



**Special Issue Call for Papers *Journal of Product Innovation Management*  
Unraveling and Reconciling Tensions in Family Firm Innovation Research**

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**Special issue aims**

While research on family firm innovation is gaining momentum, unreconciled controversial findings and salient but overlooked areas of research remain. We aim to open the black box of family firm innovation by unravelling several key untapped areas of research that offer promising avenues for enhancing the understanding of innovation phenomena – broadly conceived – within this form of business organizations that represents a key cornerstone of global economies.

**Motivation for the special issue**

Family involvement, in terms of ownership, governance, and/or management, has been identified as a salient driver of innovation management (Chrisman, Chua, De Massis, Frattini & Wright, 2015). Family firms represent the most ubiquitous type of business ownership worldwide (La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1999; Schulze & Gedajlovic, 2010; Villalonga & Amit, 2009) and are often acknowledged among the global innovation champions (Chirico et al., 2022; Forbes, 2022; König, Kammerlander & Enders, 2013). Consistent with their relevance, research in family firm innovation has steeply grown in the last decades revealing inherent contradictions and paradoxes (Calabrò et al., 2019).

Family firms are often depicted as conservative and investing less in innovation yet at the same time more long-term oriented than non-family firms, with the intention to pass down the firm to future generations, and able to innovate with limited resources (De Massis, Audretsch, Uhlaner & Kammerlander, 2018). Such controversy in existing literature refers to two opposing views on the family firm. That is, a) a unique and favorable setting for innovation in which the long-term orientation allows to dedicate and synchronize the resources required for change and risk taking (Carnes, Hitt, Sirmon, Chirico & Hu, 2021; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003); or b) a liability to a business' innovation efforts where the desire to protect family wealth and prospects for future generations lead to avoid risk, delay or prevent change and follow conservative strategies (Miller, Steier, & Le Breton-Miller, 2003). Indeed, a key characteristic of family firms is the presence of nonfinancial forms of wealth, namely socioemotional wealth (SEW), an important endowment that family owners intend to protect even if its preservation might result in suboptimal decisions from an economic perspective (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). Hence, besides financial considerations, protecting current SEW and preserving or enhancing prospective financial and SEW forms of wealth are important decision-making criteria for family firm owners (see Gómez-Mejía, Cruz, Berrone & De Castro, 2011; Hoskisson, Chirico, Zyung & Gambeta, 2017).

Innovation projects are inherently risky because of the technical complexity and uncertainty in stakeholder response, therefore family firm decisions to pursue innovation can be framed as a mixed-



gamble pertaining both financial wealth and SEW gains and losses (Bammens & Hünermund, 2020). For instance, R&D (Chrisman & Patel, 2012; Gómez-Mejia et al., 2014; Sciascia, Nordqvist, Mazzola & De Massis, 2015), patent (Chirico et al., 2020a; Duran, Kammerlander et al., 2016) and technology acquisition (Kotlar et al., 2013) decisions offer the prospect of future financial wealth gains, yet they may also entail potential losses of current SEW for the owning family. Scholars have also started overcoming the traditional trade-off between financial wealth and SEW in family firms, highlighting the influence that changes in financial wealth can exert on prospective gains and losses in SEW (Martin & Gómez-Mejia, 2016; Kotlar et al., 2018), as well as the simultaneous prospective losses and gains in different SEW dimensions framed in relation to innovation investment decisions (Bauweraerts, Rondi, Rovelli, De Massis & Sciascia, 2022).

Such controversial attitude has been targeted also by the ability-willingness innovation paradox, identifying this form of business organizations as having higher discretion to allocate their financial resources to innovation activities but lower willingness to do so (Chrisman et al., 2015). The protection of SEW might also refer to tradition, as it is hard for family members to detach from business heritage imbued with family values, thereby limiting innovation. Yet, some scholars have identified ‘innovation through tradition’ as a possible strategy to leverage tradition to innovate. By engaging in temporal search, such strategy allows long-lasting family firms to transform tradition, conventionally considered a liability to innovation, into a source of competitive advantage that is hard to imitate by non-family firms (De Massis, Frattini, Kotlar & Wright, 2016). Therefore, the context of family firms can also be revelatory for investigating contradictions and unveiling how they can be managed, offering insights also to non-family counterparts.

### **Special issue scope and exemplar inquiry directions**

This Special Issue aims to extend current understanding about family business innovation. We call for new, interdisciplinary research tapping into the repertoire of innovation and different related theories and perspectives to understand family firms’ distinctive attitude, goals and behaviors in relation to innovation. We also call for research that draws on the uniqueness of the family business to challenge the boundary conditions of broader innovation literature and theories. At the same time, we encourage scholars to develop and apply established and innovative research methods that allow them to build and test their theoretical models about family business innovation behaviors and outcomes. By doing so, this Special Issue favors the development and application of new perspectives and methodological approaches for addressing critical questions in family business innovation and favors a better integration of the academic fields of innovation and family business.

