

# **A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF BUSINESS RESEARCH DURING THE PANDEMIC**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bcom Honours Business Management in the Faculty of Business and Economic Science at the Nelson Mandela University

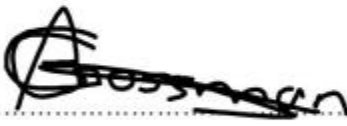
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**STUDY LEADER:** Prof. Miemie Struwig

# Declaration

## DECLARATION

This research study is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of an Honours Degree in Business Management at Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. I declare that the treatise is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this proposal has not been previously or concurrently submitted, either in whole or in part, for any other qualification at Nelson Mandela University or any other learning institution.



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Signature of student

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18th October 2021

## Abstract:

This study addresses business research during the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim of this study is to identify the research foci of business research done during the pandemic. This study will provide information on academic research that was done during 2020 and 2021. It will further identify the gaps in the research during the pandemic. It will provide evidence of previous research that has been considered during the pandemic. Lastly, it will provide recommendations for any future research in the fields of business research after the pandemic.

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# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The 2020 pandemic was caused by the spread of Covid-19. The covid-19 pandemic started December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China (Baldwin, et al., 2020). The virus spread rapidly throughout the world because of international travel. With high mortality rate, Covid-19 caused many countries to go under lockdown and close their borders. Other than the mortality rate, Covid-19 has also impacted the economies of the countries that are affected by the pandemic (Baldwin, et al., 2020). This study is a desktop review on business research during the 2020 pandemic. This chapter gives a brief background of the study and provides the study's problem statement, the research objectives and the significance of the study.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many areas of businesses have been affected. Companies are restructuring their workshops and production line to produce protective gear (Craighead, et al. 2020). The pandemic has caused many companies to go bankrupt because of the pressure it has on the economies (Donthu et al. 2020). As well as the way companies view marketing have changed; companies had to adapt and create new ways to market their business and products (He et al., 2020). These are only a few ways Covid-19 has affected business and which shows the effect of the pandemic on business research.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Business research has been done during different time periods – but what are the research foci during the 2020 pandemic?

The Covid-19 pandemic originated in Wuhan, one of the cities in China, during December 2019 (Baldwin & di Mauro, 2020). It has affected many countries because of the major tourism and economic trade that comes from China. The pandemic has caused many countries to go into lockdowns which has affected the economies of those countries.

Covid-19 is currently still active and continues to spread worldwide (Baldwin & di Mauro, 2020).

Business research into the impact of Covid-19 shows that it has a worse economic downfall than the Great Depression (Craighead, et al. 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone, no matter how healthy or privileged, they are (Bapuji, et al., 2020). Research done by Craighead et al, (2020), has shown that the pandemic has affected many areas of business. Craighead et al, (2020), did research on the supply chain of companies, shows that firms have to restructure their resource portfolio. This is done because of the huge shifts in supply and demand as well as the power shifting in the supplier's favour. Research done on companies' supply chain explains why companies are struggling to make changes to their supply chain, for instance, they have to change from mass production to customization (Craighead, et al. 2020). For example, companies are using their workshops and factories to help produce sanitizer and personal protective gear (Craighead, et al. 2020). According to Donthu, et al, (2020), many businesses are under huge financial pressure and has caused bankruptcy for many businesses. For instance, entrepreneurs are struggling as well as people working in the informal sector (Donthu et al. 2020). Research also shows that people have resorted to inventing or becoming entrepreneurs by creating products they can sell for an income (Bapuji, et al. 2020). Marketing is also being affected by Covid-19 both positively and negatively, for instance, the important face-to-face interaction and exchange of marketing is now being replaced with online exchange (He et al., 2020).

Most of the research states that companies are looking to start preparing for future pandemics and crises. Donthu et al, (2020), states that in our lifetime it is very likely that we will experience another outbreak. Craighead et al, (2020), states how companies are focusing on the prevention and preparation for the next disaster. The importance of international business research has been overlooked in the past (Donthu et al. 2020). It is thus important to get a clearer view of what foci the research during the pandemic.

Therefore, this research states the importance of business research in the time of the pandemic and requires further research to expand the knowledge of business research and the fields of business affected by Covid-19. As well as identifying the gaps in business research during the 2020 pandemic.

## **Primary Research Question**

What are the themes of research into business during the pandemic?

## **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **1.3.1. Primary objective:**

To conduct a systematic review of business research during the pandemic to determine the research foci

### **1.3.2. Secondary objectives**

To achieve the primary objective the following secondary objectives have been formulated:

SO<sub>1</sub>: Clarify key concepts in business research during the pandemic.

SO<sub>2</sub>: Identify and discuss research the different business functions and the impacts the pandemic has had on them

SO<sub>3</sub>: Identify the areas/foci of business research that still needs to be investigated.

### **1.3.3. Methodological objectives**

The methodological research objectives of this study are:

- To conduct a literature review on the business research areas
- To select an appropriate research methodology and research methods for the study.
- To collect and analyse primary data.
- To provide pertinent conclusions and recommendations to researchers based on the findings to assist them to identify areas/foci to be researched



#### 1.3.4. Significance of the research

Analysing business research during the 2020 pandemic is significant because the Covid-19 pandemic has affected many countries and companies (Baldwin, et al., 2020). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is still being researched because the pandemic is still active in 2021. To understand the impact the pandemic has had on business is very important for companies. As a result of the 2020 pandemic still being active and still impacting lives, this research will shed light on the gaps in business research during the pandemic that needs more attention. This study will identify the gaps in the research such as which business research themes have not yet considers the 2020 pandemic in their studies.

