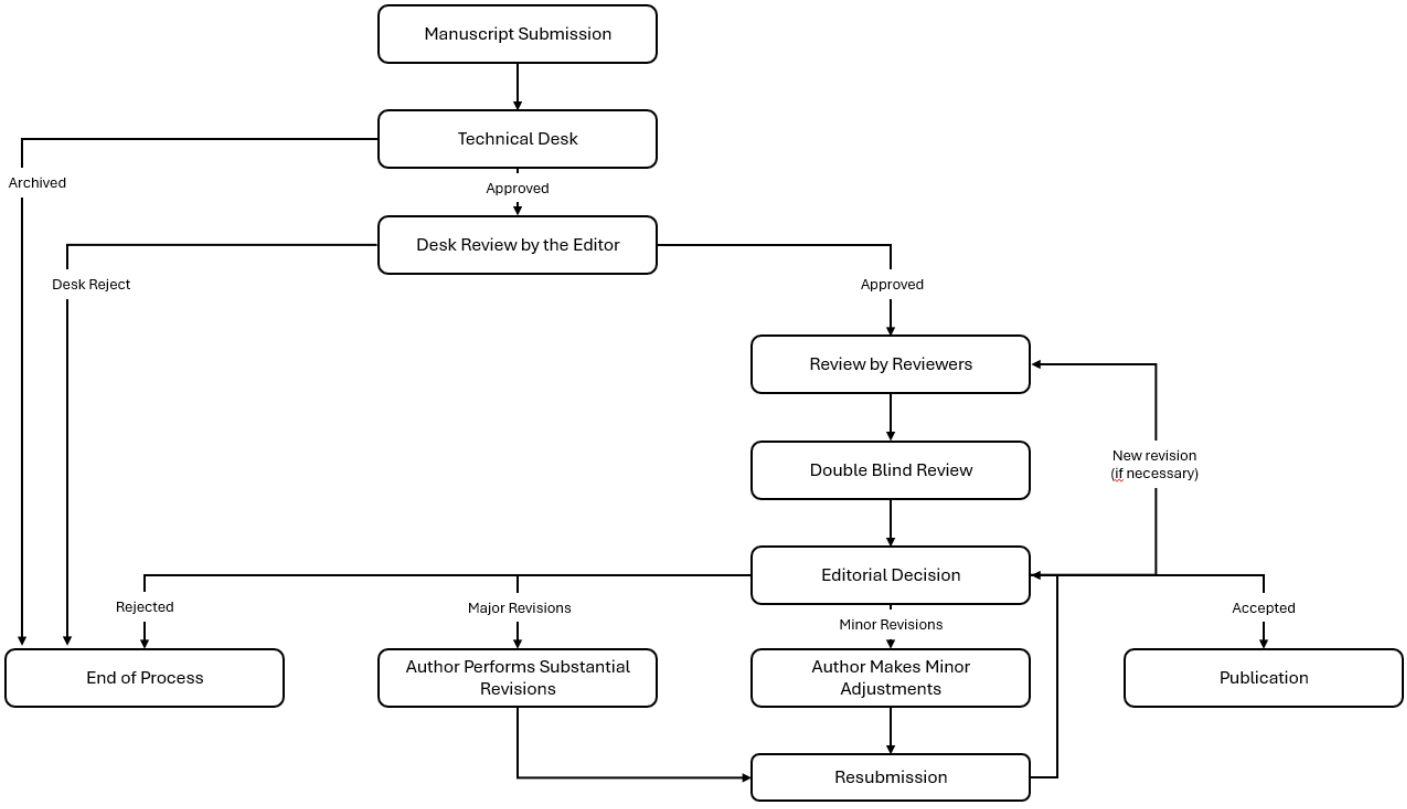
Reviewers therefore act as essential guardians of science, arbitrating on the legitimacy of knowledge to be published. It is important to emphasize, however, that reviewers are not

responsible for making detailed corrections in formatting or language, responsibilities that belong exclusively to the authors. The reviewers' function is focused on providing an objective, critical, and constructive evaluation of the scientific merit and relevance of manuscripts, directly contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field of innovation (Ellison, 2002; Fiske & Fogg, 1990).

Figure 1 presents in schematic form the editorial review process, from initial submission to final publication or rejection of the manuscript. It is important to note that the review process may involve more than one stage.

Figure 1

Editorial Review Process



Recommendations for Conducting a High-Quality Review

This section presents guidelines for conducting an effective and constructive review of manuscripts submitted to the *International Journal of Innovation*, based on recommendations found in relevant articles on the topic (Ferreira, 2014; Sarker et al., 2023; Gilmore et al., 2006). These guidelines are particularly important for early-career researchers and doctoral students who are beginning to take on the role of reviewer.

