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The art of writing literature review: What do we know and what do we need to know?

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ABSTRACT

A literature review article provides a comprehensive overview of literature related to a theme/theory/method and synthesizes prior studies to strengthen the foundation of knowledge. In the growing International Business (IB) research field, systematic literature reviews have great value, yet there are not many reviews published describing how researchers can design and develop classic review articles. In explaining the purpose, methodology, and structure of a systematic review, we provide guidelines for developing most insightful and useful review articles. By outlining steps and thumb rules to keep in mind, we present an overview of different types of review articles and explain how future researchers could potentially find them useful. In addition, we introduce nine articles finally selected for this special issue of systematic literature review-Looking back to look forward International Business research in the days to come.

1. Introduction

A subject advances when prior studies are synthesized logically based on the findings of prior studies (Kumar, Paul, & Unnithan, 2019). Literature reviews, as a research methodology (Snyder, 2019), contribute significantly for conceptual, methodological, and thematic development of different domains (Palmatier, Houston, & Hulland, 2018; Hulland & Houston, 2020). *Review papers* “are critical evaluations of prior studies that have already been published” (Bem, 1995, p. 172). They include, among others, systematic reviews and meta-analytical reviews exploring quantitative effects. Review articles carefully identify and synthesize relevant literature to compare and contrast the findings of prior studies in a domain. Thus, review articles provide readers with a state-of-the-art understanding of the research topic, help identify research gaps and signal future research avenues. In other words, systematic reviews, in particular, provide a number of critical discussions on a specific research theme by integrating extant literature, synthesizing prior studies, identifying knowledge gaps, and developing new theoretical frameworks (Marabelli & Newell, 2014). Systematic reviews, in particular, have become an explicitly recognized form of review-based research in many different disciplines (Callahan, 2014, p. 272; Kraus, Breier, & Dasí-Rodríguez, 2020). Many journals such as *Journal of Management*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, *International Journal of Consumer Studies* etc. have launched annual special issues for review articles in the recent years. In addition,

there are exclusive journals publishing review articles such as *International Journal of Management Reviews* (IJMR), *Journal of Economic Literature* (JEL) and *Academy of Management Review*.

It is worth noting that hundreds of research papers have been published using the same old theories, measures, and methods. One of the important goals of a review article is to identify key research gaps based on what constructs, theories and methods are widely applied in different settings and in what contexts (industry as well as country) studies have been carried out. Accordingly, authors of a classic review article provide directions for future research with reference to new and novel ideas, theories, measures, methods and novel research questions. Thus, a review article can serve as a platform for future research. They set the goal to discourage researchers from using the same old theories and methods in a recycled and replete way. A very well crafted literature review article has the potential to serve as base/platform/lens/springboard for future research because such an article explicitly synthesizes current knowledge, identifies research gaps, and suggests exciting new directions for future research in a given field of research, with reference to Methodology, Constructs/Variables, Theory and Contexts. Similarly, theoretical models developed as part of literature review studies can be used by both researchers and practitioners as typologies/base/lens in their research studies using quantitative or qualitative methods and/or practice. Therefore, once published, they would/usually become a very welcome and great addition to the literature.

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2. Methodology and structure of review articles

Systematic literature review articles can be broadly classified as domain-based, theory-based, and method-based. In addition to these categories of systematic literature reviews, meta analytical reviews are also increasingly popular in many different subject areas (Hulland & Houston, 2020). There are large number of domain-based reviews available in almost all subject areas both business-related (management, marketing, finance and accounting, entrepreneurship, etc.) and non-business related. However, there are not many well-crafted theory-based and method-based reviews published in well recognized journals.

2.1. Domain-based review

Domain-based review articles can be classified into different categories. Namely – Structured review focusing on widely used methods, theories and constructs (Canabal & White, 2008; Kahiya, 2018; Paul & Singh, 2017; Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2020; Rosado-Serrano, Paul, & Dikova, 2018), Framework-based (Paul & Benito, 2018), Bibliometric review (Randhawa, Wilden, & Hohberger, 2016), Hybrid-Narrative with a framework for setting future research agenda (Dabić et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2019; Paul, Parthasarathy, & Gupta, 2017), and Review aiming for model/framework development (Paul & Mas, 2019; Paul, 2019). These classifications can be elaborated as follows.

