

# Competitive intelligence and strategy implementation: Critical examination of present literature review

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**Background:** Competitive intelligence (CI) involves recognising that intelligence is the basis of firms engaging in strategic activities in a competitive marketplace. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of CI in strategic planning processes, but the impact of CI on strategy execution has received less academic attention.

**Objectives:** This study aims to critically examine the current state of the CI and the strategy implementation literature. It also identifies gaps and limitations in the existing literature.

**Method:** This study employed systematic literature with the selection criterion to identify 33 publications published between 2008 and 2022. Thematic content analysis provided a range of analytic options. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar databases were used to locate peer-reviewed journal articles. The publications were grouped by journal names, year of publication, and article count.

**Results:** The study found that CI played a vital role in developing company strategies and practices. Our study also showed that a plethora of peer-reviewed academic articles on CI were published in developed countries such as North America and Europe. Only a few CI-related studies have been published in developing countries.

**Conclusion:** Most authors have not examined how CI leads to strategy implementation, even though CI research has gained traction internationally over the years. Competitive intelligence was not found to have a relationship with implementing, evaluating, and monitoring strategies pointing out gaps in the literature and suggesting future research.

**Contribution:** This study examines the current state of the literature on CI and strategy implementation, and identifies gaps in the existing literature. Furthermore, the study contributes to academic knowledge by emphasising the significance of a well-defined and structured CI process in achieving strategy implementation outcomes.

**Keywords:** competition; competitive intelligence; CI; information; strategy; SI.

## Introduction

With markets ever becoming more turbulent and uncertain, advances in big data and digital technologies have increased the abundance of information to exploit, make strategic decisions, and survive in a competitive business environment (Trabucchi & Buganza 2020). This is why gathering intelligence from big data requires a competitive intelligence (CI) system that creates knowledge and value for organisations to make strategic decisions and implement those strategies on time to sustain a competitive advantage. Thus, making strategic and tactical decisions requires the use of CI.

Gilad (2016) described how CI helps organisations adapt to changing market conditions and gather intelligent information. In contrast, strategy ties together the external environment of an organisation with its internal dynamics. However, in the field of strategy, most research has failed to recognise that the strategy's implementation stage is crucial. Instead, most research focused on earlier stages of the strategic management process, such as analysis and formulation (Okumus & Roper 1999:21).

The purpose of CI is to forecast market trends and innovate with the help of strategic information (Foley & Guillemette 2017). Therefore, CI adds more value for organisations since it outperforms

business development, market research, and strategic planning (Tahmasebifard & Wright 2018). Competitive intelligence is used to formulate and implement corporate strategy and support sales and operations in product development and risk management (McGonagle 2016:57).

Competitive intelligence is a strategic tool for organisations, and it is typically viewed from multiple perspectives, such as process, context, and dimensions (Amiri et al. 2017; Salguero et al. 2019). Therefore, this study examines CI literature from the perspectives of Strategic Intelligence (SI) and strategy implementation, which are more relevant to organisations.

Academic articles have demonstrated that CI is critical for collecting and disseminating information formulating business strategies, and quantifying or qualifying strategic choices (Amiri et al. 2017; Bartes 2014; Calof & Wright 2008; Maritz & Du Toit 2018; Sewdass & Du Toit 2014).

Although the existing literature provides insights about CI drivers and their role in strategic management processes, little is known about whether CI activities' outcomes collectively impact strategy implementation. There is a research gap in the subject field, and more research is needed in the area. In this context, broadening the CI literature and its practical outcomes for strategy implementation is beneficial. This led to the authors investigating the overarching research questions:

- What are the critical gaps and limitations in the current CI and strategy implementation literature?
- How can future research address these gaps to improve our understanding of their relationships?

To answer the study's research questions, the authors conducted a systematic literature review.

The purpose of this study is to identify and critically evaluate gaps and limitations in the existing CI and strategy implementation literature. In addition, the paper provides recommendations for future research that will enhance the authors' understanding of CI's relationship with strategy implementation. This article begins by reviewing mainstream literature on CI and strategy implementation.

Following this, the authors explain their methodological choices in the systematic literature review. Finally, the authors conclude their study with an assessment of limitations and recommendations for future research.

## Research methods and design

This study employed a systematic literature review. Given the scope of published work on the issue, the authors accomplished this objective by adhering to systematic planning, meticulous execution, and comprehensive dissemination of the synthesised findings as outlined by

Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003). Furthermore, this method is appropriate because it ensures validity by providing a comprehensive view of existing knowledge through step-by-step protocols (Denyer & Tranfield 2009).

The current study's authors determined that a systematic literature review was the most appropriate research strategy for the above reasons. The authors developed exclusion and inclusion criteria based on topic coverage, year of publication, search words, and article type.

The researchers selected multiple reliable sources of scientific information to achieve more favourable study coverage. Due to the restricted access to the databases, the authors searched Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar for relevant texts. They retrieved peer-reviewed journal articles that included 'CI and strategy implementation' or 'strategic intelligence (SI) and strategy execution' in their titles, abstracts, subjects, or keywords.

In addition, the authors only counted articles found in multiple databases once. Their criteria excluded articles that were not directly related to CI, SI and strategy implementation, and they only considered articles published in academic journals. The original study pool consisted of 800 publications. The authors examined the abstracts of the publications to find publications that investigated organisational elements that influenced CI, SI, and strategy implementation. After applying the selection criterion, the authors identified 33 out of 800 relevant publications published in academic journals between 2008 and 2022. In addition, publications were categorised under journal names, titles, publication year, and article count. To assure the quality and dependability of the data, each co-author examined each article independently and codified data into their database. Thematic content analysis was appropriate for examining this study's qualitative data. Data content and data interpretation were then used to create thematic codes.

