

# Online presence, visibility and reputation: a systematic literature review in management studies

Literature  
review in  
management  
studies

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this 22-year paper is to synthesize business and management literature in the context of online presence, online visibility and online reputation concepts. In particular, this paper aims to generalize the analysis by investigating the level of interest of the Internet, digital and interactive marketing-focused literature, as well as the more general business and management one towards these topics.

**Design/methodology/approach** – To identify the existence or otherwise of an online presence, visibility and reputation definition, as well as an index for measuring them, a systematic review and a content analysis process were performed on 199 articles categorized over 1997-2018.

**Findings** – The findings highlight the absence of clear and shared online presence, visibility and reputation definitions; the absence of unanimously accepted indexes for measuring them; and the identification of a sequence relationship between the three investigated constructs.

**Research limitations/implications** – The paper underlines the need for both theoretical and empirical contributions to reduce the complexity characterizing the business and management literature focused on these topics.

**Originality/value** – The current study brings out interesting directions for future research studies by systematizing all the articles devoted to the online presence, visibility and reputation concepts from a business and management perspective.

**Keywords** Internet marketing, Online metrics, Web 2.0, Social media marketing, Online marketing, Online presence, Online visibility, Online reputation, Systematic literature review, Content analysis

**Paper type** Literature review

## 1. Introduction

In the past decades, the internet has received a significant level of attention by academics, business practitioners, government and media (Pomirleanu *et al.*, 2013). Managerially, the advent of the internet allowed producers and customers to communicate directly on a single online platform. Consequently, firms of any size and type are necessarily called today to access the network to survive and communicate their existence (Cormode and Krishnamurthy, 2008). Internet becomes in this way a key tool across a variety of contexts (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016).

In particular, among the different research lines concerning the Internet, Digital and Interactive marketing, the approach of the tourist studies is worthy of investigation



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(Cioppi *et al.*, 2016; Smithson *et al.*, 2011) since different authors (De Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2018; Melo *et al.*, 2017; Micera and Crispino, 2017; Xie *et al.*, 2014; Smithson *et al.*, 2011; Litvin *et al.*, 2008) identified three research streams related to:

- (1) the importance, for firms, to be present in the online sphere (online presence);
- (2) the relation between firms' online visibility and their overall performances (online visibility); and
- (3) the increasing influence assumed by the electronic word-of-mouth and customers' online reviews (online reputation).

Given the attention dedicated to these topics by the recent tourist studies, the main purpose of this paper is to generalize the analysis of these research streams by verifying if the business and management literature has already systematized these concepts and defined specific constructs and indexes for their conceptualization and measurement.

## 2. Objectives and design of the research

Specifically, the research design is composed by two different phases: in a first one, the specialized literature (Internet, digital and interactive marketing-focused) will be investigated to identify possible online presence, visibility and reputation conceptualizations and measurements. In the second phase (if no results emerge), the research will be extended to the global business and management literature.

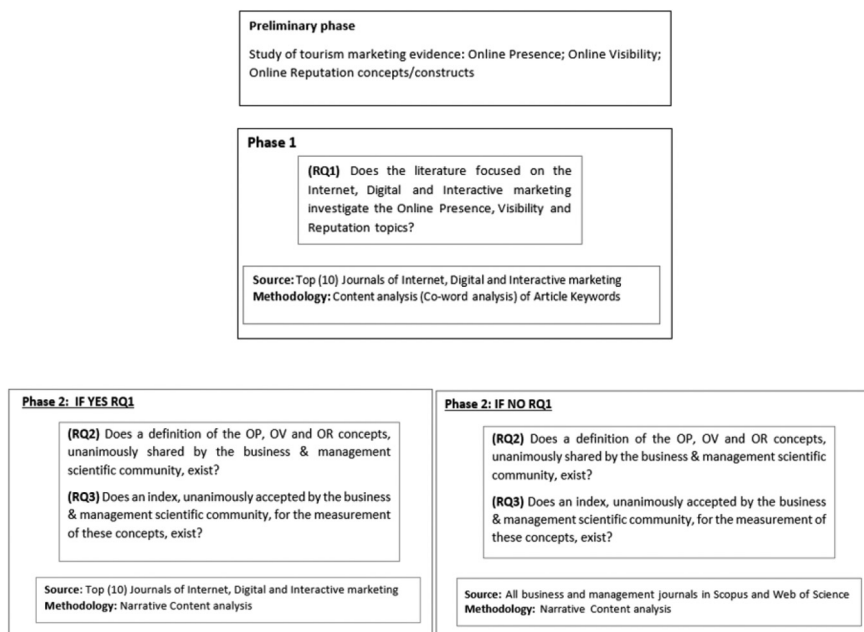
Hence, the research questions of the article will be the following:

- RQ1.* Does the literature focused on the Internet, Digital and Interactive marketing investigate the online presence, visibility and reputation topics?
- RQ2.* Does a definition of the online presence, visibility and reputation concepts, unanimously shared by the business and management scientific community, exist?
- RQ3.* Does an index, unanimously accepted by the business and management scientific community, for the measurement of these concepts, exist?

Primarily, to answer *RQ1*, the most relevant internet and interactive marketing-focused journals have been identified to find out if the online presence, online visibility and online reputation concepts represent topics recently investigated by the most authoritative literature (Figure 1). After identifying the top journals[1] (Pomirleanu *et al.*, 2013), a keywords extraction' process was carried out, concerning all the articles published, by each of them, in the last five years (2014-2018). In particular, the aim has been to figure out (through a classification of the most frequently adopted keywords) the current level of interest of the internet-focused articles towards the investigated research topics. Notably, through the adoption of the extraction tools of the Scopus and Web of Science databases, it has been possible to collect all the authors' keywords of the articles published in the last five years in the top ten internet-focused journals. Table I reports the keywords extraction's details.

Then, a frequency classification has been realized. Results revealed that the most investigated topics, in the past five years, have been: *online* (429), *social* (421), *marketing* (343), *medium* (209), *consumer* (193), *brand* (166), *model* (158), *mobile* (141), *network* (132), *advertise* (131), *internet* (129), *customer* (123) and *service* (118).

For what concerns the research streams investigated in this paper, the extraction process allowed to corroborate the limited level of interest of the internet-focused literature towards



**Figure 1.**  
Design of the research

**Source:** Our elaboration

the presence, visibility and reputation concepts since they place themselves in the lowest positions of the frequency classification (reputation: 86th position with 23 frequencies; presence: 108th position with 18 frequencies), or they are totally absent (visibility).

Overall, the extraction process's results denoted that the most commonly adopted word has been "online", thus confirming the relevance of the topic considered in this study. However, through the co-word analysis (Figure 2), it has emerged that the "online" word is not significantly associated either with presence, visibility or reputation.

In conclusion, the keywords' analysis of the specialized journals allowed to corroborate the absence of recent studies specifically focused on the online presence, visibility and reputation concepts.

