

PROTOCOL FOR A SCOPING REVIEW ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP LITERATURE

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Abstract

Competitive intelligence is a crucial skill increasingly required of entrepreneurs across firms, since guidance to enterprises on this crucial skill has proven to be problematic over the years, owing primarily to a lack of unified understanding of its meaning as well as the erroneous use of the term interchangeably with other close but dissimilar concepts. This paper aims to

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establish a protocol for a scoping review of relevant literature, to map, compare and synthesize the disparate conceptualizations available and relative theoretical underpinnings, in a bid to systematically derive a more robust and comprehensive definition and terminology that accurately captures all facets of the competitive intelligence concept. This scoping review will follow the methodological recommendations first developed by Arksey and O'Malley, and subsequently refined by Levac and colleagues. A management practitioner as well as a local librarian will be involved in the development of the search strategy, and the search will be conducted in electronic databases (Web of Science, SCOPUS and EBSCO Business Complete). This scoping review will aid the design of upcoming studies on competitive intelligence using accurate, comprehensive and scientifically conceptualized and operationalized terminology.

Keywords: *competitive intelligence; entrepreneurship; management; protocol; systematic review.*

JEL Classification: M10

Introduction

As business environs become gradually unstable, nations and corporations depend on discovery of environmental fluctuations so as to respond promptly [Calof, Arcos, & Sewdass, 2018; Kahaner, 1996]. Since firms require time for adaptation to fluctuating environments, ability to anticipate changes and determine consequences of alternative responses remain necessary [Olaleye *et al.*, 2020]. In a competitive environment, Competitive Intelligence (CI) has appeared into a discipline to assist firms, in adapting to environmental changes [Sewdass, 2012], as well as dealing with industry disruption [Vriens, & Soilen, 2014]. Competitive intelligence appeared in the early 90s in France [Davenport, & Prusak, 1997; Fayard, 2006] and is swiftly transposed to multinational companies. However, among SMEs in America, concentration was on the concept of business intelligence and knowledge management, while collective intelligence is concentrated upon in Asian context. Hence, conceptualization test on the term “intelligence” were sturdily biased by the geographic context in which it transpires.

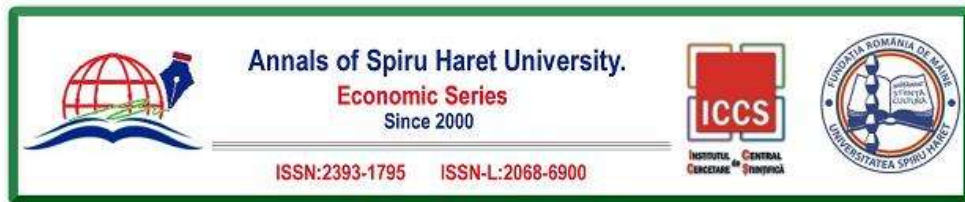
It is well established within management practice and among relevant scholarly communities, that competitive intelligence is a skill set crucial to the success of organizations and individuals [Wright *et al.*, 2004; Global Intelligence Alliance, 2007a; Michaeli, & Simon, 2008]. Approaches, which have analyzed competitive

intelligence, differ and were conditioned by geographical prejudice. Despite these conceptual differences, theoretical results regarding positive effects of competitive intelligence on internationalization and inter-discipline are unanimously established. Although, they are unsatisfactorily substantiated empirically, despite the improved consideration presently evolving in entrepreneurship and management literature.

Mazzarol, Reboud and Soutar (2009), reported that ‘owners or managers of small firms need to be alerted to environmental changes, committed to innovation and willing to change or take action if required’. Lesca, Caron-Fasan, Janissek-Muniz and Freitas (2005), reported that in becoming more competitive, SMEs in developing countries are required to capture international and transnational markets. Hence, the application of CI methods and tools by SMEs is expressly dynamic in a striving nation. Competitive intelligence is a business tool that assist organizations in the strategic management process in increasing business performance through enhanced knowledge and quality strategic plans [Salguero *et al.*, 2019]. Also, the Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals (SCIP) defines CI as the ‘procedure for supervising the competing environment and enterprise competitors for efficient business activity support and its ability to make qualified decisions, relatively to competitors’ [Štefániková, & Masárová, 2014]. CI is an extensive thought of knowledge dispersal, engrossed in competition [Nelke, 2012]. Competitive intelligence’s real value is to provide entrepreneurs with the organizational learning tool on what the competitor will do, not what the competitor has already done.

