



**A content and comparative analysis of strategic  
management research in the Baltic area: a research agenda  
for qualitative studies**

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## A Content and Comparative Analysis of Strategic Management Research in the Baltic area: A Research Agenda for Qualitative Studies

### 1 Introduction

Research in the field of Strategic Management (SM) can be mapped in a two-dimensional space (Furrer *et al.*, 2008). The first dimension confronts strategy as fit to corporate-level strategy while the second does competitive strategies to the manager's strategic role. In their content analysis, Furrer *et al.* (2008) show how research in the SM field evolved from a managerial orientation and strategy as fit lens by early 1980s to corporate-level and competitive strategies in recent times. This dynamics of the SM field parallels the evolution and changes in the conceptualisation of strategy that grew from being goal and planning oriented towards emphasizing the importance of resources and performance (Ronda-Pupo and Guerras-Martin, 2012).

Since its inception, the SM field has been interested in firms' performance and its determinants (Bowman, 1974). In this quest for causality, quantitative methods have been preferred over the qualitative ones by a large proportion of scholars (Greckhamer *et al.*, 2008). In a recent review of 1,431 articles published in the *Strategic Management Journal*, Molina-Azorín (2012) found that 76% of those articles used quantitative methods, 15.2% mixed approaches, and only 7.9% qualitative methodology.

Even if today, qualitative methods are still viewed with suspicion by many scholars (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Gibbert *et al.*, 2008), they strongly contributed to the development of the SM field, either for descriptive, explanatory, or predictive purposes (Barr, 2004; Hitt *et al.*, 1998; Snow and Thomas, 1994). Moreover, qualitative methods are particularly useful to overcome persistent problems facing quantitative studies in the presence of considerable unexplained variance in firms' performance (Bettis, 1991) and critical outliers (Hitt *et al.*, 1998). To solve such problems, qualitative methods

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3 and non-traditional research designs could be used to develop new theories  
4 (Buchanan and Denyer, 2013; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) and increase  
5 the external validity of SM research (Gibbert *et al.*, 2008). Such advantages of  
6 qualitative methods lead to a recent revival of case study as a method to  
7 develop and test theories in management and strategy research (Eisenhardt  
8 and Graebner, 2007; Siggelkow, 2007; Weick, 2007).  
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13 The aim of this paper is to assess the intellectual structure and research  
14 methods used in the SM field in the Baltic area. The central question is whether  
15 SM research in the Baltic area has evolved in similar directions as the global  
16 research in the SM field has. This is of particular interest, since the Baltic area  
17 offers excellent conditions to assess the boundary conditions of general  
18 theories and develop new theories in an environment rich in contextual socio-  
19 economic specificities (Ginevicius *et al.*, 2005). The identification of the  
20 methods used by Baltic scholars is also a relevant question addressed in this  
21 paper. Whether this research has followed an evolution pattern similar to the  
22 general stream of SM research shall facilitate the development of a research  
23 agenda for qualitative studies on SM in the Baltic area. The guidelines emerging  
24 from our investigation are relevant for both scholars and practitioners of SM in  
25 this geographic area. The latter demand responses to the challenges relative to  
26 managing their organizations strategically in this particular context. Meanwhile  
27 the former will find theoretical rationales to discover their own research path.  
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## 42 **2 Strategic management and qualitative methods**

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44 Recent literature reviews on SM research described the early 1960s as  
45 the period of emergence of the discipline (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro,  
46 2004; Furrer *et al.*, 2008; Ronda-Pupo and Guerras-Martin, 2012). These  
47 reviews highlighted that the evolution of the SM field was essentially framed by  
48 the alternative dominance of two opposing schools of thought, namely industrial  
49 organization economics and resource-based view. This evolution was labelled  
50 as the swings of a pendulum between the external and internal forces shaping a  
51 firm's strategy (Hoskisson *et al.*, 1999).  
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3 Proponents of the internal perspective consider strategy to be mainly  
4 shaped by a firm's resources and how they are dynamically combined in unique  
5 ways (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996; Teece *et al.*, 1997).  
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7 Meanwhile, for industrial organization proponents a firm's strategy is based on  
8 industry structure and rivalry (e.g. Porter, 1979; 1981). However, both streams  
9 of research are facing limitations and critiques (Barney and Hoskisson, 1990;  
10 Priem and Butler, 2001). For instance, in an ever changing industrial  
11 environment, firms with similar resources and capabilities perform  
12 heterogeneously, while there are some ventures that decide to implement  
13 different combinations of resources and capabilities within the same industry.  
14 Whether all of the firms need a sustained competitive advantage has also been  
15 questioned, and some operational problems underlying concepts at the heart of  
16 RBV, such as *value*, have been found (Kraaijenbrik *et al.*, 2010).  
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25 During the early developments of the SM field, qualitative methods, such  
26 as case studies, governed research (Hitt *et al.*, 1998; Ridder *et al.*, 2009). This  
27 was because research methods were largely constrained by the difficulties in  
28 dealing with large amounts of data at a time of computational limitations.  
29 Examples of this can be found in some of the landmark studies by Chandler  
30 (1962), based on historical method, and by Mintzberg (1973) based on  
31 observations.  
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37 Later, some scholars used more sophisticated case methodologies to  
38 study specific SM issues. For example, Collis (1991) used a detailed, field-  
39 based case study of three firms in the worldwide bearings industry to examine  
40 intangible resources such as knowledge and reputation and determine the  
41 effect on firm performance. Using a theory-building approach, as opposed to a  
42 theory-testing approach, to develop a framework to analyse the evolution of  
43 cooperation in strategic alliances, Doz (1996) studied both archival and  
44 interview data from three sets of alliance partners. More recently, longitudinal  
45 case studies have been used in SM to study the relationships between contract  
46 design, trust dynamics, and contract application in alliance governance (Faems  
47 *et al.*, 2010), and interpartner dynamics in strategic alliances (Furrer *et al.*,  
48 2013), to name just a few. Therefore, qualitative studies have a definite role in  
49 theory testing and building in the SM field.  
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### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample of articles and data collection

A critical issue in this investigation was the selection of journals dealing with SM in the Baltic area. Therefore, we set two conditions for an article to be included. First, it should mention the location explicitly in any of the article's fields, namely title, abstract and keywords. Second, it should investigate any of the SM field's key descriptors found by past literature reviews. One of the most recent reviews is owed to Furrer *et al.* (2008), so we adopted the same list they used (see appendix 1). Accordingly, the search strategy included keywords related with the Baltic area (e.g. "Baltic Sea" or the diverse countries of this area) combined with the descriptors of the SM field included in the Appendix.

