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Scientific procedures and rationales for systematic literature reviews (SPAR-4-SLR)

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Abstract

Many guiding articles on literature reviews exist, but few have delivered an authoritative protocol that researchers can rely upon with clarity and confidence. To commemorate the inaugural annual special issue on systematic literature reviews in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, the editors have pooled their expertize and experience of authoring, editing, and reviewing literature reviews to develop a rigorous review protocol—that is, the *Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews* (*SPAR-4-SLR*) protocol—that researchers can rely upon to guide and justify decisions in systematic literature reviews. Using an interrogative approach, the editors begin with a discussion of the "what," "why," "when," "where," "who," and "how" of systematic literature reviews. The editors conclude with systematic literature review exemplars in the inaugural special issue.

KEYWORDS

procedure, protocol, rational, scientific, SPAR-4-SLR, systematic literature review

1 | INTRODUCTION

Reviews in research are assessments of published material (e.g., literature and news) in a specific domain (e.g., area, outlet, and topic). Among the many types of reviews that exist (e.g., critical reviews and post-published reviews), systematic literature reviews are by far the most informative and scientific, provided that they are rigorously conducted and well justified. Among premier business journals, systematic literature reviews have been omnipresent in leading management journals for decades; however, they are relatively new in top marketing journals.

There are numerous evidences to illustrate the acceptance and success of systematic literature reviews as a methodology for and a product of world-class research, which include but not limited to:

1. The appearance and proliferation of systematic literature reviews in premier journals. For example, Weingarten and Goodman's (2021) review on experiential advantage in the *Journal of Consumer Research* and White et al.'s (2019) review on sustainable consumer behavior in the *Journal of Marketing*.
2. The call for and recognition of systematic literature reviews by editors of premier journals. For example, the *Academy of Management Review* is a premier journal devoted to review articles, whereas Palmatier et al.'s (2018) editorial statement in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* is a testament to the journal's commitment to publish review articles.
3. The citations received by systematic literature reviews published in premier journals. For example, the *International Journal of Management Reviews*, a relatively young management journal established in 1999, has very high citation-based impact factors (i.e., 2-year impact factor: 8.631; 5-year impact factor: 9.896) and rankings (i.e., business: 5/152; management: 5/266) in the 2019 Journal Citation Reports (Clarivate Analytics), mainly because they publish only review articles; other reasons that are not

citation-based relate to the attributes of clarity, novelty, importance, urgency, and rigor that are typically expected in premier journals. Similarly, Zahra and George's (2002) review on absorptive capacity in the *Academy of Management Review* has earned more than 12,000 citations.

4. The special issues commissioned to solicit systematic literature reviews for premier journals such as the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (Hulland & Houston, 2020) and the *International Business Review* (Paul & Criado, 2020).
5. The success of scholars who have established their reputation based on their expertize in publishing systematic literature reviews in premier journals. For example, Gerald (Gerry) George succeeded in academia and even rose to the position of Editor in Chief of the *Academy of Management Journal*, mainly because of his highly cited systematic literature reviews (i.e., citations in thousands). Similarly, Justin Paul has published numerous highly cited and downloaded systematic literature reviews (e.g., domain- and theory-based reviews) that have appeared in premier journals such as the *Journal of Business Research* (Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2021) and the *Journal of World Business* (Paul et al., 2017).

There are also many commentaries and editorials that have been written to highlight the form, importance, and value of systematic literature reviews. Palmatier et al. (2018) suggest that systematic literature reviews can be domain-, theory-, or method-based, whereas Paul and Criado (2020) added more refined categories such as structured theme-based reviews, framework-based reviews, bibliometric reviews, hybrid reviews, conceptual reviews, and meta-analytical reviews to that list, in addition to recommending the criteria for article and journal selection and highlighting the need for developing a future research agenda focusing on theories, constructs, characteristics, contexts, and methods in review articles. Systematic literature reviews, according to Elsbach and van Knippenberg (2020, p. 1227), are "among the most useful vehicles for advancing knowledge and furthering research." Snyder (2019, p. 333) explains that systematic literature reviews can "address research questions with a power that no single study has" because such reviews "integrate findings and perspectives from many empirical findings." Other scholars such as Hulland and Houston (2020) and Paul and Criado (2020) suggest that systematic literature reviews create value for readers when they

1. integrate and synthesize extant knowledge to provide a state-of-the-art understanding,
2. identify extant knowledge gaps and inconsistencies, and
3. signal avenues for future research to address remaining issues and to advance knowledge in the review domain.

The methods to derive review-driven insights, however, have been relatively generic. Specifically, most guides for systematic literature reviews that avail provide a checklist for researchers to consider (e.g., Moher et al., 2009, 2015; Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2016). Though useful, such guides can raise more questions than answers. Our collective experiences of authoring, editing, and reviewing review articles suggest that many researchers are

1. confused with items on review checklists (e.g., difference between database and publisher),
2. unable to justify review decisions (e.g., need for review and scope of review), and
3. relying on myriad review articles to develop review protocols that are inefficient and/or poorly synthesized (e.g., duplication and wastage of resources from overlapping criteria and mechanisms).

To this end, we take inspiration from past editorials of systematic literature reviews in premier journals (e.g., Hulland & Houston, 2020; Paul & Criado, 2020) to curate a knowledge-advancing introduction for the inaugural annual special issue on systematic literature reviews in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. Using an interrogative approach, we explain the "what," "why," "when," "where," "who," and "how" of systematic literature reviews. In doing so, we introduce a review protocol called the *Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews* (*SPAR-4-SLR*) protocol to guide researchers to systematically review the literature and to justify the decisions that they will encounter in their review. To conclude, we introduce the systematic literature reviews that were accepted for this inaugural special issue after two to three rounds of peer review by three to five reviewers with disciplinary and/or methodological expertize.

2 | WHAT A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW IS AND IS NOT

Systematic literature reviews can manifest as a *methodology* for and a *product* of scholarly research.

