

Research paper

A bibliometric analysis of extended key account management literature

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ABSTRACT

Key account management (KAM) has played an important role in business, and this study reviews key account management research using bibliometric techniques. This review includes 373 KAM relevant articles published in 68 journals between 1979 and 2016. In our analysis, we extend the discussion on KAM literature by highlighting areas such as the roles of technology and conflict as well as relationship planning and implementation. We discuss the value of co-creation, inter-organizational design elements, and dyad-level performance measures. We examine five distinctive time-periods and find that KAM relevant literature has progressed 1) from selling and relationship-building approaches to key network management, 2) from network innovation to governance, 3) from network-level performance to co-creation of business solutions and values, 4) from product and service performance to incorporating sustainability. Finally, we present the fifth transition based on a network-view of KAM and identify future research aimed at integrating areas such as network-based orientation, applications of organizational theories, organizational innovativeness, network competence for optimal structure and processes, network-based KAM teams, value-sharing mechanisms, co-created value measurement, and value sustenance within networks. We identify areas of future research and expect the adoption and application of key account management concepts to grow across multiple disciplinary fields.

1. Introduction

Key account management (KAM) has been and continues to be increasingly important for firms. Changes in customer requirements, enhanced competitive conditions, and emerging disruptions are affecting firm strategies, making KAM more critical and KAM performance essential to any firm's success (Guesalaga et al., 2018). The key account selling function has also changed over the years, with more informed and demanding buyers, prompting firms to move toward a more consultative, solution-selling approach. As the role of KAM has evolved, so has the research on this vital aspect of business success (Guesalaga et al., 2018).

There has been extensive research on KAM that incorporates other similar organizational forms such as national account management, strategic account management, and global account management. Although extensive research has been carried out in the areas of KAM, this study goes beyond KAM literature and examines KAM research in adjacent areas of inquiry (e.g., marketing) to identify current and future research trends. We followed the research protocol of other bibliometric research (Dagnino et al., 2015; Randhawa, Wilden, & Hohberger, 2016). We first identified articles that address the concepts

of key account management. We found that some of extended KAM research comes from research adjacencies such as relationship marketing, personal selling, and sales management.

When analyzing the research literature, we first identify the key contributors and institutions, which form the research profile of extended KAM literature. Then, using document co-citation analysis (DCA), we classify the core KAM literature into six clusters: key account management alliances, key account management frameworks, key account management value creation, key account management structure, global account management, and key account management performance. We then use advanced content analysis, text analytics and visualization on abstracts to identify six changes in the extended KAM literature. Each change represents a time period that began with a working approach and ends with another approach that became more viable. These transitions are 1a) from the transactional approach to the relationship to 1b) the network approach to the relationship; 2a) from a competence-based partnership to 2b) joint capability-building; 3a) from functional restructuring to 3b) inter-organizational restructuring; 4a) from relationship planning to 4b) relationship implementation; 5a) from salesforce performance to 5b) network performance; and 6a) from product and service performance to 6b) sustainability. Finally, we

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surveyed academics who work in the KAM area to identify areas of future research.

The paper is laid out as follows. This section introduces the research. Section 2 presents the background of the study, section 3 reports on the extended literature in KAM captured within earlier KAM review articles and section 4 identifies key journals, contributors, and institutions in KAM literature. Section 5 provides the results of a co-citation analysis that identifies clusters of research areas in the core KAM literature. We then provide results of content analysis and visualization of abstracts from extended KAM literature in section 6. Section 7 provides details of an academic survey on areas for future research, and Section 8 discusses insights from our results. The study is concluded in Section 9.

2. Background of the study

2.1. Key account management

Roger M. Pegram first used the term “national account” in 1972 to address important customers for firms. The term was later known by several names such as key account, global account, and strategic account. Stevenson & Page (1979) provided the first definition of this term with the following summation: “Special marketing procedures are followed in selling, servicing, and monitoring certain key customers considered important to the goal attainment selling company.” KAM focuses on establishing and managing long-term business relationships with important customers that offer a competitive advantage to firms (Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015). For this, firms identify key accounts from their existing customer database and use their strategies, capabilities, actors, and resources to develop collaborative, long-surviving, mutually beneficial relationships (Ivens & Pardo, 2007; Workman, Homburg, & Jensen, 2003). The research on KAM was distinct from traditional sales research, relationship marketing, and sales management because KAM processes typically included the selection of key or strategic accounts, team structures, coordination with other functions, and a deeper level of relationship within the organization and with the KAM customer's firm. KAM incorporated relationship marketing strategies and relationship marketing incorporated strategies associated with KAMs. Thus and interestingly, all KAM strategies incorporated relationship marketing, whereas all relationship marketing was not KAM-focused. Over the last four decades, KAM research has expanded to address a wide range of theoretical and practical issues (Guesalaga & Johnston, 2010). Also, as this paper suggests, KAM topics are researched by adjacent disciplines.

2.2. Bibliometrics

Bibliometrics, previously known as a statistical analysis of the literature (Cole & Eales, 1917) in the library and information science disciplines, was called “statistical bibliography” by E. Wyndham Hulme in 1923 at the University of Cambridge UK (Hulme, 1923). A. Prichard first introduced the term ‘bibliometrics’ term in 1969 (Thanuskodi, 2010). Bibliometrics was first defined as “the application of mathematics and statistical methods to books and other media of communication” (Groos & Pritchard, 1969). This was later described as “the quantitative analysis of the bibliographic features of a body of literature” (Hawkins, 1997). A wide range of techniques, e.g., citation analysis, author co-citation analysis, document co-citation analysis, co-word analysis, and textual analysis (Glanzel, 2015) are used in bibliometrics. For document co-citation analysis, the most impactful seminal documents within a research field are identified, and a matrix of co-citation frequencies between pairs of documents are analyzed using multivariate methods (Small, 1973). This maps the knowledge structure of the literature field and identifies the most influential ideas and schools of thought (theories and sub-domains) as well as the inter-relationships among them (White & Griffith, 1981). Broadly, bibliometric methods have the advantages of (i) a quantifiable and objective

approach to literature reviews, (ii) avoiding potential subjective biases of literature review authors, and (iii) representing views of the scholarly community (Nerur et al., 2008). For literature reviews, bibliometric methods have been extensively used in research areas involving strategy (Acedo et al., 2006 for resource-based theory; Nerur et al., 2008 for strategic management) and marketing (Backhaus et al., 2011 for business-to-business marketing; Galvagno, 2011 for anti-consumption and consumer resistance) to classify the literature for their sub-domains, disciplines and theories.

