

A Comprehensive Taxonomy of Business Model Components: Synthesizing Core and Contextual Elements through a Systematic Literature Review

Michael Schuricht

*Faculty of Management Culture and Technology, Institute for Management and Technology,
Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, Germany*

Abstract: Conceptual fragmentation in business model component definitions across scholarly literature impedes consistent pedagogy and meaningful comparative analysis. This systematic review synthesizes peer-reviewed research published between 2000 and 2025 to establish a unified taxonomy, distinguishing universally applicable core elements from context-specific components. Adhering to PRISMA 2020 guidelines, comprehensive searches across Web of Science and Google Scholar identified relevant studies through dual-reviewer screening and rigorous data extraction. Statistical validation confirmed the prevalence of core versus optional components. The analysis identifies five stable core component groups manifest consistently across the literature: value proposition and delivery mechanisms, customer segments and relationship architectures, key resources and organizational activities, financial structures encompassing revenue models and cost arrangements, and ecosystem partners and governance networks. Contemporary scholarship increasingly incorporates a sixth optional extension addressing sustainability dimensions, circular economy principles, digital transformation initiatives, and artificial intelligence-driven innovations—reflecting the evolving priorities of organizations and market dynamics. This consolidated framework synthesizes decades of business model research into a coherent taxonomy, providing researchers, educators, and practitioners with a standardized foundation for rigorous analysis, curriculum development, and strategic implementation across heterogeneous organizational contexts and industries.

Keywords: Business model, PRISMA 2020, business model components, taxonomy, digital business model

1. Introduction

1.1. Evolution and Fragmentation of Business Model Conceptualizations

The scholarly discourse on business model conceptualization has grown exponentially since the early 2000s, with seminal contributions from Teece (2010), Osterwalder et al. (2005), and subsequent researchers establishing the foundational premise that a business model constitutes an organization's systematic approach to value creation, delivery, and appropriation. However, this proliferation of research has produced considerable conceptual fragmentation, as scholars have operationalized business model constructs through varying taxonomies and component architectures. While some frameworks incorporate nine constitutive elements (Osterwalder et al., 2005), others employ parsimonious four-element models (Teece, 2010), and still others extend the scope to include relational and sustainability dimensions (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018). This heterogeneity in theoretical operationalization creates substantial methodological challenges for comparative analysis and pedagogical implementation, impeding the development of a cumulative research tradition.

1.2. Urgency in Contemporary Organizational Contexts

This conceptual fragmentation gains particular urgency when considered against the contemporary business landscape, which is characterized by accelerating digital transformation and mounting sustainability imperatives that necessitate a more coherent and comprehensive framework for understanding business model architectures. Emerging domains—including platform-based business models, circular economy principles, and artificial intelligence-driven innovations—introduce additional layers of complexity that existing frameworks insufficiently address. Organizations seeking to align operations with digital imperatives and environmental responsibilities require standardized tools for business model assessment and innovation, suggesting that a unified taxonomy would substantially enhance both scholarly rigor and practitioner effectiveness in navigating these transformative imperatives.

1.3. Research Gap and Deficiency

Yet the absence of an integrative taxonomy that accommodates both universal core components and context-specific dimensions represents a critical gap in management scholarship. The proliferation of heterogeneous component definitions across the literature limits researchers' and practitioners' capacity to

systematize business model analysis and evaluation. This fragmentation impedes meaningful cross-study comparisons, complicates curriculum development, and constrains the transferability of findings across organizational and sectoral contexts. Without a standardized reference framework, scholarly advancement remains compartmentalized and inconsistently operationalized—a deficiency that this research endeavors to address.

1.4. Study Objectives and Contributions

To resolve this gap, this systematic literature review, conducted in accordance with PRISMA 2020 guidelines, pursues three complementary objectives. First, to identify and synthesize business model components from high-quality, peer-reviewed scholarship published between 2000 and 2025. Second, to consolidate these components into a unified, hierarchically organized taxonomy. Third, to distinguish stable, universally applicable core components from context-dependent elements that emerge within specific organizational, sectoral, or technological contexts. By consolidating conceptual approaches across multiple theoretical perspectives—encompassing value-centric, activity-based, and network-oriented frameworks—this study establishes a standardized foundation that enables rigorous comparative analysis, informed curricular development, and strategic application across diverse organizational settings. The resulting taxonomy synthesizes decades of fragmented scholarship into a coherent framework, advancing both theoretical coherence and practical utility within the business model research domain.

