

Kraus, Sascha; Bouncken, Ricarda B.; Yela Aránega, Alba

**Article — Published Version**

## The burgeoning role of literature review articles in management research: an introduction and outlook

Review of Managerial Science

*Suggested Citation:* Kraus, Sascha; Bouncken, Ricarda B.; Yela Aránega, Alba (2024) : The burgeoning role of literature review articles in management research: an introduction and outlook, Review of Managerial Science, ISSN 1863-6691, Springer Berlin Heidelberg, Berlin/Heidelberg, Vol. 18, Iss. 2, pp. 299-314,  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-024-00729-1>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/315695>

**Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

**Terms of use:**

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



# The burgeoning role of literature review articles in management research: an introduction and outlook

Sascha Kraus<sup>1,2</sup> · Ricarda B. Bouncken<sup>3</sup> · Alba Yela Aránega<sup>4</sup>

Received: 2 November 2023 / Accepted: 4 January 2024 / Published online: 30 January 2024  
© The Author(s) 2024

## Abstract

This article delves into the significance and utility of literature review articles in the field of management research, encompassing their three most prominent forms: structured literature reviews, bibliometric analyses, and meta-analyses. It discusses the evolving role of literature reviews as essential tools in a research process, their methodological intricacies, and their contribution to shaping the landscape of management studies. Through a thorough examination of their merits, limitations, and best practices, our article sheds light on how literature review articles serve as valuable resources for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in the field of management. In addition, the article points towards opportunities for using AI tools, for example Google Colab, ChatGPT, Methods Wizards, or Petal for single or multiple stages and tasks of structured literature analyses.

**Keywords** Structured · Systematic · Literature · Review · Management · Business · Bibliometrics · Artificial intelligence

**JEL Classification** M1 · M10 · M19 · M20

---

✉ Sascha Kraus  
sascha.kraus@zfk.de

Ricarda B. Bouncken  
bouncken@uni-bayreuth.de

Alba Yela Aránega  
alba.yela@uah.es

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Economics and Management, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, 39100 Bolzano, Italy

<sup>2</sup> Department of Business Management, University of Johannesburg, 2092 Johannesburg, South Africa

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Law and Economics, University of Bayreuth, Prieserstraße 2, 95444 Bayreuth, Germany

<sup>4</sup> Faculty of Economics, Business Studies and Tourism, University of Alcalá, Plaza San Diego, 28801 Alcalá de Henares, Spain

## 1 Introduction

Management research, as an interdisciplinary field, is marked by a constant influx of new information, theories, and practices (van Grinsven et al. 2016; Mas-Tur et al. 2020). Keeping abreast of the latest developments and understanding the existing knowledge base serves as a fundamental requirement for making informed decisions in both academic and practical settings (Palmatier et al. 2018). Hence, literature review articles, including structured literature reviews, bibliometric analyses, and meta-analyses, play a pivotal role in facilitating this process (Fisch and Block 2018). For further embellishing the “art of literature reviews”, our introductory article explores the relevance and use of such articles in management research, elaborating on their multifaceted contributions and complexities.

In the realm of academic research, literature reviews have traditionally been an integral component, serving as a foundation for the development of new ideas, theories, and methodologies (Callahan 2014). While literature reviews have long been considered a vital part of scholarly discourse, a relatively recent trend has emerged, one that focuses specifically on *standalone* literature review articles (Kraus et al. 2022). This burgeoning field of literature reviews as own, independent studies not only underscores the importance of comprehensive literature reviews, but also reflects the dynamic evolution of the methods applied to conduct such articles. As research tools and methodologies are constantly further evolving, the discipline of standalone literature review articles is adapting and improving to meet the demands of contemporary management research.

About a decade ago, the publication landscape for literature review articles in the field of academic management faced significant obstacles in attaining the desired level of academic quality and achieving publication. Many journals editorial boards explicitly rejected submissions of this nature, citing concerns about the perceived lack of substantive “contribution” to the field (Wright 2015). At the time, literature review articles were frequently perceived as insufficiently impactful and were often deemed outside the scope of what journals sought to publish, as they would not generate new knowledge.

However, the past decade has witnessed a significant shift in the reception and recognition of literature review articles in the management field. This transformation can be attributed to the adoption of more robust methodologies (Breslin and Bailey 2020), which have not only improved the academic quality of these articles but have also amplified their impact and citation rates. This transformation has also yielded a notable enhancement in the academic quality of such articles. As a result, they now garner increased attention and “impact” within the academic community (Aguinis et al. 2012; 2014; Kunisch et al. 2018).

The newfound impact of literature review articles is evident through the increased number of citations, enhancing their standing in the academic ecosystem. This ongoing trend not only benefits authors but also elevates the journals themselves. Consequently, the quality and recognition shift positively influences the metrics used to measure the prestige and reach of academic journals,

highlighting the evolving importance of literature review articles in the contemporary academic landscape. High-quality literature reviews with improved methodologies have significantly contributed to journal metrics like the “Impact Factor” (from Clarivate) or the “CiteScore” (from Scopus/Elsevier). These metrics mirror the journals’ overall influence and status within the academic domain, and well-executed literature reviews have played a pivotal role in elevating these metrics. As a result, journals such as the “International Journal of Management Reviews” now boast some of the highest impact factors in the field, and even the leading journals in the field now—at least occasionally—publish review articles. The “Review of Managerial Science” was one of the few journals to feature an extra category for the type of academic research from its inception, and it continues to be very popular with authors.