3. Literature review

This study follows the four steps of bibliometric studies (Dagnino et al., 2015; Randhawa, Wilden, & Hohberger, 2016; Paesbrugge et al., 2018) by presenting a literature review that includes 1) sample selection and citation analysis, 2) document co-citation analysis, 3) text analysis, and 4) academic survey. Sample selection and citation analyses are discussed next.

We identified relevant articles in marketing journals by conducting a Google Scholar search. In addition to marketing and sales, we also included articles published in journals from adjacent domains of management such as operations (e.g., *Journal of Operations Management*, *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*), information technology (e.g., *Decision Sciences*, *MIS Quarterly*, *Information and Management*) and management (e.g., *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Strategic Management Journal*). We also included articles published in practitioner-focused journals such as *California Management Review*, *Harvard Business Review* and *Sloan Management Review*. A wide coverage of journals allowed an exhaustive review of KAM, and we identified 373 journal articles published between 1979 and 2016. For each of the 373 articles, a database was prepared, which included all authors' names and their affiliations, article names, year of article publication, names of academic journals, and each journal's citation count for each article entered during the month of March 2017 with Google Scholar used as the search engine.

To identify key account management relevant articles, we adopted a systematic four-step process. First, we identified keywords relevant to key account management. Other than key account, many different keywords were included in the search process such as national account, strategic account, global account, and key account management. Also, searched for articles that used key account professionals (e.g., key account manager, national account manager, key account representative, and account director) as respondents in the studies. Second, we searched for keywords in both the abstracts and full-text. Third, some articles were listed multiple times, and we removed duplicates. The original list of 487 articles contained 96 duplicates, resulting in 391 unique articles. Fourth, two researchers independently reviewed abstracts and full-text. Eighteen articles referenced key account articles but did not address any KAM issues leading to a final set of 373 articles.

In this study, we use 373 articles on KAM published in 68 journals between 1979 and 2016. In addition to articles that address the topic of key accounts, we also included articles on business-to-business relationships (Ingram, LaForge, & Leigh, 2002; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2002; Tähtinen & Halinen, 2002; Ford, 2001) and business-to-business selling (Moon & Armstrong, 1994) where KAM was discussed. Our research suggests that the first article featuring KAM was by Stevenson & Page (1979). From 1979 to 2016, 77 articles on KAM were published in *Industrial Marketing Management*, 49 in the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 36 in the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 19 in the *Journal of Business Research*, and 11 in the *European Journal of Marketing*. One-hundred-six (28.4%) articles on KAM were published over a five-year period from 01/01/2012 to 12/31/2016, and 207 (55.5%) were published over a 10-year period from 01/01/2007 to 12/31/2016. This indicates a growth of KAM research.

Five articles reviewed the literature on KAM. Although some reviews on business-to-business relationship marketing included addressing KAM aspects, reviewing KAM literature was not their key objective (Tanner et al., 2005; Tähtinen & Halinen, 2002). We discuss the five KAM reviews next. Weilbaker & Weeks (1997) reviewed KAM literature for the evolution of KAM processes and demonstrated similarity to an adoption curve. McDonald (2000) provided a framework for antecedents of KAM and KAM stages. Homburg, Workman, & Jensen (2002) classified KAM literature as research on key account managers, research on key account relationships, and research on KAM approaches. Jones et al. (2005) reviewed KAM literature for a deeper understanding of selling team dynamics. Finally, Guesalaga & Johnston (2010) reviewed KAM literature and listed 10 KAM-related research topics (related to KAM adoption, KAM elements, KAM teamwork, and KAM relationships).

Out of the five reviews, Weilbaker & Weeks (1997) and Jones et al. (2005) reviewed only two aspects of the KAM literature, that is, the evolution process of KAM and selling team dynamics, respectively. Homburg, Workman, & Jensen (2002) focused on KAM relationships, and McDonald (2000) outlined the key constructs of KAM. However, the review by Guesalaga & Johnston (2010) was relatively comprehensive with content analysis of 64 articles published from 1979 to 2009 in 17 marketing and management journals. Since this topic is very important, we extended the research by including journals from other disciplines in the review. We increased the period to 2016, used a more fine-grained profile, including articles that use key account professionals as respondents, and explored sub-domains in the literature such as global account management and sustainability in KAM. We also focused on capturing the development of KAM literature over distinctive time-periods. The number of articles jumped from 64 in Guesalaga & Johnston (2010) to 373 articles as we took a more wide-angle study. Also, we profiled a larger array of KAM literature. Classification of KAM literature expanded into sub-domains based on co-citation analysis. We tracked changes in KAM literature across distinctive time periods and conducted an academic survey on areas needing future research.

4. Research profiling

The first objective of the authors' research was to form a research profile of KAM literature using frequency counts and citation analysis. For assessing journal impact, we used frequency count and summation of citation counts of all the articles through their free-public online access in the form of abstracts and introductory material accessible via a Google Scholar search. Their citation counts and average citation rate per year were used. The average citation per year accounts for the fact that the age of an article affects its citation rate and does not discount the recently published articles (Canabal & White, 2008). The average citation per year is the overall number divided by the years since the work was published (Yan & Ding, 2010; Zhang et al., 2010). For assessing author and institution impacts, we used a weighted number of articles, weighted citation count and weighted citation count per year to allocate authorship and citations to authors and institutions. Thus, if four authors co-authored an article, the authorship and citation credits received by each author is one-fourth of the article. If one of the four authors has another single-author article, the total contribution of the author is 1.25. If an individual was involved in multiple papers, the relevant authorship or citations would simply be added to the author's total citation count. Recent studies in marketing have used weighting methods for similar research objectives (Kumar & Polonsky, 2017; Kumar, 2016; Chan, Lai & Liano, 2012; Leone et al., 2012; Polonsky et al., 2013). These results are discussed next.

First, the impact of the journals was assessed using the total number of articles published by each journal on KAM and the total number of citation counts received by all the articles published by each journal on KAM. The leading 15 out of 68 journals are presented in Table 1. The top three journals for both indices are *Industrial Marketing Management*,

Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, and *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*.