## Literature review

This section summarises and reviews the current evidence on the studied topic. The authors drew general conclusions and discussed relevant concepts below.

### Competitive intelligence

With the rise of CI activities in recent years, most organisations now invest in capabilities and procedures to obtain and monitor CI and have become members of CI associations (Calof, Arcos & Sewdass 2018).

Alnoukari and Hanano (2017:9) define CI as an 'analytical process that collects, selects and interprets competitor information about their capabilities, performance and position in the market to develop a competitive strategy for organisations'. Furthermore, CI is an ethical and legal method used to acquire and analyse information about rivals in their business to achieve strategic results for organisations

(SCIP 2016 cited in Calof et al. 2018:2). Thus, most CI definitions focus on its objectives and processes (Calof, Richards & Smith 2015).

Competitive intelligence refers to collecting information about competitors and the competitive environment to improve performance (Wright, Eid & Fleischer 2009). Competitive intelligence is a business tool that assists with the organisation's decision-making process (Ezenwa, Stella & Agu 2018). The CI process allows companies to anticipate changes that could affect their business. This process involves defining, gathering, analysing, and distributing intelligence to assist with business decisions (Bose 2008). In addition, the common stages of the CI process include focus and planning, collection, analysis, communication, process and structure, organisational awareness, and culture (Dishman & Calof 2008; Saayman et al. 2008).

The foundation of CI is that businesses gain strategic and sustainable competitive advantage. In this sense, the process of CI refers to creating information that will provide a competitive advantage to the company. The necessary information is first determined, and essential planning is made during the CI process (Kula & Naktiyok 2021). Competitive intelligence improves decisions by gaining knowledge from competitors and the industry (Bulley, Baku & Allan 2014).

Organisations can gain actionable intelligence from CI by monitoring their competitors. One of the most critical factors in steering CI effectively and ultimately incorporating such valuable knowledge into CI strategies is to leverage and unleash the power of big data tools and techniques (Ranjan & Foropon 2021). Hence, strategy development is associated with CI literature as a framework for information collecting and processing (Dishman & Calof 2008).

Competitive intelligence facilitates strategic planning in an organisation and comprehends the following process: defining, gathering, analysing, and dispersing information for decision-making (Du Plessis & Gulwa 2016; Gauzelin & Bentz 2017). Therefore, CI is a business tool used in strategic management that is gaining popularity for firms to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage (Salguero et al. 2019).

Competitive intelligence is a strategic tool that allows organisations to analyse intelligent data methodically (Amiri et al. 2017). It helps decision-makers formulate strategies and make precise choices (Mohsin, Halim & Ahmad 2015). It also provides business leaders with forward-looking insight into their current strategic choices and options to promptly adapt to changing business environments (Arrigo 2016). Therefore, CI is crucial in developing a company's strategy (Gauzelin & Bentz 2017).

As a result, it is possible to infer that CI is an essential part of strategic management and marketing since it acts as the first link in a chain of perceptions and behaviours that allows a business to adapt to its environment (Nasri 2011).

Competitive intelligence assists the strategic planning process by collecting essential information from the competitive environment to secure organisations' long-term and short-term viability (Badr, Wright & Pickton 2004; Pellissier & Kruger 2011).

Thus, CI plays a crucial role in strategy implementation by revealing valuable information about the company's position and the competitive environment. Competitive intelligence enables organisations to differentiate themselves from competitors, identify new market opportunities, and mitigate risks. To support strategy creation, execution, and assessment, organisations must have a knowledge management (KM) function integrated with CI (Asghari et al. 2020).

### Strategic intelligence

The concept of SI is relatively new in strategic management. This system assists in monitoring and exploiting the environmental variables surrounding the organisation (Alhamadi 2020). Strategic intelligence helps companies remain competitive in the market (Blandina, Stephine & Samuel 2021).

Strategic intelligence involves gathering data, processing, and analysing strategic information. Large organisations use it for strategic planning and decision-making (Alhamadi 2020). Furthermore, SI provides organisations with analytical skills that facilitate the solving of complex problems and making better decisions (Levine, Bernard & Nagel 2017). Strategic intelligence system focuses on strategic information, resources, partnerships and consulting. Furthermore, it examines and analyses the operating environment of the organisation to make informed decision (Nofal & Yusof 2013). Strategic intelligence, therefore, develops and executes the corporate strategy of an organisation in response to the intelligence needs of strategic decision-makers (Uzoamaka et al. 2017b). Moreover, SI provides decision-makers with knowledge that allows them to make informed decisions by scanning the organisations' environment, analysing the information, forecasting, and planning changes in the future (Abuzaid 2017).

Tahmasebifard and Wright (2018) found that CI dimensions such as market, competitor, technological and SI impact an organisation's performance and sustainability. Similarly, Odiachi, Kuye and Sulaimon (2021) showed that, individually, CI, product intelligence, and SI had a significant relationship with organisational sustainability.

Therefore, SI complements business intelligence (BI), CI, and KM (Alhamadi 2020; Blandina et al. 2021). Additionally, SI contributes to innovation and technological advances in collaboration with artificial intelligence (AI), BI, CI, and KM. The collected information is then analysed and synthesised into actionable insights to inform strategic planning and decision-making.

## Strategy implementation

In a highly complex business environment, organisations tend to work strategically with strategic management and entrepreneurial processes to embrace the winds of change (Höglund, Holmgren Caicedo & Mårtensson 2018). Consequently, these organisations require strategic information to assist their operational decision-making processes resulting in analytical insights and intelligence being critical components of strategy design and communication (Arcos 2016). So, the value of an organisation's capacity to analyse and evaluate changes in its environment depends on its ability to implement strategy (Campos, Rubio & Quintero 2014:1).