## 2 The evolving role of literature review articles

### 2.1 Most common review article types

#### 2.1.1 Structured literature reviews

Structured (also called *systematic*) literature reviews provide a systematic approach to synthesizing existing research by employing a well-defined methodology (Kraus et al. 2020; Sauer and Seuring 2023). They assist researchers in organizing, analyzing, and summarizing literature while maintaining transparency in their process. These reviews are instrumental in identifying patterns, trends, and key research questions (Laher and Hassem 2020). By following a predefined protocol, structured literature reviews ensure consistency and rigor in the evaluation of existing studies, making them not only valuable for understanding the current state of research but also for setting standards of methodological excellence (Rojon et al. 2021; Tranfield et al. 2003).

#### 2.1.2 Bibliometric analyses

Bibliometric analyses, rooted in quantitative data analysis (Lawani 1981), offer a unique perspective by assessing the impact, connectivity, and evolution of research in management (Donthu et al. 2021). Through bibliometric techniques, researchers can identify influential works, key authors, and emerging areas of interest, which are invaluable for understanding the field’s dynamics (Zupic and Čater 2015). In an era of information overload, bibliometric analyses help researchers identify the most influential and relevant contributions, thus facilitating focused and strategic research efforts (Linnenluecke et al. 2020).

#### 2.1.3 Meta-analyses

Meta-analyses, on the other hand, aggregate the results of multiple studies to draw generalizable conclusions (Geyskens et al. 2009). They play a significant role in

synthesizing empirical evidence, offering statistical rigor, and identifying potential biases or inconsistencies within the literature (King and He 2005). This method is particularly valuable in answering specific research questions and quantifying the effects of various management interventions (Combs et al. 2019). The transparent and quantitative nature of meta-analyses enhances their credibility, making them essential for resolving debates and informing evidence-based decisions.

## 2.2 Standalone literature reviews

Literature review articles can be valuable as standalone articles in the academic world and have their own unique place in scholarly publications (Rowe 2014). Such standalone literature review articles, as a distinct subfield within the larger arena of academic literature, have gained increasing prominence in recent years (Snyder 2019). Unlike traditional literature reviews, which are often embedded within (usually empirical) research papers (Rocco and Plakhotnik 2009), standalone literature review articles are comprehensive, self-contained documents that offer a comprehensive survey of the existing literature on a particular topic or research question. These articles are not merely background summaries but serve as authoritative reference points for scholars, researchers, and students seeking to explore a specific subject in depth. This shift towards standalone literature reviews has given rise to a unique branch of academic scholarship.

### 2.2.1 Evolution

The methods employed in conducting standalone literature review articles have witnessed continuous evolution and improvement (Kraus et al. 2022). The field has moved beyond the mere aggregation of existing studies and has evolved into a systematic and structured process. Several key factors contribute to the ongoing refinement of the methods:

- (1) *Digital Tools and Databases*: The proliferation of digital databases and search engines has made it easier to access a vast amount of literature. These tools not only expedite the process of collecting relevant research, but also allow for more precise and targeted searches, enhancing the quality of literature reviews. More than a decade ago, references for bibliometric analyses had to be entered into Excel files largely “by hand”, which meant several weeks of work for the person (often junior scholars) entering the data.
- (2) *Systematic Review Guidelines*: The adaptation of systematic review methodologies to standalone literature reviews has become increasingly common (Aguinis et al. 2020; Sauer and Seuring 2023). These guidelines ensure a rigorous, reproducible, and unbiased approach to literature selection and analysis, leading to more robust reviews (Simsek et al. 2023).
- (3) *Citation Analysis and Bibliometrics*: The use of citation analysis and bibliometric tools has become an essential aspect of standalone literature reviews (Donthu et al. 2021). By examining citation patterns and impact metrics, reviewers can

assess the influence and relevance of prior research, which aids in determining the significance of various contributions to the field (Mukherjee et al. 2022).

- (4) *Synthesis and Frameworks*: Researchers are increasingly employing advanced synthesis methods, such as meta-analysis, content analysis, and thematic frameworks, to organize and present the reviewed literature in a structured manner (Templier and Paré 2015). This helps readers gain a clearer understanding of the state of knowledge on a particular topic.
- (5) *Interdisciplinary Approaches*: The boundaries between academic disciplines are becoming increasingly porous. Literature review articles now often encompass interdisciplinary perspectives, allowing for a broader and more holistic understanding of complex topics.