For this reason, in a second phase, the global business and management literature has been analyzed to extend the investigation of the online presence, visibility and reputation topics in a more comprehensive perspective.

Notably, the systematic literature review method has been adopted since it allows to identify, evaluate and interpret "all available research relevant to a particular research question, or topic area or phenomenon of interest" (Kitchenham, 2004, p. 1). In particular, the review process has been divided into the following phases: (i) collection, (ii) systematization/selection and (iii) content analysis of the selected articles.

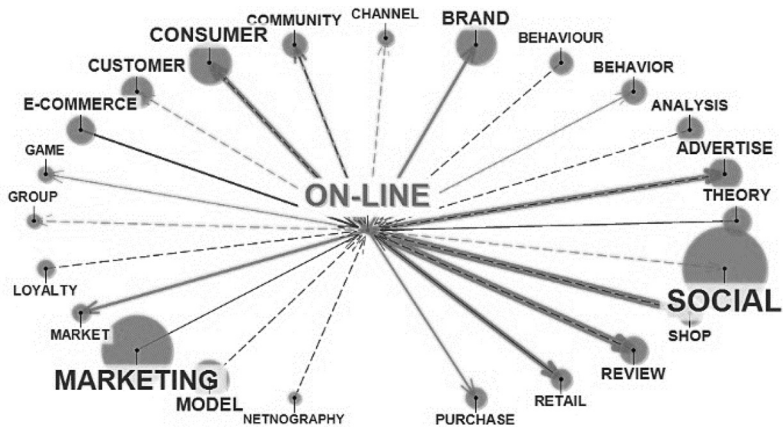
As a review search begins with the identification of specific keywords and terms, which are built from the scoping study (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003), the "online presence", "online visibility" and "online reputation" strings have been used in a systematic research.

Scopus and Web of Science are the electronic databases selected for the review, which allowed searching for articles containing the selected search strings in their titles, authors'

No.	Word	Occurrence	Percentage occurrence on the total keywords (%)	Percentage occurrence on the total papers (%)
1	ON-LINE	429	6.60	34.16
2	SOCIAL	421	6.48	33.52
3	MEDIUM	209	3.22	16.64
5	CONSUMER	193	2.98	15.37
6	BRAND	166	2.56	13.22
7	MODEL	158	2.43	12.58
8	MOBILE	141	2.17	11.23
9	NETWORK	132	2.03	10.51
10	ADVERTISE	131	2.02	10.43
11	INTERNET	129	1.99	10.27
12	CUSTOMER	123	1.89	9.79
13	SERVICE	118	1.82	9.39
14	INFORMATION	111	1.71	8.84
15	THEORY	106	1.63	8.44
16	E-COMMERCE	105	1.62	8.36
17	REVIEW	99	1.52	7.88
18	TECHNOLOGY	91	1.40	7.25
19	TRUST	91	1.40	7.25
20	DATA	90	1.38	7.17
86	REPUTATION	23	0.35	1.83
108	PRESENCE	18	0.28	1.43
	Total paper	1256		
	Total Keywords	6494		

**Table I.**  
Word analysis of  
keywords

Source: Our elaboration



**Figure 2.**  
Topics associated  
with the “online”  
concept in the top  
journals keywords

Source: Our elaboration

keywords or abstracts. Furthermore, the review has specifically focused on peer-reviewed journals since they represent the principal publication outcome for academic research. Moreover, the “document types” were limited to “article” and “review”, while for what concerns the “year” filter, all the articles/reviews until 2018 have been selected.

A further adopted filter has concerned the selected subject area, limited to the business and management one. The reason was twofold:

- (1) the purpose of the paper (to expand the analysis of the online presence, visibility and reputation concepts in a more comprehensive business and managerial perspective); and
- (2) the fact that, although this focus may have precluded a multidisciplinary review, this choice has been necessary due to the level of detail required by the full texts' reading phase.

By adopting these specific filters, a total of 255 publications have been identified (online presence: 126; online visibility: 23; online reputation: 106). Then a final filtering phase has been carried out to delete possible duplications (same contributions identified both with Scopus and Web of Science database).

At the end of this systematic process, a final database of 199 articles, published between 1997 and 2018, has been identified.

Subsequently, a content analysis process has been used to extract, from the selected publications, all the proposed online presence, visibility and reputation definitions (*definitional dimension*), as well as their measurement indexes (*metrical dimension*).

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Descriptive findings

From a keyword perspective, the online presence was found to be the most investigated concept by the business and management literature with 106 articles, followed by the online reputation ( $n = 80$ ) and online visibility ( $n = 13$ ).

For what concerns the years' distribution (Table II), for all the investigated research streams, the number of publications was meagre during the timeframe 1997-2003, but recorded a growth period from 2004, until reaching three peaks in 2014 (11 contributions focused on the online presence concept), in 2017 (15 publications dedicated to the online reputation concept and 3 to the online visibility research topic), and in 2018 (12 studies devoted to the online presence and 16 to the online reputation).

In terms of journals' distribution, *Decision Support Systems* ( $n = 7$ ), *Internet Research* ( $n = 5$ ), and *Tourism Management* ( $n = 5$ ) are the journals with the highest number of published papers (Table III).

Moreover, through the adoption of the content analysis process focused on the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the selected publications, the topic areas have been explored (Tables IV and V). In particular, Table IV quantitatively confirms the heterogeneity of the investigated sectors (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016) by also underlining the non-homogenous distribution of the three topics into the different industries.

Additionally, Table V allows identifying, through the citation analysis process, the first five most-cited contributions, which represent the most recognized publications by the research academy. Notably, results demonstrate, also at a qualitative level, how the most cited papers are attributable to studies focused on different sectors.

#### 3.2 Analytical findings

In the following sections, the results extracted from the content analysis concerning the online presence, visibility and reputation definitions and measurements will be presented.

3.2.1 *Online presence definitions.* Findings, regarding the online presence definitions' extraction, allowed to detect a limited attempt to outline this concept. Notably, even if a

Publication years	Online presence	Online visibility	Online reputation
1997	1	–	–
1998	–	–	–
1999	–	–	–
2000	1	–	–
2001	1	–	1
2002	1	–	–
2003	1	–	–
2004	6	1	–
2005	2	–	–
2006	2	–	1
2007	4	1	1
2008	3	–	3
2009	4	1	1
2010	6	–	4
2011	9	1	5
2012	7	–	7
2013	8	–	2
2014	11	1	4
2015	9	–	8
2016	7	2	12
2017	11	3	15
2018	12	3	16
<i>Total</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>80</i>

**Table II.**  
Year distribution of  
articles ( $n = 199$ )

**Source:** Our elaboration

Papers' distribution per journal	No. of papers
Decision Support Systems	7
Internet Research	5
Tourism Management	5
Information and Management	4
Public Relations Review	4
International Journal of Business Information Systems	4
Journal of Interactive Marketing	4
Other Journal ( $\leq 3$ papers)	166
<i>Total</i>	<i>199</i>

**Table III.**  
Journal distribution  
of articles ( $n = 199$ )

**Source:** Our elaboration

significant number of papers ( $n = 106$ ) dealt with this topic, only in a few of them ( $n = 23$ ), a possible definition has been proposed (Table VI). Indeed, in the majority of publications ( $n = 83$ ), the online presence concept has been investigated without introducing or trying to define it.