We used two of the most reputed scientific databases, namely Scopus and the Social Science Citation Index – SSCI , since they include those top journals that are a reference in the SM field. At the date of extraction (October 1, 2013) this search yielded a total of 187 articles, 162 of which were published in the *Baltic Journal of Management*. The remaining 25 articles were published in several business management journals, such as *Business: Theory and Practice*; *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*; *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, and the *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, among others.

#### 3.2 Keyword selection

The literature review of the SM field of research conducted by Furrer *et al.* (2008) included the most representative journals within this topic. As a result of their investigation they found the key descriptors of this field (see Appendix). Therefore, we used this list on our sample of articles in order to allow the comparison with their general map of the field.

Additionally, we also included the main quantitative and qualitative methods of research in social sciences gathered from the taxonomy of research methods conducted by Aguinis *et al.* (2009) –see final table in appendix–. In each case, a new variable was created by merging all of the respective methods into two single additional keywords: namely *quantitative* or *qualitative*.

### 3.3 The statistical tool: the HOMALS procedure for multiple correspondence analysis

Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) is a quantitative technique for analysing qualitative data (Hoffman and De Leeuw, 1992). MCA has been reported as useful for mapping the structure of a research field, including strategic management (e.g. Furrer *et al.*, 2008) and multinationals' strategy (e.g. Dabic *et al.*, 2014).

For this study, homogeneity analysis by means of alternating least squares (HOMALS) procedure was used to detect the underlying structure of associations between keywords (Gifi, 1990). The data are represented in a parsimonious Euclidean space, which aggregates the shared variance between keywords. Following the methods of Hoffman and Franke (1986), Hoffman and De Leeuw (1992), and Furrer *et al.* (2008), a matrix was created by cases (articles) and keywords (variables). A computer-aided search of each group of keywords in the article's title, abstract, and keywords was conducted. A "1" was entered if it was found and zero otherwise.

The HOMALS was performed in SPSS (v20) software. The main outcome of this procedure is a proximity map where keywords are depicted along two axes. The points in the map represent the distance between keywords. If two keywords appear closer in the map, it means that such pairs of keywords are jointly associated in a significant portion of articles (Bendixen, 1995).

Additional insights can be obtained by analysing the distance from a *qualitative* keyword to each of the other keywords. Thus, we draw a second map to include the frequency of appearance of the topic—in either qualitative or quantitative studies—and its distance to the *qualitative* keyword. The distance is computed from the coordinates of each keyword yielded by the HOMALS. The distance between the *i*-th keyword with coordinates ( $x_i$ ,  $y_i$ ) and a second one (*qualitative*, in this case) with coordinates ( $x_q$ ,  $y_q$ ) in the Euclidean space is [see Equation 1]:

$$[1] d_{iq} = \sqrt{(x_q - x_i)^2 + (y_q - y_i)^2}$$

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3 The larger the distance is, the lesser the association between the first  
4 keyword and qualitative methods is. Both axes were then divided in two  
5 segments by calculating the respective medians (see Figure 1).  
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8 Accordingly, Quadrant I comprises the keywords highly associated with  
9 *qualitative* (small distance) and present in a large portion of empirical articles.  
10 Hence they can be labelled as *research with the lowest interest* for qualitative  
11 studies in SM research in the Baltic area.  
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14 The keywords in Quadrant II hold the distance and frequency below each  
15 median. These keywords have been addressed quite often from qualitative  
16 approaches but they do not represent a large portion of the total number of  
17 articles. Hence they can be labelled as *emerging topics and gaps*, because of  
18 their low total frequency of appearance.  
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26 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE\*\*\*\*\*  
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30 Quadrant III includes the hot topics of research on SM in the Baltic area.  
31 However, they are infrequently associated with qualitative research methods.  
32 Consequently, qualitative research might be used to study these topics to  
33 complement the extant quantitative studies and assess the boundary conditions  
34 of the findings of these studies. This quadrant can be labelled as *hot-topics with*  
35 *still relevant gaps* for qualitative studies.  
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40 Quadrant IV includes the keywords with low frequencies of appearance  
41 and large distances to *qualitative*. These topics have received only marginal  
42 attention from SM scholars using qualitative methods. Nevertheless, this  
43 quadrant is most interesting for future qualitative studies and is accordingly  
44 labelled as *relevant gaps on strategic management for future qualitative studies*  
45 in the Baltic area.  
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#### 4 Mapping the intellectual structure of strategic management research in the Baltic area

##### 4.1 Has SM research in the Baltic Area been different to the general SM research stream?

Whether the intellectual structure of research on SM in this location is similar to the structure of the SM field in the rest of the world, as mapped by Furrer *et al.* (2008) (general map, henceforth) is the first question we address. Figure 2 depicts a map of keywords in the Baltic area. The proportion of variance explained by each dimension jointly sum 0.769, which exceeds the threshold of 0.500 of total variance explained.

\*\*\*\*\*INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE\*\*\*\*\*

The dimensions of the map presented in Figure 2 are similar to those identified by Furrer *et al.* (2008). These results lead to two observations. First, the descriptors of the field are robust regardless of the sample of articles and the geographic area analysed. And second, research on SM in the Baltic area is similar to research published regardless of the location studied.

In the Baltic area, research on *corporate-level strategy* is governed by descriptors such as *Financial, Diversification, Functional, Cognitive, Decision, Innovation, Performance and Corporate*. Most of these descriptors also appeared with high frequency in the general map. Comparatively speaking, a major change is *Restructuring* that was associated more with corporate-level strategy than in the Baltic case. *Cognitive*, associated with *strategy as fit* in the general map, is more strongly linked to both corporate- and competitive-level strategies in the Baltic area. Therefore, there is room for more empirical research on the *cognitive* side of strategy, in particular by combining managers' perception and judgment of the environment and the process of strategy as fit. Examples of articles focussing mainly in the corporate level strategy are those of Lorentz, Hakkinen and Hilmola (2006), who studied cross-border merger and acquisition strategies in the retail sector of Russia, or Eamets *et al.* (2008), who advanced on the differences at the corporate level due to the financial participation of employees in ownership by using a mixed method.



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3 On the right hand side of the figure, SM associates with the ongoing  
4 process of fit between strategy and structure, as well as with the determinant  
5 role of the external environment. *Leadership, Entry, Planning, Growth,*  
6 *Environment, Top Management and Mission* are the keywords with the highest  
7 loadings. Some of the latter keywords were also depicted associated to *strategy*  
8 *as fit* in the general map. However, research in this area seems to have been  
9 more concerned with growth and leadership. Hence the environmental context  
10 appears to have influenced the latter research orientation.