Hence, modern organisations have invested significantly and allocated enough resources and time to strategy formulation to outperform their competitors; and while strategic planning is used to monitor strategies, in some cases, its implementation may be affected by its efficacy.

The formulation component of strategy has eclipsed its scholarly appeal, even if it occupies a critical area between strategic planning and performance results (Aladag et al. 2020). Effective strategy implementation requires employees' coordinated and appropriate organisational activities (Olson, Slater & Hult 2005). In addition, good organisational features and personnel behaviours support the strategy's superior results (Olson et al. 2005:47). Thus, it augments organisational performance and creates a competitive advantage when effectively executing the strategy.

However, the existing strategy implementation research has mainly concentrated on a broad range of management behaviours impacting strategy implementation effectiveness (Tawse & Tabesh 2021:22). For example, Barrick et al. (2015:118) proposed that implementation is concerned with senior management's commitment to 'specify and pursue strategic objectives and adopt clearly defined metrics to assess success dynamically'.

Other studies have presented a complete picture of strategy execution as a strategic choice or decision (Anchor & Aldehayyat 2016); some have also stated that implementation strategies such as communicating, accepting, and carrying out strategic plans need to be considered (Chummun & Singh 2019).

As can be seen, strategy implementation has been defined in a variety of ways (Amoo, Hiddlestone–Mumford, Ruzibuka & Akwei 2019). In line with Lee and Puranam (2016), the authors describe strategy implementation as the organisational process by which strategies are executed to ensure alignment with business objectives.

This study focuses on the strategic implementation process, distinct from the strategic planning and decision-making processes. In this manner, it is presumed that strategy execution follows strategy development. Its efficacy is

determined by closely aligned outcomes with intended strategic plans. The usage of CI in an organisation may serve a variety of reasons, including improving its competitiveness in the commercial market. Still, it is an intrinsic part of strategic planning (Campos et al. 2014).

Competitive intelligence is effectively transferred throughout the organisation due to its effectiveness in implementing its strategy more efficiently than its competitors (Gilad 2016). In this way, CI can stimulate dialogue with decision-makers and encourage strategic thinking (Gilad 2016). In addition, CI allows for rational planning in strategy formulation.

Therefore, strategies and practices can be integrated to accelerate strategic alignment, ensuring that the organisation's priorities are appropriate to its external environment (Walter et al. 2013). This means that when both strategy implementation and CI are integrated, there is a tendency for the organisation to have a competitive advantage.

## Systematic literature review

The authors employed systematic literature reviews because they offer several advantages, such as adopting a repeatable and transparent procedure that reduces biases and mistakes (Tranfield et al. 2003). Furthermore, the authors identified the present status of the literature and any prospective gaps.

Several scholars and practitioners have recently focused on CI because of its importance in moulding an organisation's strategic decision-making (Rapp, Agnihotri & Baker 2011) and performance (Mohsin et al. 2015). For example, Ali and Anwar (2021) investigated the role of CI in determining market performance at small and medium businesses in Iraq's Kurdistan region by employing CI dimensions inclusive of third-party strategy using a hierarchal multiple regression and the Sobel test.

This study's high-level assessment of respondents showed that CI diagnosis and explanation of results impacted marketing strategy decisions in Erbil's five-star small and medium firms. Furthermore, this study's findings revealed a positive and significant mediating function for CI between extensiveness network and business performance.

Jenster and Søilen (2013) studied the relationship between strategic planning and company performance. This study presented a model that integrates CI with the synergies between different strategies and successful performance. This study showed that CI plays a vital part in strategic planning.

Also, Jenster and Søilen (2013) found that explicit strategies produced CI, leading to successful performance. Yet again, they pointed out that a chosen strategy explicitly or implicitly defines CI activities for the organisation. Essentially, these activities will determine the organisation's success and performance.

Alnoukari and Hanano (2017) also investigated the integration of BI with corporate strategic management. In this study, they posited that the integration of BI and CI could be used to formulate corporate strategies and policies. In contrast, they opined that BI technology was used effectively to attain organisational results and performance. Furthermore, they maintained that this integration supported decision-makers in implementing corporate strategies, adapting quickly to environmental changes, and gaining a competitive advantage.

Also, Uzoamaka et al. (2017a) investigated CI and organisational performance in selected deposit money banks in the South East of Nigeria. The results showed that CI had a significant favourable influence on quality service delivery. Furthermore, they recommended that banks establish CI departments that frequently assist them in gathering relevant and timely information about competitors and customers to formulate strategies and make effective decisions.

While researchers have offered several theories and approaches for effective planning, they have paid less attention to the link between CI and strategy execution. For instance, Cavallo et al. (2020) examined how CI relates to the strategy formulation process of firms. The authors presented detailed empirical data on the linkage and use of CI techniques at each level of the strategy creation process. Furthermore, their study found that CI approaches are extensively exploited for tactical goals despite their strategic relevance and widespread application.

Concurring with this finding, Badr et al. (2004) contended that the focus on the tactical use of CI highlighted that few companies were taking a longer-term strategic perspective of CI – suggesting that tactical activities were more easily identifiable, reported frequently, and easier to measure. Calof and Wright (2008) studied the origins of CI from practitioner, academic and interdisciplinary perspectives. This study's findings suggested that CI supported corporate, or business strategy decision-making as applied to sales, business development, plus research and development. Also, it demonstrated that CI impacted a wide variety of decision-making domains and is an essential component in the development of company strategy.