Systematic literature reviews, as a methodology, encapsulate the *process for assembling, arranging, and assessing existing literature in a review domain* (i.e., the 3 As), wherein "assembling" refers to the identification and acquisition of literature, "arranging" pertains to the organization and purification of literature, and "assessing" relates to the evaluation and reporting of literature. The outcome of this process suggests that systematic literature reviews, as a product of research, signify a *state-of-the-art understanding of existing literature* and a *stimulating agenda to advance understanding through new literature in the review domain* (i.e., the 2 Ss), wherein "state-of-the-art" denotes the comprehensive mapping and the up-to-date summary illustrating the development of the literature, whereas "stimulating agenda" refers to avenues and directions that future research can pursue to enrich the literature and, therefore, our understanding. Importantly, the process must be completely and transparently declared in order for the outcome to be reproducible.

Systematic literature reviews can take several forms, namely *domain-*, *theory-*, and *method-based reviews* (Palmatier et al., 2018). Paul and Criado (2020) classified myriad sub-forms of domain-based reviews (i.e., structured theme-based reviews, framework-based

reviews, bibliometric reviews, hybrid reviews, and conceptual reviews) and added *meta-analytical reviews* to that list, whereas Lim and Weissmann (2021) established the systematic review of systematic reviews called *meta-systematic reviews*. These different forms of systematic literature reviews can be summarized as follows:

1. *Domain-based reviews* concentrate on the development of an area (e.g., financial literacy), outlet (e.g., *International Journal of Consumer Studies*), or topic (e.g., reference points in consumer choice model). They can manifest in five main ways:
   (a) *Structured theme-based reviews* focus on the development of themes, which can include associated theories, models, constructs, contexts, and methods, in a review domain. Exemplars of such reviews include consumer behavior of luxury goods by Dhaliwal et al. (2021), consumer behavior and purchase intention for organic food by Rana and Paul (2017), early internationalizing firms by Jiang et al. (2020), entry modes by Canabal and White (2008), export barriers by Kahiya (2018), foreign direct investments by Paul and Feliciano-Cestero (2021), international franchising by Rosado-Serrano et al. (2018), nation branding by Hao et al. (2021), omnichannel retailing by Mishra et al. (2021), and selfies by Lim (2016b).
   (b) *Framework-based reviews* rely on established framework(s) to guide the review of a domain. Frameworks that are suitable for such reviews include the antecedents, decisions, and outcomes (ADO) framework by Paul and Benito (2018), the theories, contexts, and methods (TCM) framework by Paul et al. (2017), the theories, constructs, characteristics, and methods (TCCM) framework by Paul and Rosado-Serrano (2019), the integrated ADO-TCM framework by Lim, Yap, et al. (2021), and the interrogative framework consisting of what, why, where, when, who, and how (5W1H) by Lim (2020a). Based on our collective experience and expertize, we highly recommend using the ADO, TCM, TCCM, and/or 5W1H framework(s) to structure systematic literature reviews because these frameworks can help authors to deliver the highest level of clarity and coverage (i.e., breadth and depth) in their reviews, and thus, framework-based reviews are often more useful and impactful than all the other types of reviews in the category of domain-based reviews.
   (c) *Bibliometric reviews* highlight statistics and trends in a review domain. Exemplars of such reviews include bibliometrics of board diversity by Baker et al. (2020), fairtrade labeling by Ruggeri et al. (2019), financial literacy by Goyal and Kumar (2021), open innovation by Randhawa et al. (2016), strategic marketing by Donthu et al. (2021), and trade credit by Pattnaik et al. (2020).
   (d) *Hybrid reviews* combine two or more sub-forms of reviews in a domain. Exemplars of such reviews include hybrid narratives on immigrant entrepreneurship by Dabić et al. (2020), masstige marketing by Kumar et al. (2020), and voluntary simplicity by Rebouças and Soares (2021).
   (e) *Conceptual reviews* (*or reviews aiming for theory development*) propose new theories, hypotheses, and/or propositions in a review domain. Exemplars of such reviews include the five-dimensional model for sustainability marketing by Lim (2016a), the four-dimensional model for marketing in emerging markets by Paul (2019), the framework for customer engagement by Pansari and Kumar (2017), the integrated model for sustainable consumption by Lim (2017), the sharing economy by Lim (2020b), the 7Ps framework for international marketing by Paul and Mas (2020), and the 10Ps framework for integrated care by Lim (2021a).
2. *Theory-based reviews* examine the development of a specific theory in a review domain. Exemplars of such reviews include the self-determination theory in marketing research by Gilal et al. (2019) and the theory of planned behavior in consumer research by Hassan et al. (2016).
3. *Method-based reviews* explore the development of a specific method in a review domain. Exemplars of such reviews include the development of common method bias in tourism research by Çizel et al. (2020), crowdsourcing in consumer research by Goodman and Paolacci (2017), neuroscience in marketing research by Lim (2018a), netnography in tourism research by Tavakoli and Wijesinghe (2019), and structural equation modeling in marketing research by Hair et al. (2017).
4. *Meta-analytical reviews* focus on statistical assessments of prior research in a review domain, wherein the systematic procedures underpinning literature reviews enable researchers to identify all relevant factors and studies in that review domain prior to quantitative appraisal of synthesis to establish statistical significance and relevance. Exemplars of such reviews include consumer overindebtedness by Frigerio et al. (2020) and health motives and organic food purchases by Rana and Paul (2020).
5. *Meta-systematic reviews* consolidate existing systematic reviews in a review domain. The exemplar of this latest form of review is the systematic review of systematic reviews on behavioral control undertaken by Lim and Weissmann (2021) to introduce a new theory called the theory of behavioral control (see their article for a tabular comparison of review traits).