In a study conducted by Qiu (2008), entrepreneurial attitude, normative beliefs and their effect on managerial scanning practices for Competitive Intelligence was examined, which in turn attach to managerial construal of organizations’ strength and weakness on competitiveness. Tanev and Bailetti (2008) focused on the nexus between intelligence activities and innovation in technology firms, while Dishman and Calof (2008) report on the CI practice of technology-led companies and how this is used in the development of their marketing strategy.

As earlier mentioned, few attempts have been made in extant literature in recent times to conceptually delineate competitive intelligence from other close but dissimilar concepts such as corporate intelligence, business intelligence, market and entrepreneurial orientation, thereby creating further disparities in its conceptualizations across management fields [Tuan, 2013; Calof, & Wright, 2008]. However, owing to the unsystematic approach with which these studies were conducted, this protocol and its accompanying scoping review will not be building



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upon these studies, but will review extant literature from scratch, fully deploying the systematic (scoping) scientific review approach. This study intends to establish a protocol for a scoping review to examine how the competitive intelligence construct alongside its true conceptual equivalents are conceptualized and operationalized within the extant body of literature. Specifically, it aims to examine the individual contributions of relevant studies to our understanding of these concepts while identifying existing conceptual scope and gaps in literature in the process. Ultimately, it is expected that these efforts will culminate into the generation of a more robust, comprehensive and accurate definition and operationalization of the construct that would drive future studies on competitive intelligence.

Methodology and Analysis

Given the conceptual nature of this review and the consequent need for a substantially broad research question rather than a narrow one, we established that the scoping review approach to scientific reviews is the most appropriate approach for mapping out the diverse patterns of conceptualizations and operationalizations of competitive intelligence within extant management literature. This is because the scoping technique to reviews has been found to be robust enough in aiding the deciphering and breakdown of complex concepts while effectively enabling the clarification, delimitation and sometimes, generation of new conceptual boundaries [Stoffels *et al.*, 2019; David, Drey and Gould, 2009]. Furthermore, the technique will enable the identification of conceptual gaps, as well as the nature and sources of extant scientific evidence on competitive intelligence currently informing entrepreneurship and management practices, policies and research [Stoffels *et al.*, 2019; Daut, van Mossel, & Scott, 2013]. In a bid to provide the most comprehensive and holistic overview or summary of extant literature on the subject matter, this review will encompass as wide a range of studies as possible. Most importantly, it will include primary studies of varying methodological designs- as much as extant literature allows. A synthesis of the resultant studies isolated, will provide a well-grounded conceptual basis upon which future research on competitive intelligence will be based, seeing that scoping reviews typically lead to the generation of hypotheses or propositions rather than their deduction [Stoffels *et al.*, 2019].

The critical evaluation and appraisal of qualitative reviews especially within the natural and social sciences typically involves examining the transparency with which scientific rigor is both applied and disclosed, the comprehensiveness of the study and the probability of reproducing the study and its findings. The critical evaluation of

these quality determining elements is immensely aided by the adherence to quality standards typically provided by standardized reporting guidelines. The most popular of these are the standardized reporting guidelines for systematic reviews of which two prominently stand out: (a) the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), its extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) and its accompanying guidelines for comprehensive development of systematic review protocols (PRISMA-P) [Tricco *et al.*, 2018; PRISMA-P Group *et al.*, 2015]; and (b) the Methodological Expectations of Campbell Collaboration Intervention Reviews (MECCIR) for both the conduct and reporting of reviews, developed by Campbell Collaborations [Stoffels *et al.*, 2019; Tricco *et al.*, 2018].