While Dishman and Calof (2008) explored CI as a complex business construct and a precedent for marketing strategy formulation, this study reported on the CI practice of technology-led companies and how CI was used to develop their marketing strategies. Furthermore, this study revealed that while CI was excellent in information acquisition, it lacked procedure and analysis. However, CI is the foundation for strategic decision-making (Dishman & Calof 2008).

Tulungen et al. (2021) employed a CI approach to formulating a strategy for developing e-tourism by utilising information technology. This study concluded that CI could provide a

post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) e-tourism development strategy by meticulously mapping the strengths and weaknesses and identifying opportunities and threats.

Furthermore, Tulungen et al. (2021) posited that a strategy could be developed through campaigns, content, community, cooperation, and competitiveness in the post-COVID-19 timeframe. In contrast, Shapira (2021) investigated the limited influence of CI over corporate strategy in Israel. The study found that management did not see CI as a key component of strategic corporate decisions; so, they avoided implementing it or used only to support operational decisions.

In line with the Strategic Direction's (2020) study, CI was widely adopted at an operational level but was not utilised adequately in the strategic approach by the organisations studied.

This study's research results highlighted that the outcomes of CI were mostly applicable in operational management but unsuitable for strategic management. Yet, in his other research study, Bartes (2014) found that CI was linked to strategic management and seen as a system application discipline in an environment dominated by disruptive innovation. This result indicated that CI monitors and stimulates internal performance for organisations to attain competitive advantage and innovation (Pellissier & Kruger 2011).

Similarly, Atkinson et al. (2022) examined the impact of CI on organisational agility through strategic flexibility and corporate innovation. In this research, CI was discovered to indirectly impact organisational agility through strategic flexibility, which served as a moderating variable. Also, this study concluded that although CI promoted corporate innovation, organisational innovation had no meaningful effect on organisational agility.

Ching and Zabid (2011) investigated the acquisition and strategic use of CI in 123 listed companies on the Bursa Malaysia Securities Exchange. In this study, the respondents rated strategic decision-making activities related to expanding business operations and developing products as necessary, among other items under investigation. Also, their results portrayed that managers only used CI for strategic decision-making about sources of information obtained from customers, competitors, newspapers and periodicals, intranet and extranet, and industry and trade associations.

This result correlates with Ali and Anwar's (2021) study, which found that small and medium business managers were eager and devoted time to gathering information from various sources.

In addition, Ching and Zabid (2011) concluded that these findings suggested that managers did not see the Internet as a reliable source. They relied mainly on conventional sources such as consumers and rivals in making strategic decisions. Köseoglu, Ross and Okumus (2016) also showed that

managers only used CI for planned activities instead of strategic resolutions.

Furthermore, Köseoglu et al. (2016) found no connection between strategic planning and competitive position in CI activities. Congruently, Köseoglu et al. (2019) indicated that all levels of management were unfamiliar with CI and failed to deploy it broadly and strategically. Thus, most managers focused on tactics to gather competitor intelligence instead of strategy-related matters. In addition, Köseoglu, Yick and Okumus (2021) discovered that although top executives acquire data and information for general management or strategic planning, departments generally focus on those most relevant to their speciality to establish an operational and tactical strategy.

In contrast, Kula and Naktiyok (2021) examined the effect of strategic thinking skills of executives on CI in high competition intense industries. This study found that the strategic thinking skills of research participants and executives working in both sectors had a favourable and substantial influence on their CI. Additionally, Ezenwa et al. (2018) investigated the effect of CI on competitive advantage in Innoson Technical and Industry situated in the Nigerian state of Enugu. The study concluded that CI was vital for strategic planning and competitive advantage.

Ezenwa et al. (2018) recommended that manufacturing firms invest in CI processes, facilities, and activities by innovating their product, services, and competitive dispositions. Therefore, organisations should equip employees with the knowledge, skill, and technical know-how to handle intelligence products to implement CI activities and processes successfully.

Other studies developed and investigated models for the CI and strategy relationship. Notably, Du Plessis and Gulwa (2016) developed a two-point CI strategy framework intended as a planning tool for CI professionals. The research showed executives to be highly dependent on CI's help with strategy development, decision-making, sustainable advantage and boosting organisational performance.

Similarly, Nasri (2012) developed a conceptual model of the strategic benefits of a CI process. The research findings suggested that organisations preferred to focus on creating CI procedures. This method has the potential to give the business a long-term competitive edge.

Furthermore, his study recommended that empirical research be undertaken to discover how the CI processes affect the quality of intelligence information and encourage the expansion of strategic benefits in a firm. Equally, Campos et al. (2014) developed a CI model in an environment where strategic planning was not common and structural conditions were adverse in the Mexican surety bond industry. The results of this study proved that CI must be custom-made to meet the activities of organisations to overcome barriers created by the environment.

Based on this study's outcome, Campos et al. (2014) presented a CI model that integrated the organisation's strategic and operative phases. This model simplifies CI processes to aid business strategy.

Shujahat et al. (2017) investigated a strategic management model focussing on KM and CI. The results revealed synergic and separate uses of knowledge, and CI resulted in effective decisions leading to competitive advantage.

However, Maritz and Du Toit's (2018) findings concluded that, while CI was significant for integrating practice and strategy, study results revealed that when CI is associated with the disciplines of KM and marketing, it does not overlap with strategy. Furthermore, Maritz and Du Toit (2018) explored the location of CI inside strategy as a practice from the strategy process perspective.

This study confirmed that strategy and CI were inextricably linked. Competitive intelligence was more than just an activity or sequence of actions inside the more extensive strategic management process, but rather a critical strategic practice. In addition, Maritz and Du Toit's (2018) research indicated that CI was essential for integrating all strategic practices, denoting the existence of causal relationships at the centre of CI and strategy.

