



A systematic review of family business and consumer behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide a systematic review on the intertwining of family business and consumer behaviour literature. Leveraging bibliometric software, we systematically reviewed 178 articles from 1991 to 2022. Five research clusters are identified: (1) the familiness of the firm: a social capital perspective, (2) promoting corporate social responsibility, (3) branding the family firm, (4) family firm characteristics and (5) the family firm brand. This study puts forward a novel conceptual framework to analyse the concept of familiness from a dual perspective: the business perspective to investigate how and why family firms communicate their family nature and the consumer perspective to explore how stakeholders perceive family firms' unique characteristics. Moreover, we show a change in research patterns in family business and consumer literature, providing a deeper understanding of the conceptual structure of the field. Finally, we suggest 28 future research questions.

1. Introduction

Signalling the family nature of the firm has become an increasing imperative for family businesses, driven by the need to bring forward distinctive characteristics from competitors (Craig et al., 2008; Dos Santos et al., 2019). There are numerous examples, which range from consumer goods, such as SC Johnson that proclaims to be “a family company at work for a better future”, to the automotive industry, with Ford stating that the company is “a family company, one that spans the globe and has shared ideals”, to the food industry, such as Cargill stating that “across the decades, Cargill has remained true to the vision of founder W.W. Cargill: helping farmers prosper, connecting markets and bringing consumers the products they're seeking.”.

The increasing importance of communicating with consumers (Zellweger et al., 2010) has paved the way for family firms to leverage a unique and strategic resource, the familiness of the firm, to boost the interactions between them and consumers (Alonso-Dos-Santos et al., 2019).

While the extant literature has shown that effectively communicating family firms' identity helps to capitalise on the family ties by improving the firm–consumer relationship (Chaudhary et al., 2021), the

theoretical foundations of the intertwining between family firms' characteristics and consumer perception remain fragmented (Alonso-Dos-Santos et al., 2019; Andreini et al., 2020; Beliaeva et al., 2022; Binz Astrachan et al., 2019).

Previous studies have drawn on the concept of familiness to deepen the effect of the idiosyncratic resources of these firms on consumers, fragmenting even more the research on the topic. However, due to the broad nature of the familiness construct, there is a lack of a holistic view on the topic and, more specifically, on the two sides of the coin: how consumers perceive the familiness of the firm (Andreini et al., 2020; de Castro et al., 2021) and what resources family firms employ to effectively communicate their familiness (Beck, 2016; Sageder et al., 2018).

In fact, family business scholars acknowledge the gradual shift in focus from firms to customers (Andreini et al., 2020). Neubaum (2018) even highlighted how limited research has addressed the conflicting view of the benefits of family business with consumer perceptions. In the same direction, Rovelli et al. (2022) have highlighted how the role of external audiences in determining the importance of family firm brands remains a less explored research stream. Finally, Chaudhary et al. (2021) have highlighted how we currently lack a broader theoretical perspective on the intertwining of family business and consumer

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research, calling on scholars to undertake a systematic review on the topic.

In this context, we contribute to the research field by answering the call for a comprehensive perspective on the intertwining streams of research addressing family firms' characteristics and consumer behaviour by providing a dual perspective on the topic (Andreini et al., 2020; Chaudhary et al., 2021). In fact, we propose a conceptual framework that adopts a dual business–consumer perspective. Under the consumer perspective, we aim to cluster the extant literature that relates to the perception that stakeholders external to the family firm (i.e. consumers) have towards family firms' characteristics. The business perspective aims to investigate how and why family firms communicate their familiness and what are the lapses in strategic resources, organisational assets or firm performance. This dual perspective has the objective of investigating, in the most comprehensive way, what has been said and what still could be explored about communicating family firms' characteristics and consumer perception. Against this background, this paper aims to answer three specific research questions:

- RQ1: What are the research clusters in the bibliometrics of communicating the familiness of the firm? Which research streams emerge?
 RQ2: Which channels (journals, articles, authors and institutions) are the most influential?
 RQ3: What are future research questions that provide opportunities to further develop the extant research?

To answer our research questions, we first conducted a systematic literature review on the extant literature from 1991 to 2022, using bibliometric co-citation analysis and content analysis (Bretas & Alon, 2021). Second, through co-citation analysis, we identified five research clusters highlighting the dual perspective of the research field and how they evolved over time. Third, using HistCite and the Bibliometrix package in R, new research avenues were developed to advance the theoretical contribution of the field.

Our research contributes to the intertwining of existing literature on family business and consumer behaviour in several ways. First, this review contributes to the family business and consumer literature by documenting research efforts over the years and illustrating the growing scholarly interest in the construct of familiness over the past decade. Second, the current state of research is identified and structured. In addition, the evolution of the theories leveraged by academics is provided, and associations with the different phenomena explained are presented. The factors that motivate family firms to communicate the familiness of the firm are presented, along with the effects on organisational models, performance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) benefits. Third, the paper considers a novel and comprehensive perspective providing a dual perspective on the familiness of the firm. This review thus complements the growing body of research that discusses the implications of familiness for companies on one hand and the implications for consumers on the other. Finally, we contribute to the literature by integrating the research streams into a model to identify existing interrelationships. Furthermore, some fruitful avenues for future research are presented.

This paper is organised as follows. First, we introduce a brief review of the literature. Second, the methodology and the data extraction process are presented. Third, we present the results of the bibliometric co-citation analysis and the content analysis, highlighting the research clusters, the interconnections among the field and the conceptual structure of the literature. Finally, we discuss our findings and future research directions.

2. Theoretical background

In 1991, Lyman first explored family firms' orientation towards customer service practices, outlining that family firms are able to differentiate themselves from non-family firms because managers

present a more personal orientation, which translates into a stronger sense of family values, thereby influencing the customer service process. In this context, academic literature introduced the construct of “familiness”, which is defined as “the unique bundle of resources a particular firm has because of the systems interaction between the family, its individual members, and the business” (Habbershon & Williams, 1999, p. 11), to identify the characteristics that allow family firms to have a competitive advantage in order to generate firm wealth and value creation (Martín-Santana et al., 2020). In a relatively short period of time, familiness has become a popular and widely acknowledged construct within the family business research field, as it is argued that the presence of family-related resources differentiates family firms from corporate equivalents and gives them unique resources (Habbershon et al., 2003). The construct of “familiness” is unique to family firms as it describes why certain causal relationships comprise the “family” aspects that exist in these firms (Kellermanns et al., 2008). Additionally, familiness is a point of difference that contributes to competitive advantage (Irava & Moores, 2010). In this search to discover how family firms uniquely differ from non-family firms, academics have applied broad theoretical perspectives, such as resource-based view (RBV) theory, social capital (SC) theory, organisational identity theory (OIT), social identity theory (SIT), socioemotional wealth theory (SEW) and inference theory to better understand the family firm context. Table 1 summarises the main theories used in the context of family business research, some relevant studies and the variables used. A brief discussion of each theoretical perspective follows.

RBV is arguably the most influential framework currently employed to understand firm strategies (Reilly & Jones, 2017). RBV distinguishes the nature, characteristics and potential of a firm's unique internal processes and assets, including values, beliefs, symbols and interpersonal relationships possessed by individuals or groups (Irava & Moores, 2010). According to RBV theory, studying family firms allows to understand which resources and capabilities contribute to the uniqueness of family firms (Zellweger et al., 2010). In fact, the theory highlights how family firms possess unique resources, such as the involvement of family members in the firm or the history of the entrepreneurial family, which is a perfectly inimitable resource (Chrisman et al., 2005). Ireland (2003), leveraging the RBV framework, argued that family-owned businesses evaluate, acquire and leverage their resources in different ways from non-family-owned businesses. Five years later, Craig et al. (2008) investigated the role of family-based brand identity in relation to competitive orientation and firm performance, drawing on RBV. To support previous works, Irava et al. (2010) utilised RBV to theoretically explain distinctive competitive advantages that result from resources arising out of family involvement in business.

Tajfel and Turner (2004) developed the foundations of SIT to explore the circumstances under which individuals think of themselves as individuals or as group members. Deephouse and Jaskiewicz (2013), Kashmiri and Mahajan (2014) and Zanon et al. (2019) have leveraged SIT, adapting the theory to the context of family business research to understand the unique dynamics of family firms in explaining consumer–company relationships and consumers' motivation to identify with a company. SIT in family firm research has grown in importance as it is used both as the main theoretical framework (Zanon et al., 2019) as well as to support arguments or hypotheses (Sharma & Irving, 2005). In fact, it is argued that the concept of identity is strongly related to depictions of the influence of the family in the business (Waldkirch, 2015). In this context, Deephouse and Jaskiewicz (2013) employed SIT to describe the strength of family members' identification with a family firm. In line with previous research (Berrone et al., 2010; Zellweger et al., 2012), findings have indicated that family members identify more strongly with a family firm than non-family members, as they embrace long-term firm perspectives and care more about organisational legitimacy. Also, given the growing interest in how family firms communicate their family identity, Zanon et al. (2019) used SIT as a theoretical lens to describe the influence of family firm image promotion on consumers' engagement,

Table 1
Theories and main variables used.