Though the general understanding is that the systematic literature review methodology produces systematic literature review papers, it is important to note that systematic literature reviews, as a methodology, can also be employed to support the crafting of conceptual papers, as suggested by MacInnis (2011). However, not all review methods for producing conceptual papers can be classified as systematic literature reviews. For example, critical reviews, which are a means to develop conceptual papers, focus on assessing and resolving topical issues in the field through discourse (e.g., Lim, 2018b, 2018c), and thus, they do not adopt nor rely on a stringent set of systematic procedures like systematic literature reviews (Lim et al., 2020). Other types of reviews such as post-published reviews focus on assessing and extending topical issues based on a single publication (e.g., Lim, Ahmad, et al., 2021), and like critical reviews, they are not guided by a rigorous set of systematic procedures, and thus, cannot be classified as systematic literature reviews. Finally, systematic reviews that do not review the literature cannot be

classified as systematic literature reviews, even though such reviews can also contribute to new theory (e.g., Lim's [2021c] review of non-academic articles on COVID-19 and tourism led to the development of the agency and reactance theory of crowding).

3 | WHY A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT BE WRITTEN

Systematic literature reviews can be undertaken for a variety of reasons. Yet, we argue that it is important that researchers conduct systematic literature reviews for the right reasons.

Our position on systematic literature reviews is that such reviews should be undertaken to consolidate knowledge in a domain so that future researchers can use state-of-the-art insights to

1. avoid replicative research that do not substantially advance knowledge,
2. guide the planning of new research to substantially advance knowledge, and
3. support claims of novelty when old and new knowledge are contrasted.

We also strongly discourage researchers to conduct systematic literature reviews for unscrupulous reasons such as

1. to get published (e.g., to build CVs or to meet KPIs, and though we can empathize with the publish or perish culture as we are professors ourselves, the answer is still "no," simply because this is not a good reason to conduct systematic literature reviews or any kind of scholarly research),
2. to avoid "fieldwork" (when it does, albeit on the desktop), and
3. to do "easy" research (when it is not, as meticulous and tedious work is required).

Indeed, the fine line between research that "can" and "should" be done suggests that systematic literature reviews can be "harmful" (when done for the wrong reasons) and "helpful" (when done for the right reasons) to researchers themselves (e.g., career and reputation) and the larger community of researchers (i.e., discipline), policy-makers (i.e., policy), and professionals (i.e., practice). We make this contention based on our experience of receiving submissions that either do not clearly explain why they have conducted the literature review, or worst, make fraudulent claims (e.g., claims that no such review avail when a simple Google Scholar search can prove otherwise). Thus, systematic literature reviews, as a methodology for and a product of research, should be carried out, written, and published for the right reasons.

As mentioned, we highly recommend researchers interested to perform systematic literature reviews to use the ADO (Paul & Benito, 2018), TCM (Paul et al., 2017), TCCM (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019), or 5W1H (Lim, 2020a) framework, or a combination of these frameworks (e.g., the integrated ADO-TCM framework; Lim, Yap, et al., 2021), as an organizing structure because reviews using such frameworks can help others to gain a clear one-stop understanding of the breadth and depth (or coverage) of theories, constructs, characteristics, contexts, and methods required to justify and perform empirical research, and thus, delivering a more profound impact in advancing the field (as seen in reviews adopting such frameworks—e.g., Chen et al., 2021; Mandler et al., 2021).

4 | WHEN A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT BE WRITTEN

Unlike empirical research that can be carried out in any given point in time, the decision of when the time is "right" to conduct systematic literature reviews can be relatively complicated. Building on Paul and Criado's (2020) article, we present four suggestions to help researchers decide when they should perform systematic literature reviews:

1. When a substantial body of work in the domain exists (e.g., at least 40 articles for review).
   - A domain with 40 articles or more indicates that the domain has reached sufficient maturity for review, and thus, enabling systematic literature reviews to make a substantial contribution to that domain (see Paul & Criado, 2020).
   - A domain with less than 40 articles for review may signify that the domain is either at an infancy stage (e.g., less than 2 years old) or at a juncture of little interest among researchers, and thus, we encourage researchers to consider writing a position paper instead to stimulate additional research in such a domain (see MacInnis, 2011).
2. When no systematic literature review in the domain exists in recent years (e.g., within the last 5 years).
   - A lot of events could happen within 5 years, and thus, a domain that has not been reviewed recently may be suitable for a systematic literature review, provided that the domain has substantially progressed within that period (e.g., at least 40 new articles within the last 5 years).
   - If a domain has not been reviewed within the last 5 years and no substantial progress is observed (e.g., less than 40 articles within the last 5 years), then researchers can consider our previous suggestion to write a position paper to fertilize the domain with new ideas. Conducting a systematic literature review at this juncture will likely lead to insights that replicate existing systematic literature reviews, thereby producing little value for readers.
3. When no review of the domain exists in high-quality journals (e.g., CABS = 4*/4/3, ABDC = A*/A, WOS or Scopus = Q1/Q2, SCI or SSCI = Impact Factor ≥ 1).
   - A domain with existing systematic literature reviews that are not published in high-quality journals indicates an opportunity for conducting, writing, and publishing high-quality systematic

literature reviews. Such a situation may suggest that the domain may be short of researchers who possess methodological expertize to conduct such reviews, and thus, we encourage researchers with disciplinary expertize to collaborate with researchers with methodological expertize to produce high-quality systematic literature reviews that can advance knowledge in that domain at the highest level.

- A domain with existing systematic literature reviews that are published in high-quality journals indicates that any new systematic literature reviews, no matter how great the quality will be, should be avoided as such reviews will unlikely produce substantially new insights for readers, unless apparent gaps or shortchanges can be identified, which we will elaborate in our next suggestion.
- Note: CABS = Chartered Association of Business Schools Academic Journal Guide. ABDC = Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality List. WOS = Web of Science Journal Citations Report Quartiles. SCI = Science Citation Index Impact Factors. SSCI = Social Sciences Citation Index Impact Factors. Scopus = Scimago Quartiles.

4. When existing systematic literature reviews have gaps or shortchanges.
   - A domain with existing systematic literature reviews that are published in high-quality journals in recent years can only benefit from a new systematic literature review that offers substantially new insights. This means that any new systematic literature review in the domain must be able to highlight the gaps and shortchanges of existing systematic literature reviews and to explain how it intends to close those gaps and provide a superior review that will drive the progress of the domain forward substantially. Lim, Yap, et al. (2021) provides an exemplary systematic literature review with respect to this suggestion, which could inspire researchers to reflect on the state of systematic literature reviews in their own domains.
   - Any new systematic literature reviews in a domain that cannot illustrate the gaps or shortchanges of existing systematic literature reviews are highly discouraged. We opine that any available resources (e.g., effort, energy, space, and time) for such reviews should be (re)invested in conducting empirical research that can contribute to advancing knowledge in that domain. Alternatively, such resources can also be invested in systematic literature reviews in other domains where such reviews are truly required for the right reasons, as we mentioned previously.

