Received 23 April 2018
Revised 23 April 2018
Accepted 26 May 2018

An end-to-end process of writing and publishing influential literature review articles

Do's and don'ts

Virginia Bodolica
Department of Management, American University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, and
Martin Spraggon
Department of Public Administration, Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Abstract

Purpose – Literature reviews are essential tools for uncovering prevalent knowledge gaps, unifying fragmented bodies of scholarship, and taking stock of the cumulative evidence in a field of inquiry. Yet, successfully producing rigorous, coherent, thought-provoking, and practically relevant review articles represents an extremely complex and challenging endeavor. The purpose of this paper is to uncover the key requirements for expanding literature reviews' reach within and across study domains and provide useful guidelines to prospective authors interested in generating this type of scientific output.

Design/methodology/approach – Drawing upon the authors' own experience of producing literature reviews and a scrutiny of review papers in major management journals, the authors develop an end-to-end process of writing and publishing review articles of high potential impact.

Findings – The advanced process is broken down into two phases and seven sequential steps, each of them being described in terms of key actions, required skill sets, best practices, metrics of assessment and expected outcomes.

Originality/value – By tapping into the inherent complexity of review articles and demystifying the intricacies associated with pursuing this type of scientific research, the authors seek to inspire a wealth of new influential surveys of specialized literature.

Keywords Literature review, Best practice guidelines, Future research agenda, High-impact review article, Research synthesis, Writing and publishing

Paper type Conceptual paper

Owing to an ever-accelerating rate of transformation of competitive business landscapes, organizations have been regularly confronted with a variety of new challenges that threaten their sustainability. In an attempt to provide workable advice to corporate leaders for keeping up with changing environmental dynamics to secure firm longevity, the field of management has evolved in a number of different directions (Nofal *et al.*, 2018; Linnenluecke, 2017; Spraggon and Bodolica, 2017). Researchers have been devoting a substantial amount of time to the analysis of micro-, meso- and macro-level predictors of positive organizational outcomes that originate from a diversity of management sub-areas but also span across several social science disciplines (Smith *et al.*, 2018; Bodolica *et al.*, 2016; Leonardi and Vaast, 2017; Spraggon and Bodolica, 2011). Over the years, these efforts resulted in an amplified sophistication and heterogeneity of collected data, study designs, theoretical approaches and analytical techniques, leading to the emergence of largely disjointed bodies of literature.

In this context, it has been extremely difficult to interpret cross-study inconsistencies in findings and take stock of the accumulated research in the field. Literature review articles

This paper forms part of a special section Special Review Issue.

Management Decision
Vol. 56 No. 11, 2018
pp. 2472-2486

0025-1747
DOI 10.1108/MD-03-2018-0253

became important tools that aim at equipping scholars and practitioners to successfully navigate this heightened knowledge complexity. For scholars, these articles provide access to fragmented pieces of evidence through an intelligible unifying framework build on solid foundations of prior scientific work (Rousseau *et al.*, 2008). By gaining a deeper understanding of past evolutions and recent developments in a subject area, researchers are enabled to extract multiple questions worthy of further exploration for making their own contribution to the advancement of the field (Torraco, 2016). For practitioners, literature reviews offer valuable assistance in making sense of a vast body of increasingly sophisticated and often-contradictory academic writings, and generating insight for effective organizational intervention and guidance for policy-making and implementation (Tofan *et al.*, 2013).

Similar to other types of scientific research, including empirical, conceptual and case study papers, review articles have been regularly appearing in a number of outlets in the field of management. For instance, over the past two decades Management Decision has published many surveys of the literature on a variety of subjects such as organizational creativity (Andriopoulos, 2001), outsourcing strategy (Jiang and Qureshi, 2006), green management and financial performance (Molina-Azorin *et al.*, 2009), talent management (Vaiman *et al.*, 2012) and entrepreneurship education (Wu and Wu, 2017). Selected highly ranked journals, such as the *Journal of Management*, started to reserve at least one issue per year for the publication of influential literature reviews (Ollier-Malaterre and Foucreault, 2017) that are assessed on the basis of their relevance, scope of interest, coherence and significance for future scholarship. Ultimately, the recognition of their growing impact has culminated in the launch of the *International Journal of Management Reviews* and the *Academy of Management Annals* in 1999 and 2007, respectively, which are dedicated to the diffusion of review articles exclusively. According to the 2016 edition of Journal Citation Reports by Clarivate Analytics, the former journal is ranked 10th while the later occupies the leading position in the list of 193 publication outlets in the management category that received an impact factor.

Despite their elevated popularity with scholars and practitioners alike, contributing influential literature reviews to these and other management journals remain an utterly difficult task. While review articles can espouse a variety of different routes to focus their analysis on aspects such as empirical findings, theoretical approaches, concepts, methods or decades of research on a topic of interest, they have to be equally rigorous, integrative (Rastogi *et al.*, 2018), coherent, insightful and practically relevant. It is the purpose of this paper to demystify the intricacies of developing literature review articles and to uncover the key requirements they entail for expanding their reach within and across study domains. In particular, drawing on our own experience of producing literature reviews and an in-depth scrutiny of review papers in major management journals, we advance an end-to-end process of writing and publishing review articles of high potential impact. By tapping into the inherent complexity of these articles, we aim to provide best practice advice to prospective authors interested in generating this type of scientific output.