Theories	Authors	Research questions	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediators	Control variables
Resource-Based View (RBV)	Barney (1991); Habbershon & Williams (1999); Craig et al.(2008); Irava & Moores (2010)	-How does the promotion of family-based brand identity influence competitive orientation and firm performance? - What is the link between firm resources and sustained competitive advantage? - What are the antecedents of familiness in multigenerational family firms?	-Family-based brand identity	-Competitive orientation -firm performance		
Social identity Theory	Deephouse & Jaskiewicz (2013); Kashmiri & Mahajan (2014); Zanon et al. (2019)	-What are the reputational differences among family and non-family firms? -Do all family firms behave and get rewarded similarly with regard to their new product introductions or do FN and NFN firms differ significantly with regard to their product-related ethical behaviour and in-turn their rewards to innovation? -How does the online family firm image promotion affect consumers' intent to engage in social media activities?	-Family name in firm name -Level of family ownership -Family board presence -Family-based firm name -Promoted vs non promoted family firm image	-Reputation -Product-related strengths and product-related weaknesses -Social media engagement	-Perceived brand authenticity and consumer-company identification	-Pre-tax return on turnover, number of employees and blockholder presence
Organisational Identity Theory	Memili et al. (2010); Zellweger et al. (2012)	-How family ownership and family expectations influence family firm image, entrepreneurial risk taking and firm performance? -Which factors lead family firms to create a family firm image? How does a family firm image impact firm performance?	-Family ownership -Family expectations -Family firm pride -Communities social ties -Long-term orientation	-Family firm image and performance	-Entrepreneurial risk taking and firm image	-Industry control, firm age and firm size
Socioemotional Wealth (SEW)	Gomez-Mejia et al. (2011); Berrone et al. (2012); Jiao et al. (2021)	-How do family firms differ from nonfamily firms? -What are the differences between family and nonfamily public corporations in terms of environmental performance? - What is the link between founder-CEOs' financial wealth and their socioemotional wealth in their determinations about whether to leave their companies after the firms go public?	-Family firm - CEO ownership -CEO tenure -Ratio of inside board members -Age of the stock market when the firm's IPO is issued	-Socioemotional Wealth preservation -Environmental performance -Founder-CEO exits		-Firm size and financial performance -Hazards faced by the firm, family stage, firm size, and the presence of nonfamily shareholders
Social Capital Theory	Arregle et al (2007); Pearson et al. (2008); Duarte Alonso et al. (2020)	-What mechanisms link a family's social capital to the creation of the family firm's social capital? -Which are the unique behavioural resources and capabilities of family firms? What are the antecedents of family social capital?-How does your firm contribute to making an impact, notably, on local stakeholders (e.g., employees) or on the wider community? How are these impacts manifested? For instance, do these impacts include socioeconomic benefits?	-Familliness with respect to the resources and capabilities that are derived from the involvement and interactions of family relationships. Main propositions: -Family social capital influences the development of a family firm's organisational social capital through isomorphic pressures; -Family social capital influences the development of a family firm's organisational social capital through organisational identity and			

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Theories	Authors	Research questions	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediators	Control variables
			rationality; -Family members' internal and external interactions strengthen family social capital and simultaneously contribute to the development of the family firm's organisational social capital			
Signalling Theory	Lude & Prügl (2018); Schellong et al. (2019); Arzubiaga et al. (2022); Rauschendorfer et al. (2022)	-Does the strategy of using a family business brand influence consumers brand perceptions?-How the family firm brand leads to a (favourable) reaction of consumers compared to nonfamily firm brands? -Can a projected family firm image affect access to financial resources? -What is the impact of signalling the family nature of the firm on the emotional quality ascribed to products?	-Family Business Brand -Projected family firm image -Family nature of the firm vs non-family nature	-Brand trust -Consumer happiness -Access to financial resources -Willingness to pay -Product-related intention	-Brand authenticity -Perception of doing good -Family firm age and size -Perception of "made with love"	

showing that it increases perceived brand authenticity and, consequently, customer–company identification.

Organisational identity refers to that which is central, enduring and distinct about an organisation's character (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Recent theory that considers family and business systems as a single unit proposes that organisational identity may be a key source of competitive advantage for family firms since their identity is "unique and therefore impossible to completely copy" (Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008, p. 2). In fact, scholars have argued that principles from OIT can be adapted to the family business context in order to explain how family involvement can contribute to the competitiveness of family firms (Zellweger et al., 2010) and, consequently, to define the familiness construct (Anglin et al., 2017). Memili et al.'s (2010) empirical study used OIT to explore entrepreneurial risk-taking and family firm image, finding that family ownership positively influences the development of family firm image which in turn contributes to family firm performance. Zellweger et al. (2010) see organisational identity as a further component and source of familiness, expanding the original conceptualisation of the term. Zellweger et al. (2012) applied OIT to explain why and how a family firm builds a family firm image. The results indicate that family businesses may be particularly proficient at creating distinctive identities thanks to their ability to integrate elements from both the family and the business domain.

The concept of SEW summarises a family's affective value gained from a firm (Alon et al., 2020; Jiao et al., 2021). Building from behavioural agency theory (Wiseman & Gomez-Mejia, 1998), the general SEW model was first developed by Gomez-Mejia et al. (2007) to explain empirical differences between family and non-family-controlled firms in a variety of phenomena, such as firm risk-taking (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007), product and international diversification (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011) and CSR (Berrone et al., 2010). In this context, Gomez-Mejia et al. (2007) argued that the preservation of the stock of socioemotional investment in family firms is the primary reference for guiding managerial choices. A central topic of SEW research is that family firms make decisions based on socioemotional reference points and not just economic ones. Since its introduction in 2007, SEW has started taking hold in the field as researchers have adopted it as the main framework for their empirical studies (Jiao et al., 2021; Swab et al., 2020; Vardaman & Gondo, 2014). Because of its breadth of application, the SEW construct has proven to be a good theoretical lens for interpreting a wide variety of

phenomena in the family business context. For example, Berrone et al. (2010) leverage SEW theory to introduce the concept of CSR as a medium to differentiate a family firm's essence from other organisational forms, reporting that family-controlled firms pollute less to enhance the family's image and, consequently, to protect their SEW.

In general, SC can be defined as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available though, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit" (Nahapiet, 1998, p. 2). SC is a broad theory, described by some academics as an "umbrella concept" (Hirsch & Levin, 1999, p. 243), as it has been applied to numerous disciplines to examine a variety of collective social relationships (Kwon & Arenius, 2010; Mohan & Mohan, 2002; Wang & Chiang, 2009). As such, SC theory is considered particularly relevant in the study of familiness to examine its effects on the antecedents of this construct as well as the behavioural and social resources associated with it (Pearson et al., 2008). Therefore, SC theory has been integrated with the familiness construct in a variety of theoretical and empirical works presented in the literature (Martín-Santana et al., 2020; Nahapiet, 1998; Schmidts & Shepherd, 2015). For example, Arregle et al. (2007) applied SC theory to investigate the mechanisms that link a family's SC to the creation of SC in family firms. In this context, the authors coined the term "family social capital" (FSC) to refer to the SC developed among family members, considering it to be one of the most powerful and enduring forms of SC. Drawing on the work of Arregle et al. (2007), Pearson et al.'s (2008) theoretical model focused on the identification of the behavioural and social resources that constitute the concept of familiness, which particularly rely on the interaction and involvement of the family in the firm. More recently, Duarte Alonso et al. (2020) proposed a framework underpinned by SC theory to contribute to a deeper understanding of family firms' contributions and impacts, leveraging three dimensions first proposed by Nahapiet (1998) to explain the concept of SC: structural, relational and cognitive. These three elements are considered to be, in the context of family businesses, at the forefront of benefits gained by family firms from internal SC (Duarte Alonso et al., 2020).

Signalling theory (ST) is a prominent theory used in different literature streams, and it has been useful in explaining consumer perceptions of an organisation (Connelly et al., 2011). Recently, scholars in the family business field have started to consider the nature of the firm as an observable signal which can possibly influence consumers' perceptions of the firm itself and the associated brands (Rauschendorfer et al., 2022).

As a theoretical background to family branding, Lude and Prügl (2018) have shown that communicating the family nature of a firm positively affects consumers' brand trust and, consequently, their purchase intention. Schellong et al.'s (2019) empirical paper examined how and why family firm brands affect consumers compared to non-family firm brands, finding that the "family" component of the firm acts as a signal to consumers, resulting in a positive influence on consumer happiness through the perception of doing good. More recently, Arzubiaga et al. (2022) have focused on whether the "family" nature of a firm might be perceived as financially stable and trustworthy by external stakeholders, finding that a projected family firm image acts as a signal to lenders, allowing the family firm better access to financial resources. In line with Schellong et al.'s (2019) previous work, this study shows that a projected family firm's image can act as a signal to easy access to financial resources. Rauschendorfer et al. (2022), in conducting two experimental studies regarding consumers' perception of "made-with-love" products, argued that signalling the family nature of the firm results in a higher willingness to pay and higher emotional involvement.

Consumer inference theory, as first proposed by Kardes et al. (2004), suggest that consumers generally make decisions about a venture and its products based on limited information and knowledge. To form inferences, consumers usually generate linkages that associate available information (e.g. cues, arguments and knowledge) to conclusions in a subjective way. In a marketing context, it is argued that brand information can lead to a positive or negative consumer inference (Schmeiser, 2014). Since an increasing number of family firms now communicate their family nature to consumers through commercials, product packaging or websites, academics in the field have started to examine if and how the informational cue "family firm" works. In particular, Lude and Prügl (2018) applied consumer inference theory to the context of family firms' branding strategies to examine the reputational effects of a formal communication of the family business brand on potential consumers. Their findings indicate that the promotion of the familiness of the firm leads to a positive family firm trust inference, which results in long-term and committed relationships between consumers and the brand.