# **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW OF BUSINESS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will include a literature overview and a theoretical framework on business research. It is important to give a literature overview because it will help the reader understand what business research is and what the different themes are. The main points in this chapter corresponds with the primary objective stated in Chapter 1. The primary objective of this study is to conduct a systematic review of business research during the pandemic to determine the research foci. This chapter also corresponds with the first secondary objective stated in Chapter 1 which is to clarify the key concepts. Firstly, it will give definitions to business research and identify the themes of business research. Secondly, it will explain some of the business research themes in more detail. Lastly, this chapter will give examples of research that has already been done on each theme and explain the importance of understanding each business research theme. Business research is the process of determining detailed information in all areas or themes of business. Business research has both major themes and subthemes, and it is important to identify and understand both (Griffith, et al. 2008). Most of the articles obtained for this literature review and theoretical framework are based on international business research but a few are not.

## **2.2 BUSINESS RESEARCH**

One way to define business research is that it is the process of obtaining comprehensive information on all areas in business. These areas can also be viewed as themes of business research. Most of the articles obtained for this literature review are based on international business research. In order to identify the major themes of business research, the articles by Griffith, et al. (2008) and Christofi, et al. (2021) were used. Griffith, et al. (2008), sought to find the major themes of international business research. This research states both current and emerging business research themes.

Business research has major themes as well as subthemes (Griffith, et al. 2008). The major themes in business research as stated by Griffith, et al. (2008) are finance, marketing, consumer behaviour and supply chain management. As well as business dynamics and strategy, organization and management, economics and international political economy, entrepreneurship and new ventures, human resource management, as well as technology and innovation (Griffith, et al. 2008). Christofi, et al. (2021) also stated that human resource management, marketing and general management are major research themes.

There are also subthemes such as culture, conflict, joint ventures, exporting, and partnerships (Griffith, et al. 2008). Griffith, et al. (2008) states that there are secondary business research themes such as ethical issues, corporate social responsibility, public policy issues, multicultural enterprise subsidiary issues, and security and risk issues (Griffith, et al. 2008). However, in this literature overview it will focus on the primary and major business research themes.

Business research themes are constantly evolving, and new perspectives are being formed. One of the reasons is the important role of emerging markets in globalization (Griffith, et al. 2008). Future research in the themes will expand the range of questions that will need to be answered (Christofi, et al. 2021). Both Griffith, et al. (2008) and Christofi, et al. (2021) state that the future of international business research will remain strong. In the next sections to follow will be a brief overview of the major business research themes and examples of the literature that has already been done on them.

## 2.3 BUSINESS RESEARCH THEMES

This section will briefly describe some of the major business research themes and give a few examples of research that has already been done.

### 2.3.1 Marketing Theme

As Griffith, et al. (2008), stated marketing is a major business research theme. Research done by Harris, et al. (2009), discusses the latest progress in online marketing strategy. Marketing is all about creating brand reputations and customer relationships.

Harris, et al. (2009), reviewed this by researching entrepreneurial businesses and their use of new technologies. This study also states that social networks play an important role in marketing; due to the global popularity of the use of websites. There are many different online avenues or strategies that companies can use in online marketing to promote and grow the company (Harris, et al. 2009). In the study it shows that with online marketing comes with issues such as privacy of personal information and how that information will be used (Harris, et al. 2009).

Another example of research done in the marketing theme of business research is by Inman, et al. (2011). It focuses on shopper marketing, which can be described as the planning of all marketing activities that might influence a shopper, from the motivation to buy the product or service, to purchasing it and then the consumption of the product or service, to repurchasing it and finally the recommendation of it (Inman, et al. 2011). The practice of shopper marketing has grown in recent years and companies seem to be increasing their attention and resources to it (Inman, et al. 2011). It focuses on how much the company understands their customer or shopper behaviour. In this study it explains how shopper marketing differs from traditional marketing (Inman, et al. 2011). Briefly traditional marketing is to satisfy customer demand but shopper marketing aims to influence motivation to buy the product or service (Inman, et al. 2011). Shopper marketing continues to innovate because of the changes in shopper behaviour in the past few years. The significant changes of shopper behaviour are mainly caused by the increase in globalization, economy, technology and regulations (Inman, et al. 2011). Future research on shopper marketing states that there will be environmental development that might affect and change shopper behaviour (Inman, et al. 2011).

### 2.3.2 Human resource management theme

As stated by Griffith, et al. (2008) and Christofi, et al. (2021) human resource management is a major theme of business research. Some examples of human resource management research that has already been done are from Ahammad, et al. (2020), Doz, (2020), Guest (1997) and Boswell, et al. (2005).

The research done by Ahammad, et al. (2020) focuses on understanding strategic agility and human resource management. As well as the importance to understand the role that human resource management has within strategic agility. The fast changes in globalization and technology, has caused human resource managers to realize the importance of strategic agility (Ahammad, et al. 2020). The second example is Doz (2020) which also focuses on strategic agility; agility helps the company be flexible and adapt well to changes. This study highlights that human resource management needs to select, train and prepare the right managers and staff. So that they are able to contribute to the company's strategic ability in the future and not only focus on the now (Doz, 2020). The study also focuses on the skills and capabilities human resource management needs to be able to achieve this (Doz, 2020).

Guest (1997)'s study is the third example which highlights the different theories of human resource management. One of the main theories centre around the link between human resource management and the business' performance the researcher found that businesses that connect their human resource management to their company's strategy; the business tends to report higher financial performance outcomes (Guest, 1997). The study also states that future research on human resource management will face new issues (Guest, 1997).

The fourth example is from Boswell, et al. (2005) study that focuses on the future of human resource management. Business research continues to highlight the importance of the fit between human resource management practices and the company's strategy. The study highlights the challenges of the future and how human resource management will respond to those challenges (Boswell, et al. 2005).