2.1.1. Structured review

When a domain-based review article is structured scientifically and specifically based on widely used methods, theories, constructs in the form of tables and figures, readers get insightful information from the data reported and content. Such information is normally presented in well designed tables in classic structured review articles. This helps especially junior researchers to understand what kind of methods have been already used and what theories and constructs have already been applied. Researchers can identify research gaps with reference to methods, theories and constructs based on the compiled information. Some of the classic review articles found in the extant literature falls in this category (Canabal & White, 2008, Kahiya, 2018; Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2020). This type of domain review articles usually have between 5–10 useful tables in structured format.

2.1.2. Framework-based review

A domain-based review article can be called as Framework-based review if the authors develop it using a framework such as ADO (Antecedents, Decisions and Outcome), as seen, for instance, in Paul & Benito's (2018) review article, or the 6 W Framework developed by Callahan (2014). This 6 W Framework is comprised of – Who, When, Where, How, What, and Why. Xie, Reddy, and Liang (2017) demonstrated how to use this 6 W framework in a literature review article on cross-border acquisitions. Another useful framework is Theory, Construct, Characteristics and Methodology (TCCM) developed and applied by Paul and Rosado-Serrano (2019), or the 7-P Framework (Paul & Mas, 2019). Thematic reviews with a framework have proven to be more acceptable as they are likely to show a more robust structure. Therefore, authors of framework-based reviews have to either develop their own framework and use it for structuring their review or, adopt an already existing framework like ADO duly acknowledging whom they are borrowing it from if developed by others.

2.1.3. Bibliometric review

Bibliometric reviews analyse an extensive amount of published research by using statistical tools, thus to figure out trends and citations and/or co-citations of a particular theme, by year, country, author, journal, method, theory, and research problem. A graphical bibliometric review can be developed using Viewer software programs currently available such as VoS (Visualization of Similarities), which is widely used to carry out such a type of bibliometric review in diverse

subject areas, including International Business (Rialp, Merigó, Cancino, & Urbano, 2019). An issue inherent in many bibliometric analyses is that out of a given pool of articles, a relatively small number of articles represent a major part of the total citations in the analysis. Some researchers, however, remain somewhat sceptical regarding the overall impact of bibliometric analyses, compared to other types of reviews (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015). In our view, bibliometric reviews do not deal with theories, methods, and constructs as much as they usually do with authors, affiliations, countries, citations and co-citations, etc.

2.1.4. Hybrid review

Hybrid reviews can be developed in, at least, two different ways: i) When researchers integrate a framework to provide directions for future research in a more narrative-oriented type of literature review, it can be called as a hybrid type review. For example, Paul, Parthasarathy and Gupta (2017) used Theory, Context and Methods (TCM) framework in their narrative type review on exporting challenges for small firms to provide directions for research. ii) A second way of a rather hybrid form of review may be developed by integrating the tenets of both bibliometric and structured reviews. Further in this special issue, Bahoo, Alon and Paltrinieri, for instance, have followed a similar approach in their review focused on corruption in international business. They integrated the tenets of bibliometric review with that of a structured review.

2.1.5. Review aiming for theory development

A very significant number of review articles published in highly exclusive business journals, such as Academy of Management Review or Academy of Marketing Science Review, fall in this category. In this case, authors typically develop theoretical models and/or testable hypotheses or propositions in such theory-building review articles. However, they do not necessarily proceed to test those models and/or theoretical propositions in the same article. Paul and Mas' (2019) article on 'Toward a 7 P framework for international marketing' is a clear example for this type of work. Very recently, Post, Sarala, Gatrell, and Prescott (2020) provide a great contribution with plenty of indications and guidelines about how to advance theory by means of review articles.