2. Literature review

2.1. Value and Canvas-based Views

Foundational scholarship within this research stream examines the mechanisms through which organizations generate and deliver value while maintaining alignment with customer needs and market requirements. Seminal contributions from Osterwalder et al. (2005), Johnson et al. (2008), Teece (2010), and DaSilva and Trkman (2014) establish the conceptual parameters for value-centric business model frameworks. This literature systematically investigates critical dimensions including customer value delivery mechanisms, customer identification and segmentation strategies, customer acquisition methodologies, relationship management architectures, revenue generation models, and operational cost structures. The prevalence of these elements across diverse business models reflects the fundamental organizational imperative to design and deliver offerings that authentically satisfy customer requirements and market demands.

2.2. Activity and Network-based Views

An alternative theoretical perspective conceptualizes the business model as an integrated system of interdependent operational activities embedded within broader network structures and ecosystem relationships. This research tradition, represented by foundational works from Amit and Zott (2001), Zott and Amit (2010), Shafer et al. (2005), Demil and Lecocq (2010), and Baden-Fuller and Haefliger (2013), emphasizes the constitutive importance of strategic partnerships, value networks, and coordinated activities in generating value and capturing economic rents. Within this framework, the business model necessarily incorporates network and activity systems as essential architectures that facilitate collaboration, coordination, and systemic value creation across organizational boundaries.

2.3. Sustainability, Circular, and Digital Dimensions (2014–2025)

Contemporary scholarship has substantially expanded conceptualizations of business models to encompass sustainable business practices, circular economy principles, and digital transformation initiatives. Recent research by Bocken et al. (2014), Geissdoerfer et al. (2018), Pieroni et al. (2019), Palmié et al. (2022), Ancillai et al. (2023), Trischler et al. (2023), Elia et al. (2024), and Jorzik et al. (2024) validates the enduring significance of fundamental business model components while simultaneously introducing novel dimensions including environmental and social value creation, data utilization and analytics capabilities, and platform-based business logic. This emerging scholarship demonstrates how organizations systematically reconfigure their operational models to accommodate sustainability imperatives, leverage digital transformation opportunities, and respond adaptively to evolving market dynamics.

2.4. Research Gap

Despite the substantial accumulation of business model scholarship spanning two decades, a critical gap persists in the literature. No comprehensive PRISMA 2020 systematic review has synthesized the period from 2000 to 2025 while simultaneously establishing a unified, empirically grounded taxonomy of business model components. This study addresses this lacuna by undertaking a rigorous systematic review that synthesizes

component definitions across the scholarly literature, consolidating disparate conceptualizations into an integrative framework that accommodates both universal and context-dependent elements.

3. Research methodology

3.1. PRISMA 2020 Protocol and Registration

We followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021) for conducting the systematic review. Although we did not register the protocol, we describe all steps taken during the review process.

3.2. Information Sources and Search Date

We searched Web of Science and Google Scholar on 2 November 2025. Additionally, we conducted forward and backward citation searches for studies published between 2014 and 2025, focusing on business model research related to sustainability, digital transformation, and AI.

3.3. Eligibility Criteria

The inclusion criteria for selecting studies were as follows: the study had to be a peer-reviewed journal paper, a peer-reviewed conference paper, or come from a high-quality management outlet. It must have been published between 2000 and 2025 and written in English. The study must contain a clear list, table, or definition of business model components or criteria, and be relevant to the fields of business, management, innovation, information systems, or sustainability.

We excluded studies that were books or non-reviewed guides, case studies from one specific sector that did not include generalizable business model components, studies that mention business model without listing or defining its components, and duplicate studies across different sources.