To further support the review process, we also recommend reading the editorial commentary: *What We Expect from Manuscripts Submitted to IJI*: https://doi.org/10.5585/iji.v9i1.19849 (Scafuto, Costa & Mazzieri, 2021).

Alignment with the scope of the International Journal of Innovation

A fundamental aspect in the initial evaluation is to verify if the manuscript is aligned with the scope of the International Journal of Innovation. Submitted works should address themes related to innovation in its multiple dimensions - technological, organizational, processes, products or services, or even social innovations. The reviewer should consider whether the study effectively contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge in the area of innovation and whether it has relevance for both the academic community and practitioners in the field (Ferreira, 2014).

Overall evaluation of the manuscript

An initial panoramic reading allows understanding of the general structure, central theme, research question, methodology adopted, and main results. This step makes it possible to identify potential fundamental issues, such as imprecision in the research question or significant methodological inconsistencies (Sarker et al., 2023).

Title

The title accurately reflects the content of the work when it is concise, clear, and sufficiently descriptive, allowing the reader to quickly identify the theme and scope of the study (Ferreira, 2014).

Abstract

A good abstract synthesizes the objective of the study, the methodology used, the main findings, and contributions. It offers a clear overview of the article, allowing the reader to quickly determine its relevance and interest (Ferreira, 2014).

Introduction

The introduction defines the research question, justifies its relevance, and presents the theoretical and empirical context. It is important to observe whether the authors indicate the expected contribution of the study in relation to the existing literature (Gilmore et al., 2006).

Literature Review

A literature review should be critical, up-to-date, and relevant, establishing explicit connections with the investigated topic. A proper review discusses both seminal works and recent studies, clarifying how they contribute to the research question (Gilmore et al., 2006; Ferreira, 2014).

Conceptual Development and Hypotheses (when applicable)

Well-formulated hypotheses or propositions are clearly presented and supported by consistent theoretical arguments. They specify the expected relationships between variables and maintain logical coherence with the conceptual development (Ferreira, 2014; Sarker et al., 2023).

Method

A well-structured methodology is clearly described and justified. It includes a transparent explanation of data collection, sample definition, adopted procedures, and analytical techniques. An appropriate method adequately addresses the proposed research questions (Sarker et al., 2023).

Results

Well-presented results are clear and objective, with proper support from tables and graphs. They specify which propositions or hypotheses were confirmed or rejected, offering initial interpretations that are coherent and evidence-based (Ferreira, 2014).

