



# Looking back to look ahead: MRQ's past five years of evidence-based management research in numbers

Joern Block<sup>1,2,3</sup> · Leif Brändle<sup>4</sup>

Published online: 2 November 2022

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022

## Abstract

The literature base of business and management research is constantly growing and becoming more complex. Hence, the need for an evidence-focused review journal such as Management Review Quarterly (MRQ) is also growing. Literature reviews, meta-analyses, replications, and bibliographic studies help to consolidate and integrate the field's evidence and knowledge and set the agenda for future research. MRQ has found its place in the management field and has seen a constant rise in the number of submissions and impact. This editorial aims to take stock. It looks back to look ahead by reflecting on the number of submissions, the journal's scope in terms of international coverage, methods, and topics, and its impact over the last five years. The editorial closes with an outlook for the next five years and discusses the uniqueness of MRQ as an evidence-focused review journal.

**Keywords** Management · Literature reviews · Replication studies · Meta-analyses · Bibliometric reviews

**JEL Classification** L10 · L20 · L30 · M10 · M20 · M30 · M40 · M50

## 1 Introduction

Business and management research has seen a substantial increase in the number and type of journals and their literature base. The literature reviews, meta-analyses, and bibliographic investigations of MRQ and other (review) journals reflect this development and are becoming more complex. The number of publications

---

✉ Joern Block  
block@uni-trier.de

<sup>1</sup> Trier University, Trier, Germany

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

<sup>3</sup> Wittener Institut für Familienunternehmen, Universität Witten/Herdecke, Witten, Germany

<sup>4</sup> University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany

summarized therein is also on a constant rise. For instance, in MRQ's recent bibliographic studies we find a substantial increase in the reviewed literature across different fields of management and business research. While the increasing number of studies provides a chance for the field to move forward, there is a risk of knowledge becoming fuzzy and integrations becoming more complex; keeping up with the entire literature stream on a particular topic is almost impossible. Hence, there is a clear need for the "products" of a review journal like MRQ.

*Structured literature reviews* allow the systematic identification and integration of large numbers of studies, integrating them into a broad and often holistic conceptual framework and setting the ground for future research. *Replication studies* help to increase confidence in the results of original studies. Many replications prepare the ground for *meta-analyses* that consolidate specific findings based on the evidence of many individual empirical studies. Finally, *bibliometric reviews* rigorously follow the trajectory of evolving literature stocks to uncover the structure and dynamics of the knowledge in the respective field.

MRQ is at the heart of contributing to the empirical grounding of business and management research. Once started in 1951 as a German language journal in Vienna, MRQ is one of the oldest academic journals on business and management studies. Building on this legacy and turning MRQ into a "pure" review journal as its unique characteristic, the journal has significantly broadened its geographical scope and impact in terms of audience and contributors over the last years.

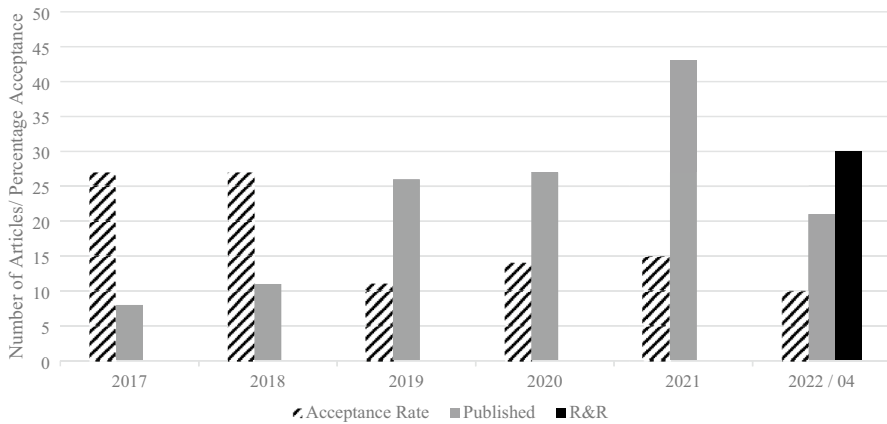
In the style of MRQ as a review journal, this short editorial aims to take stock of what the journal has achieved in the past five years. We use empirical evidence from Springer, our publisher, and various other databases, such as Elsevier's Scopus, to reflect on the development of MRQ. Based on this reflection, we share thoughts on where the journal is heading in the coming five years, inviting the management and business research community to become part of this journey.