Success is a difficult concept to explain; it relates to the ability of an individual to mix the right combination of skills to achieve better performance. Firm success is an even more difficult concept to explain as it entails the interplay of individuals and resources that, in the right mix, lead to the superior performance of the company. In this quest for the perfect mix of ingredients to achieve superior performance, family firms have a special ingredient: the familiness of the firm. The above review of theories suggests that familiness is a multifaceted concept. In fact, the familiness of the firm can be leveraged as a resource by the company, but it also needs to be perceived by stakeholders to deploy its beneficial outcomes. For this reason, it is crucial for academics in the field to have an overview of how this concept has evolved over the years and how it can be analysed. From a holistic perspective, we aim to highlight the efforts that companies sustain in communicating the familiness of the firm and the perception that stakeholders (e.g. consumers) form about this concept.

3. Research methods

3.1. Bibliometric and content analysis methods

To answer our research questions, this study employed a combination of bibliometric and content analysis techniques (Christofi et al., 2021; Shamsollahi et al., 2021; Vrontis & Christofi, 2021). First, we created a co-citation mapping to demonstrate the interconnections between articles with the aim of revealing similarities and clusters of specific research topics (Alon et al., 2021; Donthu et al., 2020; Mukherjee et al., 2022). Second, through HistCite, which quantitatively examines the connections between articles (Bahoo et al., 2020a), we identified five research clusters: the familiness of the firm: a social

capital perspective, promoting CSR, branding the family firm, family firm characteristics and family firm brand. Third, we conducted a three-way association among the countries, keywords and journals (Koo, 2021) to highlight the interconnections within the sample. Fourth, a conceptual thematic map was developed to analyse the conceptual structure of the field. Fifth, to show the most relevant and influential publications, journals, institutions and authors, we conducted a performance citation analysis leveraging the R Bibliometrix package in Biblioshiny (Jalal et al., 2021). Finally, we conducted a content analysis (Bahoo et al., 2021; Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015; Xi et al., 2015) to summarise the trends in the literature to increase the understanding of the clusters that emerged from the bibliometric analysis and to propose promising avenues for future research (Bahoo, 2020; Bretas & Alon, 2021).

3.2. Data extraction process

We systematically examined 178 articles from 1991 to 2022. Traditionally, Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus have been the two most widely used databases for bibliometric analyses (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Singh et al., 2021). However, Scopus has a wider coverage than WoS (Singh et al., 2021). For this reason, Scopus is considered more appropriate for smaller research areas (Bretas & Alon, 2021), as in the case of the intertwining of consumer research and family business. However, given the impossibility of using HistCite with databases other than ISI, we employed both databases (i.e. Scopus and WoS) for our bibliometric analysis.

Following Bretas and Alon's (2021) methodological approach, we adopted a two-stage data extraction process (see Fig. 2). First, we developed a keyword search in the Scopus and WoS databases and executed it in January 2022. Using the Boolean OR and operators, a combination of terms such as "family firm*" OR "family control*" OR "family-based" OR "family owner*" AND "consumer*" OR "familiness*" OR "perception" OR "brand*" was used to conduct a pilot search. Then, researchers read through article titles and authors' keywords in order to find other potentially relevant articles (Vrontis et al., 2021). Each time an alternative keyword was found, it was included in the next step of the keywords search, resulting in a total of 2,173 articles. We only included papers written in English to allow researchers a full understanding of the articles during the second stage of the data extraction process. Given our intention to review the entire literature on the intertwining of how family firms communicate their familiness and consumer perception, the search was not restricted by date, and papers written up to 2022 were retrieved. Only peer-reviewed articles in the domain of business and management literature were selected, accounting for a total of 706 papers. The second stage consisted of a detailed examination of the dataset (Alon et al., 2021) to remove unrelated and duplicate articles, resulting in a total of 308 articles. The third stage consisted of excluding articles whose title and abstract were not pertinent to the research questions, accounting for a total of 272 results. Finally, in the last phase, the analysis of the dataset was conducted through a one-to-one screening of each paper by at least two of the authors independently in order to exclude papers not relevant to the objective of the research. As a result of this process, we were left with 178 studies for bibliometric analysis.

The final sample of 178 articles (Table 2) was written by 395 authors and published in 86 journals, with an average citation level per document of 104.8. Fig. 1 illustrates the evolution of the field in terms of number of publications. The body of literature has been growing steadily since 2008, the year in which the number of publications on the topic grew by ten times over the previous year. 2014 had the most prominent scientific production, with 17 articles published in the field. However, research in the domain emerged in 1991, when (Lyman, 1991) analysed if and how family ownership plays a role in the creation of positive customer service interactions. Based on the subject categories, most of the papers belong to the field of business, management and accounting (52.8 %) and economics, econometrics and finance (27.8 %). The

Table 2
Main info dataset.

Description	Results
Timespan	1991–2022
Sources	86
Documents	178
Average citations per documents	104.8
Average citations per year per doc	8.457
References	12,603
Keywords Plus (ID)	88
Author's Keywords (DE)	477
Authors	395
Author Appearances	480
Single-authored documents	23
Documents per Author	0.451
Authors per Document	2,22
Collaboration Index	2.4

Source: Authors' elaboration using Biblioshiny package in R.

remaining articles belong to the field of social sciences (9.6 %), arts and humanities (6.1 %) and psychology (3.7 %). Thus, it is obvious that family business research is an interdisciplinary domain.

4. Findings

4.1. Co-citation mapping: Identifying research streams

Fig. 2 shows a co-citation map of the literature. Co-citation mapping is the mapping of top-cited papers in relation to the papers that co-cite

them (Bahoo et al., 2020b) and is conducted through HistCite software. As previous studies suggest (Apriliyanti & Alon, 2017; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2022), to identify co-citation networks among our sample, we only included articles co-cited at least 11 times since 1991, resulting in a dataset of 30 top-cited articles.

In Fig. 3, the vertical axes denote the year of publication. Articles are represented by nodes, while the size of the node circle represents how influential the articles are in terms of the number of total local citations (TLC). Co-citation linkages are depicted by lines that connect the nodes, and an arrow represents the citation relationship between them. In our citation mapping, the largest nodes are numbered 13 (Dyer & Whetten, 2006), 20 (Carrigan & Buckley, 2008), 36 (Micelotta & Raynard, 2011), 48 (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013) and 26 (Berrone et al., 2012). Nodes that are close to each other represent similarities compared to nodes that are far apart. The co-citation analysis also revealed one article not cited by other articles in the sample, and which could not be placed within any of the clusters that emerged (node 15, Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008).

The content analysis of the articles revealed that there are five research streams, which are conceptualised in Fig. 4: (1) the familiness of the firm: a social capital perspective, (2) promoting CSR, (3) branding the family firm, (4) family firm characteristics and (5) the family firm brand. Each stream consists of clusters of articles, which have been grouped together based on the perspective analysed (i.e. the business or the consumer), the similarity of their topics and the context (Alon et al., 2021). Clusters have been labelled based on the content of the articles. According to the business perspective, the first three clusters aim to investigate how the family firm communicates their family nature

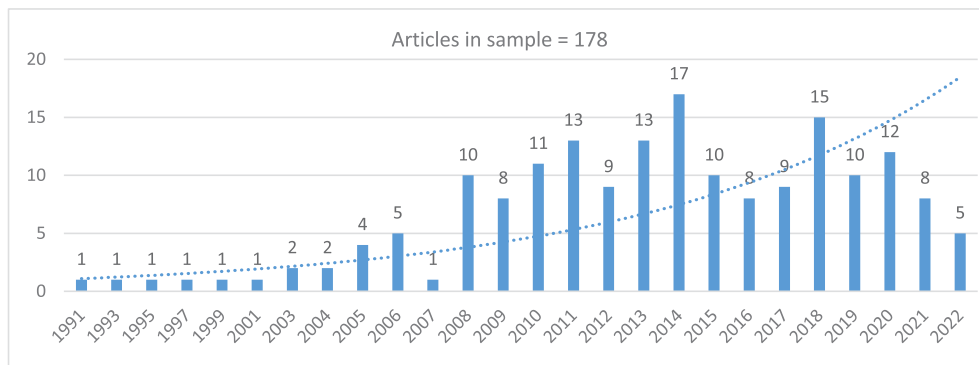


Fig. 1. Publications between 1991 and 2022. Authors' elaboration - February 2022.

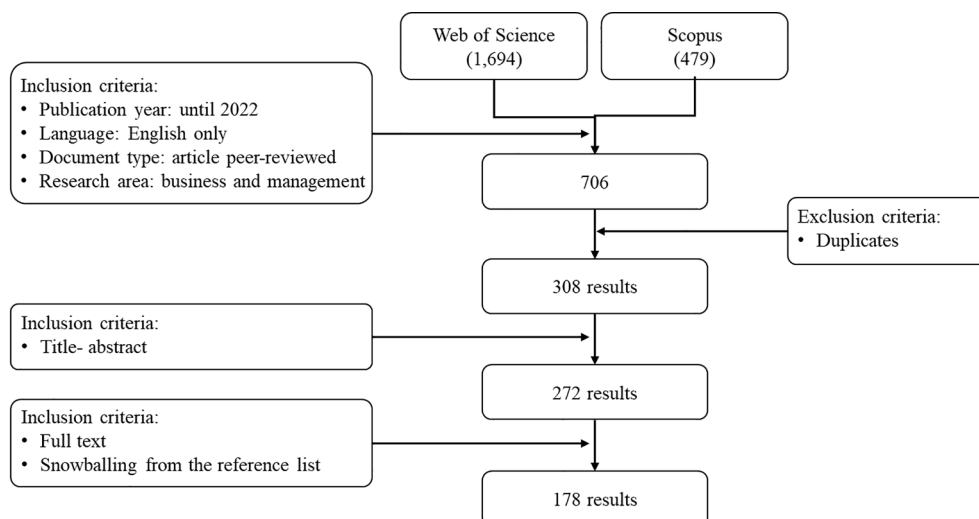


Fig. 2. Literature search strategy.

