

Exploring the Role of Peer-Review as a Mechanism of Quality Control of Academic Marketing Research Submitted for Publication in Arab Refereed Journals: A Proposed Standardized List of Evaluative Criteria

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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the progress of the academic marketing research submitted for publication in Arab refereed journals, diagnosing the current problematic situation and developing what can be considered as a unified and standardized list of evaluative criteria that may be used by these journals in assessing the validity and suitability of the academic marketing research for publication. Those journals are adopting varied evaluative forms (lists of evaluative criteria) to determine whether the research paper is publishable or not. The data required for this research were collected from a sample of 305 staff members of both, the departments of Business Administration and Marketing at the Arab universities which are active members of the Association of Arab Universities (AARU). The sample consisted of two groups: the first was the reviewers' group which consisted of 180 members. While the other was the authors' group which consisted of 125 members. The data was collected by using two different questionnaires (one for each group). Quantitate and qualitative statistics were used in the data analysis. The main outcome of this study was the standardized list of evaluative criteria which was reached through the 8 steps procedure developed by the researcher.

Keywords

explore, academic, peer-review, Arab, criteria

1. Introduction

For more than ten years, the author of the current paper conducted a series of field observations while he was in two job positions. The first, when he was as a chief editor of Al-Zaytoonah Journal for Scientific Research for five years. The journal, which is issued by the Deanship of Academic Research at Al-Zaytoonah private university in Jordan, is refereed. The second position is his membership of the editorial board of three refereed journals. One of them is issued in both Arabic and English language (the Jordanian Journal of Business Administration), while the other two issued only in English. During that experience the author has experienced many issues regard the publication process. This study is the first part of a research stream that consists of two parts, which aim to explore and diagnose the current situation of the academic Marketing research submitted to Arab refereed journals and assessing its quality. This study attempts to explore the current situation and proposes what may be considered as a unified and standardized list of criteria that can be used to evaluate the quality of marketing research

and in turn determining its suitability for publication in Arab refereed journals in the future. The second part, which will be published soon after this paper, aims to assess the quality of the academic marketing research submitted to Arab refereed journals.

The main objective of the current study is to highlight some important issues, which are relevant to the academic marketing research submitted for publication in Arab refereed journals. More specifically, it aims to provide researchers in general, and early-stage marketing researchers in particular, with what can be considered as guidelines to conduct research papers and to understand the major procedural processes that lead to high quality publications. It also attempts to explore the major aspects of the peer-revision and analyzes the dynamics and mechanisms through which this process can be accomplished. It then delineates the salient criteria that are used by Arab Refereed Journals to determine which research papers are publishable. Finally, the current study proposes a unified and standardized list of evaluation criteria that can be adopted by editorial boards of Arab Refereed journals. On the contribution side, the author believes that addressing the above mentioned issues will effectively contribute to improving the quality of the research process as a whole.

2. Importance of the Study

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it is the first attempt, which aims to explore the process and the mechanisms of academic Marketing research submitted to Arab refereed journals for publication. The study is also important because it is a pioneer initiative to improve the quality and the efficiency of the peer-review process. It is also important because it proposes what can be considered as a standardized evaluative form, which can be adopted by Arab refereed journals in assessing the academic marketing research which is going to be submitted to them for publication in the future.

3. Academic Research Publishing

Academic publishing is defined as the activity which involves the distribution of academic research which is mostly published in academic journals articles, books or theses form. Peer-review is the mechanism by which these journals can qualify submitted manuscripts for publication. It should be noted that academic publishing has largely transited from print to electronic format, where journal articles are made available instantly. The validity and suitability of the research paper for publication in the academic journals are determined by the editorial boards of those journals based on selective evaluative criteria adopted by them, and which vary among journals. Indeed, the editorial board's decision is usually made with the consideration of the reviewers' recommendations about the suitability for publication. Most academic disciplines have their own journals, and marketing is one of these. This study confines itself to the academic marketing research.

In fact, researchers are always motivated by several reasons, some of them are self-related, while other related to issues such as academic promotion, prestige and reputation. Other motivations which stands behind conducting and publishing research were reported by Peat et al. (2002). Among of these motivations are reaching findings that are worth to be published, contributing in diffusion scientific thought and knowledge; and satisfying their institutions' requirements for promotion. Indeed, to be a valid publication, the research paper must be published in a peer-reviewed journal or in proceedings of highly ranked conference. Having chosen the preferred journal for publication, researchers' effort should be devoted to place the paper in that journal. Prior to being accepted for publication, research papers usually undergo several serious revisions, based on the reviewers' comments, and recommendations before they actually appeared in print (Saunders et al., 2012).

4. Academic Research Quality Control Process

Controlling the quality of the academic research involves the evaluation of the scientific quality of published papers. This process is essentially completed through the peer-review which constitutes the mechanism by which the quality of the academic marketing assessed, controlled and assured. Peer-review quality and standards vary greatly among journals. During the peer-review process, the submitted papers are reviewed by peers of authors (researchers) who are assumed to be specialists in the paper's research area. The process may undergo one or more rounds of review. After each round, the researcher(s) of the paper modify the submission in line with the reviewers' comments; this process is repeated until the editor is satisfied and the work is accepted. It should be noted that the review process in most journals is similar. Common for many peer-review practices is the fact that this process is confidential, i.e., authors do not know the reviewers of their papers (blind review) and the reviewers also should not know the identity of the authors of the papers (double-blind review). Despite the fact that journal editors largely admit that the peer-review is essential to academic research quality control in term of rejecting poor quality work, there have been examples of important results that are turned down by one journal before being taken to others.

