

Publishing in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*

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After 3 years in the United States, the editorial home of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management (APJM)* has returned to Asia this year—to The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Founded in 1983 at the National University of Singapore, *APJM* is the oldest and most prominent academic journal in the management field focused on the

Taking over a journal is obviously a team effort. I thank Mike Peng, our previous Editor-in-Chief, for his mentoring and hands-on assistance with the journal, and for his continuing involvement as the journal's Consulting Editor. I also thank incumbent Senior Editors Michael Carney (Concordia University), Simon Lam (University of Hong Kong), Klaus Meyer (University of Bath), Eric Tsang (University of Texas at Dallas), and Chi-Sum Wong (The Chinese University of Hong Kong) for staying on. Thanks also go to new Senior Editors Ilan Alon (Rollins College), Kaz Asakawa (Keio University), Shyh-er Chen (National Sun Yat Sen University, Kaohsiung), Eric Gedajlovic (Simon Frasier University), Hicheon Kim (Korea University), Rico Lam (University of Macau), David Lamond (Nottingham Trent University), Jane Lu (National University of Singapore), Ram Mudambi (Temple University), Anil Nair (Old Dominion University), Daphne Yiu (The Chinese University of Hong Kong), Michael Young (Hong Kong Baptist University), and Kevin Zhou (University of Hong Kong) for agreeing to join my team as Senior Editors. I also appreciate the support from 21 members of our Editorial Advisory Board and 38 members of our Editorial Review Board. I also thank Dean T. J. Wong of the Faculty of Business Administration at The Chinese University of Hong Kong for his support of the journal. I also would like to thank Dean Hasan Pirkul of the School of Management at the University of Texas at Dallas and Dean O. Homer Erekson of the Neeley School of Business at Texas Christian University for their support. Also, appreciation goes to Rachel Pinkham of the University of Texas at Dallas, who will continue to serve as *APJM*'s Managing Editor. At Springer, I am grateful for the support of Nick Philipson and Charlotte Cusumano (New York), Priya Bijesh and Sivakani Jayaprakash (Chennai, India), and Arjane Amponin (Manila, The Philippines) and their respective teams in editing and production.

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Asia Pacific region. As the new Editor-in-Chief, I am grateful for the vote of confidence given to me by the previous Editor-in-Chief, Mike Peng of the University of Texas at Dallas, and the officers of the Asia Academy of Management (AAOM) led by the President, Garry Bruton of Texas Christian University, and the Secretary, C. M. Lau of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. It is their hard work along with that of the previous editors, including Andrew Delios and Kulwant Singh of the National University of Singapore, gifted scholars all, that have made *APJM* what it is now: An authoritative source on Asia Pacific management and an official publication of the AAOM—an international affiliate of the Academy of Management.

As Editor-in-Chief, I hope to continue to make *APJM* a stronger and even more valuable resource for authors and scholars in management and international business. Fortunately, I am assisted in this endeavor by a world-class team of Senior Editors, many from Mike Peng's team and a set of new ones. The senior editorial team consists of prolific and influential authors that have published a combined total of more than 1,000 peer-reviewed articles and over 50 books. More importantly, all have published in and reviewed for *APJM* so they are thoroughly familiar with the journal's editorial mission. We have editors and editorial board members from six continents, and every member of our editorial team has studied or worked in multiple countries. Our combined professional experience covers about 40 countries around the world, bringing together a global perspective seldom matched by the editorial teams at other journals. And we are fortunate that Mike Peng will stay on as Consulting Editor and continue to supply his extensive expertise and advice to our editorial team.

I am also pleased to report on the journal's vigor. In 2009, the number of annual submissions to *APJM* was approximately 300, some four times the number of submissions in years past. This is due in large part to the efforts of the previous Editor-in-Chief Mike Peng and his team, who tirelessly promoted *APJM* and worked to increase the journal's stature while securing the important listing on the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI). Not all journals have the privilege of being included in the SSCI, and we are fortunate to be one of those. We expect our first journal citation report to come out in 2010; early indications are that the impact factor may be around one.

The journal's progress would not be possible without our dedicated, careful reviewers and talented authors. For regular submissions, our acceptance rate is approximately 15% with a fast turnaround time from our reviewers and Senior Editors. An accepted article will typically be published online within 1 to 2 months after its final acceptance (see www.springer.com/10490—OnlineFirst) and has a reasonable chance of being published in less than a year after acceptance. *APJM* again compares favorably with the production speed of many other journals. Authors should feel confident that their work will get a timely and constructive review, and given the high download statistics and the (expected) solid impact factor, will be read and cited.