By focusing on the extracted definitions, several authors mainly underlined the strategic role of the online presence as an essential precondition (Lee *et al.*, 2013; Sebastião, 2013) for the firms' success in the online environment (Raguseo *et al.*, 2017; Rodríguez Domínguez *et al.*, 2011; Murphy and Scharl, 2007; Jackson, 2007; Torres *et al.*, 2006) to present themselves in the digital sphere (De Bakker and Hellsten, 2013); enhance their image

Topic areas	Online presence	Online visibility	Online reputation
Industrial sector	32	4	7
Tourism sector	17	6	30
Political/Public sector	10	–	1
Print sector	8	–	–
Online projects/communities	6	–	4
Education sector	6	2	–
Online behaviors	5	1	12
e-commerce/shopping	5	–	6
Museums and arts	4	–	–
Food/beverage sector	3	–	3
Luxury sector	3	–	–
Banking sector	2	–	–
No-profit sector	2	–	–
Medical sector	2	–	2
Sporting sector	1	–	–
Online auction market	–	–	6
Online reputation systems/management	–	–	5
Online recruitment/labor market	–	–	2
Personal reputation	–	–	1
Entertainment sector	–	–	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>80</i>

Source: Our elaboration

**Table IV.**  
Topic area  
distribution

Concept	Authors, years	Sector of analysis	No. of citations
Online presence	Chen and Yen (2004)	Industrial sector	168
Online presence	Constantinides (2004)	Industrial sector	166
Online presence	Torres <i>et al.</i> (2006)	Political/Public sector	122
Online presence	Kuan and Bock (2007)	Industrial sector	112
Online presence	Lee <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Industrial sector	100
Online visibility	Drèze and Zufryden (2004)	Industrial sector	86
Online visibility	Meyer and Schroeder (2009)	Education sector	43
Online visibility	Murphy and Scharl (2007)	Industrial sector	33
Online visibility	Smithson <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Tourism sector	31
Online visibility	Lappas <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Tourism sector	29
Online reputation	Xie <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Tourism sector	129
Online reputation	Reuber and Fischer (2011)	Industrial sector	121
Online reputation	Lee <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Tourism sector	100
Online reputation	Baka (2016)	Tourism sector	89
Online reputation	Liang <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Tourism sector	73

Source: Our elaboration

**Table V.**  
Top five most cited  
articles

(AbuGhazaleh *et al.*, 2012); offer and share new source of rich information and communicate with primary and secondary stakeholders (Hagsten and Kotnik, 2017; Powell *et al.*, 2016; Wilson, 2011); attract and reach more potential customers (Graham and Greenhill, 2013; Stewart and Marcketti, 2012; Smithson *et al.*, 2011); respond to criticism launched online (Veil *et al.*, 2012); extend and complement the market reach of the physical channels

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Constantinides (2004)	A comprehensive and customer-oriented virtual proposition addressing a wide variety of issues and delivering the maximum possible effect, the utmost Web experience	–	–
Chen and Yen (2004)	–	Presence of specific website features in six interactivity dimensions (Quality, playfulness, Choice, connectedness, information collection, reciprocal communication)	Website analysis
Torres <i>et al.</i> (2006)	A measurement of the Internet use	–	–
Jackson (2007)	A resource generating tool; a part of a coherent communication strategy	–	–
Murphy and Scharl (2007)	Vital tool to a brand's internet success	–	–
Tiago <i>et al.</i> (2007)	–	Presence of specific website features	Website analysis
Carrizales <i>et al.</i> (2011)	–	Evaluation of two different types of online services: those that allow citizens to interact with the district, and those that allow users to register online for district events or services	Website analysis
Rodríguez Domínguez <i>et al.</i> (2011)	A presence on the internet	–	–
Smithson <i>et al.</i> (2011)	The use of a website and the design characteristics (interactivity, navigation and functionality) and information these websites should show to attract customers	Three-point scale as follows: 0 for no Internet presence; 1 for hotels with website only; 2 for hotel websites with e-commerce tools	Presence/absence analysis
Wilson (2011)	An expectation that information and further details will be available online	–	–
AbuGhazaleh <i>et al.</i> (2012)	A way to enhance the company's image and reputation	–	–
Mich and Hull (2012)	A map of the official and semi-official presences for firms	Analysis of the following spaces: the official website and social networks. Gathering of the main data (e.g., the registered members, published posts, last official update, etc.). Creation of a Web presence map illustrating the most interesting strategies	Website/ social media analysis

**Table VI.**  
Online presence definitions and metrics' extraction

(continued)



Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Panagiotopoulos (2012)	—	Construction of an Index (OP): 'I believe that the union can benefit from its presence on social networks'(OP-SN), 'I believe that the union can benefit from the Internet presence compared to its traditional activities' (OP-WEB) and 'I believe that the union can benefit from its presence on Facebook' (OP-FB)	Website/ social media analysis
Stewart and Marcketti (2012)	An essential way to reaching museum visitors	—	—
Veil <i>et al.</i> (2012)	A voice to respond to criticism launched online	—	—
De Bakker and Hellsten (2013)	The way firms present themselves online	The hyperlink network around an organization's website; combination of hyperlink analysis and semantic co-word maps	Hyperlink network analysis
Graham and Greenhill (2013)	A way to extend and complement the market reach of the printed channel, by improving the rate of circulation change thus attracting more readers	Convergence tools (presence in multimedia platforms); Co-creation (Presence of different forms of UGC); Interactivity (Number of 2.0 tools); Paywalls (Presence of e-commerce application)	Presence/ absence analysis
Lee <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Precondition for effective relationships in the mediated environments	Number of followers and the speed of growth	Social media analysis
Lilleker and Jackson (2013)	A way to build closer relationships with users; a potential marketing tool; a major tool for internal marketing	—	—
Papagiannidis <i>et al.</i> (2013)	An important communication medium; a catalytic factor in communicating any existing political advantages politicians may have	—	—
Sebastião (2013)	A "must have" under penalty of no existence	—	—
Otero <i>et al.</i> (2014)	A powerful instrument, capable of attracting consumers to a store and creating the possibility of a future purchase	—	—
Pranić <i>et al.</i> (2014)	—	Presence or absence of a number of website attributes on a well-prepared checklist belonging to the following categories: 1. User-friendliness; 2. Site attractiveness; 3. Marketing effectiveness; 4. Informativeness	Website analysis
		—	—

(continued)

Table VI.