It should be noted that peer-review practices are varied. For instance, the task of reviewing research papers may be assigned to internal members selected from the editorial board of the journal, while others assign the review to external reviewers. Within the context of the editorial boards of Arab refereed journals the review of the manuscripts is assigned to two external reviewers and their recommendations on the suitability of the reviewed paper are provided confidentially to editor-in-chief. On the other hand, some editorial boards depend on a mix of practices. In some cases, the editor-in-chief assigns the submitted research paper to one of the editorial board (internal) who is specialist in the major field of the paper for a preliminary assessment. The revision is usually made according to a set of evaluation criteria enclosed in the evaluation forms attached with the manuscript. Having reviewed the manuscript, the reviewer sends a report including his/her comments and recommendations that can improve the research paper to the editor-in-chief, who presents it to editorial board to decide whether to accept or reject the paper. The outcome of this of the process is a letter from the editor-in-chief to notify the author of the decision which may one of the following:

- 1) Accepting the paper for publication as it is (without modifications).
- 2) Accepting the paper for publication with minor modifications.
- 3) Accepting the paper for publication with major modifications.
- 4) Rejecting the paper (i.e., the paper will not be published).

It should be noted that peer review can be done under two different conditions:

- 1) The peer-review is carried out by a panel of two reviewers. In this case, if one reviewer asked for minor modifications in the research paper, while the other asked for major modifications, the editor usually either consults his associates in the editorial board to verify the comments and suggestions of both reviewers and to be sure whether their comments are logic and justified and in turn, the verification led to a majority judgment and decide either accept or reject the paper for publication. If such a decision has not been reached, the editor then sent the paper to a third reviewer to review it. The opinion of this reviewer in most cases will determine the editor's final decision on the suitability of the paper for publication. If the third reviewer asked for major modification, this will support the reviewer's judgment who asked for major modifications, and the paper is usually rejected. On the other hand, if the reviewer's recommendations suggest that the paper requires minor modifications the editor sends the paper to the author in order to be revised, and then resubmitted. If he accepts to do that, the

revised paper is resubmitted again, and the editor sends the paper to one of the two reviewers to check the revision. If it is found that the author complied with the required modifications, the paper is accepted for publication. However, if the author believes that he cannot accept the recommended modifications, he must inform the editor about that, and the paper then, is rejected. In both cases the author is notified of that.

2) The peer-review is carried out by a panel of three reviewers. In this case, if one reviewer asked for minor modifications to be done in the research paper, while the other two asked for major modifications, the paper is mostly rejected, and the author notified of that. However, if two reviewers asked for minor modifications the editor send the paper to the author to be revised and resubmitted again. When the paper resubmitted the editor send it to one of reviewers (usually to the reviewer whose required modifications are major to check whether the modifications have been made). If yes, the paper is accepted for publication, and the author notified. In both situations, and once the decision is being a majority one it convinces the editor to take the majority side in order to be fair. Figure 1 depicts a simplified diagram of the mechanism of publishing a research paper.

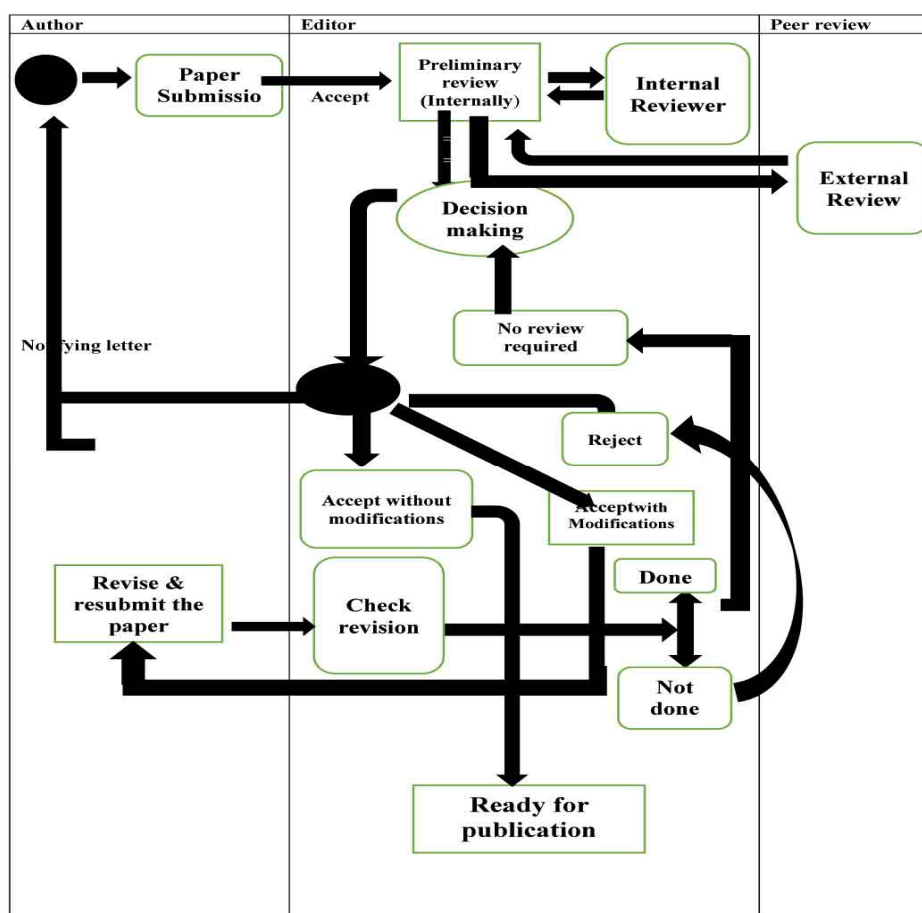


Figure 1. The Publishing Mechanism Used by Arab Refereed Journals

5. Characteristics and Criteria of Good Academic Research: A Literature Review

Academic marketing research refers to the research performance of the staff members at universities and research institutes. In this study the researcher attempt to propose what can be considered as a systematic approach to analyze academic Marketing research performance at Arab universities and to develop a standardized evaluation tool (form) to be used by Arab Referred Journals and all other institutions which are involved in assessing the suitability of academic marketing research for publication. In this part of the study, the major characteristics and criteria of good academic research are reviewed as follows:

5.1 Clear Title

Good tile is an integral part of the research paper. Having a clear and expressive title, this can easily allow indexing services and help users to track research that are relevant to their own. Day (1983) defined a good title as “the fewest possible words that adequately describe the contents of the paper”. Peat et al. (2002) pointed out that effective titles have the following distinctive features:

- 1) They identify the main issue of the research paper;
- 2) They begin with the subject of the research paper;
- 3) They are accurate, unambiguous, specific and complete;
- 4) They attract readers.