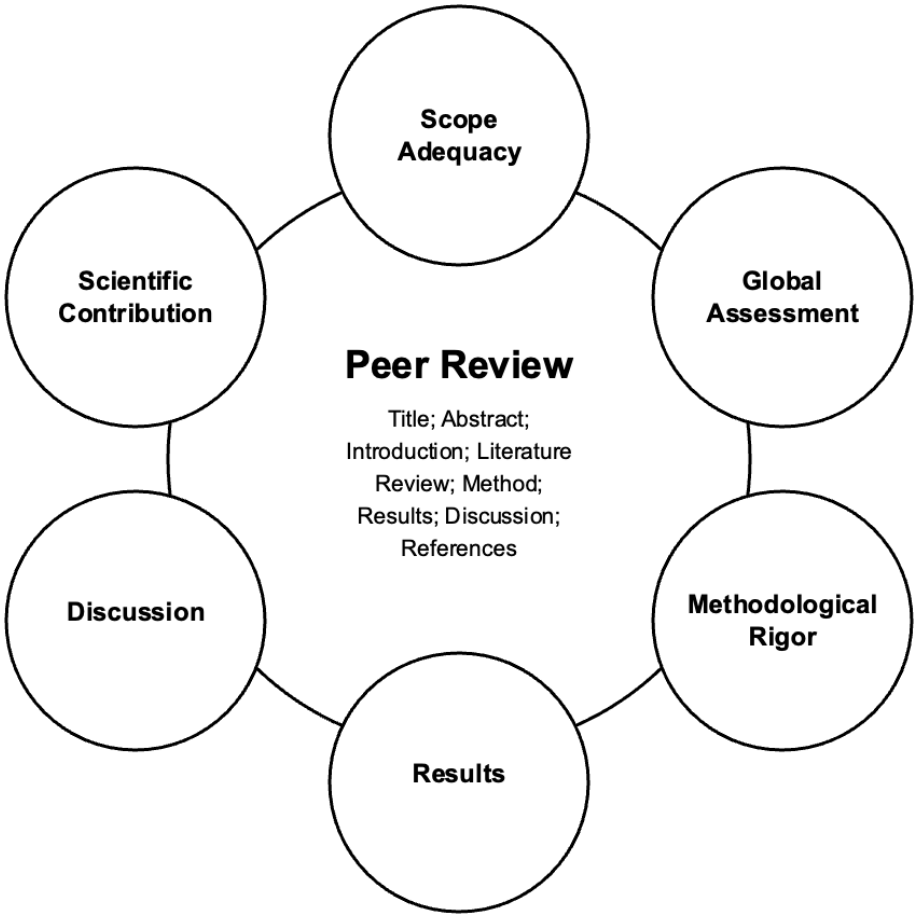
Discussion and Conclusions

A coherent discussion connects the results to the literature, clarifying the article's effective contribution to the field of innovation. It explicitly addresses limitations and provides suggestions for future research that are relevant and clearly justified (Gilmore et al., 2006; Sarker et al., 2023).

Applying these guidelines helps reviewers provide useful and objective evaluations, contributing to scientific development and to the quality of publications in the *International Journal of Innovation*. When assessing manuscripts, it is essential to consider whether the work aligns with the journal's prioritized thematic areas related to innovation management, such as: Innovative Entrepreneurship; Innovation and Learning; Innovation and Sustainability; Innovation Internationalization; Innovation Systems; Emerging Innovation Topics; and Digital Transformation.

Figure 2

Essential Elements of the Peer Review Process in the Scientific Editorial Context



Preparation of the Review for the Author (and Editor)

Upon completing the evaluation of a manuscript, the reviewer needs to organize the points observed during the reading and prepare two types of reviews: one directed to the authors and another confidential one to the editor. To prepare a constructive and effective review, some guidelines are fundamental.

The review intended for the authors should begin with a summary of the revised manuscript. This allows the authors to verify whether the reviewers correctly understood the

objectives, methodology, and proposed contributions. It is recommended that the reviewer initially highlight the positive aspects before detailing the points that require improvement (Sarker et al., 2023).

Following this, the most significant points, both positive and critical, should be clearly enumerated, structuring the review by thematic topics and not just following the order of the pages (Sarker et al., 2023). Specific and detailed comments, accompanied by concrete and feasible suggestions, are essential to guide authors in improving the manuscript (Sarker et al., 2023).

Reviewers should ensure coherence between the recommendations made to authors and those directed to the editor. Contradictions between public and confidential comments can generate confusion and complicate the editorial decision-making process (Sarker et al., 2023). Therefore, consistency in evaluations is indispensable.

It is important to emphasize that reviews should not be vague or subjective; generic expressions such as "lacks interest" or "does not present a contribution" need to be clearly substantiated, indicating specific reasons and, whenever possible, referencing relevant literature (Ferreira, 2014). Furthermore, reviewers should avoid introducing fundamental issues in advanced stages of the review process, especially when such issues could have been pointed out from the beginning, thus promoting fairness and fluidity of the process (Sarker et al., 2023).

An additional relevant aspect concerns ethics in the peer review process. Reviewers should continuously reflect on their own biases and seek to transcend them, presenting their disagreements in a transparent and respectful manner, clearly substantiating their criticisms (Sarker et al., 2023). Collaborative and empathetic postures, considering how the reviewer would like to receive comments, contribute to a productive and professional review environment (Sarker et al., 2023).

It is recommended that the reviewer conclude the review with a brief synthesis that reinforces the main points addressed and offers a constructive perspective on the potential for improvement of the work (Sarker et al., 2023).

In the confidential review to the editor, the reviewer should be clear about their final recommendation on publication, choosing among the alternatives usually available:

1. Accept
2. Mandatory revisions
3. Resubmit for review

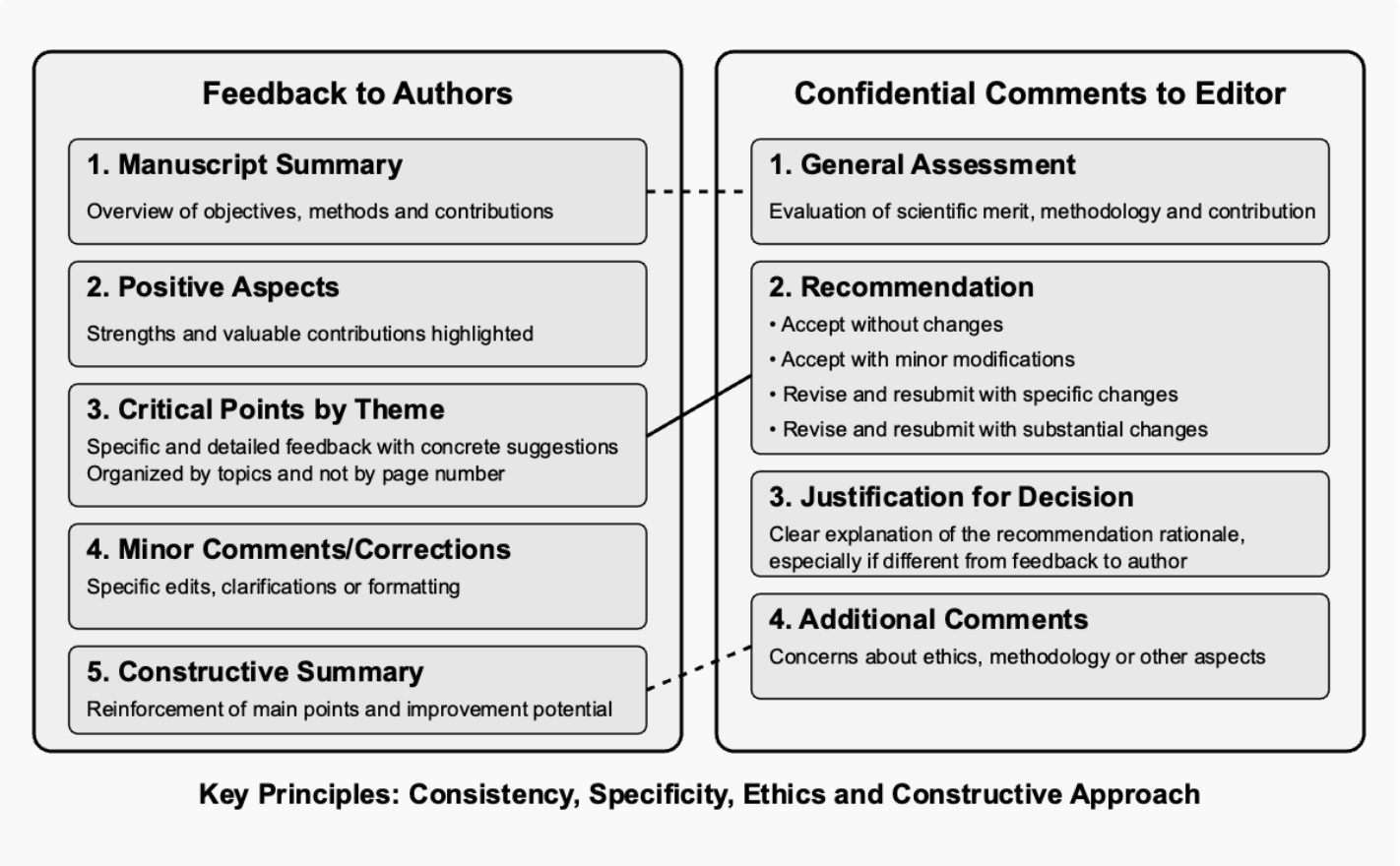
4. Submit to another journal
5. Reject
6. See comments

In this context, it is fundamental to succinctly explain to the editor the main reason for the recommendation made, especially if there are divergences between the review shared with the authors and that sent confidentially to the editor.

In summary, a well-prepared review that follows these guidelines will contribute significantly to the quality of publications and to the advancement of scientific knowledge in the field of innovation.

Figure 3

Visual representation of the structure and essential elements of the review for the author and editor



Reviewer Checklist

This section presents a comprehensive checklist to assist reviewers in the evaluation process of manuscripts submitted to the International Journal of Innovation. This tool has been developed to ensure a thorough and systematic analysis, contributing to the standardization and quality of reviews (Sarker et al., 2023; Ferreira, 2014).

Initial Assessment

- [ ] I have verified that the manuscript is aligned with the scope of the International Journal of Innovation
- [ ] I have confirmed that there are no conflicts of interest in my participation as a reviewer
- [ ] I have assessed whether I have adequate expertise to review this manuscript
- [ ] I have verified the feasibility of meeting the deadline established by the editor

Structural and Formal Analysis

- [ ] Title: is clear, concise, and adequately represents the content
- [ ] Abstract: adequately synthesizes the objective, method, results, and contributions
- [ ] Keywords: are relevant and representative of the content
- [ ] General structure: follows the standard organization expected for scientific articles
- [ ] Length: is within the limits established by the journal guidelines
- [ ] Figures and tables: are necessary, clear, and properly referenced in the text
- [ ] References: follow the journal standard and are appropriately cited in the text