Second, the impact of each of the 373 articles was assessed based on their total citation count (Table 2) and citation count per year (Table 3). For citation count per year, 2017 is given as the reference year and the age of an article was calculated by the difference between the year of the article's publication and the reference year. For an article, its citation count was divided by the age of the article that provided citation counts per year for each article in the database of this study. Tables 3 and 4 present the 15 most impactful articles for their total citation count and citation count per year. Interestingly, the oldest and the most impactful article for total citations was published in 1991 and the newest in 2009. On the other hand, the oldest and the most impactful article based on citations per year was published in 2000 and the newest in 2016, which indicates the utility of citations per year as an index of the article's impact assessment. The tables also indicate that most impactful articles are not limited to marketing journals as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Third, the impact of 586 authors (who co-authored at least one of the 373 articles) was assessed for the weighted number of articles, weighted citations, and weighted citations per year (Table 4). Interestingly, Ojasalo, Pardo, Piercy, Sharma, and Storbacka appeared as the top ten contributing authors among the three indices. A correlation analysis of the full set of authors identifies three measures as highly correlated – article and total citations ($r = 0.561, p < .01$); articles and average citations per year ($r = 0.655, p < .01$); total citations and weighted citations per year ($r = 0.551, p < .01$).

Fourth, the impact of 355 institutions (affiliations of the 586 authors) was assessed for the weighted number of articles and weighted citations. Out of 355 institutions, 318 (89.6%) were academic, 27 (7.6%) were corporate organizations, and 10 (2.8%) were other institutions. The results indicate that Cranfield University UK and the University of Warwick UK are two of the top five most-contributing institutions for both indices (Table 5). Other institutions in the top five are Bocconi University in Italy and Emlyon Business School in France, followed by four USA universities, Georgia State University, Harvard Business School, University of Miami, and University of North Carolina. Other leading institutions engaged in KAM research are located in different countries and continents, e.g., Canada, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA. Notably, the contributing 586 authors and 355 institutions are globally dispersed, indicating broad global interest in KAM.

5. Document co-citation analysis

The second objective of this paper's research was to identify the sub-domains of KAM research. To achieve this objective, we used document co-citation analysis. In this case, Small (1973) recommended the use of the most impactful seminal research within a research field. In our sample of 373 articles, we first selected articles with a core focus on KAM, by identifying articles with keywords related to key account management in their titles or abstracts (149 articles). To further reduce the set to the most-impactful/seminal documents, we used citations per year (by dividing the number of article citations by its age, where age is the difference between the year an article was published and 2017, the reference year). We selected articles that have five citations per year (a value we derived by plotting the number of citations per year on an X-axis and articles on a Y-axis; then, treating the graph as a Scree plot indicates, where the curve drops at five citations per year). This reduced our list to 56 highly cited articles. Next, we used the 56 articles to identify co-citation frequencies for each pair of articles. The co-citation count refers to the number of articles in which Article A and an Article B are both cited together. The ABI/INFORMS database was used to collect co-citation frequencies for each pair of articles (Harzing & Alakangas, 2016), resulting in a co-citation matrix. The diagonal values of the matrix (e.g., Article A and itself) were treated as missing values in the

Table 1
Impact of journals.

Rank	Journal	Number of Articles	Rank	Journal	Number of citations
1	Industrial Marketing Management	77	1	Industrial Marketing Management	4049
2	Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management	49	2	Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management	3310
3	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	36	3	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	1646
4	Journal of Business Research	19	4	Journal of Marketing	1562
5	European Journal of Marketing	11	5	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	1133
6	Business Horizons	9	6	Sloan Management Review	710
6	Journal of Business Ethics	9	6	European Journal of Marketing	656
6	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	9	6	Long Range Planning	603
9	Journal of Strategic Marketing	8	9	Journal of Business Ethics	588
10	European Management Journal	7	10	Journal of Relationship Marketing	549
10	Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing	7	10	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	537
10	Journal of Marketing	7	10	Journal of Business Research	479
10	Journal of Marketing Management	7	10	Journal of Marketing Management	423
14	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	6	14	Business Horizons	401
14	Journal of International Marketing	6	14	Strategic Management Journal	395

analysis (White & Griffith, 1981). The co-citation matrix was then converted into a matrix of proximity values (i.e., Pearson correlation coefficients). The (absolute) values in the proximity matrix in this study were as high as one (diagonal values) and as low as zero (showing no correlation between a pair of articles).

The proximity matrix indicates the degree to which two articles are cited together and the sub-domains are identified using cluster analysis (Tsay, Shen, & Liang, 2016; Dagnino et al., 2015; Chabowski, Hult, & Mena, 2011; McCain, 1986). The number of clusters was determined using hierarchical cluster analysis (Hair et al., 1998). Then, *k*-Means clustering (Dillon & Goldstein, 1984) was used to create groups of articles representing different research sub-domains. To interpret each cluster/group of articles, their abstracts were content analyzed using VOSViewer software, which uses the number of occurrences and term relevance to filter the main terms in the text. After interpretation, each cluster was named to represent sub-domains of KAM literature.

5.1. Results

As stated earlier, we selected 56 articles to classify KAM literature, and a 56×56 proximity matrix was prepared using co-citation frequencies. The matrix was used as input to cluster analysis. A dendrogram produced by Ward's hierarchical clustering method indicated the possibility of four and six clusters. A *k*-means cluster analysis (Dillon & Goldstein, 1984) was performed for the alternative four- and six-cluster solutions. Moreover, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for final cluster centers was also conducted for comparison. Final results indicated that the six-cluster solution provided better discrimination and statistical significance ($p < .001$) for clusters (Dillon & Goldstein, 1984). In the six cluster-solution, Cluster 4 was the largest with 16 articles, and Clusters 1 and 5 were the smallest with five articles in each cluster, whereas Cluster 2 had 12 articles, Cluster 3 had seven articles, and Cluster 6 had 11 articles. Using VOSViewer software, abstracts of all the articles in each cluster were content analyzed. The clusters are key account management alliances, key account management frameworks, key account management value creation, key account management structure, global account management, and, key account management performance. Some of the clusters had traits much like those in earlier reviews; thus, similarities were seen in the outcomes and performances, as well as in their measures (Guesalaga & Johnston, 2010; Jones et al., 2005; Homburg, Workman, & Jensen, 2002; McDonald, 2000; Weilbaker & Weeks, 1997). Similarities were also seen in KAM relationships (Homburg, Workman, & Jensen, 2002), and global account management (Guesalaga & Johnston, 2010). However, we specify contribution of this review compared to earlier reviews in Table 6 and thus, extend the work of previous researchers (Weilbaker and Weeks

(1997), McDonald (2000), Homburg et al. (2002), Jones et al. (2005) and Guesalaga and Johnston (2010).

