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How Do Consumers See Firms' Family Nature? A Review of the Literature

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Abstract

This literature review analyzes studies that deal with the meanings that consumers form about firms' family nature. Through our analysis of 83 papers, we highlight the importance of firms' family nature from consumers' perceptual, social, and cultural perspectives, at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Besides the common meanings that consumers attach to firms' family nature, our review showed that, in some cases, firms' family nature acquired meanings that were deemed to be so important that they eventually provided consumers with self-identification, communitarian identification, and novel market configurations, and even made the family firm the industry's prototypical organizational form.

Keywords: firms' family nature, consumers, meanings, micro level, meso level, macro level

Introduction

We review studies on the meanings consumers form about firms' family nature.

Consumers' active role in contemporary marketplaces is widely acknowledged in current research (Cova & Dalli, 2009; Martin & Schouten, 2013). Consumers are more powerful than ever owing to the spectacular rise in digital technologies, the proliferation of virtual environments, and—more generally—a shift in power from firms to consumers (Labrecque, Vor dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak & Hofacker, 2013; Muñoz & Schau, 2007). The establishment of contemporary paradigms like consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; 2015) and service dominant logic (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2008) and their ways of framing market exchanges beyond their transactional value have pushed scholars to regard the marketplace as a fabric of meanings. Thus, scholars have gradually shifted their focus from firms to customers' and have noted that consumers make extensive use of marketplace meanings to negotiate their identity via individual consumption practices, to establish social relationships through the creation of social aggregates that form around consumption, and use the marketplace to create and circulate social and cultural ideologies that go beyond mere consumption (Giesler & Fischer, 2017; McInnis, Torelli, & Park, 2019; Peñaloza & Venkatesh, 2006).

In family business studies, scholars are especially concerned with whether and how the meanings implied in a firm's family nature (i.e. being a family firm) influence consumers and with whether and how family firms can exploit these meanings to gain differentiation and to outcompete their non-family counterparts (e.g., Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018; Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013). This is clearly visible in a growing number of scholarly contributions on family firm brands that are depicted in the four available comprehensive literature reviews (Beck, 2016; Binz Astrachan, Botero, Astrachan, & Prügl, 2018; Bravo, Cambra, Centeno, & Melero, 2017; Sageder, Mitter, & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2018). A close look at research contributions summarized by these literature reviews reveals a tendency by scholars to consider firms' family nature as an idiosyncratic resource (see Binz Astrachan et al., 2018), which distracts from seeing

1
2 the meanings implied in being a family firm as (also) a by-product of a negotiation of meanings
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4 at the individual level but also at the level of the multiple social spheres in which consumers are
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6 embedded and in which consumption practices occur. Recent developments in marketing and
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8 consumer research, on the contrary, have widely shown that consumption meanings are only
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10 partly explained by consumers' positive mental associations with a market offering (for the most
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12 recent criticisms, see McInnis, Torelli, & Park, 2019), but are largely created through
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14 mechanisms of congruence (or fit) between a market offering and consumers' selves (i.e. at the
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16 individual level) (see Escalas & Bettman, 2005), through the association and appropriation of
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18 these meanings by some groups (i.e. at the group level) (e.g., Muñiz & O'Guinn 2001; Schouten
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20 & McAlexander, 1995), and through the underlying dynamics that regulate the functioning of
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22 markets (i.e. at the market level) (e.g., Giesler & Fischer, 2017). This is not to say that these
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24 individual, group and market level mechanisms have never been studied before. Rather, that
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26 being previous literature reviews based on the implicit assumption that the firms' family nature is
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28 an idiosyncratic resource of family firms, they tended to overlook the inclusion of other works
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30 where such family nature is framed as an outcome of negotiated and market mediated
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32 consumption practices.
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39 Having identified this gap, we review the literature so as to answer the following research
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41 question: *What do we know about how consumers form meanings about firms' family nature?* To
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43 answer this question, we conduct a mixed-method literature review and create a mapping
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45 framework that includes different yet nested levels where meanings are created: *micro*, *meso*, and
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47 *macro* (see Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Giesler & Thompson, 2016). The micro-meso-macro
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49 framework unifies distinct yet interconnected and embedded spheres of social reality (Dopfer,
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51 Foster, & Potts, 2004) that range from dyadic firm-consumer interactions (the micro level), through
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53 structured patterns of action and interaction in collectives (the meso level), and broader social
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55 categories in which both the micro and meso levels are embedded (the macro level) (see Andreini,
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57 Pedeliento, Zarantonello, & Solerio, 2018). Used to organize the literature, this framework provides
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1
2 a fine grained ontological lens able to reframe what we already know about how consumers form
3 meanings about firms' family nature and how the multiple social contexts in which consumers are
4 embedded make such family nature meaningful (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). Thus, the micro-
5 meso-macro framework portrays as many nested contexts in which specific social structures,
6 interactions and meanings emerge and develop. Our review findings enable us to propose a
7 different—namely more consumer-sensitive—perspective through which firms' family nature can
8 be approached, and to propose a research agenda to advance and further enlarge the family business
9 literature's scope and boundaries.
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25 **Previous literature reviews**

26 As noted, a growing stream has investigated consumers' perceptions of firms' family
27 nature. It has focused on family-based marketing and family-based brands, and is well
28 summarized in four recent literature reviews (Beck, 2016; Binz Astrachan et al., 2018; Bravo et
29 al., 2017; Sageder et al., 2018). In short, Beck (2016) depicted the effects of being a family firm
30 on firms and their stakeholders, highlighting the relevance of conducting brand management
31 research in family firms. Bravo et al. (2017) provided an overview and taxonomic analysis on the
32 brand concept, along with a framework to better understand branding in the specific context of
33 family firms. Binz Astrachan et al. (2018) offered a compelling literature review to answer the
34 questions what a family business brand is, what its constituents are, and how branding takes place
35 in family firms, by considering consumers' perceptions and reactions. Finally, Sageder et al.
36 (2018) proposed a detailed and comprehensive picture of the literature on family firms' images
37 and reputations from the perspectives of both consumers and firms. Even more importantly, the
38 most relevant research streams considered by these reviews included studies that 1) considered
39 what family firms communicate as part of their brands (e.g., Krappe et al., 2011); 2) analyzed
40 when family firms communicate their family firm brands (e.g., Micelotta & Reynard, 2011); or 3)
41 focused on how family firm brands are perceived (e.g., Botero, Binz Astrachan, & Calabrò,
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2018). Research into the third component tended to combine how stakeholders viewed family firms.

However, notably, none of these reviews used the words *consumer(s)*, *customer(s)*, or *client(s)* in the search strings through which articles were identified in electronic databases. Thus, these reviews' contributions are skewed toward branding and communication strategies at the firm level, with limited consideration of consumers' roles. A close look at the list of reviewed papers (e.g., see the list included in the supplementary data by Binz Astrachan et al., 2018¹) corroborates this statement. In contrast to these reviews, we focus on consumers and review studies that help us to understand how consumers form meanings related to firms' family nature, also shedding light on the dynamics that lie beyond such meaning formation.

Method

To get a deeper understanding of what we know about how consumers form meanings about firms' family nature, we integrated the systematic review approach with an inductive ontological analysis of papers. A systematic literature review is "an overview of primary studies which contains an explicit statement of objectives, materials, and methods and has been conducted according to explicit and reproducible methodology." (Greenhalgh 1997:672). To perform it, we followed the protocol suggested by Thorpe, Holt, Macpherson, and Pittaway (2005) as well as Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003). Following Jones, Coviello, and Tang (2011), we then enhanced the review with a thematic ontological analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), inductively reading and rereading the papers in iterative cycles to identify themes in a process of theme accordance and categorization that ensured consistency within and across theme categories (Jones et al., 2011, Noy & McGuinness, 2001).

¹ The appendix can be accessed via the journal's website. The appendix is a separated document from the Binz Astrachan et al., 2018 article's text.

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3 We limited the review to articles in established peer-reviewed journals, because they are a
4 source of validated knowledge and strongly impact on the field (Ordanini, Rubera, & DeFillippi,
5 2008; Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Bachrach, & Podsakoff, 2005). To identify articles, we applied
6 three search strategies, each aimed at increasing the number of papers. The final database
7 consisted of 83 papers. Appendixes A and B provide extensive details of the procedures we
8 followed to search, select, and analyze the papers. The adoption of these protocols enabled us to
9 identify a set of papers that was not included in previous literature reviews. Of the 83 papers we
10 identified, only 11 had been previously considered.

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13 A closer look at the 83 articles revealed a clear preference for qualitative studies (50
14 papers). This can be explained by the fact that this research stream is still fairly young, and that
15 measurement scales have not yet been developed (Binz Astrachan et al., 2018). Twenty-one used
16 a quantitative approach, five a mixed-methods methodology, four were literature reviews, and
17 three were conceptual papers. Empirical studies had been developed in very different
18 geographical contexts, with most focusing on single European countries (35 articles), the U.S.
19 (19), and single Asian countries (7). A wide array of industries were represented, although there
20 is a clear overrepresentation of studies on food and beverages (26), retail (10), and tourism (8).
21 Few studies (4) focused simultaneously on different industries.

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24 On the basis of the systematic literature review and the ontological analysis of the 83
25 selected papers, we clustered papers in different groups by using two criteria.