5.2 Scientific Methodology

Methodology refers to the science of determining suitable tools and methods to conduct a scientific research. Scientific methodology has been viewed as a major requirement for the academic research. The term usually refers to the organized way of thinking that includes a series of standardized procedures to be followed by researchers in searching problems or phenomena in order to lead them to logical solutions (Malhotra, 2010). The American Heritage Dictionary (2000) defines methodology as “the theoretical analysis of the methods appropriate to a field study or to the body of methods and principles particular to a branch of knowledge”. However, marketing researchers must distinguish between method and methodology. Burns and Bush (2010) point out that methodology of marketing research refers to how the tools of investigation are used in a marketing research. It is logically assumed that if the methodology was followed it should lead researchers to more accurate and valid results which can be generalized.

Malhotra (2010) summarizes the core of the academic research in the following:

- 1) Problem definition.
- 2) Formation of testable hypotheses.
- 3) Measurement of the variables.
- 4) Testing hypotheses.
- 5) Reporting the findings.
- 6) Analysis and discussion of the findings.
- 7) Drawing conclusions.

Along with this line of thinking, Kiplinger (2006) pointed out that the definition of the researched problem and the formation of testable hypotheses are important attributes of the academic scientific research. On the other hand, the accuracy of measurement of the variables has also been considered as a major determinant of the validity of the results and in turn, the possibility of generalizing those results. Green and Tull (2006) emphasized three major characteristics of the accurate measurement. 1) Mutual exclusivity, 2) inclusivity, and 3) validity. The importance of the scale validity criterion has been confirmed as a necessary condition for good research by the authors added that the scale validity refers

to the power of the scale in measuring all aspects of the variability implied in the dependent variables (i.e., Internal validity) has crucial effect on the reliability of the final results. It also refers to the power of the scale in measuring all aspects of the variance implied in the dependent variables. A great attention has been paid for the sampling procedure applied by the researcher as an important determinant of the research external validity (the generalizability of the findings to the population from which the sample was selected). To that extent that the sample used is representative, this will be positively contributes to the research external validity. In contrast, if the sample was improperly selected, this indeed, will not just lead to poor inference, but it casts the doubt about the research quality of the research as a whole. Babbie (2004) emphasized the importance of the qualitative representation of the sample because it determines the external validity of the results (i.e., the generalizability of the results). Sudman and Blair (2008) and Burns and Bush (2010) indicated that the fitness of statistical techniques which used in testing the hypotheses of the study should be assured if the inferential process is to be reliable.

5.3 Writing Style

Academic writing style can be defined as “the way that researcher expresses his/her ideas, knowledge and information clearly in terms of discussing a certain problem”. Writing style should include clear introduction, body and conclusion. This means the progression of ideas and paragraphing. Within this context, Greetham (2001) pointed out that introduction, paragraphs and conclusion must be clear and coherent. Specifically, the introduction is a key part in which the researcher must interpret the title or question and tell the readers the map that they are going to follow through the content of the research paper. The author (2001) added “The opinions expressed in the conclusion must reflect the strength and balance of the arguments that have preceded them in the body of the research paper”. In fact, good writing style is viewed as a main feature of the good academic marketing research especially when the research paper is written in English language. Many Arab researchers—because they are non-native speakers of English—are still confused about how to write good academic papers of various different kinds in English. The main characteristics of “good academic writing” have been the focus of much debate in the general field of writing skills.

5.4 Accuracy

One major factor which can effectively contribute to the quality of the academic marketing research is the accuracy. It is essential because it determines to a large extent the generalizability of the findings which can be reached through the research. Indeed, this can be ensured by maintaining the correct citation, logical inference and drawing conclusions and all aspect of the research. Once all these aspects have been precisely applied the research can be designed and conducted properly (Malhotra, 2010).

5.5 Coherence and Cohesion

In his early creative work, Mahoney (1977) defined cohesion as “the demonstrable pattern of the text’s integrity and a text is perceived as coherent when it makes consistent sense, with or without the help of devices of cohesion”. He adds “Coherence implies that the text must make sense, and means that it must be appropriately structured and interlinked by suitable signposts and linking words”. Therefore, Researchers must also have to show a good range of vocabulary and sentence structures and to avoid repetition.

5.6 Abstract

Abstract is an important component of the research paper. It is a key factor in identifying any literature or research in a certain subject. Some electronic publication database require that abstract should not

exceed (250) words. Abstract would not include everything about all aspects of the research, and it is also not to use the same statements and expressions.

5.7 Citation

In an academic context researchers have to cite all sources from which they obtain the information and of direct and indirect quotations too. They also have to provide adequate references and/or bibliography details. Zikmund et al. (2010) emphasized the importance of citation as a feature of a good academic research. Actually, there are many referencing conventions in existence. The most common is referencing Harvard style. Although this diversity of the citation methods, the most important criterion to be considered is to maintain the same system through an individual piece of work (i.e., the researcher must not change the citation from one system to another in the same text).

5.8 Turnitin: The Originality Test

Turnitin is an electronic text matching system that compares text of a research paper against a database of sources which contains copies of electronic text on the internet.

The system provides an Originality Report in which “matched” text is underlined, color coded, and linked to either the original source on its database (<http://www.turnitin.com>). Thus, originality Report is simply a tool to help reviewers find sources that contain text similar to submitted papers. The report also provides an indication of the proportion of the submitted work that matches other sources. It indicates how much the trustworthiness of author’s own position is clear. The system is considered as a mean of academic integrity assurance. It could be concluded that the Originality Report provided by the system can effectively assist editorial boards to make an objective decision regarding the suitability of a research paper for publication, thereby helping support the maintenance of fair assessment standards for all researchers. However, it should be noted that the unoriginality that the turnitin system can discover in the research paper does not mean it is plagiarized (<http://www.turnitin.com>). As it has been defined by Saunders et al. (2012) plagiarism is the presentation of somebody’s thoughts and ideas as if they are your own. Park (2003) pointed out that plagiarism takes four forms. These are: 1) Stealing material from another source, 2) Submitting a paper written by somebody else, 3) Copying sections of material from one source text, and 4) Paraphrasing material from one or more source without documentation. Neville (2010) pointed out that plagiarism represents a major concern of the higher education institutions in the twenty first century. With regard to the Turnitin, Editorial boards of Arab refereed journals are varied with respect to the level of the acceptable Turnitin percentage. In most cases, percentage was ranged from (5-20%). When it was higher than this level the paper is mostly rejected.

6. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- 1) Exploring the problem of academic marketing research publishing and clarifying its basic aspects.
- 2) Exploring the mechanisms used in the publishing of the Academic Marketing research in the Arab refereed Journals.
- 3) Providing the Editorial Boards of the Arab refereed journals with what can be an integrated database which can help them in establishing a sound and unified publishing policy regarding the academic marketing research.
- 4) providing the editorial boards of the Arab refereed journals at the Arab universities with a database that can enable them to increase the efficiency decision making process regarding the suitability of the research papers for publication.

- 5) Contributing to the process of legitimizing the evaluation of academic marketing research.
 - 6) Ensuring more objective, appropriate and valid scientific reviews of the academic marketing research.
 - 7) Encourage better quality control in the academic marketing research through better self- and other-monitoring.
 - 8) Proposing a standardized evaluation form that can be used by the Arab refereed journals in assessing and evaluating the academic marketing research to be submitted to them for publication.
- Providing the editorial boards of the Arab refereed journals with a database that can enable them to increase the efficiency of the decision.

7. Research Design and Method

This study aims at gaining background information about the current situation of the academic marketing research, its progress and problems. For the purpose of this study both qualitative and quantitative data was needed. Therefore, the data has been collected from two samples which were randomly selected from the staff members of both, the Business Administration and Marketing departments at the Arab universities which are active members of the Association of the Arab Universities (AARU). In addition to the reference panel of 10 staff members who are marketing professors in the marketing departments at ten Arab universities. Those members were informed that they were participating in a survey aiming to explore the current progress of the academic marketing research publication, and to identify any possible relevant problems. Each staff member's participation was based on his choice of one of two given roles in which he likes to be involved. The first role was a "research paper reviewer", and the second role was a "research paper author". Staff members who choose the reviewer role were asked to send copies of their reports about any research paper they have reviewed during the last two years, and also to answer a set of questions about his research reviewing experience. For those members who involved in the author role were requested to answer another set of questions which are relevant to their role as researchers. This task has been accomplished through the e-mail correspondence, and was lasted two months. Responses were received from three hundreds and five staff members who were classified into two groups consisting of (180, and 125 members for each of the reviewers and authors simultaneously) and which represented the total sample used in this study. For the purpose of this study both, the qualitative and quantitative approaches have been used. The qualitative approach was required to provide the researcher with initial insights, ideas, or and understanding about the different criteria which used by the Editorial Boards of the Arab Refereed journals in evaluating the academic marketing research papers submitted to them for publication. It basically involves the content of some of the reviewers' reports which usually attached to the evaluation forms used in the peer review process of the research papers. It also involves the reviewers' responses on a short questionnaire which has been sent to them. The quantitative approach was also applied using the questionnaire to collect some structured data from the staff members in the two samples (reviewers and authors). It must assured that the field data required for this study were collected from three main sources: 1) all participated staff members and, 2) a 10 member's Arab reference panel.

8. Research Methodology

In accordance with the purpose and objectives of the study, the following steps have been followed in exploring the problematic aspects of the academic marketing research publishing:

8.1 Diagnosing the Research Problem

Within the context of Academic Marketing Research publishing, hundreds of research papers are yearly submitted by Arab scholars for publication in the Arab Refereed journals. Indeed, once those research papers are received by people who in charge, the research paper goes through a process of peer review and assessment which usually made by two referees. This review is accomplished according to a set of evaluation criteria included in an evaluation forms attached with the manuscript. The extent to which the content of the manuscript complies with those criteria determines whether the research paper is accepted for publication or rejected.

8.2 Symptoms of the Problem

While journal editors largely agree that the system is essential to quality control in terms of rejecting poor quality work, there have been examples of important results that are turned down by one journal before being taken to others. It should be admitted that the big gap in the peer review process is that it does not always able to identify the high-quality academic work. Within this context, three major symptoms of the problem can be reported:

8.2.1 The Feedback Gap in Peer-Review

If the editorial board's decision rejects the publication of the paper in the journal which is the most frequent case (as reported in the in depth interviews with the sample of Arab staff members), the editor's letter to the author does not include any of the reviewers comments or recommendations. If the paper requires any modifications before it can be considered for publication is sent back to the author to be revised and the author must comply with this condition. On the other, if the author feels unable to do them he informs the editor about that, and the same procedure applied to the rejected papers. The problematic situation occurs under all conditions where the research papers are rejected and the authors are not allowed to have any feedback (comments or suggestions) that could be made by there viewers about their papers except the decision of rejection. According to the publishing policies and the code of ethics adopted by most of the editorial boards of Arab Refereed journals, peer-review is a top confidential process and the Editorial Board's decisions regarding the suitability of the research paper for publication are final, and even the boards reserve the right not to justify these decisions. Moreover, and in all cases where the research paper is rejected, the editor unusually enclose the reviewers' comments and suggestions on the paper in his letter to the author. In fact, the outcome of these policies will be the inability of the author to benefit from the reviewers' comments and may not contribute to the improvement of the quality of the academic marketing research. Indeed, this casts a veil of doubt on the ability of the peer review as an efficient control mechanism on the quality of the academic marketing research, make it just a one-way evaluative process and may create what can be considered as a problematic situation in the field of academic marketing research publishing. Table 1 shows the matrix of peer-review process and the possible problematic situations associated with it.