The argument presented in the remainder of this paper proceeds along the following lines. In the next section we elaborate on some popular misconceptions about management literature reviews and confront them with facts. A detailed description of the proposed end-to-end process of review articles' development with its two constitutive phases and seven sequential steps follows. Our analysis of the different components of the process is accompanied with many illustrative examples of published manuscripts from the broad management field. The contributions of the advanced process of writing and publishing influential literature reviews are highlighted in the concluding section of this paper.

Review articles' misconceptions and facts

Although review articles represent legitimate pieces of scientific research, several misleading assumptions are commonly associated with writing and publishing such articles.

Therefore, before choosing to pursue this type of scholarly inquiry, researchers should be warned against a number of popular misconceptions (see Table I). In the initial phases of writing, of upmost importance is to recognize that influential review articles do not represent simple narrative accounts of the current state of knowledge in a given field of investigation. Instead, they necessitate a critical evaluation of the extant literature and its limitations, a thorough discussion of theory-driven insights to fill the identified gaps, and a meticulous formulation of thought-provoking questions to guide future research endeavors on the chosen subject area (Bodolica and Spraggon, 2015; Doherty, 2013).

While literature review articles often come under attack for being excessively long, in reality their total word-count is not superior to qualitative studies with most of the page length being attributed to numerous analytical tables and figures (Madison *et al.*, 2016; Pindado and Requejo, 2015). In spite of the fact that primary data collection is not required, review articles necessitate a fairly significant amount of time and effort in order to search for, gather, select, and make sense of the vast and frequently disparate literature. To boost the effectiveness of the entire process and secure an optimal outcome in terms of future scholarly impact, these research undertakings should not be carried out independently but rather in collaboration with several well-established authors within their respective academic disciplines. Indeed, due to soaring importance and popularity of multidomain surveys of the literature, more often than not these collaborative endeavors are co-authored by multiple (at least three) scholars, permitting to effectively tap into broadly diversified but related bodies of knowledge (Nicholls-Nixon *et al.*, 2011; Smith *et al.*, 2018).

Contrary to common beliefs, influential review articles are relatively more difficult to produce and publish than original research papers because they require a certain level of maturity, longstanding expertise and an in-depth understanding of the field of inquiry (Gomez-Mejia *et al.*, 2011). This is why these articles do not represent the best investment for scholars in the early stages of their career, being more suitable for well-published researchers who are more experienced in leading collaborative projects and mentoring junior faculty. Finally, review articles may often be favored over other types of scientific output due to flawed expectations that they would garner a wealth of citations within a limited timeframe. Instead, informative reviews may actually generate a large number of views or downloads by referring interested authors to the original source of synthesized evidence. Moreover, it

Phase	Aspect	Popular misconceptions	More accurate facts
(1) Writing	Content	Are mere descriptive summaries of extant literature in the field	Require critical assessment of the literature and identification of future research directions to advance current knowledge in the field
	Length	Are excessively long	Are comparable in length to qualitative articles (length due to many tables and figures)
	Process	Can be completed in shorter periods of time	Are fairly time-consuming, especially if the analyzed literature is vast and incongruent
	Authors	May be effective self-sufficient endeavors	Are most effective as collaborative (and cross-disciplinary) undertakings (several coauthors)
(2) Publishing	Easiness	Are easier to publish than original research	Are relatively more difficult to produce (when lacking longstanding expertise in the field)
	Career	Represent a good investment for early career researchers	Require maturity and thorough understanding of the field (are more suitable for mid-career and well-established scholars)
	Citations	Rapidly and always generate lots of citations	May take time to generate citations; or may not necessarily generate lots of citations, but rather a large number of views or downloads

Table I.
Misconceptions and facts about literature review articles

should come as no surprise to veteran academics that citations might take time as several years may be needed until the analyzed field would evolve in the direction suggested by the review article.

End-to-end process of producing review articles

In the following subsections we offer an end-to-end process of writing and publishing influential review articles, which may be particularly useful for prospective authors in the management field. While the advanced process is consistent with procedures employed in systematic reviews that originated in medical science and gradually expanded to other disciplines (Tofan *et al.*, 2013), it is also more flexible to account for the predominantly qualitative nature of management scholarship. The end-to-end process is composed of two phases and seven steps, of which the first five belong to the phase of writing, while the last two steps are related to publishing reviews of the literature. As indicated in Table II, for each component we indicate the key actions involved, major skill requirements, best practices, metrics for assessment and the main outcome. Figure 1, which incorporates a flow diagram of the entire process, offers a simplified illustration of critical idiosyncrasies associated with writing and publishing impactful review articles.

Phase 1: writing

Step 1: exploring the topic. The process starts from the identification of the subject area for the literature review and securing its significance and relevance. To achieve this purpose, researchers should draw on their expertise of assessing extant knowledge, reflecting on recent evolutions and challenging dominant assumptions in the field. These actions are particularly useful when seeking to delimit a promising review topic and uncovering related concepts that will be subsequently employed as key search terms. Since some areas lend themselves well to cross-disciplinary exploration, it is advisable to verify whether the selected topic has been previously examined from alternative perspectives. The major skillsets associated with this step are inquisitiveness, creative thinking, ability to change and adapt in light of the newly found evidence, and understanding of multiple fields of inquiry that is critical for gaining additional insight on the subject of interest.