Out of the two predominant standardized guidelines, only the PRISMA guidelines provides a comprehensive guide for the reporting of review protocols (PRISMA-P); it should be noted that this guideline is specifically aimed at the development of systematic review protocols rather than scoping review protocols, as the guidelines for scoping review protocols is still undergoing development at the time of this report [Stoffels *et al.*, 2019; Tricco *et al.*, 2018]. Thus, as provided in file 1 of the accompanying supplementary document, this protocol adopts equivalent and relevant items from the PRISMA-P guidelines to both generate and ensure that the reporting quality contained here-in meets the required scientific standard.

Concerning the development of the final scoping review, we will ensure that the PRISMA-ScR guidelines are rigorously implemented particularly with regard to the reporting of its methodology. To do so we will adopt the 6-phase procedure pioneered by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), modified by Levac, Colquhoun and O'Brien (2010) and further extended by Peters *et al.* (2017) of the Joanna Briggs Institute. This methodological procedure involves the following phases: (a) identification of the research question; (b) identification of relevant studies; (c) study selection; (d) charting the data; (e) curation, summarization and reporting of results; (f) consultations with experts [Stoffels *et al.*, 2019].

Phase A: Identification of the research question

Given that the overriding objective of this exercise is to examine and hence gain an in-depth understanding of how competitive intelligence is conceptualized in extant entrepreneurship research, and its influence on performance, regardless of study design, methodological and analytic procedure and outcome, we pose the following initial research questions:

RQ1: How is competitive intelligence conceptualized and operationalized in extant entrepreneurship research

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RQ2: How are the various concepts and terms used as equivalents to competitive intelligence conceptualized and operationalized in extant entrepreneurship research?

RQ3: How does Competitive Intelligence influence performance of an Entrepreneur?

It should be noted at this juncture, that given the iterative nature of systematic reviews and more so scoping reviews [Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Stoffels *et al.*, 2019], the initial research questions stated above is not final nor exhaustive, and depending on our findings as we execute the actual review process, we may find a need to add more research questions. In addition to the earlier stated core objective of this study which is to contribute to the understanding and development of a comprehensive conceptualization of competitive intelligence, this study will also take advantage of the review process to further synthesize all results contained in primary studies that are relevant to competitive intelligence within the focal context.

Phase B: Identification of relevant studies

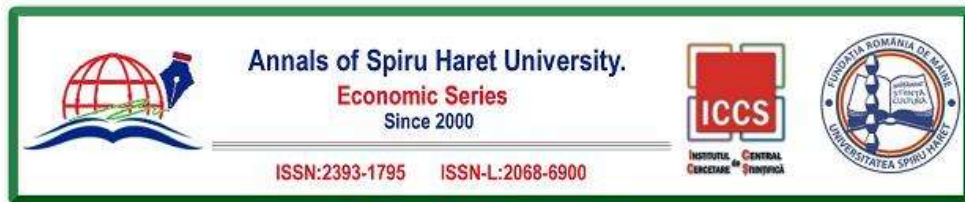
This concerns the iterative development of a scientifically appropriate search strategy, and will involve the contribution of the entire scoping review research team. Taking guidance from best practice drawn from prominent systematic review authorities especially the Joanna Briggs Institute and their recommended scoping review guideline [The Joanna Briggs Institute, 2015; Peters *et al.*, 2017], we will implement a two-step search procedure, by first of all initiating an initially broad search phase upon which the second stage of the search process will be based [Colquhoun *et al.*, 2014; Davis *et al.*, 2009; Stoffels *et al.*, 2019]. The Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies 2015 guideline statement also known as the PRESS statement [Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; PRISMA-P Group *et al.*, 2015], will be used as a guide (by OLE and BRO) to comprehensively develop the two-step search procedure deployed in this study.