Table 1. The Matrix of Peer-Review Dynamics and the Possible Occurrence of Problematic Situations

The decision of Reviewer (1)	The decision of Reviewer (2)	Board's decision	The possibility of Problematic situation
1) The paper is accepted	2) The paper is accepted for	1) The paper is accepted for	No problem

for publication without any modifications	publication without any modifications	publication	
3)The paper is accepted for publication after minor modifications have been made	4) The paper is accepted for publication after minor modifications have been made	2) The paper is accepted for publication after the modifications have been made and assured by one of the reviewers	No problem feedback is available (Reviewer's report sent to author to make the suggested modifications)
5) The paper is accepted for publication after minor modifications have been made	6) The paper is accepted for publication after major modifications have been made	3) The paper is accepted for publication after the modifications have been checked by the reviewer who suggested the major modifications	No problem feedback is available Reviewer's report sent to the author to make the suggested modifications
7) The paper has been accepted for publication after major modifications have been made	8) The paper has been accepted for publication after major modifications have been made	4) The paper has not been accepted for publication (Rejection)	Problematic situation (feedback is mostly not available)
9) The paper has not been accepted for publication	10) The paper has been accepted for publication after minor modifications have been made	5) The paper sent to a third reviewer to make a decisive judgment regarding the publication (accept with suggestions or reject)	Problematic situation (feedback is mostly not available if the third reviewer rejects the paper)
7) The paper has not been accepted for publication	8) The paper has been accepted for publication after major modifications have been made	6) The paper sent to a third reviewer to make a decisive judgment regarding the publication (accept with suggestions/reject)	Problematic situation (feedback is mostly not available if the third reviewer rejects the paper)
11) The suggested modifications by the reviewers have not been made	7) The paper has not accepted for publication (Rejection)		Problematic situation (feedback is mostly not available)
12) The reviewers disagree on the suitability of paper for publication and the editor made his own decision what so ever	8) The paper either accepted or rejected (in case of rejection)		Problematic situation (feedback is mostly not available)

As the data displayed in Table 1 shows, cells (4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) represent possible problematic situations where the feedback is not available for the author's research paper. For many Arab Marketing academics, this issue constitutes a hindering factor of their academic promotion, and sometimes it goes further to represent a real source of frustration and anxiety. Moreover, the adoption of some editorial policies or traditional rules of thumb block the researcher's right to get any detailed feedback about their research. It should be assured that the peer-review is a valuable experiential learning process

which offers an advantageous opportunity for the marketing researchers to benefit from the reviewer's comments and suggestions included in their reports. These comments are expected to have a significant subsequent positive impact on the researcher's morale and the quality of their research.

8.2.2 Researchers' Negative Perception of Peer—Review

In a pilot survey including in-depth interviews which conducted (either personally or through the e-mail) by the researcher with a number of staff members of the Business Administration and Marketing at Jordanian and Arab Universities, there was a negative perception (stereotyping) about the mechanism by which the peer-review is happened and that reviewers often have inconsistent comments over the research they have submitted to certain Arab refereed journals. This aspect of the peer-review was explored through the analysis of the content of the reviewers' reports on research papers they have received in order to be reviewed and assess their suitability for publication. In her well known academic work, Steinzor (2014) indicated that "the most widely recognized failing of peer review is its inability to ensure the identification of high-quality work". Also, Mahoney (1977) in his early experimental study pointed out that peer-review implies a level of "Confirmatory bias" which refers to "the unconscious tendency to accept reports which support the reviewer's views and to downplay those which do not. Experimental studies show the problem exists in peer reviewing".

8.2.3 Absence of a Unified or Standardized List of Evaluation Criteria

In the absence of a valid standardized evaluation criteria and the varied comments and the subjectivity in the reviewers' judgments, this problematic situation will continue to prevail in the future. When reviewers were asked about their opinions toward the evaluative criteria, they pointed out that the list of these criteria must be refined and augmented by more criteria which may increase the reliability and validity of the evaluative criteria and in turn improve the quality of the evaluative and control role of peer review over the academic marketing research in the future.

9. Population and Sampling Procedure

9.1 The Population Framework

The population of this study consisted of all staff members of both, the departments of Business Administration and Marketing at all universities which are active members of the Association of Arab Universities (AARU). To collect the data required for this study, a predesigned letter was sent to them through the e-mail. Only those staff members who have reviewed research papers during the previous two years were requested to participate in this process. Reviewers were asked to fill out a short self-instructed questionnaires in addition to providing the researcher with copies of reports they have made about research papers they have reviewed during that period. Responses were received from three hundreds and five 305 staff members who were classified into two groups consisting of (180, and 125 member for each of the reviewers and authors simultaneously) and which represented the sample of this study. Table 1 shows The Population framework:

Table 2. The Population Framework of the Study

No.	Country	The Number. of universities	The Number. of responding universities	Number of respondents (reviewers & authors)
1	Jordan	23	18	46
2	Arab Emirates	15	7	27

3	Bahrain	3	1	4
4	Tunis	6	2	8
5	Algeria	7	5	9
6	Saudi Arabia	28	15	35
7	Sudan	23	11	17
8	Syria	11	5	16
9	Iraq	27	17	25
10	Oman	1	1	4
11	Palestine	14	9	17
12	Qatar	1	1	2
13	Kuwait	2	1	3
14	Lebanon	16	11	28
15	Egypt	32	19	64
	Total	209	123	305

9.2 The Sampling Procedure

The population of this study was consisted of all staff members of both the Marketing and Business Administration in all Arab university which are members of the Association of Arab Universities (AARU) which count two hundred and nine universities (active members of the association). A total of (325) questionnaires from one hundred and twenty three responding universities have been received with (58.9 %) rate of response. The returned questionnaires from the two groups (reviewers & authors) then have been revised, edited and finally purified to reach the number of three hundred and five good questionnaires (180) of them were from reviewers and (125) were from authors. The total sample was considered for the purpose of data analysis. Table 1 shows the Sampling structure of the study:

Table 3. The Sampling Structure of the Study

No	Country	Number reviewers	of Number of Authors	Total
1	Jordan	36	10	46
2	Arab Emirates	14	13	27
3	Bahrain	1	3	4
4	Tunis	3	5	8
5	Algeria	2	7	9
6	Saudi Arabia	19	16	35
7	Sudan	13	4	17
8	Syria	11	5	16
9	Iraq	18	7	25
10	Oman	1	3	4
11	Palestine	11	6	17
12	Qatar	1	1	2
13	Kuwait	1	2	3
14	Lebanon	10	18	28
15	Egypt	39	25	64
Total		180	125	305

10. Data Collection Tools

This study is based on an exploratory research design. For the purpose of this study it was necessary to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Therefore, different tools and techniques have been used in collecting the data. Predesigned and structured questionnaires have been used to collect some demographic and professional data which is related to the academic experience of the participating staff members. In-depth interviews also were conducted either personally or through the e-mail correspondences to collect all needed data.

