A bibliometric analysis of extended key account management literature

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Adoption and Applications of Key Account Management Concepts in Business Literature: A Bibliometric Analysis

Abstract

Because key account management (KAM) has played such an important role in business, technology, and network success, this study reviews research on the adoption and application of key account management concepts. This review includes 373 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 take the readers on a journey across five distinctive time-periods and find that KAM 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 implementation of challenges 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 key account management 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 key account management literature and reviews the research adoption and application of key account management concepts in adjacent areas of research (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 the research on KAM concepts also 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, 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 drivers and measures. 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 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 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 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. Over the last four decades, research on KAM has expanded to address a wide range of theoretical and practical issues encircling KAM (Guesalaga & Johnston, 2010). In addition, as this research suggests, KAM principles have been adopted 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). The term 'bibliometrics' term was first introduced by A Prichard 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; Paesbrugghe *et al.*, 2018) by presenting a literature review that includes 1) sample selection and citation analysis, 2) document co-citation analysis, text analysis; and 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 key account management, 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, 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. Entries also included the year of article publication.

To identify key account management articles, we adopted a systematic four-step process. First, we identified keywords related to key account management. Other than key account, many other 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 managers, national account managers, key account representatives, and account directors) 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 key account management 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 key account management 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 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 time span 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 rate 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 rate 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 an article was co-authored by four authors, 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). This process produced a list of most impactful journals, authors, articles and institutions in KAM literature and are presented in Tables 1-6.

--- Tables 1-6 About Here ---

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 Tables 1 and 2. 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 3) and citation count per year (Table 4). 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 3 and 4.

Third, the impact of 586 authors (who co-authored at least one of the 373 articles) was accessed for the weighted number of articles, weighted citations, and weighted citations per year (Table 5). Interestingly, Ojasalo, Pardo, Piercy, Sharma, and Storbacka appeared as the top ten contributing authors for all 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 6). 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 USA. Notably, the contributing 586 authors and 355 institutions are globally dispersed, indicating a broad global interest in KAM.

5. Document Co-Citation Analysis

The second objective of this paper's research was to identify 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 (ProQuest) 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 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 ($p < 0.001$) 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 drivers and performance measures. 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 key account management relationships (Homburg, Workman, & Jensen, 2002), and in global account management (Guesalaga & Johnston, 2010). A comparison of the clusters and their themes with those of prior literature reviews are mentioned in Table 6. The clusters are described next.

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.

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; Millman & Wilson, 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 (as mentioned in the 'KAM framework' column in 'this study' row in

Table 6) (Gosselin & Bauwen, 2006; Homburg, Workman & Jensen, 2002; Kempeners & van

der Hart, 1999; Lacoste, 2012; Lacoste, 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 towards conceptual developments on relationship planning and implementation, value

creation, vertical coopetition, and customer engagement.

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, 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.

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 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.

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 & 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.

Cluster 6: Key Account Management Performance Drivers and Measures. Cluster 6 contains 11 articles that explore KAM performance drivers and measures. 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 are 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 in literature to determine the size of key account management (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 analysis created maps for each time-period showing key concepts and linkages between these concepts within each cluster (see Figures 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 Figures 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 Figure 5) evolved recently as a theme in this period. The thematic changes across the time-periods are presented in Figure 6.

--- Figure 1 to 6 About Here ---

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.

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 Figures 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 Figures 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 towards long-term relationships as promoted by Deshpande & Farley (2002) and key network management introduced by Ojasalo (2004). Two years later, Huemer (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.

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," "transformation," "restructuring," and "resources" were peripheral themes in the *supplier* concept as shown in Figures 1 and 2). For example, Turner (1990) looked upon the joint product partnership to achieve product differentiation; Cooper & Gardner (1993) explored how shared, and complementary competencies and resource-sharing develop good business relationships. Jolson (1997) continued the cooperative emphasis by providing detailed illustrations on partnering procedures and issues, and Napolitano (1997) discussed how partnering capabilities create superior value.