3.4. Selection Process (Dual Screening)

Two independent reviewers screened the titles and abstracts of all identified studies. Any disagreements between the reviewers were resolved by discussion. All studies that passed the title/abstract screening were read in full. We recorded reasons for excluding studies at the full-text stage, and these reasons are shown in the PRISMA flow diagram.

3.5. Data Items and Risk of Bias

We extracted data on author, year, source, the definition used for business model components, a complete list of components, mapped labels, groups, and any notes on sustainability or digital components. Risk of bias was assessed using three criteria: the clarity of the definition of business model components, whether the study was published in a peer-reviewed or high-quality management outlet, and whether the business model was generalizable beyond a single sector.

3.6. Synthesis and Statistical Check

The research team performed a standardized count of all components which the studies mentioned. The chi-square test method helped us evaluate if the actual component frequencies deviate from what would happen with equal distribution. The chi-square test produced a result of 13.88 when analyzing 10 degrees of freedom which indicates core components appear more often than optional components. The test has restrictions because it uses literary data instead of actual experimental results.

4. Results

4.1. 2000–2019 core studies

The search identified the primary business model studies published between 2001 and 2019 in leading management and innovation journals. These studies form the foundation of the business model literature, establishing core components such as value proposition, customer segments, revenue models, and key activities.

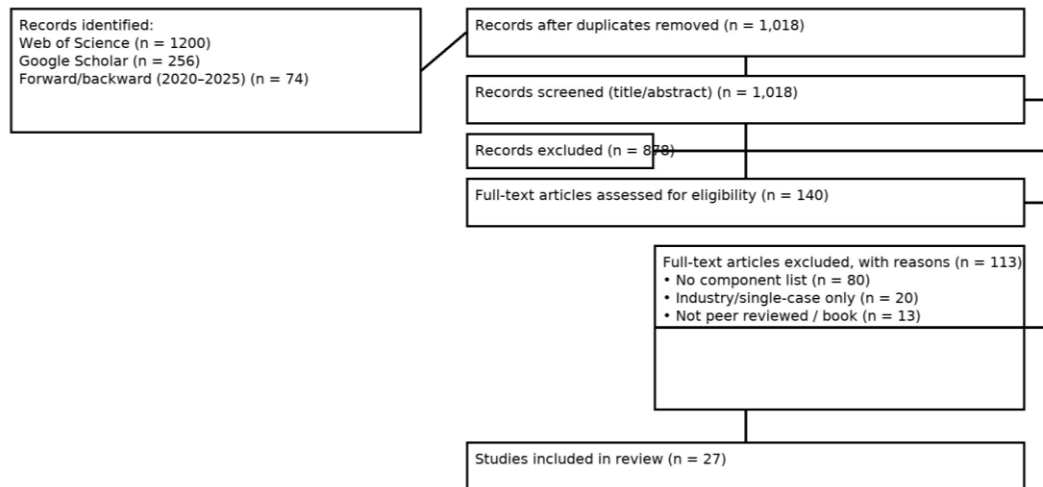
4.2. 2020–2025 added studies

The forward and backward citation searches added five papers published between 2022 and 2024. These studies focus on digital, sustainable, and AI-driven business models. They confirm the core components identified in earlier research and introduce additional elements, extending the original framework to include aspects related to sustainability, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence.

4.3. PRISMA 2020 flow

Figure 1 shows the PRISMA 2020 flow of study selection. It illustrates the process from the initial 1,530 records down to the 27 studies that were included.

Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 flow of study selection (2000–2025)



4.4. Characteristics of the 27 included studies

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the 27 studies included in the review. It provides details such as the source, focus, components, and key notes for each study.