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17 Examples of qualitative research on top management teams are those of  
18 Dickerson *et al.* (2006) and Umans (2008). Based on the case studies of two  
19 multinational companies operating in Latvia, Umans (2008) suggests that ethnic  
20 diversity in top management teams might lead to more informal and open  
21 communication in the teams, but has no clear influence on power distribution in  
22 the teams. He also pointed out the need for studying variables which could  
23 moderate the effects of ethnic diversity on communication and power  
24 distribution. Dickerson *et al.* (2006), in their narrative analysis comparing  
25 different cultures, argue that the cultural ideologies of researchers have actually  
26 influenced the studies conducted in the field of strategy. In short, there are  
27 several arguments pointing out that the Baltic States offer interesting contexts  
28 for qualitative research in light of the contextual-dependency of findings.

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37 Within the dimension of *competitive strategies*, positions are similar to  
38 the general map. Research in the Baltic area is best described by keywords  
39 such as *Entry, Competition, Cognitive, Functional, Growth, International,*  
40 *Environment, and Capabilities*. The main difference is the relevance of  
41 *International* in the case of the Baltic area instead of *Innovation*. *Entry* and  
42 *Competition* are keywords with remarkable loadings. In this area, research on  
43 competitive strategies has strongly been concerned with the entry of firms,  
44 either to an industry or to an international market. Examples of the focus on  
45 competitive strategies are those of Roolaht and Varblane (2009) and  
46 Lemmetyinen and Go (2010). Based on case studies of two major Baltic  
47 banking groups, Roolaht and Varblane (2009) studied the inward-outward  
48 dynamics in the internationalisation of Baltic banks that lead to their  
49 incorporation into Nordic banking groups. With a single-case study describing  
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3 the dynamic process of building a brand identity, Lemmetyinen and Go (2010)  
4 examine the process of building a brand identity in the cruise sector based in  
5 the Baltic Sea region. Dynamic capabilities were studied by Tsekouras *et al.*  
6 (2011) who conducted a comparative analysis of three case studies captured  
7 through a number of interviews with senior managers to study the types and the  
8 nature of innovations developed by small companies and the ways innovations  
9 impact firms' strategic capabilities.  
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15 Research on the *manager's strategic role* has been conducted  
16 essentially through *Leadership, Top Management, Planning, Financial, Mission,*  
17 *and Organization*. The exchange of positions between *Corporate* and  
18 *Organization* is the most remarkable change when compared with the general  
19 map. Hence the corporate level seems to be less associated with the manager's  
20 role while emphasizing the relevance of the organizational level, a small  
21 although relevant nuance. This is perhaps influenced by the size of  
22 organizations dominant in the Baltic area, which is not different to other  
23 European countries: small and medium-sized enterprises. However, as noticed  
24 by Furrer *et al.* (2008), the dynamics of the general map showed an evolution  
25 towards corporate-level strategies, largely influenced by diversification  
26 strategies in the global marketplace. Consequently, a relevant gap for future  
27 research relates to corporate-level strategies in the Baltic area.  
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#### 40 4.2 Gaps of research from qualitative approaches in the Baltic area

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42 Two additional keywords were included in the map at this step.  
43 Qualitative and quantitative methods were classified in one variable each (see  
44 Figure 3) and the distance to both was computed.  
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49 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE\*\*\*\*\*  
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53 Quantitative research is more strongly associated with *competitive*  
54 *strategies* from the *strategic approach as fit*, while qualitative research has been  
55 more firmly linked to *managers' strategic role* from a *corporate-level* perspective  
56 (see Figure 3).  
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3 A somewhat surprising finding is that *Entry* and *Competition* are far away  
4 from both methodological descriptors. *Mission* and *Planning* are also two  
5 descriptors that are far away from both methodological descriptors. Therefore, it  
6 seems that there is still room for more empirical research on these issues in the  
7 Baltic area by using either qualitative or quantitative methods, since they have  
8 been equally ignored in both types of studies.

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13 *Leadership, Fit, Restructuring, and Performance* are among those descriptors  
14 with larger distances to qualitative methods. Despite the fact that performance  
15 is consistently highlighted as a central idea at the very heart of SM (Bowman,  
16 1974; Furrer *et al.*, 2008), qualitative studies might be required to better  
17 understand the role of performance outliers (Hitt *et al.*, 1998.). Cultural issues  
18 seem to be a promising gap for qualitative studies as well, since *Leadership*  
19 was highlighted amongst the descriptors more distant to *qualitative*. Conversely,  
20 the smallest distances to *Qualitative* are from keywords such as *Environment,*  
21 *Corporate, International, Alliances, Capabilities* and *Functional*. Additional  
22 findings may be provided from the matrix of frequency of appearance and  
23 distance to *Qualitative* (see Figure 4), where topics located in both Quadrant III  
24 and IV are the more interesting for a Research Agenda.

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34 Only a small number of keywords are located in Quadrant III, which  
35 means that those topics are currently under-researched and have been  
36 conducted more by using quantitative methods rather than qualitative  
37 approaches. They are *Organization, Performance, Fit, Growth and Financial*.  
38 The growth–performance relationship has quite often been studied by a  
39 quantitative approach since causality is crucial in this type of investigation. Yet  
40 qualitative studies may shed some light on the contextual particularities in the  
41 Baltic Sea, where a diversity of cultural ambiances interact. Strategy as fit could  
42 be an interesting approach to study this topic.

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49 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE\*\*\*\*\*

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53 Quadrant IV includes keywords with large distances to *Qualitative* that  
54 have seldom been associated either to qualitative or to quantitative methods in  
55 the Baltic area. To a higher extent they associate with *Competition* and *Entry*.  
56 *Leadership, Restructuring, Mission, Planning, Cognitive* and *Typologies* are  
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3 other relevant topics here. *Top Management* is right at the Median in the  
4 distances axis, and thus could be included in either the Quadrant IV or II.  
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7 On the other hand, Quadrants I and II offer only limited opportunities for  
8 qualitative studies in this area. Some opportunities for qualitative research may  
9 exist in Quadrant II to the extent that new limits are explored. *Functional*,  
10 *Entrepreneurship*, *Diversification*, and *Alliances* are the main keywords.  
11 *Innovation* is located at the median. Managers' entrepreneurial behaviour could  
12 be a critical construct for explaining the choice of strategies in the Baltic  
13 area - for instance, those strategies related to innovation, diversification or  
14 alliances. Qualitative studies may help to identify possible mediator or  
15 moderator effects influencing the relationship between entrepreneurial  
16 orientation and strategies, prior to evidence of their validity to be provided by  
17 quantitative methods.  
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## 27 **5 Discussion**