The literature advanced to building KAM-related capabilities (see "capability," "resources," "dissemination," "learning" and "knowledge" as themes in the *dissemination* concept in Figures 3 to 5). For example, Miller (2003) described how shared resources and capabilities create sustainable resources; Vazquez, Iglesias, & Álvarez-González (2005) found how goal congruence, trust, and relational norms develop shared capability, and Piercy (2010) elaborated upon the need for new, shared capabilities in responding to market pressures and business risks. In relatively recent years, Gebauer, Paiola, & Edvardsson (2012) provided a guiding framework for operationalization of capabilities in dyadic relationships; and Ivens *et al.* (2016) explained how dyadic capabilities are useful in managing KAM networks.

From Functional Restructuring to Inter-Organizational Restructuring. Research in KAM

initially focused on functional resources and functional innovations (see *functions* and *process* as

concepts with "resources," "adoption," and "structure" as central themes and "innovative,"

"integration," "commitment" and "strategy" as peripheral themes in Figures 1 and 2). For

example, Cardozo, Shipp, & Roering (1987) discussed changes in organizational restructuring;

and Crittenden, Gardiner, & Stam (1993) explored the facilitation of inter-functional

coordination. Similarly, Kempeners & van der Hart (1999) discussed organizational design-

related decisions for KAM; Millman & Wilson (1999) outlined methods to enhance KAM's

customer-focus, and Homburg, Workman, & Jensen (2000) discussed key changes in marketing

organizations to adapt to KAM culture.

Research later moved toward inter-organizational restructuring (see *strategy* and

dissemination as concepts with "capability" and "co-creation" as central themes and "synergy"

and "complexity" as peripheral themes in Figures 3 to 5). For example, Miller (2005) examined

the management of collaborative interfaces; Georges & Eggert (2003) examined value creation

in collaboration relationships. Also, Knoppen & Christiaanse (2007) developed a framework for

interorganizational adaptation in a dyadic relationship, and Nätti & Ojasalo (2008) examined

how organizational restructuring in collaborative relationships can facilitate knowledge-sharing

and knowledge-transfer. Recently, Storbacka (2012) examined inter(and intra-organizational

alignment design elements for KAM; Hakanen (2014) examined co-creation of integrated

solutions by KAM teams; and Gounaris & Tzempelikos (2014) explored the relationships

between structural reformations and effectiveness of KAM programs.

From Relationship Planning to Relationship Implementation. Initially, research in KAM

focused more on planning for relationship building (see *planning* as a concept with "competence," "dyadic," as central themes and "information," "interorganizational," "loyalty" and "value" as peripheral themes in Figures 1 and 2). For examples, Barrett (1986) suggested a separate salesforce as a strategy; Simpson (1989) examined strategic planning for KAM, and Cooper & Gardner (1993) highlighted methods of establishing KAM relationships. Similarly, Daugherty, Ellinger, & Plair (1997) discussed the benefits of additional services and resource commitments for key accounts.

Later, the research focused on the implementation aspects of relationship building (see *implementation* as a concept in later time-periods with "commitment," "control" and "values" as central themes, and "culture," "growth" and "adoption" as peripheral themes in Figures 3 to 5). For examples, Wengler, Ehret, & Saab (2006) and Brady (2004) explored antecedents, processes, and challenges in implementing relationship marketing, and Guenzi, Pardo, & Georges (2007) addressed issues with the adoption of relationship strategy. Recently, Wilson & Woodburn (2014) highlighted issues affecting KAM implementation, and Marcos-Cuevas *et al.* (2014) highlighted intra-organizational decisions and challenges in KAM implementation.

From Salesforce Performance to Network Performance. In the first two time-periods (1979–2001), outcomes were sales-focused (thus, Figures 1 and 2 feature "selling," "sales," "major" and "accounts" as central themes in the *accounts* concept). For example, Doyle, Pignatelli, & Florman (1985) examined formal goals and reward structures for salespersons. Almost a decade later, Matthyssens & van den Bulte (1994) focused on performance-related issues in team selling. Similarly, Tice (1997) examined the compensation perspective, and Perry, Pearce, & Sims (1999) explored the enhancement of a selling team's effectiveness.