Foley and Guillemette (2017) explored the taxonomy of BI strategies in organisations. Their results showed the coexistence of BI, corporate BI, predictive intelligence, and CI. In addition, Foley and Guillemette (2017) posited that a CI strategy arms organisations with insights from their external environments.

Research by Lackman and Lanasa (2013) showed that competitive intelligence systems (CIS) had four modules that assisted each of the four fundamental strategic market planning processes, such as company goal setting and forecasting, to improve the accuracy of the industry.

In doing so, CI studies strategic information to assist organisations in anticipating trends and market innovation. Consistent with this view, Bartes (2014), Calof et al. (2015), Hagiú and Tanascovici (2013) opined that CI aids strategic planning and it provides solutions for potential challenges and opportunities that exist in the external environment. Therefore, foresight and CI focus on the organisation's external environment to provide the tools that illustrate the direction in which markets drift (Calof et al. 2015).

Some studies have linked CI with SI; in this instance, Pellissier and Kruger (2011) studied SI as a strategic management tool in the South African long-term insurance industry.

This study indicated that SI enhances decision-making and plays a vital role in strategic management. In addition, the authors observed that SI provided leadership with relevant information leading to attaining competitive advantage and

innovation. Their findings indicated that SI was predominately utilised strategically within the organisation, contributing to decision-making.

Furthermore, their findings suggested that using CI provides organisational leaders with the advantages of contemporary emerging technology in their business sector. As a result, SI adds value and involves managers in the strategy formulation process. It helps management make fact-based decisions to clarify plans and create successful strategic choices (Pellissier & Kruger 2011).

Also, Pellissier and Kruger (2011) concluded from the research findings that SI was created by the combined influence of BI, CI, and KM. These synergies enable organisations to integrate their information and intellectual resources into an SI system that disseminates intelligence data for strategic planning and decision-making.

Similarly, Esmaeili (2014) investigated the effect of SI on decision-making and strategic planning using the intelligence system in organisations in Khorram-Abad City. This study's research showed that SI had a positive and meaningful effect on strategic decision-making and planning in organisations that use intelligent systems. This study also identified successful aspects of SI, such as human resource intelligence, organisational procedures, technical, informational, and financial resources, and competition and customer intelligence.

Also, Agha, Atwa and Kiwan (2014) evaluated the impact of SI and its dimensions on a firm's performance and the mediating role of strategic flexibility and its dimensions on such an impact in firms in the biotechnology industry. Their study concluded that SI had a strong positive influence on company performance, a positive effect on strategic flexibility, and a positive impact on firm performance in strategic flexibility as a mediator variable.

Congruently, Uzoamaka et al. (2017b) concentrated on the influence of SI intelligence on business success in selected commercial banks in South-East Nigeria. This study found a significant positive association between SI and corporate performance. This result illustrates how excellent SI by businesses contributes to company success. Furthermore, this study concluded that banks must be adaptable enough to changes in the external business environment.

Al-Zu'bi (2016) examined the aspects of SI and its role in achieving organisational agility. This study showed that all the SI dimensions impacted achieving organisational agility. Also, the study showed a more significant influence on dimensional creativity. Furthermore, Al-Zu'bi (2016) endorsed a need for managers to know how to evaluate and identify organisational agility to attain the organisation's strategic goals. This study correlates with Alnoukari and Hanano (2017), who pointed out that integrating BI and corporate strategic management directly affected modern and flexible organisations. The result

implies that dynamic and current organisations may effectively use market position and strategy changes.

## Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). (No. HSSREC/00000221/2019.).

## Results and discussion

In this section, the authors present the characteristics of collected articles to provide a comprehensive overview of CI and SI literature in relation to strategy implementation. The authors present thematic codes illustrating journal names, publication years, number of articles and countries. Table 1 presents the number of published articles.

As can be seen, the *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae Et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis* ( $n = 3$ ), *International Journal of Hospitality Management* ( $n = 3$ ), and *Journal of Intelligence Studies in Business* ( $n = 3$ ) were found to contain the most CI and strategic planning articles ( $n = 9$ ). The *European Journal of Marketing* has the most important publications ( $n = 2$ ), whereas the rest of the journals only had  $n = 1$  publications.

The authors also evaluated the number of published CI and SI articles for the same period. Figure 1 depicts the rising quantity of publications, notably after 2008. In addition, it illustrates how academic interest has remained low in 2011, 2012, and 2019.

In the study, the authors discovered that the number of CI-published publications increased in 2014 ( $n = 4$ ), 2017 ( $n = 4$ ), and 2021 ( $n = 5$ ) (Figure 1). In contrast, SI-related articles concurrently, grew only in 2014 ( $n = 2$ ) with the least number of articles published in 2011 ( $n = 1$ ), 2016 ( $n = 1$ ), 2017 ( $n = 1$ ).

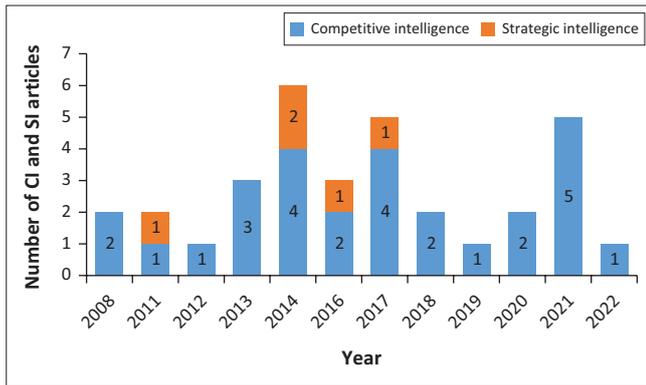
Other noteworthy years in terms of frequency of occurrence for CI related publications include 2013 ( $n = 3$ ), 2008 ( $n = 2$ ), 2016 ( $n = 2$ ), 2018 ( $n = 2$ ) and 2020 ( $n = 2$ ), with the fewest articles produced in 2011 ( $n = 1$ ), 2012 ( $n = 1$ ) and 2019 ( $n = 1$ ). However, because this study was completed in the first quarter of 2022, the article counts for the current year cannot be generalised.