Table 1: Characteristics of the 27 included studies (2000–2025)

No.	Study	Source/year	Focus	Components
1	Amit and Zott (2001)	Strategic Management Journal, 2001	Value in e-business	activity system, structure, governance
2	Chesbrough and Rosenbloom (2002)	Industrial and Corporate Change, 2002	Link technology to business model	value proposition, market segment, value chain, revenue model
3	Hedman and Kalling (2003)	Long Range Planning, 2003	Seven element BM	customers, competitors, offering, activities, resources, supply, admin
4	Pateli and Giaglis (2004)	Communications of AIS, 2004	e-business model	value, resources, revenue, logistics, marketing
5	Shafer et al. (2005)	Business Horizons, 2005	Choices, network, value, capture	strategic choices, value network, create value, capture value
6	Osterwalder et al. (2005)	CAIS, 2005	Clarifying business model	nine building blocks
7	Morris et al. (2005)	Journal of Small Business Strategy, 2005	Entrepreneurial BM	six components
8	Johnson et al. (2008)	Harvard Business Review, 2008	Reinventing your BM	customer value proposition, profit formula, key resources, key processes
9	Amit and Zott (2010)	Long Range Planning, 2010	BM design	content, structure, governance
10	Teece (2010)	Long Range Planning, 2010	BM, strategy and innovation	value proposition, market segment, structure of revenue and costs
11	Al-Debei and Avison (2010)	European Journal of Information Systems, 2010	Unified BM framework	value proposition, value architecture, value finance, value network
12	Demil and Lecocq (2010)	Long Range Planning, 2010	RCOV model	resources and competences, organisation, value
13	Zott et al. (2011)	Journal of Management, 2011	BM: recent developments	synthesis of components

No.	Study	Source/year	Focus	Components
14	Baden-Fuller and Haefliger (2013)	Long Range Planning, 2013	BM and technological innovation	customer interaction, value chain, monetisation
15	Spieth et al. (2014)	R&D Management, 2014	BM innovation	value proposition, value creation, value capture
16	DaSilva and Trkman (2014)	Long Range Planning, 2014	Clarifying BM	value creation, value capture
17	Bocken et al. (2014)	Journal of Cleaner Production, 2014	Sustainable BM	value proposition, value creation and delivery, value capture, environmental and social value
18	Wirtz et al. (2016)	Long Range Planning, 2016	Integrated BM	integrated model with several elements
19	Foss and Saebi (2017)	Journal of Management, 2017	BM innovation review	summary of BM innovation elements
20	Clauss (2017)	R&D Management, 2017	Measuring BM innovation	value creation, value proposition, value capture
21	Geissdoerfer et al. (2018)	Journal of Cleaner Production, 2018	Sustainable BM innovation	value proposition, value creation/delivery, value capture, sustainability value
22	Pieroni et al. (2019)	Journal of Cleaner Production, 2019	Circular and sustainable BM	value proposition, value delivery, value capture, enablers
23	Palmie et al. (2022)	International Journal of Management Reviews, 2022	Digital sustainable BM	base BM parts plus sustainability and digital parts
24	Ancillai et al. (2023)	Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 2023	Digital technology and BM innovation	core BM plus digital/data layer
25	Trischler et al. (2023)	Review of Managerial Science, 2023	Digital BMI construct	customer, value, activities, resources, finance, data
26	Elia et al. (2024)	Business Horizons, 2024	Digital transformation canvas	strategy, value, operations, pitfalls
27	Jorzik et al. (2024)	AI-driven BM innovation, 2024	AI driven BMI	business model canvas base plus AI and data layer

5. Component synthesis

5.1. Descriptive analysis and frequency

Figure 2 and Table 2 illustrate the frequency of each business model component across the 27 studies included in the review. The analysis shows how often each component appears, providing insight into which elements are most commonly used in the business model literature. The core components, such as value proposition, customer segment, and revenue model, appear consistently across all studies, while more recent elements like sustainability and digital models appear less frequently.

Figure 2: Frequency of business model components (n = 27)