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29 As a result of the latter findings, three areas of interest have been  
30 identified while the fourth seems to offer lesser opportunities for qualitative  
31 studies. First, *Entry* and *Competition*, deserve further attention in order to shed  
32 more light on the rationale of contextual specificities. The latter should be  
33 explored from the viewpoint of the manager's strategic role. Second, strategic  
34 behaviour emerges as a topic requiring more empirical research in the nascent  
35 topic of micro-foundations of strategy. Third, the relationship growth-  
36 performance calls for more qualitative research at organizational levels by  
37 including moderator/mediator effects of contextual variables in the Baltic area,  
38 in the pole of strategy as fit. The fourth topic relates to global organizations'  
39 strategies in the global marketplace, perhaps from a resource-based view and  
40 capabilities approach. In addition, scholars are encouraged to find and justify  
41 their own path in light of the maps.  
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51 The manager's strategic role can be fruitfully explored through  
52 entrepreneurship approaches, which also offer promising research avenues  
53 when it comes to diversification, innovation and functional strategies.  
54 Entrepreneurial orientation was found to be a crucial construct in  
55 entrepreneurship research. It can predict success of a myriad of strategic  
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3 decisions such as survival of new international ventures (e.g. Kropp *et al.*,  
4 2008). Therefore, qualitative research should be particularly devoted to  
5 exploring the boundaries of that construct when applied to predict functional or  
6 diversification strategies. Entrepreneurship is largely rooted in the research of  
7 Mintzberg (1973), while the scales are mainly credited to Khandwalla (1977)  
8 and Lumpkin and Dess (1996). Some examples of studies on entrepreneurship  
9 orientation in the Baltic area are those of Elenurm and Alas (2009) and Elenurm  
10 (2012).

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17 Moreover, amongst the more distant keywords to *qualitative* methods,  
18 most of them relate to the manager's strategic role, which indicates a major gap  
19 for future research. If *Restructuring*, a corporate-level strategy, is included in the  
20 equation then the topic of the manager's strategic role in competitive and  
21 corporate-level strategies arises. This calls for more empirical research in the  
22 Baltic area on the emerging topic of micro-foundations of strategy (Felin and  
23 Foss, 2005), with a particular interest in *Entry* decisions (i.e. the *strategic*  
24 *behaviour*). For instance, calls for research have been made regarding how the  
25 combination of the logistic and supply chain management together with key  
26 individuals in multi-tier relationships may shape the competitiveness of firms in  
27 the global marketplace (see González-Loureiro *et al.*, 2014).

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37 Strategic behaviour is largely rooted in the managers' abilities to make  
38 fine judgments to set up the best strategy, a kind of strategy recipes (Spender,  
39 1989) and in the Penrosian managerial services that are critical for an  
40 organization's successful growth (Penrose, 1959). Qualitative studies may help  
41 to find some answers to *who* along with *where* and *when* questions in order to  
42 predict strategic behaviour. The Upper Echelons theory (Hambrick and Mason,  
43 1984) on how the organizational strategic behaviour is shaped as an image of  
44 the managers' attitudes, skills and personality traits seems to configure a  
45 promising research avenue.

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51 The "strategy as fit" as a research avenue is based on the particular  
52 conditions that the Baltic area offers. It includes a variety of small open  
53 economies, at a different stage of economic development (Ginevicius *et al.*,  
54 2005), a combination of Northern cultures (e.g. Sweden, Finland) with East  
55 European working styles (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania...). So a particular  
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3 consideration of cultural issues is required when applying general theories to  
4 this area, while emphasizing the relevance of contextual dependency on SM  
5 research. An example of the conditions in a transitional economy is Borg's study  
6 of Latvia (2006), who claimed that firms must adapt their organizational routines  
7 and strategies. For instance, Luptáková *et al.* (2005) showed how national  
8 culture and power dimensions are diverse and extremely relevant for strategists  
9 in the Baltic States. Kivipõld and Vadi (2010) is an example of a study on the  
10 mediating the role of structure on the relationship between leadership and  
11 performance. A noteworthy exception was Huettinger (2006), who found that  
12 Latvia and Lithuania do not score differently from Sweden in the Hofstede's  
13 scale of cultural dimensions. This may require additional qualitative research to  
14 gain a deeper understanding of these findings.  
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23 The boundaries of current theories on organizational performance and  
24 growth could be explored from both sides of the pendulum. The key issue here  
25 might be how and to what extent the control of valuable, rare, inimitable and  
26 non-substitutable resources may result in sustained superior performance in the  
27 particular case of the Baltic area. Qualitative approaches will help to identify the  
28 key constructs, still obscured relationships, as well as mediator/moderator  
29 effects. Perhaps the rationale of moderator and mediator effects on  
30 performance is an interesting topic for future qualitative studies. Qualitative  
31 methods could provide a wider scope of explanations on why some  
32 relationships may not hold in the Baltic area or what adaptations are required in  
33 terms of performance.  
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42 Methodologically speaking, Greckhamer *et al.* (2008) describes situations  
43 in which qualitative research may be useful to deal with interdependent effects.  
44 For example, the non-independent nature of explanatory variables (causality)  
45 can be better investigated from a qualitative approach and help scholars to  
46 better understand where the boundaries of general theories are.  
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51 The different levels of the object of research may have influenced the rise  
52 of quantitative methods. External and internal forces to explain the strategy-  
53 performance paradigm governed research over the 1980s and 1990s (Ramos-  
54 Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro, 2004; Furrer *et al.*, 2008). After that, a transition  
55 from industry (e.g. Porter, 1979, 1981) and/or corporate/enterprise levels (e.g.  
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3 Barney, 1991) towards individuals, in the emerging field of “micro-foundations”  
4 of strategy (Felin and Foss, 2005) may have happened. At these three levels of  
5 complexity, there is still room for enlarging the qualitative methods’ contribution  
6 to this discipline, in the process of *humanizing strategy*. Therefore, the  
7 exploration of the diverse contexts in which strategic decisions are made by  
8 individuals can be more approachable by qualitative methods.  
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13 Figure 5 graphically summarizes the key contributions that qualitative-  
14 based research is expected to offer in this field and context.  
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17 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE\*\*\*\*\*  
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19 This article also contributes to improving the methods for reviewing  
20 literature. Quite frequently, literature review articles have strongly relied on the  
21 researcher’s intuition providing analyses which may be bounded in scope and  
22 extension (limited number of articles). As an original contribution, this article  
23 proposes a step forward by means of the matrix frequency – distance.  
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## 29 **6 Conclusion**