Moreover, the authors found no CI or SI studies published in 2009, 2010, or 2015. Therefore, it is not surprising that there has been an increase in CI-related papers compared to SI within the same period. These findings validate that CI disciplines have a long and illustrious academic and practitioner history, with academic literature citations beginning in the 1950s and firm practices documented in the 15th and 16th centuries (Juhari & Stephens 2006). Congruently, it was reported that organisations that engaged in high CI activities showed 36% higher levels of quality in strategic planning (Jaworski & Wee 1993).

Hence, research in CI remains attractive as a development field, as seen by the number of prolific publications published between 2008 and 2022 compared to SI publications. Thirdly, the principal

TABLE 1: Number of published articles.

Article Title	Journal Name	Author	Year	Country	Article Count
<b>Competitive Intelligence and Strategic Planning</b>					
Measuring competitive intelligence Network and its role on Business Performance	International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences	Ali and Anwar (2021)	2021	Iraq	1
Integration of business intelligence with corporate strategic management	Journal of Intelligence Studies in Business	Mouhib Alnoukaria and Abdellatif Hananoa (2017)	2017	Syria	1
Defining a Basis for the New Concept of Competitive Intelligence					
The Objectives of Competitive Intelligence as a Part of Corporate Development Strategy	Acta Universitatis Agriculturae Et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis	Bartes (2014a, 2014b, 2014c)	2014	Czech Republic	3
Competitive Intelligence–Tool Obtaining Specific Basic for Strategic Decision Making TOP Management Firm					
Competitive intelligence: A Practitioner, Academic and Inter-Disciplinary Perspective					
Competitive intelligence: A Multiphase Precedent to Marketing Strategy	European Journal of Marketing	Calof and Wright (2008) Dishman and Calof (2008)	2008	Canada	2
Competitive intelligence and strategy formulation: Connecting the dots	Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal	Cavallo et al. (2020)	2020	Italy	1
Acquisition and strategic use of competitive intelligence	Malaysian Journal of library & information science	Ching and Zabid (2011)	2011	Malaysia	1
A Competitive Intelligence Model Where Strategic Planning is Not Usual: Surety Sector in Mexico	International Business Research	Campos et al. (2014)	2014	Mexico	1
Developing a Competitive Intelligence Strategy Framework Supporting the Competitive Intelligence Needs of a Financial Institution's Decision Makers	South African Journal of Information Management	Du Plessis and Gulwa (2016)	2016	South Africa	1
Effect of competitive intelligence on competitive advantage in Innoson technical and industry limited, Enugu state, Nigeria	International Journal of Business, Economics & Management (IJBEM)	Ezenwa et al. (2018) Köseoglu et al (2016)	2018 2016	Nigeria	1
Competitive intelligence practices in hotels					
How do hotels operationalize their competitive intelligence efforts into their management processes? Proposing a holistic model	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Köseoglu et al (2019) Köseoglu et al (2021)	2019 2021	Netherlands	3
Coopetition strategies for competitive intelligence practices-evidence from full-service hotels					
The practice turn within strategy: Competitive intelligence as integrating practice	South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences	Maritz and Du Toit (2018)	2018	South Africa	1
Conceptual Model of Strategic Benefits of Competitive Intelligence Process	International Journal of Business and Commerce	Nasri (2012) Jenster and Spøllen (2013)	2012 2013	Tunisia Sweden	1
The relationship between strategic planning and company performance—A Chinese perspective					
Competitive intelligence approach for developing an etourism strategy post COVID-19	Journal of Intelligence Studies in Business	Tulungen et al. (2021) Kula and Naktiyok (2021)	2021 2021	Indonesia Turkey	3
Strategic thinking and competitive intelligence: Comparative research in the automotive and communication industries					
Competitive intelligence: functional practices, goals and infrastructure of companies in Brazil	TransInformação, Campinas	Vidigal (2013)	2013	Brazil	1
Competitive Intelligence and Organizational Performance in Selected Deposit Money Banks in South-East, Nigeria	International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)	Uzoamaka et al. (2017a)	2017	Nigeria	1
Attaining organisational agility through competitive intelligence: the roles of strategic flexibility and organisational innovation	Total Quality Management & Business Excellence	Atkinson et al. (2022)	2022	United Kingdom	1
Maximizing the potential impact of competitive intelligence: Big data strategy lessons from Brazil's private sector	Strategic Direction	Strategic Direction (2020)	2020	United Kingdom	1
Strategic management model with lens of knowledge management and competitive intelligence: A review approach	VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems	Shujahat et al. (2017)	2017	United Kingdom	1
The limited influence of competitive intelligence over corporate strategy in Israel: historical, organizational, conceptual, and cultural explanations	Intelligence and National Security	Shapira (2021)	2021	Israel	1
Taxonomy of Business Intelligence Strategies in organizations	Cahier du PRISME	Foley and Guillemette (2017)	2017	Canada	1
Competitive Intelligence and Forecasting Systems: Strategic Marketing Planning Tool for SME's	Atlantic Marketing Journal	Lackman and Lanasa (2013)	2013	United States of America	1
<b>Strategic Intelligence and Strategic Planning</b>					
The impact of strategic intelligence on firm performance and the mediator role of strategic flexibility: An empirical research in biotechnology industry	International Journal of Management Science	Agha et al. (2014)	2014	Jordan	1
Aspects of Strategic Intelligence and its Role in Achieving Organizational Agility: An Empirical Investigation	International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences	Al-Zu'bi (2016)	2016	Jordan	1
A Study on the effect of the strategic intelligence on decision making and strategic planning	International Journal of Asian Social Science	Esmaeili (2014)	2014	Iran	1
A study of strategic intelligence as a strategic management tool in the long-term insurance industry in South Africa	European Business Review	Pellissier and Kruger (2011)	2011	South Africa	1
The Effect of Strategic Intelligence on Business Success in Selected Commercial Banks in South-East, Nigeria	International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)	Uzoamaka et al. (2017b)	2017	Nigeria	1
<b>Total</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>33</b>