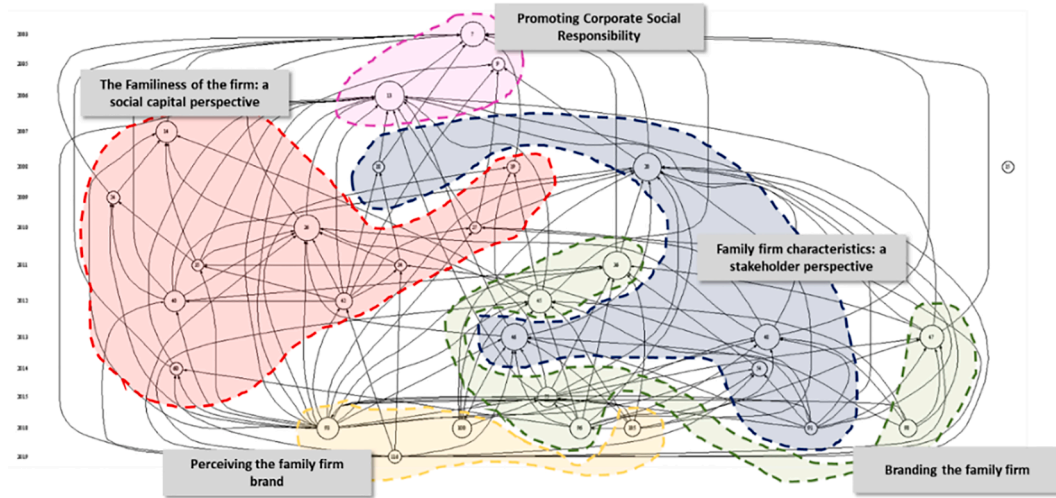


Fig. 3. Co-citation mapping of 30 top-cited articles in the sample. Source: Authors' elaboration using HistCite software.

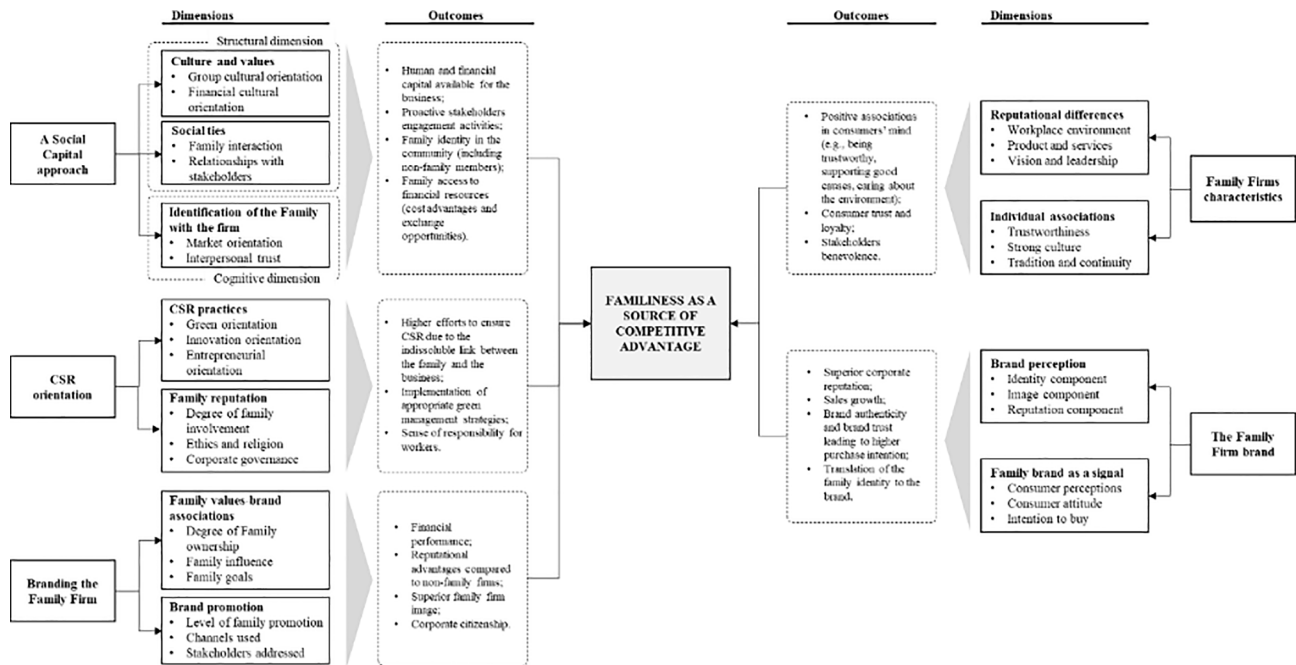


Fig. 4. Conceptual framework.

through SC, CSR and family brand outlook. According to the consumer perspective, the last two clusters are related to how external stakeholders (i.e. consumers) perceive the familiness of the firm and how this perception differs in terms of consumer behaviour. A short discussion of each stream follows.

4.1.1. The business perspective: A social capital approach

The leading research question in this cluster investigates the importance of SC as a component contributing to the success of the family and, consequently, the firm. FSC is an asset available to a family firm that consists of positive network relationships between the family, customers and the community (Sorenson et al., 2009). In fact, it is argued that SC is idiosyncratic to each family firm since it reflects a family's own culture, growth, size and history.

Arregle et al. (2007), node 14, investigated the mechanisms that link a family's SC to the creation of SC in the family firm. The authors suggest the importance of the heterogeneity of a firm's internal groups and

characteristics of a firms' dominant group (i.e. the family group) in the development of FSC. Since FSC is determined by the family's stability, interactions and closure, it is considered one of the most powerful and enduring forms of SC. Salvato and Melin (2008), node 19, investigated how some family firms attain long-term value creation through the investigation of their ability to recombine sources of competitive advantage, including SC. Their findings indicate that although SC enhances value creation in any form of firm, in family firms these advantages are more evident since they are absorbed into family members' social links and communicated to stakeholders. Additionally, a family's ability to recombine and renew internal relationships and family-specific components allows family firms to build a competitive advantage.

In analysing how family involvement influences firm's strategies and performance, Sharma and Sharma (2011), node 35, have highlighted that SC built through the family business helps create proper resources and capabilities for the family, which may generate a competitive

advantage. These findings are consistent with those of [Sorenson et al. \(2009\)](#), node 24, which reveal a significant positive relationship between FSC and firm performance. In fact, one strategic advantage for family firms lies in building strong network relationships with external stakeholders. [Cennamo et al. \(2012\)](#), node 42, in arguing that family firms are more inclined to adopt proactive stakeholder engagement activities, suggested that FSC allows the family firm to enhance its ties with external stakeholders by emphasising the value of social networks. Their findings are consistent with those of [Berrone et al. \(2012\)](#), node 26, which indicate that family members are more likely to work collaboratively with and through groups of people because a family's sense of belonging, self and identity are often shared by non-family employees.

4.1.2. *The business perspective: Promoting CSR*

A major question in this research stream investigates how family firms' unique bundle of resources can influence their orientation towards and communication of CSR ([De La Cruz Déniz & Suárez, 2005](#)). It is argued that family businesses act in a different manner according to environmental and economic points of view to properly focus on their CSR ([Block & Wagner, 2014](#)). In fact, some studies suggest that the involvement of the family in the firm results in higher efforts to ensure CSR ([Godfrey, 2005](#)), with the aim of creating a more favourable firm reputation in stakeholders' minds and, consequently, competitive advantage.

[De La Cruz Déniz Déniz and Suárez \(2005\)](#) empirical study, node 9, explored the different orientations that family firms maintain towards social responsibility. The authors suggest that despite the tendency to consider family firms as a homogeneous group ([Sharma & Irving, 2005](#)), their CSR practices differ in terms of orientations and behaviours. However, those differences do not seem to be associated with the firm's biographical characteristics (i.e. size, age and family involvement in the ownership) but with the family's own values and culture.

[Dyer and Whetten \(2006\)](#), node 13, examined if and how family firms are more socially responsible than non-family firms, finding that family firms are more interested in avoiding social concerns, as they see their images and reputations tightly and inextricably connected to the firms. In fact, a family whose name is part of the company's name may have difficulty in distancing itself from the business it controls. This has led family firms to avoid practices that can lead to them being labelled as "socially irresponsible" since they are more interested than others in protecting their reputation. In analysing the relation between founding-family ownership and firm performance, [Anderson and Reeb \(2003\)](#), node 7, highlighted that concerns such as family loyalty and those related to family reputation suggest that families have stronger incentives to ensure the firm's profitability and welfare.

4.1.3. *The business perspective: Branding the family firm*

The leading research question in this stream focuses on how family business brands are used and if promoting a family firm brand positively influences stakeholders' attitudes and, consequently, firm performance. In fact, previous research ([Astrachan et al., 2018](#); [Micelotta & Raynard, 2011](#)) suggests that using the term "family firm" as a component of the organisational brand translates into a more positive stakeholder perception of the brand and the firm. [Craig et al. \(2008\)](#) have argued that family firms can exploit their brand identity to persuade consumers to make decisions based on family values and beliefs. Additionally, making the family business brand known could be a potential source of sustained competitive advantage thanks to the values and characteristics associated with it ([Astrachan et al., 2018](#)).