### 2.2.2 Functions

Literature review articles, while not presenting original empirical research findings, serve several critical functions and are often considered as important contributions to the field. The main functions of such articles are:

- (1) *Synthesizing Existing Knowledge*: Literature review articles are dedicated to summarizing and synthesizing existing knowledge on a specific topic or research area (Rousseau et al. 2008). They consolidate information from various primary research studies, providing a holistic overview (Chen and Hitt 2021). By doing so, they help readers understand the current state of research on a given subject (Dwertmann and van Knippenberg 2021).
- (2) *Identifying Trends and Gaps*: One of the primary roles of a literature review article is to identify trends, patterns, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge. This can be crucial for researchers looking to explore new avenues, formulate research questions, and design studies that address unanswered questions.
- (3) *Providing Methodological Insights*: Some literature review articles delve into the methodologies used in the studies they review. These methodological insights can be valuable for researchers who want to understand the best practices in data collection, analysis, and study design within a particular field.
- (4) *Supporting Evidence-Based Decision-Making*: Literature reviews offer a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and professionals seeking to make informed decisions. They provide a condensed and authoritative source of information, helping stakeholders to apply the most current and reliable knowledge in their work.
- (5) *Clarifying Complex Concepts*: Many fields have complex theories and concepts that may be challenging to grasp for newcomers. Literature reviews often simplify and clarify these ideas, making them accessible to a broader audience, including students and individuals new to the field.
- (6) *Educational and Teaching Aids*: Literature review articles are frequently used in educational settings to teach students about a specific topic or research area, especially in postgraduate or doctoral level courses. Supervisors may assign these articles to help students gain an understanding of foundational knowledge and the history of research within a field.

- (7) *Influencing Theory Development*: In some cases, literature reviews serve as a foundation for advancing new theoretical frameworks or models. They provide a comprehensive perspective on a subject, which can inspire the development of new theories or the refinement of existing ones.
- (8) *Fostering Debate and Discussion*: Sometimes, a literature review article might take a critical stance, highlighting contradictions or controversies in the field. This can stimulate debate and discussions among researchers, contributing to the evolution of knowledge.

While literature review articles primarily summarize and consolidate existing research, they play an essential role in knowledge dissemination and are often a crucial starting point for both seasoned researchers and newcomers to a particular field (Kraus et al. 2023). As standalone articles, they offer readers a well-structured and comprehensive overview of a specific topic, making them a valuable resource in academia and beyond.

### 2.2.3 Use of artificial intelligence AI tools

In the future, researchers may increasingly utilize artificial intelligence (AI) tools like Google Colab, ChatGPT, Methods Wizards, and or Petal in the entire process or enhance specific stages of a systematic literature review and analysis. AI can provide direct or indirect support for various steps in systematic literature analysis, as well as contribute to decision-making during the augmented analysis (Burger et al. 2023).

While it is essential that the researcher's decisions guide the research question, AI, such as ChatGPT, can aid in refining research questions and improving terminology. AI also holds the potential to automate search processes across diverse databases, although this potential requires careful research preparation. For instance, employing AI activities necessitates the training of AI models, such as by establishing criteria for paper inclusion or exclusion. Researchers can employ automatic coding of articles through platforms like Petal.org and elicit.org, create word clouds using CodeInterpreter and Python, generate scientometric networks, and visualize research maps.

An integral aspect of supporting literature analysis is the creation of a coding or data extraction sheet by the researcher. AI can assist in the identification and coding of Python scripts. However, limitations persist, and researchers must determine when and based on which criteria they will halt title or abstract screening.

While future research in systematic literature review and analysis may incorporate AI, there are also opportunities for studying and comparing the effectiveness of these methods. For instance, researchers can establish criteria for evaluating and comparing various tools for systematic reviews.

Last, but not least, we would like to emphasize the potential ethical issues associated with the use of generative AI, including ChatGPT, which researchers must take into consideration (see e.g., Dwivedi et al. 2023).

### 2.2.4 Contributions

- (1) *Advancing Knowledge:* Literature review articles contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge by providing a comprehensive overview of the field (Pittaway et al. 2014). They act as stepping stones for subsequent research, helping scholars build on existing work and explore uncharted territory. In this regard, literature reviews serve as catalysts for intellectual growth, encouraging scholars to identify gaps, generate new hypotheses, and design novel research endeavors.
- (2) *Quality Assurance:* Review articles, by evaluating and summarizing a multitude of studies, act as a form of quality assurance. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners can trust that these reviews have undergone a rigorous evaluation process, which ensures the reliability of the information presented. Furthermore, the transparent methodology employed in structured literature reviews and the quantitative rigor in bibliometric analyses and meta-analyses enhance the credibility of these reviews, making them dependable sources for decision-making.
- (3) *Informing Theory and Practice:* Literature review articles serve as foundational components in the development of theory and practice within the field of management (LePine and King 2010). They provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing body of knowledge (DeGeest and Schmidt 2010), thus offering valuable insights into both historical and emerging trends. Researchers often employ literature reviews to identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the domain, which can stimulate further investigation and innovation. The dual role, as both a beacon illuminating the path of management research and a compass guiding practical applications, underscores the significance of literature review articles.
- (4) *Policy and Decision-Making:* In addition to their academic utility, literature review articles are indispensable for shaping policy and decision-making in the management sector (Aguinis et al. 2022). Policymakers and practitioners often rely on these articles to develop strategies and make informed choices based on an evidence-based understanding of current best practices. By synthesizing and summarizing vast bodies of research (Cooper 1988), literature review articles act as digestible sources of knowledge, ensuring that decision-makers can navigate the complex landscape of management with a sound understanding of the current state of the art (Dwertmann and van Knippenberg 2021).