Because management reviews are mostly developmental and discovery-driven, keeping a flexible approach throughout the entire process is important as it allows processing fresh data, making meaningful adjustments, and incorporating novel ideas. Another best practice advice is to select a research question of broad interest to stakeholders in a variety of areas, which is consistent with cross-disciplinary investigations that could be carried out effectively by multiple authors. For instance, a comprehensive review of empirical findings on executive compensation packages surrounding merger and acquisition transactions may be similarly appealing to scholars and practitioners in finance, accounting, strategic management and human resources (Bodolica and Spraggon, 2015). Influential review articles often result from choosing a topic with high growth potential, especially when the literature has reached adolescence and the time is right to pause, analyze what is known and suggest avenues for further inquiry. This was successfully attempted by Audretsch (2012) who has reviewed the growing entrepreneurship research stemming from a variety of academic traditions in order to provide a reconciled view of what constitutes entrepreneurship and propose viable streams for future development of the field.

To identify an attractive topic for their survey of the literature and get valuable insights into related aspects, many scholars choose to spend some time reading the “limitations and future research directions” section of the most highly cited empirical articles published within the broad area of their interest. In this section expert authors pinpoint promising

Table II.
An end-to-end process of writing and publishing influential literature review articles

Phases	(1) Writing					(2) Publishing	
Steps	1. Exploring the topic	2. Searching and screening the literature	3. Studies' assessment and selection	4. Literature analysis and synthesis	5. Structuring and drafting the review	6. Journal submission and publication	7. Post-publication diffusion
Actions	Read and reflect on recent evolutions Question extant knowledge Verify ways for cross-disciplinary exploration Delimit the topic and related concepts	Define search terms and keywords Search in different sources of data Check prior reviews Retrieve identified studies' full texts Screen articles and eliminate duplicates	Use a progressive, multi-stage method Scrutinize abstracts and full-texts Assess eligibility Solve the quality-quantity tradeoff Select papers for final inclusion	Read the articles and extract relevant data Critically analyze the literature (make thematic analysis) Synthesize findings in meaningful ways Identify cross-study patterns	Decide about the paper's structure Write the draft paper Make presentations at scientific conferences Take part in working paper series at school Solicit and integrate peers' feedback	Select the journal Check submission requirements and secure compliance Submit the article Read comments, revise and resubmit Initiate related research projects	Disseminate via networks / post on social media Update profile Build exposure (guest speaking and consulting) Write and publish related articles
Skills	Inquisitiveness and discovery Creative thinking Understanding of multiple fields Ability to change and adapt	Familiarity with and ability to navigate through databases Meticulousness Attention to detail Determination and persistence	Consistency, focus and delivery skills Reasoning capacity and conviction Ability to work effectively alone and with fellow scholars	Analytical and cognitive skills Holistic thinking Coherence and ability to extrapolate Capacity to make associations	Writing skills: sense of style and ability to edit paper's contents for flow and clarity Ability to structure ideas logically Proactiveness	Determination to publish the article Openness to collegial criticism Responsiveness to editor and reviewer comments	Communication and interpersonal skills Social media proficiency Networking abilities

(*continued*)

Phases		(1) Writing				(2) Publishing	
Steps	1. Exploring the topic	2. Searching and screening the literature	3. Studies' assessment and selection	4. Literature analysis and synthesis	5. Structuring and drafting the review	6. Journal submission and publication	7. Post-publication diffusion
Best practices	Flexible approach Topic with high growth potential Literature in adolescence phase Cross-disciplinary research question Multiple authors	Iterative approach Comprehensive, unbiased and reproducible search Combination of various methods Clearly defined search strategy	Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria Criteria adherence Justified reasons for studies' exclusion Review panel (first independent, then collaborative work)	Many explanatory summary tables Scientific methods of data synthesis Framework with themes or clusters Double/triple data extraction	Relevant division of writing tasks among review co-authors Optimal structure: introduction, method (with framework), findings, future research and conclusion	Selecting the right publication outlet A corresponding author role Effective peer-review process Respect the R&R process' deadline	Membership in professional associations Integrate review with teaching Have an active review-related research agenda
Metrics	Peers' excitement Positive feedback Co-authorship offers from expert researchers Test search for topic relevance	Benchmark type and variety of searches to prior reviews High volume of relevant literature Point of saturation (studies' overlap)	Zero selection bias Minimal inter-rater discrepancy Effective resolution of disagreements Optimal sample size for further analysis	Degree of data extraction accuracy (via comparison) Co-authors' agreement test Summary tables' prototypes	Co-authors' degree of satisfaction with draft Conference attendees' feedback and requests to get the full paper Experts' opinion Working paper views	Number of "reject on the desk" Unsuccessful submission count Number of R&Rs Journal editors' and reviewers' wows	Citations' count Number of reads Profile views Novel research ideas generated Evolution of the field as advised
Outcome	Promising topic for review	Pool of studies for potential inclusion	Final sample of studies to review	Framework with coherent synthesis	Submission-ready manuscript	Published review article	Influential review article

Table II.