## 2 The last 5 years in numbers

### 2.1 More publications – but not at the expense of quality and rigor

To start with an evidence-based reflection on MRQ in the past five years, the increase in the number of published articles per year is one of the most important developments. As a quarterly journal, MRQ started with two articles per issue in 2017 and increased its quarterly publications to 8 articles per issue in 2022. In 2021, MRQ saw 43 publications (including online first articles) and 289 submissions. The number of submissions continues to rise as the journal has received 184 submissions in the first four months of 2022 (552 expected for 2022). MRQ's growing reviewer board is currently dealing with about 30 revisions, some of which might soon pass the publication bar.

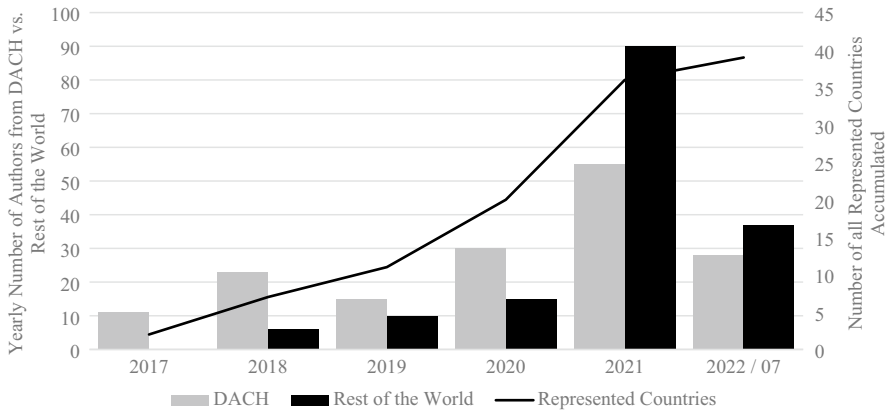
In its early days of becoming an international peer-reviewed journal, MRQ received fewer submissions but accepted relatively more articles in the peer-review process (accepted 27% of the submissions in 2017). With the increasing number of submissions, MRQ has sharpened its profile and developed new (stricter) criteria for



**Fig. 1** Acceptance rate and published articles in MRQ per year

publishing with the journal (e.g., Kuckertz and Block, 2021; Block and Fisch 2020). In an attempt to hold up to its standards of systematic and transparent methods, replicable findings, and actionable insights for management researchers and practitioners, the journal experienced acceptance rates of 15% in 2021 and 10% in the first quarter of 2022 (Figs. 1). However, future contributors to MRQ should consider that about 11% of the submitted articles in 2021 did not go through the review process due to authors' withdrawal, leaving the adjusted rejection rate at 73%. Regarding the first 25 rejection decisions in 2022, the primary reasons for more than half of the desk rejects have been: 1) a lack of conceptual development (i.e., studies have been exclusively descriptive), followed by 2) (original) empirical studies that are outside the methodological scope of MRQ, and 3) manuscripts that are far too short in the depth of the communicated content. We can only encourage potential contributors to carefully read and consider our editorials, which will likely help to avoid early dropouts.

The editorial and reviewer board has taken care of relatively fast decisions, not unnecessarily delaying the submission and publication process. Authors received, on average, a rejection decision from the journal after 15 days in 2021 (14 days until 05/2022). The revision process, including one or more rounds, has led to 205 days on average in 2021 until a paper at MRQ receives its final acceptance (211 until 05/2022). After acceptance, it takes another 16 days on average (in 2021) until Springer publishes the paper as an online first article. To keep up with the increasing number of submissions and the journal's standards, Management Review Quarterly significantly increased its reviewer board by more than 40 scholars worldwide. MRQ has also welcomed two new co-editors, Peter Limbach and Stefan Lier. Peter Limbach covers submissions on accounting and taxes as well as corporate finance and governance, while Stefan Lier is responsible for the supply chain and production management.