Getting published in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*

As an editor, I am frequently asked about how to publish in *APJM*; indeed, prospective authors for *APJM* should know how to satisfy the demands of reviewers

and editors to publish their work in the journal. I will provide some guidance for those questions here and in future editorials on various stages of the research process. Interested readers should check upcoming editorials in *APJM* for additional information and some further expansion of these topics. To summarize some of the key points, authors should become familiar with the extensive research on the subject of writing and research in the social sciences. These works provide an idea of what constitutes a theoretical contribution (Whetten, 1989), what theory is and is not, and how to apply theory in empirical papers (Sutton & Staw, 1995). They also discuss heuristics in social research (Abbott, 2004) and different approaches to the research design process (Creswell, 1994; Van de Ven, 2007). These works and others provide authors with important guidelines on developing a paper.¹

What about the specifics that authors need to know to publish in *APJM*? Certainly, a key first step in publishing in *APJM* (or in any journal for that matter) is understanding the journal's role and mission. *APJM* seeks to publish the best work in the field of management scholarship on the Asia Pacific region, particularly articles that contribute in terms of what can improve the performance of firms. Because *APJM* only publishes about one-sixth of the manuscripts it receives, authors should be careful to attend to details about suitability, format, and contribution of their manuscripts, of which more will be said about below.

In terms of the journal's geographic focus, *APJM* publishes original manuscripts on management and organizational research on the Asia Pacific region, which encompasses the Pacific Rim countries and mainland Asia. This means not only East Asia (e.g., China, Japan, Korea), but also Central and South Asia (e.g., India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan) and West Asia (e.g., the Middle East and Turkey). It also includes Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. Potential manuscripts for *APJM* should thus contain significant Asia Pacific content, though they do not have to be devoted completely to Asia. An empirical paper should have ample Asia Pacific data and implications. If a conceptual manuscript is submitted, it should also contain some Asia Pacific content and relevance. There is no strict litmus test as such: manuscripts are evaluated for suitability and publication potential for the journal on a case by case basis. Be careful to read previous articles in *APJM* to have an idea of the types of papers that are typically published.

Avoiding common problems

As noted above, knowing the journal and its mission are the first steps in publishing in *APJM*. A lack of familiarity with the journal is an all-too-common problem. For example at *APJM*, we regularly receive papers in which the title and abstract identifies the topic of the paper as inappropriate for the journal in terms of its mission and geographical focus. Likewise, we receive numerous papers that are single-spaced with highly improper formatting. Needless to say, this can significantly hurt the paper's chances of being sent out for review. The formatting does not have to be picture

¹ *Engaged Scholarship* (Van de Ven, 2007) in particular provides excellent guidance on writing and research for organizational scholars and has an extensive bibliography of key works on a range of research-related topics.

perfect, but it should be close to *APJM*'s standards. Check the journal's website and past papers for the proper formatting in terms of headers, in-text citations, and references. Sending in a paper with all-footnotes or some other citation format not used by *APJM* suggests to the editorial team that the author has either never read *APJM* or did not think it was worth his or her time to fix the formatting. Sometimes we get a paper with numerous typos and grammatical mistakes, which make it difficult to review. A copy editor can help fix grammatical problems, excessive passive voice, typographical errors, and other editorial problems. If authors feel they have a problem in this area, it would be good to invest a little time and money in the editorial process before sending a paper to *APJM* or any journal. When possible, ask a colleague to read the manuscript before submission.

Perhaps the most common problem I have seen in reviewing and editing papers over the past two decades is the lack of a clearly stated research question. Often authors will state their research question in very vague terms such as: "this paper is about *guanxi* in China" or "this paper will explore family business in Southeast Asia." Try not to "explore," "study," or "research about" something. Ask a clear and direct research question in the introduction of the paper—in the first sentence if possible. And please make sure you understand the meaning of the word "question" here: the sentence has to end with a question mark.² Surprisingly, after being pushed by editors and reviewers to clearly raise a research question, some authors still fail to use the simple but powerful grammatical device of a question mark and are unable to frame their work in terms of a clear question.

All of these problems can send a negative signal to the editor and reviewers about an author's work while masking its potential value. Try to avoid these problems of format, clarity, emphasis, and unclear contribution to maximize the chance that your paper can go out for review and be published.