30 This paper aimed to assess the intellectual structure and methods of  
31 research on SM in the Baltic area in order to suggest research avenues for  
32 qualitative studies. A total of 187 articles have been analysed to map the  
33 intellectual structure of research and methods. Some gaps in the research have  
34 been found and discussed by confronting these results with extant research and  
35 by enlarging the methodology of Furrer *et al.* (2008).  
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42 Three areas of interest have been identified while the fourth seems to  
43 offer more limited opportunities for qualitative studies. These are: *Entry and*  
44 *Competition; Strategic Behaviour and the Micro-foundations of Strategy; the*  
45 *Growth-Performance Relationship; and Global Strategies.*  
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49 Qualitative methods, such as case studies, have been highlighted as  
50 especially appropriated in emerging areas where the theory is still scarce in  
51 constructs and relationships must be explored (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994).  
52 Therefore qualitative research is expected to offer research opportunities where  
53 boundaries of theories must already be tested.  
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**Marina Dabic**, is Professor of Entrepreneurship and International Business at University of Zagreb, Faculty of Economics & Business, Croatia and Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, the UK.. She participated in more than 70 conferences and published 50 papers appeared in wide variety of international journals including *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of World Business*, *European Management Journal*, *Thunderbird Business Review*, the *International Journal Physical Distribution Logistic management - IJPDLM*, *International Marketing Review*, *IJHRM*,

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3 Management Decision, etc. Her research areas include entrepreneurship, HRM, international business,  
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13 [Author3 bio]  
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24 *Business*.  
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TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1. Matrix for detecting gaps in qualitative research

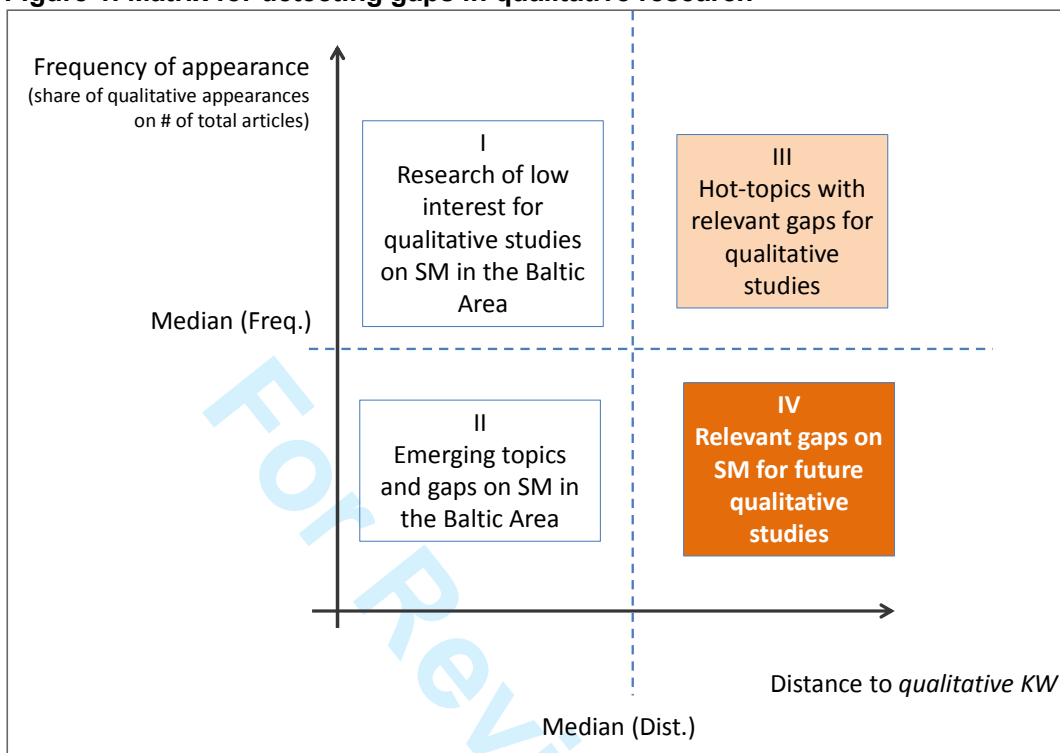


Figure 2. Research on Strategic Management in the Baltic area: Comparative map with the general map in Furrer et al. (2008)

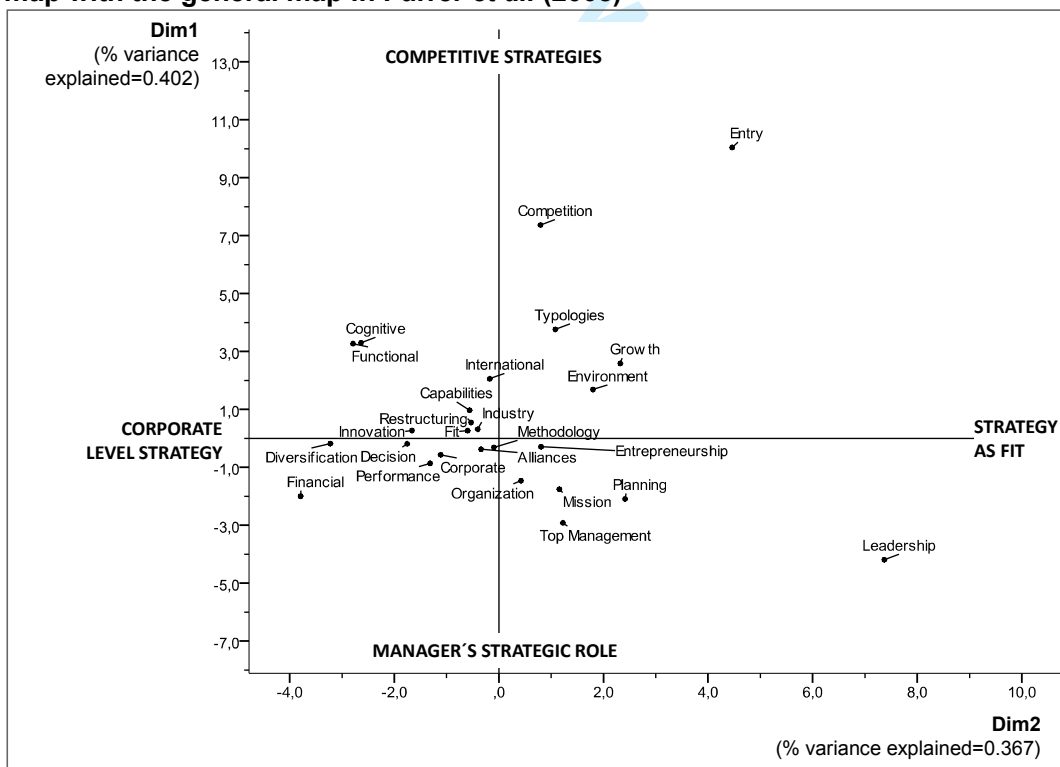
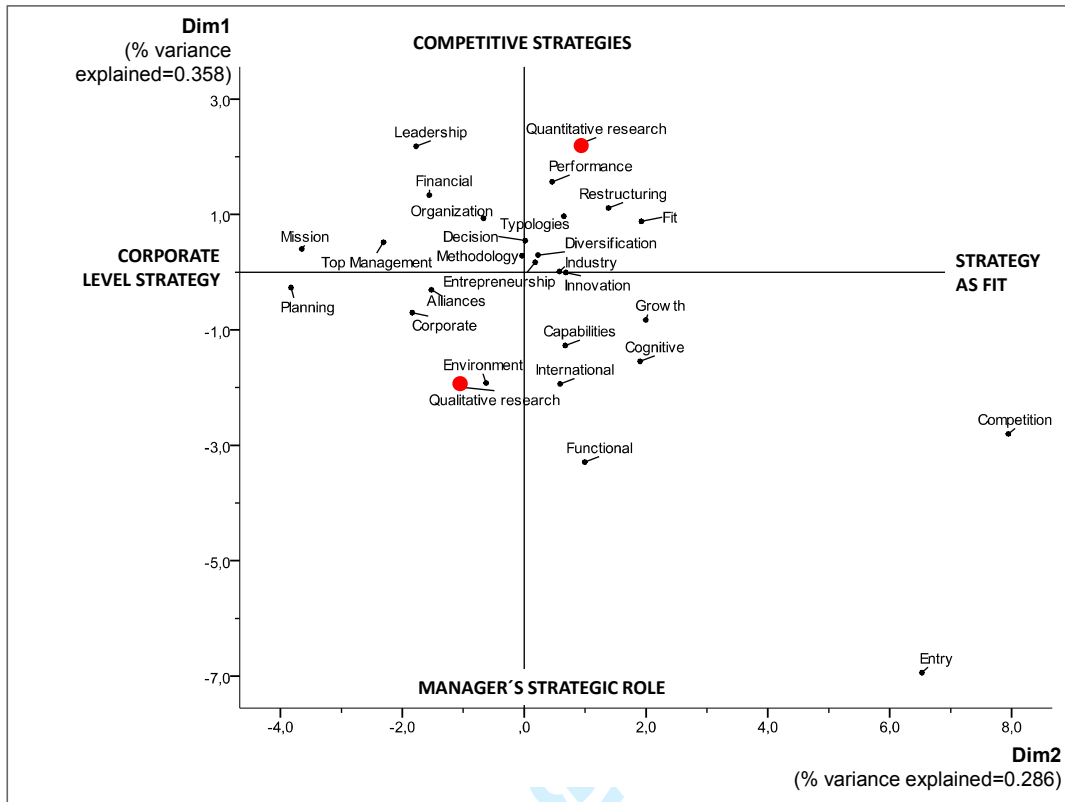


