

Strategic Management: A Bibliometric Mapping of Research Trends and Intellectual Structure

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Article Info

Article history:

Received March, 2026

Revised March, 2026

Accepted March, 2026

Keywords:

Strategic Management;
Bibliometric Analysis; Research
Trends; Intellectual Structure;
Sustainable Development

ABSTRACT

This study aims to map the research trends and intellectual structure of strategic management through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis. Data were collected from the Scopus database over a defined publication period and analyzed using VOSviewer to examine keyword co-occurrence, co-citation patterns, and thematic evolution. The findings reveal that strategic management research is structured around three major clusters: sustainability-oriented strategy, digital transformation and technological innovation, and human-centered and methodological approaches. The results indicate that sustainable development, decision making, and strategic approach are dominant themes, reflecting the growing importance of long-term value creation and adaptive strategy. Furthermore, emerging topics such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and circular economy highlight the increasing role of technology and environmental concerns in shaping contemporary strategic management discourse. Temporal analysis shows a clear shift from traditional human-centered studies toward digitally enabled and sustainability-driven strategies. This study contributes to the literature by providing a systematic and visualized overview of the evolution of strategic management research, offering insights into current trends and potential future research directions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic management has long been recognized as a central field in business and management studies because it addresses how organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage and long-term performance. In an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, organizations must continuously adapt their strategies to respond to

technological change, globalization, market competition, and stakeholder expectations. Strategic management provides conceptual frameworks and analytical tools that assist organizations in aligning internal capabilities with external opportunities [1], [2]. Over the decades, the discipline has expanded significantly, incorporating perspectives from economics, organizational theory,

entrepreneurship, and innovation studies. As a result, the body of knowledge in strategic management has grown rapidly, producing a vast number of academic publications and theoretical contributions that shape how organizations formulate and implement strategies [3].

The rapid growth of scholarly output in strategic management has created both opportunities and challenges for researchers. On one hand, the expanding literature enriches the field by introducing diverse theoretical perspectives such as the resource-based view, dynamic capabilities, behavioral strategy, and strategic entrepreneurship [3]. On the other hand, the proliferation of research can make it difficult to identify the dominant themes, influential scholars, and emerging directions within the discipline. Studies have shown that the large volume of publications across journals and academic databases makes it necessary to employ systematic analytical methods in order to synthesize and structure the accumulated knowledge in the field [4], [5]. Bibliometric analysis has therefore emerged as a valuable methodological approach for understanding the evolution of scientific research and identifying patterns within scholarly literature.

Bibliometric analysis refers to the quantitative evaluation of scientific publications using statistical and mathematical techniques to examine citation patterns, research productivity, collaboration networks, and thematic development. Through the analysis of citation data and bibliographic information, bibliometric methods can reveal the intellectual structure of a research field and illustrate how knowledge develops over time. These techniques enable scholars to map relationships among authors, institutions, journals, and research topics, providing insights into how scientific communities evolve and how influential ideas emerge within a discipline. Bibliometric approaches are widely applied in various fields of science and social science to evaluate research performance and identify key trends in knowledge development.

In the context of strategic management, bibliometric studies have increasingly been used to explore research trends and conceptual structures within the discipline. By analyzing citation networks, keyword co-occurrences, and collaboration patterns, researchers can identify the major theoretical foundations that underpin strategic management research and trace how these foundations have evolved over time. Bibliometric mapping also allows scholars to discover emerging topics such as digital transformation, sustainable strategy, and behavioral perspectives in decision-making. Such analyses provide a comprehensive overview of how strategic management research has developed across different periods, highlighting both established themes and new research frontiers.

Furthermore, bibliometric mapping contributes to a deeper understanding of the intellectual structure of strategic management by revealing clusters of related research topics and influential scholarly works. Techniques such as co-citation analysis and co-word analysis enable researchers to detect relationships among publications and identify the conceptual frameworks that shape the discipline. Visualization tools such as VOSviewer have been widely employed to illustrate networks of authors, keywords, and citations, thereby providing a clearer picture of the research landscape. By identifying the main clusters and connections among studies, bibliometric mapping can guide scholars toward future research directions and help consolidate fragmented knowledge within the field.

Despite the growing use of bibliometric analysis in management studies, comprehensive mapping of strategic management research remains limited. Many existing studies focus only on specific subtopics, such as strategic leadership, strategic decision-making, or strategic accounting, rather than examining the broader intellectual structure of the discipline as a whole. Consequently, there is still a need for a

systematic analysis that integrates research trends, influential publications, and thematic clusters within strategic management literature. Conducting such a bibliometric study is important for understanding how the field has evolved and for identifying the dominant research streams that continue to shape contemporary strategic management scholarship.