Making a contribution

An otherwise solid paper may not be acceptable for publication in *APJM* if it does not meet *APJM*'s objectives and geographical focus, is too narrow in scope, or fails to make a contribution (or make that contribution clear). Therefore, a good place for authors to begin when submitting a paper to the journal is to focus on the nature of the manuscript's contribution and what has been done in the past on this subject.

As *APJM*'s mission is to publish substantive contributions to the management and international business discipline, it is surprising how many submissions do a poor job of clearly describing the incremental contribution of the paper, and thus get rejected. I learned early in my tenure as an action editor for *APJM* and other journals that this explanation for rejecting a paper can be especially confusing to authors. It is difficult for the reviewers and the editor to tell an author specifically how to improve

² Authors can find many fine examples of clear and up-front research questions. In particular, the work of Mike Peng provides some very good examples of well-framed research questions—often as the first sentence of the paper (e.g., Peng, 2004; Tan & Peng, 2003). Some of his more recent work has even used the title of the paper to first raise the research question (e.g., Su, Tsang, & Peng, 2009). This leaves little doubt of what the paper will try to accomplish.

the contribution of a paper, so authors can be understandably discouraged. I will write in more detail on this and related topics (research questions, research programs, research contributions) in future *APJM* editorials and commentaries. For now, suffice to say that many manuscripts fail to make any meaningful contribution for either theory, practice, or other substantive area. Authors should study articles in top tier journals to see how contributions and key implications are offered.

One common example of a submission lacking a clear contribution is a paper that simply gives readers a tour of well-understood literature, constructs hypotheses with small variations on the variables from that literature—hypotheses that essentially test what is known and little else—and finally, confirms what readers already know, with little additional insight or reason given for the study. Research streams develop over time, and research on a given topic tends to become more incremental and less interesting. In terms of marginal contributions, the tenth paper on a topic is simply not as useful or interesting as the first nine papers were in describing the phenomenon, developing the model, and testing hypotheses. A paper may be the first to examine a particular aspect of the problem or issue, and in a new research site, but that paper needs to communicate clearly why this topic was studied and what the paper will add to the current state of knowledge and practice. Just testing what is already well-known without making the contributions clear is usually a formula for rejection in good journals.

Similarly, simply having a novel research site is seldom a sufficient rationale for publishing a paper. Just because a particular phenomenon has not been examined in a particular site (such as a specific industry or country) is not enough of a reason to do a study. For example, it is unclear why motivation should necessarily be different in China. If one collects enough data, a China data set will give significantly different results from another country's data set. But this begs the "so what" question. If it is found to be different, finding a difference alone is inadequate without an explanation for the difference and the (likely) mechanism for the difference as well as why people should care about those differences. Such venue-driven research carries a burden of making the case that the research site should matter for some important reason (it might, but a paper must demonstrate this, and not just state it) and then show that the expected difference is present for the reason hypothesized. Extra external validity provided by a study conducted in a new research setting may be a welcome addition to a research stream, but additional justification for a study beyond the new site alone is needed. In the case of the motivation example, what might be different about motivation in China? What conditions might be present that would make motivation and reward function differently from previous mainstream studies? All studies need to be justified and situated in the literature, and studies conducted in a new research site are no different.

Authors should also avoid claiming that they are conducting exploratory work when they really are not. This is another problem I see with submissions: Authors argue that their paper "lays the groundwork for a new domain" when in fact that "domain" is not new. For example, we get many papers at *APJM* that claim *guanxi* is "new" and unique to China, and thus they are doing exploratory research on *guanxi*. Yet *guanxi* is neither new nor unique to China: Research in social psychology over the previous 60 years shows that the components that make up *guanxi* are present in many if not all societies and are well-understood (Kenrick, Neuberg, & Cialdini,

2007). If you want to write about *guanxi*, you need to know what Alvin Gouldner (1960) and numerous other researchers wrote about reciprocity, and what Robert Cialdini (2008) and others found about liking and similarity in the process of social influence. Do not just quote ancient texts and poems—be sure to do the necessary groundwork to define *guanxi* clearly and show what is state-of-the-art in terms of past research and how the new research on *guanxi* adds to what is already known about the principles of reciprocity and liking.