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28 First, we distinguished the papers based on the whether the family firm was 1) the *main*
29 *focus* of investigation ($n = 33$)², or 2) a *research context* ($n = 20$), or 3) emerged as an *incidental*
30 *finding* ($n = 30$). Second, we categorized the papers based on *their level of analysis*, distinguished
31 into *micro*, *meso*, and *macro* levels. As mentioned in the introduction, this coding is consistent
32 with the perspective shared in consumer culture studies (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Giesler &
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² This group of studies also included the four literature reviews Beck (2016), Bravo et al. (2017), Sageder et al. (2018), and Binz Astrachan et al. (2018).

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2 Thompson, 2016) and with this branch of scholarship's attempt to inscribe individual consumers'
3 lived experiences into larger social contexts (see Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). At a micro level,
4 consumers are framed and analyzed at the individual-subjective level, i.e. on cognitive
5 perceptions and their behavioral effects (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Fournier, 1998). At the meso
6 level, consumers are investigated as members of social aggregates such as communities, social
7 movements, and subcultural and ethnic groups (Cova & Pace, 2006; Hietanen & Rokka, 2015;
8 Muñiz & O'Guinn 2001; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995) whose formation may imply or may
9 revolve around consumption practices. Finally, at the macro level, consumers are seen as
10 marketplace actors that may prompt and affect the functioning of markets and the structure of the
11 underpinning product categories (Akaka, Vargo, & Lusch, 2013; Arnould & Thompson, 2005;
12 Giesler & Fischer, 2017). Our mapping framework (see Table 1 and Appendix C) presents the
13 literature based on the different levels of analysis adopted and based on the role of firms' family
14 nature in the papers selected for the literature review.

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35 **Insert Table 1 about here**

36 37 **Results**

38 39 ***The micro level: Firms' family nature as the focus of analysis***

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41 At the micro level, 12 of 20 papers that analyzed firms' family nature as the main focus of
42 analysis relied on a positivist epistemology and adopted a quantitative strategy that focused on
43 how firms' family nature can impact consumers' cognitions and behaviors (e.g., Beck &
44 Kenning, 2015; Binz, Hair Jr, Pieper, & Baldauf, 2013; Lude & Prügl, 2018; Orth & Green,
45 2009; Sageder et al., 2015). Six papers relied on qualitative methodologies and employed various
46 research methods, such as case studies, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Two papers
47 adopted a mix method approach. The quantitative papers generally adopted a psychological and
48 cognitive perspective to identifying the attributes consumers attached to family-owned firms
49 compared to non-family-owned ones (e.g., Beck & Kenning, 2015; Beck & Prügl, 2018; Binz,
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2 Hair Jr, Pieper, & Baldauf, 2013; Botero et al., 2018; Orth & Green, 2009; Sageder et al., 2015;
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4 Schellong, Kraiczy, Malär, & Hack, 2018). The qualitative papers were mainly interested in
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6 unveiling consumers' perceptions and the meanings relating to the relationships and face-to-face
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8 interactions between consumers with members of family businesses (see Carrigan & Buckley,
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10 2008; Krappe et al., 2011; Lyman, 1991; Presas, Guia, & Muñoz, 2014; Wilson, Bengtsson, &
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12 Curran, 2014).
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16 Regarding the meanings at the micro level, our review confirmed consumers' well-known
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18 mental associations with firms' family nature (Beck & Kenning, 2015; Binz, Hair Jr, Pieper, &
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20 Baldauf, 2013; Sageder, Duller, & Mitter, 2015) and the attributes consumers attach to family-
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22 owned brands (Botero et al., 2018; Lude & Prügl, 2018; 2019; Schellong, Kraiczy, Malär, &
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24 Hack, 2018). Common meanings that consumers perceive as peculiar to family firms and their
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26 brands relate to their smaller sizes (Carrigan & Buckley, 2008; Panwar, Paul, Nybakk, Hansen, &
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28 Thompson, 2014) and to their being perceived as more authentic (Lude & Prügl, 2018), human
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30 (Beck & Prügl, 2018), trustworthy (Beck & Kenning, 2015; Binz et al., 2013; Duncan & Hasso,
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32 2018; Lude & Prügl, 2019), and sensitive to social responsibility (Kang, Chiang, Huangthanapan,
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34 & Downing, 2015; Panwar et al., 2014; Schellong et al., 2018), and closer to the local context
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36 they act in (Baschieri, Carosi, & Mengoli, 2017; Ducan & Hasso, 2018). The evidence from
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38 quantitative studies was also supported by qualitative enquiries, which empirically confirmed the
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40 abovementioned consumer perceptions. Further, the articles also showed that what consumers
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42 perceive and appreciate most about family firms relates to their ability to establish and maintain
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44 relational bonds with their customers (Carrigan & Buckley, 2008; Presas et al., 2014). The same
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46 meanings were also revealed in empirical studies that focused on family-based brands, where
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48 brand values such as consistency, enduring commitment, integrity, and attention to creating
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50 strong bonds with stakeholders were underlined (Krappe et al., 2011; Peters & Frehse, 2011;
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52 Wilson, Bengtsson, & Curran, 2014). Thus, most of the meanings attached to family firms have
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54 positive valence, and only a few studies disclosed negative consumer perceptions, such as the
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2 limited product selection and price/value in retail (Carrigan & Buckley, 2008; Orth & Green,
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4 2009). Consumers considered family firms to be inflexible and hierarchical, and questioned these
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6 companies' future continuity and succession (Krappe et al., 2011).
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10 While the micro level papers focused on family firms confirmed what previous literature
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12 reviews found, our investigation shed light on the ways in which consumers formed these
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14 perceptions and the related outcomes. In particular, most of the selected papers categorized at the
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16 micro level used a theoretical approach based on signaling theory (see Connelly, Certo, Ireland,
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18 & Reutzel, 2011) to explain what consumers perceived about firms' family nature. The direct and
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20 personal relationships between consumers and members of family firms is another way in which
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22 consumers develop positive perceptions, enabling family-owned businesses to gain advantages
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24 vis-à-vis non-family firms (e.g., Carrigan & Buckley, 2008; Dessì et al., 2014; Lyman, 1991;
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26 Orth & Green, 2009; Peters & Frehse, 2014; Presas et al., 2014; Sageder et al., 2015). Studies in
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28 this set also provided evidence that the above meanings also relate to positive consumers'
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30 outcomes, such as purchases and loyalty (Carrigan & Buckley, 2008; Presas et al., 2014; Sageder
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32 et al., 2015). Others noted that consumers have better evaluations, better preferences, and higher
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34 intentions to purchase when comparing family firms' offerings to those of non-family firms (Binz
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36 et al., 2013; Lude & Prügl, 2018; Orth & Green, 2009). Other studies focused on less frequently
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38 studied outcomes, such as emotional value (Peters & Frehse, 2011), feelings of happiness
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40 (Schellong et al., 2018), and indulgence (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010).
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46 At the micro level, our review showed how papers focused on how family firms have
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48 tended to overemphasize the latter's ability to persuade consumers and to prompt the formation of
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50 positive perceptions via communication strategies, communication tactics, and brand stimuli.
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52 Indeed, to date, only two studies have tested whether family firms' planned identities
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54 communicated via their branding strategies were in fact perceived differently by consumers, i.e.
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56 whether a projected identity generated a misalignment with image (Dessì et al., 2014; Wilson et
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58 al., 2014). In the retail context, Wilson et al. (2014) found that meanings attributed to family-
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2 operated retailers can differ significantly depending on whether these meanings belong to
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4 managers or to consumers. In the same context, Dessì et al. (2014) found a significant perceptual
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6 discordance between retail managers and their customers when they sought to understand how
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8 small family-owned retailers were able to compete against large superstores that sell the same
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10 products.
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13 14 15 16 ***The micro level: Firms' family nature as the context of analysis*** 17

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19 Only four papers took a micro perspective with family firms as the context of analysis (De
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21 Roeck, Maon, & Lejeune, 2013; Dessì & Floris, 2010; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010; Yi & La,
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23 2004) and focused on how consumers develop meanings about family firms. They found that
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25 these meanings can form through direct relationships with family owners (Dessì & Floris, 2010;
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27 Yi & La, 2004) or through positive shopping experiences (De Roeck et al., 2013) resulting in the
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29 establishment of interpersonal (Dessì & Floris, 2010; Yi & La, 2004), company-consumer (Wirtz
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31 & McColl-Kennedy, 2010), and brand-consumer (De Roeck et al., 2013) bonds.
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35 In the context of a family-owned restaurant, Yi and La (2004) found that a *human touch*,
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37 i.e. the direct relationship consumers establish with a firm's family members, is a direct driver of
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39 loyalty to the service organization. This *human touch* image has been demonstrated to be
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41 effective when communicated during service recovery, lowering opportunistic behaviors by
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43 consumers, who indulged companies presented as family firms more than other company types
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45 (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010).
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49 Differently, De Roeck et al (2013) focused on IKEA, finding that despite the fact that the
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51 firm's family nature is not communicated or promoted, such family nature is made salient via
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53 sales promotions and other marketing tactics especially addressed to families, such as family
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55 membership programs, family-inclusive shops, and special offers to families. Although IKEA's
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57 family nature was not a primary focus of this paper, the results underlined how this characteristic
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59 prompted positive consumer experiences. As De Roeck et al. (2013) vividly state in reference to
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IKEA, “the democratic design encourages customers to be part of IKEA’s family.” (p. 145). In addition, Dessì and Floris (2010) demonstrated that firms’ performance is directly linked to the accordance between management and customers’ perceptions of family firms’ strengths, and mostly relate to human relationships and professionalism.