11. Hypotheses of the Study

For the purpose of this study the following hypotheses were tested:

Ho1: The lack of feedback about the research papers when they were rejected for publication is the critical problem as it is perceived by Arab authors of marketing research.

Ho2: Marketing researchers (authors) have a negative perception of the peer review and the reviewers' judgments are subjective regarding the evaluative criteria enclosed in the evaluation form attached with the paper.

Ho3: Editorial boards of the Arab Refereed Journals don't use a unified and standardized list of criteria in evaluating the academic marketing research submitted to them for publication.

Ho4: There are no differences between the evaluations of both the reviewer's and the panel's regarding the importance of the evaluative criteria to be used to evaluate the academic marketing research submitted for publication in the Arab refereed journals.

12. Findings and Discussion

In this part, the major findings of the study are reported as follows:

12.1 The Lack of Feedback on Rejected Papers: A Critical Problem

The content analysis of In-depth interviews (either personally or through e-mail correspondence) there was a large number of research authors who expressed the fact that in all cases where the research paper is rejected, the editor unusually enclose the reviewers' comments and suggestions on the paper in his letter to the author. In fact, the outcome of these policies will be the inability of the author to benefit from the reviewers' comments and may not contribute to the improvement of the quality of the academic marketing research. Indeed, this casts a veil of doubt on the ability of the peer review as an efficient control mechanism on the quality of the academic marketing research, make it just a one-way evaluative process and may create what can be considered as a problematic situation in the field of academic marketing research publishing.

12.2 Marketing Researchers' Perception of the Peer-Review

It is assumed that the reviewers' adoption of the scientific research methodology by during their review of the research should lead them to have a common and similar judgment regarding the same evaluative criterion. In order to shed more light on the problem of marketing research publishing, this aspect of the peer-review was explored through the analysis of the content of the reviewers' reports on research papers which have been sent to them by the editorial board of any Arab Refereed Journals to review and assess their suitability for publication. The reviewers' responses and their comments and recommendations enclosed in their reports were analyzed. Results of the content analysis of the reviewers' reports showed that their evaluations regarding five evaluative criteria were varied on the same criterion. These results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Results of the Content Analysis of the Reviewers' Reports about Their Evaluations Regarding Five Evaluative Criteria

The Criteria	Reviewer's comments	Modifications are not required	minor modifications are required	Major modifications are required	Need for total change	Total%
1. Problem Definition		35(19.4 %)	75(41.7 %)	45(25 %)	25(13.9 %)	180(100%)
2. Formation of Hypotheses		10(5.5 %)	115(63.9 %)	45(25 %)	10(5.6 %)	180(100%)
3. Literature review		90(50 %)	60(33.3 %)	20(11.2 %)	10(5.5 %)	180(100%)
4. Statistical Processing		38(21.1 %)	102(56.7 %)	30(16.7 %)	10(5.5 %)	180(100%)
5. Sample size		65(36.2 %)	80(44.4 %)	25(13.9 %)	10(5.5 %)	180(100%)

From the data displayed in Table 4 a noticeable variation among the reviewers' recommendations regarding the same of each of the five evaluative criteria. For example, problem definition criterion did not required any modifications in reports of (19.4%) of reviewers, while it was required minor modifications in the reports of (41.7%) of reviewers , and major modifications in the reports of (25%) of reviewers. Only (13.9%) of the reviewers have reported that problem definition needs to be changed totally. Considering the fact that the reviewers' judgments—what so ever—are considered a basic determinant of the editorial board final decision about the suitability of the research paper for publication, it is expected that the wide variation among the reviewers' judgments will create a state of confusion about them and will not know how to deal with that variation and may add new dimensions to the problem. It should be mentioned that if these modifications (minor or major) haven't been made by the author of the research paper, this would be a good reason for rejecting the publication of the paper. This result assures the first hypothesis and suggest more objectivity to be considered by the research reviewers.

12.3 The Standardized List of Evaluative Criteria

Another aspect of the current progress of academic marketing research is the evaluation form used in evaluating the research submitted to them for publication. Content analysis of the reviewers' questionnaires indicated that editorial boards of the Arab refereed journals did not use a unified or standardized evaluation list of criteria in evaluating the research papers which submitted to them and deciding their suitability for publication. They did not use neither the same criteria nor a same number of those criteria in their evaluation forms when they sent for review by the reviewers. The number of those criteria was varied among the different journals with 10 as minimum and 30 as maximum). In order to reach what can be considered as a unified and standardized list of evaluative criteria the following 8-steps procedure was used:

1) Approaching the Deanships of Scientific research or research centers in the universities which are members of the Association of the Arab Universities (AARU), and asking them whether they issue any refereed journals. The number of the reached universities was forty.