[Micelotta and Raynard \(2011\)](#), node 36, in examining a sample of official corporate websites, investigated the extent to which family firms leverage the familial component of their business in their online communication strategies. The authors suggest that family firms adopt different branding strategies (i.e. family preservation, family enrichment and family subordination) to develop a family-based corporate brand identity. In fact, despite the tendency to consider family

businesses as a homogeneous group, they seem to differ in terms of corporate brand identity strategies. The choice of using one strategy or another depends on the nature of the products/services offered, the size of the firm and its geographical dispersion as well as the connotative meaning associated with the familial component of their business. Building on [Micelotta's](#) prior research, [Botero et al. \(2013\)](#), node 47, explored how and where information about family ownership is presented on websites, finding that 57 % of family firms communicate their family nature in the "About us" page. As previous research suggests ([Micelotta & Raynard, 2011](#)), their findings indicate that family firms differ in terms of their intent to integrate the family and the business into their identity as a firm. Despite explicit messages being less likely to be misunderstood by the audience, many family firms use implicit strategies when communicating their family identity. A possible reason suggested by the authors is that family managers may not see the benefits associated with an explicit communication strategy.

[Zellweger et al. \(2012\)](#), node 45, investigated why some family firms choose to create a stronger family firm image than others and if this positively affects family firm performance. Their findings indicate that perceiving the family nature of a business allows stakeholders to create a positive cognitive image which in turn positively affects firm performance. These results are consistent with those of [Gallucci et al.'s \(2015\)](#) subsequent work, node 75, which suggests that communicating the family as a corporate brand results in higher rates of sales growth. Additionally, their findings indicate that the presence of a family member in the management improves firm performance thanks to a more efficient management of resources.

[Astrachan et al.'s \(2018\)](#) review of the literature, node 96, pointed out three views or conceptualisations (i.e. the identity view, the image view and the reputation view) of the family business brand, arguing that it is an inimitable and unique resource that could be a source of competitive advantage and differentiation for the firm. However, not all family firms decide to actively communicate their family business brand. In this context, [Astrachan et al. \(2018\)](#), node 90, developed a conceptual framework in order to investigate why family firms decide to either promote or not promote their unique family business to stakeholders. Their findings are consistent with prior conceptual work ([Memili et al., 2010](#); [Zellweger et al., 2010](#)) since it seems that family firms consciously decide to promote their family background because they expect a return in terms of differentiation in the marketplace, superior firm image and increased customer benevolence.

4.1.4. *The consumer perspective: Family firm characteristics*

The dominant research question in family firm perception investigates the reputational differences between family and non-family firms, what the meaning of familiness is to the consumers and how it influences consumers' perceptions of family firms. Prior research has suggested that family firms have a superior reputation since they are perceived as more trustworthy and authentic than their non-family analogues ([Carrigan & Buckley, 2008](#); [Chaudhary et al., 2021](#)). [Binz et al. \(2013\)](#), node 46, empirically explored consumers' distinct perceptions of family versus non-family companies as well as the benefits of promoting a family firm image. The authors proposed that the relational qualities associated with family firms (e.g. being trustworthy and authentic, caring about the environment) positively influence consumer preferences and that this results in the ability of family businesses to differentiate themselves from competitors. [Deephouse and Jaskiewicz \(2013\)](#), node 48, investigated the reputational differences between family and non-family businesses from a stakeholder point of view. They proposed that family members identify more strongly with a family firm than non-family members do with either family or non-family firms since they are more motivated to pursue a favourable corporate reputation.

[Presas et al. \(2014\)](#), node 54, in the context of tourism and leisure, focused on understanding how the family firm identity is perceived by customers. The construct of familiness from a tourism consumer's point

of view results in four dimensions (i.e. getting to know the business as a family business, having direct interaction with the family owner of the firm, feeling the hospitableness of the firm, perceiving “authenticity” in the consumption) which allow tourism family firms to situate themselves at a clear advantage over non-family firms in terms of potential to satisfy consumers. The first two, in fact, create a solid company–client bond, while the latter two allow customers to perceive authenticity and family values in their visit. These four dimensions translate into a set of family values that when perceived by customers, allow them to “feel at home” (Kastanakis et al., 2022).

Botero et al. (2018), node 91, leveraged signalling theory to explore the associations that individuals have with the term “family firm”. The authors started from the assumption that communicating the involvement of the family in the firm results in positive associations and impressions and, consequently, in a competitive advantage for the firm. In conducting a two-stage study, the findings indicate that the term “family firm” is positively associated with longevity, tradition, strong culture and customer orientation. However, family firms are also associated with internal conflicts, being smaller in nature and having limited opportunities. Moreover, recent literature contributions have put forward the role of family firms’ heritage and tradition in fostering successful innovation. In fact, researchers posit that consumers increasingly make brand choices based on the aesthetic and symbolic value of products and services (Kumar & Kaushik, 2022; Magistretti et al., 2020). Furthermore, the benefits of tradition and heritage become especially important when consumers look to the past for guidance in increasingly chaotic and culturally unstable times (Brown, 2001; De Massis et al., 2016). For companies, relying on past knowledge and tradition to innovate can be especially effective in industries where specific cues about history and tradition are transferred to the consumer as characteristics of the family firm. Furthermore, cues concerning the heritage of the company may satisfy the enduring need to balance the tension between preservation and adaptation (De Massis et al., 2016). Finally, this study contributes to the family business brand literature by providing some insights into which characteristics family business managers may consider when developing communication plans with external stakeholders, which differ in terms of associations with the term “family firm”.

4.1.5. The consumer perspective: The family firm brand

Previous research (Keller & Lehmann, 2006) suggests that effective brand management can influence the ability of companies to differentiate themselves from their competitors, the performance of the firm, and consumers’ purchase behaviour. In the family business context, Botero et al. (2013) argued that family businesses differ from others in the degree to which they communicate the family business brand, which is characterised by three elements: image, identity and reputation. These three elements allow family firms to differentiate themselves from others in the marketplace (Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018).

Family business branding research has focused on understanding how and why family firm brands affect consumers compared to non-family firm brands (Astrachan et al., 2018). By linking family firm research with marketing research, academics in the field have focused on demonstrating that family firms’ brands have the potential to differentiate themselves from competitors by making their family nature known (Binz Astrachan et al., 2019).

Drawing on inference theory, Lude and Prügl (2018), node 100, investigated whether, how and why the perception of the family nature of a brand influences consumer preference. More specifically, they empirically tested whether the informational cue “family firm” placed on a brand logo or a product could differentiate the family firm brand from competitors. Their findings indicate that actively promoting the family firm nature results in a stronger purchase intention and an increased level of brand trust. In addition, the study revealed that consumers perceive brands that signal their family nature as more authentic than brands that don’t. The concept of brand trust has also been investigated by Beck and Prügl (2018), node 105, who argued that a strong

family firm image and reputation increases consumers’ brand trust and, consequently, consumers’ purchase intentions. In addition, their findings indicate that emphasising the “human qualities” of family firms allows them to better leverage the effect of their perceived trust among stakeholders. In this context, Sageder et al.’s (2018) systematic literature review, node 93, provided an overview of the state of research on the reputation and image of family firms, with particular reference to the concept of brand identity.

Similarly, Schellong et al. (2019), node 116, examined how family firm brands affect consumers by focusing on two types of consumer happiness: happiness related to the general affect of consumers (i.e. general happiness) and happiness directly related to the purchase of a product (i.e. purchase happiness). Drawing on signalling theory and stressing the power of the “family” component of the firm, the authors proposed that family firms might be more successful than non-family ones because family firm consumers’ higher perception of doing good positively influences their happiness, which, consequently, may positively affect firm performance. These findings support previous research (Astrachan et al., 2018; Lude & Prügl, 2018) that has established the brand’s family firm status as a powerful signal that is given strategic value.

4.2. Three-field plot

A three-field plot based on a Sankey diagram that depicts the connections from countries, keywords and journals is displayed in Fig. 5. Since the size of the boxes is proportional to the frequency of occurrences, the US has the maximum number of publications in the domain, and its scholars are publishing more on “family business”, “family firm image” and “familiness”. One of the main interests of family business scholars in Spain is the concept of “reputation”, while “communication” is a strong topic among German and Austrian researchers. The concept of “trust” is linked to Italian, Spanish and French publications in the field. Journal-wise, the concept of “familiness” has mainly been published in *Family Business Review* and *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*. The keyword “organisational identity” is popular among US and Spanish scholars, and organisational identity-related articles have only been published in *Family Business Review*. One of the reasons could be that organisational identity is widely used as a theoretical construct within the family business research domain as well as the concept “socioemotional wealth” (only published in *Family Business Review*).

4.3. Conceptual thematic map

Co-word analysis draws clusters based on the analysis of keywords. Authors’ keywords are considered as themes, whose density (internal associations) and centrality (external associations) can be used in classifying them and mapping in a two-dimensional thematic map (Fig. 6). We can then analyse themes according to the quadrant in which they are placed (Bretas & Alon, 2021): high density and centrality (quadrant type 1), low density and high centrality (quadrant type 2), high density and low centrality (quadrant type 3), and topics with low values on both axes (quadrant type 4).