Figure 3. Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research on Strategic Management in the Baltic area

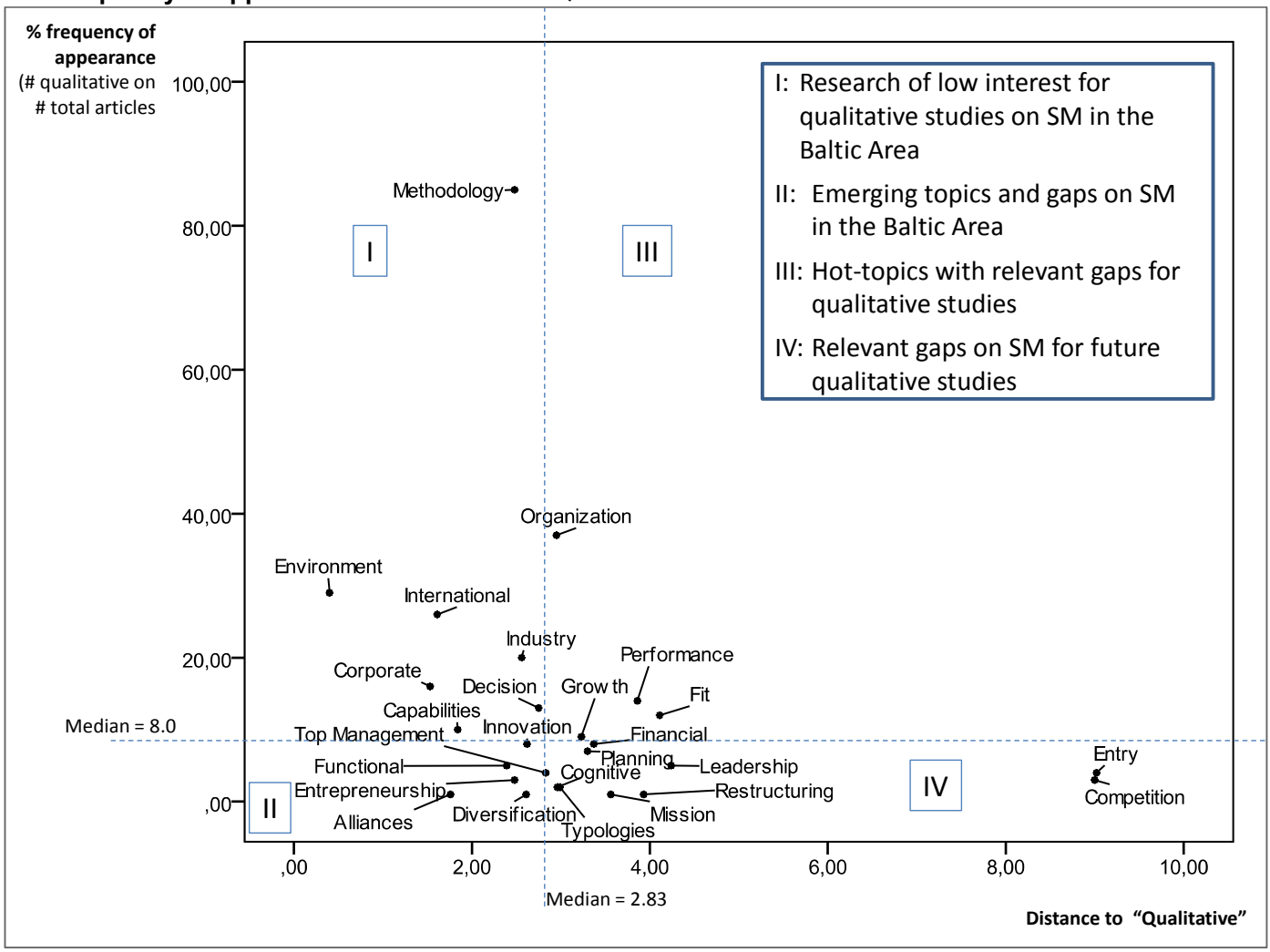


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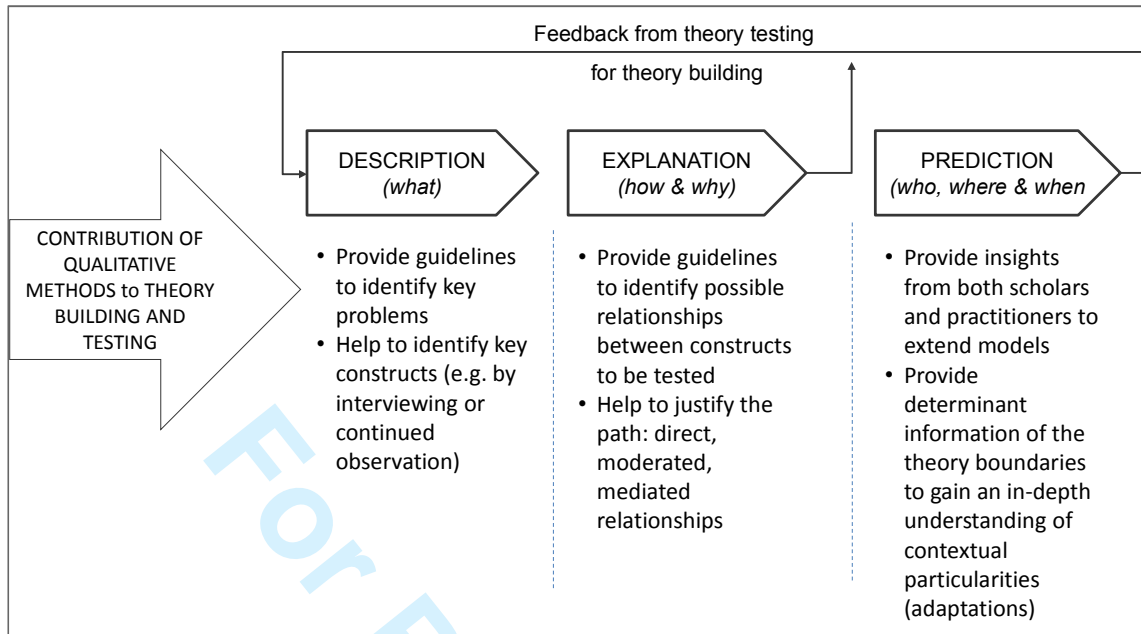
Figure 4. Matrix of frequency of appearance and distance to *Qualitative*





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**Figure 5. Contributions of qualitative methods to theory building and testing**



## APPENDIX: dictionary of descriptors

**Descriptors of the Strategic Management field**

Short name	Descriptor	keywords
Alliances	Alliances, joint ventures, and co-operation	Collaboration, collective strategies, co-operative arrangements, co-operative strategy, electronic data interchange, inter-firm linkages, inter-firm networks, inter-industry transactions, inter-organizational learning, inter-organizational networks, joint ventures, network management, network externalities, network organizations, network perspective, non-joint ventures, partnership, relational contracts, strategic alliances, strategic networks, transaction costs, subcontracting, outsourcing
Capabilities	Capabilities, competencies, and resource-based view of the firm	Assets, core capabilities, core competencies, core technologies, distinctive competence, excess capacity, factor market, firm heterogeneity, firm skills, firm specific assets, group capabilities, human resources, isolating mechanisms, know-how, knowledge, organizational competence, organizational knowledge, patent race game, resource position barriers, resource product matrix, reputation, resources, resource dependency, resource-based view, resource commitment, routines, socio-cognitive resources, skill profile, strategic assets, strategic resources, strengths and weaknesses
Cognitive	Cognitive modelling	Bounded rationality, cognitive biases, cognitive psychology, cognitive styles, executive cognition, organization perception, perceived environment, perception, psychological context, social construction, socio-cognitive resources
Competition	Competition and competitive analysis	Bilateral competition, comparative advantage, competitive analysis, competitive data, competitor analysis, domestic competition, foreign competition, game theoretic approach global competitiveness, global competition, global market competition, market share growth, market share leader, market share strategies, multi-point competition, rivalry, rivalry intensity, sustainable competitive advantage
Fit	Concept of strategy as fit	Co-alignment, compensation–diversification strategy fit, compensation–organizational strategy fit, contingency theory, entrepreneurial style–environment fit, mission–environment fit, manager–strategy fit, strategic fit, strategy–environment fit, strategy–structure fit, strategy–technology fit, structure–environment fit, structure–technology fit

Short name	Descriptor	keywords
Restructuring	Corporate restructuring	Acquisition factors, acquisition strategy, bankruptcy, co-insurance, conglomerate restructuring, corporate reorganization, corporate restructuring, divestment, divestitures, downsizing, efficiency gains, failure, financial distress, mergers strategy, organizational failure, reorganization, reorientation, restructuring, revitalization, spin-offs, stage of takeovers, turnaround
Corporate	Corporate strategy	Capital structure, conglomerate strategy, corporate culture, corporate development, corporate entrepreneurship, corporate reputation, corporate speeches, corporate strategy, corporate value, corporate venturing, corporate governance, corporate headquarters, corporate investment decisions, corporate renewal, corporate reorganization, corporate restructuring, headquarters–subsidiary relations, ownership, ownership structure, organization governance, resource allocation