5 | WHERE A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT BE WRITTEN

Given that one of the overarching goals of systematic literature reviews is to advance knowledge in the domain, we opine that such reviews, when rigorously conducted and well justified, should be submitted and published at outlets that will have maximum impact. Such outlets are typically

1. author centric (e.g., provide higher word limitations for systematic literature reviews, free copies of authored reviews to share with networks, free downloads of high-impact reviews, and quick turnaround for peer reviews and from acceptance to publication),
2. have high readership (e.g., as per citations, downloads, and reputation in the discipline),
3. easily accessible (e.g., major publishers subscribed by most higher education institutions, such as Elsevier, Wiley, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Francis, and Emerald),
4. highly affordable (e.g., open access or subscribed by higher education institutions, and thus, little to no cost to readers), and
5. readily available (e.g., electronic copies).

Such characteristics, in our view, are often seen in premier journals (i.e., high impact factor, highly ranked). Therefore, we would highly encourage researchers to do a good job in crafting their systematic literature reviews and to target premier journals that explicitly welcomes or have a track record of publishing such reviews as potential homes for their reviews—doing otherwise will risk the review not achieving its intended impact for the domain it was written.

6 | WHO SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT WRITE A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Given that systematic literature reviews are a complex form of research, we opine that such reviews should only be undertaken by disciplinary and methodological experts. Our contention is founded on the premise that such reviews can shape the future of the domain, and thus, they should not be undertaken by researchers or research teams that do not possess such expertize—as doing so may place the future of that domain in jeopardy, especially when underdeveloped, or worst, misrepresented insights are published and relied upon. Thus, we highly encourage multi-expert collaborations, particularly among domain and systematic review experts, for systematic literature review endeavors.

7 | HOW A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT BE WRITTEN: THE SPAR-4-SLR PROTOCOL

The preparation of a protocol is fundamental to systematic literature reviews, as a protocol ensures careful planning, consistency in implementation, and transparency enabling replication. In other words, a protocol enables researchers to anticipate problems, reduce arbitrariness, promote accountability, and uphold research integrity.

Few protocols for systematic literature reviews exist. Most often, researchers conducting systematic literature reviews rely

on the preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis (PRISMA) protocols (PRISMA-P) by Moher et al. (2009) or Moher et al. (2015). Though PRISMA and PRISMA-P are both relatively comprehensive as they allow researchers to report their reviews orderly, rigorously, and transparently, they were developed for systematic reviews in general and provided little rationales that researchers could use to justify their review decisions.

To address these limitations, we propose an alternative protocol that we developed specifically for systematic literature reviews, and we call this new protocol as the *Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews* protocol, or in short, the *SPAR-4-SLR* protocol. In essence, the SPAR-4-SLR protocol, which we introduce in Figure 1 and elaborate in Table 1, consists of three stages and six sub-stages that flow sequentially, namely

1. *assembling*, which involves (1a) *identification* and (1b) *acquisition* of literature that have not been synthesized,
2. *arranging*, which involves (2a) *organization* and (2b) *purification* of literature that are in the process of being synthesized, and
3. *assessing*, which involves (3a) *evaluation* and (3b) *reporting* of literature that have been synthesized.

Systematic literature reviews assembling, arranging, and assessing literature based on the SPAR-4-SLR protocol should be able to deliver (1) state-of-the-art insights of and (2) stimulating agendas to advance knowledge in the review domain. More importantly, the delivery of such insights and agendas using the SPAR-4-SLR protocol will be (1) thoroughly justified based on logical and pragmatic rationales, and (2) transparently reported based on the stages and sub-stages. We strongly discourage authors who plan to use the SPAR-4-SLR protocol to modify the arrangements and conventions in the protocol—as doing so can jeopardize the rigor (e.g., efficiency and efficacy) of the protocol for systematic literature reviews.