5.1.1. Cluster 1: key account management alliances

KAM alliance relates to seller-buyer coordination and collaboration. Cluster 1 contains five articles that explored aspects of collaboration and conflicts in developing and managing KAM alliances. For collaboration, KAM alliances require the active role of sales organizations and collaboration across traditional organizational boundaries (Piercy, 2006). The degree of collaboration may have variations that delineate KAM relationships. Researchers have suggested that the use of technology strengthens the collaborations by improving customer contacts at different levels (Sheth & Sharma, 2008). Conflicts in KAM relationships are resolved using increased communication levels, conflict management techniques, pro-activeness and appropriate managerial attitudes (Atanasova & Senn, 2011; Davies, Ryals, & Holt, 2010). Thus, while the prior KAM reviews have referred to supplier types, account types, relationship types and exchange types in KAM alliances, this study adds technology- and conflict-related aspects to this cluster.

5.1.2. Cluster 2: key account management frameworks

Cluster 2 contains 12 articles that developed frameworks for KAM. Conceptual frameworks for KAM have been developed as extensions to sales management and focus on the suppliers' perspective (Millman & Wilson, 1996; 1995). The emphasis here is on the alignment of suppliers' KAM programs within customers' strategic and dynamic contexts (Millman & Wilson, 1995), and on addressing buyer and seller dyadic relationships.

Many frameworks have been developed using multiple perspectives and theories from various disciplines such as economics, marketing, and strategy. These frameworks used these perspectives and theories to produce typologies, matrices, cycles, processes, and decisions for various KAM aspects (Gosselin & Bauwen, 2006; Homburg, Workman, & Jensen, 2002; Kempeners & van der Hart, 1999; Lacoste, 2012, 2016; McDonald, Millman, & Rogers, 1997; Ojasalo, 2001; Richards & Jones, 2009; Ryals & Rogers, 2007; Zupancic, 2008). Thus, while prior KAM reviews have addressed KAM taxonomy, KAM elements, and KAM strategy, we extend the discussion toward conceptual developments on relationship planning and implementation, value creation, vertical competition, and customer engagement.

5.1.3. Cluster 3: key account management value creation

Cluster 3 contains seven articles that explored KAM value creation. First, this cluster relates to organizational competence for value creation and value co-creation (Hakanen, 2014; Sullivan, Peterson, & Krishnan, 2012; Pardo, 1997). For value creation and co-creation,

Table 2
Impact of articles based on total number of citations.

Rank	Author(s)	Title	Year	Citations	Journal
1	Davies, Brady & Hobday	Charting a path toward integrated solutions	2006	548	Sloan Management Review
2	Corsten & Kumar	Do suppliers benefit from collaborative relationships with large retailers? An empirical investigation of efficient consumer response adoption	2005	458	Journal of Marketing
3	Homburg, Workman Jr. & Jensen	Fundamental changes in marketing organization: The movement toward a customer-focused organizational structure	2000	449	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
4	Perrini, Russo & Tencati	CSR strategies of SMEs and large firms. Evidence from Italy	2007	445	Journal of Business Ethics
5	Homburg, Workman Jr., & Jensen	A configurational perspective on key account management	2002	435	Journal of Marketing
6	Miller	An asymmetry-based view of advantage: toward an attainable sustainability	2003	395	Strategic Management Journal
7	Krapfel, Salmund & Spekman	A strategic approach to managing buyer-seller relationships	1991	340	European Journal of Marketing
8	Sheth & Parvatiyar	Evolving relationship marketing into a discipline	2002	318	Journal of Relationship Marketing
9	Klein & Rai	Interfirm strategic information flows in logistics supply chain relationships	2009	299	MIS Quarterly
10	Mendelson	Organizational architecture and success in the information technology industry	2000	281	Management Science
11	Christian & Jensen	Intraorganizational determinants of key account management effectiveness	2003	268	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
12	Matthyssens & van den Bulte	Getting closer and nicer: partnerships in the supply chain	1994	266	Long Range Planning
13	Babakus, Cravens, Grant, Ingram & LaForge	Investigating the relationships among sales, management control, sales territory design, salesperson performance, and sales organization effectiveness	1996	252	International Journal of Research in Marketing
14	Steinman, Deshpande & Farley	Beyond market orientation: When customers and suppliers disagree	2000	250	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
14	Cooper & Gardner	Building good business relationships: more than just partnering or strategic alliances?	1993	250	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management

Table 3
Impact of articles based on average citations per year.

Rank	Author(s)	Title	Year	Citations per Year	Journal
1	Davies, Brady & Hobday	Charting a path toward integrated solutions	2006	49.8	Sloan Management Review
2	Perrini, Russo & Tencati	CSR strategies of SMEs and large firms. Evidence from Italy	2007	44.5	Journal of Business Ethics
3	Corsten & Kumar	Do suppliers benefit from collaborative relationships with large retailers? An empirical investigation of efficient consumer response adoption	2005	38.2	Journal of Marketing
4	Klein & Rai	Interfirm strategic information flows in logistics supply chain relationships	2009	37.4	MIS Quarterly
5	Storbacka	A solution business model: Capabilities and management practices for integrated solutions	2011	36.5	Industrial Marketing Management
6	Homburg, Workman, Jr., & Jensen	A configurational perspective on key account management	2002	29.0	Journal of Marketing
7	Miller	An asymmetry-based view of advantage: toward an attainable sustainability	2003	28.2	Strategic Management Journal
8	Homburg, Workman Jr., & Jensen	Fundamental changes in marketing organization: The movement toward a customer-focused organizational structure	2000	26.4	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
9	Steenkamp & de Jong	A global investigation into the constellation of consumer attitudes toward global and local products	2010	25.6	Journal of Marketing
10	Wilhelm, Blome, Bhakoo, & Paulraj	Sustainability in multi-tier supply chains: Understanding the double agency role of the first-tier supplier	2016	23.0	Journal of Operations Management
11	Rodriguez, Peterson & Krishnan	Social Media's Influence on Business-to-Business Sales Performance	2012	22.8	Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management
12	Wolf & Seuring	Environmental impacts as buying criteria for third-party logistical services	2010	21.9	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management
13	Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts	Examining the impact of servant leadership on salesperson's turnover intention	2009	21.8	Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management
14	Sheth & Parvatiyar	Evolving relationship marketing into a discipline	2002	21.2	Journal of Relationship Marketing
15	Hunter & Perreault	Making sales technology effective	2007	20.6	Journal of Marketing

Table 4
Impact of authors.