Quadrant type 1, with high internal and external associations, shows the motor themes considered mainstream themes in the literature. Since our analysis mainly focused on the construct of familiness and how it allows family firms to differentiate themselves from non-family ones, authenticity is one of the most recurrent words associated with our major area of research. The concept of authenticity is mainly connected with promotion and marketing. In quadrant type 2, with low density and high centrality, we see basic and transversal topics. These themes concern general topics transversal to the different research areas in the field. Consequently, in this area general topics related to family business appear, such as the concept of familiness and how family firms communicate it (Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018) as well as their reputation (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013) and corporate performance

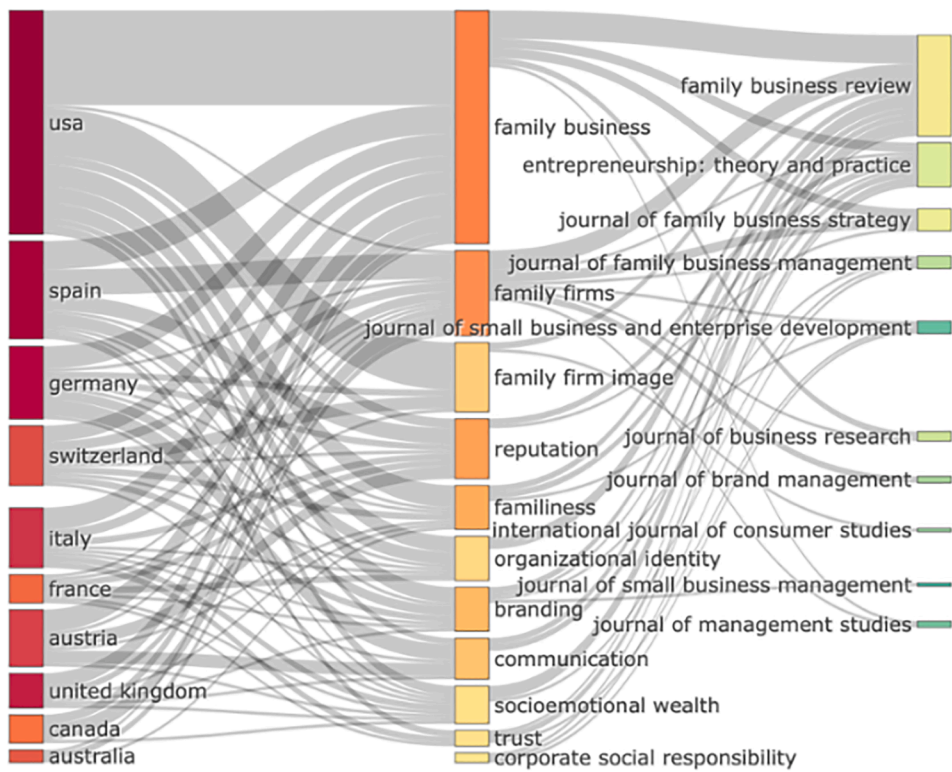


Fig. 5. A three-field plot showing the network between countries (left), keywords (middle) and journals (right). Source: Authors' elaboration using Biblioshiny package in R.

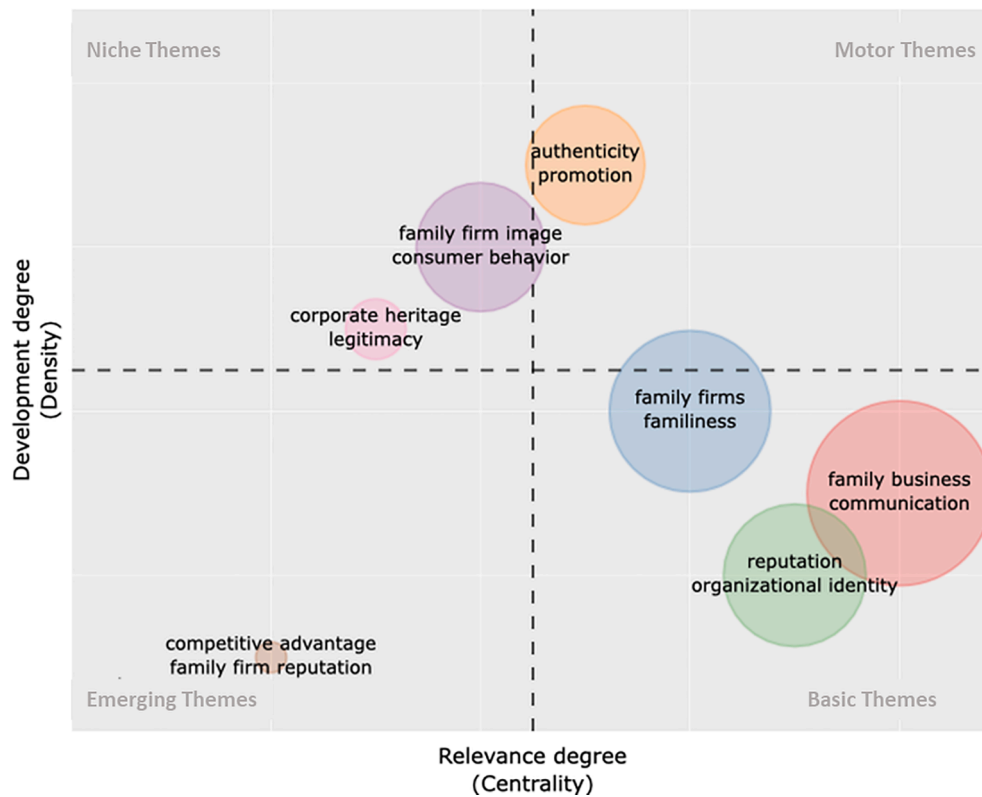


Fig. 6. Conceptual thematic map based on authors' keywords. Source: Authors' elaboration using Biblioshiny package in R.

(Craig et al., 2008). In contrast, research topics in quadrant type 4, with low density and low centrality, are weakly developed or emerging themes to be further developed. In this research, themes such as family firm reputation and competitive advantage are emerging and are associated with concepts such as family firm branding. Finally, in quadrant type 3, with high density and low centrality, there are articles concerning specialised themes (niche themes), such as corporate heritage and legitimacy. In fact, this quadrant shows high density themes but unimportant external links, which are thus of only limited importance for the field (low centrality). This is also the case for the concept of family firm image and how stakeholders or employees perceive it (Barnett & Kellermanns, 2006).

4.4. Leading channels

The bibliometric citation analysis through Biblioshiny revealed the most relevant journals, articles, institutions and impactful authors. Table 3 illustrates the total local citations within the retrieved articles (TLC). The total local citation score indicates how many times the articles in the sample have been cited by other articles in the sample. The total global citation score (TGC) instead denotes how many times the articles included in the local collection have been cited globally by other articles not belonging to the sample. Based on the TLC score, we outlined the 10 most impactful articles in the sample. The most influential paper in the literature was that of Zellweger et al. (2010), with 41 TLC and 3.42 TLC/t, followed by the articles of Craig et al. (2008) and Micelotta and Reynard (2011). Zellweger et al.'s (2010) paper explored how the concept of familiness can vary among families, and it proposed a multidimensional view of this aspect, leveraging three dimensions: organisational identity, essence approach and components approach. In

terms of TGC, the most significant paper was that of Anderson and Reeb (2003) (2,584 TGC), followed by those of Habbershon and Williams (1999) (1,124 TGC) and Berrone et al. (2012) (1,101 TGC).

5. Discussion

The main objective of this research was to conduct a comprehensive and systematic bibliometric analysis to map what has been said and what still could be explored about communicating the familiness of the firm and consumer perception. Using a sample of 178 articles, we investigated the intellectual and conceptual structure of the field by providing a comprehensive framework and adopting a dual perspective to explain how family firms communicate their family nature (i.e. the business perspective) and how consumers perceive the family nature of the firm (i.e. the consumer perspective).

5.1. Theoretical contributions

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to utilise qualitative (content analysis) and quantitative (bibliometric analysis) techniques to conduct a systematic review of the intertwining of the family business and consumer behaviour literature. This study contributes to the advancement of the literature in several ways. First, we present and discuss the evolution of theories leveraged by the authors, highlighting how the extant literature has evolved and how different constructs have been measured. We use the information stemming from the analysis of the evolution of the field to conceptually map how family firms leverage and communicate their unique idiosyncratic advantage (i.e. the familiness of the firm) and how consumers react to the signalling of the family nature of the firm. Moreover, we detail the elements and their relations

Table 3
Ranking of top 10 articles (sorted by TLC).