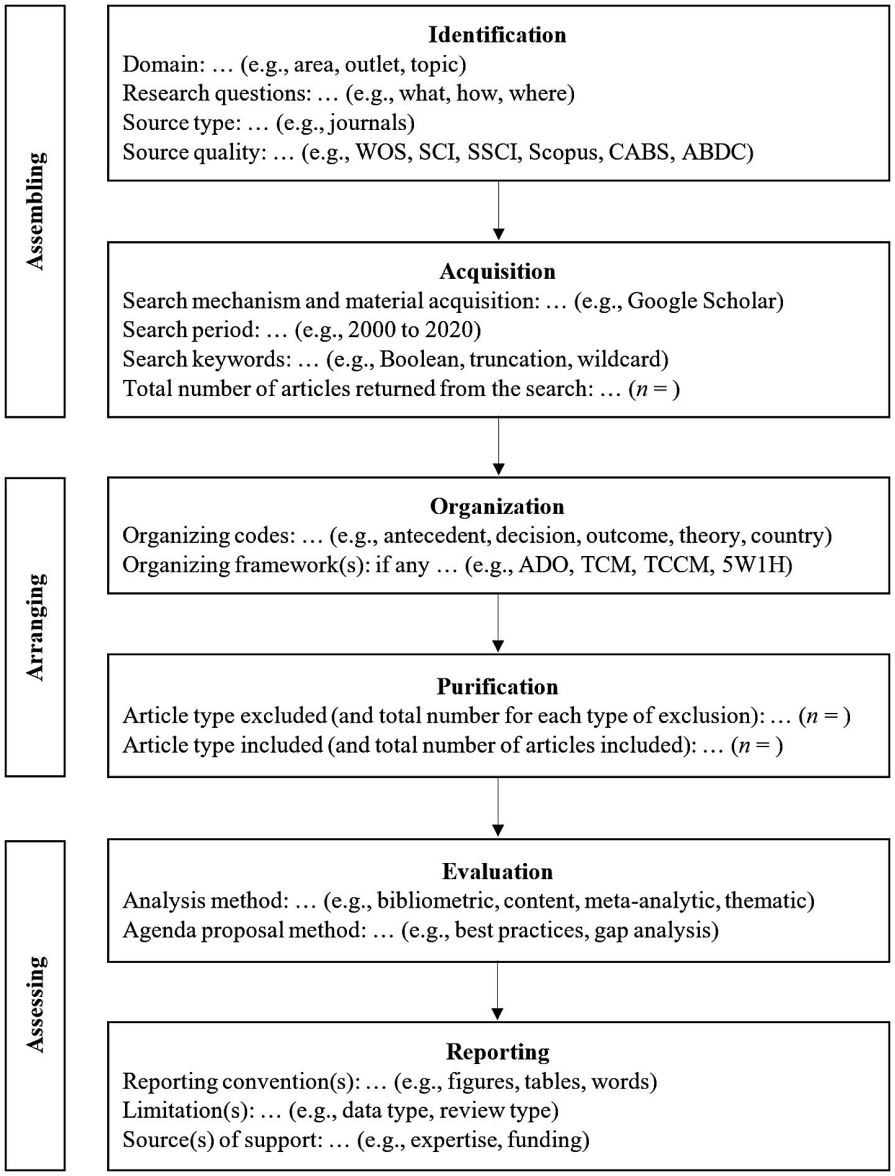

FIGURE 1 The SPAR-4-SLR protocol

TABLE 1 The SPAR-4-SLR protocol

Stage	Sub-stage	Criterion	Action	Rationale(s)
Assembling	Identification	Domain	Define the domain.	To set the area (e.g., financial literacy), outlet (e.g., *International Journal of Consumer Studies*), or topic (e.g., reference points in consumer choice model) that will take center stage in the review.
		Research question	Define the research question on "What do we know about …?"	To guide discovery of bibliometrics, characteristics, constructs, relationships, and/or themes in the domain.
			Define the research question on "How do we know about …?"	To guide discovery of theories, contexts, and methods in the domain.
			Define the research question on "Where should … be heading?"	To ground the development of an agenda for the domain.
		Source type	Define inclusion and exclusion of sources of published material.	Academic sources, particularly academic journals, are most preferred as they (1) contribute to scholarly advancement and (2) undergo rigorous peer review. Other academic sources are less preferred for a variety of reasons. Books and book chapters are less preferred as they are less likely to contribute substantially to scholarly advancement (i.e., explanatory > exploratory). Conference proceedings are less preferred as they often do not undergo rigorous peer review (usually little to no peer reviews) and they are typically research in progress. Dissertations or theses are less preferred as they are usually undertaken to demonstrate research capability rather than to make novel contributions to the domain, especially at bachelor and master levels. Nonetheless, academic sources other than academic journals may be included if (1) they are part and parcel of the norms in that domain, or if (2) they are needed to form sufficient literature (e.g., 40 or more articles) for the review. Non-academic sources such as market reports, news articles, and white or working papers should not be included as they are not formally a part of the literature.
		Source quality	Define the quality of sources of published material.	Academic journals have various source quality lists that can be used to guide the identification of journals where articles for review are acquired. The action item here requires researchers to identify and justify (1) the selection of journal quality list, followed by (2) the area(s) in that list, and (3) the journal quality threshold(s) that will be considered. Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus are the most popular journal quality lists because they transcend across disciplines. WOS indexes less journals than Scopus due to its highly stringent indexing criteria (e.g., SSCI and SCI have but ESCI does not have impact factors), whereas Scopus has a broader range of subject areas and categories than WOS, which enables scholars to better locate journals based on areas that are most relevant to the review domain. Therefore, WOS can be used to curate a manageable collection of articles for review when researchers encounter thousands of articles in subject areas of established and rich review domains, whereas Scopus can be used to curate a larger pool of articles in emerging domains at high-quality journals when researchers encounter tens to hundreds of articles in subject areas relevant to the domain under review. Using journal quality thresholds can be considered to manage the number of articles reviewed, wherein articles included are published in the top percentiles of journals in relevant subject areas and/or categories (e.g., Q1 and/or Q2 or equivalent impact factors or cite scores based on the last journal appearing in those quartiles). Importantly, we recommend limiting the subject areas and/or categories chosen to address or manage the different quartile ranks that journals may have with respect to the subject areas and/or categories that they appear in (e.g., Q1 in marketing, Q3 in strategy and management). Alternatively, impact factor thresholds can be considered (e.g., ≥ 1).

TABLE 1 (*Continued*)