Rank	Author	Weighted number of articles	Rank	Author	Weighted total citation	Rank	Author	Weighted citations per year
1	Piercy NF	6.7	1	Miller D	451.4	1	Storbacka K	63.9
2	Sharma A	6.2	2	Pardo C	443.3	2	Piercy NF	44.3
3	Ryals LJ	5.7	3	Piercy NF	408.8	3	Pardo C	35.2
4	Pardo C	5.4	4	Storbacka K	384.0	4	Miller D	32.3
5	Wilson K	4.7	5	Homburg C	383.7	5	Homburg C	25.3
6	Ojasalo J	4.5	5	Jensen O	383.7	5	Jensen O	25.3
7	Lane N	4.3	5	Workman Jr. JP	383.7	5	Workman Jr. JP	25.3
8	Storbacka K	3.8	8	Ojasalo J	347.0	8	Sharma A	25.0
9	Lacoste S	3.0	9	Sharma A	302.6	9	Ojasalo J	24.5
9	Tzempelikos N	3.0	10	Millman T	284.0	10	Ryals LJ	23.8
11	Mouzas S	2.5	11	Mendelson H	281.0	11	Sheth JN	22.0
11	Stevenson TH	2.5	11	Sheth JN	281.0	12	Lacoste S	21.9
11	Millman T	2.3	13	Wilson K	245.8	13	Mouzas S	20.6
14	Miller D	2.2	14	Corsten D	229.0	14	Corsten D	19.1
14	Georges L	2.2	14	Kumar N	229.0	14	Kumar N	19.1

researchers have suggested that firms should be competent to use their existing structures and align their internal organizational structures (Guesalaga & Johnston, 2010; Wengler, Ehret, & Saab, 2006) to effectively utilize intelligence, to manage interfaces between sales and other business functions, to integrate KAM processes, and to adapt to new business models and business strategies in customer industries (Piercy & Lane, 2003). Second, this cluster is related to value-related behaviors such as value-creating behaviors and value-claiming behaviors (Ivens & Pardo, 2007). Third, this cluster is also related to the roles of KAM teams as knowledge integrators for firms as they acquire, assimilate, and apply knowledge for value creation and delivery (Hakanen, 2014). Thus, while prior KAM reviews have captured value types, value creation processes, and roles and skills of KAM teams, we enhance this cluster with organizational competence for value co-creation, value-claiming behaviors, and KAM teams serving as knowledge integrators.

5.1.4. Cluster 4: key account management structure

Cluster 4 contains 16 articles that explored KAM structures—capabilities, programs, processes, and practices. For KAM capabilities and programs, researchers have suggested that the KAM structure specifies a firm's resource allocation capability based on customer behavior for price-service trade-off (Rangan, Moriarty, & Swartz, 1992), partnership capability (Guenzi, Pardo, & Georges, 2007), human resource capability (Reisel, Chia, & Maloles III, 2005), salesperson capability (Guenzi, Pardo, & Georges, 2007), and cooperation, i.e., joint problem-solving and integration capabilities (Piercy & Lane, 2006). KAM structures allow a fit between inter-organizational alignment design elements (e.g., account portfolio definition, account business planning, account-specific value proposition, and account management

Table 5
Impact of institutions.

Rank	Institution	Weighted number of articles	Rank	Institution	Weighted citations
1	University of Warwick, UK	12.9	1	University of North Carolina, USA	624.9
2	Cranfield University, UK	10.9	2	Cranfield University, UK	610.0
3	University of Miami, USA	7.4	3	University of Warwick, UK	578.0
4	Georgia State University, USA	6.6	4	Harvard Business School, USA	548.5
5	Emlyon Business School, France	6.3	5	Bocconi University, Italy	535.2
6	Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland	5.5	6	University of Mannheim, Germany	533.7
7	University of North Carolina, USA	5.1	7	Emlyon Business School, France	513.3
8	Hanken School of Economics, Finland	5.0	8	Hanken School of Economics, Finland	486.7
9	Aalto University, Finland	4.8	9	Emory University, USA	484.5
10	Texas Christian University, USA	4.5	10	Georgia State University, USA	477.0
11	Lancaster University, UK	4.3	11	University of Maryland, USA	440.0
12	Harvard Business School, USA	4.2	12	University of Alberta, Canada	395.0
13	University of Georgia, USA	4.0	13	Creighton University, USA	384.0
14	University of Minnesota, USA	3.9	14	University of St. Gallen, Switzerland	356.0
15	Turku School of Economics, Finland	3.8	15	University of Buckingham, UK	323.5

process) and intra-organizational design elements (e.g., organizational integration, support capabilities, account performance management, account team profile, and skills) (Storbacka, 2012). An effective KAM structure is designed by changing and managing organizational processes to adapt to KAM programs (Guenzi & Storbacka, 2015) that understand customer demands, sales intelligence, and building customer-centric organizational units (Brehmer & Rehme, 2009).

Researchers have suggested that KAM process and practices cover sales (Brehmer & Rehme, 2009), pricing, costing and risk assessments (Ryals, 2006), channel allocation, salesforce allocation, and resource allocation (Boles, Johnston, & Gardner, 1999) that are adaptive to accounts needs (Pardo, Salle, & Spencer, 1995). Effective KAM processes and practices are designed by cultural and organizational alignments (Millman & Wilson, 1999), contractual governance (Ivens & Pardo, 2008), appropriate intra- and inter-organizational coordination and transversality (Pardo, 1999). The effectiveness of KAM processes and practices is measured by exchange value, proprietary value and relational value (Boles, Johnston, & Gardner, 1999; Hofer et al., 2012; Pardo et al., 2006). While the prior KAM reviews have focused upon organizational structure, policies, and resources, we add inter-organizational design elements, capability perspective and governance aspects in this cluster.

5.1.5. Cluster 5: global account management

Global account management (GAM) extends KAM for global customers. Cluster 5 contains five articles that explore GAM as an extension to KAM. Researchers have suggested that firms' needs for GAM are driven by global strategic priority (Shi et al., 2010), cost, technology, and nature of customers, channel partners and competitors (Yip &

Table 6
Identified clusters and contribution of the paper^a.