### 2.3.3 Supply Chain Management theme

As Griffith, et al. (2008) stated supply chain management is also a major theme in business research. Examples of business research that has already been done on supply chain management are from DeWitt, et al. (2001), Lambert, et al. (2017), and Emberson, et al. (2006).

DeWitt, et al. (2001) focuses on defining supply chain management. The study states that supply chain management is the flow of both materials and products, as well as it is a management process. However, this study highlights that there are many definitions of supply chain management and states issues concerning this (DeWitt, et al. 2001). Supply chain management can also be defined as the strategic coordination of a company's functions in the supply chain (DeWitt, et al. 2001). It is important to understand supply chain management to be able to apply it to practices and research. DeWitt, et al. (2001) states that the prominence of supply chain management has only risen in the past ten years. The second article is by Lambert, et al. (2017) highlights the different articles done on supply chain management and states that a number of changes to the supply chain management framework have been made. This study highlighted the supply chain management research priorities. It is important to understand that there are issues in the research of supply chain management, and questions that still need to be answered in future research (Lambert, et al. 2017). Emberson, et al. (2006) is the third example which looks at theories and practices that have already been developed and aims to identify the possibilities and challenges of supply chain management research.

The study states that in order for supply chain management to mature as a discipline there has to be more progress in the clarification of the supply chain management, domain, core components and its main problems (Emberson, et al. 2006). Emberson, et al. (2006) highlights that the challenges came from the gaps between the theory and the practice of supply chain management.

### 2.3.4 Customer Behaviour theme

As stated by Griffith, et al. (2008) customer behaviour is a major theme in business research. Examples of research done on this theme is by Foxall, et al. (2003) and Chen, et al. (2011). A subtheme is customer relationships as it affects customer behaviour and an example of research done on this is by Korsakienė, (2009).

The first example is by Foxall, et al. (2003) which did a study of in-store customer behaviour. The understanding of customer behaviour is important to be able to maximize profit and compete in a highly competitive marketplace. The customer situation and the profile characteristics of the customer can have a great influence on the customer's style of shopping (Foxall, et al. 2003). In the fashion industry stores, gender differences influence, customer behaviour. Foxall, et al. (2003) looked at the interaction of customers to instore products. It is important to understand this because it will influence the style customer behaviour (Foxall, et al. 2003). Chen, et al. (2011) is the second example, which focuses mainly on the impact of different environments on customer behaviour. The study highlights the importance of understanding the store's atmosphere, and the impact it has on customer behaviour. Chen, et al. (2011) states the importance for customers to view shopping as a pleasant experience and not just a chore, because customers will avoid unpleasant environments. Even though there has been much research done on customer behaviour; there is still a lot of aspects of customer behaviour that needs to be studied further (Chen, et al. 2011).

Third article by Korsakienė, (2009), focuses on customer relationships, their advantages, and what restricts them. Customer relationships are viewed as important resources for a company and it gives opportunities to companies that need to gain more exposure in the industry. Customer relationships not only focus on business-to-customer relationships but also on business-to-business relationships (Korsakienė, 2009). Korsakienė, (2009), also focuses on customer relationship management and states that it is not just gaining and maintaining the relationships but also to aim to grow and strengthen the relationship to build it into a partnership.

Some advantages of customer relationship management are increased profits, increased brand loyalty and increased customer loyalty. However, Korsakienė, (2009), also focuses on identifying the issues that restrict customer relationship management. Infrastructure development and marketing institutional development impacts the application of customer relationship management (Korsakienė, 2009). It is important to understand customer relationship management as it can be a reason for the company's long-term success (Korsakienė, 2009).

### 2.3.5 Business dynamics and strategy theme

Griffith, et al. (2008) stated that business dynamics and strategies are a major theme in business research. Examples on this research theme is by Coudounaris, et al. (2009), Greenaway, et al. (2005), Williamson, (1999), Aulakh, et al. (1996) and Czinkota, et al. (1997). Exporting and partnerships are subthemes of the business dynamics and strategy theme (Griffith, et al. 2008).

The first article is on the subtheme exporting by Coudounaris, et al. (2009). Its aim was to analysis the changes in exporting research over the past few decades. Coudounaris, et al. (2009), highlighted that exporting is one of the most common ways for companies to enter the international market. This study also highlights the key exporting themes that need to be focused on. One of the major fields of international business that has experienced a great amount of advancements over the past few decades, is exporting (Coudounaris, et al. 2009).

Exporting needs more research and attention because of the many changes that are happening today, as a result of globalization and the growing competition (Coudounaris, et al. (2009). The second article is by Greenaway, et al. (2005), which focuses more on the link between exporting and productivity. In the study Greenaway, et al. (2005), showed that countries that pursue outward trade strategies have done far better than countries that rather purchase inward trade. This suggests the theory that links exporting to productivity. In the study this theory states that exporting leads to company productivity growth (Greenaway, et al. 2005).

Williamson (1999), is the third article, which focuses on business strategy. It shows that it is important to understand that business strategy is interdisciplinary.



The study focuses on two perspectives of business strategy; which are the governance perspective and the competence perspective (Williamson, 1999). Williamson, (1999), aims to give a better understanding of strategy using these two perspectives.

Aulakh, et al. (1996), focuses on the subtheme partnerships; it is research done on cross-border partnership. Aulakh, et al. (1996), states that it is important to look at the managing of cross-border partnership. Another aim was to identify the trust in cross border partnerships. Aulakh, et al. (1996) highlighted that latest research done on international business has emphasized the need to understand the behavioural and social dynamics in cross-border marketing partnerships. The fourth article is by Czinkota, et al. (1997), which focuses on international business and trade. Czinkota, et al. (1997), states that the most important issues in international business and trade that will come over the next decade. That main issues and points that were focused on, were geographic issues, sectorial transformation, international and framework issues, and corporate adjustment strategies (Czinkota, et al. 1997). The geographic issues mainly state that future growth will increase greatly in the next decade and if there are any declines in growth rates; it will mainly be because some countries' economies are maturing faster than other countries. The corporate adjustment strategies state that globalization will affect companies in the corporate level (Czinkota, et al. 1997).