Rank	Document	Year	Title	Purpose	TLC	TLC/t	TGC	TGC/t
1	Zellweger et al.	(2010)	Exploring the concept of familiness: Introducing family firm identity	The purpose of this paper is to take a closer look at how familiness can vary among families.	41	3.42	373	31.08
2	Craig et al.	(2008)	Leveraging family-based brand identity to enhance firm competitiveness and performance in family business	The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the promotion of family-based brand identity influences competitive orientation (customer versus product) and firm performance in family businesses.	37	2.64	188	13.43
3	Micelotta & Reynard	(2011)	Concealing or revealing the family? Corporate brand identity strategies in family firms	This study explores the various family-based branding strategies that family firms can draw on to differentiate themselves from their competitors.	33	3.00	125	11.36
4	Binz et al.	(2013)	Exploring the effect of distinct family firm reputation on consumers' preferences	The aim of this paper is to investigate consumers' distinct perceptions of family firms as a class of economic actors, and their preference for or indifference towards the services or products offered by family firms as compared to those of non-family businesses.	31	3.44	101	11.22
5	Habbershon & Williams	(1999)	A resource-based framework for assessing the strategic advantages of family firms	The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the RBV is a proper framework for understanding the competitive advantages of family firms.	31	1.35	1124	48.87
6	Deephouse & Jaskiewicz	(2013)	Do family firms have better reputations than non-family firms? An integration of socioemotional wealth and social identity theories	The objective of this paper is to develop a theory on reputational differences among family and non-family firms.	30	3.33	359	39.89
7	Orth and Green	(2009)	Consumer loyalty to family versus non-family business: The roles of store image, trust and satisfaction	This study sheds insight on how consumers perceive and relate to family and non-family grocery stores	30	2.31	117	9.00
8	Carrigan & Buckley	(2008)	'What's so special about family business?' An exploratory study of UK and Irish consumer experiences of family businesses	This study provides insight into the meaning of 'familiness' in consumers' minds when linked to family businesses, and explores the relationships and experiences that respondents have of family firms.	28	2.00	97	6.93
9	Berrone et al.	(2010)	Socioemotional wealth and corporate responses to institutional pressures: Do family-controlled firms pollute less?	The aim of this paper is to compare the environmental performance of family and nonfamily public corporations between 1998 and 2002.	27	2.25	859	71.58
10	Arregle et al.	(2007)	The development of organisational social capital: Attributes of family firms	The purpose of this paper is to develop and extend social capital theory by exploring the creation of organisational social capital within family firms.	24	1.60	983	65.53

TLC/t = Average local citations received per year; TLC = Total local citations received; TGC/t = Average global citations received per year; TGC Total global citations received.

that concur in establishing the familiness of the firm as a source of competitive advantage. Second, in answering our first research question regarding how articles are clustered, a co-citation mapping using the 30 most influential articles in terms of TLC has permitted the identification of five different clusters based on the perspective adopted and the similarity of their topic. The content of each paper was analysed and the interconnections among articles underlined within each cluster. At the end of this process, we identified five key research streams: 1) an SC perspective, 2) promoting CSR, 3) branding the family firm, 4) family firm characteristics and 5) the family firm brand. Third, we contribute to the extant literature by highlighting the connections between countries, keywords and journals through a three-field plot. The most influential authors have come from several international institutions, all located in developed countries (i.e. Zeppelin University, University of Louisville). In terms of geographic coverage, the most prominent scientific production comes from the US, where scholars publish more on “family business”, “family firm image” and “familiness”. Journal-wise, the most influential sources are *Family Business Review* and the *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, the leading publication in the field of family business. The analysis puts forward the different topics on which researchers, in their respective countries, focus. Moreover, indicating the most prominent journals highlights the interdisciplinarity of the investigated topics. Fourth, leveraging the co-word analysis, we identified a conceptual thematic map to deepen the understanding of the conceptual structure of the field. We created a thematic map based on authors’ keywords to classify themes based on the relevance of their external and internal associations. This thematic map will contribute to the academic discourse by providing researchers with an overview of what has been said (i.e. basic themes), what is relevant in today’s research (i.e. motor themes) or what are potential niche themes to explore. Our analysis reveals that concepts such as the relation between family firm reputation and competitive advantage need to be further developed. Fifth, the analysis of the leading channels reveals the seminal articles published by the most cited authors in the dataset. The analysis contributes to strengthening the perspective regarding the co-authorship network of researchers in this area and to recognising influential authors as well, which is essential for the growth of any field. As the sixth and last contribution to the literature, this systematic review presents a total of 51 future research questions (shown in Table 4) for the identified streams of research, 23 of which stem from the extant literature, and 28 of which have been proposed by the authors.

5.2. Managerial contributions

This paper presents a wide spectrum of managerial implications. The identification of five research streams helps to create a wide body of knowledge that can help managers and practitioners in understanding the role of the familiness of the firm, both as a source of competitive advantage and as a signal to consumers. The emergence of three clusters, namely “a social capital perspective”, “promoting CSR” and “branding the family firm”, will be particularly helpful for family business managers as they provide cues on how to leverage corporate communication and the family ties proper to the firm to accrue the competitive advantage of the company. Practitioners interested in understanding which dimensions influence competitive advantage and which are the outcomes linked to those dimensions will find the systematic review particularly useful. For the managers and practitioners interested in designing effective communication and branding strategies for family firms, they will find the research streams “family firm characteristics” and “the family firm brand” of particular interest as they provide a holistic overview of the key elements perceived by consumers when forming if-then linkages in their minds. For example, it might be of interest for marketing managers in family firms to understand which relational qualities associated with family firms (e.g. being trustworthy and authentic, caring about the environment) positively influence consumer preferences or if specific informational cues (e.g. “family firm”)

Table 4
Suggested Research Questions.

Research Stream	Future Research Questions from extant literature	Proposed research avenues
A social capital perspective	<p>1) How do boards and family councils participate in the formation of SEW? How do the different SEW dimensions intervene in the entrepreneurial process? Schmidts and Shepherd (2015)</p> <p>2) How feelings and emotions affect the formation of SEW? How they affect the functioning of the family and the firm? Berrone et al. (2010)</p> <p>3) In which contexts is family firm image particularly beneficial (for example when forming international partnerships with other family firms)? Zellweger et al. (2012)</p> <p>4) Does more social capital(s) in a firm yield greater levels of advantage? And how does the process of social capital development influence organisational outcomes? Arregle et al. (2007)</p>	<p>1) How does the family involvement in the firm affect its ability to recombine resources and skills?</p> <p>2) How can the dynamic capabilities perspective explain the differences in performance among family firms?</p> <p>3) What is the role played by the longevity of the firm in defining/enabling organisational change? Is learning from the past a resource for family firms’ social capital?</p> <p>4) How do country-specific contexts influence the creation of family firms’ social capital?</p> <p>5) What is the role of nonfamily managers in developing and maintaining the social capital within the family firm?</p>
Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility	<p>1) Which family firm characteristics are the determinants of different corporate social orientations and behaviours? De La Cruz Déniz Déniz and Suárez (2005)</p> <p>2) Are differences in CSR behaviour related to the family character? Venturelli et al. (2021)</p> <p>3) Is there a cross cultural difference in CSR communication between family firms from different countries? What is the role of culture in determining CSR orientation? Venturelli et al. (2021)</p> <p>4) Do special relationships with stakeholders represent different CSR behaviours? Do family businesses have a greater propensity for CSR behaviours towards certain stakeholders? Uhlaner et al. (2004)</p> <p>5) What are the specific roles of longevity, organisational and family identity in determining CSR behaviour? Block & Wagner (2014)</p>	<p>1) Do family firms perform differently from other firms because of or despite their differences in CSR?</p> <p>2) Does this differentiation result in higher firm performance?</p> <p>3) How does family firms’ green orientation stimulate innovation?</p> <p>4) Which elements of the familiness contribute to the development of green-oriented practices and reporting models within the firm?</p> <p>5) How does the green-orientation of the family business affect performances?</p> <p>6) To what extent do family firms communicate their CSR engagement versus non-family firms? Which are the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of communicating their green orientation?</p>
Branding the family firm	<p>1) How family firms make decisions about branding their family firm? Why some family firms decide not to communicate their family business brand? Astrachan et al. (2018)</p> <p>2) Why organisations are more likely to use implicit</p>	<p>1) How can family firms leverage digital platforms to increase their communication capacities and firm performance?</p> <p>2) How can family firms leverage dynamic marketing capabilities to shape their marketing decision-making</p>

(continued on next page)

Table 4 (continued)

Research Stream	Future Research Questions from extant literature	Proposed research avenues
Family firm characteristics	<p>messages when communicating that they are family firms? Is the use of implicit messages a strategic choice by family firms in their communication practices? Botero et al. (2013)3) How family-based corporate brand identity strategies change over time? Micelotta & Reynard (2011)4) How family firm image affects a firm's reputation in the marketplace? Are there scenarios where a very strong (or weak) family firm image hurts a firm's reputation? Does a family firm's reputation vary by stakeholders? Zellweger et al. (2012) 5) What types and channels of advertising or promotion efforts are most effective for conveying family- related values that build customer relationships? Craig et al. (2008)</p> <p>1) Does the satisfaction of multiple stakeholders help in attaining an ultimate goal of long-term survival of these organisations? (Zellweger and Nason, 2008)</p> <p>2) In analysing the interplay between consumer and family firms, are some elements more influential than others? How, when and why does it vary? Contextual and personal factors may emerge as key influencers; can these be generalised, and if so, to what extent? Carrigan & Buckley(2008)</p> <p>3) Is it possible that the current favourable attitude towards (smaller, privately-owned) family firms is related to the loss of trust in the economic system and its institutions, caused by the collapse of large, publicly-owned corporations? Binz et al. (2013)</p> <p>4) What are the associations that individuals have with the term "family firm"? Which factors influence how they develop these associations? Botero et al. (2018)</p> <p>5) How economic crises, organisational crises, corporate succession and/or changed environments influence the image and reputation of family firms? Sageder et al. (2018)</p>	<p>process to foster the family firm brand?</p> <p>3) Which social media channels are more effective to promote the family firm brand?</p> <p>4) In leveraging influencer marketing strategies, how do family firms fight brand dilution?</p> <p>5) What is the effect in performance, over the short and long run, of communicating the familiness of the firm?</p> <p>6) How do family firms leverage trustworthy relationships with consumers through social media?</p>
	<p>1) How do different generational cohort (i.e. millennials and Z Gen) perceive family firm characteristics?</p> <p>2) Which elements of the familiness of the firm influence the purchase intention of consumers? How do these elements affect different generations?</p> <p>3) How do the family firms' characteristics promote entrepreneurship in younger generations?</p> <p>4) How do family firms' characteristics promote innovation within the firm? What are the performance outcomes?</p> <p>5) How do SMEs versus MNEs exploit family firms' characteristics to effectively communicate with stakeholders? Which resources are proper to one or the other organisational form?</p> <p>6) How do cross-cultural differences affect the communication and perception of family firms' characteristics? Are family firms' characteristics positively perceived cross-geographically?</p>	