Stage	Sub-stage	Criterion	Action	Rationale(s)
				The Chartered Association of Business Schools Academic Journal Guide (CABS AJG) and the Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality List (ABDC JQL) are most popular in the business discipline. Like the scenarios for WOS and Scopus, the CABS AJG includes a lesser number of journals as compared to the ABDC JQL. Thus, the CABS AJG can be used to manage the high number of articles in established and rich review domains, whereas the ABDC JQL can be used to curate a larger pool of articles in emerging domains at high-quality journals. Another way to justify the use of one discipline-based journal quality list over the other is to rely on recency—for example, the ABDC JQL, which was updated in 2019, may be selected over the CABS AJG, which was updated in 2018. Moreover, using discipline-based journal quality list can also avoid the situation of having to reconcile the quality thresholds of journals in WOS and Scopus, as journals are typically assigned to only one category and thus one journal rank in discipline-based journal quality lists. Such journal lists are also less volatile to rank changes, as they are reviewed every few years by disciplinary experts (CABS AJG, ABDC JQL) rather than yearly based on citations (WOS, Scopus). More importantly, we recommend choosing only one journal quality list to inform the review, as using multiple journal quality lists will require a separate assessment and consolidation of journal titles, which is an endeavor that appear to be inefficient in our view. No ranked source quality list exists for books, book chapters, conference proceedings, dissertations, and theses. If these sources are included, researchers are encouraged to consider curating their own source quality thresholds—for example, inclusion of books and book chapters published by reputable publishers only (e.g., Elsevier, Wiley, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Francis, and Emerald), conference proceedings indexed in WOS or Scopus, and dissertations and theses at the doctoral level from universities listed in the Times Higher Education (THE) or Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings. Specifying source quality upfront is sensible because (1) the coverage area or quality list are already known, (2) it helps to ensure that all eligible sources have been covered, and (3) it reduces the number of articles from sources that the review does not wish to consider.
	Acquisition	Search mechanism and material acquisition	Define the search mechanism used to source of articles.	There are a number of pragmatic ways to search and acquire articles for review. Researchers can rely on Google Scholar, which is a search engine that indexes most, if not all, scholarly publications (including in press articles) much quicker as compared to other potential mechanisms that could be used for article search. It is also easily accessible and freely available. In addition, Google Scholar, when signed in using institutional accounts, is often connected to myriad publishers, and thus, enabling researchers to download articles for review without going through multiple touchpoints (e.g., no need to log into each publisher to download articles). Alternatively, researchers can rely on databases such as WOS or Scopus as search engines, which can perform as well as Google Scholar in terms of the completeness of search results returned, though a time lag may occur for some scholarly publications (e.g., latest issue, in press articles). The advantage that WOS and Scopus have over Google Scholar is the bibliometric details that they can provide for researchers to download, which is especially useful for reviews relying heavily on bibliometric analysis. They also do not produce search results that include predatory journals, which may be rampant on Google Scholar. Similarly, they are connected to myriad publishers when researchers sign in using their institutional accounts.

TABLE 1 (*Continued*)

Stage	Sub-stage	Criterion	Action	Rationale(s)
				We do not recommend conducting manual search on other databases (e.g., ProQuest and ScienceDirect) or publishers (e.g., Elsevier, Wiley, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Francis, and Emerald) *unless* non-journal articles are sought or it is used as a cross-check mechanism, as (1) significant literature may be omitted, and (2) doing so will create additional touchpoints, and thus, increasing chances of error and inefficiency. We also do not recommend using multiple search engines as doing so will require researchers to consolidate duplications that emerge from what we believe is a redundant and an unproductive endeavor.
		Search period	Define the period for search.	This refers to the start and end date for the search. For emerging domains where literature is scant or emerging, we recommend leaving the start date open, but including the end date to signal the time in which the search would cover (as it is important for the purpose of transparency in reporting). For established and matured domains where literature is abundant or rich, we recommend defining reasonable start (e.g., a significant milestone—e.g., 10, 20, or 30 years, or the year with a significant turn of events) and end (similar reason as the former) dates.
		Search keyword(s)	Define the keyword(s) for search.	This refers to the keyword(s) that will be used for the search. Operators such as Boolean (e.g., multiple keywords are included with the word "OR"—we do not suggest "AND" as it is limiting), truncation (e.g., consum* = consume, consumer, consumerism, consumption), and wildcards (e.g., behavio?r = behavior, behaviour; wom!*n* = woman, women) are recommended. Keywords can be chosen though brainstorming among researchers in the research team, which should consist of disciplinary (e.g., marketing), and if possible, subject-matter (e.g., consumption) expert(s).
Arranging	Organization	Organizing codes	Define the codes.	This refers to the code book that researchers rely upon to code and record each article returned from the search. The codes will depend on what type of systematic literature review is conducted. For example, bibliometric reviews can code articles in terms of citation, reference, journal title, article type (conceptual/editorial/empirical/review/other), year, number of citations, keywords, country, and institution in a single tab in an Excel document, whereas framework-based reviews relying on the integrated ADO-TCM framework can code articles in terms of (1) antecedents and decisions in rows and decisions and consequences in columns in one tab (ADO) and (2) citation, reference, journal title, article type (conceptual/editorial/empirical/review/other), year, number of citations, theory, country, population (domestic/international), method (conceptual/quantitative/qualitative/experimental + additional open-ended column for specific method), and data (primary/secondary + additional open-ended column for specific data) in another tab (TCM) in an Excel document. Entries include citations, ticks, and/or votes (see Kahiya [2018] and Lim, Yap, et al. [2021]).
	Purification	Article type	Define articles for inclusion and exclusion.	Once the articles have been fully coded, researchers will now be in an informed position to better decide which articles will and will not proceed to the review. Any decision to filter articles earlier may lead to errors in omission (e.g., omitting articles that may appear irrelevant on the surface, which may be caused by poor titles or abstracts, but may in fact be relevant when read in detail). Triangulation with existing literature reviews, if any, may be considered as a cross-check mechanism to ensure seminal articles are included (not excluded). Several criteria can be used for article exclusion, wherein the remaining articles are included and progressed for review assessment. First, duplicates should be removed. Second, predatory titles, which bear the same name as original titles, should be removed. Third, if the review is only interested in empirical articles, then other types of articles should be removed (e.g., editorials and reviews). Fourth, if the review is only interested in journal articles, then non-journal titles should be removed (as journal titles with generic names such as "*Managerial Finance*" or "*Tourism Management*" often appear in results returned from the acquisition stage). Finally, the articles that were removed and the reasons underpinning their removal should be noted in detail (e.g., how many articles were removed because they were duplicates, published in predatory titles, non-empirical, and non-journal titles).