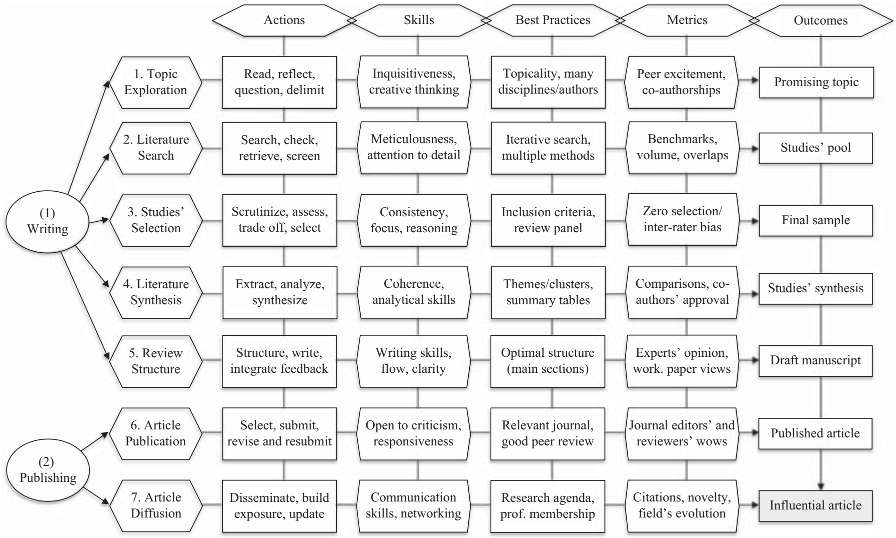

Figure 1.
Flow diagram of the advanced process of writing and publishing influential review articles

opportunities for further exploration, stimulating a wealth of relevant research that may constitute the subject of a comprehensive literature review. In their paper on knowledge creation processes in small software companies operating in Canada, Spraggon and Bodolica (2008) discussed a number of limitations that were addressed in numerous recent studies in the field. A potential topic for a review article could be the analysis of knowledge management practices across various organizational (small vs large), industrial (software vs financial) and cultural (Canadian vs emerging market) settings.

To gauge the successful accomplishment of this initial step that should result in the delimitation of a promising topic for literature review, we offer a number of applicable metrics. When sharing their intentions with others in the broader research community and soliciting professional advice, prospective authors could estimate the amount of positive feedback received or the degree of peers' excitement with the proposed topic. Another valuable indicator could be the number of offers extended by expert researchers to co-author the future literature review article. Finally, to get an extra confirmation of the topic timeliness and relevance, it is highly recommended to perform an *a priori* search to assess how many papers would fall within the scope of the review. When a very low quantity of papers is generated through this preliminary search, the subject area may be in its infancy stage, indicating that the time may not be right for performing a meaningful literature review.

Step 2: searching and screening the literature. The second step involves conducting a thorough search and an initial screening of the literature on the proposed topic. Typically, this process begins with the activation of various search functions and operators available in bibliographic databases that could be accessed via the academic libraries' website. Among the key databases that are not only directly related to the field of management but also provide a wide range of relevant subject coverage are ABI/INFORM, Business Source Premier (EBSCO host), JSTOR, Emerald, PsycINFO, ProQuest Central, Web of Science and Scopus. Having identified applicable search terms, scholars may deploy the keyword search technique to generate a preliminary set of studies that are semantically connected to the research question. Different keywords and combinations of keywords should be tried to check their appearance in the title, abstract and full text of scientific publications. Additional filters could be applied by specifying the type of document, study, or language, while Boolean operators AND, OR and NOT could be effectively used to broaden or restrict the search function.

To avoid potential bias, the task of identifying relevant keywords for the selected research topic has to be approached meticulously. Authors should consider discussing, refining and validating their initial list of keywords with a review panel of experienced scholars in the area of the survey of the literature. In the case of Savino *et al.*'s (2017) review of empirical studies on search and recombination processes of innovation development, this discussion resulted in 22 keywords, such as "acquisition," "recombination," "capabilities," "creation," "knowledge," "integration," "elements," "innovation," "generation," "search," and "source." When performing the database search using the identified keywords, it is advisable to employ various Boolean connectors or symbols, such as (for phrase searching), ! or * (for root expansion purposes), and * (for capturing word variants). By making use of the search term "recombin*," Savino *et al.* (2017) could retrieve all the documents that include the words "recombine," "recombining," "recombinant," and "recombination."

A number of other valuable methods that complement the database search could point to new papers that were missed during the prior search. The most popular is the ancestry approach that consists in screening the reference list of the recently published articles to find the sources of evidence on which they relied and continuing this citation analysis procedure until no further references are revealed (Bodolica and Spraggon, 2009). The targeted search ensues from peer suggestions of critical studies on the review topic or from the expert knowledge of highly regarded journals that are most likely to publish relevant research. For example, authors who aim to survey the literature on social/relational governance mechanisms and their ethical implications may perform a targeted search in specialized journals, such as *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, *Business Ethics: A European Review*, and *Journal of Business Ethics* (Bodolica and Spraggon, 2011). Personal requests could also be sent to leading scholars in the subject area with the purpose of identifying appropriate working papers and forthcoming articles.

Moreover, we recommend performing a focused search for review articles that were previously published on the same or closely related topics. Being aware of these articles is essential for building a solid basis for differentiation and offering a convincing justification that warrants the conduct of a new literature review on the topic. The retrieved full texts of all the papers generated during the entire search should be placed in a specially designated folder and afterwards subjected to an overall screening to eliminate potential duplicates. To be successful in this time-consuming process, researchers should possess a number of skills of which the most important are determination, perseverance, meticulousness and attention to detail. A good familiarity with different electronic databases is valuable as it enhances the ability to easily navigate and produce optimal hits by making use of wild cards, operators and algorithms.