Although strategic management has developed into one of the most prominent fields in business research, the rapid expansion of academic publications has created fragmentation within the literature. Scholars often focus on specialized topics or theoretical perspectives, which can make it difficult to obtain a comprehensive overview of the field's development and intellectual structure. Without systematic mapping, it becomes challenging to identify the main research themes, influential authors, collaborative networks, and emerging areas of study. Therefore, a bibliometric analysis is necessary to organize the existing body of knowledge, reveal patterns of research development, and provide a structured understanding of the intellectual landscape of strategic management studies.

The objective of this study is to conduct a bibliometric analysis of strategic management research in order to map the development of the field, identify major research trends, and reveal the intellectual structure of the discipline.

2. METHODS

This study employs a bibliometric analysis approach to examine the development and intellectual structure of research in strategic

management. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative research method that analyzes patterns within academic publications using statistical techniques applied to bibliographic data such as authors, titles, abstracts, keywords, citations, and references. This method is widely used to evaluate research productivity, identify influential studies, and map the conceptual structure of a scientific field. In the context of this study, bibliometric analysis is used to systematically explore the evolution of strategic management research, detect dominant themes, and identify relationships among authors, publications, and research topics. By applying bibliometric techniques, the study provides a structured overview of how the field has developed over time and highlights the main intellectual foundations that shape strategic management scholarship.

The data used in this research are obtained from a reputable academic database that indexes peer-reviewed journals in the fields of business, management, and social sciences. The dataset consists of scholarly publications related to strategic management collected using relevant keywords such as "strategic management," "strategy formulation," "competitive strategy," and related terms. To ensure data quality and relevance, only articles and review papers published in academic journals are included, while conference papers, editorials, and non-academic publications are excluded. After applying these selection criteria, the bibliographic information is exported and prepared for analysis.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Literature

Citations	Authors and year	Title	Source
40785	[6]	Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage	Journal of Management, 17(1), pp. 99–120
24480	[7]	Dynamic capabilities and strategic management	Strategic Management Journal, 18(7), pp. 509–533

sustainable development, strategic approach, supply chain management, circular economy, and climate change are highly prominent. This cluster indicates that strategic management research has increasingly incorporated environmental and sustainability concerns, reflecting a shift toward long-term value creation and responsible business practices. The strong interconnections among these keywords suggest that sustainability is no longer a peripheral topic but has become central to strategic decision-making frameworks.

The green cluster highlights the growing influence of digitalization and advanced technologies in strategic management. Key terms such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, machine learning, and human resource management dominate this cluster. The presence of decision making and strategic planning within this network suggests that technology is not only a tool but also a driver of strategic processes. This indicates a paradigm shift in which firms increasingly rely on data-driven insights and intelligent systems to enhance competitiveness. Moreover, the integration of human resource management within this cluster underscores the importance of aligning technological capabilities with organizational skills and workforce adaptation.

Meanwhile, the blue cluster appears to represent a more methodological and human-centered perspective within the strategic management literature. Keywords such as humans, male, female, adult, procedures, and controlled study suggest the influence of empirical and experimental research approaches, possibly derived from interdisciplinary fields such as psychology,

healthcare management, or behavioral studies. The inclusion of organization and management indicates that this cluster connects human factors with organizational contexts, emphasizing the role of individual behavior and decision processes in shaping strategic outcomes.

The visualization also demonstrates significant inter-cluster connectivity, particularly between sustainability (red cluster) and digital transformation (green cluster). For instance, terms like innovation, risk assessment, and strategic planning act as bridging nodes, linking environmental strategy with technological advancement. This suggests that contemporary strategic management research increasingly integrates sustainability goals with digital capabilities, forming a hybrid research direction. Similarly, the connection between the green and blue clusters implies that human-centered considerations remain essential in the implementation of technology-driven strategies.

The network structure indicates that strategic management research is evolving toward a multidisciplinary and integrative field. The convergence of sustainability, digital transformation, and human-centered approaches reflects the complexity of modern organizational challenges. The prominence of emerging topics such as artificial intelligence and climate change highlights future research directions, while the strong network density suggests a mature yet continuously expanding field. This mapping underscores the transition from traditional competitive strategy models to more adaptive, technology-enabled, and sustainability-driven strategic paradigms.