The micro level: Firms’ family nature as an incidental finding

Ten papers included incidental finding on firms’ family nature at the micro level of analysis. Besides the common meanings that consumers attach to firms’ family nature, such as small, truthful, socially responsible, and committed to quality (e.g., see Karstens & Belz, 2006; Meas, Hu, Batte, Woods, & Ernst, 2014), these papers’ incidental findings revealed how firms’ family nature is salient in specific product categories such as organic foods (Grashuis & Magnier, 2018; Karstens & Belz, 2006; Meas, Hu, Batte, Woods, & Ernst, 2014), and luxury products (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015), but also for services such as restaurants (Danes, Hess, Story, & York, 2010) and retailing (Paul, Sankaranarayanan, & Mekoth, 2016).

Other incidental findings also indicate that firms’ family nature is utilized by consumers to articulate their identity as individuals (Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009; Charters, Fountain, & Fish, 2009). Lee et al. (2009) focused on anti-consumption and brand antagonism, and unveiled a consumers’ preference for shopping at family-based stores as an example of their empathy with local businesses. Charters et al. (2009) revealed that consumers tend to prefer buying wines from family-owned wineries as a way to express their antagonism to bigger, non-family-owned organizations. Thus, these findings align with previous studies that suggest that consumers use the symbolic meaning of consumption to emphasize the ideological impacts of mundane consumption choices (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982) and use consumption for self-representation purposes (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995; Sirgy, 1982). In the context of family firms, this reasoning implies that consumption choices are made on the basis of a perceived fit between individual selves and the meanings that are supposed to be related to firms’ family

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2 nature. This identitarian congruence shapes consumption preferences for family firms (Lundqvist,
3 Liljander, Gummerus, & Van Riel, 2013) and higher identification with family members
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5 (Charters et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2009).
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10 11 ***The meso level: Firms' family nature as the focus of analysis*** 12

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14 Two papers at the meso level showed that members who joined social groups that revolve
15 around consumption practices use the meanings implied in firms' family nature to bind members
16 together and to keep the group alive. Lapio and Morris (2000) for instance investigated the group
17 of fans of NASCAR, a family-owned company that organizes popular stock car racing, and
18 found that these amateurs consider themselves to be valued and intimate members of the
19 NASCAR family. Bednarz and Nikodemska-Wołowik (2017) for instance showed that, in
20 Poland, *familiness* is associated with negative meanings of nepotism and amorality owing to the
21 negative cultural legacy of adverse past political and economic conditions.
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32 This set of papers underlines that firms' family nature was not only linked to consumers'
33 mental processing driving their choices, but also to group based dynamics in social settings in
34 which consumption assumes the form of a communitarian practice. This is visible in consumers'
35 aggregates such as communities of consumption or brand communities, but also in broader social
36 contexts in which consumers are nested, where the meanings of being a family firm can be used
37 either to maintain the group or contrasted.
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48 ***The meso level: Firms' family nature as the context of analysis*** 49

50 Of the reviewed papers in which firms' family nature was the context of analysis, seven
51 adopted a meso level perspective when studying family-based contexts. For example, McGrath,
52 Sherry, and Heisley (1993) demonstrated how farmers' family nature embodied root cultural
53 metaphors that induce consumers to compare their lifestyle to the values that underpin the ways
54 in which family farmers relate to the market. In this context, firms' family nature relates more to
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2 ideologies, according to which consumption choices are self-representation vehicles to signal an
3 individual's adherence to specific groups or social movements (Elliot, 1997; Holt, 1997).
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5 Similarly, Sherry (1990) demonstrated that the family nature of flea markets in the Midwest was
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7 fundamental to the institutionalization of the sociocultural practices that this market type propose,
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9 since these businesses embody values and ideologies that contrast strongly to those aligned with
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11 the capitalist ethos. Encounters, events, and markets are the ways in which these meanings and
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13 ideologies are perpetuated and shared in communitarian settings, into which economic and festive
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15 impulses can be fused. The outcomes related to the family nature meanings enacted in ideological
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17 social settings can be summarized by Holt's (2004) affirmation that consumption is first a cultural
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19 practice imbued with ideological meanings. Thus, the creation of alternative social formats and
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21 consumption types can be considered to be the outcomes of the ways in which firms' family
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23 nature can be shared and experienced by consumers with communal ideological mindsets
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25 (Balmer & Cheng, 2016).
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32 Four other papers focused on two family-based brand communities: Nutella (Cova &
33 D'Antone, 2016; Cova & Pace, 2006), LEGO (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013), and Vespa
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35 (Rindell, Santos, & De Lima, 2015). Although these brand communities are linked to specific
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37 family firms, none of these studies investigated the social structures and social interactions
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39 developed according to the family firm brands' values, but only focused on the consumer
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41 practices and marketing practices enacted in these communities. The reasons are different for
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43 each case. At the start of the Internet era, Nutella suppressed the very first brand fans' attempts to
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45 create consumer-based brand communities. This created conflicting relationships between the
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47 brand evangelists and the company. For this reason, when Nutella opened its company-owned
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49 brand community, "My Nutella The Community," the managers decided this online space was for
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51 member self-expression instead of using it to promote Nutella's heritage and brand values.
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53 Differently, LEGO's brand revitalization process passed through multiple consumer-owned
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55 communities not directly controlled by the company. Near bankruptcy in 2003, LEGO started a
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2 recovery program that included the recouping of brand values. Putting consumers first, the
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4 company began to orchestrate its social and network capital, which included multiple user-
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6 generated brand communities.
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9 Rindell et al. (2015) focused on the Vespa brand community in Portugal. Interestingly,
10 they identified the difference between the family-owned brand heritage as aimed by the corporate
11 governance and the heritage as understood by the members of Vespa brand community. For the
12 former, this brand heritage was largely represented by the brand's ability to constantly update
13 models with cutting-edge engine technologies while keeping them faithful to the original Vespa
14 design. For the latter, this brand heritage was instead only represented by its past, regardless of
15 whether new models were faithful to their original design. As the paper reports, this misalignment
16 caused a lack of fans' communitarian representation with current Vespa brand values and
17 therefore the refusal of the new versions of products, the creation of independent user-generated
18 communities that support the brand's glorious past, and the refusal of any contagion with Vespa's
19 new brand values. Such findings offer new opportunities for deeper investigations on the reasons
20 and logics behind consumer practices relating to family-owned brands in different community
21 settings, as well as for the identification of possible solutions to more tightly unfold the meanings
22 implied in firms' family nature in the lives of brand communities.
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44 ***The meso level: Firms' family nature as an incidental finding***

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46 Three of the seven studies that incidentally found evidence about firms' family nature at
47 the meso level focused on consumers' ethnocentrism (Alonso, 2012; Fernández-Ferrín, Calvo-
48 Turrientes, Bande, Artaraz-Miñón & Galán-Ladero, 2018; Pitta & Franzak, 2008), ethnic
49 consumption (Amine & Lazzaoui, 2011; Jamal, 2005), subcultural social groups (Peñaloza,
50 2001), and anti-consumption social movements (Gopaldas, 2014). Papers that focused on
51 consumers' ethnocentrism showed how consumers make purposeful use of firms' family nature
52 to make sense, perpetuate, and instantiate their ethnocentrism in their purchasing choices
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2 (Alonso, 2012; Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2018; Pitta & Franzak, 2008). For instance, Alonso
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4 (2012) and Fernández-Ferrín et al. (2018) demonstrated that local consumers use firms' family
5
6 nature as a herald of their ethnocentric ideology, sustained by their local consumption choices
7
8 and thus their membership to a local and ethnocentric social group.
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10
11 Two papers considered selected ethnic groups and found that firms' family nature signals
12
13 tradition and reassures consumers in transactional contexts endangered by 'invasion' by non-local
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15 firms, such as retail chains setting up operations in developing countries (Amine & Lazzaoui,
16
17 2011). Jamal (2005) showed that family firms are good at working with co-ethnic consumers,
18
19 because family-owned retailers are used to working with ambivalence, providing both ethnic and
20
21 mainstream brands and products at competitive prices, while Peñaloza (2001) investigated how
22
23 consumers' cultural production at a cattle trade show and rodeo recreated and maintained
24
25 ancestral cultural values, finding that consumers see family-owned ranches and booth exhibitors
26
27 as the most meaningful firm types engaged in the perpetuation of the American West subculture.
28
29 Finally, not all the family meanings were used constructively. For instance, Gopaldas (2014),
30
31 focusing on the wine industry, showed that consumers and family firm brands proactively spread
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33 a marketplace sentiment of anger at corporations, governments, and mainstream consumers,
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35 contrasting their family values against more global ones.
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The macro level: Firms' family nature as the focus of analysis