- 2) Getting the evaluation forms which currently used by the editorial boards of the Arab refereed Journals of those universities. A total of twenty five evaluation forms have been received through the e-mail.
- 3) Reviewing the evaluation forms used by the editorial boards of the Arab refereed Journals. Those forms were varied in regard to the number of evaluative criteria they include, (from 10 criteria as minimum and 30 as a maximum).
- 4) Forming the reference evaluating panel. This panel was consisted of ten members who were full professors of Marketing at ten large Arab universities located in ten Arab countries (Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algiers, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and Lebanon). The panel members were also Recommended and acknowledged by the chief editors of the Arab refereed journals as academic authorities in Marketing.
- 5) Ten copies of the list of the thirty evaluative criteria were sent to the panel members. The major task of the panel members was to thoroughly read the evaluative criteria listed in the evaluation forms and assess the extent to which each of them is correlated to the construct of the quality of academic marketing research and how much it is important in assessing the suitability of that research for publication in the Arab Refereed Journals. The panel members were given one month to accomplish this task and send their responses.
- 6) Upon their reception, the responses of the ten panel members were thoroughly read, analyzed and refined, and a final list of twenty important evaluative criteria was reached.
- 7) Testing the reliability and validity of the list. In order to be used as a reliable and valid measurement scale of the quality of the academic marketing research, the list of evaluative criteria was tested. Reliability of the scale refers to the extent to which the scale produce consistent results when the measurement is repeated (Malhotra, 2004). Thus, it shows how consistent and stable the ratings generated by the scale on all items (i.e., the evaluative criteria) are likely to be, and it also measures the equivalency of internal consistency within the scale criteria. On the other hand, the validity of a scale involves the extent to which the measurement scale truly reflects the construct of quality of academic marketing research. Clearly, a suitable and good scale must be both reliable and valid (see reliability and validity tests which follow this procedure).

12.4 Reliability Test

Reliability refers to whether the techniques used in collecting data in addition to the analytical procedures used by the researcher were able to provide him with consistent results if they were repeated again on the same research conditions (Saunders et al., 2012). It measures the equivalency of internal consistency within the scale criteria. The importance of this test was assured by Brad burn, Sudman and Wansink (2004) who indicated that it is “very useful to remove any ambiguities in the respondents’ interpretations of the criteria” and to help formulating the evaluative criteria relevant to the construct of the quality of academic marketing research being measured. Within the context of this study, it was necessary to examine the strength of importance associated with each evaluative criterion in assessing the quality of academic marketing research and in turn its suitability for publication. Therefore, the reliability of the measurement scale was assured through two different methods: The first was through the responses 10 members of the Arab reference panel which has been formed for this purpose, and which was one of the 8-step previously mentioned procedure. While the second method was through the responses the total sample of the study 305, which was consisted of the 180 reviewers and 125 research authors. The test was conducted through a question which was directed to all those

participants about the degree that each of the evaluative criteria contained in the list is important in assessing the quality of academic marketing research and in turn its suitability for publication.

Table 5 shows the mean scores of the ratings of the respondents of the two samples regarding the importance of each of the evaluative criteria all evaluative criteria.

Table 5. The Mean Scores of the Ratings of the Respondents of the Two Samples Regarding the Importance of each of the Evaluative Criteria all Evaluative Criteria

No	The evaluative criterion	Total sample (305)	Panel members' sample (10)
1	The research problem is clearly defined	4.48	4.50
2	The research topic is logically analyzed	4.27	4.30
3	The research design is appropriate and suits the researched topic	4.43	4.00
4	The basic concepts and ideas are presented conveniently	4.36	4.70
5	The theoretical framework of the research is consolidated	4.30	4.50
6	The scales of measurement are valid and reliable	4.39	4.60
7	The researchable variables are operationally well defined	4.35	4.50
8	The literature review is relevant and comprehensive	4.26	4.30
9	The research hypotheses are testable and contextual	4.25	4.00
10	The sample is sufficient and representative	4.42	4.40
11	The data collection tools suite the nature of the research	4.38	4.30
12	The statistical techniques are suitable to the analysis	4.35	4.70
13	The method of presentation and discussion of findings is convenient	4.24	4.20
14	The research findings are consistent with the research objectives & hypotheses&	4.05	4.35
15	The practical implications of the findings are significant	4.06	4.45
16	The citation process is appropriate	3.90	4.10
17	The references and bibliography are sufficient and up to date	4.08	4.03
18	Trustworthiness of author' s own position is clear	3.89	4.50.
19	The style of presenting concepts and theories are suitable and objective	4.06	4.10
20	The inferential approach is logically valid	3.99	4.40
Grand Mean		4.22	4.35

The data displayed in Table 5 showed that there were no significant differences between the two grand means of both e participating staff members 305 and the Arab reference panel 10. The means were

(4.22. 4.35 simultaneously). This result supports the fourth null hypothesis and augments the liability of the list of evaluative criteria as a measurement scale to assess the quality of the academic marketing research, and in turn its suitability for publication

The data displayed in Table 5 shows that there were no significant differences between the two grand means of both samples. This result supports the reliability of the list of evaluative criteria as a measurement scale to assess the quality of the academic marketing research, and in turn its suitability for publication.

12.5 Validity Test

This test examines the extent to which the measurement scale fully captures all aspects of the variable being measured (i.e., the quality of academic marketing research. The quality construct is multifaceted a number of different evaluative criteria concerning to how the referee (reviewer) assesses the quality of academic marketing research. Therefore, the test of the validity of the scale by which the quality of academic marketing research must assure that each of the evaluation criteria included in the scale is intended to tap the referee's position on it. This test involves the examination of several types of validity: the content validity and the discriminant validity.

12.6 Content Validity

This type of validity also known as face validity (Thunder, 2004). It examines the extent to which the content of the measurement scale of the quality of the academic marketing research seems to capture all relevant aspects of this quality and that can influence the referee's evaluation and assessment of the research and its suitability for publishing. This validity was assessed through three different methods: 1) the researcher's thorough the content analysis of the twenty five evaluation forms which included the different evaluation criteria and used by the Editorial Boards of the Arab Refereed Journals, 2) The panel members' revision and assessment of the same evaluation criteria included in those forms, 3) The reviewers' sample (180) assessment of the importance of each of the evaluation criteria in determining the quality of the academic marketing research, and in turn its suitability for publication (steps 3, 5, 7 in the procedure of the development of the measurement scale), and finally (4) the reviewers' reports to the editorial boards.