2.2. Theory-based review

Systematic reviews focused analysing the role of a specific theory in a subject area/ field are very useful for both senior and junior researchers. Such a review article can be labelled as Theory-based review. This type of review articles synthesize and help advancing a body of literature that uses and/or empirically applies a given underlying theory. For example, Rindfleisch and Heide's (1997) classic review titled 'Transaction Cost analysis in Marketing: Past, Present and Future Applications' has been cited more than 2600 times. Other examples of theory-based reviews in the Marketing field are 'Resource-Based Theory in Marketing' (Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014) in the Journal of Academy of Marketing Science or the one titled 'Role of self-determination theory in marketing science' (Gilal et al., 2019). Also, a very recent review on studies employing Gradual internationalization versus Born-global models (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019) falls in this category in the area of International Business/Marketing. Similar reviews can be developed exploring the role and application of a given core theory -or even different theories- in a given field (Eisenhardt, 1989), sometimes with a special emphasis on theoretical contributions and/or empirical developments in specific set of scientific journals (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Further developments of this nature can also imply, for instance, systematically reviewing Agency Theory in Franchising, or the Theory of Planned Behaviour in International Business/Marketing or Entrepreneurship, etc.

2.3. Method-based review

Method-based review articles synthesize and extend a body of literature that uses an underlying methodology (either quantitative or qualitative). For example, the paper titled 'Event Study Methodology in the Marketing Literature: An Overview' (Sorescu, Warren, & Ertekin, 2017). Similarly, the article 'Discriminant Validity Testing in Marketing: An Analysis, Causes for Concern, and Proposed Remedies' by Voorhees, Brady, Calantone, and Ramirez (2016) systematically reviews existing approaches for assessing discriminant validity in marketing contexts applying Monte Carlo simulation to determine which tests are most effective. However, the number of method-based reviews available in different subject areas of business administration or International Business/Entrepreneurship are not so many (some notable exceptions in the International Entrepreneurship field being, for instance, Coviello and Jones (2004) or, more recently, Ji, Plakoyiannaki, Dimitratos, and Chen (2019)). Therefore, there are still great opportunities for developing such method-based review articles. For example, review articles focusing on Smart PLS applications in global strategy research or Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in a specialized area of International Business/Marketing empirical literature can be developed and published.

2.4. Meta analytical review

While both focusing mainly on examining quantity or volume of previous research, systematic reviews and meta-analysis actually differ; the former seeks to synthesize many previous findings, while the latter makes a deeper statistical assessment of available data and findings (essentially correlations among variables) from many previous quantitative studies (Pati & Lorusso, 2018; Piper, 2013). A meta-analysis is a form of increasingly popular quantitative technique that is being widely recognized as perhaps one of the best statistical assessment of prior empirical research on a specific research topic. Meta-analyses help researchers to 'identify directions and effect sizes based on prior studies with the help of weighted average techniques, and contextualize the relationships by considering moderator variables' (Klier, Schwens, Zapkau, & Dikova, 2017, p. 3??). We could also refer here to the classic meta-analytical review developed with a proper methodology and structure by Knoll and Matthes (2017), published in the Journal of Academy of Marketing Science. Similarly, Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin, and Frese (2009) focused on the classical relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and business performance published in Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice. Also, two articles in this Special Issue volume are meta-analytical reviews, i) by Tang and Buckley (2020) ii) by Schmid and Morschett (2020). They developed meta-analysis reviews on hard core topics in the field of International Business.

3. Thumb rules and suggestions for developing an impactful review article

Based on our own knowledge and experience as editors, guest editors and authors of several review articles, and partly complementing other similar efforts (Fisch & Block, 2018; Reuber, 2010; Webster & Watson, 2002), we succinctly provide some potentially useful tips and suggestions for developing more insightful and impactful review articles in future research.

3.1. Topic selection

Not surprisingly, well-crafted review articles tend to be generally impactful. However, authors should not select a very recurrent topic for review when there are already other excellent reviews on the same topic (especially very recent ones) published in highly reputed journals. Editors and reviewers may not be keen to consider very traditional

thematic reviews when there are several comprehensive ones already available elsewhere related to a given theme/topic unless authors demonstrating a very novel reviewing contribution by providing a completely new set of research agenda. It is important then to check this thematic novelty on key bibliometric databases such as Google Scholar, Web of Science (WoS) or Scopus before deciding to choose a more generic versus specific topic for review.