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Scott Rader <i>et al.</i> (2014)	A largely one-way, traditional advertising model that essentially replicates elements of print and broadcast advertisements, but in the digital domain		
Ban and Popa (2015)	–	QUALITY OF ONLINE PRESENCE: 1. the quality of the content of the website - manifestation in the virtual environment (search and booking engine, newsletters, own blog, customer support, SEO, Google Analytics etc.); 2. the level of interactivity of the website - the interaction with customers; 3. the entering into new socialization environments provided by the Internet (presence on Facebook or other social media)	Website/ social media analysis
Calefato <i>et al.</i> (2015)	A way to foster both cognitive and affective trust	–	–
Powell <i>et al.</i> (2016)	A way offering a major new source of rich information about organizations	–	–
Hagsten and Kotnik (2017)	A way enabling firms to share information and communicate with customers	The possession or not of a website	Presence/ absence analysis
Moghavvemi <i>et al.</i> (2017)	–	The presence (1) or absence (0) of specific website items belonging to the following categories: 1. Hospital information and facilities; 2. Admission and medical services; 3. Interactive online services; 4. External activities; 5. Technical items	Website analysis
Raguseo <i>et al.</i> (2017)	A way to be present on multiple channels, such as generalist search engines	–	–
Shaltoni (2017)	–	Presence of a firm's website; Firm's social media presence across the following platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube	Website/ social media analysis
De Jong and Wu (2018)	–	Presence of specific content Element per Function Area: 1. Visitor information; 2. UNESCO status; 3. Virtual experience; 4. Education; 5. Destination marketing; 6. Community participation; 7. Advertisements	Website analysis

Table VI.

(continued)

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
<a href="#">Dominguez-Falcón et al. (2018)</a>	It is important to be formally present on the platform as a sign of business modernity and innovation	Evaluation of the presence of the following items: 1. Informative items (11); 2. Clients (12); 3. social networks (4); 4. Web 2.0 applications (5); 5. website's usability (10)	Website analysis

Source: Our elaboration

(Otero et al., 2014) by improving the rate of circulation change (Graham and Greenhill, 2013); build closer and more trusting relationships with users (Calefato et al., 2015; Lilleker and Jackson, 2013).

*3.2.2 Online presence measurements.* Concerning the online presence measurement indexes, the analysis highlighted the absence of a standard scale widely accepted by researchers (Horster, 2011; Smithson et al., 2011). Indeed, the identification of a shared online presence index is still at an exploratory stage with several authors proposing possible metrics. Notably, they can be categorized into five different groups:

- (1) presence/absence analysis;
- (2) website analysis;
- (3) social media analysis;
- (4) website/social analysis; and
- (5) hyperlink network analysis.

The first identified categorization (*presence/absence analysis*) presents, among the others, the most global perspective since it is founded on the study of the firms' online existence based on the simple presence/absence of an official website/e-commerce platform (Hagsten and Kotnik, 2017; Graham and Greenhill, 2013; Smithson et al., 2011).

By going more in detail, the *website analysis* focuses its attention on the examination of the presence of particular features of firms' websites. Then, the analysis proceeds with the attribution of specific scores to each examined feature to evaluate the overall firms' online existence (Dominguez-Falcón et al., 2018; De Jong and Wu, 2018; Moghavvemi et al., 2017; Pranić et al., 2014; Carrizales et al., 2011; Tiago et al., 2007; Chen and Yen, 2004).

Conversely, Lee et al. (2013) use an analysis centered on social media (*social media analysis*) to assess the firms' online existence by examining their presence/absence on specific online platforms and by adopting specific measurements, such as the number of followers in the respective social media.

Moreover, another detected online presence practice concerns the simultaneous analysis of the official website and social media spaces (*website/social media analysis*), thus combining the previous two analyses (Shaltoni, 2017; Ban and Popa, 2015; Mich and Hull, 2012; Panagiotopoulos, 2012).

Finally, the last categorization (*hyperlink network analysis*) has been adopted by De Bakker and Hellsten (2013) who present an explorative study of activist groups' online presence via their websites by proposing a combination of methods to analyze both the

structural positioning of websites (hyperlink network analysis) and the meanings in these websites (semantic co-word maps).

*3.2.3 Online visibility definitions.* Concerning the online visibility topic, the content analysis allowed to underline a more accurate attempt to define it with respect to the previously investigated construct (online presence). In particular, the conceptualization proposed by [Drèze and Zufryden \(2004\)](#) represents the most adopted definition by the business and management literature ([Smithson et al., 2011](#)). Notably, the authors defined the online visibility topic as “the extent to which a user is likely to come across a reference to a company’s Web site in his or her online [...] environment” ([Drèze and Zufryden, 2004](#), p. 22). Additionally, they also conceptualized it as a precursor to website traffic, in the same vein, as awareness is a precursor to purchase.

More recently, [Reuber and Fischer \(2011\)](#) described it as the firm’s familiarity in the eyes of online stakeholders, relative to that of its rivals, while [Smithson et al. \(2011\)](#) defined it as a differentiating factor able to produce superior organizational performance through the capture of new clients. In their paper, instead, [Charest and Bouffard \(2015\)](#) underlined the relevance of online visibility as a key factor impacting upon the image of an organization.

By focusing on the hotel industry, [Lappas et al. \(2016\)](#) defined online visibility as the probability, for firms, to be included in the consideration set of a random user.

Finally, [Raguseo et al. \(2017\)](#) and [Raisi et al. \(2018\)](#) focused their attention on the competitive features characterizing the online visibility concept by highlighting its critical relevance for firms’ competitiveness through its ability to attract more profitable customers.

*3.2.4 Online visibility measurements.* From the measurement perspective, one of the most complete attempt to evaluate the online visibility concept is that proposed by [Drèze and Zufryden \(2004\)](#), who conceptualized the Visibility Index as follows: for each website, a binary index (0 or 1) was assigned to a respondent depending on whether the respondent had seen reference to, or mention of, the website in any one or more of the following online sources: Internet advertising/banner ads; results of a search done on a search site; listing in the directory section of a search site; link to the website from any other website(s); discussion group, newsgroup, or chat room; e-mail received from someone; online news article. However, by only focusing on these measurements, the [Drèze and Zufryden \(2004\)](#) model did not consider the users’ perspective and their search choices. To include these preferences, [Smithson et al. \(2011\)](#) proposed a model integrating the psychological, motivational, economic and processing approaches of users.

In addition to the [Drèze and Zufryden \(2004\)](#) and [Smithson et al. \(2011\)](#) measurements, a further online visibility index, proposed by the business and management literature, concerns the firm’s search engine ranking and website traffic ([Manes Rossi et al., 2018](#); [Pant and Pant, 2018](#); [Lappas et al., 2016](#); [Chua et al., 2009](#); [Murphy and Scharl, 2007](#)).

With the purpose of enriching the previous studies, [Otero et al. \(2014\)](#) and [Raguseo et al. \(2017\)](#) tried to identify the main elements composing the online visibility index. Notably, the [Otero et al.’s \(2014\)](#) online visibility construct is composed of the following elements:

- backlinks (the greater the number of links pointing to a website, the better its visibility);
- infomediaries (being on at least two key-sector infomediaries allows to reach high visibility and customer awareness);
- website (the better the website quality, the greater the effectiveness in consumer attraction); and
- social media (the more a firm participates in social media, the more it improves its search engine rank).