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45 Among the researchers who studied family firms as their main objective at the macro
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47 level, seven papers considered consumers as actors who, through their actions, can modify the
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49 marketplace they act in. These papers mainly relied on a sociological approach to markets
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51 (Fligstein & Dauter, 2007), where the market is considered to be a socially constructed arena in
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53 which different actor types (consumers, firms, intermediaries, and institutions) can make sense of
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55 things. In this instance, firms' family nature resulted in an effective cultural signal, which
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57 meanings consumers can develop and exploit, contributing to the development of market
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2 dynamics, including the emergence and development of new product categories, such as
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4 Australian wines (Strickland, Smith Maguire, & Frost, 2013), the perpetuation of traditional
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6 markets, such as fine wine and restaurants (Heine, Phan, & Atwal, 2016; Kovács, Carroll, &
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8 Lehman, 2013), the development of local economies (Del Baldo 2014; File, 1995; Walton, 2014),
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10 and even some possibly negative influences of family firms on society (Carney & Nason, 2018).
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14 The results showed that firms' family nature acquired meanings that were deemed to be so
15
16 important for consumers that they eventually provided novel market configurations and made the
17
18 family firm the industry's prototypical organizational form. For example, Strickland et al. (2013)
19
20 demonstrated that advertising a family heritage was a way for wineries to acquire legitimacy in
21
22 Australia's nascent wine market, since consumers weighted winemakers' reliability in relation to
23
24 the owning family's stated heritage. Similarly, Heine et al. (2016) showed that, in France's fine
25
26 wine industry, firms' family nature is a prototypical cue of authenticity that family-based
27
28 companies must manage with caution in order to fit the 'ideal' prototype in consumers' minds.
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30 The ways in which family firm meanings become sources of authenticity are perpetuated in
31
32 market practices developed with consumers. For instance, consumers reward family firms' efforts
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34 to keep their commitment to quality while downplaying their commercial motives. On the other
35
36 hand, family firms do their best to appear ever-committed to quality and to find the promotional
37
38 mix in order to appear uninterested in and distant from commercial motives (Beverland, 2006;
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40 Heine et al., 2016; Kovács et al., 2013).
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46 At the macro level, two papers underlined another salient meaning that deserves attention:
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48 firms' family nature as a development force. Del Baldo (2014) and File (1995) demonstrated that
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50 consumers and other stakeholders see family firms as local economic developers that can even
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52 stimulate such industries' internationalization (Walton, 2014).
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57 ***The macro level: Family firms' nature as the context of analysis***
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3 The nine studies of family firms as contexts of analysis at the macro level confirmed that
4 firms' family nature is a prototypical feature that relates to consumer perceptions of authenticity
5 in specific markets, such as wine and business-to-business industries (Massa, Helms, Voronov, &
6 Wang, 2017; Tsui-Auch, 2005) or even a prototypical feature of innovation in industries such as
7 tourism (Wang & Juan, 2016). The same prototypical feature was found to be relevant for a
8 family-based brand (Santos, Burghausen, & Balmer, 2016), where the corporate family-based
9 brand heritage fostered a sense of authenticity for the product brands of the same company.
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18 At this level, we found that, in some industries, firms' family nature represented the
19 expression of local cultures and was also interpreted as a territorial developing force by local
20 communities (Liu & Gao, 2014; Tessari & Godley, 2014). In this vein, Melewar and Skinner
21 (2018) demonstrated that, for consumers, firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of local
22 industrial organizations. Specifically, they found that, for consumers, family ownership was a
23 signal of quality and authenticity as well as a structuring force that helped to make brewing an
24 area-salient industrial activity. Delmestri and Greenwood (2016) investigated a specific case of a
25 family firm in the spirit industry, demonstrating that, for local communities, firms' family nature
26 constituted such a value to legitimize a brand undergoing a vertical rise in status, which also
27 affected the entire product category's structure.
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41 Finally, Press et al. (2014) demonstrated that firms' family nature can become an
42 oppositional category code when consumers utilize its meanings to animate ideological conflicts
43 (Luedicke, Thompson, & Giesler 2010; Mikkonen, Vicdan, & Markkula, 2014) with the
44 emergence of new markets (Giesler, 2007), such as the organic food industry. These aspects will
45 be more evident in papers in which firms' family nature was an incidental finding, as we will
46 explain.
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57 ***The macro level: Firms' family nature as an incidental finding***
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Among the papers that found some incidental findings with implications for understanding firms' family nature, 13 adopted a macro level perspective. Eight presented results in line with previously discussed macro level findings, in which firms' family nature was found to be a prototypical feature of product categories (Catry, 2003; Ger & Csaba, 2000; Kovács et al., 2013; Smith Maguire, 2013; Ulver-Sneistrup & Johansson, 2011; Voronov, De Clercq, & Hinings, 2013; Vrontis & Paliwoda, 2008), while two unveiled firms' family nature as a driver of the development of new product categories, such as the single malt whisky category (McKendrick & Hannan, 2013) and private banking in the UK (Laurance, 2008).

Different from previous analyses, three articles unveiled a sociocultural valence of firms' family nature, and not only an economic one. In particular, family firm meanings have been found to be key to creating and supporting collective identities in specific markets, such as winemaking (Markowska & Lopez-Vega, 2018). Stories of pioneering winemaking families have become a sort of communitarian identity glue among local companies and an objective element that consumers use to evaluate wineries' expertise at making high-quality products (Markowska & Lopez-Vega, 2018). Smith Maguire (2010) for instance revealed that wine promoters, who are cultural intermediaries that operate at the interfaces between winemakers and customers, make extensive use of narratives that underline the symbolism implied in being a family firm winery so as to foster a higher feeling of consumer authenticity toward the market offering.

Further, the assumed sociopolitical meanings of firms' family nature affected some markets' social and economic regulations, such as extended retail hours in Canada (McGregor, 2005). A similar political meaning has been used by consumers to negatively influence the outcomes of mergers and acquisitions enacted by global companies in specific markets (Van Rensburg, 2005). Thus, firms' family nature can not only assume the meaning of economic developer or reshaper of product categories, but also that of sociopolitical promoter of individual and communitarian identities (Markowska & Lopez-Vega, 2018; McGregor, 2005).

Firms' family nature and a future research agenda

We have reviewed studies that relate to the meanings that consumers form about firms' family nature (i.e., being a family firm). Our findings have unveiled that consumers use such meanings to negotiate their identities, to establish social relationships, and to promote social and cultural ideologies that go beyond the pure act of consumption. The previous literature reviews focused more on whether and how the meanings implied in a firm's family nature influence consumers (with a tendency to consider firms' family nature as an idiosyncratic resource). Instead, our review has represented papers that shed light on the meanings implied in being a family firm as a result of a negotiation of meanings that takes place not only at the individual level (micro), but also at the level of the multiple social spheres (meso and macro) in which consumers are embedded and in which consumption occurs. Thus, we were also able to shed more light on the mechanisms of congruence (or fit) between market offerings and consumers' selves, on the association and appropriation of these meanings by some groups, and on some of the underlying dynamics that animate markets.

Further, our literature review has advanced knowledge about how consumers form meanings about firms' family nature in two major and emerging ways. First, categorizing the papers according to family firms' roles in the analysis not only allowed us to identify not only studies in which family firms were the main actors in the meaning formation (firms' family nature as the focus of analysis), but also enabled us to broaden our perspectives to cases in which meaning formation occurred among different actors. Thus, when family firms were the context of the analysis, we could detect a more active role of consumers, engaged in meaning formation with other market actors. With papers in which firms' family nature was an incidental finding, we could enrich consumers' multifaceted meanings such as identity-based, ideological, cultural, sociopolitical, and prototypical meanings.

Second, the micro, meso, and macro codification analysis allowed for grouping the literature into separate levels corresponding to as many social contexts in which meanings were

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2 formed. Despite being distinguished, the micro, the meso and macro levels cannot be considered
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4 as silos; they are connected via meta-layers (Chandler & Vargo, 2011) in which practices,
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6 routines, activities, and processes allow for the exchange, negotiation, legitimation, and de-
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8 legitimation of meanings, values, and symbols across individual, social, and market contexts
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10 (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This framework led us to propose a research agenda to stimulate the
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12 development of further knowledge and a deeper understanding of firms' family nature.
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18 **The micro level**

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20 In our literature review, we identified three gap types at the micro level: the emotional
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22 significance of firms' family nature, the self-identity significance of firms' family nature, and the
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24 family firm personality. Each of these gaps are discussed next.
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30 1) *The emotional significance of firms' family nature*

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32 As our review suggested, studies have shown that consumers have positive attitudes to
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34 firms' family nature, and that these attitudes can even be more positive than what they may be
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36 toward non-family companies (see Dessì et al., 2014; Sageder et al., 2015; Orth & Green, 2009;
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38 Binz et al., 2013; Beck & Kenning, 2015; Botero et al., 2018). However, we still know little
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40 about whether a firm's family nature prompts specific emotional feelings, such as attachment
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42 (e.g., Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010), love (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi,
43
44 2012), or—if negative—hate (e.g., Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016). Attachment
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46 theory (see Bowlby, 1969), which is widely established in marketing and branding studies (see
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48 Jiménez & Voss, 2014; Park et al., 2010; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005), is a promising
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50 investigation stream upon which family firms' emotional significance can be grounded. Possible
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52 research questions include, but are not limited to:
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57 • *Which emotional bond types are more likely to determine consumers' feelings of emotional*
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59 *attachment to family firms compared to non-family ones?*
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- *Which negative feelings (e.g., hate) do consumers relate to firms' family nature? Which factors are more likely to prompt such negative consumer feelings?*
- *How do the consumer affective responses toward family firm brands and/or products change according to the meanings the firm's family nature assumes for that consumer?*

2) The self-identity significance of firms' family nature

Consumers use self-identity meanings as identity signals or self-representation vehicles (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 1995; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; McGrath et al., 1993; Sirgy, 1982). Scholars have often shown that family firms are engaged in a sort of David vs. Goliath competitive dynamic, because they often compete against large multinational corporations which, although they have more financial and economic resources, may lack sufficient social and cultural capital and are therefore perceived as less genuine (Ger & Csaba, 2000; Voronov et al., 2013).