3.2. Journal selection criteria, identification of streams and period coverage

Normally, many researchers and academics tend to select perhaps the most well-known bibliographic database, Web of Science (WoS)/Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)/Journal Citation Report which list academic journals with an Impact Factor (IF), for identifying potential sources for reviewing. When there are several hundreds of papers on a highly popular topic already published to be potentially reviewed, one can even rely upon JCR-indexed journals with an IF above a given threshold (i.e. 1.0 plus following, for instance, Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). Also, many authors have published review articles using studies from the indexed journals found in Scopus, which lists a greater number of journals than WoS. Therefore, relying mainly on Scopus to conduct a systematic literature review may yield a very long list of references which may even exceed the word limits set by many journals. On the other hand, we have come across some published review articles of a relatively small size samples of articles in a specific field justifying their selection on 5–10 journals with a minimum rank of 3 star and/or above in the Journal Quality List (JQL) of the Association of Business Schools (ABS) or Journals with an A or A star rank in the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) list. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that journals might not be extremely interested in your review, if it does not cover also articles from your target journal. Therefore, it is advisable to include articles from at least 10–20 significant journals in a review paper, to minimise the risk of not publishing your work due to biased journal selection criteria. Most of the review articles in this Special Issue cover articles retrieved from well-established bibliographic databases such as WoS and/or Scopus. Nonetheless, it was surprising to note that some of the mainly rejected submissions for this special issue did not have clear journal selection criteria and most of them included references from not fully reliable academic sources.

3.2.1. Articles search and inclusion criteria using keywords

A systematic review article can be developed using 40–50 to 500 or more relevant papers. Sourcing relevant articles can be, however, a challenge. Authors will have to use their knowledge, judgment and experience many times for deciding upon clear selection criteria (i.e. exclusion/inclusion) of articles in their sample. There are two popular methods for determining, among others, highly convenient inclusion criteria: i) Keywords decided by the authors of a potential article to be selected for being reviewed are generally found directly in the title, abstract or list of keywords. ii) Keywords can be also found in the full text of the article, apart from in its title or abstract. Therefore, the sample size of a review article will tend to be relatively small if only the first criteria is strictly used. However, authors should be aware that they might get hundreds of papers to be potentially included in their sample, if they use second criteria including also keywords in the full text. In that case, wide reading of content, discussion, deliberation, and consensus among the author/s of a review paper is needed many times in order to decide the most appropriate final sample.

3.2.2. Identification of streams and time period of the review

Several review articles focus on identifying the main sub-streams of research conducted in the past on a wider topic or even an entire discipline like, for instance, Strategic Management (Furrer, Thomas, & Goussevskaia, 2008; Hoskisson, Wan, Yiu, & Hitt, 1999). Jones, Coviello, and Tang (2011) proceeded this way in their assessment of the International Entrepreneurship field published in the Journal of

Business Venturing. More recently, [Dabić et al. \(2020\)](#) identify different streams of past research on immigrant entrepreneurship. Another review on Social entrepreneurship published in *Journal of Business Research* ([Gupta, Chauhan, Paul, & Jaiswal, 2020](#)), and a review on Culture and International Business by [Srivastava, Singh, and Dhir \(2020\)](#), included in this Special Issue of *International Business Review* (IBR), also identify and provide a clear overview of the sub-streams of research in their specific fields.

As regards the time coverage of a review paper, it can be found that some reviews cover just (or less than) 10 years while there are other reviews covering up to 50 years or more of prior research in the field ([Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2020](#); [Schmid & Kotulla, 2011](#)). Review articles covering 20, 25 or 30 years of research are also relatively common ([Furrer et al., 2008](#)). In our opinion, it is important to cover at least a bare minimum of a 10 year period for a systematic literature review ([Rialp, Rialp, & Knight, 2005](#)).