### 2.3.6 Entrepreneurship theme

As stated previously entrepreneurship is one of the major themes of business research and small business research is a subtheme (Griffith, et al. 2008). Examples of small business research that has already been done is by Kuckertz, et al. (2016), Anastasia (2015), and Berisha, et al. (2015). Research done on entrepreneurship is by Csorba, et al. (2012), Eroğlu, et al. (2011), and Audretsch, et al. (2011),

Firstly, in the article by Kuckertz, et al. (2016), small business is defined. It also looks at the difference between small business and entrepreneurship, that they are also related and that they interlink. According to Kuckertz, et al. (2016), there are many definitions of the field of small business. One of the definitions focuses on the size of the business related to the number of employees and sales (Kuckertz, et al. 2016).

Entrepreneurship and small business research are related; however, they do have different areas of research that they focus on (Kuckertz, et al. 2016).

The second article of research is from Anastasia (2015), which states that the definition of small business has changed over the past few decades. One of the main points in the study was to gain a greater understanding of small business. In the study it defines small businesses by size standers, if the business has less than 100 employees and if the business is private (Anastasia, 2015). It is important to add small and medium enterprises (SME) into this business research theme. Therefore, the third article which is by Berisha, et al. (2015), focuses on defining SMEs. In this article it states that SMEs make up 90% of all firms in the world. As stated in Berisha, et al. (2015), SMEs are also defined by their annual turnover, their number of employees and their annual balance sheet. For example, Berisha, et al. (2015), states that a medium sized enterprise has more than 250 employees and a small sized enterprise has more than 50 employees. However, this is only one definition for SME and other definitions of SMEs differ substantially (Berisha, et al. 2015). One of the main points in Berisha, et al. (2015), is that it is difficult to define SMEs in all markets because for example, a firm in a big market can be seen as small and in a small market the firm can be seen as big (Berisha, et al. 2015).

Another example is that it is difficult to define SMEs by number of employees because of the increase in casual workers and part-time workers. Berisha, et al. (2015), concluded that there is no universal definition for SMEs. These articles show that more research needs to be done on small and medium enterprises.

Csorba, et al. (2012) is one of the articles that were looked at to describe the entrepreneurship theme in business research. One of the main points in this study was to define entrepreneurship. Csorba, et al. (2012) stated that entrepreneurship is very difficult to define, however, it has rapidly evolved over the years. One of the ways entrepreneurship is defined is that it is an entrepreneur who takes on innovative and active behaviour, as well as takes all financial risk in developing a new idea or project.

Entrepreneurship is also defined as an active process of creating wealth with the use of limited resources and innovation (Csorba, et al. 2012).

The second article which is by Eroğlu, et al. (2011), was used to give another explanation of entrepreneurship. Eroğlu, et al. (2011), focused on defining entrepreneurship, cultural influences and did this by looking at Turkish culture. In Eroğlu, et al. (2011), entrepreneurship is defined as an exercise of starting a new business when an opportunity is identified. It also described it as being all about risks, innovation and creative thinking. The findings in Eroğlu, et al. (2011), show that culture has a clear influence on entrepreneurship. The study also suggests that entrepreneurship in different countries can be seen to have some universal traits. However, when looking at different cultures, for instance, Eroğlu, et al. (2011), elaborated that in less developed countries entrepreneurship is highly encouraged to help economic growth. The main focus on Eroğlu, et al. (2011), was that it indicates that culture has a clear effect on entrepreneurship. Lastly, the third article on entrepreneurship is by Audretsch, et al. (2011) which focuses on the future entrepreneurship research. The field of entrepreneurship research has developed as one of the most dynamic, important and relevant fields in management and economics science. The study suggests that for the future of entrepreneurship research, it must be integrated as a field approach (Audretsch, et al. 2011). One of Audretsch, et al. (2011)'s main points is identifying the issues that will shape entrepreneurship research in the future.

## 2.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter it focused on defining business research and identifying the major themes in business research. It gives a literature review and theoretical frame work on business research.

The identified six themes in this chapter will be used in the data analysis and include:

- Marketing
- Human resource management
- Supply chain management
- Customer behaviour
- Business dynamics and strategy
- Entrepreneurship

Chapter 3 will outline the research design used in this study.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter it includes the Research Design of this study as a result of the qualitative nature of this study, a systematic review will be conducted in the research design. It will contain all the relevant information for sampling, the data collection, the design of the measuring instrument, the data analysis and the ethical considerations. This will link back to the previous two sections where the primary objective was stated. Therefore, in this section the way the data is selected will be based on the primary objective of this study.

### **3.2 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The sample for this research will be done through a desktop review and using a qualitative method. The sample will be extracted by means of a desktop review, using the EMERALD platform. Only one search term will be used which will be business research. A time frame of 12 months will be used to ensure the articles were published in the years 2020 and 2021. It will focus on business research done during the pandemic and it will also focus on business research that was done on the impacts the pandemic has had on business research. The sample will help shed light on the research that was done during the years of the 2020 pandemic and identify the gaps in business research themes that have not considered the pandemic in the research. The size of the sample will be five articles that will be taken from the Nelson Mandela University Library Databases Emerald platform. The analysis of the sample will be done in the next section.

### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Primary data is data that has not been published yet and it is collected first hand. It includes surveys, interviews and experiments (Kabir, 2016). Secondary data on the other hand is sources that have already been published.

Secondary data is used mainly in research that is based on reviewing literature. It includes books, articles, newspapers, journals, and others (Kabir, 2016).