### 2.2.5 Limitations and best practices

- (1) *Potential Biases:* Literature review articles, though rigorous, are not immune to potential biases, as the selection of studies and methodologies can introduce subjective judgments. However, adherence to transparent and well-documented procedures can mitigate these biases (Sauer and Seuring 2023). Practicing rigorous research ethics and maintaining a commitment to neutrality in the selection and analysis of studies is vital to ensure the objectivity and integrity of literature review articles (Harari et al. 2020; Hiebl 2023).



- (2) *Continuous Updates*: Given the dynamic nature of management research, literature review articles should be periodically updated to ensure their relevance. Best practices include providing clear guidelines for the frequency of updates and methods for incorporating new research. By setting a standard for regular review updates, researchers can ensure that literature review articles remain current and continue to guide the evolution of the field.
- (3) *Needs and Justifications for Update*: However, on the other side, it is somewhat disturbing to observe that for certain topics, not just one, but two or three literature review articles on the exact or at least almost the same research question have been published at almost the same time or at an extremely short distance from each other, often—but not always—in poorly ranked or even totally unranked journals. This often happens in ignorance or bad research of the editors and reviewers to already published topics. Of course, an update only makes sense if other sub-areas of the subject area are investigated or other questions are addressed, or if the subject area has developed so much in the meantime—also in terms of scope or method—that an update can be justified and, above all, makes sense. If this is not the case, the editors and reviewers should not allow the publication of the more recent contribution, for which there is already a paper with almost the same content.

### 3 Conclusion: elaborated analyses based on topics and content

Literature review articles, including structured literature reviews, bibliometric analyses, and meta-analyses, are invaluable tools in the realm of management research, significantly contributing to its growth and development (Hulland and Houston 2020). They serve as cornerstones for theory development, policy formulation, and evidence-based decision-making, thus playing a pivotal role in the progression of management studies (Short 2009). Despite certain limitations, adherence to best practices and a commitment to periodic updates can ensure that these articles remain relevant and continue to guide and shape the field's dynamic evolution. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners alike can benefit from their contribution to the field's multifaceted landscape, where knowledge is both the destination and the journey. In the future, we expect that the research process will be further augmented by the use of AI tools.

Standalone literature review articles are emerging as a distinctive and essential component of academic scholarship. As this field continues to burgeon, the methods employed for conducting literature reviews are constantly evolving and improving. The utilization of digital tools, the application of systematic review guidelines, the integration of bibliometrics, advanced synthesis methods, and interdisciplinary approaches all contribute to the ongoing refinement of this scholarly practice. These changes reflect the adaptability of the academic community in the face of evolving research methodologies and information technologies, ensuring that standalone literature review articles remain valuable resources in the ever-changing landscape of academia.

The field of standalone literature review articles, as discussed earlier, has witnessed considerable growth and development, marked by a continuous evolution of methodologies. However, there is a pertinent question looming on the horizon: *Has the field reached its zenith, and are there signs of saturation in the kind of work produced?*

The proliferation of software tools and readily accessible bibliographic databases has made it possible for virtually anyone to conduct descriptive analyses of scholarly literature (e.g., Chen 2003; Van Eck and Waltman 2014; Ammirato et al. 2023). Consequently, a considerable number of literature review articles now seem to produce strikingly similar results, asking the same research questions and presenting almost identical descriptive information. The wealth of available data can sometimes lead to redundancy rather than meaningful insights. Indeed, there are indicators suggesting that this might be the case. In recent years, there has been an influx of literature review articles that, despite employing sophisticated and easy-to-use data analysis tools such as *VOSviewer* to analyze and visualize Scopus, EBSCO, and similar databases, predominantly produce purely descriptive information. These descriptions often revolve around “most cited authors”, “most cited articles”, “countries with the highest publication rates”, and other similar metrics. While this descriptive information is valuable, it can be argued that the field may have reached a saturation point with regard to this type of analysis.

In this context, the additional benefit of producing literature review articles primarily centered on purely descriptive data is increasingly questionable. While it may serve as a helpful reference for basic background information, these analyses no longer push the boundaries of knowledge or offer new, substantive contributions to a field. Such literature review articles can be seen as a culmination of a specific era, where easy access to data has led to a profusion of descriptive, albeit repetitive, reviews.

The field of standalone literature review articles is evolving, and it is advisable to transition towards more sophisticated analyses and the integration of useful AI tool results. The future of this field should prioritize generating deeper insights through topic, content, and thematic analyses, rather than simply presenting descriptive data. In-depth examinations of existing literature’s content, emerging trends, knowledge gaps, and critical assessments of methodologies can provide fresh perspectives and value to readers.

In conclusion, the era of standalone literature review articles centered on purely descriptive data is approaching its conclusion. The field should progress towards more elaborate analyses based on topics and content. This evolution will not only invigorate the discipline but also offer readers valuable insights and a deeper understanding of the state of knowledge in a specific research area. As the field continues to evolve, the focus should shift from “who cites whom” to “what’s new” and “what’s next” in the world of scholarly literature.