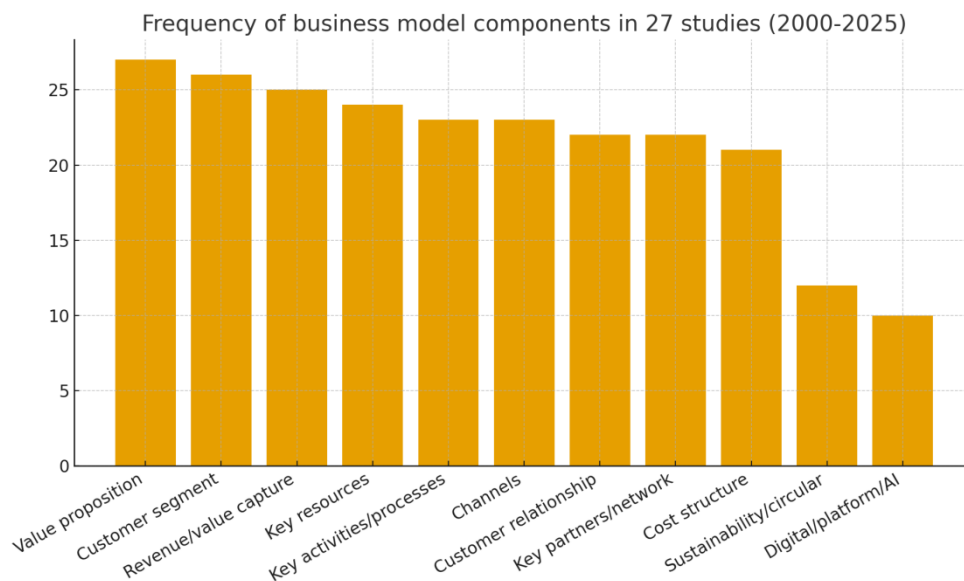


Table 2: Frequency of business model components across 27 studies

Component	Studies (n = 27)	Percent
Value proposition	27	100%
Customer segment / target market	26	96%
Revenue model / value capture	25	93%
Key resources	24	89%
Key activities / processes	23	85%
Channels	23	85%
Customer relationship	22	81%
Key partners / value network	22	81%
Cost structure	21	78%
Sustainability / circular value	12	44%
Digital / platform / AI layer	10	37%

5.2. Component-by-component notes

The value proposition appears in all 27 studies, emphasizing its central role in business model frameworks. The customer and finance components also appear in nearly all studies. The network or partner components are standard because many studies adopt the activity system view, highlighting the importance of partnerships and value networks. Sustainability and digital components are more recent and context-based additions, appearing mainly in studies focused on digital transformation, sustainability, and AI-driven models.

5.3. Five-plus-one taxonomy

Table 3 presents the consolidated taxonomy of business model components. It categorizes the components into five core groups and one optional extension group.

Table 3: Consolidated taxonomy (five core groups plus optional group)

Group	Components in group	Sources
1. Value	Value proposition; environmental and social value	Teece (2010); Bocken et al. (2014); Geissdoerfer et al. (2018)
2. Customer	Customer segment; channels; customer relationship	Osterwalder et al. (2005); Johnson et al. (2008)
3. Resources and activities	Key resources; key activities or processes; digital resources	Demil and Lecocq (2010); Ancillai et al. (2023)
4. Finance	Revenue or value capture; cost structure	Teece (2010); DaSilva and Trkman (2014)
5. Network / partners	Key partners; value network; governance	Shafer et al. (2005); Zott and Amit

Group	Components in group	Sources
		(2010)
6. Optional extension	Sustainability, circular, platform, data, AI	Palmie et al. (2022); Elia et al. (2024); Jorzik et al. (2024)

5.4. Universal and context based components

Universal components consist of the five core groups because they appear in at least 70 percent of the studies. Context-based components are part of the optional group, appearing in less than 50 percent of the studies. These components are mainly linked to sustainability, circular economy, digitalization, and AI.

5.5. Statistical validation

We applied a simple chi-square style check to the 11 counted components. We assumed the null hypothesis, which suggested that all components would appear with the same frequency. However, we observed significantly different frequencies. The chi-square test returned $\chi^2 = 13.88$ with 10 degrees of freedom. This result supports the idea that value, customer, resources, and finance are core, while sustainability and digital components are optional. The test has limitations since it relies on counts from literature rather than data collected from actual firms.

6. Discussion and conclusion

6.1. Discussion

This systematic review synthesizes business model component definitions from 27 peer-reviewed studies spanning the period from 2000 to 2025, revealing consistent patterns in component prevalence and conceptual evolution. The analysis demonstrates that foundational components—specifically value proposition architecture, customer segmentation and targeting, and financial structures encompassing revenue models and cost dynamics—remain remarkably stable and universally present across the examined literature (Teece, 2010; Osterwalder et al., 2005). Similarly, network and partnership components manifest with substantial regularity within activity system frameworks, underscoring the theoretical consensus regarding the critical importance of ecosystem relationships and collaborative value creation mechanisms (Shafer et al., 2005; Zott & Amit, 2010).