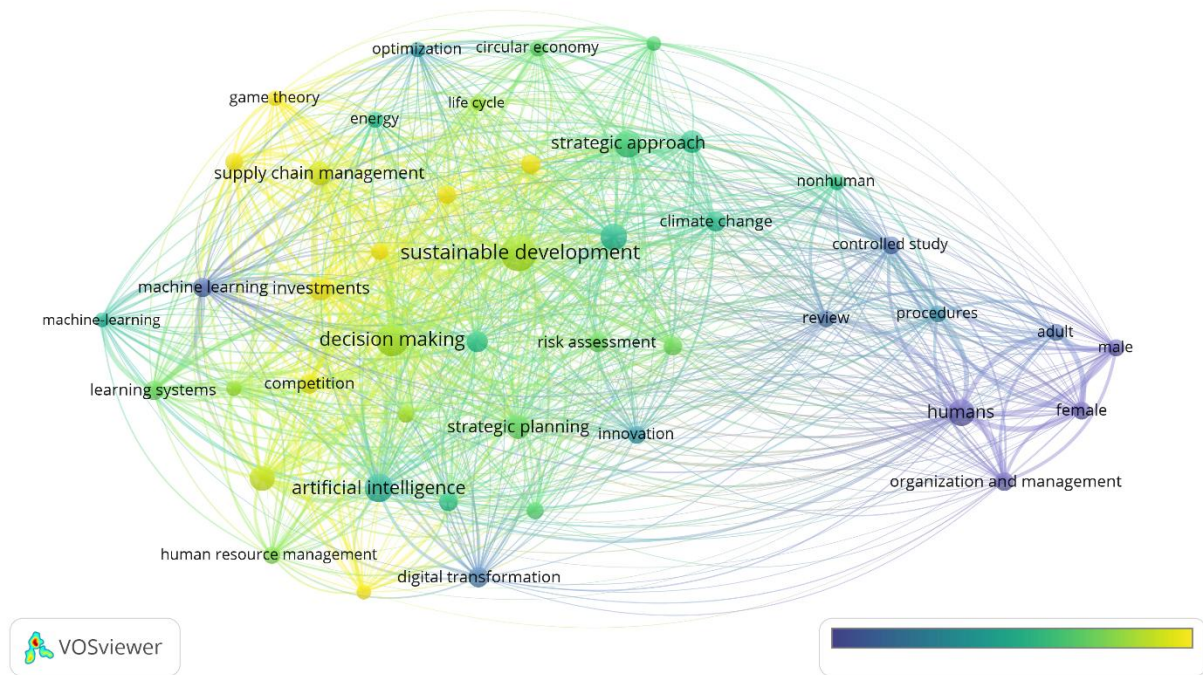


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 presents the temporal evolution of research themes in strategic management, where colors transition from dark blue (earlier studies) to yellow (more recent developments). The blue-colored nodes, such as humans, male, female, adult, and procedures, indicate that earlier research in this field was largely dominated by human-centered and methodological approaches. These topics reflect foundational studies rooted in behavioral science, organizational analysis, and empirical procedures, emphasizing individual and organizational dynamics as the basis of strategic decision-making.

Moving toward the green spectrum, the visualization highlights the emergence of integrative and transitional themes such as sustainable development, strategic approach, climate change, risk assessment, and decision making. These topics represent a shift in strategic management research toward broader organizational and environmental concerns. During this phase, the field began to

incorporate sustainability, risk management, and long-term strategic thinking, indicating a transition from micro-level behavioral studies to macro-level strategic frameworks. The central position of sustainable development suggests its role as a bridging concept connecting earlier foundational research with more contemporary strategic priorities.

In the yellow-colored nodes, which represent the most recent research trends, themes such as artificial intelligence, machine learning investments, digital transformation, optimization, circular economy, and supply chain management become prominent. This indicates that current strategic management research is heavily influenced by technological advancement and sustainability integration. The convergence of digital technologies with circular economy and optimization strategies reflects a forward-looking research agenda focused on efficiency, innovation, and resilience.