Rather than fixating solely on the most cited sources, the field should embrace a shift towards a more qualitative and substantive approach (Aguinis et al. 2020). The content and results should be utilized for theorizing (Post et al. 2020; Breslin and Gatrell 2023). Analyzing the quality of research, assessing paradigm evolution, exploring interdisciplinary connections, and identifying new research

directions are areas that deserve increased attention. Literature reviews that offer meaningful synthesis, critique, and conceptual innovation can form the foundation for advancing knowledge within a specific field. Kunisch et al. (2023) call this approach—aptly—“review research”.

The key takeaway is that while the age of simplistic, mostly descriptive literature reviews may be nearing its end due to a perceived saturation of such content, it does not diminish the importance of literature review articles in general. Instead, it underscores the need for better, more rigorous, and more insightful approaches to conducting them (Kunisch et al. 2023). In conclusion, literature review papers remain vital in the academic landscape, serving as essential foundations for new research, providing historical context, and guiding scholars towards understanding the state of knowledge in their respective fields (Parmigiani and King 2019). However, as discussed, there is an urgent need for improvement in how such literature reviews are conducted.

Literature reviews must evolve beyond mere summarization and enumeration of citations to provide deeper insights, critical assessments, and meaningful synthesis. Researchers and scholars should strive for more elaborate and nuanced analyses, focusing on the content, topics, and themes within the literature. By adopting these more advanced and critical approaches, literature review papers will continue to play a crucial role in advancing knowledge and scholarship in various academic disciplines. The future of literature reviews lies not in their obsolescence but in their refinement and their capacity to offer richer, more meaningful contributions to the academic discourse.

## 4 The review articles in this special issue

This Special Issue of the “Review of Managerial Science” brings together the above mentioned review types in a variety of ways, attempting to provide a state-of-the-art overview of some of the hottest topics in entrepreneurship, innovation, and knowledge in contemporary management research. It consists of ten contributions from 33 authors from 13 countries.

The paper titled “Uncovering the organizational, environmental, and socio-economic sustainability of digitization” by Chopra et al. (2023) delves into the integration of organizational, environmental, and socioeconomic sustainability with digital technologies, a topic that has garnered increasing attention in recent years. Through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis, this paper provides valuable insights into the social, intellectual, and conceptual structures of this evolving field. The study not only sheds light on the descriptive aspects of this subject but also emphasizes its social and intellectual context, its evolution, and its future agenda. It underscores the benefits of technology adoption in enhancing efficiency, improving performance, and driving profitability for both individuals and companies. Furthermore, it advocates for increased funding to develop environmentally friendly technologies that promote inclusive economic models and sustainable growth. The research also addresses the social and ethical implications of technology integration, emphasizing the importance of considering factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and location

when digitizing the world. By drawing on existing evidence and synthesizing findings, this study offers a fresh academic and policy contribution to the interconnected fields of digitalization and sustainability.

The paper authored by Felicetti et al. (2023) titled “Digital innovation in entrepreneurial firms” presents a comprehensive systematic literature review that explores the intricate relationship between entrepreneurship and digital innovation. By analyzing 185 papers published over the past two decades, the authors aim to consolidate the state of research at the intersection of these two vital fields. Their review identifies six key topics, such as start-ups’ collaboration networks, business-model innovation, and digital ventures. What sets this paper apart is its ability to propose three main research directions for future exploration. These include advocating for multi-level analyses of digital innovation in entrepreneurial ventures, encouraging interdisciplinary approaches, and promoting the development of specific theories for digital innovation. Overall, this research serves as a solid foundation for academics and practitioners by providing a structured overview of the existing knowledge while guiding future research endeavors toward the unexplored territories of entrepreneurship and digital innovation.

In the paper authored by Fernández-Uclés et al. (2023) titled “Online reputation of agri-food companies and determining factors”, the authors explore the online presence and reputation of agri-food companies in the modern, technology-oriented society. It emphasizes the critical importance of a positive online image as a key intangible asset for companies undergoing technological transformations. The study employs fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis to identify the factors influencing online reputation, highlighting the role of legal form and attributes associated with the company’s website. These attributes include website quality, the presence of corporate social responsibility information, secure connections, and the sale of organic products. The research’s findings provide strategic guidelines for both public and private decision-makers to leverage the full potential of information and communication technologies. In essence, this study emphasizes the need for companies to not only have an online presence but to convey the right image effectively, and it provides concrete insights for achieving this goal.

The paper titled “Overcoming barriers to transformation in manufacturing firms” by Brekke et al. (2023) tackles the challenges faced by manufacturing firms in their quest to break away from established business models, offerings, routines, and capabilities. They adopt a path-dependence perspective in their analysis, relying on a single longitudinal case study of a leading manufacturing company. Through in-depth interviews with senior executives and managers, the authors uncover four path-breaking mechanisms that offer valuable insights into the process of transformation. These mechanisms include organizational reconfiguration, reconfiguration of value offerings, opportunity exploration, and knowledge reconfiguration. By developing a framework based on these mechanisms, the research provides meaningful guidance for manufacturing firms seeking to deviate from their existing paths, offering fresh perspectives and a systematic approach to the challenge of transformation in this sector.