At the first stage of the search process, we will search for the term 'competitive intelligence' limiting the results to 'business' and 'management' literature, to identify an initially broad set of studies first for the Web of Science (WOS) collection database, after which this initially search string will be extended to the SCOPUS and EBSCO Business Complete databases sequentially. This initial search step will enable us to not only identify studies topically having competitive intelligence as a core concept, it will also allow us identify other concepts which are used as equivalents competitive intelligence within the entrepreneurship

literature. A draft search representing this initial search step is available for viewing in file 2 of the supplementary document that accompanies this protocol. After analysis of titles and abstracts of the related papers, it was deduced that keywords are: business intelligence, corporate intelligence, market/entrepreneurial orientation. The search query will include the three sets of keywords separated by, AND Boolean operators corresponding to each of the three main search concepts and within each concept keywords will be separated by OR Boolean operators.

Following in the footsteps of previous scoping review studies [Stoffels *et al.*, 2019] the first hundred studies returned from this initial search step will be collectively examined by all of the researchers in the review team for the face validity of this initial search step, with the aim of ensuring that this initial search string first and foremost allows for the identification of studies topically concerned with competitive intelligence and subsequently, that it allows for the isolation of studies using other conceptual terms equivalent to competitive intelligence. Upon the collective agreement among the research team regarding the validity of this initial search step, the two reviewers saddled with the responsibility of identifying equivalent concepts (OLE and BRO) will proceed to scan through the first two hundred studies generated from all three databases in a bid to identify and isolate concepts equivalent to competitive intelligence which are eligible for inclusion in the second phase of the search strategy as well as their accompanying studies. These concepts are those which represent management or managerial psychology terminologies used in entrepreneurship literature which concern themselves with the cognitive aspect and processes of strategic decision making for both strategic goal setting and strategic problem solving at the managerial level of analysis (such as market orientation, business and corporate intelligence, etc.). Upon collective agreement by both reviewers on identified concepts eligible for inclusion at the second step of the search strategy, the first reviewer will then proceed to scan the rest of the abstracts returned from the initial search. However, where disagreements exist, the second reviewer will proceed to scan the next two hundred abstracts from the returned studies until a collective agreement is reached. After an agreement is obtained and after all of the abstracts have subsequently been scanned, all of the concepts identified and isolated to be eligible for inclusion at the second stage of the search strategy will be reviewed and discussed again by both reviewers and a final selection of eligible concepts determined for inclusion at the second search step.

At the second stage of the search strategy, a search string and query will be developed first for the Web of Science (WOS) collection database and then



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extended to the SCOPUS and EBSCO Business Complete databases respectively. The generation of this search string or query will entail the combination of each of the selected eligible concepts from search stage 1 and limiting the search results to ‘management’ and ‘business’ literature to locate and isolate studies which both conceptualize and operationalize each of the eligible concepts within the entrepreneurship and management literature.

Upon generating the two sets of study collectives from the two-step search procedure earlier described, we will examine the end reference lists of all of the returned studies for the possibility of identifying and locating additional studies that may have been missed despite the rigor of the two-step search process. The review team will conduct these two searches in June, 2021.

Phase C: Study Selection

After implementing the second step of our search strategy and upon obtaining a definitive set of primary studies all of the abstracts will be screened by two independent researchers to determine studies whose full texts are eligible for retrieval. Once all eligible full texts have been retrieved, they are then comparatively assessed again between the two reviewers for their eligibility for inclusion or exclusion in the study. Where disagreements exist, discussion sessions are held with the entire research team and consensus decisions taken to resolve them.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria mentioned in the paragraph above and depicted in Figure 1 above will be generated in an ongoing and iterative manner. However, the inaugural inclusion criteria will be restricted to the following:

1. Primary studies and reviews of an original nature published in peer-reviewed journals
2. Such studies must have competitive intelligence as one of their main topics
3. The topic area must be within the field of entrepreneurship or general management

Since the objective of this scoping review, is to examine how competitive intelligence has been conceptualized and operationalized in peer-reviewed management research, it is only logical that we exclude materials published in such avenues as postgraduate theses, commentaries, magazines, book reviews, books, blogs and vlogs as well as letters to the editors. More elaborate and detailed reasons for excluding these and other literature sources will be provided and documented in the full text of the scoping review process.