CI, competitive intelligence; SI, strategic intelligence.

**FIGURE 1:** Number of journal titles related to competitive intelligence and strategic intelligence by year.

authors of chosen papers and the countries in which their host institutions are situated were evaluated. Figure 2 depicts the number of articles published by each country.

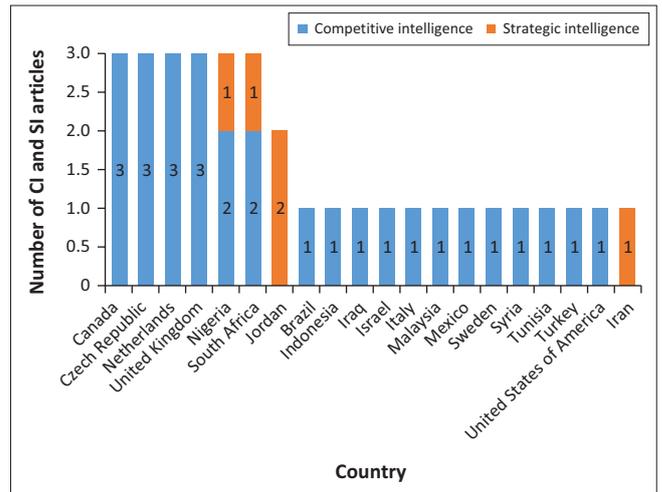
As seen in Figure 2, the most prolific CI-related article writers were from Canada ( $n = 3$ ), the Czech Republic ( $n = 3$ ), the Netherlands ( $n = 3$ ), and the United Kingdom ( $n = 3$ ) – in all these countries published the most publications ( $n = 12$ ). They were followed by Nigerian writers ( $n = 2$ ) and South African writers ( $n = 2$ ).

In addition, many of the results concerning CI-related articles were consistent with general trends across the countries investigated. Notably, compared to other nations, Jordanian writers ( $n = 2$ ) produced the most SI-related articles, followed by Iranian writers ( $n = 1$ ). These findings confirm that, despite the growing interest in applying CI to strategic planning, authors from developed markets such as North America and Europe have concluded a wide range of peer-reviewed academic articles on existing research.

In contrast, a few studies have been completed in the context of developing countries – suggesting that few from South Africa consider this subject field (Du Toit 2015:18).

This viewpoint supports Maune's (2014) conclusions that CI was still in its infancy in South Africa 20 years after it was introduced. However, South Africa has written more CI-related publications compared to the other countries studied. As a result, it is not unexpected that CI has little effect on business strategy. Consistent with this view, Shapira (2021) found that CI was occasionally used as a foundation for decision-making, but it was rarely integrated into the strategy. Finally, the authors analysed the research outcomes of the articles under consideration to identify any gaps. Also, they examined the authors' findings and conclusions about the relationship between CI, SI, and strategic planning. Figure 3 illustrates the number of articles by research outcome.

As the researchers analysed the relationships between CI, SI, and strategic planning focused journals, they discovered that CI research increased in most studies. These studies emphasised the vital role of CI in formulating and developing



CI, competitive intelligence; SI, strategic intelligence.

**FIGURE 2:** Number of articles by countries.

company strategies and its practical application to strategic planning (Bartes 2014; Calof & Wright 2008; Cavallo et al. 2020; Dishman & Calof 2008; Du Plessis & Gulwa 2016; Maritz & Du Toit 2018; Tulung et al. 2021).

Other research has found that integrating CI with strategy can assist with strategic decisions, organisational performance, and competitive advantage (Ali & Anwar 2021; Campos et al. 2014; Ezenwa et al. 2018). Yet, the most typical applications of CI are creating and implementing company strategy (McGonagle 2016). In contrast, the results of SI were related mainly to strategic decision-making and organisational performance (Agha et al. 2014; Pellissier & Kruger 2011; Uzoamaka et al. 2017b).