Clusters	Research areas/ topics
KAM Alliance	Collaboration: degree of collaboration; integration across traditional organizational boundaries; managerial attitude; <i>use of technology to improve customer contacts.</i> Conflicts: <i>conflict management; pro-activeness.</i>
KAM Framework	Conceptual biases: biased toward supplier's perspective; an extension to sales management. Theory/perspectives: <i>transaction cost economy, economic rent generation theory, commitment-trust theory, integrated business process perspective, relationship marketing perspective, strategic perspective, customer alignment perspective, network perspective, social media perspective, competency perspective, supply partnership perspective.</i> Concepts: relational development cycle, product-process complexity matrix, account portfolio matrix, organizational and managerial competencies, relationship proneness, <i>customer alignment-shareholder value relationship</i> , account management system, planning and implementation, organizational fit, strategic fit, operational fit, personal fit, KAM strategy selection, operational KAM, <i>corporate KAM</i> , account team structure, account managers' decision-making process, <i>vertical coopetition, coopetition continuum, social media usage model, key customer engagement cycle</i> , key account profitability assessment, relationship effectiveness
KAM Value creation	KAM teams: <i>role of knowledge integrators.</i> Behavior: <i>value-creating behaviors; value-claiming behaviors; perception forming behaviors of added value.</i> Competence: <i>value co-creation; value creation using existing structures; adaptation to new business models and business strategies in customers' industries; effective utilization of intelligence; better management of the interfaces between sales and other business functions; integration of KAM process to meet customer demand.</i>
KAM Structure	Capabilities: <i>partnering; resource allocation; human resource; joint problem-solving; salesperson; organizational citizenship.</i> Programs: <i>inter-organizational alignment design elements; intra-organizational design elements; checklist for managing KAM programs; drivers to establish KAM programs.</i> Processes: <i>key accountization steps; internal design; process drivers.</i> Practices: pricing, costing; risk assessments; co-ordination; <i>transversality; contractual governance.</i>
Global Account Management (GAM)	Capabilities: <i>opportunity identification; information processing; resource allocation; intelligence acquisition; reconfiguration.</i> Strategies: inter-country coordination, interorganizational coordination, <i>marketing activities standardization, global integration.</i> GAM team: <i>political entrepreneurial behavior</i>
KAM Performance	Performance drivers: financial; relational; behavioral; activities-related; resource-related; <i>technology; environmental.</i> Performance measures: firm-level; market-level; account-level; <i>dyad-level.</i>

Note: The themes mentioned in italics in the table are the contribution of this study and have not been highlighted in previous literature reviews on key account management (i.e. Guesalaga and Johnston, 2010; Jones et al., 2005; Homburg et al., 2002; McDonald, 2000; Weilbaker and Weeks, 1997).

Madsen, 1996). Firms use intelligence acquisition, coordination, and reconfiguration to design and implement GAM programs and structure (Shi et al., 2005). Firms require information processing and resource allocation capabilities for GAM programs (Birkinshaw, Toulan, & Arnold, 2001). For GAM, firm design strategies are related to competitiveness, marketing, services, value chain, coordination and global integration (Shi et al., 2010; Yip & Madsen, 1996). Researchers have also suggested that GAM programs and their implementation are effective with consistency in services and offer a uniform point of contact and customer partnerships. GAM programs are noted for their management structure, compensation, and an incentive system as well as uniformity in purchasing and pricing (Yip & Madsen, 1996). Wilson & Millman (2003) wrote about their political-entrepreneurial behavior for GAM teams and account managers. Thus, compared to prior KAM reviews that have acknowledged GAM aspects as parts of KAM, we found GAM an independent sub-domain of inquiry, which is unique when compared to KAM based on its strategies and team behavior.

5.1.6. Cluster 6: key account management performance

Cluster 6 contains 11 articles that explore KAM performance. Researchers have suggested that performance drivers are- (i) financial (e.g. costs), (ii) relational (Sharma, 2006; Abratt & Kelly, 2002; Sengupta, Krapfel, & Pusateri, 1997; Barrett, 1986), and (iii) technological (Davies & Ryals, 2014; Salojärvi, Sainio, & Tarkiainen, 2010). Researchers have also suggested organizational drivers (e.g., customer orientation, selling orientation, and top management involvement (Davies & Ryals, 2014; Guenzi, Georges, & Pardo, 2009; Salojärvi, Sainio, & Tarkiainen, 2010; Workman, Homburg, & Jensen, 2003), and behavioral drivers (e.g., account managers' strategic ability, intrapreneurial ability and selling skills) (Abratt & Kelly, 2002; Sengupta, Krapfel, & Pusateri, 2000; Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015). Types of KAM performance measures include firm-level role performance, revenue, customer retention, increased profit margins, utilization of customer knowledge, and reduced cost to serve. The customer level is best known for customer satisfaction; the market level emphasizes competitiveness and the dyad-level excels at mutual problem solving,

relationship improvement, shared investments, and fostering synergistic solutions (Davies & Ryals, 2014; Guenzi, Georges, & Pardo, 2009; Salojärvi, Sainio, & Tarkiainen, 2010; Schultz & Evans, 2002; Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015). While the prior KAM reviews have mentioned financial, relational and organizational performance drivers as well as firm-, account- and market-level performance measures, we add technology as another performance driver and dyad-level performance measures in this cluster.

6. Content analysis and visualization

Our third objective was content analysis and visualization. We used text mining on the abstracts of all 373 articles to capture changes in KAM literature over five different time-periods: 1979–1996, 1997–2001, 2002–2006, 2007–2011 and 2012–2016, which is in line with our third research objective. The five-year period is considered appropriate to capture changes in a literature domain (Kumar & Polonsky, 2017; Leone et al., 2012). Text mining is a form of unstructured ontological discovery that uses words in articles and highlights conceptual insights from a set of articles (Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014). This study used Leximancer 4.0 (a text data mining software) that applies a Bayesian learning algorithm and uses proximity values between words in textual data to construct and visually present themes and concepts as outputs. The software uses word frequency and co-occurrence data to identify families of terms that tend to be used together in the text (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). The importance of themes is depicted in colors and sizes of circles: Brighter circles and bigger sizes indicate a higher level of importance for a theme. This approach has been used to analyze literature similar to size of key account management (e.g. open innovation by Randhawa, Wilden, & Hohberger, 2016).

