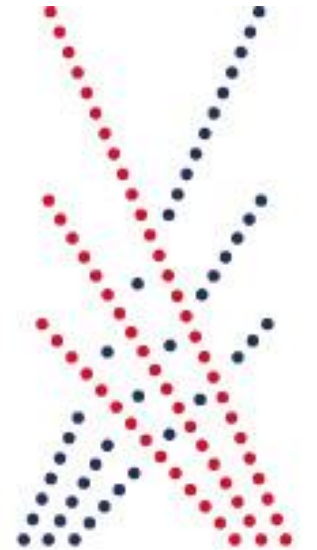




HOW TO WRITE AN ABSTRACT SO IT HAS MORE IMPACT



Advice for those publishing in:
British Journal of Management
International Journal of Management
Reviews



Based on a presentation
produced by our publishing
partner Wiley

**BRITISH ACADEMY
OF MANAGEMENT**

What does a good abstract look like?

"The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do."

Thomas Jefferson

"You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere."

Lee Iacocca

The purpose of any writing we do is to communicate something to someone.

The purpose of an abstract is to set out clearly and briefly the content of your article – and to make readers want to read your work in full!

Please consider our advice so that you can maximise the impact of your article.

How to write a good abstract

Ask yourself four questions :

1. What problem did you study and why is it important?

Here, you want to provide some background to the study, the motivation behind the study, and/or the specific question or hypothesis you addressed. Use your best judgment here as to how much to say in this first section.

2. What methods did you use to study the problem?

Give an overview of your methods. Normally, you should keep the methods section brief unless it is the focus of the paper.

3. What were your key findings?

When describing your results, focus on the main finding. List no more than 2-3 points. Avoid ambiguous or imprecise wording.

4. What did you conclude based on your findings, what are broader implications?

The conclusions section is where you want to drive home the broader implications of your study. What is new or innovative about the findings? How do your findings affect the field of study? Are there any applications? For literature reviews: what is the conceptual contribution and where should the literature be going from here? In writing this section, however, don't make sweeping generalizations unsupported by the data, and avoid saying that insights "will be discussed".

Good abstracts need to be:

Clear

- Decide how much to cover in 200 words
- Put your main points first
- Use the active voice, not passive

Concise

- Use everyday words
- Cut unnecessary words
- Switch out the adverbs

Engaging

- Make it inclusive
- Use keywords in context
- Leave them wanting more

[Consider doing a video abstract too!](#)

Clear

Your readers only want the key information. So, keep it to 200 words.

Think of details like tennis balls – the more you throw, the fewer you can catch.

Put your main points first to ensure every reader gets your most important message, then secondary points.

Active voice sounds sharp and dynamic. Passive voice is slow and stuffy.

Active sentences are where the subject does something:

- We conducted a review (instead of: a review was conducted)
- We created a model (instead of: a model was created)
- The consultant made a lot of changes (instead of: a lot of changes were made)
- They found it difficult (instead of: it was found to be difficult)

Tip: Use 'by monkeys' to check if something is passive – if you can add 'by monkeys' to the sentence and it still makes sense, then it's passive!

Everyday words make your writing warm and personal. They make it shorter and accessible.

- in order to → **to**
- despite the fact that → **although**
- in relation → **about**

Cut unnecessary words. For example:

“We investigated how consultants collaborated together over an estimated period of about six months, barring any unexpected surprises.”

Adverbs add to the length and complexity of your writing. They can almost always be cut or replaced with a more descriptive word. **There are usually better words than adverbs.**

- The multi-sector analysis was very useful – **The multi-sector analysis is invaluable**
- The experience was really, really exciting – **The experience was thrilling**

Engaging

Be mindful of subtle ways in which language can impart **bias and judgement** – even unintentionally.

Think about **sex / gender and race / ethnicity** - e.g. use **humankind** rather than mankind.

Avoid labelling for disability or socioeconomic traits – e.g. **low-income households** rather than ‘poor’.

Avoid ageism and **try to be specific** – e.g. we studied **children between 2 and 6**, not ‘young children’.

Most readers discovered your article via an online search, so including **appropriate terms and relevant keywords** can help guide them to the right place. *However, use keywords with caution. Trying to squeeze in keywords can end up making the text difficult to read or understand, so include keywords carefully and in context.*

- ✓ **Your abstract should tell people the basics – who, what, where, when**
- ✓ **It is the ‘why?’ which makes them read on: Why is this new? Why does it matter? Why is it important?**
- ✓ **Cover that to make people want to read more.**

A good example of a BJM paper abstract

Social Bots and the Spread of Disinformation in Social Media: The Challenges of Artificial Intelligence

1. What problem did you study
and why is it important?

2. What methods did you
use to study the problem?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is creating a revolution in business and society at large, as well as challenges for organizations. AI-powered social bots can sense, think and act on social media platforms in ways similar to humans. The challenge is that social bots can perform many harmful actions, such as providing wrong information to people, escalating arguments, perpetrating scams and exploiting the stock market. As such, an understanding of different kinds of social bots and their authors' intentions is vital from the management perspective. Drawing from the actor-network theory (ANT), this study investigates human and non-human actors' roles in social media, particularly Twitter. We use text mining and machine learning techniques, and after applying different pre-processing techniques, we applied the bag of words model to a dataset of 30,000 English-language tweets. The present research is among the few studies to use a theory-based focus to look, through experimental research, at the role of social bots and the spread of disinformation in social media. Firms can use our tool for the early detection of harmful social bots before they can spread misinformation on social media about their organizations.

3. What were your key findings?

4. What did you conclude based on your findings,
what are broader implications?

What makes this good?

It explains the background and problem fully, sets out the method used, provides key takeaways and practical use.

A good example of an IJMR paper abstract

Social media and luxury: A systematic literature review

1. What problem did you study and why is it important?

2. What methods did you use to study the problem?

Luxury, historically an exclusive, rare and elitist phenomenon, is changing. This is predominantly driven by technological developments, particularly social media, and the rising level of consumer empowerment in the marketplace. A maturing stream of research has emerged assessing the effects of social media platforms on luxury brands, offerings and consumers. However, there has been no comprehensive analysis of this extant literature synthesizing the current state of knowledge and postulating future research directions. This paper addresses this gap by utilizing a systematic literature review approach. A total of 115 articles were collected and analysed and five core themes were identified, examining (1) luxury brand strategy, (2) luxury brand social media communications, (3) luxury consumer attitudes and perceptions, (4) engagement and (5) social media's influence on brand performance-related outcomes. These themes are comprehensively explored to understand the myriad impacts of social media on luxury businesses before conceptualizing the themes as a holistic framework explaining social media's role within luxury. The framework developed highlights the fragmented yet progressive nature of research on the confluence of social media and luxury, and signals fruitful avenues for further inquiry. It is proposed that scholarly attention is directed towards multiple lines of inquiry, including social media's role in luxury brand construction online, social media's role in facilitating 'moments of luxury', younger consumers' luxury consumption, as well as the integration of both future innovative technological developments and novel social media platforms within luxury branding.

3. What were your key findings?

4. What did you conclude based on your findings, what are broader implications?

What makes this good?

It explains the background and gap, sets out the review method used, covers key findings and practical use.

Some useful tools and tips

- Hemmingway Editor – free to use online (can be downloaded as an app, at a cost)
- Plain English campaign / Center for Plain Language
- Read it aloud/get someone else (ideally unconnected) to read it!
- Keep a link to any good abstracts you read and use them for inspiration for your own
- Read some good examples from our journals
- Get more guidance here: <https://www.wiley.com/network/researchers/preparing-your-article/how-to-write-a-scientific-abstract>



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