As this study will be based on a desktop review and it will be based on secondary data. The data will not be collected using human interviews, surveys and questionnaires. However, the data will be collected by using the EMERALD platform and articles that are available on the Google Scholar platform. In the collection of the data, articles and journals that were published in the years 2020 and 2021 will be included. As well as the research must be related to business research during the pandemic. All articles and research that were published before 2020 and 2021 and that are not relevant to the primary objective will be excluded. The data collection will include making sure that the data is relevant to the study. This will be done by screening titles, abstracts, introductions and conclusions, and selecting the relevant articles. The data extraction criteria that will be employed are the publication date of the article, name of article, methodology used, data collection method, data analysis method and lastly the research outcomes of the article.

### 3.4 DESIGN OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

As stated in 3.2 the data will be collected by means of a desktop review. The methodology that will be used in this study will be mainly qualitative. As a result of this the measuring instruments will be the protocol. This will include searching for articles on the EMERALD platform and Google Scholar, screening the data and selecting the relevant articles. This information will include the dates the articles were published and the methodology that was used. This will help with ensuring that the research content will be relevant to this study.

### 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Once the data has been collected, it will be analysed using relevant and appropriate methods. These methods will include screening titles, abstracts, introductions and conclusions. As well as extracting relevant information from the articles and identifying the gaps in the research. This will include the date of publication, the methodology that was used and the outcomes of the research. After this has been done structuring and reducing the data will take place. In this study the data reduction will exclude articles that were published before 2020 and articles that are not relevant to the primary objective of this study, which is to conduct a systematic review of business research during the pandemic to determine the research foci. The organisation scheme that this study will use will be explained in Chapter 4, which will include the sample analysis and the outcomes.

### 3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research rigor is very important and is considered in this study. A way that will be used to ensure that the data collected is credible and reliable, will be by only sourcing the data from academic research publications. The EMERALD platform will be used for the sample to ensure the academic credibility of the articles. As well as the use of the Google Scholar platform for any other article used for the rest of the study. As this study is a qualitative desktop review, the considerations of human research subjects, interviewing and surveying ethically is not a worry for this study. To ensure the reliability, credibility and ethics of this research will be by making sure to give proper acknowledgements to the authors of the articles that will be used; giving proper referencing. Therefore, proper means of paraphrasing and referencing will be used to make sure that there is no plagiarism. Another tool that will be used to ensure that nothing was plagiarised will be the use of Turnitin at the end of the study. Lastly, an ethics clearance form and a learning agreement will be signed before the research is conducted.

### 3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter starts by identifying the research design, how the sample of this study will be extracted. Thereafter the data collection method, the design of the measuring instruments and the data analysis method for this study was explained. Finally, the ethical considerations of this study were stated. Chapter 4 presents the empirical results.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE EMPIRICAL RESULTS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will contain the results of the five articles that were extracted for the sample. The main aim of this chapter is to complete the primary objective of this study, which is to review business research during the pandemic. The third secondary objective stated in Chapter 1, which is to identify the areas of business research that still needs to be investigated, will also be completed in this chapter. This will be done by reviewing and analysing the five articles extracted for the sample and looking for gaps in the research. In this chapter the sample will first be described. Thereafter the articles from the sample will be explained briefly and some conclusions will be made.

### **4.2 THE SAMPLE USED IN THE STUDY**

These five articles to be used in this study, were extracted by using the EMERALD platform and only one search term which was business research was used. The EMERALD platform was used to ensure the academic credibility. The time frame that was used was 12 months and there showed 23 051 records available. Next the relevance of the articles were checked and five articles were extracted. The data extraction criteria that was employed were publication date of article, name of article, methodology employed, data collection method, data analysis method and research outcome.

Firstly, the five articles that were extracted will be identified, by title, the authors and the date of publication. Secondly, the organisational scheme that was used in this study will be stated, as well as a table identifying the results. Thirdly, a discussion of the results from the five articles will be included in this chapter. Lastly, a summary of the results and findings from the five articles that were used for the sample will be included in this chapter.



## 4.3 THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

The articles used in the sample are as followed:

- “Prevailing the article approaches predicting sustainable business models: a systematic review” by J.J. Ferreira, C.I. Fernandes, M. Hughes, and P.M. Veiga, published in 2021.
- “Trust and commitment as mediators between economic and non- economic satisfaction in business relationships: a sales perspective” by N. Høgevold, G. Svensson, and C. Otero-Neira, published in 2020.
- “Two-decade bibliometric overview of publications in the Journal of Knowledge Management” by R. Chaudhuri, G. Chavan, S. Vadalkar, D. Vrontis, and V. Pereira, published in 2021.
- “Is small and medium-sized beautiful? The structure and evolution of family SMEs research” by A. Calabro, A. Caputo, and G. Valenza, published in 2021.
- “Entrepreneurship research in the Middle East and North Africa: trends, challenges, and sustainability” By A. Aljuwaiber, published in 2021.

## 4.4 THE ORGANISATION SCHEME USED IN THE STUDY

The following items were included in the organisation scheme used in this study:

- Publication date of article – 2020 and 2021
- Name of journal – Article 1 = Prevailing theoretical approaches predicting sustainable business models: a systematic review; Article 2 = Trust and commitment as mediators between economic and non-economic satisfaction in business relationships: a sales perspective; Article 3 = Two-decade bibliometric overview of publications in the Journal of Knowledge Management; Article 4 = Is small and medium-sized beautiful? The structure and evolution of family SMEs research; Article 5 = Entrepreneurship research in the Middle East and North Africa: trends, challenges, and sustainability.