TABLE 1 *(Continued)*

Stage	Sub-stage	Criterion	Action	Rationale(s)
Assessing	Evaluation	Analysis method	Define methods to analyze articles under review.	The methods to analyze articles under review will depend on what type of systematic literature review is conducted. For example, bibliometric reviews can rely on bibliographic modeling (e.g., co-authorship analysis, co-citation analysis, and social network analysis) and topic modeling (e.g., bibliographic coupling, cluster analysis, and keyword co-occurrence analysis). Meta-analytical reviews can rely on meta-analytical analysis (e.g., meta-analytic structural equation modeling or meta-analytic regression analysis) to analyze statistically combined findings. Other types of reviews such as structured and framework-based reviews can rely on content (e.g., descriptive—journal with the most articles, articles with the most citations and average citations per year, and most popular theories, contexts, and methods) and thematic (e.g., clustering and vote counting of concepts and relationships—see Kahiya [2018] and Lim, Yap, et al. [2021]) analyses. Methods to ensure rigor (e.g., trustworthiness, reliability, and validity), as in empirical qualitative and quantitative studies, should be reported.
		Agenda proposal method	Define best practices, gaps, and areas for future research.	Best practices and gaps should be identified based on review of existing literature. Future research directions should be informed by these best practices and gaps so that the review of existing literature and the suggested directions to curate new literature do not appear independent of each other. Stating of research questions and propositions that can be investigated by future research is recommended.
	Reporting	Reporting convention	State acknowledgements and summarize findings.	Systematic literature reviews cater to diverse readers, and thus, a combination of discussions (words) and summaries (visuals) is highly recommended. Limitations and sources of support should also be acknowledged.

8 | EXEMPLARS OF SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEWS

Before concluding, we present summaries of systematic literature reviews that were accepted for publication in the inaugural annual special issue on systematic literature reviews in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. We thank all submitting authors and reviewers for their investment in this special issue, and we hope that our readers will appreciate and enjoy the collection of systematic literature reviews in consumer studies that we have curated.

Akhmedova et al.'s (2021) review on service quality in the sharing economy using a hybrid approach involving bibliometrics and structures on 40 articles indexed in Scopus and WOS reveals four research clusters around the themes of risks, service quality, trust, and value creation. Their review also unpacks the antecedents (e.g., online-, offline-, and peer-related factors), decisions (e.g., economic, emotional, functional, and social), and outcomes (e.g., behavioral intentions, consumer satisfaction, perceived risk, and trust) of service quality in the sharing economy.

Barari et al.'s (2021) review on customer engagement behavior provides a meta-analysis that integrates data consisting of 196 effect sizes from a sample of 146,380 cases from 184 articles. Their review indicates that customer engagement manifested through two pathways, namely the organic pathway, which is relationship-oriented, and the promoted pathway, which is firm-initiated, and that these pathways may be moderated by cultural and engagement contexts as well as product and industry types.

Billore and Anisimova's (2021) review on panic buying using the 3W1H structure (i.e., what, where, how, and why) and the TCCM framework (i.e., the theories, constructs, characteristics, and methods framework developed by Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019) sheds light on the external environmental factors, consumer internal factors, and pre-, during, and post-panic behavioral responses in panic buying research. Their review also provides directions from the consumer and retailer perspectives as well as that involving broader societal issues and crisis management that will be worthwhile exploring in future research.

Bölen et al.'s (2021) review on flow theory was underpinned by the information systems life cycle (i.e., adoption, continuance, and discontinuance). Their review, which considers 81 peer-reviewed articles from 2000 to 2019, suggests that the technology acceptance model, the expectation-confirmation model, the information systems success model, and the theory of planned behavior are the most used theories alongside flow theory in information systems. They also suggest that the antecedents, dimensions, and consequences of flow vary depending on the stage of information systems in the life cycle.

Chaudhary et al.'s (2021) review on littering behavior consists of 70 journal articles over 48 years. Their review indicates that littering attitudes, intentions, and behavior, including its attribution and justifiability, are directly influenced by demographic, educational, psychological, situational, and reinforcement factors, with some factors assuming a dual role (e.g., dependent factors as mediators and

independent factors as moderators). Their review also indicates that most studies on littering behavior are confined to developed countries, thereby calling for additional studies on the topic in developing and less developed countries.

Darveau and Cheikh-Ammar's (2021) review on liminality and consumption using 140 articles from 23 CABS AJG-ranked journals retrieved through the PRISMA protocol unpacks the conceptual associations between liminality and consumption (i.e., liminal products, liminal consumption, consumption-caused liminality, and their unique manifestations) as well as the modes of liminal experiences (i.e., body, position, space, and time). Their review also sheds light on the theories (e.g., actor network theory, family discourse theory, and paradox theory), contexts (e.g., communities and identity- and object-related transitions) and methods (e.g., conceptual, qualitative, and quantitative) employed in prior research that can be used to inform future research in the area.

Du et al.'s (2021) review on supply chain agility using the PRISMA protocol and 35 articles from 21 CABS AJG-ranked journals highlights the changes in consumer requirements, competition, marketplace, society, and technology, and how companies can respond to these changes to develop supply chain agility, which can create or preserve competitive advantages and produce positive impacts on consumer satisfaction, market share, profitability, sales, and velocity to market.

Hungara and Nobre's (2021) review on consumer culture theory using 48 articles across 24 different journals explains the typology of consumption communities (e.g., small vs. large groups), concepts (e.g., assemblage thinking and consumption experiences) and theories (e.g., service dominant logic; social capital, exchange, network, and practice theories), as well as the antecedents (e.g., anti-brand community participation; attachment or ownership to brands, products, and services; and hedonic and utilitarian community factors), mediators/moderators (e.g., community type and sociocultural issues), and consequences (e.g., ephemerality, identity co-creation, and subcultural antagonism) often studied using consumer culture theory.

Khatoon and Rehman's (2021) review on negative emotions in consumer-brand relationships uses the PRISMA protocol and organizes the final set of 55 articles based on two frameworks: the TCM framework (i.e., theories, contexts, and methods) developed by Paul et al. (2017) and the ADE framework (i.e., antecedents, emotions, and outcomes), which is a modified version of the ADO framework (i.e., antecedents, decisions, and outcomes) devised by Paul and Benito (2018). Their review, which is anchored upon Fournier's (1998) seminal article on consumer-brand relationship theory and Shaver et al.'s (1987) hierarchical theory of emotions, charts the negative emotions in consumer-brand relationships into three emotional clusters: anger (six constructs and 23 sub-constructs), sadness (six constructs and 31 sub-constructs), and fear (two constructs and 15 sub-constructs). Their review also calls for additional research in understudied negative emotions such as anxiety, distress, fear, guilt, and hate.