Consumers see the act of consumption as well as their purchasing choices as active and purposeful ways to support family firms against large multinational and transnational corporations (Charters et al., 2009). Yet, to date, the roles of firms' family nature in consumers' self-identity projects have only emerged incidentally in studies' empirical findings—there has been no specific research into this issue. Future research questions that can be addressed include:

- *How can consumers utilize the meanings related to firms' family nature to shape their own identities and identity projects?*
- *Which elements make family firms more identity-salient than their non-family counterparts from a consumer perspective?*
- *Which consumers' selves tend to be more significantly related to the purchasing and consumption of family firm brands and products?*

3) The family firm brand personality

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3 Consumers' anthropomorphizing tendency (which implies the attachment of human
4 characteristics to objects) is well studied in the brand-consumer relationship literature (for a
5 pioneering study on brand personality, see Fournier, 1998) and has also been recently
6 investigated in family firm literature (Beck & Prügl, 2018). Anthropomorphizing can result in
7 specific feelings toward a firm or brand, such as a sense of firm/brand self-connection (Escalas &
8 Bettman, 2005), which pay out in the creation and maintenance of enduring firm/brand-consumer
9 relationships (Veloutsou, 2007; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). Because family firms' values are
10 often associated with those held by the owning family's members (Sorenson, 2014), the
11 attribution of personality traits to inanimate brands (Manning, 2010) is more easily achieved in
12 the context of family firms.
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25 According to our literature review, while Krappe et al.'s (2011) study is a pioneering
26 investigation of family firm brand personalities, more studies are needed to test the reliability and
27 validity of established brand personality scales (e.g., Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, & De Wulf,
28 2009) in the family business context, or to create and test specific family firm brand personality
29 measurement scales. Research questions that can be addressed include:
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- 36 • *Which personality traits are consumers more likely to associate with family firms?*
 - 37 • *How are consumers' personalities and family firms' personalities connected?*
 - 38 • *How does a family-based brand personality intended by a firm differ from that attached by*
39 *the consumer to a brand?*
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49 **The meso level**

50 Our literature review, revealed that the firms' family nature takes on specific meanings in
51 communities, social movements, subcultural and ethnic groups. However future research should
52 focus on two underdeveloped research areas: family firms as custodians of subcultural values and
53 firms' family nature in brand communities:
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1) *Family firms as custodians of subcultural values*

Firm and brand meanings are involved in the ritual consolidation of sociocultural systems, such as consumption subcultures (see Holt, 2004; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Our literature review highlighted the incidental findings of Peñaloza (2001), who demonstrated that subcultural groups of consumers, along with family-owned ranchers and booth exhibitors, perpetuated the subculture of the American West. Similar incidental results have been obtained by authors investigating ethnocentric consumer groups (e.g., Balmer & Chen, 2016; Jamal, 2005). Theoretically and empirically, the analysis of how family firms' nature can assume subcultural significance requires the adoption of social theories and research approaches that primarily concern these meso level social structures and their relationships to other broader social environments, for instance, strategic action field theory (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012), institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995), or Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu's (1984) theories of practice. Since, according to our review, these insights were incidental findings, future research should seek to answer these questions:

- *How does the establishment and diffusion of specific consumption subcultures relate to the presence and relevance of family firms in specific contexts and industries?*
- *Which specific subcultural consumer groups are more related to firms' family nature and their characteristics?*
- *How do selected consumption subcultures perceive the contributions by family firms' compared to those by non-family-based ones?*

2) *Firms' family nature in brand communities*

When firms decide to communicate and exploit their family nature as an idiosyncratic resource (Beck & Kenning, 2015; Binz Astrachan et al., 2018; Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018; Micelotta & Raynard, 2011), consumers can use family-based brands to signal their adherence to specific social and political ideologies (Holt, 2004; Kravets & Öрге, 2010) and to create social

1
2 aggregation types around firms and brands. In particular, brand communities (Cova & Pace,
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4 2006; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001) are expressions of this
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6 phenomenon. Our literature review identified specific brand advocates and brand communities
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8 created around well-known family firm brands such as Nutella, LEGO, and Vespa, (Cova &
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10 Pace, 2006; Cova & D'Antone, 2016; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Rindell et al., 2015).

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14 Theoretically and empirically, the analysis of these brand communities can rely on the
15
16 theoretical perspectives in the broad branch of theories known as consumer culture theory (CCT).
17
18 CCT addresses the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and
19
20 cultural meanings (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Historically, it has been largely studied how
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22 brand communities are formed and maintained, as well as the intricate network of dynamics
23
24 involving consumers and marketers. Considering the specific community management styles and
25
26 the related members' values and practices that our literature review showed in family firm brand-
27
28 based communities (i.e. Nutella, Lego and Vespa communities), future studies should compare
29
30 brand communities formed around family-based brands to those formed around non-family-
31
32 owned ones, so as to identify differences across these two different community types. These
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34 research questions offer promising lines of enquiry:
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39 • *What are the traits of successful brand communities stemming from family firms? How does*
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41 *their success relate to these firms' family nature?*
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43 • *From a consumer perspective, how do family-based brand communities differ from non-*
44
45 *family-based brand ones?*
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47 • *How do consumers that join family firm brand communities endorse family-related values to*
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49 *engage with, participate in, and commit to a brand community?*

50 51 52 53 54 **The macro level**

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56 The macro level comprises marketplaces, product categories, and wider market
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58 environments in which values and meanings affect market dynamics (Arnould & Thompson,
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2005, 2015; Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). Thus, at this level of analysis, firms' family nature is seen by consumers as a cultural force that may affect the functioning of markets and market categories (Akaka et al., 2013; Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016). In our review, we identified three research areas for future investigation of firms' family nature in macro contexts:

1) The relevance of the family nature of firms and markets

An emerging family business research stream is investigating in which markets firms' family nature is a source of value and competitive advantage vis-à-vis non-family firms (Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018; Botero, Spitzley, Lude, & Prügl, 2019). These authors suggest that buying behavior processes affect the salience of firms' family nature in specific markets such as business-to-business and business-to-consumer. What we found at the macro level is that firms' family nature resulted in a categorical prototype in the wine industry (e.g., Markowska & Lopez-Vega, 2018; Smith Maguire, 2013; Voronov et al., 2013), and for handcrafted items (e.g., Ger & Csaba, 2000; Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015), and that this characteristic was salient both for consumers and other stakeholders. Being prototypical means to be a typical and more representative model of a category than others (Durand & Paoletta, 2013). Framed in this way, firms' family nature could become salient not only for branding purposes, but also for more strategic and managerial decisions relating to market entrance and exit strategies, niche concentration, and/or alliance selection (Miller, Amore, Le Breton-Miller, Minichilli, & Quarato, 2018). However, we still lack empirical and comparative analyses that relate firms' family nature to the characteristics of markets and their actors. Thus:

- *In which industries is firms' family nature a categorical prototype? What are these relative markets' tenets?*
- *What are the characteristics of the industries in which firms' family nature is salient to consumers?*

- *What makes firms' family nature salient to consumers in one market and not in another? How can we identify and measure these differences?*

2) Firms' family nature as a prototypical feature of authenticity in specific markets

The consumer quest for authenticity is a cornerstone of contemporary markets (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Family firms seem to have most of the attributes—generally labeled *cues*, adopting Grayson & Martinec's (2004) term—that consumers value when evaluating the authenticity of family firms' brands and products. The literature suggested three main bits of empirical evidence to corroborate this statement. First, consumers are more likely to consider small and family-owned businesses as more authentic than large-scale and chain-affiliated ones (Kovács et al., 2013). Second, a product's link to a place of origin where it is grown, prepared, or manufactured, which is the main attribute along which consumers evaluate market offerings' authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Beverland, 2006), has been found to be amplified when connected to a family firm (Melewar & Skinner, 2018; Lude & Prüggl, 2018). Third, scholars have also found that a firm's fidelity to its history and the continuity of how it behaves in the marketplace are potent sources of perceived authenticity (Beverland, 2006; Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin, & Grohmann, 2015). From this perspective, a family firm's heritage has been found to be a guarantor of authenticity (Balmer, 2011; Smith Maguire, 2010). What seem particularly important in the realm of family-based firms are the ways in which authenticity's value became salient and consumers' contributions to making authenticity central as a mechanism that governs market exchanges. The growing body of studies on market system dynamics (see Giesler & Fischer, 2017) provides a benchmark to inform a specific research stream on this issue. However, although family firms' authenticity is gaining importance in the literature, further research is needed. In particular, we see great potential for studies focused on these questions:

- *How do consumers ascribe authenticity to family firms?*

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2
3 • *How does authenticity differ between family firms and non-family firms from a consumer*
4 *perspective?*
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7 • *What roles do market actors (family firms, consumers, intermediaries, and institutions) have*
8 *in creating 'authentic' narratives?*
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11 12 13 14 3) *Firms' family nature and the formation of novel market categories* 15