- Methodology employed – M1= Quantitative; M2 = Qualitative; M3 = Mixed Methods
- Data collection method C1= Primary Data; C2= Secondary Data;
- Data analysis method – A1= Qualitative; A2 = Systematic Review A3= Bibliometric Analysis
- Research outcomes –Theme 1= Business Research, Theme 2 = Business Research and the effects of Covid-19

Tables 4.1 provides the results of the study.

**TABLE 4.1: THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

<b>Publication date</b>	<b>Author/s</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>J.J. Ferreira, C.I. Fernandes, P.M. Veiga, M. Hughes</b>	<b>Article 1</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>C2</b>	<b>A3</b>	<b>THEME 1</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>N. Hogevoold, G. Svensson, C. Otero-Neira</b>	<b>Article 2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>THEME 1</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>R. Chaudhuri, G. Chavan, S. Vadalkar, D. Vrontis, V. Pereira</b>	<b>Article 3</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>C2</b>	<b>A3</b>	<b>THEME 1</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>A. Calabro, A. Caputo, G. Valenza,</b>	<b>Article 4</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>C2</b>	<b>A3</b>	<b>THEME 1</b>

<b>2021</b>	<b>A. Aljuwaiber</b>	<b>Article 5</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>C2</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>THEME 1</b>
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The results as shown in Table 4.1 will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

## 4.5 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This section will discuss the results of the study and give a brief explanation for each of the five articles main points and conclusions. Four out of the five articles used mixed research methods and one used a quantitative research method. Four out of the five articles used secondary data as their data collection methods using only literature found on academic platforms and one article used secondary data as the data collection method using surveys. These articles also show that three out of the five articles used bibliometric analysis as their data analysis methods and two articles used systematic review. Lastly, all articles research outcomes were based on the theme of business research and none on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on business research. The next part will elaborate more on a qualitative analysis of the five articles extracted for the sample.

### 4.5.1 Qualitative results for Article 1

The first article by Ferreira, et. al, (2021), was published in 2021 and the methodology used was a mixed method. The data collection method for Ferreira, et. al, (2021), is secondary as it was a bibliometric co-citation analysis. This was used to collect the most relevant research papers on sustainable business model. The collection of the data was done through the Web of Science to ensure high academic quality and 343 documents were selected for the sample (Ferreira, et. al, 2021). These documents focused on the main topic of sustainable business models (Ferreira, et. al, 2021). Ferreira, et. al, (2021)'s data was analysed using a systematic review, as well as network analysis review. The network analysis was used to group and map the articles and their co-citation links. The analysis focused on cluster analysis to group the related articles (Ferreira, et. al, 2021).

These clusters were the main focus of Ferreira, et. al, (2021). Each cluster was formed to elaborate on sustainable business models dominant theoretical approaches. The first cluster was framed to elaborate on sustainable business models' implementations and in each article, it had a slightly different view on this (Ferreira, et. al, 2021).

The next four clusters were sustainable business model's challenges, institutional sustainable business model, circular sustainable business model, and finally the emerging SBM (Ferreira, et. al, 2021). The results showed that the subject of sustainable business models was not common until 2010 and after 2014 (Ferreira, et. al, 2021). Finally, the main outcome of Ferreira, et. al, (2021), is that it gives a guide of sustainable business model literature that identifies sustainable business model's main issues, limitations, findings and its future (Ferreira, et. al, 2021). Which gives future researchers an idea of the gaps that need to be filled on this subject (Ferreira, et. al, 2021). Although this article identifies some of the gaps in the research, the impact on sustainable business model literature is not included in these gaps.

#### 4.5.2 Qualitative results for Article 2

The second article is by Høgevold, et.al. (2020), which was published in 2020 and the methodology employed was a mixed the method. The data collection method for Høgevold, et.al. (2020), was surveys which is secondary data. The surveys were focused on cross-industry Norwegian companies. Høgevold, et.al. (2020), surveyed 294 respondents but selected only 81 for the sample. The surveys mainly focused on the respondents to identify their relationships with their customers (Høgevold, et. al. 2020). The data analysis method was a systematic review for Høgevold, et.al. (2020). The main research question of Høgevold, et. al. (2020), is "whether trust and commitment are mediators between economic and non-economic satisfaction also applies to seller business relationships". The results state that the main research question is in fact true, and it also states the importance of business to business relationships (Høgevold, et. al. 2020).

This study aimed to advance the marketers' understanding of the sales demand and tries to fill the gaps in this particular business research theme (Høgevoid, et. al. 2020). This article highlighted the importance of business to business relationships but did not focus on the impacts the Covid-19 pandemic will have on these relationships. Therefore, this is an important gap to fill in the research.

#### 4. 5.3 Qualitative results for Article 3

Chaudhuri, et. al. (2021), is the third article which was published in 2021, and the methodology that was employed is quantitative. The data collection method for Chaudhuri, et. al. (2021), is a systematic review. The data was collected by extracting research papers from the Journal of Knowledge Management and the data collection criteria that was used, was that each research paper was received systematically based on the volume and issue of each year (Chaudhuri, et. al. 2021). As well as identifying key terms and themes of each research paper (Chaudhuri, et. al. 2021).

The data analysis method contained sorting the research papers into bubble maps, auto-correlation maps and matrix maps by using Vantage Point software. It also entailed selection of 1346 research papers (Chaudhuri, et. al. 2021). This article focused on investigating the change in knowledge and advancement of the research published in the Journal of Knowledge Management between 1997 and 2020 (Chaudhuri, et. al. 2021). This bibliometric analysis extracted 1346 research published in the Journal of Knowledge Management from the time they started in 1997 to 2020 (Chaudhuri, et. al. 2021). The results show that most of the research published in the Journal of Knowledge management during the years 1997 – 2020 came from the UK, Australia, Italy, Spain and the USA (Chaudhuri, et. al. 2021). The main focus of this article is to put together and synthesize all of the academic literature on the issues of knowledge management since the Journal of Knowledge Management was established. As well as to create awareness for the business research field of knowledge management. It states the emerging trends, future research directions and gaps in knowledge management (Chaudhuri, et. al. 2021).

