

Optimising your research article impact

ACADEMIC IMPACT

Measured by article citations.

PUBLIC MEDIA IMPACT

Measured by alternative metrics (Altmetrics) which track views, downloads, sharing and discussion, etc, using the article's digital Object Identifier (DOI).

IMMEDIACY

Makes the writing more personal (eg, 'we find that') rather than impersonal (eg, 'it was found that')

INTENSITY

Uses emotion words like 'struggle', 'surprising', 'good'

DIVERSITY

Uses a richer vocabulary of unique rather than repeated words

The three lexical variants to consider in relation to academic citations and media coverage

Appropriate use of lexical variants varies depending on the audience, subsection and innovativeness of the article.

Writing for public media and academic impact

Drivers of media coverage

DO:

- Increase the intensity of your writing, particularly in the article's introduction. Writing about 5% of the article using words like 'better,' 'careful,' 'surprising,' 'critical' helps to drive media coverage.
- Use a range of unique words in the introduction but less diversity of words in remaining sections.

DON'T:

- Excessively use immediacy words as this can diminish media coverage. Affinity-seeking cues increase communication effectiveness only up to a point, beyond which immediate

language negatively influences perceptions of objectivity.

Drivers of academic citations

DO:

- Use intensity words regularly to inspire interest among academic readers.

DON'T:

- Use unfamiliar or unique words in the abstract. Diversity increases citations in sections towards the end of the article.

HOWEVER:

- Diversely written abstracts tend to gain both citations and public attention; so, leverage diverse wording in your article abstracts to boost the public's readability.

Journals and editors

DO:

- Offer authors advice about promoting their research via search engines, databases, and social media.
- Invite authors to adapt the research article for formats like teaching materials, learning resources and podcasts.
- Encourage authors to broaden the reach of the research by publishing chapters in handbook series, executive summaries, and informed commentaries in web-based outlets.

DON'T:

- Seek a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to academic citations and media coverage.

NOTE:

- Trying to appeal to different audiences may yield conflicting stylistic choices and ultimately a lower overall impact across all audiences. For example, innovative articles which are written less intensely are likely to gain more citations. However, innovative articles that use more immediate and less diverse language are likely to gain more media coverage.
- Innovative articles that create buzz and have a higher sharing premium serve core science functions: discovery, dissemination, and discussion. Therefore, crowd-sourcing attention fosters the journal's primary goal of sharing science, so the value of these articles is not to be overlooked.