16
17 When markets are concentrated in the hands of large-scale multinational producers, new
18 and small local players proliferate to satisfy the demand for different, non-mass market products
19 (e.g., Carroll, 1985; Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; McKendrick & Hannan, 2013). Consumers
20 and family firms can play a key role in this process. In particular, our literature review revealed
21 that consumers animate ideological conflicts, utilizing firms' family nature as an oppositional
22 category code in order to support the emergence of new markets, such as the organic food
23 industry (Luedicke, Thompson, & Giesler 2009; Mikkonen, Vicdan, & Markkula, 2014; Press et
24 al., 2014). The large body of research on market and category formation and evolution (for a
25 review, see Negro, Koçak, & Hsu, 2010) offers a multitude of theoretical perspectives and
26 research traditions that can help scholars to shed much light on consumers and family firms'
27 potential roles in determining these dynamics of new market formation in transitioning existing
28 markets and product categories in their favor. In this stance, more knowledge can be developed at
29 the macro level, starting with these questions:
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- 46 • *Which ideologies that relate to firms' family nature do consumers, as market actors, utilize to*
47 *support the emergence of new product categories?*
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51 • *In product categories that are under significant transition, what makes being a family firm*
52 *more reliable than a non-family firm in the eyes of consumers?*
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56 • *For which nascent product category types are firms' family nature more salient for*
57 *consumers and thus for product category emergence?*
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Conclusion

We have sought to answer the following question: *What do we know about how consumers form meanings about firms' family nature?* A mixed-method approach that combined a traditional systematic literature review with an ontological thematic analysis of 83 papers has enabled us to shed light on key aspects that led to the identification of a novel approach to the academic conversation on the topic and that led us to define a new research agenda.

In contrast to previous literature reviews (Beck, 2016; Bravo et al., 2017; Binz Astrachan et al., 2018; Sageder et al., 2018), where 90% of the papers adopted a micro level approach, only 2% a meso level approach, and 8% a macro level one, our literature review offers a more balanced view of the literature to date, since it is far less skewed toward the micro level. Consumers have a key role not only in the mental processing of firms' meanings, but also—and foremost—in shaping firms' family nature as a key attribute upon which the purchasing process may depend, and through which some marketplace dynamics may be affected. In particular, as the review reports and as we contend, the meanings about firms' family nature are formed through dynamic interactions involving (individual) consumers, consumer collectives (e.g., social groups and cultural aggregates), and wider market environments (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Askegaard & Linnet, 2011).

These findings contribute to the family business literature, in two ways. First, we have made it possible to advance the theorizing about firms' family nature by introducing a new ontological perspective, one in which consumers are actively involved in forming the meanings implied in firms' family nature at the micro, meso, and macro levels. This ontological perspective led us to propose a new research agenda that we trust will encourage further investigation into family firm brands as socially constructed phenomena developed via interactions between market actors. We also trust that this work will stimulate new research efforts at the intersection of marketing and family business, so as to also derive important suggestions for practitioners.

Second, our review offers an overview of the meanings that consumers form about firms' family nature and how these drive consumers' individual choices, provide cultural material, form

1
2 social collectives, and affect the dynamics of market shaping and formation (see Arnould &
3
4 Thompson, 2005), ultimately providing competitive advantages to firms (Keller, 1993). Further,
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6 our findings can be very relevant for family firms, for competitive reasons and for managerial
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8 decisions relating to market entrance and exit strategies, niche concentration, and/or alliance
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10 selection (see e.g., Miller, Amore, Le Breton-Miller, Minichilli, & Quarato, 2018). Framed in this
11
12 way, family firms can exploit the unexplored resources that stem from consumers' meaning formation,
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14 supporting for instance consumers' identity projects, social advocacy groups, and making the family firm
15
16 the industry's prototypical organizational form.
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20 This study has limitations. First, the papers in which the family firms were an incidental
21
22 finding did not aim to study the family firm; for this reason, some results had to be extracted from
23
24 the findings or deducted from the text. Our review process sought to reduce biases relating to the
25
26 selection of results, and future analyses could find better methods to address this issue. A second
27
28 related limitation may, therefore, be that it did not use an independent group of researchers who
29
30 could control and provide alternative thematic and ontological investigations. In future,
31
32 replicating the methodology used for this literature review is advisable so as to understand the
33
34 main theoretical streams around the meanings relating to firms' family nature.
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Table 1. Overview of the Systematic Literature Review’s Key Findings.

	Firms’ family nature as the focus of investigation	Firms’ family nature as the research context	Firms’ family nature as incidental finding
Micro level	<p>Perceived associations Positive: small, local, trustworthy, socially responsible, authentic, and human Negative: limited selection of product and price offerings</p> <p>Relational meanings Positive: good relational skills, strong bonds with consumers, integrity, long-term strategy Negative: inflexible and hierarchic</p>	<p>Situational meanings Family nature meanings related to direct relationships with owners Family nature meanings related to shopping experiences (e.g., IKEA store)</p>	<p>Meanings related to product categories The meaning of firms’ family nature are salient in specific product categories</p> <p>Identitarian meanings Family nature of firms as a signal of a trait of consumer individual identity (e.g. anti-consumption and brand antagonism)</p>
Meso level	<p>Communitarian glue The meanings of family nature as communitarian, lifestyle, hobby glue</p>	<p>Adherence to social groups Family firms’ nature as adherence to ideologies of specific social and subcultural groups or movements</p> <p>Family nature meanings in brand community Divergent meanings compared to family firms’ intended ones (e.g. Vespa)</p>	<p>Ethnocentric meanings Firms’ family nature as a herald of ethnocentricity</p> <p>Subcultural meanings Firms’ family nature represents the perpetuation of subcultural values (often linked to a territory), embodied in specific subcultural communities</p> <p>Antagonistic meanings Firms’ family nature has anti-institutional and anti-government meanings to antagonistic groups</p>
Macro level	<p>Prototypical feature Firms’ family nature mean authenticity, high quality and heritage for an entire product category</p> <p>Economic developing force Firms’ family nature means economic development</p>	<p>Territorial and local features in product categories Market actors recognize firms’ family nature as expressions of territorial and local features into product categories</p> <p>Product category status Firms’ family nature legitimized with a higher product category status by market actors</p>	<p>Sociocultural meanings Firms’ family nature created and supports a collective identity in specific markets</p> <p>Sociopolitical meaning Firms’ family nature represents an oppositional category code</p>

Appendix A: Procedures for Sourcing, Search, Selection, and Exclusion

A. Source of information

1. Peer-reviewed journal articles only.

A number of key bibliographical databases (Scopus, EBSCO, Web of Science) were considered. The EBSCO database resulted in higher functionality, since as it was the only one that allowed us to apply the keyword search to the full text.

B. Exclusion criteria

1. Research published in edited books and conference proceedings
2. Editorials
3. Case studies for teaching purposes
4. Material not written in English.

C. Search method

- Articles across academic journals published until January 2019

The following search strategies were performed as single searches (independent from one another) and not as consequential search steps:

- **Search strategy 1**

- a. in full text: (“family business*” OR “family firm*” OR “family enter*” OR “familin*” OR “family control*” OR “family led*” OR “family owner*” OR “family-based”) AND in subject terms: consumer*=> 156 papers
 - b. in full text: (“family business*” OR “family firm*” OR “family enter*” OR “familin*” OR “family control*” OR “family led*” OR “family owner*” OR “family-based”) AND in subject terms: customer*=> 121 papers
 - c. in full text: (“family business*” OR “family firm*” OR “family enter*” OR “familin*” OR “family control*” OR “family led*” OR “family owner*” OR “family-based”) AND in subject terms: client* => 56 papers
- Paper total: **333**.

Paper selection

- a. Deleting repetitions and other documents included in the exclusion list
 - b. The researchers (in pairs) read the abstracts and the introductions of all papers dividing them into A, B, or C categories (A-papers were relevant to the research objective, B-papers were studies of which relevance was not clear, and C-papers were not relevant).
 - c. After reading each set of 20 papers, the two researchers compared and reconciled their categorizations.
 - d. A third researcher re-assessed any articles excluded by one researcher but included by the other.
 - e. All the B-papers were rechecked to verify their inclusion in this category.
 - f. Final check by two researchers to verify the match between papers’ content and the systematic review’s objectives.
- Only A-papers were considered for the thematic analysis (n = 55).

- **Search strategy 2**

- a. in full text: (“family business*” OR “family firm*” OR “family enter*” OR “familin*” OR “family control*” OR “family led*” OR “family owner*” OR “family-based”) AND in title OR in abstract (consumer* OR customer* OR client*) => 1,162 papers.

Paper selection

- a. Deleting repetitions and other documents included in the exclusion list.

- b. The researchers read the abstracts of all the papers.
- c. Final check by two researchers to verify the match between papers' content and the systematic review's objectives.
Only A-papers considered for the thematic analysis (n = 7).

- **Search strategy 4**

Feedback and suggestions from experts in family business and marketing and two anonymous reviewers plus manual search by the authors in google scholar (n = 21 papers).

Total of papers considered for the thematic analysis (n = 83).

Appendix B. Procedures for Thematic Analysis and Ontological Organization

A. Data organization

1. Papers were organized in chronological order to January 31, 2019.
2. An Excel file was prepared to record and compare coding by researchers.
3. The Excel file had to contain the following information: title, abstract, authors, publication date, publication title, keywords, research question, theoretical perspective, sample, research context (sector or industry), research method, main results, major concepts related to a family firm's nature and to how consumers make sense of it, and personal notes by the readers about how and why the paper is relevant.