Finally, by focusing their attention on the tourism sector, [Raguseo et al. \(2017\)](#) detected two main areas in which firms should be necessary visible in the online context:

- (1) the online visibility on OTAs (OTA's multiplicity); and
- (2) the online visibility on TripAdvisor (review variance, review valence, review volume and hotel responses) ([Table VII](#)).

**3.2.5 Online reputation definitions.** Finally, for what concerns the online reputation conceptualization, even if several contributions ( $n = 80$ ) focused the attention on this topic, only fewer than a half ( $n = 31$ ) tried to propose possible definitions of it ([Table VIII](#)).

Notably, three main aspects, related to the online reputation definition, emerged from the content analysis: the capacity/quality perspective; the aggregative perspective; the objective perspective.

Turning to the first perspective (*capacity/quality perspective*), several authors ([Diaz and Rodriguez, 2018](#); [Xie and So, 2018](#); [Diéguez-Soto et al., 2017](#); [Lee et al., 2011](#); [Chua et al., 2009](#); [Elsaid and Knight, 2007](#); [Lin et al., 2006](#)) focused their attention on the online reputation role as a performance indicator able to differentiate and detect the firms' capacity/quality in the online context.

Further authors ([Rodríguez-Díaz et al., 2018](#); [Xie and So, 2018](#); [Micera and Crispino, 2017](#); [Charest and Bouffard, 2015](#); [Papagiannidis et al., 2013](#); [Hung et al., 2012](#); [Rice, 2012](#); [Reuber and Fischer, 2011](#); [Dellarocas, 2010](#); [Zhou et al., 2008](#)), instead, underlined the relevance of this construct as an online summary/aggregator of users' positive and negative perceptions and experiences (related to a firm's past actions, products, services or brands) describing the firm's overall appeal to all its key online stakeholders when compared to other rivals (*aggregative perspective*).

Within the third perspective (*objective perspective*), fall all the authors focusing their attention on the main objectives recognized to the online reputation, such as inducing cooperation ([Bakos and Dellarocas, 2011](#)); mitigating information asymmetry ([Novotny and Spiekermann, 2017](#); [Lin et al., 2016](#)); influencing customers during their online purchasing ([Singh et al., 2016a](#)); reducing transaction risks ([Novotny and Spiekermann, 2017](#)); capturing clients and reaching sales goals and higher prices ([Díaz and Rodríguez, 2018](#); [Diana-Jens and Ruibal, 2015](#); [Yoganarasimhan, 2013](#)); influencing the firms' value perceived by users ([Parra-Lopez et al., 2018](#)); helping community members make decisions ([Dellarocas, 2010](#)).

**3.2.6 Online reputation measurements.** Similarly to the online presence construct, the online reputation analysis underlined the current absence of a standard scale unanimously adopted by the business and management literature. However, several studies tried to propose possible metrics to evaluate the firms' reputation in the online sphere. Notably, two different categories of measurements emerged:

- (1) general feedback ratings; and
- (2) composed indexes.

For what concerns the first categorization (*general feedback ratings*), several studies ([Aureli and Supino, 2017](#); [Banerjee et al., 2017](#); [Diéguez-Soto et al., 2017](#); [Abrate and Viglia, 2016](#); [Blomberg-Nygaard and Anderson, 2016](#); [Floreddu and Cabiddu, 2016](#); [Li, 2016](#); [Schuckert et al., 2016](#); [Singh et al., 2016b](#); [Diana-Jens and Ruibal, 2015](#); [Anderson and Lawrence, 2014](#); [Ye et al., 2014](#); [You and Sikora, 2014](#); [Rice, 2012](#); [Horster, 2011](#); [Reuber and Fischer, 2009](#)) adopted general and global feedback ratings to measure firms' online reputation, such as the

**Table VII.**  
Online visibility  
definitions and  
metrics' extraction

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Drèze and Zufryden (2004)	The extent to which a user is likely to come across a reference to a company's website in his or her online environment; A precursor to website traffic, as awareness is a precursor to purchase	For each website, a binary index (0 or 1) was assigned to a respondent depending on whether the respondent had seen reference to, or mention of, the website in any one or more of specific online sources A company's search engine ranking and website traffic	Composed index
Murphy and Scharl (2007)	—	Ranking in search engine results	Search engine ranking/website traffic Search engine ranking
Chua <i>et al.</i> (2009)	—	—	—
Meyer and Schroeder (2009) Reuber and Fischer (2011)	A key emergent factor The firm's familiarity in the eyes of online stakeholders relative to that of its rivals A differentiating factor able to produce superior organizational performance through the capture of new clients; The higher possibility of finding certain enterprises; A differentiating factor for competitive advantage	— — Average users' search preferences	— — Composed index
Smithson <i>et al.</i> (2011)	—	—	—
Otero <i>et al.</i> (2014)	—	<i>Elements for online visibility</i> Backlinks Infomediarities Website Social media	Composed index
Charest and Bouffard (2015)	A factor impacting upon the image of an organization	—	—
Lappas <i>et al.</i> (2016)	The probability to be included in the consideration set of a random user; a function of the features that a business can cover and its position in the platform's review-based ranking	Position in the review-based ranking; the industry-standard average rating function, as well as TripAdvisor's Popularity Index formula, which considers the age, quantity and quality of a hotel's reviews; Delay Index	Composed index

(continued)

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Raguseo <i>et al.</i> (2017)	A competitive necessity; The ability to attract more profitable customers	<i>Hotels' online visibility</i> : 1. OTAs' multiplicity; 2. Review variance; 3. Review valence; 4. Review volume; 5. Hotel responses	Composed index
Manes Rossi <i>et al.</i> (2018)	–	Logarithm of the results of a search in "google.com", in which the university appeared in the past year	Search engine ranking
Pant and Pant (2018)	–	In-links or pagerank; the site's user traffic	Search engine ranking/website traffic
Raisi <i>et al.</i> (2018)	A critically important factor for firms' competitiveness	–	–

Source: Our elaboration

Table VII.