In terms of best practice advise, it is imperative for the search process to be unbiased, for reliability purposes, and inclusive, for securing full coverage of relevant studies. All the search strings and other elements of the search strategy should be clearly defined and reported to eliminate potential concerns regarding scientific reproducibility. Preferably, the articles' identification procedure should occur in repeated cycles consistent with an iterative approach that necessitates reliance on multiple methods and techniques. To measure the effectiveness of this process, investigators can benchmark the number, type and variety of searches performed against those stated in prior review articles. The search can be unequivocally declared complete when a sufficiently high volume of pertinent literature is produced and the point of saturation is reached with recurrent study overlaps ensuing from any subsequent data search. The outcome of this step constitutes the generation of a pool of papers for potential inclusion in the survey of the literature.

Step 3: studies' assessment and selection. As far as the third step is concerned, it aims to finalize the sampling procedure that began when searching and screening the specialized literature. While the application of various search filters allowed producing a general data set, a closer examination into the papers' contents is required to secure their relevance for the review. The key actions that authors need to undertake refer to scrutinizing the literature, quality evaluation, eligibility assessment, and studies' selection for definitive inclusion in the sample. This process is conducted in a progressive, multi-stage fashion that starts from a more superficial analysis of abstracts and concludes with a detailed examination of full texts of all the retrieved articles. Papers that move successfully through each consecutive stage are shortlisted, while those that do not fulfill the pre-established criteria are excluded from further consideration.

Exclusion from the sample can be driven by a number of factors, such as the study type (empirical vs conceptual), research method (quantitative vs qualitative), firm size and type (small vs large; private vs public), time period (before vs after a given event), and geographical area (North America vs other regions). The assessment of studies' quality can be made based on the reputation of the journal where they have been published, total citation counts, theoretical embeddedness, methodological strength, or significance of contributions to extant scholarship and practice. This procedure commonly requires solving the quantity-quality tradeoff, as a stronger focus on best-quality evidence decreases the quantity of articles that could be included in the review. For instance, by screening as many as 30 top journals by 5-Year Impact Factor in business, finance, economics, and management categories, Pindado and Requejo (2015) were able to consider over 350 papers in their survey of the family business governance literature.

To eliminate potential subjectivity when building the final data set, we advocate strict adherence to clearly defined inclusion criteria and providing justified reasons for studies' exclusion from the sample. An essential best practice advice is to have several investigators perform this articles' selection task independently and afterwards compare and consolidate the results within the review panel. For this purpose, scholars should be consistent throughout the process and focused on the task at hand, possess strong reasoning capacity and delivery skills, and demonstrate ability to work well both individually and in collaboration with fellow researchers. When the level of inter-rater discrepancy is low and disagreements over papers' inclusion are unanimously resolved, the selection bias can be kept close to zero. In addition, the effectiveness of this step can be measured against an optimal number of retained studies to ensure the feasibility of their subsequent analysis.

Step 4: literature analysis and synthesis. Having completed the sampling procedure, the process continues with an in-depth analysis and synthesis of all the studies included in the survey. This is the most cumbersome and demanding step as it involves both delving into each paper separately and combining the widely dispersed pieces of evidence to create an integrative understanding of the explored subject area (Rastogi *et al.*, 2018). When analyzing the contents of extant research, a detailed form should be devised to provide a structured basis for critical data extraction. The purpose of this form is to summarize the constitutive parts of each article by including relevant data for the ensuing synthesis of the literature. It may contain information about sample characteristics (such as size, industry, nationality and period), theoretical perspective(s) used, sources of data collection, methods of data analysis, independent and dependent variables, major empirical findings, and key contributions to theory and practice. This background information is then used to synthesize the results in meaningful ways through the identification of cross-study patterns, emerging themes, and general trends in the field.

Given the significance of this step for the future development and impact of the review article, we advise relying on scientific methods of (quantitative or qualitative) research synthesis. They offer a means for investigators to systematically interpret empirical evidence, detect areas of knowledge conversion, elaborate on the underlying reasons of inconsistencies, and offer viable suggestions for improved management scholarship and practice (Rousseau *et al.*, 2008). Meta-analysis enables the aggregation of results from multiple studies that tackle the same research question in an effort to increase the statistical power and generate a more reliable estimate of the net effect (Mackey *et al.*, 2017). However, in the case of broad heterogeneity of studied phenomena and related measures, which is a common occurrence in the field of management, interpretive approaches to data synthesis, such as meta-synthesis or realist synthesis, are more appropriate. While the former allows drawing generalizations from a set of both comparable and very different qualitative studies, the latter seeks to uncover the conditions that make an intervention work for a specific target audience.

Another best practice recommendation is to include as many summary tables as needed to adequately substantiate the interpretation of data for performing a thorough thematic analysis of the literature. Similarly to the previous step, two or more reviewers should work separately on completing the data extraction forms that would be reconciled jointly to eliminate discrepancies and enhance accuracy. An effective way of reporting the synthesized findings is to build a unifying framework of overarching themes or clusters that can be broken down in sub-categories or sub-clusters based on conceptual similarity. For example, by integrating several knowledge management streams of inquiry, Spraggon and Bodolica (2012) developed a multidimensional taxonomy of intra-firm knowledge transfer processes that is composed of four different categories.