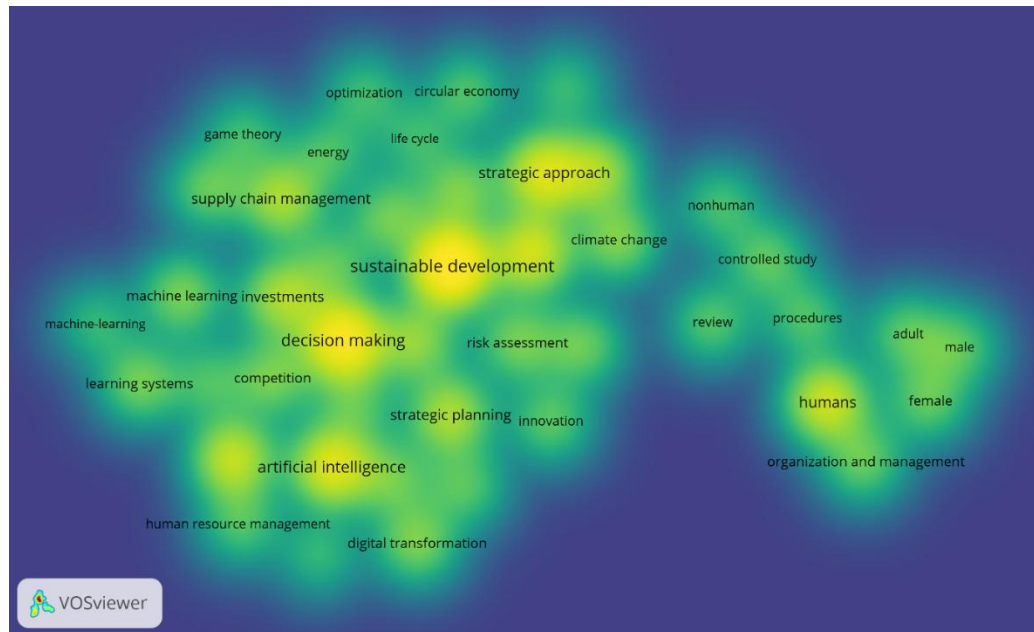


Figure 3. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 3 highlights the most intensively studied and frequently occurring themes within the strategic management literature. Areas with brighter yellow coloring, particularly around sustainable development, decision making, and strategic approach, indicate core research hotspots that have received substantial scholarly attention. This suggests that strategic management research is strongly anchored in sustainability-oriented strategies and managerial decision processes. The prominence of artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and supply chain management within high-density regions further reflects the increasing integration of technological innovation into strategic frameworks, reinforcing the importance of aligning digital capabilities with long-term strategic objectives.

In contrast, areas with lower density (green to blue shades), such as humans, procedures, and demographic-related terms (male, female, adult), indicate less concentrated but still relevant research streams, often associated with methodological or interdisciplinary contributions. The spatial

separation of these topics from the main density clusters suggests that while human-centered and experimental studies remain part of the literature, they are less dominant compared to strategic, technological, and sustainability-driven themes.

Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric analysis reveal that strategic management research has undergone a significant transformation from its traditional theoretical foundations toward a more dynamic, interdisciplinary, and technology-driven field. The dominance of themes such as sustainable development, decision making, and strategic approach indicates that contemporary research is no longer limited to competitive positioning alone but increasingly emphasizes long-term value creation and adaptability. This evolution aligns with the shift from classical frameworks such as Porter's Five Forces toward more flexible perspectives like Dynamic Capabilities, which better capture the complexity of modern business environments.

One of the most prominent insights from the analysis is the central role of sustainability in shaping strategic management discourse. The high density and strong connectivity of keywords such as sustainable development, climate change, and circular economy indicate that environmental considerations have become deeply embedded in strategic thinking. This reflects a broader paradigm shift in which organizations are expected to balance economic performance with environmental and social responsibilities. The integration of sustainability into strategic frameworks suggests that firms are increasingly adopting holistic approaches that align with global sustainability agendas, positioning sustainability not merely as a compliance issue but as a source of competitive advantage.

In addition to sustainability, the results highlight the growing influence of digital transformation and advanced technologies in strategic management research. The emergence of themes such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and digital transformation underscores the importance of data-driven decision-making and technological innovation. These developments suggest that strategic management is increasingly reliant on digital capabilities to enhance organizational agility, improve efficiency, and support innovation. Furthermore, the connection between technology-related themes and strategic planning indicates that digital transformation is not an isolated function but a core component of organizational strategy.

Another important observation is the bridging role of key concepts such as decision making, risk assessment, and innovation, which connect multiple thematic clusters within the

network. These concepts serve as integrative mechanisms that link sustainability, technology, and organizational strategy. This interconnectedness highlights the multidimensional nature of strategic management, where decision processes are influenced by both internal capabilities and external environmental pressures. It also suggests that future research should focus on exploring these intersections in greater depth, particularly in understanding how organizations can effectively integrate sustainability and digital transformation into coherent strategic frameworks.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study demonstrates that strategic management research has evolved into a highly dynamic and interdisciplinary field characterized by the convergence of sustainability, digital transformation, and strategic decision-making. The analysis reveals that while traditional theoretical foundations remain relevant, contemporary research is increasingly shaped by emerging themes such as artificial intelligence, circular economy, and environmental sustainability. The strong interconnections among these themes highlight a shift toward more integrative and adaptive strategic frameworks that respond to complex and rapidly changing business environments. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual structure and research trends in strategic management, while also identifying future research opportunities that emphasize the integration of technological innovation and sustainable value creation.

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