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Lin <i>et al.</i> (2006)	The firm's capacity in the online context	–	–
Elsaid and Knight (2007)	An important consideration of the assessment of the quality of the company's products	–	–
Zhou <i>et al.</i> (2008)	The net impact of the positive and negative feedback	–	–
Chua <i>et al.</i> (2009)	An important component of niche marketing and differentiation	–	–
Reuber and Fischer (2009)	–	The total number of downloads of a product in the online context	General feedback ratings
Dellarocas (2010)	A summary of one's past actions within the context of a specific Web-based community, presented in a manner that can help other community members make decisions	–	–
Bakos and Dellarocas (2011)	A mechanism for inducing cooperation	–	–
Horster (2011)	–	Reputation rankings	General feedback ratings
Lee <i>et al.</i> (2011)	An extrinsic cue indicating the quality of online merchants and online information creators	–	–
Reuber and Fischer (2011)	A perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describe the firm's overall appeal to all its key online constituents when compared to other leading rivals	<i>Online reputation constructs:</i> 1. Online visibility; 2. Valence of online signals; 3. Volume of online signals; 4. Consistency of online signals; 5. Perceived trustworthiness	Composed index
You and Sikora (2014)	–	Summary statistics (for example, sample average) of the feedback ratings	General feedback ratings
Hung <i>et al.</i> (2012)	A significant determinant of marketing's influence in businesses; one of the most important tools for marketing; an endogenous and self-generated indicator produced by the users for their benefit	–	–
Rice (2012)	A history of reported evaluations left by prior transaction partners and disseminated to the community	Good and poor ratings	General feedback ratings
Papagiannidis <i>et al.</i> (2013)	The extent to which users can identify the standing of others, including themselves, in a social media setting	–	–

**Table VIII.**  
Online reputation definitions and metrics' extraction

(continued)



Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Yoganarasimhan (2013)	The higher probability of being chosen as well as the ability to charge higher prices	–	–
Anderson and Lawrence (2014)	–	Online consumer review ratings	General feedback ratings
Ye <i>et al.</i> (2014)	–	The percentage of positive feedback (calculated by dividing the number of unique positive ratings by the total number of unique positive ratings and unique negative ratings)	General feedback ratings
Charest and Bouffard (2015)	The expression and evaluation of the opinion of Internet users through the use of Web tools	–	–
Diana-Jens and Ruibal (2015)	The result of what clients, former clients, future clients, employees, etc. say, write and communicate to another anywhere in the internet social media based on their perceptions and experience in any moment of their relationship, direct or indirect, with the brand; a vital aspect of the business competitiveness; a vital factor in establishing pricing strategies	The whole group of reviews available through Social Media channels; position in the TripAdvisor's ranking	General feedback ratings
Shen <i>et al.</i> (2015)	An important driver for community members to contribute voluntarily	–	–
Abrate and Viglia (2016)	–	Star rating, the average online rating given by visitors	General feedback ratings
Baka (2016)	An ongoing cyclical process that consists of manageable moments	–	–
Blomberg-Nygaard and Anderson (2016)	–	Guest review score	General feedback ratings
Floreddu and Cabiddu (2016)	–	Number of positive, negative and medium codes	General feedback ratings
Li (2016)	–	The valence of user-generated online reviews (average review rating)	General feedback ratings
Lin <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Secondhand and historical information shared by strangers; a set of reviews and ratings mitigating information asymmetry	Volume or the number counts of reputational ratings (RatingsCount), valence or the average of these ratings (AvgRating), and a dummy variable (NoRating) measuring whether the vendor has received	Composed index

(continued)

Table VIII.

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Schuckert <i>et al.</i> (2016)	–	any ratings associated with his or her profile at the time of the bid (a value of one indicates the absence of ratings) Customers online ratings	General feedback ratings
Singh <i>et al.</i> (2016a)	A criteria influencing customers during their online purchasing	Customers online ratings	General feedback ratings
Aureli and Supino (2017)	A typical result of web 2.0	Rankings, ratings, travel website algorithms and scores	General feedback ratings
Banerjee <i>et al.</i> (2017)	–	Average business rating * Number of reviews	General feedback ratings
Diéguez-Soto <i>et al.</i> (2017)	The online customer valuation regarding location, quality of rest, rooms, service, quality-price and cleanliness	Online popularity ranking available in Tri-pAdvisor website: 100 – [(TripAdvisor ranking position/Number of hotels in TripAdvisor ranking)* 100]	General feedback ratings
Gupta <i>et al.</i> (2017)	The perception of the e-commerce sites online presence	<i>Online reputation measures:</i> 1. Product information; 2. Conveyance; 3. Website content and ranking; 4. Offers and promotions; 5. Advocacy; 6. Status delivery; 7. Privacy and security	Composed index
Liang <i>et al.</i> (2017)	An important type of social capital	Online reviews related data	General feedback ratings
Micera and Crispino (2017)	Both the positive and negative opinions exchanged on the web	Analysis of the opinions (positive or negative) expressed by users in various Web sources (communities, blogs, social networks) and measurement of virality (sharing rates) generated by these comments and posts	Composed index
Nicoli and Papadopoulou (2017)	The foundation of a successful hotel business enterprise, with massive benefits, including high demand and more profit, good marketing exposure, repetitive clientele, loyalty and integrity, competitive advantage and a priceless advertisement; a synonymous with how publics perceive the most significant characteristics of an organization	–	–

Table VIII.

(continued)

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Novotny and Spiekermann (2017)	A trust mark reducing transaction risks and remediating information asymmetry	To calculate the score of a profile, the ratings are added and divided by the number of reviews	General feedback ratings
Ramos <i>et al.</i> (2017)	–	Score reviews	General feedback ratings
Aringhieri <i>et al.</i> (2018)	The result of (i) a number of repeated transactions between pairs of sellers and buyers, not necessarily the same, and (ii) the sharing with other sellers and buyers of the outcomes of the transaction	–	–
Diaz and Rodríguez (2018)	A strategic factor in determining the competitiveness and marketing capacity of lodging companies; a new marketing tool to capture clients and reach sales objectives in the lodging industry	–	–
Gössling <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Determinant of economic success	–	–
Könsgen <i>et al.</i> (2018)	–	Star ratings	General feedback ratings
Parra-Lopez <i>et al.</i> (2018)	A critical variable related to credibility, reliability and coherence which influences the value and service perceived by a user	–	–
Rodríguez-Díaz <i>et al.</i> (2018)	A set of opinions, experiences, and evaluations of customers shared on websites about a product, service, or brand; It is currently one of the most important topics in defining hotels' marketing strategy; It is out of the scope of companies because it is an external factor; the communicative and interactive processes for spreading information exchanged by actors within a social network	Service quality; Price (perceived value); Category (Booking.com); Service quality, Price (perceived value), Category (TripAdvisor); Service quality; Price; Category (percentage recommendation) (HolidayCheck)	Composed index
Wang and Kim (2018)	–	The number of buyers who gave the latest positive feedback minus the number of those who gave the latest negative feedback	General feedback ratings
Xie <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Aggregate online marketing performance indicator	Aggregate ratings of online reviews: Consumer reviews - Averatings: Average ratings of reviews for hotel quality in a given quarter, with the value of 5 for	General feedback ratings

(continued)

Table VIII.

Authors	Conceptualization	Adopted index	Index categorization
Yang and Leung (2018)	–	“Excellent,” 4 for “Very Good,” 3 for “Average,” 2 for “Poor,” and 1 for “Terrible.” Review valence; Review volume	General feedback ratings

**Table VIII.** Source: Our elaboration

total number of online downloads of a product; online consumers review ratings; percentage of positive online feedback; the whole group of reviews available through social media channels; the position in the TripAdvisor’s ranking; star rating; guest review score; number of positive, negative and medium codes; and the valence of user-generated online reviews (average review rating).