**Fig. 2** Internationalization of the author base of MRQ

## 2.2 The journal's international scope

One of the major challenges that MRQ faced was transforming the journal from a German-language DACH-focused journal to an English-language international journal. Assessing the number of authors on publications in MRQ from German-speaking regions (DACH) versus the rest of the world shows that in 2021 the journal reached an important milestone in its attempts to internationalize (Fig. 2). For the first time, more authors (90 vs. 55) contributing to publications in MRQ declared their respective home institution to be in a non-German-speaking country. As of 2022, the authors contributing to MRQ come from more than 39 countries. While in 2021 most authors declared their institutional base in Europe (78), 46 authors referred to their institutions located in Asian countries (Africa: 4; North America: 8; South America: 9).

## 2.3 Broadening the scope of methods

Most articles published in MRQ in the past five years are systematic literature reviews (68%), while bibliometric studies represent 16%, editorials 6%, replication studies 8%, and meta-analyses 3% of all publications.<sup>1</sup> The impact in terms of citations<sup>2</sup> indicates that the journal's readers acknowledge MRQ's typical methods. Most of the journal's citations stem from systematic literature reviews (72%). Also, regarding the number of average citations per paper in the past five years, systematic literature reviews take the lead (8.8 citations), followed by meta-analyses (5.5 citations), bibliographical studies (4 citations), and replication studies (2.4 citations). The relatively low number of citations for replications is, in our view, not a sign of poor quality. It simply reflects the state of our field, where replications still have to

<sup>1</sup> We used the database Scopus to export a list of all articles published in MRQ in the period between 2017 and June 2022.

<sup>2</sup> When referring to citations in this editorial, we draw on citation counts provided by the Scopus database.

build their legitimacy and find their way into the scholarly community (Block and Kuckertz 2018; Block et al. 2022a, b). MRQ aims to take the lead in this regard and help replications perceived as a legitimate and essential article type in management and business research. Interestingly, on average, MRQ editorials have received 21.4 citations, indicating that the tips and recommendations contained therein are helpful to the journal's readership and the research community as a whole.

## 2.4 Broadening the scope of topics

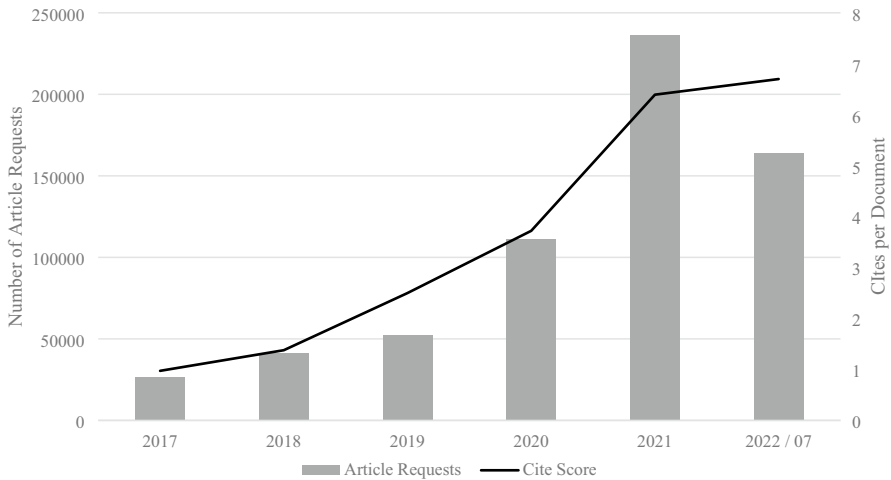
MRQ has covered various business and management research topics over the last five years. An analysis of the JEL codes that the authors of accepted articles have reported for their studies in the past five years shows that the most significant share of contributions falls into the broader topic of entrepreneurship, new firms, technology, and innovation (see Table 1). Additionally, personnel management, diversity, social responsibility, and corporate culture have been important topics for the journal. Authors have also contributed significantly to finance and accounting research by taking behavioral, corporate, and governance perspectives.