6.1. Results

Text mining analysis with Leximancer software used abstracts for the articles in each time-period as inputs, and the outputs of this

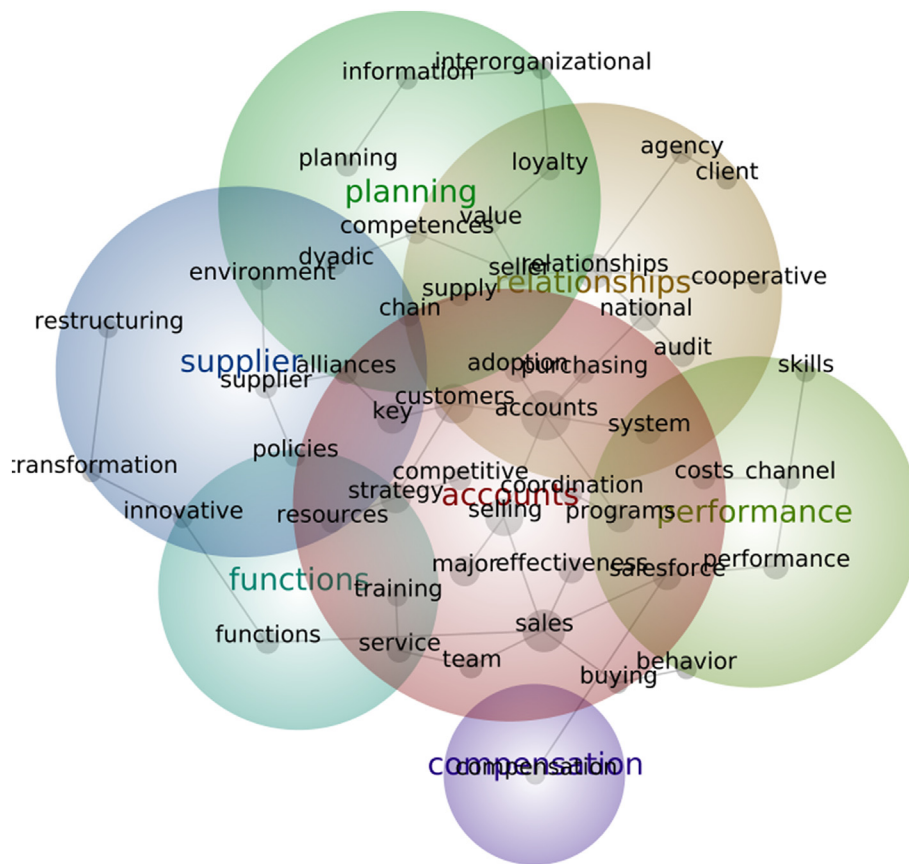


Fig. 1. Content analysis and visualization—first time period 1979–1996.

analysis created maps for each time-period showing key concepts and linkages between these concepts within each cluster (see Figs. 1 to 5). For this, the data was divided into five time-periods: 1979–1996 (50 articles), 1997–2001 (51 articles), 2002–2006 (65 articles), 2007–2011 (101 articles) and 2012–2016 (106 articles).

As evident, KAM literature has a strong focus on *accounts* and *relationships* over all the time-periods (note the red color in Figs. 1 to 5). In the first period 1979–1996, KAM literature focused on KAM *planning* and *compensation*. In the second time-period 1997–2001, KAM literature discussed KAM *process* and KAM *program* related themes. In the third time-period 2002–2006, KAM literature focused upon KAM *strategy*. In this period, KAM literature included *structure* and *costs* in KAM relationships. In the fourth time-period 2007–2011, the focus was on trust and included *competitive* and *innovative* perspectives in time-period 2007–2011. In the final period 2012–2016, the focus was on *implementation*, *information dissemination* and *organizational culture*. Interestingly, sustainability (shown as a *sustainable* theme in Fig. 5) evolved recently as a theme in this period. The thematic changes across the time-periods are presented in Fig. 6.

The findings presented thus far suggest that KAM literature focuses on collaboration, KAM structure, KAM processes, and KAM performance. Also, KAM literature is related to other domains such as personal selling (and salespeople) literature, business network literature, relationship marketing literature and sustainability literature. While KAM literature initially adopted a team selling approach, a more specialized approach to KAM has recently evolved, which integrates theories and concepts from other sub-domains of marketing. This text analysis identifies six trends in KAM literature that are discussed next.

6.1.1. From transactional approach to relationship to network approach to relationship

When key account research emerged, the focus was on transactions

with the same customers (see “purchasing,” “seller,” and “activities” in Figs. 1 and 2 representing the main themes in the first two time-periods). For example, the LaForge, Cravens, & Ranney (1984) study focused on the sales response relationships. The pioneers in this type of research, Stevenson & Page (1979), found selling, servicing, and monitoring key customers to be important marketing procedures. The literature gradually advanced to the network approach to relationships that engaged in discussions on power conflicts, trust building, co-creating values, dyadic relations and collaborative methods of business (see Figs. 3 and 4 for “competitive,” “collaboration,” “conflict,” “trust,” “power,” “network,” and “flexibility” as themes in *relationship* and *network* concepts). For example, Perry, Pearce, & Sims (1999) described the effectiveness of empowered selling teams. A few years later, Beverland (2001) outlined conditions appropriate for relationship selling.

The research focus gradually moved toward long-term relationships as promoted by Deshpande & Farley (2002) and key network management introduced by Ojasalo (2004). Two years later, Huemmer (2006) was defining the supply relationship perspective for KAM's system design and coordination followed by Grant & McLeod (2007), who explained roles of shared philosophy and trust in a networked relationship. Five years later, Mouzas & Ford (2012) discussed how knowledge-based resources are created as a joint consent between actors in supply networks, and in the same year, Strömsten & Waluszewski (2012) deployed a resource interaction framework to create innovations in networks and to establish governance. Thus, research has transitioned from a transaction orientation to a network orientation.

6.1.2. From competence-based partnerships to joint capability-building

Discussions in the initial years were focused on competence-based alliance formations with less focus on needs for restructuring, transformative changes, or resource investment (note that “innovative,”