Conversely, further researches (Gupta *et al.*, 2017; Micera and Crispino, 2017; Lin *et al.*, 2016; Reuber and Fischer, 2011) proposed composed online reputation indexes comprise multiple measurements. Table VIII provides a detailed description of them.

3.2.7 *Online presence, online visibility, and online reputation declinations and interactions.* Alongside the extraction of the possible definitions and measurements of the online presence, visibility and reputation concepts, the content analysis process also allowed to identify specific declinations and connections existing between them.

For what concerns the declination dimension, Table IX lists, for each construct, specific declinations emerged from the literature describing the online presence, visibility and reputation constructs (e.g. social media presence, website visibility and social media reputation).

Concerning the interaction perspective, the analysis enabled to point out two major connections existing between the investigated concepts: the online presence-online visibility and online visibility-online reputation relationships.

With respect to the first interaction, several authors (Raguseo *et al.*, 2017; Otero *et al.*, 2014; Smithson *et al.*, 2011; Chua *et al.*, 2009; Murphy and Scharl, 2007; Chen and Yen, 2004) identified a sequence relationship between online presence and online visibility. In

Online presence	Online visibility	Online reputation
Digital presence	Website visibility	Website reputation
Website presence	Social media visibility	Social media reputation
Social media presence		Online reputation management
Offline/online presence		Online reputation systems
		Online reputation systems’ problems
		Online reputation mechanisms
		Online reputation scores
		Online reputational ratings/reviews

**Table IX.** Online presence, online visibility and online reputation declinations

Source: Our elaboration

particular, these concepts have been considered as two subsequent stages of the internet adoption.

Indeed, in their work, [Raguseo et al. \(2017\)](#) stated that the online presence, on its own, does not represent a competitive advantage since it is potentially accessible by any organization and consequently not sufficient to attract profitable customers. According to [Smithson et al. \(2011\)](#) and [Chua et al. \(2009\)](#), the competitive advantage lies in the way the internet existence is managed. For organizations (as well as any other online player) with an online presence, the subsequent challenge should be to increase the flow of traffic to their online contact points (e.g. websites and social media), with the final aim of intensifying their online visibility and then their sales.

Overall, even if an effective online presence is vital for the internet's success, having a technology represents only a first stage of organizational diffusion. Players, in later phases of the internet adoption, should promote their online spaces to achieve higher search engine rankings, yielding more online visibility, and subsequent internet traffic ([Murphy and Scharl, 2007](#)).

By focusing on the second interaction (online visibility-online reputation), also, in this case, a relationship of natural succession emerges between the two constructs ([Reuber and Fischer, 2011](#); [Smithson et al., 2011](#); [Chua et al., 2009](#); [Murphy and Scharl, 2007](#)). More specifically, once firms enter in the online environment (online presence), the intensification of their online visibility through the flow of traffic to their official websites and social media ([Chua et al., 2009](#)) is not enough. Even if a key stage is pointing the user towards the firm's online spaces, then the design and information provided must be appealing (online reputation) ([Smithson et al., 2011](#)). Online reputation represents, in fact, a valuable resource in the internet environment since players with a positive reputation are more attractive to investors, customers, suppliers or employees. This attractiveness can lead to price, cost, and performance advantages that may persist over time ([Reuber and Fischer, 2011](#)).

In other words, according to the business and management literature, the online presence, visibility and reputation concepts represent three successive phases of the internet adoption. The first step consists in accessing the network through the establishment of an online presence (e.g. websites and social media), which should be then promoted to increase the online visibility and traffic. Once users are attracted towards the online contact points, the task of retaining and positively influencing potential customers is assigned to the online reputation, which can yield different categories of advantages, especially in terms of price, performance and sales.

[Table X](#) synthesizes all the interactions extracted from the investigated literature.

#### 4. Discussion, conclusions and future research needs

Through the adoption of the literature review and content analysis process, the present study tried to systematize all the papers devoted to the online presence, visibility and reputation concepts from a business and management perspective.

To answer *RQ1*, the study highlighted the absence of the three investigated topics in the keywords of the top-ten journals. Thus, the subsequent adoption of the systematic literature review (focused on all the business and management papers) allowed to generalize the analysis. Starting from this generalization, a significant interest emerges toward the online presence topic (with 106 articles dedicated to it), followed by the online reputation ( $n = 80$ ) and online visibility ( $n = 13$ ) constructs.

In terms of temporal distribution, for all the analyzed research streams, the literature's interest has grown especially in the last five years (2014-2018), thus confirming the

Authors	Online presence-online visibility interactions	Online visibility-online reputation interactions
Chen and Yen (2004)	Benefits of adding interactivity to a website include improved user satisfaction and a possible increase in site visibility; Prioritizing and strategically selecting the candidate features may help firms sustain a competitive online presence	
Murphy and Scharl (2007)	Having a technology represents an early stage of organizational diffusion. Companies in later stages of internet adoption, for example, promote and redesign their websites to achieve higher search engine rankings, yielding more online visibility and subsequent website traffic	While higher search engine rankings lead to higher traffic (online visibility), the design and information provided lead to greater credibility and reputation for a website
Chua <i>et al.</i> (2009)	A subsequent marketing process challenge, for organizations, which do have an online presence, is understanding how to increase the flow of traffic to their website, increase their online visibility and hence increase sales	
Yayli and Bayram (2010) Reuber and Fischer (2011)	In today's competitive market-place and technology-driven society, just having a Web presence no longer brings visibility	There are two aspects of an online reputation: being visible online and being seen as providing high-quality goods and services; Online reputation involves both visibility and quality
Smithson <i>et al.</i> (2011)		Online visibility alone is not enough. The first step is obviously pointing the user towards the firm's website, but then the design and information provided must be appealing
Otero <i>et al.</i> (2014)	It is important for a firm to carefully consider online presence. Having a website provides both a context for online commerce and a way to organize customers. Therefore, a firm should be present on at least two important industry-relevant infomediaries to ensure its visibility, provide detailed information on its own website, and ultimately attract customers to its physical establishment for a final purchase	
Raguseo <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Online presence through a corporate website and search engines is not sufficient for being visible and attracting profitable customers; Online visibility as the ability to attract more profitable customers	

**Table X.**  
Online presence,  
online visibility and  
online reputation  
interactions

**Source:** Our elaboration

increasing relevance of these topics for the recent business and management studies (Table II).

By focusing on *RQ2*, the adoption of the content analysis process allowed to investigate the definitional dimension related to the three research topics. In particular, the findings highlighted the absence of a clear and shared definition of online presence, visibility and reputation. However, even if the majority of the analyzed studies have dealt with these topics without introducing or defining them, a not insignificant percentage of articles has tried, on the contrary, to conceptualize them.