12.7 Discriminant Validity

This type of validity refers to the extent that the measured variables are correlated. It should emphasize that these variables are truly different. As a rule of thumb, when the measurement scales are correlated more than 0.75 the discriminant validity may be questioned (Hair et al., 2006). Therefore, it measures the mutual exclusivity of each evaluative criterion in measuring one aspect of the construct being measured (Zikmund, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the discriminant validity of the measurement scale of the quality of academic marketing research was assured by conducting the Paired Samples Test. The results of this test indicated that the scale was significantly valid at 95 percent level of confidence. The results of this test were reported for the first four evaluative criteria by which the construct of quality of the academic marketing research was assessed are shown in Table 6:

Table 6. The results of the Paired Sample Test

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	F – G	.41639	.98628	.05647	.10526	.32752	3.832	304	.000

Pair 1	G – H	.36066	.95133	.05447	-.26785-	-.05346-	-2.949-	304	.003
Pair 1	H – I	.12557	.91531	.05241	-.03756-	.16871	2.551	304	.012
Pair 1	I – J	.16230	.93509	.05354	-.04307-	.16766	2.563	304	.046

8) The twenty evaluative criteria were then formulated in an expressive statements, and been attached to a five—points liker scale, where, score 5 refers to a strong agreement with the evaluative criterion, score 4 refers to agreement, score 3 refers to the neutrality of the agreement with the criterion, score 2 refers to the disagreement with the criterion, And finally, score 1 refers to a strong disagreement with the criterion. Table 6 shows the final standardized form list of the evaluative criteria.

Table 7. The Final Standardized Form of the Evaluative Criteria

No	Evaluative criterion	Strongly Disagree (1)	2	3	4	Strongly agree (5)
1	The research problem is clearly define					
2	The research topic is logically analyzed					
3	The research design is appropriate and suits the researched topic					
4	The basic concepts and ideas are presented conveniently					
5	The theoretical framework of the research is consolidated					
6	The scales of measurement are valid and reliable					
7	Theresearchable variables are operationally well defined					
8	l The literature review is relevant and comprehensive					
9	The research hypotheses are testable and contextual					
10	The sample is sufficient and representative					
11	The data collection tools suite the nature of the research					
12	The statistical techniques are suitable to the analysis					
13	The method of presentation and discussion of findings is convenient					
14	The research findings are consistent with the research objectives & hypotheses					
15	The practical implications of the findings are significant					
16	The citation process is appropriate					
17	The references and bibliography are sufficient and up to date					

-
- 18 Trustworthiness of author's own position is clear
 - 19 The style of presenting concepts and theories are suitable and objective
 - 20 The inferential approach is logically valid
-

The quantifying rational:

In order to augment the reliability and validity of this form, the reviewers' recommendation regarding the suitability of the review research paper should be based on the quantifying rational:

- 1) If the mean score is greater than 3 the paper should be accepted (with or without modification);
- 2) If the mean score is less than 3 is considered as unsuitable for publication.

13. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was aiming to explore the current situation of the academic marketing research publishing and diagnosing the publishing problems confronting the Arab authors of marketing research. It also attempted to develop what can be considered as a standardized list of evaluative criteria which can be by the editorial boards of Arab refereed journals. At the beginning, the researcher tried to analyze the current situation of the academic marketing research submitted for publication in the Arab refereed journals. Based on his own personal experience as a member of the editorial boards of several Arab and foreign refereed journal, the researcher as laid out the ground for in-depth discussion of the mechanism of the academic marketing research publishing. The data required for this paper was collected basically from a sample which was randomly selected from the Staff members of the academic departments of the Marketing and Business Administration at Arab universities. The results of the study indicated that the lack of feedback on the rejected research papers was the major problem of the academic marketing research publishing. This in fact is considered a hindering factor of the progress of the academic marketing research in the future. Within the context of this conclusion the following recommendations can be submitted:

- 1) It should be acknowledged that peer-review is a main source of information which is considered the base of the editors' actions toward the submitted paper. In fact the reviewers' comments and suggestions enclosed in their reports to the editors are a major determinant of the editors' final decision whether to accept or reject the paper. Indeed, reviewers' comments are always constructive and may effectively contribute to the improvement of the paper. If research authors comply with the editors recommendations and agree to modify the manuscript the paper would be more suitable for publication. According to the current publishing policies and the code of ethics adopted by most of the editorial boards of Arab Refereed journals, the Editorial Board's decisions regarding the suitability of the research paper for publication are final, and even the boards reserve the right not to justify these decisions. Moreover, and in most cases where the research paper is rejected, the editor unusually enclose the reviewers' comments and suggestions on the paper in his letter to the author who are not allowed to see the reviewers' reports. In fact, the outcome of these policies will be the inability of the author to benefit from the reviewers' comments and may not contribute to the improvement of the quality of the academic marketing research. *Therefore, it is worth to recommend more liberation of these policies and traditional rules of thumb. Updating these policies, should offer the research authors the opportunity to have copies of the reviewers "reports when the authors notified of their papers. This willow them to benefit from the reviewers" comments and suggestions, even in the cases where their*

papers were rejected. This will help augmenting the role of peer-review as a control mechanism of the quality of the academic marketing research.

2) According to the managerial procedures of most editorial boards of most Arab refereed journals, submitted research papers are sent to two papers. If they asked for major modifications research papers are usually rejected for publication. Considering that the basic role of the peer-review is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of the academic marketing research, this process should be moderated in a manner that makes it an experiential learning process for Arab marketing researchers and will help augmenting the role of peer-review as a control mechanism of the quality of the academic marketing research.

3) In most cases were the peer-review is carried by two reviewers there would be a chance for disagreement regarding the suitability of the research paper for publication. Especially, if both reviewers have contradicting recommendations regarding the paper. In such a case, it becomes necessary for the editor to make the appropriate decision and notify the author of that. Therefore, it would be worth to consider the three-reviewers panel. This can effectively assists editorial boards to make an objective decision regarding the suitability of a research paper for publication, thereby helping support the maintenance of fair assessment standards for all researchers.

4) More applied research is recommended in the field of assessing the quality of the academic marketing research by using the standardized evaluation form developed in this research paper.

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