Understanding How to Make Literature Reviews
Easier for Business Scholars

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Abstract

The literature review is an integral component of any study. It grounds the scholarly subject matter, justifies the study at hand, and provides the readers with the context for understanding the study (Boote & Beile, 2005). The crafting of the literature review can be a frustrating, time-consuming, and tedious process. Recommendations for easing literature review construction are lacking because they typically focus on how to locate relevant information rather than how to analyze the texts or organize the review. Many tools exist which could help researchers organize and deepen their literature reviews, however these tools do not appear to be widely used. This presentation will discuss the similarities between qualitative research analysis and the literature review, briefly demonstrate one approach to more efficiently crafting literature reviews using the tool NVivo, and discuss a proposed study which will assess the level of awareness and use of computer-related literature review tools by business scholars.

The process for writing a literature review is similar to the approach for qualitative analysis. (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2014; Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012)). Techniques and tools which are used for qualitative analysis can also be useful for making literature reviews easier and more thorough.

Numerous resources exist to assist scholars with locating and organizing texts to be used for a literature review, such as subscription databases (EBSCO, JSTOR), search engines (Google Scholar), search alerts, social media platforms (ResearchGate), and citation management tools (RefWorks, EndNote). However, few tools exist that assist with the analysis of the texts or organization of the review. In all of the current strategies, scholars must continuously scan the information in order to synthesize and fit the information into a form which is usable for the literature review. The use of qualitative software tools can streamline this process.

One of the computer-related tools most discussed in articles, NVivo, is a software product intended to assist qualitative researchers with the coding, analysis, and organization of their data that can be easily extrapolated to the creation of literature reviews. The crafting of a literature review is very similar to how NVivo is used. Many sources can be easily imported into and manipulated within NVivo in order to assist with data analysis and theme generation. The literature review process is significantly enhanced by the software's features, which include total document searching, contextual linking from description nodes to the original sources, and the ability to conduct queries on the data.

Studies have effectively described qualitative tools and provided instructions on how to use them with literature reviews (Bandara, 2006; Bandara, Furtmuller, Gorbacheva, Miskon, & Beekhuyzen, 2015; Bandara, Miskon, & Fielt, 2011, Di Gregorio, 2000). However, many academics do not use computer-related tools. The question is why these tools, which enable the researcher to more easily organize and search sources, are not more widely used by business scholars. To better understand this area an internet survey is to be conducted to learn more about the following:

- How business scholars currently organize literature reviews
- Level of awareness of available tools
- What tools they currently use to help them with literature reviews
- What they like about the tools
- What they dislike about the tools
- What questions they have about the tools

Table 1: Hypotheses to be Researched	
Subject	**Hypothesis**
Awareness	Business scholars are not aware of the tools which exist
Understanding	Those who are aware do not understand how to use them.
Confusion	Those who are aware of the tools are confused about which tools would work best for them.
Approach	How to adapt the approach to a literature review to effectively use the tools chosen is a concern for researchers.
Cost	They believe the cost of these tools would be prohibitive.
Learning curve	The time needed to learn the tools outweighs the benefits.

To better understand the barriers which keep business scholars from taking advantage of tools which would make the literature review easier, a survey will be conducted of business professors at colleges and universities who have written at least one article or conference presentation in the last calendar year.

The premise of this article is that software would help the researcher to deal more effectively with the large amount of information uncovered during the literature review. This article will examine the use of tools and how they can potentially make literature reviews easier and more effective. Strategies can then be developed to help business scholars more easily and thoroughly conduct literature reviews.

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: Literature reviews, while essential, are painful for most researchers to conduct. This research is designed to enhance the literature review process by exploring and discussing tools which can make the process easier.

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