<p>From Transactional Approach to Relationship to Network Approach to Relationship</p>	<p>Sales response relationships Selling, servicing, and monitoring Competence-based alliance formations Joint product partnership Partnering capabilities</p>	<p>Collaborative business Power conflicts Value co-creation Shared resources and capabilities to respond to market Pressures/business risks to create sustainable resources</p>	<p>Key network management Networks' shared philosophy Network innovations and governance Capabilities operationalization in dyadic relationships for network management</p>
<p>From Competence-Based Partnership to Joint Capability-Building</p>	<p>Organisational restructuring Functional innovations KAM culture</p>	<p>Inter-organisational restructuring and adaptation Value creation in collaboration relationships Knowledge-sharing and knowledge-transfer</p>	<p>Inter- and intra-organizational alignments Co-creation of integrated solutions Structural reformations</p>
<p>From Relationship Planning to Relationship Implementation</p>	<p>KAM planning KAM relationships establishment methods KAM resource commitment benefits</p>	<p>Relationship implementation Adoption of relationship strategy</p>	<p>KAM implementation issues and challenges KAM intra-organizational decisions</p>
<p>From Salesforce Performance to Network Performance</p>	<p>KAM teams' formal goals and reward structures KAM performance-related issues Enhancement of selling team effectiveness</p>	<p>Team-level performance Network-level effectiveness Strategic information flows within supply chain relationships</p>	<p>Team-level performance Network-based KAM performance Return on joint investment</p>
<p>From Product and Service Performance to Sustainability</p>	<p>Product and service performance</p>	<p>Product and service performance</p>	<p>Environmental criteria in buying Sustainability compliances across multi-tier supply chains</p>
	<p>1979–1996</p>	<p>2002–2006</p>	<p>2012–2016</p>
	<p>1997–2001</p>	<p>2007–2011</p>	

Fig. 6. Content analysis and visualization—thematic changes across the time-periods.

Table 7
Areas of future research.

Topic	Importance	Sample research questions
1 Key Account Management Alliances	6.03	1. What is the optimal level of coordination? 2. How can internal alignment be achieved? 3. How have new technologies helped to strengthen KAM alliances?
2 Key Account Management Performance	5.79	1. How to quantify qualitative measures for key account management performance? 2. What qualitative measures of key account performance can complement quantitative measures? 3. What process measures can be used to evaluate key account management performance?
3 Key Account Management Value Creation	5.73	1. How should value creation be measured? 2. How does KAM help in creating brand value? 3. How is value shared between the seller and buyer in KAM?
4 Global Account Management	5.45	1. What are the similarities and differences between global and key account management? 2. How can new technologies enhance global account management programs? 3. When should a firm move from international key account management to global key account management?
5 Key Account Management Structure	5.36	1. What are the different types of organization structures for key account management? 2. How can a firm design an optimal key account management structure? 3. Should key account relationships be led by sales or other functional areas?
6 From Competence-Based Partnership to Joint Capability-Building	5.28	1. How are relationships enabling joint capability building partnerships formed? 2. What are the potential issues with capability building partnerships? 3. How does network-based capability help mitigate business and environmental risks?
7 From Salesforce Performance to Network Performance	5.16	1. What are the most effective methods to measure network performance? 2. What is the relationship between sales force performance and network performance? 3. How do salespeople react to the shift of performance metrics from sales outcome to network outcomes?
8 From Transactional Approach to Relationship to Network Approach to Relationship	5.09	1. What are the challenges of a network approach to relationships? 2. How can external network relationships help the key account management dyadic relationship between seller and buyer? 3. Should key account management research address relationships across the entire supply chain?
9 From Relationship Planning to Relationship Implementation	4.97	1. What are the potential barriers in the transition from relationship planning to relationship implementation? 2. How can organizational theories be applied to deal with organizational conflicts? 3. What monitoring procedures must be in place for effective relationship implementation?
10 Key Account Management Frameworks	4.91	1. What defines a key account versus a strategic account? 2. To what extent should KAM be an externally or internally-focused discipline? 3. Development of construct and measurement of key account management orientation.
11 From Functional Restructuring to Inter-Organizational Restructuring	4.84	1. How and what types of organizational innovativeness are facilitated by using key account management? 2. How do key account management teams address the interorganizational relationships? 3. How does the use of emerging technology affect key account management structure, processes, and practices?
12 From Product and Service Performance to Sustainability	4.45	1. How is sustainable market orientation achieved by supplier-customer dyad? 2. What is the willingness to pay for a sustainable supplier? 3. What is the definition of sustainability in key account management?

literature along with the shifts in emphasis on alliances, performance, as well as values and management as highlighted in Table 7. We identified key areas for future research and comprehensively reviewed the adoption and application of key account management literature from 1979 to 2016 using citation analysis, document co-citation analysis, and text mining. This study is the first to use bibliometric methods to perform KAM literature review. This study has four major contributions.

First, it identifies the impact of specific authors, institutions, journals, and articles on KAM. This profiling of the literature presents a holistic introduction of the KAM literature (including research that has adopted key KAM research) to new and future researchers and provides information on publication resources and outlets.

Second, this research, using document co-citation analysis, identifies six key focus areas that present sub-domains of the extended KAM research. Although earlier research classified KAM literature, this research replicates earlier studies and provides a more finely-grained classification of the research. We extend the discussion on KAM literature classification by adding: roles of technology and conflict to KAM alliances; concepts of relationship planning and implementation, value creation, vertical co-competition and customer engagement in addition to their impact to the KAM framework; value co-creation, value-claiming behaviors and acts of KAM teams as knowledge integrators to KAM value creation; inter-organizational design elements, capability

perspective and governance to KAM structure; and dyad-level performance measures to KAM performance. We also describe GAM as an independent sub-domain of inquiry and partially-differentiate GAM from KAM for strategies and team behavior. Thus, this study is the first to extend the study of KAM research to adjacent areas wherein we compared and contrasted our results with prior KAM reviews.

Third, this research uses text mining to capture the development of KAM literature in multiple areas over five different time-periods. We demonstrate that the KAM literature has progressed from the selling and relationship-building approaches to the key network management, network innovation and governance, network-level performance, and co-creation of business solutions and values, while defining the challenges in KAM implementation and incorporating sustainability dimensions in KAM. The findings indicate that the focus of research has gradually shifted from customers' views of KAM to a network view of KAM in the form of KAM structure and KAM performance. Thus, we find that the KAM literature is not confined exclusively to relationship marketing literature, and recent studies have explored other sub-streams of marketing and business such as sustainability, innovation, and governance.

The fourth major contribution of the research is the identification of future research areas. Academics have suggested that KAM alliances, KAM performance, KAM value creation, GAM, and KAM structure be the key areas of future research. We also recommend that research in

KAM utilize relevant research in adjacent areas such as dynamic capability (Teece & Pisano, 1994), open innovations (Randhawa, Wilden, & Hohberger, 2016), service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and team-level behavior (Schippers, West, & Dawson, 2015).

This research has faced several limitations imposed by the selection of keywords and the impact of articles assessed by their citation counts. To minimize sampling bias, we increased the list of keywords as well as the list of journals where we sourced the relevant articles. To overcome the limitation posed by articles with high citation counts, we included all 373 articles in text mining to capture a comprehensive development of KAM literature.

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