3.3. Appropriate title

Writing an integrative literature review actually implies using past and present research to explore the future ([Torraco, 2016](#); [Webster & Watson, 2002](#)). Therefore, it is paramount to mention that beyond covering past and current research lines, the main goal of an outstanding review article is also to provide detailed and specific directions for future research. Therefore, ideally, this objective should be quite explicit and/or included in the paper's title ([Rialp, Rialp, & Knight, 2014](#); [Rauch et al., 2009](#); [Rialp et al., 2005](#)). For example, some of the most popular review articles of the guest editors of the Special Issue are titled as follows: 'Masstige Marketing: A review, synthesis and research agenda' ([Kumar et al., 2019](#)); 'International Franchising: A review and future research agenda' ([Rosado-Serrano et al., 2018](#)); 'Marketing in Emerging countries, A review, theoretical synthesis and extension' ([Paul, 2019](#)). A relative short title highlighting both a thorough review effort (looking back) and developing a future research agenda (looking forward) is more attractive if the researcher is aimed at focusing not only on reviewing prior research in the field but also on providing meaningful directions for future research with reference to (new) theory, methods, and constructs.

3.4. research gaps and importance of directions for future research

Authors are required to identify key research gaps in a good review article based upon a thorough coverage of prior research. Therefore, At least 20–25 % of the review paper, should be dedicated to develop a comprehensive future research agenda with reference to theory, methodology, constructs, and/or context. Authors need to list out and anticipate the underexplored theories, key constructs and potentially novel methods that can be used in future research in this particular but highly relevant section of a review article. Significantly, all the review studies finally selected for inclusion and publication in this Special Issue of *International Business Review* (IBR) carefully included a dedicated section on directions for future research.

3.5. Tables/figures

Authors need to understand well how tables and figures tend to be crafted, designed and/or structured in classic, most downloaded review articles. They should think twice whether such tables, charts or figures to be potentially inserted in a review article are indeed useful for others or not, essentially by thinking carefully about how many are needed to use and how to better design them. It is very recommended to look carefully at these graphical resources as included in other outstanding review articles in the field and decide if you want to add/delete some tables or figures to help the reader to better interpret them. For example, three particular recent reviews ([Hao et al., 2019](#); [Kahiya, 2018](#); [Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2020](#)) offer several well-structured tables

with useful data and synthesizing content for readers and other researchers.

3.6. And above all: rigor and relevance

Review manuscripts are supposed to thoroughly synthesize a significant and important research area. Many times, authors have good and relevant topics. However, they fail to demonstrate well what general or more specific theories, constructs and methods are widely used and most researched. Unfortunately, many authors do not take enough efforts to pool the findings of prior studies in the best possible way. Ideally, pooled findings of prior studies need to be also reported in a table/chart format, categorising similar or contradictory findings. Also, authors of review papers have to rigorously complement text and tables regarding the most widely used methods, theories, variables, and extensively studied industry contexts, countries, etc. Undoubtedly, reviews structured both scientifically and logically, and especially showing very useful outcomes for readers are likely to be more rigorous, relevant and impactful.

4. Looking back to look forward: generalizations in international business research

In this section, we introduce the nine papers selected for this Special Review Issue based on competitive review process out of 76 submissions received in response to our special issue call for papers. Due to the bulk of submissions to be managed, the two guest editors assumed approximately half of the submissions each one, and took full responsibility for their management throughout the review process separately (including reviewers' selection and multiple interactions with both contributors and reviewers), with a final editorial coordination and joint agreement regarding those finally selected for this Special Review Issue of *International Business Review* (IBR). All papers were reviewed by three or four reviewers.

4.1. Cognitive foundations of firm internationalization: a systematic review and agenda for future research ([Niittymies & Pajunen, 2020](#))

Niittymies and Pajunen address the fundamental role of managerial cognition in the internationalization of firms. However, according to these authors, there exists no coherent understanding of how prior research has examined and captured the cognitive foundations of internationalization. Niittymies and Pajunen's review identifies three mainstreams of research that, overall, consists of nine more specific research areas. They also show that especially the areas addressing (1) managerial learning, (2) characteristics of upper echelons, (3) intra-organizational perceptions, and (4) external actors' perceptions provide opportunities for the further advancement of internationalization literature. For harnessing these opportunities, those authors believe that the micro foundational approach could support the empirical examination of the cognitive foundations and would notably contribute to the Uppsala model-based theorization of the firm internationalization process.