Decision	Decision-making	Applied decision analysis, behavioural decision theory, decision analysis, decision-making, decision-making technologies, decision support systems, devil's advocacy, dialectic, organizational decision-making, strategic decisions, strategic decision-making, strategic decisions, strategy-making modes
Diversification	Diversification strategy	Corporate diversification, conglomerate strategy, diversification strategies, diversity, dominant logic, firm diversity, new firm formation, product diversification, related diversification, relatedness, scope economies, synergy, systematic risk, unrelated product, vertical integration, vertical strategy
Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurship	Corporate entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial capacity, entrepreneurial start-ups, entrepreneurial strategy, entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship paradigm, intra-preneurship, new venture formation, new ventures, small businesses, small firm perspective, start-up business data, start-up process
Entry	Entry modes and strategic advantage	Choice of entry mode, entrants, entry strategies, first mover, first mover advantage, first mover effects, foreign market entry, market pioneering, new markets, order of entry, order of market entry perspective, pioneering, product cannibalism, product imitation, timing of entry perspective

Short name	Descriptor	keywords
Environment	Environmental modelling: governmental, social, and political influences on strategy	Antitrust, deregulation, environment and strategy, environment scanning, environmental analysis, environmental change, environmental conditions, environmental complexity, environmental determinism, environmental information, environmental munificence, environmental scanning, environmental shock, environmental stability, environmental uncertainty, environmental variation, government regulation, government relations, impact of environment, industrial policy, market analysis, national security, perceived environment, public affairs office, public policy formulation, public policy issues, political bargaining power, political imperative, politics, privatization, procedural justice, public sector, public utilities, regulated environment, regulation, social control, social demands, social issues, social power, social responsiveness, social systems, state owned enterprises
Financial	Financial theory and strategic management	Agency theory, anti-takeover amendments, capital market, capital structure, CAPM, contract risk, dept, efficient market, family stockholding, financial ratio, financial systems, free cash flow hypothesis, golden parachutes, investment strategies, managerial entrenchment hypothesis, market efficiency hypothesis, market imperfections, mutual funds, option theory, risk and return, risk measures, risk reduction, risk/return, risk/return paradox, shareholder, shareholder value maximization hypothesis, shareholder wealth, shareholder wealth creation, stock market reactions, stockholder suits, stockholders, systematic risk, value, venture capital Accounting principles, flexible manufacturing, manufacturing strategy, manufacturing
Functional	Functional strategies	Accounting principles, flexible manufacturing, manufacturing strategy, manufacturing trade-off, marketing, marketing competencies, marketing strategy, marketing/R&D link, optimal plant size, pricing strategy, product strategies, segmentation, strategic markets
International	Global, international, and multinational strategies	Culture, cross-country analysis, cross-country management, export control, export performance, foreign direct investment, foreign market entry, global competition, global competitiveness, global corporation, global integration, global market competition, global strategy, globalization, international competition, international competitiveness, international strategy, multinational corporation, multinational management, multinationals