As an editor, I am also concerned when authors claim their main contribution is “filling a gap” in the literature in which no one has studied the relationship between variables A and B. The problem is that the authors often do not explain why anyone should care about the relationship between A and B in the first place. An author might have done a major study on this topic, complete with a massive questionnaire and sophisticated path analysis. But if the question boils down to “can I see better with my glasses on or my glasses off,” then it may have difficulty getting published. The point that “no researcher has tested this before, particularly in country X” does not logically justify the need for such a study (Whetten, 1989).

Types of papers

Suppose you are convinced that you have a contribution to make with your research, and you are not making any of the common errors discussed above. Another common question authors might ask at this point include: (1) What types of papers does your journal accept? (2) Are they only standard empirical, hypothesis testing (variance) studies? (3) Or do you consider other types of research designs? These topics will be addressed in greater detail in subsequent editorials, but for now the short answers to the questions are many types, no, and yes. That is to say, *APJM* publishes a range of research designs and ontologies; it does not only publish empirical, quantitative hypothesis-testing studies (e.g., Ahlstrom, Lamond, & Ding, 2009; Meyer, 2009). A careful scan of *APJM* over the past decade will demonstrate

Table 1 *APJM* special issue topics and conferences.

Special issue topics	Special issue conferences	Publication dates
Networks in Asia Pacific business	Shanghai, December 2004	December 2005
Conglomerates and business groups	Singapore, December 2005	December 2006
25th anniversary	–	December 2007
Knowledge management and innovation strategy	Xi’an, July 2007	September 2008
Varieties of Asian capitalism	Brisbane, December 2007	September 2009
Managing in ethnic Chinese communities	Kaohsiung, December 2008	2010 (planned)
Managing corporate governance globally	Vancouver, October 2009	2011 (planned)
Leadership in Asia	Macau, December 2010 (planned)	2012 (planned)
Strategic management in private and family businesses	Beijing, July 2011 (planned)	2013 (planned)

the variety of papers and research designs that are published in the journal. *APJM* publishes a range of papers, from macro to micro, from theory-building to theory-testing, and from quantitative to qualitative. This summary is by no means exhaustive, and just because a type of paper has not been published in *APJM* before does not mean that it will not be considered (though past articles are a good guide for prospective authors).

In fact, *APJM* has sought to diversify both its content and its geographical reach, not only through papers published in the regular issues, but also through Special Issues and Special Issue Conferences. Shown in Table 1, a number of Special Issue Conferences have been held throughout the Asia Pacific region. We held our most recent Special Issue Conference on corporate governance in Vancouver, Canada in October 2009. This was the first time an *APJM* Special Issue Conference crossed the Pacific and was held in North America. Two new Special Issues have just been announced, for leadership and for family business, with Conferences planned for Macau (December 2010) and Beijing (July 2011). Please see the Call for Papers on the Springer-*APJM* website for more information.

The first issue for 2010

In this first issue under my stewardship, and true to the spirit of *APJM* as an “A journal” both in quality and in covering Asia, we have papers from around Asia, including China, Singapore, Korea, Japan, and India. The issue also contains a Perspectives paper by Ming-Jer Chen discussing his work on competitive dynamics research. There is also a paper on the workplace experiences of Muslim women in Australia. In addition, we have a Commentary by Tony Fang from Sweden reflecting on Hofstede’s work on culture and how it fits with Asia business research. I hope readers continue to find this and future content of *APJM* interesting and valuable.

In closing, I would like to thank Mike Peng and all the previous editorial teams who have, over the past 26 years, raised the profile of *APJM* to a position where it is now the leading journal on management in the Asia Pacific region. It is my hope to continue to build *APJM* and increase its recognition in the worldwide community of management scholars. As a stakeholder of *APJM*, you can help by submitting your best work to the journal at <http://apjm.edmgr.com>, reviewing for us (please contact me directly about this at ahlstrom@baf.msmaail.cuhk.edu.hk), and by reading, supporting, challenging, and citing work published in *APJM*.

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David Ahlstrom (PhD, New York University) is a professor at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests include management in Asia, entrepreneurship, and management and organizational history. He has published over 60 peer-reviewed articles in journals such as the *Strategic Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, and *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*. He also co-authored the textbook *International management: Strategy and culture in the emerging world*. He has served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of International Business Studies* and *Journal of Small Business Management* in addition to *APJM*. Professor Ahlstrom has guest edited two Special Issues of *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice*. At *APJM*, he has guest edited two Special Issues (Turnaround in Asia in 2004 and Managing in Ethnic Chinese Communities, forthcoming in 2010), and served as a Senior Editor during 2007–2009. He became Editor-in-Chief of *APJM* in 2010.