Manually classifying each MRQ article's keywords into different management fields provides the following picture: Entrepreneurship (12%), Strategy (12%), Finance (12%), Human Resource Management (12%), Organization (11%), Innovation (10%), Marketing (5%), Sustainability Management (5%), International Management (5%), Business Information Systems (5%), Supply Chain & Operations (4%), Decision Sciences (4%), Accounting (3%), and Taxes (1%). Also, here, a bias in the topics is visible. Some topics or research fields are clearly underrepresented.

## 2.5 Generating impact – articles in MRQ reach out to more readers and attract citations

MRQ has reached a growing number of readers and significantly increased its scholarly impact over the past five years (Fig. 3). Specifically, Elsevier's Scopus CiteScore, which measures cites per published article over four years, increased from 2.3 in 2018 to 6.3 in 2021. Therewith, MRQ's citation score rank is in the range of other renowned (review) journals such as the *European Management Review* (CiteScore2021: 4.1), *Review of Managerial Science* (CiteScore2021: 8.0), and *International Business Review* (CiteScore2021: 8.0). In Elsevier's comparison between journals, MRQ ranks as of 2022 on 12/144 in the category of "Business, Management and Accounting" journals. In the category of "Strategy and Management" journals, MRQ is also in the top quartile, ranked 76/456 (83rd percentile). For the first time, the Scopus SJR index, measuring the importance or prestige of other journals citing MRQ, turns green and indicates MRQ to be in the top quartile.

MRQ's increasing academic impact is not just unfolding in terms of citations but also in full article requests. Starting from 41,338 full-text article requests in 2018, MRQ in 2021 notes 236,189 requests for accessing and reading articles published in



**Fig. 3** Visibility and impact of MRQ over the past years. Note: Citations per document 2017–2021 based on Scimago (4-year period). Citations per Document 2022 based on Scopus CiteScore Tracker (until August 2022)

the journal. The first six months of 2022 were promising, as already 163,835 article requests came in (the predicted number for the entire year of 2022: 327,670).

### 3 Thoughts for the next 5 years

In this section, we will briefly comment on the numbers of the preceding sections and share some thoughts about the future of MRQ as an evidence-based management review journal.

Against the background of strongly expanding literature stocks, the field of management and business research needs academic outlets specializing in solidifying evidence. The impact of review journals such as the *Academy of Management Annals* and the *International Journal of Management Reviews* provides proof of the strong contribution that literature reviews make to our field. MRQ has recently taken substantial strides toward becoming an internationally recognized review journal. The numbers of the past five years indicate that there has been significant progress in this regard. Notably, the substantial increase in our worldwide readership to 327,670 expected full-text requests in 2022, the recent Scopus CiteScore of 7.0 (September 2022), and the top quartile position in Scopus journal comparisons provide evidence to this end.

Looking ahead, MRQ aims to further improve its quality. Particularly, the journal strives to increase the rigor of its articles, strives to foster internationalization, and the publication of so far under-represented methods and topics. Moreover, we aim to improve the journal's impact towards solving the grand challenges of today. The following concrete steps are taken in this regard.