Contributions may address, but are not limited to, the following research topics themes and questions:

- Innovation through tradition in family firms and use of the past to innovate (e.g., De Massis et al., 2016; Erdogan, Rondi & De Massis, 2021):
  - *How do family firms select elements of their past to be leveraged in innovation?*
  - *How can next generation family members learn about and reinterpret family business tradition to innovate?*
- The psychological foundations of family business innovation (i.e., considering biases, heuristics, personal traits etc. of family business actors) which links to social psychology and the micro foundational lenses to understand innovation (e.g., Picone et al., 2021):
  - *How do family business members’ emotions affect the innovation process?*
  - *(How) do stakeholders’ emotions affect family business innovation behavior?*



- Family governance and innovation, which links to topics on innovation governance and family boundary organizations and innovation in the family-related organizational ecosystem (e.g., family offices, family foundations, family academies, etc.) (De Massis, Kotlar & Manelli, 2022):
  - *How do family offices that invest in private equity stimulate innovation of the firms they participate in? Are these firms more innovative than family-managed firms?*
  - *Is a family that develops formalized governance systems better able to identify business innovation opportunities?*
- Family business innovation productivity and performance (Duran et al., 2016; De Massis et al., 2018):
  - *What practices allow family firms to be better able to convert innovation inputs into innovation outputs?*
  - *How can we measure the fulfilment of family-centered goals in family business innovation?*
- Mixed gambles and new trade-offs in family business innovation (Chirico et al., 2020a; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2014):
  - *How do family firms leverage their distinctive features to make innovation decisions following a mixed-gamble logic?*
  - *What are the organization-, group- and individual-level knowledge and capabilities required to evaluate mixed gambles and make innovation decisions (e.g., incremental, radical, exploitative, explorative) in family firms?*
- Family business innovation in the face of crisis situations (De Massis & Rondi, 2020; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2022):
  - *Family firms are considered more resilient to exogenous shock, but do these shock spur innovation initiatives? Does family firm innovation trigger resilience and vice versa?*
  - *Are family firms more prone to engage in sustainable innovation after a crisis?*
- Family business open vs. closed approach to innovation (e.g., Kotlar et al., 2020):
  - *Do family and non-family firms behave differently when collaborating in innovation ecosystems?*
  - *How can family firms balance knowledge sharing and secrecy to protect their competitive advantage when engaging in innovation activities?*
- Family business network and innovation:
  - *Does the increased complexity of the family structure (e.g., new marriages, newborn, divorces, sudden death) influence family business innovation?*
  - *How do family relational, task or process conflicts affect family firm innovation activities?*
- Digital innovation in family firms (e.g., Ceipek et al., 2021; Soluk et al., 2021):
  - *How do multigenerational family firms make decisions about digitalization?*
  - *Can digitalization and digital competences become sources of legitimacy for next generation family members?*
- Organizational design and restructuring (e.g., Chirico, Gomez-Mejia, Hellerstedt, Withers & Nordqvist, 2020b):
  - *Are family firms more reluctant to integrate new knowledge from acquired or merged firms than non-family firms? How does knowledge acquisition affect post-merger innovation initiatives?*
  - *Does the ability-willingness innovation paradox impact restructuring decisions (e.g., merger, sale, dissolution, exit) in business families?*
- Family influence and different types of innovation (e.g., product vs. process vs. business model innovation; radical vs. incremental innovation; disruptive vs. continuous innovation):



- Do the drivers, behaviors and outcomes of innovation in family firms vary when different types of innovation are considered?
- If yes, how?
- Service innovation and family firms (e.g., Rondi et al., 2021):
  - Do family firms engage in servitization differently from non-family firms to achieve innovation?
  - Does family business innovation behavior differ between product and service innovation?
- Commercialization of family firm innovation:
  - Does communicating the family-status influence product legitimacy in the market?
  - How does family image affect new product positioning on the market?
- Family involvement and SME innovation
  - How does innovation (e.g., type, degree, process) of family-owned SMEs differ from SMEs with other types of ownership structures or even from larger corporations – either family or non-family based?
  - How might the “doing-using-interacting” (DUI; informal innovative activities; see Alhusen et al., 2021) approach differ between family and non-family SMEs, and with larger corporations?

To conclude, we welcome theoretical, empirical and methodological work on both family firms and business families that acknowledges the academic sediments, but first and foremost the contributions that integrate family business and mainstream research on innovation. We encourage manuscripts across the whole theoretical and methodological scope of the *Journal of Product Innovation Management* (JPIM) (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15405885>) that can provide a unique perspective through diverse methodological approaches, and interdisciplinary co-author teams.

### Review process timeline

Milestone	Date
Call for paper announcement	June 2022
Meeting the special issue guest editor(s) session at IFERA <sup>1</sup> 2022, IPDMC and the JPIM Research Forum	June 2022 / July 2022 / November 2022
Paper proposal <sup>2</sup> deadline (optional)	September 30, 2022
Paper proposal decision (if applicable)	October 31, 2022
Submission deadline (full paper)	April 30, 2023
First round decision	August 31, 2023
In person dedicated workshop (for authors with invited revisions)	Fall 2023
Revision due	February 29, 2024
Second round decision	May 31, 2024
Second revision due	August 31, 2024
Final editorial decision	October 31, 2024
Anticipated publication	Fall/Winter 2024

<sup>1</sup> IFERA is the International Family Enterprise Research Academy, the leading global community of family business scholars. In 2022 the IFERA Conference will be held in Santander, Spain.

<sup>2</sup> An optional step prior to formal submission is a short (3-5 page) proposal to facilitate the authors to get feedback from editors on their work in progress. This step is not mandatory to be eligible to submit a full paper. The proposal should include the key elements of the study as: motivation/positioning, link to the



relevant literature, illustration of the method(s), preliminary elements of discussion and future research directions. We also ask authors to indicate the stage of development of their research at the time of proposal submission.

### **Submission**

All submissions should be made through the JPIM system at [www.jpim.online](http://www.jpim.online). Be sure to indicate your targeting of this special issue when prompted.

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