Notably, the online presence concept has been generally defined by several authors (Raguseo *et al.*, 2017; Rodríguez Domínguez *et al.*, 2011; Murphy and Scharl, 2007; Jackson, 2007; Torres *et al.*, 2006) as a fundamental precondition for the firms' success and competitiveness in the online sphere.

Conversely, from the analysis, a more accurate attempt to thoroughly define the online visibility concept emerged. In particular, the Drèze and Zufryden (2004) conceptualization has turned to be one of the most adopted by the business and management literature (Smithson *et al.*, 2011). However, despite the existence of this definition, more recent studies (Raisi *et al.*, 2018; Raguseo *et al.*, 2017; Lappas *et al.*, 2016; Charest and Bouffard, 2015; Reuber and Fischer, 2011; Smithson *et al.*, 2011) have tried to propose their own online visibility definition, thus leading to a proliferation of ever-new conceptualizations.

An evident fragmentation has also characterized the online reputation extractions, with the majority of studies focusing on specific aspects of this research stream. Dealing with this multi-faceted scenario, the article tried to combine and synthesize all the definitional extractions to propose a conceptual baseline useful for future researches.

Moreover, through the adoption of the content analysis process, the paper allowed identifying different declinations and interactions existing between the online presence, visibility and reputation concepts. Notably, some authors (Raguseo *et al.*, 2017; Otero *et al.*, 2014; Reuber and Fischer, 2011; Smithson *et al.*, 2011; Chua *et al.*, 2009; Murphy and Scharl, 2007; Chen and Yen, 2004) detected specific two-by-two connections between the investigated research streams. This finding is very interesting since it shows that the online presence, visibility and reputation constructs are not separate, but on the contrary, they are logically interconnected, thus creating a digital strategic management process (Figure 3).

Finally, for what concerns *RQ3*, the findings outlined how unanimously accepted indexes do not yet exist since there are not standardized scales widely recognized by researches (Horster, 2011; Smithson *et al.*, 2011). Despite this result, several authors tried to propose possible metrics. Faced with this scenario, the attempt of this article has been that of synthesizing all of them to combine the multiple proposed online presence, visibility and reputation indexes into specific categorizations (Figure 3).

Overall, to provide an additional stimulus to the debate, Figure 3 proposes a possible framework of synthesis. Notably, it summarizes:

- the most cited online presence, visibility and reputation definitions;
- all the interactions existing between them; and
- all the indexes categorizations emerged from the content analysis.

In particular, this framework is the result of the adoption of the following criteria:

DIGITAL STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS

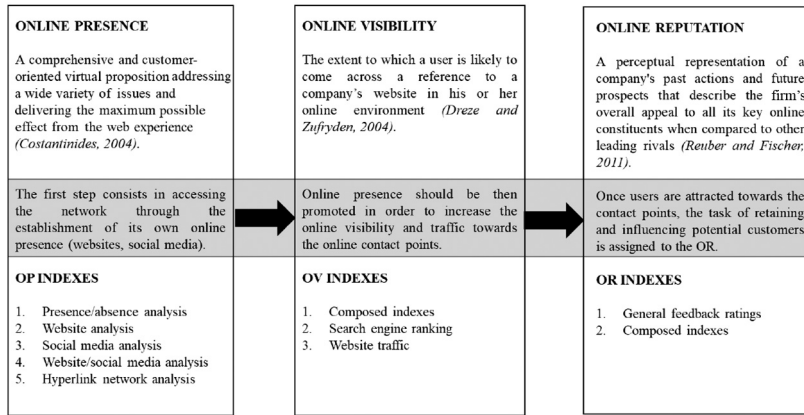


Figure 3.  
Theoretical  
framework

Source: Our elaboration

- *Definitional dimension:* for each research stream, the definition with the highest number of citations has been selected since the ability to attract the attention of the scientific community represents a quality proxy (Kraus et al., 2012; Garfield, 1979);
- *Interactional dimension:* all the interactions, emerged from the content analysis, have been completely and synthetically inserted.
- *Metrical dimension:* all the indexes categorizations, created to synthesize the multiple measurements proposed by the literature, have been included.

However, even if the adopted criteria allowed achieving a coherent theoretical framework, this cannot be considered a definitive result, but a starting point for future researches. Indeed, it does not include the online presence, visibility and reputation declinations emerged from the content analysis (Table IX). Conversely, the rich literature focused on such declinations (in particular, social media and website) may provide important elements for completing the theoretical framework proposed in this article. In the present study, these aspects have not been deepened since they go beyond the proposed objective (the identification of the existence or otherwise of possible definitions and metrics of the more general concepts of online presence, visibility and reputation). Nevertheless, since these declinations are of extreme interest, they should be the object of future research.

In addition, the article allowed to highlight further research prospects both theoretical and practical in nature.

Theoretically, given the extreme relevance assumed by the online topic in the everyday business practices, such as the growing investments in digital communication (Tiago and Verissimo, 2014), the increasing attention towards the online reviews (Xie et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2011), and the greater importance of evaluating, monitoring, and managing the online reputation (Hung et al., 2012), it becomes fundamental to univocally conceptualize the online presence, visibility and



reputation constructs. To date, even if these concepts have been investigated by the literature (the review process identified 199 articles focused on these topics), they have not yet been uniquely defined. A potential motivation for this lack of systematization may be identified in the fact that the online thematic is not only extremely recent (the articles increased significantly since 2010), but also extremely rapid in its evolution, as well as not easy to circumscribe. Therefore, the business and management literature appears in a pre-paradigmatic phase (Kuhn, 1970), in which different definitional and methodological proposals are competing for the preference and scholars' attention.

In addition, the identification of shared definitions can generate a second research line applicative in nature. Indeed, the theoretical concepts of online presence, visibility and reputation can be converted into managerial tools with univocal measurements able to:

- constantly monitor and manage the online existence; and
- analyze and measure the existing correlations between firms' online presence, visibility and reputation and their standard performance metrics (e.g. sales trends, revenue levels and profitability indices).

Ultimately, these findings should be evaluated in light of the paper's limitations. Firstly, the study is limited to the analysis of the business and management literature and, to be generalized, it should also be extended to other subject areas. Moreover, the review has only considered two databases (Scopus and Web of Science) and journal articles and reviews. These criteria have determined the selection of scientific studies, by consequently leaving out managers and consultants' contributions. Therefore, future researches should also be extended to monographs.

Finally, the proposed framework represents a first theoretical-conceptual attempt, which should be:

- tested and verified by subsequent empirical research studies;
- completed by future studies focused on the analysis of the identified declinations of online presence, visibility and reputation; and
- inserted into a broader context (e.g. through the identification of the online presence, visibility and reputation antecedents and consequences).

#### Note

1. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications; International Journal of Electronic Commerce; International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising; International Journal of Online Marketing; Internet Research; Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice; Journal of Electronic Commerce Research; Journal of Interactive Marketing; Journal of Internet Commerce; and Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing.*

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