In the article authored by Ballerini et al. (2023) titled “E-commerce channel management on the manufacturers’ side”, the authors address the evolving landscape of

e-commerce channel management from the perspective of manufacturers. As online commerce continues to reshape the global marketplace, this study focuses on the emerging literature concerning online channel management from a manufacturer's point of view. The research starts by providing bibliometric insights into the ongoing work in this field and goes further to identify and review three interconnected thematic clusters. These clusters revolve around strategic marketing issues, pricing policies, and operational interactions among supply chain members. The paper concludes with the development of thirteen original research propositions, offering potential avenues for future research in this rapidly expanding area. In essence, this study provides a comprehensive structure for the existing knowledge on online channel management from the manufacturer's perspective and paves the way for future theoretical advancements and research pathways.

The paper titled "The role of digitalization in business and management" by Calderon-Monge and Ribeiro-Soriano (2023) is a systematic literature review that explores the role of digitalization in the realms of business and management. In an era where digitalization plays a crucial role in economic growth, the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the state-of-the-art digitalization within firms. The authors analyze 119 review articles published in the fields of management, marketing, and finance and accounting. The review reveals key trends in the most mature areas of these disciplines, such as the impact of digital technologies on the analysis of consumer behavior, the intersection of digitalization and green innovation within organizations, and the application of blockchain technology to financial services. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of digitalization's implications and its integration into established points of view within the literature on management, marketing, finance, and accounting. It serves as an essential resource for scholars and practitioners seeking to grasp the evolving landscape of digitalization in the business and management domains.

The article titled "Transformational and entrepreneurial leadership" by Ravet-Brown et al. (2023) scrutinizes to clarify the distinction and overlap between these two constructs. Entrepreneurship, recognized as a driver of economic growth, hinges on entrepreneurial leadership. Yet, the study notes that research in this area is marked by fragmentation and insufficient integration with the broader leadership literature. This work endeavors to unravel the relationship between the concepts of transformational leadership (TL) and entrepreneurial leadership (EL), which have been suggested by previous research as measured here by a survey study. The authors employ conceptual work, current research findings, and practical insights to examine the conceptual divergence and questionnaire-related challenges associated with EL and TL. While the study provides an overview of EL from a leadership science perspective, it underscores the need for a specific theoretical model to support this evolving field. This research, therefore, represents a significant contribution to the study of leadership styles, providing clarity on the distinctions and overlaps between transformational and entrepreneurial leadership.

In the paper authored by Anwar et al. (2023) titled "Entrepreneurship in family firms: an updated bibliometric overview", the authors embark on an ambitious task of unraveling the complexities of entrepreneurial behavior in family firms by conducting a bibliometric analysis. The exponential growth of research in this domain has led to

fragmentation due to various theoretical perspectives and contexts. This study integrates two bibliometric methods to paint a comprehensive picture of the field. Through co-citation analysis, the authors cluster the intellectual foundations of entrepreneurship in family firms, highlighting key aspects such as socioemotional wealth and entrepreneurial orientation. A bibliographic coupling of recent publications reveals the current research discourses, encompassing topics like gender and success, family firm internationalization, and more. The research offers a solid foundation for scholars and practitioners seeking to understand the existing knowledge on entrepreneurship in family firms while paving the way for future theoretical advancements and research pathways.

The article “Absorptive capacity in family firms” by Pütz and Werner (2023) is a systematic literature review that delves into the role of absorptive capacity (AC) in family firms. With two-thirds of businesses worldwide being family firms, understanding AC’s impact on these unique entities is crucial. The authors examine 27 articles to shed light on the distinct dynamics of AC in family businesses, emphasizing the influence of family members on the integration of external knowledge. The study reveals that family members both promote the integration of external knowledge and potentially hinder it by isolating the firm and restricting access to external knowledge. Additionally, the research highlights the predominance of conceptual studies in this domain and the need for more empirical research drawing on multidimensional constructs of AC and family influence. This paper provides valuable insights into the intricate relationship between family firms and AC, paving the way for further exploration and understanding in this unique context.

The final article in this issue “Open innovation: status quo and quo vadis—An analysis of a research field” by Bertello et al. (2023) delves into the evolving field of open innovation. In an era characterized by rapid social and economic changes, the study explores how the research community has adapted to meet new needs and challenges in the open innovation domain. Using bibliometric techniques and content analysis, the paper offers a descriptive analysis of the literature, defines its knowledge structure, and provides an overview of the theoretical landscape. The research shows that the field is consolidating established topics and theoretical approaches while also exploring uncharted dimensions of open innovation. In conclusion, this study offers a comprehensive perspective on the state of research in open innovation and provides valuable insights into its evolving nature.