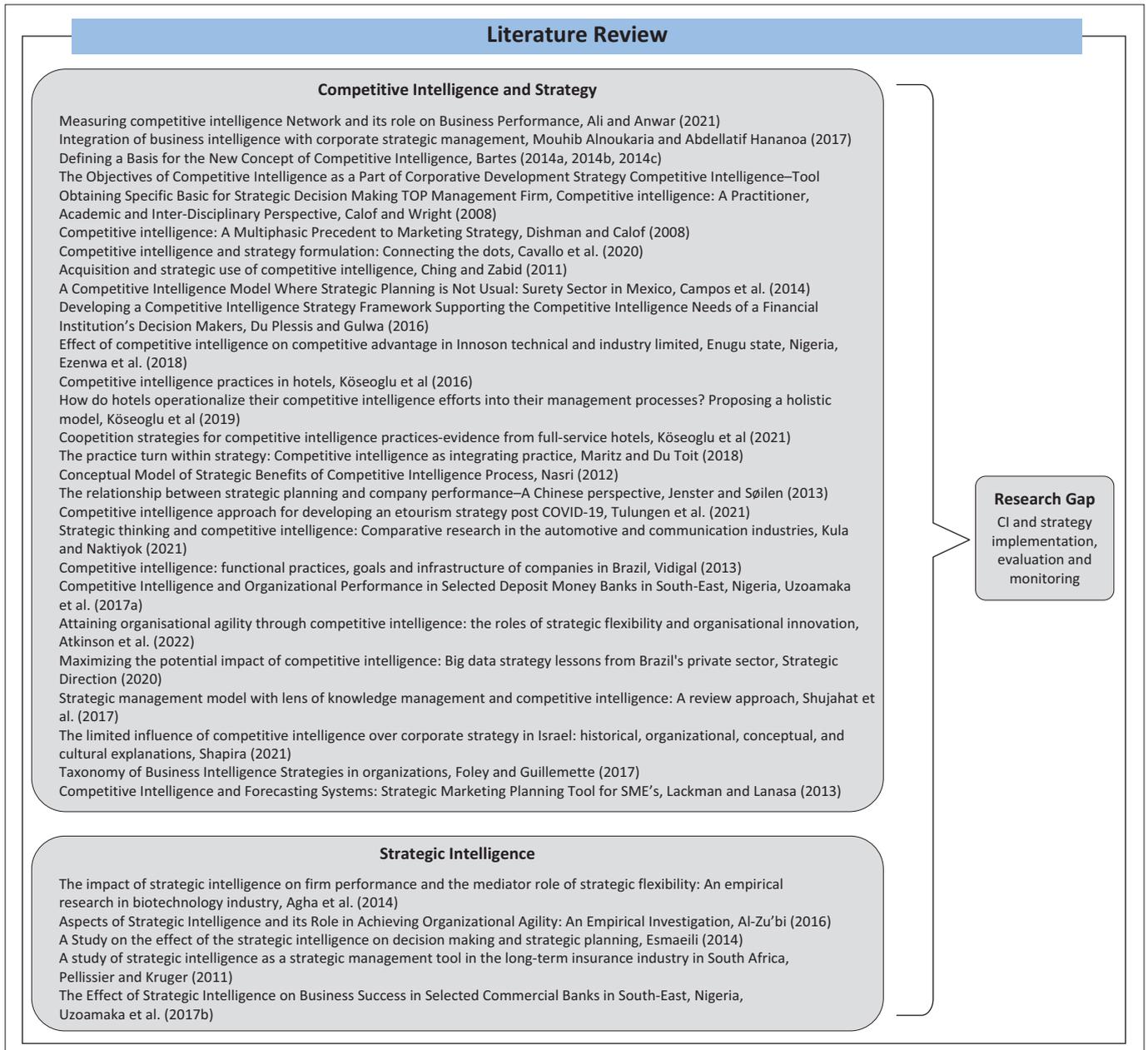
As a result, the authors found no empirical data relating both CI and SI with strategy implementation, evaluation, and monitoring in the systematic literature review they examined. This points to a research gap in the literature, indicating a need for more study.

## Conclusions and limitations

The most common application of CI is developing and implementing a company's strategy and using it to aid more expedient decisions. This study included a thorough literature assessment of CI and strategic implementation in various countries by selecting and analysing 33 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2008 and 2022.

Despite years of developing research in CI and strategic planning, a literature analysis demonstrated significant gaps in nations' CI and strategy implementation publications. Furthermore, among the articles examined, the researchers discovered that CI played a critical role in the formulation and development of firm strategies, and its application contrasted with Jaworski and Wee (1993), according to which organisations engaged in high levels of CI activities had 36% higher levels of quality in strategic planning.

This study examined the current state and trends in the CI and strategy implementation literature. The articles were



CI, competitive intelligence.

**FIGURE 3:** Related articles by research outcome.

categorised based on their theoretical viewpoints, research subjects, and countries. The article identified gaps in the literature and suggested possible areas for future research.

The study has limitations that should be highlighted. To begin, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar were used to search for papers related to CI, SI, and strategic planning. The sample may have overlooked articles in other publications with databases in different fields. Furthermore, the research was limited to peer-reviewed academic journals, and book chapters or conference proceedings were not included in the search.

Nonetheless, the articles chosen addressed a wide range of research-related concerns. Although search terms for CI, SI, and strategic planning were varied, important

publications with different keywords might have been overlooked.

Finally, future studies recommended based on literature analysis, limiting their scope for innovation. The method used, however, is deemed appropriate because trustworthiness processes were ensured by following transparent stages.

In addition, the authors emphasise that while content analysis is versatile, allowing for a wide range of analytic possibilities, it only describes what is present and may not reveal the underlying causes and consequences of the research pattern. This viewpoint is congruent with Maritz and Du Toit (2018), who reported that thematic content analysis showed minimal interpretive value. So, future research could benefit from triangulation using different methodologies.

In conclusion, despite growing awareness of CI and its benefits over the years, most authors have not examined how CI contributes to strategy execution. The authors analysed 33 articles and identified gaps in the literature concerning the relationship between CI and strategy implementation. The study's findings provided valuable insights and served as a foundation for practitioners and academics in the fields of CI and strategy implementation to explore future research in this area. This study also advances academic knowledge by emphasising the importance of a structured and well-defined CI process and its integration into strategic planning.

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## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Authors' contributions

M.L.M. wrote the first draft of the manuscript after researching CI and strategic planning literature. Both authors performed thematic content analysis, crystallised results and conclusions. B.Z.C. led and supervised this project.

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## Data availability

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and/or its supplementary materials.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors, and the publisher.

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