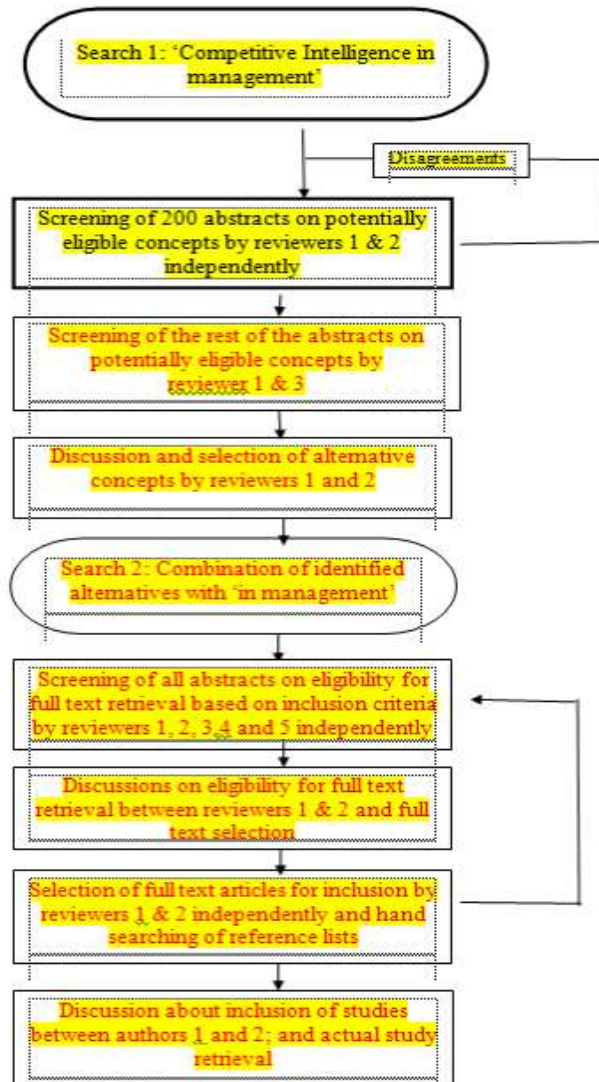


Figure no. 1. Search And Study Selection Process: Flow Diagram

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Phase D: Charting the data

The full texts of primary studies which meet the inclusion criteria specified above will constitute the sole source of analytical data for this scoping review. The process of extracting data from these studies will entail the preliminary generation of an analytical framework using an excel spreadsheet to record key information which will form the building block of the analytical categories to be examined at the analysis stage. Such information includes study characteristics (year of publication, country context, organization context, study methodology, study question, study design, study participants, study outcomes and study quality), conceptualization of competitive intelligence (extant definitions, rationale and underlying theories, as well as extant operationalizations, reflections on its formal and informal nature), and gaps identified in the competitive intelligence literature. However, additional data extraction categories will be included to the spreadsheet in consultation with the research team as they become evident during the review process. While its neither standard nor required practice to evaluate study quality in scoping reviews [Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Colquhoun *et al.*, 2014; Daudt *et al.*, 2013; Davis *et al.*, 2009; Levac *et al.*, 2010; Stoffels *et al.*, 2019], we follow the recommendations of Daudt *et al.* (2013) implemented in Stoffels *et al.* (2019) and assess study quality in a bid to unravel all extant gaps in the competitive intelligence stream of research within the field of entrepreneurship and management, irrespective of their nature- qualitative or quantitative [Levac *et al.*, 2010]. In doing so, we similarly follow in the footsteps of Buckley *et al.* (2009) and Stoffels *et al.* (2019) in using the pre-set quality indicators for reviews specified by [Buckley *et al.*, 2009] and reported in the analytical framework earlier mentioned. A preliminary evaluation of the excel-based analytical framework spreadsheet for its comprehensiveness and efficacy will be performed by carrying out a pilot test on the first five to ten primary studies, with contribution from the entire research team to ensure that a common framework will guide our analysis of the studies.