B. Theme identification

1. Two researchers individually analyzed each paper for objective, research questions, key arguments, research methods, major concepts and relative definitions, theoretical perspective, and outcomes.
2. Individually, the researchers wrote a statement describing the primary focus of each paper, and about how, according to the paper, consumers see firms' family nature, paying attention to the conceptual terminology and vocabulary used by the authors.
3. After 20 papers, the researchers compared their statements and discussed how to resolve any misalignments.
4. The statements were used to enable identification of at least three orders of thematic categories (T1, T2, and T3).
5. Preliminary names were given to the thematic categories.
6. Definitive category names resulted from discussions and interactions between authors, and these thematic categories were applied to the remaining papers in the Excel file.
7. Every 20 papers, the researchers aligned their results for consistency.

C. Ontological organization

1. The authors discussed and agreed on the three thematic categories (T1, T2, and T3) for each paper.
2. Using an ontological process, from the descriptive statements, the authors gathered the thematic categories by similarities (T1), and formed the second-order (T2) and major thematic areas (T3) to create a taxonomic (subtheme-supertheme) hierarchy (data structure available upon request).

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3 3. The authors reviewed and checked for redundancy or duplication.
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6 **D. Interpretation and validation**

- 7 1. The Excel file contained all the descriptive statements, the thematic (supertheme)
8 category, and second-order and first-order themes for each paper.
9 2. For each theme, the authors wrote an explanation to check the fit between the
10 paper's content and the themes, ensuring ontological consistency.
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12 **E. Quality checking**

- 13 1. Each paper was codified by the authors providing the same attention to each paper.
14 2. The process was thorough, inclusive, and comprehensive (three thematic
15 descriptors).
16 3. The interaction process implied a comparison of the selected themes, going back
17 and forth to the original papers.
18 4. The authors checked for internal coherence, consistency, and distinction.
19 5. The authors interpreted the papers using their own meanings, maintaining the
20 vocabulary expressed in the papers as much as possible.
21 6. Data and themes were combined iteratively.
22 7. The authors used ontology tables for consistency.
23 8. The authors had an active role in each phase.
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Appendix C: Papers Included in the Literature Review

	Authors	Level	Object	Methodology	The meanings of family firms' nature
1	Alonso, A. D. (2012)	meso	I	Qualitative	Local consumers use firms' family nature as a herald of their ethnocentric ideology, sustained by their local choice of consumption and thus their membership of a local and ethnocentric social group.
2	Amine, A., & Lazzaoui, N. (2011)	meso	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature signals tradition and reassures consumers in transactional contexts endangered by 'invasion' by non-local firms.
3	Balmer, J. M., & Chen, W. (2016)	meso	C	Quantitative	In specific subcultural groups, the family nature of firms and their heritage embody root cultural metaphors that are salient for these groups.
4	Baschieri, G., Carosi, A., & Mengoli, S. (2017)	micro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature mean authentic and trustworthy investments, especially for local investors.
5	Beck, S. (2016)	LR	F	Literature review	This literature review focuses on brand management research in the family business domain and the implications for consumers.
6	Beck, S., & Kenning, P. (2015)	micro	F	Quantitative	Family firms are more trustworthy than non-family ones. By providing a new definition and measurement of customers' perceptions of family firms, this study represents the first quantitative attempt to assess the consequences of such perceptions.
7	Beck, S., & Prügl, R. (2018)	micro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature signaled through brands positively influences consumers' brand trust and perceived benevolence. Further, if brands are able to emphasize their family firms' 'human qualities,' the effect of consumer trust will increase.
8	Bednarz, J., & Nikodemska-Wołowik, A. M. (2017)	meso	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is associated with negative meanings of nepotism and amorality owing to the negative cultural legacy of adverse past political and economic conditions in a specific sociocultural context (Poland).
9	Binz Astrachan, C., Botero, I., Astrachan, J. H., & Prügl, R. (2018)	LR	F	Literature review	This literature review offers a compelling overview and taxonomic analyses on the brand concept, along with a detailed framework to gain a better understanding of branding in the specific context of family businesses.
10	Binz, C., Hair Jr, J. F., Pieper, T. M., & Baldauf, A. (2013)	micro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature related to consumer preferences owing to consumer associations with relational qualities (e.g., being trustworthy, supporting good causes, being good employers, or caring about the environment) than business-related qualities (e.g., being innovative, quality-oriented, or above-average performers).
11	Botero, I., Binz Astrachan, C., & Calabrò, A. (2018)	micro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature is associated by consumers with small and medium-sized companies with a strong culture, good corporate citizens, trustworthy, and interested in tradition and continuity. On the other hand, it is associated with negative characteristics, such as being less professional and providing no career opportunities to non-family members.
12	Bravo, R., Cambra, J., Centeno, E., & Melero, I. (2017)	LR	F	Literature review	This literature review provides answers to the questions what a family business brand is, what its constituents are, and how branding takes place in family firms, by closely considering consumer perceptions and reactions.
13	Carney, M., & Nason, R. S. (2018)	macro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature embody some negative socioeconomic dynamics, such as privileges and conflicts.
14	Carrigan, M., & Buckley, J. (2008)	micro	F	Qualitative	Meanings of firms' family nature: Positive: Small, local, honesty and integrity, heritage, uniqueness, longevity, trust, authenticity of the relationship. Negative: Invasive relationship, doubt about continuity and future longevity linked to the family illness or bereavement or family retirement.
15	Catry, B. (2003).	macro	I	Conceptual	Firms' family nature can support the characteristics of rarity and uniqueness, which are product category codes of luxury products and brands.

16	Charters, S., Fountain, J., & Fish, N. (2009)	micro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature as a way to support local businesses. Storytelling and direct contact with owners make people more supportive of family firms.
17	Cova, B., & D'Antone, S. (2016)	meso	C	Qualitative	Negotiation of family firm brand meanings between family firms and consumers nurture meaning in a community setting (e.g., brand communities).
18	Cova, B., & Pace, S. (2006)	meso	C	Qualitative	Negotiation of family firm brand meanings between family firms and consumers nurture meaning in a community setting (e.g., brand communities).
19	Danes, J. E., Hess, J. S., Story, J. W., & York, J. L. (2010)	micro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature as a mediation between cultural modernization and tradition.
20	De Roeck, K., Maon, F., & Lejeune, C. (2013)	micro	C	Qualitative	The meanings of firms' family nature translate into a family business model tailored to families "where the democratic design encourages customers to be part of IKEA's family."
21	Del Baldo, M. (2012)	macro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature means local economic development through authentic and enduring relationships among the family business, the stakeholders, and the local context.
22	Delmestri, G., & Greenwood, R. (2016)	macro	C	Qualitative	Prototypical status: Firms' family nature changes the status of an entire product category. The market's legitimization of a status changes to a traditional product provided by a family firm.
23	Dessi, C., & Floris, M. (2010)	micro	C	Quantitative	Firms' family nature embodies these firms to form strong and long-term relationships with consumers. This has been proven in both internal and external audiences.
24	Dessi, C., Ng, W., Floris, M., & Cabras, S. (2014)	micro	F	Qualitative-quantitative	Firms' family nature relates to these firms' relational abilities. This finding is supported by a comparison between internal and external perceptions that resulted in statistically less distant in family firms than in non-family ones.
25	Duncan, K., & Hasso, T. (2018).	micro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature means authentic, trustworthy investments for non-professional investors.
26	Fernández-Ferrín, P., Calvo-Turrientes, A., Bande, B., Artaraz-Miñón, M., & Galán-Ladero, M. M. (2018)	meso	I	Quantitative	Local consumers use firms' family nature as a herald of their ethnocentric ideology, sustained by their local choice of consumption and thus their membership of local and ethnocentric social groups.
27	File, K. M. (1995)	macro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature means economic development, since many B2B industries are composed of interrelationships between family firms.
28	Ger, G., & Csaba, F. F. (2000)	macro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of tradition and authenticity in Turkey's carpet industry.
29	Gopaldas, A. (2014)	meso	I	Qualitative	Contrasting family firms' values against more global ones, consumers use firms' family nature as an ideological herald.
30	Grashuis, J., & Magnier, A. (2018)	micro	I	Quantitative	Firms' family nature signaled through brands positively influences consumers' perception of quality and thus willingness to pay for a higher price in agricultural products.
31	Gyrd-Jones, R. I., & Kornum, N. (2013)	meso	C	Qualitative	Negotiation of family firm brand meanings between family firms and consumers nurture meaning in a community setting (e.g., brand communities).
32	Heine, K., Phan, M., & Atwal, G. (2016)	macro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical cue of authenticity in the wine industry. It is perceived as a point of differentiation on the part of professional wineries.
33	Jamal, A. (2005)	meso	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature as cultural mediator between modernization and ethnic traditional products.
34	Kang, J. S., Chiang, C. F., Huangthanapan, K., & Downing, S. (2015)	micro	F	Qualitative-quantitative	Firms' family nature is closely related to corporate social responsibility, especially by consumers, yet less so by employees.
35	Karstens, B. & Belz, F. M. (2006)	micro	I	Qualitative	Consumers perceive a close link between firms' family nature signaled through brands and socioecological products.
36	Kovács, B., Carroll, G. R., & Lehman, D. W. (2013)	macro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical cue of quality and authenticity in the restaurant business.