Scholars need to possess solid cognitive and analytical skills to juggle large amounts of information, assimilate findings from the surveyed studies, and combine them with their expert knowledge of the field to set new priorities for further exploration. They also ought to make extensive use of their holistic thinking and ability to extrapolate to perform thematic associations and uncover conceptual connections between various strands of the literature. The successful accomplishment of this step can be assessed through a number of metrics such as the summary table prototype, degree of data accuracy and co-authors' agreement test. By designing a summary table prototype with only 3-4 full paper entries, researchers can pre-test its level of meaningfulness and explicitness with non-co-authoring peers who can point to imperfections, reveal reasons of misinterpretation, and suggest modifications in the layout and contents of the designed table. Data accuracy is achieved via comparison and effective harmonization of independent data extraction work by multiple investigators who should subsequently come to a mutual agreement regarding the conceptual framework to be used for reporting the results of their review paper.

Step 5: structuring and drafting the review. The fifth step in the end-to-end process of writing influential review articles is concerned with the effective organizing of co-authors' thoughts and viewpoints about the surveyed literature and exposing them in the form of a well-articulated text. The main objective is to produce a coherent and logically structured draft of the review paper to enhance the quality of the message being delivered to the target audience and to increase the likelihood of its future impact. This requires possessing excellent writing skills that include a sense of style, capacity to organize ideas in an intelligible manner, and ability to edit content for grammar, flow and clarity. Additionally, co-authors need to be proactive in their search for peers' feedback on the written draft and approach the received criticism as a viable opportunity for improvement. When making presentations at scientific conferences and taking part in working paper series at business school or university, new insights can be generated for successfully rewording and streamlining the text.

Disregarding the specificity of the synthesized topic or subject area, most management review articles exhibit a strikingly similar structure. An impactful survey of the literature is typically organized around five major sections, including introduction, methods and/or framework, findings, future research, and conclusion. The introduction seeks to attract readers' interest by raising awareness about the importance of the researched question (i.e. step 1), substantiating the need for a comprehensive review of the evidence, and delineating the achieved contributions for knowledge advancement in the field. The methods section aims to report the details of the sampling procedure, starting from the initial search strategy and screening of the literature (i.e. step 2), and concluding with the adopted techniques for studies' assessment and selection (i.e. step 3). The description of sample characteristics is often conveyed in a table that categorizes the distribution of retained articles by journal title, journal discipline, year of publication, and total citation count, among others. The inclusion of these methodological aspects is a must for all the papers that appear in the *International Journal of Management Reviews* (Linnenluecke, 2017; Pindado and Requejo, 2015).

Alternatively, most articles published in the Academy of Management Annals choose to focus on the development of a conceptual model or framework that stems from the deployment of scholarly efforts to analyze and synthesize the dispersed literature (i.e. step 4). This framework organizes the reviewed research in different themes, streams, and sub-clusters and is used to guide the readers through the remainder of the article (Bodolica and Spraggon, 2009; Leonardi and Vaast, 2017). The findings section embraces the structure advanced in the conceptual framework to discuss the emerging results from the surveyed studies by making use of relevant summary tables for each thematic cluster. Then, the section on future research should critically assess the current state of knowledge on the topic, discuss discrepancies and limitations, and advance a comprehensive theory-driven agenda of research questions that should be addressed in the next generation of studies in the field. Finally, a one- or two-paragraph conclusion is dedicated to providing a brief overview of the review article and inspiring additional work and further inquiries in the subject area.

Considering the complexity of devising a coherent literature review paper, we advocate a skill-based division of structuring and writing tasks among the co-authors. A reliable qualitative metric of the paper's future success represents the objective feedback and opinions received from subject-matter experts and experienced researchers in related fields. The potential interest of the scholarly community can be estimated via conference attendees' requests to get the full paper and the number of working paper's views and downloads. Since the expected outcome of this step represents the finalized review manuscript that is ready for journal submission, the degree of co-authors' satisfaction with the produced draft can indicate its readiness to enter in the publishing phase.

Phase 2: publishing

Step 6: journal submission and publication. While writing a review manuscript is extremely demanding, publishing it in a well-regarded academic journal poses an entirely separate challenge. This step requires familiarity with a number of potential publication outlets, their scope of coverage, type of readership, and specific submission guidelines. It necessitates understanding of the practice of scholarly publication, including the idiosyncrasies related to the double- or triple-blind peer review. Difficulties associated with securing timely evaluations from expert reviewers due to their busyness and time constraints contribute to slow turnaround cycles from initial submission to editorial decision, adding more uncertainty to the equation. Given the multiplicity of parties involved in the process, its success hinges upon the effective collaboration among the authors, editorial assistants, editors, associate editors and anonymous reviewers.

The most important best practice advice is to select an appropriate scholarly outlet for publishing a survey of the literature. Submitting authors can choose between review-only publication titles, annual review issues of general management journals, and regular editions of more specialized management outlets. The better the fit between the journal scope and the review article topic, the higher the likelihood of benefiting from a productive and expedited peer-review process. Nonetheless, if the subject area of the review article is sufficiently broad but also focused on a specific management sub-discipline, it stands a good chance of being published in either of these journals. For instance, in-depth surveys of the expanding family business research have been routinely included in both review-only management titles (Gomez-Mejia *et al.*, 2011; Siebels and zu Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2012) and regular issues of specialized journals, such as *Family Business Review* (Madison *et al.*, 2016) and *Journal of Family Business Strategy* (Suess, 2014).