Short name	Descriptor	keywords
Growth	Growth models	Adaptation, business cycle, business survival, decline, disequilibrium phenomena, development, dynamic theories, economies of evolution, economies of scale, ecosystems theory, evolution, evolutionary biology, experience, experience curve, firm size, growth characteristics, growth industry, growth rate, growth risks, growth strategies, growth-share matrix, industry evolution, industry growth, industry life cycle, inertia, life cycle theory, low share businesses, models of change, market cycle, market growth, market share growth, market share leader, market share strategies, mature industries, mature businesses, mature firms, organizational ecology, organizational evolution, organizational growth, organizational inertia, organizational life cycle, organizational size, population ecology, process models, product life cycle, scale, scale economies, stage models, stages of development, stages of growth theory, strategy through process, sustainable growth, technology life cycle
Industry	Industry analysis	Bargaining power, buyer power, competitor analysis, customer analysis, entry barriers, exit barriers, firm power, industrial organization, industrial policy, industry attractiveness, industry change, industry concentration, industry consolidation, industry effect, industry evolution, industry growth, industry life cycle, industry structure, industry typologies, intra-industry profit differentials, market power, market structure, mature industries, mobility barriers, monopoly power, power dependence, PIMS study, SIC codes, supplier power, strategic industry factors
Leadership	Leadership, management style, and learning	Conflict resolution, co-ordinating mechanisms, co-ordination, group norms, individual learning, leadership, management development, management by objectives, management style, management system, manager typologies, managerial choice, managerial objectives, managerial perspective, middle management, quality of management, reward systems, roles and tasks of managers, visionary leaders
Methodology (*)	Methodologies, theories, and research issues	Agency theory, annual report studies, chaos theory, contingency theory, expectancy theory, institutional theory, measurement issues, methodological issues, neo-institutionalism, paradigm evolution, policy research, philosophy of science, philosophy of strategic management, research issues, research philosophy, strategic theory, teaching issues, theory development, theory of the firm

Short name	Descriptor	keywords
Organization	Organization: structure, strategy, and change	Bureaucracy, complex organizations, control system implementation, decentralization, efficiency, flexibility, franchising, functional relationships, heterarchy, hierarchy, implementation, incrementalism, industry change, inter-organizational learning, learning curve, learning myopia, learning traps, M-form structure, organizational change, organizational evolution, organizational learning, organizational mutation, organizational pathology, organizational typologies radical change, social learning theory, strategic change, strategy implementation, technological change
Performance	Performance	Abnormal returns, accounting return, company performance, operating performance, performance controls, performance measurement, performance measures, productivity, productivity improvement, profit, profit forecast, profitability, rate of return, rents, risk and return, risk/return, risk/return paradox, shareholder return, strategic performance, sustainable rents, Tobin's Q, wealth creation
Planning	Planning and control systems	Business plan, communication, control systems, Delphi technique, diagnostic control system, economic planning, financial control, financial planning, forecasting, formal planning processes, human resource planning, information asymmetries, interactive control system, information diffusion, information management, information processing, information systems, information technology, locus of control, managerial control, marketing planning, organizational control, performance control, planning horizons, process, project planning, process technology, scenario analysis, social control, staff planning, strategic control, strategic control systems, strategic planning, strategy process, succession planning, value-based planning, zero-based budgeting
Innovation	R&D, technology, innovation	Core technology, decision-making technologies, emerging technology, high technology industries, incubators, information technology, innovation gap, innovation model, innovation strategy, innovation strategy search, marketing/R&D link, new product development, organizational innovation, patent race game, process technology, product innovation, process R&D, R&D budget, R&D expenditures, R&D intensity, strategic innovation, strategy- technology interaction, technological change, technological competition, technological evolution, technological innovation, technological progress, technological settings, technology, technology life cycle, technology management, technology transfer, technology strategy

Short name	Descriptor	keywords
Typologies	Strategy typologies and strategic groups	Cost leadership, cost versus market focus, differentiation, entry barriers, exit barriers, focus strategy, generic strategies, Miles and Snow typology, mobility barriers, prospector, strategic groups, strategic variables
Mission	Strategy, mission, vision	Strategic adaptation, strategic alternatives, strategic behaviour, strategic choice, strategic commitment, strategic configuration, strategic moves, strategic orientation, strategic position, strategic vision, strategy and structure, strategy content, strategy formation, strategy formulation, strategy reformulation
Top management	Top management	Board of directors, CEO, Company directors, compensation, executive, executive characteristics, executive compensation, executive succession, executive team, general managers, incentives, management buyout, management selection, manager typologies, managerial elites, managerial entrenchment hypothesis, reward systems, succession planning, top management team

(\*)We excluded those keywords related with methodologies that were included in any of the two categories about methodologies

Source: Based on the Appendix of Furrer *et al.* (2008).

### **Methodologies**

Short name	Keywords
Quantitative	Archival analysis, analysis of variance, ANOVA, ANCOVA, behavioural simulation, Bayesian analysis, categorical dependent variable, causal mapping, cluster analysis, coefficient beta, common method variance, computational modelling, computer simulation, confidence intervals, correlation analysis, descriptives, discriminant analysis, effect size, ethno-statistics, factor analysis, generalized estimating equations, logistic regression, longitudinal data analysis, MANOVA, meta-analysis, missing data, multiple regression, multidimensional scaling, network analysis, neural networks, nonparametric techniques, outliers, partial least squares, path analysis, power analysis, structural equation modelling, SEM, temporal issues, reliability analysis, scale development,
Qualitative	Action research, case study, comparative case study, content analysis, document interpretation, ethnography, focus group, grounded theory, interpretive analysis, interviewing, narrative analysis, participant observation, policy capturing.

Note: mixed-methods articles were coded in both methodologies due to the low number found.

Source: Based on the taxonomy of research methods of Aguinis *et al.* (2009)