37	Kovács, B., Carroll, G. R., & Lehman, D. W. (2017)	macro	I	Qualitative-quantitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of quality and authenticity in retail.
38	Krappe, A., Goutas, L., & Von Schlippe, A. (2011)	micro	F	Qualitative	Firms that communicate their family nature through brands are perceived as the most sustainable and social companies by consumers. Firms' family nature relates to sustainability, fairness, safety, and solidarity, yet these firms are also perceived as rather inflexible, hierarchical, and faltering.
39	Lapio, J. R., & Morris, K. (2000)	meso	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature as a communitarian glue that allows to practice consumers' hobbies and to keep up lifestyles in a communitarian context.
40	Laurence, A. (2008)	macro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature as a driver of the development of new product categories, such as private banking.
41	Lee, M. S., Motion, J., & Conroy, D. (2009)	micro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature signaled through brands assume a self-identarian meaning for consumers who resist global homogenization, seek to preserve their cultural diversity, and seek to ensure that the financial profits from their purchases will remain in their own country.
42	Liu, A. H., & Gao, H. (2014)	macro	C	Qualitative	Firms' family nature assumes an economic developing force, because family firms in China open commercial doors for their customers.
43	Lude, M., & Prügl, R. (2018)	micro	F	Quantitative	For investors, longevity and trust are central decision-relevant perceptions linked to the firms' family nature. In investment contexts, firms' family nature mitigates risk-aversion in the gain domain and reinforces risk-seeking in the loss domain.
44	Lude, M., & Prügl, R. (2019)	micro	F	Quantitative	The relationship between firms' family nature signaled through brands and consumers' brand trust is mediated by the level of brand authenticity as perceived by consumers.
45	Lundqvist, A., Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., & Van Riel, A. (2013)	micro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature signaled through brand storytelling techniques is salient and positively influences consumers' willingness to pay.
46	Lyman, A. R. (1991)	micro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature relates to relational and personalization capacity of employees in family-based service companies. Consumers perceive these meanings through service policies.
47	Markowska, M., & Lopez-Vega, H. (2018)	macro	I	Qualitative	The meanings of firms' family nature have a key role in creating and supporting collective identities in specific markets, such as winemaking.
48	Massa, F. G., Helms, W. S., Voronov, M., & Wang, L. (2017)	macro	C	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature that relates to consumer perceptions of authenticity in specific markets (such as wine). These meanings are co-created through consumers and firms' rituals and evangelists' activities.
49	McGrath, M. A., Sherry Jr, J. F., & Heisley, D. D. (1993)	meso	C	Qualitative	In specific subcultural groups, firms' family nature embodies root cultural metaphors that induce consumers to compare their lifestyle to the values enacted by family-based farmers.
50	McGregor, S. (2005)	macro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature assumes sociopolitical meanings that affect some markets' social and economic regulations, such as extended retail hours in Canada.
51	McKendrick, D. G., & Hannan, M. T. (2013)	macro	I	Qualitative-quantitative	Firms' family nature as a driver of the development of new product categories, such as the single malt whisky category.
52	Meas, T., Hu, W., Batte, M. T., Woods, T. A., & Ernst, S. (2014)	micro	I	Quantitative	Consumers perceive a close link between firms' family nature, as signaled through brands, and organic food.
53	Melewar, T. C., & Skinner, H. (2018)	macro	C	Qualitative-quantitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of local beer, where consumers perceive family firms more authentic because their local brands are strongly connected to the area (highly distributed and supported by the local distribution).
54	Mostajer Haghighi, A., Baum, T., & Shafti, F. (2014)	micro	I	Qualitative	Consumers perceive a close link between firms' family nature and their ability to develop direct and informal relationships with family business owners.
55	Orth, U. R., & Green, M. T. (2009)	micro	F	Quantitative	The meanings of firms' family nature in retail: Positive: Trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. Negative: A limited selection of products and imbalance between price and value.

56	Panwar, R., Paul, K., Nybakk, E., Hansen, E., & Thompson, D. (2014)	micro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature of firms is closely related to corporate social responsibility and consumers legitimate family-based companies' CSR activities more than those by non-family ones.
57	Paul, J., Sankaranarayanan, K. G., & Mekoth, N. (2016)	micro	I	Qualitative	Consumers positively associate retailers' family nature with social desirability and staff friendliness. These associations have been tested in retail in India, where 80% of retailers are family-owned.
58	Peñaloza, L. (2001)	meso	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is perceived as the embodiment of the values that characterize specific subcultures.
59	Peters, M., & Frehse, J. (2011)	micro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature signaled through brands positively enhances consumers' emotional added value, which serves as a competitive advantage for firms.
60	Pitta, D. A., & Franzak, F. J. (2008)	meso	I	Conceptual	Consumers make purposeful use of some firms' family nature to make sense, perpetuate, and instantiate their ethnocentrism in their purchasing choices.
61	Presas, P., Guia, J., & Muñoz, D. (2014)	micro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is considered as an idiosyncratic bundle of resources and capabilities that allow consumers to have direct communication with a firm's family owners, to feel the firm's hospitality and hospitableness, and to perceive a travel experience as 'authentic.'
62	Press, M., Arnould, E. J., Murray, J. B., & Strand, K. (2014)	macro	C	Qualitative	Firms' family nature can become an oppositional category code when consumers utilize its meanings to animate ideological conflicts.
63	Rindell, A., Santos, F. P., & De Lima, A. P. (2015)	meso	C	Qualitative	Negotiation of the meanings of a family firm brand between family firms and consumers in a community setting (e.g., brand communities).
64	Sageder, M., Duller, C., & Mitter, C. (2015)	micro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature increases consumer perceptions of the customer-orientation and employee-orientation capabilities, positively affecting the reputation of family firms and thus customer loyalty.
65	Sageder, M., Mitter, C., & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, B. (2018)	LR	F	Literature review	This literature review proposed a detailed and comprehensive picture of the literature to date, focusing on family firms' images and reputations from the perspectives of both the consumers and the firms.
66	Santos, F. P., Burghausen, M., & Balmer, J. M. (2016)	macro	C	Qualitative	The corporate family-based brand becomes a prototypical feature thanks to its heritage, which fosters a sense of authenticity in the eyes of consumers.
67	Schellong, M., Kraiczy, N. D., Malär, L., & Hack, A. (2018)	micro	F	Quantitative	Firms' family nature signaled through brands affects consumer perceptions of firms' social responsibilities. Thus, consumption of such a product drives higher consumers perceptions of doing good and thus their happiness.
68	Seo, Y., & Buchanan-Oliver, M. (2015)	micro	I	Qualitative	In the fashion industry, firms' family nature signaled through brands assumes meanings related to artisanship, quality, and craftsmanship.
69	Sherry Jr, J. F. (1990)	meso	C	Qualitative	In subcultural groups (e.g., the niche of flea markets), firms' family nature represents the values and ideologies that contrast strongly to those aligned with the capitalist ethos.
70	Smith Maguire, J. (2010)	macro	I	Qualitative	Intermediaries' roles in fostering a sense of authenticity in consumers via leveraging firms' family nature.
71	Smith Maguire, J. (2013)	macro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of quality and heritage in the wine industry.
72	Strickland, P., Smith Maguire, J., & Frost, W. (2013)	macro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical cue of authenticity in the wine industry that consumer legitimate also in the emergent wine market in Australia.
73	Tessari, A., & Godley, A. (2014)	macro	C	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is an economic developing force in specific markets, such as the poultry market.
74	Tsui-Auch, L. S. (2005)	macro	C	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature that relates to consumer perceptions of authenticity in specific markets, such as wine. These meanings are co-created through consumers and firms' rituals and evangelists' activities.
75	Ulver-Sneistrup, S., & Johansson, U. (2011)	macro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of quality and authenticity in retail.
76	Van Rensburg, D. J. (2015)	macro	I	Conceptual	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of quality and local culture. Family firms, intermediaries, and consumers can cooperate to help prevent global brands from entering specific markets.

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77	Voronov, M., De Clercq, D., & Hinings, C. R. (2013)	macro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of authenticity and the development of local culture in the wine industry.
78	Vrontis, D., & Paliwoda, S. J. (2008)	macro	I	Qualitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of authenticity in the wine industry.
79	Walton, J. K. (2014)	macro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature means local tourism development via durable relationships inside and outside the area, stimulating the industry's internationalization.
80	Wang, E. S. T., & Juan, P. Y. (2016)	macro	C	Quantitative	Firms' family nature is a prototypical feature of innovation in the tourism industry.
81	Wilson, Janes E., Bengtsson, A., & Curran, C. (2014)	micro	F	Qualitative	Firms' family nature signaled through brands can be perceived differently by internal and external audiences. Consumers may not fully perceive the heritage value inherent in family-based brands.
82	Wirtz, J., & McColl-Kennedy, J. R. (2010)	micro	C	Quantitative	Consumers indulge family firms more than publicly owned ones. Consumers associate family firms' nature with small size and fewer resources in case of recovery emergencies.
83	Yi, Y., & La, S. (2004)	micro	C	Quantitative	Firms' family nature increases consumers' attachment to family-owned restaurants.

Notes: * F = main focus; C = context; I = incidental finding; LR = Literature review.

For Peer Review