While selling remains the primary focus of KAM research, other performance indicators have emerged in research (see Figure 5 where "selling" is a peripheral theme in the intersection of *effectiveness* and *customer* concepts). For example, Mouzas (2006) examined network-level effectiveness as an indicator of performance, while Klein & Rai (2009) explore strategic information flows within supply chain relationships and relational performance outcomes. Recently, Davies & Ryals (2014) discussed network-based KAM performance indicators (e.g., relational improvements and returns on joint investment). Shortly after that, Ivens *et al.* (2016) defined the role of internal KAM networks in KAM performance.

From Product and Service Performance to Sustainability. Traditionally, KAM research focused on product and service performance (Turner, 1990). Recently, sustainability has emerged as an important attribute in KAM literature (see Figure 5's representation of *sustainable* as a concept for between 2012 and 2016). For example, Wolf & Seuring (2010) highlighted environmental considerations as the key buying criteria in dyadic relationships; Miles, Verreynne, & Luke (2014) discussed sustainable market orientation, and Wilhelm *et al.* (2016) explored sustainability compliances across multi-tier supply chains. We expect more research on sustainability in KAM as sustainability research achieves maturity in marketing literature.

7. Directions for Future Research: Survey of Academic Researchers

Directions for future research is a key objective of this study, and we surveyed academic researchers in core KAM areas because they are the ones who drive KAM research. We followed the research design of Paesbrugghe *et al.* (2018) and Rangarajan *et al.* (2018). Given the broad research areas that could be identified, we used the categories identified by using co-citation

analysis and text mining as well as visualization for future research. We designed a self-administered online questionnaire much like that of Paesbrugghe *et al.* (2018) and Rangarajan *et al.* (2018). We used the same questions for all 12 research categories (six from co-citation analysis and six from text mining). For each category, the category description and topic definition were provided (Paesbrugghe *et al.* 2018). As an example, for key account alliance, the following data was provided: Topic: Key Account Management Alliances; Topic definition: The level of coordination and collaboration between the sales organization and other relevant functions. Like Paesbrugghe *et al.* (2018) and Rangarajan *et al.* (2018), the question for category 1 was: "We would like your opinion on the importance of studying the following topic when examining Key Account Management. Please rate from 1 to 7 (1 = not important and 7 = very important)." This instruction was followed by the category topic and definition. In addition, we also asked, "If you think the topic selling process and technique is important, can you please share a possible research question?" We asked these questions for all 12 categories.

As the researchers in core KAM areas are ideal respondents for this task simply because they actively follow the literature, we took the list of authors from the 56 articles that we had selected for the co-citation analysis and searched their paper and/or the Internet for email addresses. We found data for 141 researchers. The link to the online questionnaire was sent to the researchers with two reminders—each sent a week apart. Of the 141 samples, five emails bounced back, and 14 authors informed us they were retired or were no longer active in the KAM research area. Our final sample was 122 authors of papers that had published in the area of KAM research. We received 42 usable responses (50% from North America; 38% from Europe and 12% from Asia).

7.1 Results

The results are presented in Table 7. We calculated the importance of each topic and provided research questions. The five most important topics and their means are: 1) key account management alliances (6.03), 2) key account management performance drivers and measures (5.79), 3) key account management value creation (5.73), 4) global account management (5.45), and 5) key account management structure (5.36). The remaining seven topics are: 1) from competence-based partnership to joint capability-building (5.28), 2) from salesforce performance to network performance (5.16), 3) from transactional approach to relationship, 4) from network approach to relationship (5.09), 5) from relationship planning to relationship implementation (4.97) to key account management frameworks (4.91), 6) from functional restructuring to inter-organizational restructuring (4.84), and 7) from product and service performance to sustainability (4.45).

--- Table 7 About Here ---

As we observed in our analysis, key account management alliances, key account management performance drivers and measures, key account management value creation, global account management, and key account management structure are the five most important areas for future research.

8. Discussion - the Network view: KAM's past, present and the future

Using sub-domains, trends, and future research directions in the area of adopting KAM concepts, this study highlights the network conceptualization of KAM. The network view of KAM suggests that in contrast to the traditional focus on each customer as an independent customer, customers are conceptualized as a network of interlinked organizations. As an example, Walmart

and large retailers are asking their suppliers not to use Amazon's AWS service (Greene & Stevens 2017), interlinking Walmart Suppliers in a network. In addition, selling firms' employees and buying firms' employees form networks. The network view of KAM encompasses network philosophy, network competence, and network value. We discuss the three aspects of networks in the context of our findings.