Therefore, the article shows that the articles published in the Journal of Knowledge Management have developed over the years and attained academic maturity (Chaudhuri, et. al. 2021). Although this study used articles from 1997 to 2020' none of the articles that were published in the Journal of Knowledge Management during this time frame included information about the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### 4.5.4 Qualitative results for Article 4

The fourth article extracted for the sample is by Calabrò, et. al. (2021), which was published in 2021 and the methodology used was a mixed method. The article aims to give a map of the family SMEs research structure and its field (Calabrò, et. al. 2021). The data collection methods were bibliometric analyses and a systematic review, data was collected by using the Scopus database and a sample of 155 articles were extracted. After these articles were extracted, they were sorted into maps and placed into clusters. The data was analysed using a systematic review, as well as co-citation analysis (Calabrò, et. al. 2021). After the analysis, four clusters of research were formed.

The clusters are succession cluster, performance cluster, organisational cultural cluster and internationalisation cluster (Calabrò, et. al. 2021). The results of this study show that family small and medium-size businesses differ on the other hand to large family firms (Calabrò, et. al. 2021). It also found that studies found that there is a positive influence of intrafamily succession on small family owned business performance. The main focus of Calabrò, et. al. (2021), is on small and medium-sized family enterprises, as they are growing rapidly and to give knowledge on the future research for this field. An example of future research that was stated in Calabrò, et. al. (2021), is focusing on studies that rather focus on the success of the successor, who has started their own business, built their own skills and experience, without the protection of the family business. Future research could also focus on understanding the different forms of knowledge that might be more relevant to make SME succession possible.

Another example is that future research should focus more on the impact of the younger generations on organisational culture that could potentially affect innovation performance in future years (Calabrò, et. al. 2021). Although Calabrò, et. al. (2021), considers future research in the field on family small and medium sized businesses, it does not considers the impact the Covid-19 pandemic might have on this field.

#### 4.5.5 Qualitative results for Article 5

Lastly the fifth article which is by Aljuwaiber, et. al. (2021), was published in 2021 and the methodology used was mixed research method. The data collection method for Aljuwaiber, et. al. (2021), was secondary data. Data was collected from Emerald, Scopus and the Web of Science databases. The articles were extracted if they fit the criteria which included articles on entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North America (Aljuwaiber, et. al. 2021). A sample of 271 articles were extracted for this study. The data was analysed using a systematic review and were grouped by country.

The main objective of Aljuwaiber, et. al. (2021), was to look at present issues in entrepreneurship research done in the Middle East and North America. The results of the study states that there is an increase in entrepreneurship Middle East and North America but the field of entrepreneurship research is still immature (Aljuwaiber, et. al. 2021). One of the outcomes of this study is that it helps direct future research in entrepreneurship by identifying the different trends (Aljuwaiber, et. al. 2021). Future research for this business research theme could be on the impact the Covid-19 pandemic will and has had on entrepreneurship.

## 4.6 FINAL SYNTHESIS OF THE DATA

After analysing these five articles it can be seen that they leave gaps in these fields of these business research themes. Even though these articles were published in the time frame of 2020 and 2021, which are the years of the Covid-19 pandemic; they do not elaborate or consider the impact the pandemic has and will have on business research. In Høgevold, et. al. (2020), it focuses on marketing and business relationships, it left a gap in this research because it does not consider the impact and effects the Covid-19 pandemic will have on these relationships. Calabrò, et. al. (2021), also left a gap as it does not consider the impact the pandemic has had on sustainable business models. Lastly, Aljuwaiber, et. al. (2021), did not consider that the pandemic will have an impact on entrepreneur behaviour, for instance the increase or decrease in entrepreneurship. All the articles highlight future research areas however, they fail to elaborate on the issues of the pandemic is going to have on these fields of business research. As stated previously the Covid-19 pandemic has affected all walks of life including business. Therefore, the Covid-19 pandemic needs to be considered in future business research.

## 4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter starts by outlining the sample of the research. Thereafter a quantitative analysis of the results was provided and then a qualitative analysis was given for each article. A final synthesis of the data concluded the chapter. Chapter 5 will provide the conclusions and recommendations for the study.



# **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations of this study. It will link all the previous chapters and give conclusions. The chapter will start out with giving research articles that show the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on these business research themes. Next, this chapter will give a conclusion on this study. Finally, recommendations will be given for future studies.

## **5.2 EVIDENCE OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH THAT HAS CONSIDERED THE PANDEMIC**

As stated previously the Covid-19 pandemic has had an effect on everyone, everywhere around the globe. For some business research themes there are gaps in the research. There is evidence that Covid-19 has had an impact on business research. For example, on human resource management, customer behaviour and marketing. An article by Cooke et al., (2021), focused on the International Journal of Human Resource Management and what articles were published in the past 30 years. The article stated that the Covid-19 pandemic has been an extremely challenging period and it has resulted in economic downturn (Cooke et al., 2021). Therefore, it will affect the research of human resource management in the future. Cooke et al., (2021), stated that the Covid-19 pandemic has the possibility of changing national and international human resource approaches and work significantly. Due to the pandemic human resource management research will change; such as the economy after the pandemic will lead to extreme growth into the gig economy and more casual employment (Cooke et al., 2021).

A study to show the effects on customer behaviour is by Mehta et al., (2020). This article shows that customer behaviour and attitudes tend to change during a crisis. During the Covid-19 pandemic customers were seen to spend less of their income on less or non-essential items, such as jewellery and clothing (Mehta et al., 2020).