Each team member will independently review the full-texts of the included primary studies and chart the extracted data into their individual analytical frame spreadsheets to enhance the accuracy of the data extraction process. Upon completion, these independently charted data will be compared and any inconsistencies in extracted data will be resolved through repeated dialogue and discussions across the entire research team.

Phase E: Curation, summarization and reporting of results

In the actual scoping review publication, we will use a PRISMA flow diagram to present the final numbers related to this study. We will document a descriptive account of the various conceptualizations of competitive intelligence encountered during the review process as well as their accompanying operationalization irrespective of how diverse they are. We will then proceed to narratively synthesize the relevant data extracted using emergent themes and categorizations. The final results will be consensually and comparatively arrived at and consolidated by two of the reviewers BRO and FTS.

As earlier mentioned, the study will concern itself with identifying both qualitative and quantitative gaps, discrepancies and shortcomings in extant competitive intelligence literature. A thorough discussion of the extracted data and its emergent themes within the purview of relevant entrepreneurship and general management theories will be carried out, culminating in our proposition of alternative conceptualization or operationalization (or both) of competitive intelligence for future researchers within the management stream of research as our findings deem necessary.

Phase F: Consultations with experts

This phase entails the introduction of an important reality check to confirm the practicality and virility of our findings and interpretations. We will engage two management practitioners and one entrepreneurship consultant from the corporate world as well as one entrepreneurship academic scholar specializing in the stream of research, for consultation on the findings of our study as well as on our proposed alternative conceptual definition and operationalization of competitive intelligence.

Ethical Consideration and Study Dissemination

As systematic and scoping reviews depend on a methodology which mandates the extraction and review of data from publicly available literature sources, they do not require ethical consent or approval [Stoffels *et al.*, 2019]. The resultant scoping review will constitute the first and only (to the best of our knowledge) effort at systematically identifying, scoping and comparing competitive intelligence terminologies and the varying concepts used to portray it in the entrepreneurship literature with a view to proposing an alternative and more comprehensive conceptualization. This protocol thus reflects the very transparent, robust and rigorous scoping review methodology to be implemented in the final study. Findings

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from the study will be disseminated by publishing it in a peer-reviewed journal targeting entrepreneurship and management scholars and practitioners alike. The exposal of current gaps in the management literature regarding the conceptualization and operationalization of competitive intelligence and the proposal of an alternative albeit more accurate, robust and comprehensive conceptualization, will be of interest to future management scholars, as it will guide future research in this regard. In addition, both the study methodology and the study's findings may also be of interest to scholars and researchers in other management domains other than entrepreneurship, giving the ubiquitous nature of the competitive intelligence concept across management and non-management domains alike.

Contributors:

OLE and BRO were responsible for the preliminary design of this study. BRO, OLE, SAO, TOO and CGA were instrumental to the development of the eligibility and data extraction criteria. The draft search strategy was developed by BRO and OLE. OLE, BRO, SAO, TOO and SOE were responsible for screening the abstracts and their full texts. BRO generated and conceptualized the review approach adopted for this study and led the team in the preparation and writing of the manuscript. OLE, BRO, SAO, TOO, FTS, SOE and CGA collectively contributed to and gave approval for the final version of this protocol; while OLE assumed a supervisory role for the preparation of the manuscript.

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Competing interests: This is an ongoing project that will end by September 2021; participation in this protocol does not hinder the scoping review result. On the contrary, it might enrich it. Moreover, in this scoping review we have a strong and experienced team that ensures quality and exemption. In addition, we have no conflicts of interest related to the studies used in this scoping review.

Preliminary Timeframe:

- Search for literature: April 2021–March 20218
- Coding and assessment: June 2021–September, 2021
- Initial results: September 2021
- Preparation of final paper: October 2021–December 2021
- Submission of final review: January 2022

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