**Table 1** JEL 15 most published sub-categories in MRQ in the past five years

JEL	Broad category	Sub-category	MRQ articles
L26	Firm objectives, organization, and behavior	Entrepreneurship	16
M10	Business administration	General	15
M12	Business administration	Personnel management, executives; executive compensation	13
M14	Business administration	Corporate culture, diversity, social responsibility	11
M13	Business administration	New firms, startups	10
O31	Innovation, research and development, technological change, intellectual property rights	Innovation and invention: processes and incentives	10
O32	Innovation, research and development, technological change, intellectual property rights	Management of technological innovation and R&D	10
G32	Corporate finance and governance	Financing policy · financial risk and risk management · capital and ownership structure · value of firms · goodwill	8
M41	Accounting and auditing	Accounting	7
G41	Behavioral finance	Role and effects of psychological, emotional, social, and cognitive factors on decision making in financial markets	6
M31	Marketing and advertising	Marketing	6
M48	Accounting and auditing	Government policy and regulation	6
O33	Innovation, research and development, technological change, intellectual property rights	Technological change: choices and consequences · diffusion processes	6
Q56	Environmental economics	Environment and Development · Environment and Trade · Sustainability · Environmental Accounts and Accounting · Environmental Equity · Population Growth	6
D91	Micro-based behavioral economics	Role and effects of psychological, emotional, social, and cognitive factors on decision making	5

First, rigorous articles result from a joint effort of authors, the editorial board, and reviewers. The presented numbers for the past five years in MRQ show that the journal has significantly reduced its acceptance rate. At the same time, the accepted articles proved to be particularly well received by the community. We want to continue (on) this path and aim for evidence-based review articles and replication studies that provide frameworks for future research. Since MRQ focuses on systematic methods, rigorous methodological sections and empirics will continue to be the primary requirement for future publications.

Second, we aim to bolster our internationalization efforts. Our numbers show that the share of authors from non-German-speaking countries now clearly represents the majority in MRQ publications. Nevertheless, currently less represented in MRQ are authors from Africa as well as North and South America. We will encourage submissions from these regions and invite reviewers and special issue editors to contribute to the journal in the upcoming years to increase our international scope.

Third, MRQ aims to increase publications in replication studies and meta-analyses. One of the unique features of MRQ compared to other review journals is that we encourage replication studies and meta-analyses because we believe they are critical for evidence-based management research. However, our numbers indicate that both methods are still underrepresented in MRQ. Since we experience that current approaches in replication studies and meta-analyses are less known, we will continue to publish editorials and methodological articles that help authors navigate their research (Burgard and Steinmetz 2022; Hansen et al. 2022; Steinmetz and Block 2022). Additionally, we invite authors to submit articles on reviewing methods that might inform other authors about how to conduct bibliographic studies, meta-analyses, replication studies, and structured literature reviews (e.g., Clark et al. 2021). MRQ is also interested in combinations of our submission types, e.g., replications and literature reviews of meta-analyses (e.g., Block et al. 2022a, b; Lakens et al. 2016; Velte 2021).

Our numbers indicate that MRQ already covers a wide area of topics. However, looking ahead, we would like to address further under-represented fields such as marketing, supply chain, production management and logistics, as well as accounting and taxes. By recently adding two new co-editors to the editorial team, we are confident of improving the editorial process for authors contributing to some of these fields. MRQ will for sure further expand its editorial team in the coming years to attract submissions from so far underrepresented topics.

Finally, we aim to develop MRQ into an *engaged scholarly journal*. MRQ strives to address grand challenges and tackle real-world problems via evidence-based management research. Research on sustainability, inequality, digitalization, and management for non-profits will receive greater attention in MRQ as the journal moves forward. Recent MRQ articles on climate change and organizations (Díaz Tautiva et al. 2022), (corporate) environmental sustainability and performance (Bhatt and Ghuman 2022; Kwarto et al. 2022), corporate social responsibility (Rojas Molina et al. 2022; Frerichs and Teichert 2021), non-profits (Nordin et al. 2022) social enterprises (Armstrong and Grobbelaar 2022), supply chain management (Durugbo and Al-Balushi 2022) and entrepreneurship (Kuckertz and Brändle 2022) in crises



show the way forward. We intend to publish more of such empirically grounded and practically relevant research.

#### 4 Conclusion: MRQ as an evidence-focused review journal

What makes MRQ unique and different from "normal" management journals and other review journals? The answer to this question is not trivial but very important as more and more journals embrace review-type articles, and the competition for good review articles is high.