Content Analysis

Introduction

- [ ] The research problem is clearly defined
- [ ] The rationale for the study is well-grounded
- [ ] The objectives are explicitly presented
- [ ] The expected contribution is clearly articulated

Literature Review

- [ ] Covers seminal works and relevant recent research
- [ ] Presents a critical analysis, not just descriptive
- [ ] Highlights the gaps that justify the current research
- [ ] Sources are diverse and of recognized quality

Conceptual Development/Hypotheses

- [ ] The theoretical/conceptual model is clearly presented
- [ ] The hypotheses or propositions are logically derived from theory
- [ ] The relationships between variables or constructs are well defined
- [ ] The conceptual development is original and relevant

Methodology

- [ ] The research design is appropriate to the proposed objectives
- [ ] The methodological procedures are described in detail
- [ ] Data collection techniques are appropriate
- [ ] The sample is well characterized and adequate
- [ ] Analysis techniques are rigorous and compatible with the data
- [ ] Ethical issues have been adequately considered

Discussion

- [ ] Interprets the results in light of the existing literature
- [ ] Clearly states the theoretical and/or practical contributions

Conclusions

- [ ] Acknowledges the study's limitations
- [ ] Suggests relevant directions for future research
- [ ] Conclusions are justified by the results presented

Critical Analysis

- [ ] Originality and innovation: the work represents an original contribution
- [ ] Relevance: the study brings important insights to theory and/or practice
- [ ] Methodological rigor: methods are appropriate and correctly applied
- [ ] Quality of argumentation: reasoning is logical and well-constructed
- [ ] Limitations: have been adequately acknowledged and discussed

Review Preparation

Feedback to Authors

- [ ] I started with a summary of the manuscript
- [ ] I highlighted positive aspects before critical points
- [ ] I structured the review by thematic topics
- [ ] I provided specific and detailed comments

- [ ] I offered concrete and feasible suggestions
- [ ] I maintained a respectful and constructive tone
- [ ] I concluded with a constructive summary

Confidential Feedback to Editor

- [ ] I presented a general assessment of the manuscript
- [ ] I clearly indicated my recommendation (accept, revise, reject)
- [ ] I justified my recommendation with clear rationale
- [ ] I maintained consistency between comments to authors and editor
- [ ] I added relevant observations that did not fit in the feedback to authors

Final Verification

- [ ] I reviewed my comments for clarity and constructiveness
- [ ] I verified the consistency of my evaluation
- [ ] I confirmed that my comments do not reveal my identity
- [ ] I checked that all important points have been addressed
- [ ] I reviewed the text for typing or grammar errors

This checklist represents an auxiliary tool to ensure the comprehensiveness and quality of reviews and should be adapted according to the specificities of each manuscript and the editorial policies of the International Journal of Innovation.

Conclusion

The peer review process lies at the heart of the scientific validation system, representing a fundamental mechanism for ensuring the quality, integrity, and relevance of academic publications in the field of innovation. The guidelines and recommendations presented in this editorial aim to strengthen this process within the International Journal of Innovation, promoting high-quality, constructive, and ethical evaluations.

Editorial excellence relies substantially on the dedication and commitment of reviewers, who voluntarily devote their time and expertise to assess and enhance the work of their peers. We acknowledge that manuscript reviewing is a complex and demanding task, requiring technical and scientific knowledge, as well as critical, analytical, and communication skills.

By adopting the guidance outlined here — from verifying the manuscript's alignment with the journal's scope to assessing the methodology and providing constructive feedback — reviewers

play a decisive role in establishing the International Journal of Innovation as a high-quality platform for the dissemination of knowledge. The proposed checklist serves as a practical tool that synthesizes the key aspects to be considered during the review process, functioning as a guide for both seasoned reviewers and those new to this important academic role. We believe its systematic use can foster greater consistency and depth in evaluations.

It is important to emphasize that the primary goal of peer review is not merely to filter out unsuitable manuscripts, but to contribute to the continuous improvement of scientific output, fostering a constructive dialogue among authors, reviewers, and editors. In this sense, peer review goes beyond a technical assessment and becomes an essential mechanism for the collective advancement of knowledge.

The International Journal of Innovation reaffirms its commitment to scientific excellence and extends its gratitude to all reviewers whose meticulous and dedicated work has been fundamental to the journal's quality and credibility. We hope the guidelines presented in this editorial will further enhance the review process, strengthen the scientific community, and contribute to the development of the field of innovation. In this context, the careful work of reviewers serves as an essential safeguard against errors and a catalyst for the development of genuine and transformative knowledge in the field of innovation.

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