

## Commentary

---

# Comments on the paper “Helping reviewers ask the right questions: The InfoQ framework for reviewing applied research” by Ron S. Kenett and Galit Shmueli<sup>1</sup>

M.A. Hidirolou  
*E-mail: hidirog@yahoo.ca*

In my experience, it is true that reviewers are asked to comment on articles on scientific articles without the benefit of very specific guidelines for judging them. This agrees with what Ron S. Kenett and Galit Shmueli state in their article [1]: that is, “As in other disciplines, it is typically left to the reviewer’s experience and good sense to determine the contribution of a paper. Together with the Associate Editor and Editor’s opinions, one assumes that the “wisdom of the review team” will uncover the value of the paper in a reliable and reproducible way.” Furthermore, generally speaking, there are no general guidelines on how to write a paper so that it coincides with what the journal is looking for. This implies that Journals should also have guidelines for the authors to instruct them on how the article will be judged by the reviewers. This does not necessarily mean that authors will follow them, but, it should improve the quality of articles when they are first submitted to the journals.

The authors also point out that there has been there has also been a concerted effort by many journals to expedite the reviewing cycle in order to make new knowledge available in a timely fashion. For example, the Journal of Business & Economic Statistics has a policy that after the first round of revisions, papers must be either rejected or accepted subject to specific minor revisions. I am not convinced that this is a reasonable request on the part of journals, as several first-round articles that contain good material, but that are not well-

written, will not get through. The quality of such articles should improve quite a bit with successive reviews if the reviewers provide good comments. How long does it take a typical author to write-up an article that is almost ready to be published? I bet you that from idea inception to publication, about 5 years on the average are required to get an article published. An author either spends more time initially at polishing an article or spends more time later when the reviewers provide comments.

The authors provide a good description of InfoQ. They provide a number of factors that affect it such as the data ( $X$ ), the data analysis ( $f$ ) and the analysis goal ( $g$ ), as well as by the relationships between them. They then go onto describe the Utility of data sets which is measured using specific metric(s) ( $U$ ). A bit more could have been said about how metrics are arrived at. For theoretical statistics, I think that a metric depends on the novelty of the theoretical results as well as their validity in terms of mathematical/statistical rigor.

They then go on to describe how they would organize guidelines in applied journals into the following eight InfoQ dimensions: 1. Data Resolution; 2. Data Structure; 3. Data Integration; 4. Temporal Relevance; 5. Chronology of Data and Goal; 6. Generalizability; 7. Operationalization; and 8. Communication. Points 1 through 5 are about carrying out good data analysis. It would have been good if the authors had added separate points that covered novelty and rigor. The Generalizability may be difficult to imagine by the originators of the article. However, this does not mean that the results cannot be extended by someone else. That someone else might not have been able to come up with

---

<sup>1</sup>R.S. Kenett and G. Shmueli, Helping authors and reviewers ask the right questions: The InfoQ framework for reviewing applied research, Statistical Journal of the IAOS, 32 (2016) 11–19.

new results without that step. The same comment holds for operationalization: if the originator of the idea can state how it can be operationalized, that is great. However, this does not mean that someone else will not find a way to apply it after the article appears.

Journals take time to mature and they are at the mercy of articles that are submitted to them. I think that authors do not generally submit articles to mature journals if they feel that the level of their articles is not up to that level. If they do, such articles are rapidly rejected on first reading. I wonder if the checklist provided in Table A2 in their appendix would really improve the quality of journals that are relatively young. Such journals take time to mature and may not be the first choice of submission of authors with good articles. It should also be stated that it takes time and effort both on the part of the authors and reviewers to abide to such guidelines. Time that is demanded on reviewers is quite valuable: one must not forget that this time is voluntary. Detailed guidelines might deter them from accepting.

Good data analysis is much emphasized in the review. Data analysis is important, but methodological soundness and novelty in the methods is even more important in journals such as IAOS with its objective “*The main aim of the journal is to support the IAOS mission by publishing articles to promote the understanding and advancement of official statistics and to foster the development of effective and efficient official statistical services on a global basis*”. These methods range from frame creation to eventual publication of the survey results. It is both methodological soundness and novelty that are implemented into the systems that compute official statistics.

## Reference

- [1] R.S. Kenett and G. Shmueli, Helping authors and reviewers ask the right questions: The InfoQ framework for reviewing applied research, *Statistical Journal of the IAOS* **32** (2016), 11–19.