Another way for selecting an optimal publication outlet that should be acknowledged represents getting informed about recent Calls for Papers as part of Special Issues released by a number of journals in the field. Interested authors can explore the full list of Open Calls for Special Issue Papers on the website of major scientific publishers such as Emerald, Elsevier, Wiley and Inderscience. Special Issues are commonly guest-edited by subject-matter experts who delineate the scope of the issue and formulate critical research questions that have to be answered in relation to a specific topic. A literature review article that pushes the boundaries of scholarly inquiry on the identified topic beyond extant knowledge frames stands a good chance of both being published and garnering citations. The Special Issue Call for Papers on "Micro-foundations of small firm internationalization" from *Cross Cultural and Strategic Management* by Emerald could be of interest to comparative management scholars. Guest Editors are inviting submissions of various papers, including literature reviews, that tackle the international growth of small businesses from a comparative/cross-cultural perspective.

To enable a smooth submission and communication process, the corresponding author should check the specific journal requirements, secure compliance with them, and inform all the co-authors when the manuscript is under publication consideration. While awaiting the editorial decision on this submittal, new research projects can be initiated to capitalize on the ideas advanced in the review paper. In case of receiving a positive feedback from the journal, the co-authors should read the reviewers' comments, revise the manuscript accordingly and, prior to the expiration of the deadline, resubmit it for another round of anonymous evaluation. Of critical importance is to preserve openness to constructive criticism and responsiveness to editors' and reviewers' suggestions for improvement. The metrics that can be used to assess these publishing efforts are the number of "reject on the desk" decisions, the unsuccessful submissions after the initial peer review, the "revise and resubmit" cycles, and the positive impressions and encouragements of reviewers and journal editors. Eventually, with a healthy dose of co-authoring scholars' determination and commitment, the outcome of this step will constitute the acceptance of the review article for publication.

Step 7: post-publication diffusion. The final step in the advanced end-to-end process of producing influential review articles consists in various post-publication diffusion initiatives that seek to stimulate the article's widespread use and adoption. All the academic journals implement a number of strategies to enhance their visibility and reputation, such as providing open access to selected issues and offering early view options by posting papers online ahead of print. While the prestige of a given journal is most commonly estimated by the magnitude of its impact factor, publishing in top-ranked outlets is not an automatic guarantee of garnering a lot of citations, and vice-versa. As a matter of fact, there are many examples of highly cited articles that appeared in journals not included in the Social Sciences Citation Index, such as the qualitative case study methodology paper by Baxter and Jack (2008). Hence, we believe that it is also the responsibility of the authors to deploy a number of actions to help the review article being noticed and applied.

As soon as the paper gets accepted for publication, the news ought to be disseminated through personal and professional networks, and posted on relevant social media platforms. The publicly available resume of each author has to be updated along with the individual profile page on the official website of the employing institution (e.g. school, university, research center). To spread awareness about their forthcoming survey of the literature, researchers should increase their exposure to both the academic and practitioner communities by building a digital presence, participating in discipline-related conferences, delivering consulting mandates, and accepting guest speaker and discussion panel invitations. Moreover, they could start new inquiries and complete the previously initiated research projects stemming from the review, while several years later the significantly amplified evidence on the surveyed topic could result in a renewed effort to synthesize the related literature. For instance, the original review article of Bodolica and Spraggon (2009) on top management pay in target and acquiring firms have been notably expanded and morphed into a full-fledged book (Bodolica and Spraggon, 2015) to capture the evolution and the rapidly evolving knowledge base in this subject area.

To succeed in their post-publication diffusion efforts, scholars should optimize their social media proficiency, be great communicators, possess strong interpersonal skills and be good at networking. Our best practice recommendations for authors are to be active members of several professional associations, to pursue a dynamic research agenda within the broader scope of their review paper, and to integrate the outcomes of their research with teaching, consulting and community outreach. To evaluate the impact of the published article, we suggest relying on both quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment. While the total citations' count is the most popular statistic, the number of paper downloads and even authors' profile views on social media may be seen as complementary indicators. For example, the *Academy of Management Annals*' website offers a regularly updated metric on the most read papers published in the journal, which is based on the aggregation of PDF downloads and full-text HTML views. The literature review's potential influence can also be estimated qualitatively by the novelty of suggested avenues for future research, the practical relevance of generated ideas, and the long-term evolution of the field in the direction advocated by the review article.

Conclusion

The management discipline provides infinite possibilities for taking stock of advancements and setbacks in various areas of its dynamic and broadly diversified arena (Chen and Miller, 2012; Kalliny and Benmamoun, 2014). In-depth reviews of the literature are ideal venues for challenging established assumptions, highlighting serious knowledge gaps, and offering thought-provoking reflections on how the field can move forward. To be successful in their attempts to interpret the cumulative evidence produced by a body of scholarship, researchers need to be aware of all the requirements in terms of actions, skill sets, best practices, and metrics for assessing the outcomes. In this paper we seek to make a methodological contribution by developing the foundations of an end-to-end process of writing and publishing high-impact review articles in the field of management. It is our contention that the guidelines included in the advanced process would be beneficial to authors interested in pursuing this type of scientific research by inspiring a wealth of new influential surveys of specialized literature.

References

Andriopoulos, C. (2001), "Determinants of organizational creativity: a literature review", *Management Decision*, Vol. 39 No. 10, pp. 834-840.

Audretsch, D. (2012), "Entrepreneurship research", *Management Decision*, Vol. 50 No. 5, pp. 755-764.

Baxter, P. and Jack, S. (2008), "Qualitative case study methodology: study design and implementation for novice researchers", *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 544-559.