**Funding** Open access funding provided by Libera Università di Bolzano within the CRUI-CARE Agreement.

**Data availability** There is no data available for this article.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

**Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article’s Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line

to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

## References

- Aguinis H, Suárez-González I, Lannelongue G, Joo H (2012) Scholarly impact revisited. *Acad Manag Perspect* 26(2):105–132
- Aguinis H, Shapiro DL, Antonacopoulou EP, Cummings TG (2014) Scholarly impact: a pluralist conceptualization. *Acad Manage Learn Edu* 13(4):623–639
- Aguinis H, Ramani RS, Alabduljader N (2020) Best-practice recommendations for producers, evaluators, and users of methodological literature reviews. *Organ Res Methods* 26(1):46–76
- Aguinis H, Jensen SH, Kraus S (2022) Policy implications of organizational behavior and human resource management research. *Acad Manage Perspect* 36(3):857–878
- Ammirato S, Felicetti AM, Rogano D, Linzalone R, Corvello V, Practice, (2023) Digitalising the systematic literature review process: the MySLR platform. *Knowl Manag Res Pract* 21(4):777–794
- Anwar M, Clauss T, Meyer N (2023) Entrepreneurship in family firms: an updated bibliometric overview. *Rev Manag Sci*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00650-z>
- Ballerini J, Yahiaoui D, Giovando G, Ferraris A (2023) E-commerce channel management on the manufacturers' side: ongoing debates and future research pathways. *Rev Manag Sci*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00645-w>
- Bertello A, De Bernardi P, Ricciardi F (2023) Open innovation: status quo and quo vadis - an analysis of a research field. *Rev Manag Sci*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00655-8>
- Brekke T, Lenka S, Kohtamäki M, Parida V, Solem BAA (2023) Overcoming barriers to transformation in manufacturing firms. A path-dependence perspective of digital servitization. *Rev Manag Sci*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00641-0>
- Breslin D, Bailey K (2020) Expanding the conversation through 'debate essays' and 'review methodology' papers. *Int J Manag Rev* 22(3):219–221
- Breslin D, Gatrell C (2023) Theorizing through literature reviews: the miner-pro prospector continuum. *Organ Res Methods* 26(1):139–167
- Burger B, Kanbach DK, Kraus S, Breier M, Corvello V (2023) On the use of AI-based tools like ChatGPT to support management research. *Eur J Innov Manag* 26(7):233–241
- Calderon-Monge E, Ribeiro-Soriano D (2023) The role of digitalization in business and management: a systematic literature review. *Rev Manag Sci*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00647-8>
- Callahan JL (2014) Writing literature reviews: a reprise and update. *Hum Resour Dev Rev* 13(3):271–275
- Chen C (2003) Mapping scientific frontiers: the quest for knowledge visualization. *Springer Sci Bus Media* 59:364–369
- Chen VZ, Hitt MA (2021) Knowledge synthesis for scientific management: practical integration for complexity versus scientific fragmentation for simplicity. *J Manag Inq* 30(2):177–192
- Chopra R, Agrawal A, Sharma GD, Kallmuenzer A, Vasa L (2023) Uncovering the organizational, environmental, and socio-economic sustainability of digitization: evidence from existing research. *Rev Manag Sci*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00637-w>
- Combs JG, Crook TR, Rauch A (2019) Meta-analytic research in management: contemporary approaches, unresolved controversies, and rising standards. *J Manage Stud* 56(1):1–18
- Cooper HM (1988) Organizing knowledge syntheses: a taxonomy of literature reviews. *Knowl Soc* 1(1):104
- DeGeest DS, Schmidt FL (2010) The impact of research synthesis methods on industrial–organizational psychology: the road from pessimism to optimism about cumulative knowledge. *Res Synth Methods* 1(3–4):185–197
- Donthu N, Kumar S, Mukherjee D, Pandey N, Lim WM (2021) How to conduct a bibliometric analysis: an overview and guidelines. *J Bus Res* 133:285–296
- Dwertmann DJ, van Knippenberg D (2021) Capturing the state of the science to change the state of the science: a categorization approach to integrative reviews. *J Organ Behav* 42(2):104–117