The research in MRQ is empirically grounded, and the articles in MRQ answer relevant research questions by systematically aggregating, analyzing, and interpreting empirical evidence in academic studies. MRQ understands its main mission in providing meaningful evidence. While other journals highlight the need for a theoretical contribution, articles in MRQ need to contribute to the empirical grounding of management and business research. A systematic approach in every step of the research process enables MRQ articles to be transparent and replicable. Along this line, meta-analyses and replication studies are a vivid part of MRQ's mission.

**Acknowledgements** We thank our co-editors, Peter Limbach and Stefan Lier, for their great input. We also want to acknowledge the contributions of Christian Fisch, the former managing editor, to the journal, and we thank Barbara Marquardt for her careful language edit.

**Funding** Not applicable.

#### Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

#### References

- Armstrong R, Grobbelaar S (2022) Sustainable business models for social enterprises in developing countries: a conceptual framework. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00260-1>
- Bhatt Y, Ghuman K (2022) Corporate environmental responsiveness: a bibliometric and content analysis. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00275-8>
- Block J, Fisch C (2020) Eight tips and questions for your bibliographic study in business and management research. *Manag Rev Q* 70(3):307–312
- Block J, Kuckertz A (2018) Seven principles of effective replication studies: strengthening the evidence base of management research. *Manag Rev Q* 68(4):355–359
- Block J, Hansen C, Steinmetz H (2022) Are family firms doing more innovation output with less innovation input? A replication and extension. *Entrep Theory Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587221084249>
- Block JH, Fisch C, Kanwal N, Lorenzen S, Schulze A (2022b) Replication studies in top management journals: An empirical investigation of prevalence, types, outcomes, and impact. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00269-6>
- Burgard T, Steinmetz H (2022) Evidence in management science related to psychology: benefits, tools, and an example of a community-augmented meta-analysis. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00270-z>

- Clark WR, Clark LA, Raffo DM, Williams R (2021) Extending Fisch and Block's (2018) tips for a systematic review in management and business literature. *Manag Rev Q* 71:215–231
- Díaz Tautiva JA, Huaman J, Ponce Oliva RD (2022) Trends in research on climate change and organizations: a bibliometric analysis (1999–2021). *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00298-1>
- Durugbo CM, Al-Balushi Z (2022) Supply chain management in times of crisis: a systematic review. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00272-x>
- Frerichs IM, Teichert T (2022) Research streams in corporate social responsibility literature: a bibliometric analysis. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-021-00237-6>
- Hansen C, Steinmetz H, Block J (2022) How to conduct a meta-analysis in eight steps: a practical guide. *Manag Rev Q* 72(1):1–19
- Kuckertz A, Block J (2022) Reviewing systematic literature reviews: ten key questions and criteria for reviewers. *Manag Rev Q* 71(3):519–524
- Kuckertz A, Brändle L (2022) Creative reconstruction: A structured literature review of the early empirical research on the COVID-19 crisis and entrepreneurship. *Manag Rev Q* 72(2):281–307
- Kwarto F, Nurafiah N, Suharman H, Dahlan M (2022) The potential bias for sustainability reporting of global upstream oil and gas companies: a systematic literature review of the evidence. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00292-7>
- Lakens D, Hilgard J, Staaks J (2016) On the reproducibility of meta-analyses: Six practical recommendations. *BMC Psychol* 4(1):1–10
- Nordin N, Khatibi A, Azam SM (2022) Nonprofit capacity and social performance: mapping the field and future directions. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00297-2>
- Rojas Molina LK, Pérez López JÁ, Campos Lucena MS (2022) Meta-analysis: associated factors for the adoption and disclosure of CSR practices in the banking sector. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00267-8>
- Steinmetz H, Block J (2022) Meta-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM): new tricks of the trade. *Management Review Quarterly*. *Manag Rev Q*
- Velte P (2021) Meta-analyses on corporate social responsibility (CSR): a literature review. *Manag Rev Q*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-021-00211-2>

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.