Network Philosophy. We regard the commitment-trust relationship and integrated business process perspective as foundations of the relationship philosophy in KAM. Researchers have used these foundations to address shared relationship philosophy across the supplier and other actors in the supply-chain networks for multiple networked relationships (Grant & McLeod, 2007), understanding the importance of organizational fit (Richards & Jones, 2009) and network-based innovations (Strömsten & Waluszewski, 2012). Researchers also explored the effectiveness of governance in developing organizational resource interfaces in critical business relationships (Strömsten & Waluszewski, 2012), and the importance of contractual governance in relationships (Ivens & Pardo, 2008). We suggest that additional research address network-based orientation and applications of organizational theories.

Network Competence. For network competence, we focus on organizational capabilities, and inter-organizational alignment and fit. Thus, Miller (2003) explored information and planning systems, as well as the structural mechanism to adapt to network needs. Other researchers defined the network-related roles of KAM teams such as knowledge integrators, value-creators, and those who had value-claiming behaviors (Hakanen, 2014; Ivens & Pardo, 2007). Storbacka (2012) extended their studies by outlining the useful elements in organizational alignment and

further defining the roles of other actors. We suggest future research on shared network competence for designing an optimal key account management structure, an optimal coordination level, and an effective inter-organizational innovativeness. Another interesting area of research is how shared network competence helps mitigate business and environmental risks. For team-level network competence, future studies need to address network-based teams and their roles in structure and processes for effective inter-organizational relationships.

Network Value. Network value is driven by value creation that is evaluated through value co-creation. Research on joint value creation has addressed product management (Turner, 1990), integrated solutions for business services (Hakanen, 2014) and synergistic solutions (Schultz & Evans, 2002). Future research can address exploring the development of more value-sharing mechanisms, measuring co-created values and sustaining value within networks. Network performance has been examined through relationship-specific performance, trusting beliefs (Klein & Rai, 2009), and market-place position of competitive advantage (Ivens *et al.*, 2016). We recommend that future research address performance measures and examine the relationship between sales force performance and network performance. In addition, studies can explore quantifying qualitative measures, determining how qualitative measures can complement quantitative measures, and providing a comparison of measures.

9. Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study is to examine research adoption and application of key account management concepts in the literature along with the shifts in emphasis on alliances, performance drivers and measures, 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. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to use bibliometric methods to perform KAM review. This study has four major contributions:

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

management 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 key account management to a network view of key account management in the form of key account management structure and key account management 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 key account management alliances, key account management performance drivers and measures, key account management value creation, global account management, and key account management structure be the key areas of future research. We also suggest that research in key account management utilize research in adjacent areas such as dynamic capability (Teece & Pisano, 1994), open innovations (Randhawa, Wilden, & Hohberger, 2016) and service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

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 key account management literature.

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Table 1
Impact of Journals Based on Total Number of Articles Published

Rank	Journal	Number of Articles
1	Industrial Marketing Management	77
2	Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management	49
3	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	36
4	Journal of Business Research	19
5	European Journal of Marketing	11
6	Business Horizons	9
	Journal of Business Ethics	9
	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	9
9	Journal of Strategic Marketing	8
10	European Management Journal	7
	Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing	7
	Journal of Marketing	7
	Journal of Marketing Management	7
14	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	6
	Journal of International Marketing	6

Table 2
Impact of Journals Based on Total Number of Citations

Rank	Journal	Number of Citations
1	Industrial Marketing Management	4,049
2	Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management	3,310
3	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	1,646
4	Journal of Marketing	1,562
5	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	1,133
6	Sloan Management Review	710
7	European Journal of Marketing	656
8	Long Range Planning	603
9	Journal of Business Ethics	588
10	Journal of Relationship Marketing	549
11	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	537
12	Journal of Business Research	479
13	Journal of Marketing Management	423
14	Business Horizons	401
15	Strategic Management Journal	395

Table 3
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	