Table 4 (continued)

Research Stream	Future Research Questions from extant literature	Proposed research avenues
Perceiving the family firm brand	<p>1) Is there a link between consumer happiness and firm performance? How family firm brands can benefit from their status in the context of marketing? Schellong et al. (2019)</p> <p>2) Why family firms hold a trust advantage? Which mechanisms trigger the trust advantage on behalf of consumers as well as other stakeholders? Beck & Prügl (2018)3) What is the effect of signalling the family nature of a firm and its founding year ("Family owned since 1902") or the generational stage ("Family-run for five generations")? What is the importance of the antecedents of brand authenticity (i.e., rarity and stability) ? Lude & Prügl (2018)</p> <p>4) How family firms create a meaningful brand through which customers perceive the familiness of their products? Presas et al. (2011)</p>	<p>1) Does the perception of the family nature of the firm affect brand trust?2) What are the antecedents of brand authenticity in the context of digital platforms (e.g., social media) ?</p> <p>3) How do consumers perceive brand authenticity of family firms vs non-family in the context of digital platforms?</p> <p>4) To what extent does the familiness of the firm enable to increase brand strength in the context of social media?</p> <p>5) What is the role played by family firms' brand in creating brand communities? Which elements of the family firms' brand contribute in creating a sense of community and belonging?</p>

placed on a brand logo or a product could differentiate the family firm brand from competitors.

6. Future research avenues

To answer the third research question of this study, we propose guidelines for future researchers working in the domain of family business and consumer research. We have listed the future research direction for each research stream separately.

6.1. The business perspective: A social capital approach

This research investigates the importance of social capital as a component contributing to the success of the family and, consequently, the firm. In analysing the familiness of the firm from a social capital perspective, future research questions could address the impact of social capital on organisational outcomes and firm performance. Researchers could explore why and how the family involvement in the firm affects its ability to recombine resources and skills, analysing the impact of the familiness on dynamic capabilities. Moreover, from an international dynamic capabilities perspective, academics could deepen the role of the family firm image when forming international partnerships with other family firms. Furthermore, leveraging a social capital perspective, researchers could investigate how different feelings and emotions affect the formation of socioemotional wealth within the firm and within international partnerships. If FSC is an asset available to a family firm that consists of positive network relationships and allows family firms to leverage an idiosyncratic resource (i.e. family's own culture, growth, size and history), future research could investigate the role played by the longevity of the firm in defining/enabling organisational change. Finally, future research could deepen the role played by country-specific contexts in the creation of the FSC to highlight if and how specific context characteristics play a role in the definition of a firm's SC.

6.2. The business perspective: Promoting CSR

While the extant literature argues that family firms act in a different manner according to CSR matters, suggesting that the involvement of the family in the firm results in higher efforts to ensure CSR, it is still unclear which dynamics are the determinants of the different corporate social orientations and behaviours of family firms. In the CSR research stream, future research questions could focus on understanding whether differences in CSR behaviour are related to individual characteristics of family members. Researchers could deepen whether there is a direct role played by diversity (in individuals' demographics or beliefs) in the relationship between CSR and firm performance or investment return. This research could shed light on the opportunistic behaviour deriving from greenwashing activities, for example. Furthermore, it could be of interest to study how the CSR strategy definition and implementation processes unfold in the context of family firms and if and how they differ from non-family firms. Furthermore, the CSR orientation of the firm could be related to firm performance by studying the impact that CSR communication has on the organisational model of the firm. Since family firms seem to differ from non-family-owned businesses in terms of their orientation towards CSR, the development of this research stream could analyse which familial components contribute to this differentiation. Moreover, researchers could deepen the differences in practising CSR between local and global family firms or between small-medium enterprises or multinational family-owned companies. Additionally, future research should examine if and how family firms' different approaches to CSR result in higher firm performance. Finally, future studies could adopt the lenses of absorptive capacity to investigate which green-oriented processes and practices stimulate innovation within family firms and what the role played by the green orientation of the entrepreneurial family is.

6.3. The business perspective: Branding the family firm

While the extant literature posits that family firms' brands have the potential to differentiate themselves from competitors to make their family nature known, academics still struggle to propose a unified view on how family-based corporate brand identity strategies change over time and how family firms make decisions about their branding strategies. In fact, family firms' branding strategies seem to differ in terms of values transmitted to stakeholders. In the domain of brand management, the organisational image of the family firm encompasses the mental associations that organisational members want others to believe about the organisation. It is a desired state of perception about the firm and its offerings that the entrepreneurial family aims to influence through its formally managed corporate communication and informally communicated signals (e.g. employee behaviour, customer service, philanthropic activities). It could be interesting to understand why some family firms decide not to communicate their family nature or to communicate it using implicit instead of explicit messages when developing their communication strategies towards stakeholders. On another note, it is possible that family managers are not fully aware of the benefits associated with an explicit communication of the family nature of their firms (i.e. a more positive stakeholder perception of the family firm brand) or that this choice represents a communication strategy itself. Furthermore, it could be of interest to understand how different components of a family business brand interact and to explore how context-specific characteristics influence how the firm communicates the brand. In the increasingly digitalised world, it could be of interest to deepen if and how family firms can leverage digital platforms and big data to increase communication capacities and firm performance. Moreover, as the rise of social networks has paved the way for various forms of communication and branding strategies, researchers could deepen the different approaches that family versus non-family firms leverage to communicate in different social media (e.g. audio-based, video-based, etc.). Finally, the rise of new professional figures in social media, the

influencers, has led companies to leverage their services to stimulate brand engagement. It could be beneficial for researchers to investigate if and how family firms could benefit from those services or if the familiness of the firm forms stronger positive if-then linkages in consumers' minds than those formed through influencers' campaigns.

6.4. The consumer perspective: Family firm characteristics

Leveraging signalling theory, academics posit that communicating the involvement of the family in the firm results in positive associations and impressions and, consequently, in a competitive advantage for the firm. Moreover, consumers positively associate the term "family firm" with specific cues relating to longevity, tradition, strong culture and customer orientation. However, future studies could deepen which dimensions of the familiness concur in forming positive linkages in consumers' minds and how those cues are related to the image of the entrepreneurial family or the organisation at large. The extant research suggests that the relational qualities associated with family firms positively affect stakeholders' preferences and satisfaction. Thus, scholars could deepen the influence of stakeholders' satisfaction on the long-term survival of family firms and the extent to which contextual and personal factors can be generalised in analysing the interchange between consumers and family firms. While academics posit that family firms establish unique relationships with customers, employees and the community and gain advantage from those in the long run, it could be of interest to deepen how different categories of family firms (e.g. SMEs versus MNEs) exploit family firms' characteristics to effectively communicate with stakeholders. Does the ownership level, family control and size of the firm affect consumers' perception of the familiness of the firm? Furthermore, recent literature contributions have shed light on the dynamics of innovation proper to family firms, proposing that tradition is a key element in foreseeing the success of innovation. Future research could investigate which elements proper to tradition and heritage concur in promoting innovation within the firm and how it is perceived by consumers. In addition, future research should explore if the family firms' positive reputation derives from stakeholder loss of trust in publicly-owned corporations and the relationship between crises (economic, organisational and environmental) and corporate image and reputation. Also, it could be interesting to investigate how different generational cohorts (i.e. millennials and Gen Z) perceive family firm characteristics.

6.5. The consumer perspective: The family firm brand

The intertwining of family business and brand management literature has brought to light how family-owned companies shape their corporate communications to reveal their family nature in order to evoke in the minds of consumers feelings of authenticity, high-quality, reliability or sustainability. A prominent research area in the domain of brand management relates to the investigation of the brand authenticity construct. Future research could unravel which dimensions compose the authenticity construct in the domain of family businesses and investigate which of these dimensions are positively perceived by consumers. Furthermore, researchers could investigate the relationship between brand authenticity and consumer engagement, comparing family versus non-family firms. Moreover, researchers could explore the antecedents of brand authenticity in the context of digital platforms (e.g. social media). The sense of belonging, propelled by the increased consumer engagement due to the ability of the firm to exploit the narrative of the heritage, values and company history, opens new paths for researchers to explore what the role played by family firms' brands in creating brand communities is and which elements of the familiness contribute to creating this sense of belonging and community. Moreover, in analysing the family business brand from a consumer point of view, future research questions should focus on how the meaning of the family firm brand, through which consumers form positive if-then

linkages, is transferred to products and services. It could be of interest to investigate if the familiness of the firm acts as a mitigator in the case of negative or deceptive experiences with the products or service of family firms. Does the familiness of the firm play a role in mitigating negative brand engagement (e.g. negative word of mouth)? Additionally, future research could explore the importance of the antecedents of brand trust and brand authenticity in the context of digital platforms (e.g. social media) to understand if and how these constructs impact consumers even, or in the same way, in digital contexts.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Augusto Bargoni: Writing – original draft, Software, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Ilan Alon:** Supervision, Conceptualization. **Alberto Ferraris:** Validation, Supervision, Conceptualization.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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