Bodolica, V. and Spraggon, M. (2009), "Merger and acquisition transactions and executive compensation: a review of the empirical evidence", *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 109-181.

Bodolica, V. and Spraggon, M. (2011), "Behavioural governance and self-conscious emotions: unveiling governance implications of authentic and hubristic pride", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 100 No. 3, pp. 535-550.

Bodolica, V. and Spraggon, M. (2015), *Mergers and Acquisitions and Executive Compensation*, Routledge, New York, NY.

Bodolica, V., Spraggon, M. and Tofan, G. (2016), "A structuration framework for bridging the macro-micro divide in healthcare governance", *Health Expectations*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 790-804.

Chen, M.-J. and Miller, D. (2012), "Competitive dynamics: themes, trends, and a prospective research platform", *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 135-210.

Doherty, N. (2013), "Understanding the self-initiated expatriate: a review and directions for future research", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 447-469.

Gomez-Mejia, L.R., Cruz, C., Berrone, P. and De Castro, J. (2011), "The bind that ties: socio-emotional wealth preservation in family firms", *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 653-707.

Jiang, B. and Qureshi, A. (2006), "Research on outsourcing results: current literature and future opportunities", *Management Decision*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 44-55.

Kalliny, M. and Benmamoun, M. (2014), "Arab and middle eastern business research: a review of the empirical literature (1990-2013)", *Multinational Business Review*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 442-459.

Leonardi, P.M. and Vaast, E. (2017), "Social media and their affordances for organizing: a review and agenda for research", *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 150-188.

Linnenluecke, M.K. (2017), "Resilience in business and management research: a review of influential publications and a research agenda", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 4-30.

Mackey, J.D., Frieder, R.E., Brees, J.R. and Martinko, M.J. (2017), "Abusive supervision: a meta-analysis and empirical review", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 43 No. 6, pp. 1940-1965.

Madison, K., Holt, D.T., Kellermanns, F.W. and Ranft, A.L. (2016), "Viewing family firm behavior and governance through the lens of agency and stewardship theories", *Family Business Review*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 65-93.

Molina-Azorin, J.F., Claver-Cortes, E., Lopez-Gamero, M.D. and Tari, J.J. (2009), "Green management and financial performance: a literature review", *Management Decision*, Vol. 47 No. 7, pp. 1080-1100.

Nicholls-Nixon, C.L., Davila Castilla, J.A., Sanchez Garcia, J. and Rivera Pesquera, M. (2011), "Latin America management research: review, synthesis, and extension", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 1178-1227.

Nofal, A.M., Nicolaou, N., Symeonidou, N. and Shane, S. (2018), "Biology and management: a review, critique, and research agenda", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 7-31.

Ollier-Malaterre, A. and Foucreault, A. (2017), "Cross-national work-life research: cultural and structural impacts for individuals and organizations", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 111-136.

Pindado, J. and Requejo, I. (2015), "Family business performance from a governance perspective: a review of empirical evidence", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 279-311.

Rastogi, A., Pati Surya, P., Krishnan, T.N. and Krishnan, S. (2018), "Causes, contingencies, and consequences of disengagement at work: an integrative literature review", *Human Resource Development Review*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 62-94.

Rousseau, D.M., Manning, J. and Denyer, D. (2008), "Evidence in management and organizational science: Assembling the field's full weight of scientific knowledge through syntheses", *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 475-515.

Savino, T., Messeni Petruzzelli, A. and Albino, V. (2017), "Search and recombination process to innovate: a review of the empirical evidence and a research agenda", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 54-75.

Siebels, J.-F., zu Knyphausen-Aufseß and D. (2012), "A review of theory in family business research: the implications for corporate governance", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 280-304.

Smith, M.B., Hill, A.D., Wallace, C.J., Recendes, T. and Judge, T.A. (2018), "Upsides to dark and downsides to bright personality: a multidomain review and future research agenda", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 191-217.

Spraggon, M. and Bodolica, V. (2008), "Knowledge creation processes in small innovative hi-tech firms", *Management Research Review*, Vol. 31 No. 11, pp. 879-894.

Spraggon, M. and Bodolica, V. (2011), "Post-acquisition structuring of CEO pay packages: incentives and punishments", *Strategic Organization*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 187-221.

Spraggon, M. and Bodolica, V. (2012), "A multidimensional taxonomy of knowledge transfer processes", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 65 No. 9, pp. 1273-1282.

Spraggon, M. and Bodolica, V. (2017), "Collective tacit knowledge generation through play: integrating socially distributed cognition and transactive memory systems", *Management Decision*, Vol. 55 No. 1, pp. 119-135.

Suess, J. (2014), "Family governance – literature review and the development of a conceptual model", *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 138-155.

Tofan, G., Bodolica, V. and Spraggon, M. (2013), "Governance mechanisms in the physician-patient relationship: a literature review and conceptual framework", *Health Expectations*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 14-31.

Torraco, R.J. (2016), "Writing integrative literature reviews: using the past and present to explore the future", *Human Resource Development Review*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 404-428.

Vaiman, V., Scullion, H. and Collings, D. (2012), "Talent management decision making", *Management Decision*, Vol. 50 No. 5, pp. 925-941.

Wu, Y.-C.J. and Wu, T. (2017), "A decade of entrepreneurship education in the Asia pacific for future directions in theory and practice", *Management Decision*, Vol. 55 No. 7, pp. 1333-1350.

Corresponding author
Virginia Bodolica can be contacted at: virginia.bodolica@hec.ca