As well as there was a large decline in the demand in cosmetics and homecare. However, customers were seen to be raiding grocery stores during this time (Mehta et al., 2020). Customer behaviour has changed because of the global crisis of Covid-19 pandemic and businesses are going to have to make strategic changes (Mehta et al., 2020). Lastly, He et al., (2020), did research that states that marketing and the way companies market has been affected by the pandemic. Marketing has been affected both positively and negatively by Covid-19. For example, the once important face to face interaction and exchange of marketing, is now having to be replaced (He et al., 2020). Companies had to adapt to the changes and challenges the Covid-19 pandemic brought.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion this study has conducted a systematic review of business research during the Covid-19 pandemic to determine the research foci. This study showed that there are many different business research themes. By using the sample of the five articles this study was able to identify that not all themes in business research done during the years of 2020 to 2021 has considered the impact of Covid-19 in their studies. Article one from the sample is based on the sustainable business models which falls under the business dynamics and strategy theme. Article 2 from the sample is based on business relationships. Article 3 was based on all business research that was published in the Journal of Knowledge Management. Article 4 from the sample is based on small and medium sized businesses and Article 5 is based on entrepreneurship research, which both fall under the entrepreneurship theme in business research. Considering the three articles used as examples to show that the Covid-19 pandemic has definitely impacted business and in conjunction will affect business research in the future.

Therefore, there is a gap in business research that happened during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study recommends that future studies in business research should consider how the pandemic has affected and how it will continue to impact and change business research. Future researchers should focus on the themes of entrepreneurship, business dynamics and strategies, and business relationships. As these are the themes the study analysed in the sample and concluded that not all research done during the pandemic period has considered the pandemic in their research.

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## Appendix A: Data collection Schedule

<b>Data Collection Schedule</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Introduction and Background to the study	10 May 2021
The Literature review of Business research during the pandemic and a Theoretical framework	30 July 2021
Research Design and Methodology	30 July 2021
Collect the sample	1 August 2021
Do the actual analysis of the sample	1 August – 31 August 2021
The Empirical results	6 September 2021
Summary, conclusions and recommendation	4 October 2021



# Appendix B: Ethics Clearance

## ANNEXURE 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE TEMPLATE

NELSON MANDELA  
UNIVERSITY

### FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES

#### ETHICS CLEARANCE FOR TREATISES / DISSERTATIONS / THESES

**Instructions:**

- Should be completed by study leader and student
- Must be signed off by student, study leader and HoD
- Submit completed form to Ms Lindie van Rensburg
- Please ensure that the research methodology section from the proposal is attached to this form
- **Please note that by following this Proforma ethics route, the study will NOT be allocated an ethics clearance number**

FACULTY: Business and Economic Sciences

SCHOOL / DEPARTMENT: Business

I, (surname and initials of study leader) Struwig, M

the study leader for (surname and initials of candidate) Gossman C.A

(student number) 217528155

a candidate for the degree of Bcom Honours Business Management

with a treatise/dissertation/thesis entitled (full title of treatise/dissertation/thesis):

A Systematic Review of Business Research During the Pandemic

considered the following ethics criteria (please tick the appropriate block):

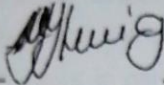
## ANNEXURE 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE TEMPLATE

		YES	NO
1.	Is there any risk of harm, embarrassment of offence, however slight or temporary, to the participant, third parties or to the communities at large?		X
2.	Is the study based on a research population defined as 'vulnerable' in terms of age, physical characteristics and/or disease status?		X
2.1	Are subjects/participants/respondents of your study:		
2.1.1	Children under the age of 18?		X
2.1.2	NMMU staff?		X
2.1.3	NMMU students?		X
2.1.4	The elderly/persons over the age of 60?		X
2.1.5	A sample from an institution (e.g. hospital/school)?		X
2.1.6	Handicapped (e.g. mentally or physically)?		X
3.	Does the data that will be collected require consent of an institutional authority for this study? (An institutional authority refers to an organisation that is established by government to protect vulnerable people)		X
3.1	Are you intending to access participant data from an existing, stored repository (e.g. school, institutional or university records)?		X
4.	Will the participant's privacy, anonymity or confidentiality be compromised?		X
4.1	Are you administering a questionnaire/survey that:		
4.1.1	Collects sensitive/identifiable data from participants?		X
4.1.2	Does not guarantee the anonymity of the participant?		X
4.1.3	Does not guarantee the confidentiality of the participant and the data?		X
4.1.4	Will offer an incentive to respondents to participate, i.e. a lucky draw or any other prize?		X
4.1.5	Will create doubt whether sample control measures are in place?		X
4.1.5	Will be distributed electronically via email (and requesting an email response)?		X
	Note:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If your questionnaire <b>DOES NOT</b> request respondents' identification, is distributed electronically and you request respondents to return it <i>manually</i> (print out and deliver/mail); <b>AND</b> respondent anonymity can be guaranteed, your answer will be NO.</li> <li>If your questionnaire <b>DOES NOT</b> request respondents' identification, is <i>distributed via an email link and works through a web response system</i> (e.g. the university survey system); <b>AND</b> respondent anonymity can be guaranteed, your answer will be NO.</li> </ul>		
5.	Do you wish to publish an article from this study and submit to an accredited Journal?		X

## ANNEXURE 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE TEMPLATE

Please note that if ANY of the questions above have been answered in the affirmative (YES) the student will need to complete the full ethics clearance form (REC-H application) and submit it with the relevant documentation to the Faculty R/CH (Ethics) representative.


and hereby certify that the student has given his/her research ethical consideration and full ethics approval is not required.

  
STUDY LEADER(S)

14/10/2021  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

  
STUDENT

14/07/2021  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## Appendix C: Turnitin Summary

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EBML410 Caitlyn Gossman 217528155 Treaties

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ORIGINALITY REPORT

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