4.2. Piecing together a puzzle—a review and research agenda on internationalization and the promise of exaptation ([Aaltonen, 2020](#))

Aaltonen's review illustrates the commonalities between research agendas in the internationalization process and provides a starting point for subsequent theory development utilizing exaptation in predicting internationalization. Thus, her review contributes to the field of *International Business* by offering a conceptual framework to combine internationalization theories by including non-linear, discontinuous, and novel events more tightly to the existing foundations of internationalization. This is a framework-based review using TCCM protocol developed by [Paul and Rosado-Serrano \(2019\)](#). According to Aaltonen,

exaptation (seen as discontinuous developmental shifts) and adaptive behaviour are both Darwinian concepts used in organizational behaviour theories. Organizational behaviour also forms the basis of several internationalization theories, and exaptation is suggested to provide a theoretical tool for understanding disruptive development in internationalization. Together with adaptation, the concept illustrates a joint framework for understanding both disruptive and non-disruptive development in internationalization.

4.3. *Corruption in international business: a review and research agenda (Bahoo, Alon, & Paltrinieri, 2020)*

In their hybrid type review, combining the elements of bibliometric and structured review, Bahoo et al. (2020) systematically review the literature on the topic of corruption in International Business (137 articles) for the last 17 years between 1992 and 2019. Additionally, they identify seven research streams in this growing literature stream: (1) the legislation against corruption, (2) the determinants of corruption, (3) combating corruption, (4) the effect of corruption on firms, (5) the political environment and corruption, (6) corruption as a challenge to existing theories of management, and (7) the effect of corruption on foreign direct investment and trade. Based on their systematic review, these authors recommend that strong international laws are needed to minimize the negative impact of corruption on International Business. Firms must also consider corruption when formulating strategies to increase operational efficiency and performance. Finally, corruption challenges some key assumptions of existing theories of management. They have developed several research questions for future research in the area of International Business.

4.4. *Export market orientation: an integrative review and directions for future research. (İpek & Bıçakcıoğlu-Peynirci, 2020)*

A firm's export market orientation has long been the interest of several scholars and has received theoretical and empirical research attention in the International Business literature. In this context, İpek and Bıçakcıoğlu-Peynirci (2019)'s contribution critically investigates and synthesizes the empirical body of research on the export market orientation phenomenon in relation to theoretical issues, context, conceptual approaches, and interrelationships among the constructs of interest, and methodology. Within the scope of this systematic review, 80 studies on export market orientation published between 1998 and 2018 are subjected to a content-analysis. The findings delineate that despite the significant progress achieved in the knowledge of export market orientation, particular concerns should be still addressed to make the export market orientation literature move toward maturity.

4.5. *Decades of research on foreign subsidiary divestment: what do we really know about its antecedents? (Schmid & Morschett, 2020)*

Research on the antecedents of foreign subsidiary divestment has grown in the last several decades. However, the findings are ambiguous. Schmid and Morschett try to clarify this situation by providing, for 18 antecedent candidates derived from 45 articles, a descriptive picture of previous studies, theoretical arguments for the expected direction of effect, and quantitative synthesis of the effects by means of meta-analysis. According to this meta-analytic contribution, ten variables significantly affect the likelihood of foreign divestment while the effects of eight antecedents are inconclusive. Overall, subsidiary level antecedents have stronger effects on the divestment likelihood than parent firm or host country characteristics. According to Schmid and Morschett's findings, the resource-based view and the transaction cost approach appear to provide better explanations for foreign divestment than organizational learning theory or institutional theory. For the future research agenda, the authors propose investigating strategic motivations, taking a portfolio perspective, testing full conceptual models,

considering multilevel data structures, and using Boddewyn's reversed eclectic paradigm as theoretical framework.