Montoro-Pons et al.'s (2021) review on music consumption performs bibliometric analyses (e.g., co-citation and bibliographic coupling) on 455 academic documents in business, economics, and management journals indexed in the WOS and published in the past 20 years. Their review highlights the prominence of the United States and the United Kingdom as countries that produce the most output and impact on music consumption research. Their review also reveals seven clusters of focal papers on music consumption research based on co-citation analysis, namely (1) information, intellectual property, and infringement, (2) consumer behavior, (3) music industry organization and strategic approaches, (4) embracing disruption, (5) marketing the arts, (6) information economics, and (7) consumer innovativeness and ethical consumption. Their review further unveils six research clusters on music consumption based on bibliographic coupling of documents between 2000 and 2009 (i.e., piracy and file sharing; marketing and business strategies; and music production, innovation, and value creation) and between 2010 and 2019 (i.e., social networks and digital music; streaming and live music; and a revisit of privacy) periods.

Nanda and Banerjee's (2021) review on consumers' subjective financial well-being using a hybrid-narrative approach and 128 articles published between 1978 and 2020 results in an organizing framework that highlights the macro- (e.g., cultural, economic, geographical, and technological) and micro- (e.g., financial service providers, financial intermediaries, and consumers) level factors involved in maintaining consumers' subjective financial well-being (e.g., financial freedom, happiness, and satisfaction) as well as the outcomes of having that well-being (e.g., family and health well-being, overall life satisfaction, and smart shopper image).

Riboldazzi et al.'s (2021) review on private label consumer studies using 145 studies published over five decades reveals three overarching themes relating to research on private label, namely buyer characteristics and perceptions (e.g., consumer profile and perceived characteristics), marketing stimuli (e.g., development and innovation; marketing mix- and retailing mix-related factors and evaluations), and post-purchase-related factors (e.g., consumer loyalty and post-purchase behavior). Their review also reveals the theories (e.g., attitude theory, attribution theory, big five theory, brand equity theory, cue utilization theory, prospect theory, signaling theory, utility theory, and theory of reasoned action), contexts (e.g., channel characteristics, product categories, and geographic areas), and methods (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, and mixed) in existing research that can inform future research in the area.

Shahab et al.'s (2021) review on elaboration likelihood model using 68 empirical articles published in WOS's Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) or Science Citation Index (SCI) journals with an impact factor more than one indicates that the theory has been widely applied across communication medium (e.g., computer-related mediums such as e-brochures, social networking sites, and websites), contexts (e.g., marketing, psychology, and health), and countries (e.g., Australia, China, and United States). Their review also indicates that content marketing and promotional messages can affect the central and peripheral routes of persuading and inspiring consumers, especially those with a high degree of personal

innovativeness and a high tendency to seek novelty, act, and perform desired behaviors.

Södergren's (2021) review on brand authenticity using 73 articles from 33 CABS AJG-ranked journals reveals that its research is focused on three major areas, namely the distinguishing characteristics between authentic and inauthentic brands, the legitimizing function of brand authenticity, and the emotional and moral aspects of brand authentication. Their review also consolidates the antecedents (i.e., brand virtuousness and perceived connection to the past), decisions (i.e., communication, commitment, coolness, and connection), and consequences (i.e., brand loyalty, brand trust, cultural iconicity, and perceived quality) of brand authenticity for easy reference by prospective scholars in the area.

Turan's (2021) review on the success drivers of co-branding provides a meta-analysis that integrates data of 197 effect sizes from 37 independent studies reported in 27 articles in CABS AJG-ranked journals. Their review indicates that the relationship between partner brands has a significantly larger impact on the success of co-branding than individual brand characteristics, and that brand image fit is a more important driver of co-branding success than brand equity and product-category fit. These findings were found to be generalizable across different types of business, co-branding strategy, and industry.

Valinatajbahnamiri and Siahtiri's (2021) review on flow in computer-mediated environments involves 137 articles in SSCI's "business, management, and marketing," "psychology," and "information systems" journals. Their review sheds light on the multidimensional, cognitive absorption, unidimensional, and descriptive streams that can be used to structure flow; the person-, artifact-, and task-related antecedents of flow; and the cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences of flow in computer-mediated environments.

Vrontis et al.'s (2021) review on social media influencer marketing using 68 articles from 29 CABS AJG-ranked journals sheds light on the relationships between source characteristics, psychological-related influential factors, content attributes, and sponsorship disclosure with consumer outcomes. Their review also provides a strategic assessment of social media influencer marketing as a marketing tool and an integrative multidimensional framework that considers the antecedents, mediators, and moderators of potential outcomes, including the contextual factors, relating to social media influencer marketing and consumer behavior.

Other systematic literature reviews that form an extended part of the inaugural special issue (i.e., reviews that were submitted around a similar time under the regular "review" category) that will be worthwhile exploring include Bhatia et al.'s (2021) review on life insurance purchase behavior, Cavalinhos et al.'s (2021) review on in-store mobile device usage, Goyal and Kumar's (2021) review on financial literacy, Kapoor and Banerjee's (2021) review on brand scandal, Mamun et al.'s (2021) review on Islamic marketing, Mishra et al.'s (2021) review on omnichannel retailing, Rebouças and Soares's (2021) review on voluntary simplicity, Tanrikulu's (2021) review on theory of consumption values, and Wang et al.'s (2021) review on consumer choice models and reference points.

9 | CONCLUSION

To this end, we concur with Kumar et al. (2020) that a domain advances when literature in that domain is logically synthesized. We hope that the SPAR-4-SLR protocol, which we developed based on our collective expertize and experiences of authoring, editing, and reviewing literature reviews, including those submitted to this special issue, will help researchers to gain a better understanding of the multi-faceted decisions and equivalent rationales that entail in systematic literature reviews. We highly encourage *researchers* to consider adopting our protocol to develop rigorous and transparent systematic literature reviews that are useful and impactful, and *peer reviewers*, when invited to review systematic literature reviews, to pro-actively craft review feedback that are thoughtful, useful, fair, respectful, and action-oriented (see Lim, 2021b).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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