- Dwivedi YK, Kshetri N, Hughes L, Slade EL, Jeyaraj A, Kar AK, Baabdullah AM, Koohang A, Raghavan V, Ahuja M (2023) “So what if ChatGPT wrote it? Multidisciplinary perspectives on opportunities, challenges and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice and policy. *Int J Inf Manag* 71:102642
- Felicetti AM, Corvello V and Ammirato S (2023) Digital innovation in entrepreneurial firms: a systematic literature review. *Rev Manag Sci*
- Fernández-Uclés D, Mozas-Moral A, Bernal-Jurado E, Puentes-Poyatos R (2023) Online reputation of agri-food companies and determining factors: an empirical investigation. *Rev Manag Sci*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-023-00639->
- Fisch C, Block J (2018) Six tips for your (systematic) literature review in business and management research. *Manag Rev Q* 68:103–106
- Geyskens I, Krishnan R, Steenkamp J-BE, Cunha PV (2009) A review and evaluation of meta-analysis practices in management research. *J Manag* 35(2):393–419
- Harari MB, Parola HR, Hartwell CJ, Riegelman A (2020) Literature searches in systematic reviews and meta-analyses: a review, evaluation, and recommendations. *J Vocat Behav* 118:103377
- Hiebl MR (2023) Sample selection in systematic literature reviews of management research. *Organ Res Methods* 26(2):229–261
- Hulland J, Houston MB (2020) Why systematic review papers and meta-analyses matter: an introduction to the special issue on generalizations in marketing. *J Acad Market Sci* 48:351–359
- King WR, He J (2005) Understanding the role and methods of meta-analysis in IS research. *Commun Assoc Inf Syst* 16(1):32
- Kraus S, Breier M, Dasí-Rodríguez S, Journal M (2020) The art of crafting a systematic literature review in entrepreneurship research. *Int Entrep Manag J* 16:1023–1042
- Kraus S, Breier M, Lim WM, Dabić M, Kumar S, Kanbach D, Mukherjee D, Corvello V, Piñeiro-Chousa J, Liguori, E.e.a. (2022) Literature reviews as independent studies: guidelines for academic practice. *RMS* 16(8):2577–2595
- Kraus S, Mahto RV, Walsh ST (2023) The importance of literature reviews in small business and entrepreneurship research. *J Small Bus Manage* 61(3):1095–1106
- Kunisch S, Menz M, Bartunek JM, Cardinal LB, Denyer D (2018) Feature topic at organizational research methods: how to conduct rigorous and impactful literature reviews? *Organ Res Methods* 21(3):519–523
- Kunisch S, Denyer D, Bartunek JM, Menz M, Cardinal LB (2023) Review research as scientific inquiry. *Organ Res Methods* 26(1):3–45
- Laher S, Hassem T (2020) Doing systematic reviews in psychology. *South African J Psychol* 50(4):450–468
- Lawani S (1981) Bibliometrics: its theoretical foundations, methods and applications. *Libri* 31(4):294–315
- LePine JA, King AW (2010) Editors’ comments: Developing novel theoretical insight from reviews of existing theory and research. *Acad Manag Rev* 35(4):506–509
- Linnenluecke MK, Marrone M, Singh AK (2020) Conducting systematic literature reviews and bibliometric analyses. *Aust J Manag* 45(2):175–194
- Mas-Tur A, Kraus S, Brandtner M, Ewert R, Kürsten W (2020) Advances in management research: a bibliometric overview of the review of managerial science. *Rev Manag Sci* 14:1–26
- Mukherjee D, Lim WM, Kumar S, Donthu N (2022) Guidelines for advancing theory and practice through bibliometric research. *J Bus Res* 148:101–115
- Palmatier RW, Houston MB, Hulland JJ (2018) Review articles: purpose, process, and structure. *J Acad Market Sci* 46:1–5
- Parmigiani A, King E (2019) Successfully proposing and composing review papers. *J Manag* 45(8):3083–3090
- Pittaway L, Holt R, Broad J (2014) Synthesising knowledge in entrepreneurship research-the role of systematic literature reviews. Edward Elgar Publishing, Handbook of research on small business and entrepreneurship
- Post C, Sarala R, Gatrell C, Prescott J (2020) Advancing theory with review articles. *J Manage Stud* 57(2):351–376
- Pütz L and Werner A (2023) Absorptive capacity in family firms: a systematic literature review. *Rev Manag Sci*
- Ravet-Brown TÉ, Furtner M and Kallmuenzer A (2023) Transformational and entrepreneurial leadership: a review of distinction and overlap. *Rev Manag Sci*



- Rocco TS, Plakhotnik MS (2009) Literature reviews, conceptual frameworks, and theoretical frameworks: terms, functions, and distinctions. *Hum Resour Dev Rev* 8(1):120–130
- Rojon C, Okupe A, McDowall A (2021) Utilization and development of systematic reviews in management research: what do we know and where do we go from here? *Int J Manag Rev* 23(2):191–223
- Rousseau DM, Manning J, Denyer D (2008) Evidence in management and organizational science: assembling the field's full weight of scientific knowledge through syntheses. *Acad Manag Ann* 2(1):475–515
- Rowe F (2014) What literature review is not: diversity, boundaries and recommendations. *Eur J Inf Syst* 23(3):241–255
- Sauer PC, Seuring S (2023) How to conduct systematic literature reviews in management research: a guide in 6 steps and 14 decisions. *Rev Manag Sci* 17:1–35
- Short J (2009) The art of writing a review article. *J Manag* 35(6):1312–1317
- Simsek Z, Fox B, Heavey C (2023) Systematicity in organizational research literature reviews: a framework and assessment. *Organ Res Methods* 26(2):292–321
- Snyder H (2019) Literature review as a research methodology: an overview and guidelines. *J Bus Res* 104:333–339
- Templier M, Paré G (2015) A framework for guiding and evaluating literature reviews. *Commun Assoc Inf Syst* 37(1):6
- Tranfield D, Denyer D, Smart P (2003) Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *Br J Manag* 14(3):207–222
- Van Eck NJ, Waltman L (2014) CitNetExplorer: a new software tool for analyzing and visualizing citation networks. *J Informet* 8(4):802–823
- van Grinsven M, Heusinkveld S, Cornelissen J (2016) Translating management concepts: towards a typology of alternative approaches. *Int J Manag Rev* 18(3):271–289
- Wright PM (2015) Rethinking “contribution.” *J Manag* 41(3):765–768
- Zupic I, Čater T (2015) Bibliometric methods in management and organization. *Organ Res Methods* 18(3):429–472

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.