4.6. *Host country risk and foreign ownership strategy: meta-analysis (Tang & Buckley, 2020)*

Empirical evidence for the relationship between host country risk and a firm's ownership level in its foreign entry strategy is, according to Tang and Buckley, inconclusive. These authors revisit this relationship by integrating the internalization logic with an institution-based view to examine the moderating effects of formal and informal institutions in the home country. By meta-analysing 64 empirical studies involving 52,229 ownership decisions on foreign market entry, their study gives support to theoretical arguments that the focal relationship is positively moderated by institutional constraints on policymakers and risk-taking tendencies in the home country, but is negatively moderated by the joint effect of these two institutional factors. Tang and Buckley's meta-analytic findings shed new light on the literature of host country risk and foreign ownership strategy. Besides describing the implications of the findings for theory and practice, they also discuss the agenda for future theory development in the International Business field.

4.7. *Foreign location decisions through an institutional lens: a systematic review and future research agenda (Donnelly & Manolova, 2020)*

In their article, Donnelly and Manolova (2020) address one of the most relevant strategic decision in International Business (IB),- selection or choice of foreign location.. While there is general agreement that institutions influence location decisions, less is known, according to them, about the specific levels and mechanisms of institutional influence. To address these gaps, these authors systematically review and synthesize 106 articles published in 19 general management and IB journals from 1998 to 2019. They examine institutions at different levels (e.g. regional, national, or subnational). The characteristics and experiences of multinational corporations are deeply examined, as well as the industry conditions that determine the boundaries of institutional influence. Key findings from Donnelly and Manolova's descriptive and thematic analyses reveal both theoretical tensions and empirical gaps. Using an organizing framework, they outline four main research avenues are also identified.

4.8. *The determinants and performance of early internationalizing firms: a literature review and research agenda (Jiang, Kotabe, Zhang, Hao, & Wang, 2020)*

As scholars have examined the antecedents, processes, and performance of early internationalizing firms in the past three decades, the domain has become a full-fledged research field. However, extant reviews have not yet provided a comprehensive picture of the determinants of early internationalizing firms and their performance although it is a relevant topic in the literature. In response, Jiang et al. (2020)'s article seeks to systematically review and synthesize extant research on the determinants and performance of early internationalizing firms. The authors critically assess and examine 167 articles that have appeared in 28 academic journals over the last three decades. This study contributes to the extant literature by highlighting the determinants of early internationalizing firms and their performance with a focus on the entrepreneur, firm, and environment factors. Furthermore, an integrative framework is developed to account for the relationships among determinants, early internationalization, and outcomes. Finally, the authors reveal some significant gaps to advance an important research agenda for future research.

4.9. Culture and international business research: a review and research agenda (Srivastava et al., 2020)

Srivastava, Singh and Dhir (2020) explores the role of culture and international business in internationalization outcomes through a systematic review and analysis of articles published between 2009 and 2019. By mapping the current research domain, their review reflects the avenues for future research in theory development, context, characteristics, and methodology (using TCCM protocol developed by Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). They have identified eight research clusters as follows. (1) national culture, (2) external uncertainty avoidance, (3) knowledge transfer & collaboration, (4) HRM & management practices, (5) international diversification research, (6) entrepreneurial mindset, (7) interaction, and (8) firm performance. The clusters were grouped into independent factors and internationalization outcome factors. Besides, their framework may provide deeper insights into the theoretical implications which will lead to further advancement in these research areas.

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of a review article is to critically analyse the extant literature in a given research area, theme or discipline, identifying relevant theories, key constructs, empirical methods, contexts, and remaining research gaps in order to set a future research agenda based on those gaps. We have provided experience-based information in the form of insights and guidelines on how to develop scientifically acceptable and truly impactful literature review articles. It is important to consider these suggestions, at least partly, to avoid rejection of this type of research articles in outstanding business-related journals. These insights are based on our experience as editors of review articles as well as based on the ideas and comments given by a very exclusive group of anonymous reviewers. In our opinion, it is, indeed, an “art” to develop a classic systematic review or a meta-analytical contribution. Although a single author of a highly original contribution has been also included in this Special Review Issue, ideally it seems that a team of two or three scholars are usually required to develop such impactful review articles, so that they can exchange ideas and use the exposure and experience of those who have track record and more accumulated knowledge. We hope readers really enjoy the outcome of our work at least as much as we have enjoyed its development process as guest co-editors.

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