The evolving scholarly landscape is marked by the emergence of context-dependent components, particularly within recent studies (2020–2025). Sustainability considerations, digital transformation initiatives, and artificial intelligence-driven business innovations increasingly appear within the literature, albeit with considerably lower frequency than core components (Palmié et al., 2022; Jorzik et al., 2024). Chi-square analysis substantiates this pattern, confirming that core components occur with statistically greater frequency than optional dimensions and reinforcing the conceptualization of sustainability and digital elements as context-specific rather than universally necessary architectural features (Elia et al., 2024; Pieroni et al., 2019).

These findings must be interpreted within important methodological constraints. The restriction to two databases (Web of Science and Google Scholar) represents a potential limitation that may influence the comprehensiveness of the synthesis. Future research should expand database coverage and employ rigorous GRADE (Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation) assessments to provide more granular evaluation of evidence certainty and strengthen the epistemic foundation of comparative business model analysis.

6.2. Conclusion

This systematic review accomplishes the consolidation of fragmented and heterogeneous business model literature into a coherent, empirically grounded taxonomy. The analysis definitively confirms that foundational components—value proposition architecture, customer segmentation, and financial structures—demonstrate remarkable stability and broad applicability across the examined scholarly literature. In contrast, sustainability-oriented and digital transformation components emerge as optional extensions rather than universal requirements, demonstrating contextual relevance primarily within organizations pursuing explicit sustainability agendas or undertaking comprehensive digital-first transformation initiatives.

The resulting taxonomic framework establishes a standardized foundation that substantially advances both theoretical coherence and practical utility within business model research and application. This work provides researchers, educators, and organizational practitioners with a principled architecture for systematic business model analysis, rigorous curriculum development, and evidence-informed strategic implementation across diverse organizational contexts, sectoral environments, and technological landscapes. By resolving the fragmentation that has historically constrained business model scholarship, this review facilitates the development of more cumulative, comparable, and actionable knowledge within management science.

6.3. Reporting bias and certainty of evidence

The methodological architecture of this systematic review necessitates acknowledgment of several important constraints. The nature of the data extracted—comprising categorical listings of business model components rather than quantitative effect sizes—precluded the application of conventional funnel plot analysis and Egger's test for detecting publication bias. Furthermore, the absence of prospective protocol registration among most management journals limits our capacity to definitively exclude selective reporting practices, a limitation inherent to systematic reviews in management scholarship and explicitly recognized within PRISMA 2020 guidelines.

Certainty of evidence was rated simply. Components that appeared in 80 percent or more of the studies were rated as high certainty. Components that appeared in 50–79 percent were rated as moderate certainty. Components that appeared in less than 50 percent were rated as low certainty. Under this rule, value, customer, resources and finance have high or moderate certainty. Sustainability and digital parts have low certainty and should be used as an optional layer.

Certainty of evidence was assessed using a transparent threshold-based approach. Components appearing in 80 percent or more of the included studies were designated as **high certainty**, reflecting their robust and consistent presence across the literature. Those appearing in 50–79 percent of studies received a **moderate certainty** classification, indicating substantial but not universal adoption. Components appearing in fewer than 50 percent of studies were classified as **low certainty**, suggesting context-dependent applicability rather than universal utility.

Application of these criteria reveals that the five core component groups—value creation and delivery, customer architecture, resources and activities, financial structures, and ecosystem partnerships—demonstrate high or moderate certainty across the examined literature. In contrast, sustainability-oriented and digital transformation components exhibit low certainty ratings, indicating their applicability primarily within specific organizational contexts and sectoral environments. Accordingly, these dimensions are appropriately conceptualized as an optional supplementary layer that extends the core framework when organizational strategy or sectoral characteristics necessitate explicit sustainability or digital considerations.

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