

The scholarly impact of the most cited and award winner articles in International Business

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ABSTRACT

The knowledge and evolution of a discipline are supported on multiple contributions of scholars through their research, but some works have a larger impact on the field. In this paper we examine the most cited articles in international business (IB) research. Methodologically, we identify the six most cited articles published on the top journal for IB studies - Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS) -, which are also those prized with the 'JIBS decade award'. This award symbolizes their contribution to the field. We assess the impact of the top six articles measuring citations in a sample of other top twelve business / management journals. The procedures of analyses involve counting citations and the co-citations networks of each of the six award winning articles to observe how widespread is their influence into domains that are outside the immediate boundaries of the theme researched in each article.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we identify and examine the impact of the most cited articles in international business (IB) research. Albeit the number of scholars doing research has been increasing gradually – possibly because the track record of publications is becoming a standard on career evaluation (HARGENS; SCHUMAN, 1990) –, and the number of scientific journals (now probably surpassing some remarkable one hundred thousand) and papers published are rising, the most impactful research is arguably skewed to a selected few articles and journals that make it to the top rankings in their disciplines. These are the articles and journals that receive the majority of the citations (GARFIELD, 1979; BALDI, 1998; CALLAHAM *et al.*, 2002). For Deans, researchers and editors it is interesting to understand such issues as how often are the papers cited, what percentage of the papers are never

cited, how have citation figures been evolving, and what is the actual impact of those most cited papers for the evolution of a discipline. While a published article has passed the peer gatekeepers and assessed as to their contribution, not all articles have equal impact.

Individuals and organizations resort to a variety of indicators of performance and impact for multiple purposes. The academic environment is no different and it often uses rankings of journals (Park; Gordon, 1996), schools and scholars for hiring and tenure decisions and for allocating resources (MOED *et al.*, 1985; HARGENS; SCHUMAN, 1990; PARK; GORDON, 1996). Some rankings measure the impact of research, often based on citation data and the journals' impact factors (GARFIELD, 1979; CULNAN *et al.*, 1990; HARZING, 2010). While it is true that citation counts are only one of the methods for portraying a paper's impact, it is also an objective, albeit imperfect, method to infer importance (CULNAN *et al.*, 1990). Articles that bear a greater

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contribution tend to have a larger number of citations (LEVITT; THELWALL, 2008).

As a field of study matures, scholars periodically attempt to make sense and organize the extant research by conducting different forms of literature reviews and bibliometric analyses (RAMOS-RODRIGUEZ; RUIZ-NAVARRO, 2004). Bibliometric studies apply statistical methods to source documents to objectively quantify and classify the documentation. Bibliometric studies often rely on citation and co-citation analyses, but may be complemented with a wealth of additional information. The core of bibliometric studies is the assumption that bibliographic citations are a legitimate and appropriate measure of influence (SMALL, 1973; GARFIELD, 1979; CULNAN *et al.*, 1990; PENG; ZHOU, 2006).

In this paper we identify the six most cited articles in international business studies. These were published in the top ranked journal for IB research - *Journal of International Business Studies* (JIBS). The six articles were Johanson and Vahlne (1977), Kogut and Singh (1988), Kogut and Zander (1993), Dunning (1988), Oviatt and McDougall (1994) and Anderson and Gatignon (1986). More highly cited articles are arguably those that made the largest contribution to the development of the discipline in the past decades, possibly shaping its direction. In our study we followed bibliometric procedures comprising analyses of citations and co-citations. The delimitation of this study to only the top six articles is somewhat arbitrary but the citation counts for the followers were significantly lower. We then use *ISI web of knowledge* to identify citations to these six articles in the track record of publication of twelve journals that are known to publish IB-related research. In a sample of 1,278 articles that cited the six articles considered, we analyzed the impact of the six articles to the study of different phenomena and theories. The analyses of the most cited articles reveals the ties of the works to other scholars, citing authors and geographic reach, and discuss the impact of highly visible research.

This work is especially relevant for doctoral students and newcomers to the discipline that may rapidly gain a grasp of the impact of the top works and their intellectual interconnections. As such it complements other literature reviews and bibliometric studies by revealing foundational works to streams of research that have captured scholars

research efforts over the past decades. The paper is organized as follows. First, we briefly review literature in bibliometry. Second we explain the method, including procedures and sample. The empirical results are followed by a discussion, noting some limitations and avenues for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The tradition of examining and counting citations dates to the late 1950s, with Clark's (1957) assessment of the most significant contributions to psychology. Examining citations provides a rear view on the communication flows in a field. Both citations and journals' impact factors are increasingly becoming a standard for evaluating publications, scholars and schools. For instance, US universities increasingly use citation data for hiring, promoting and tenure decisions (HARGENS; SCHUMAN, 1990). Citation frequencies permit identifying the influential works but there is ample consensus that citation-based metrics are imperfect measures of a paper's absolute merit, impact or quality, albeit a fair indicator of the use of a work by other scholars (see CRONIN, 1984).

Bibliometric studies rely on quantitative analyses of written source documents (articles, books, reports, theses and dissertations, etc.) to examine a discipline (RAMOS-RODRIGUEZ; RUIZ-NAVARRO, 2004; NERUR *et al.*, 2008; SHAFIQUE, 2013). Bibliometric studies have been applied to understand the structure of scientific knowledge, or of a community of scholars, within specific fields or disciplines (WHITE; GRIFFITH, 1981; WHITE; MCCAIN, 1998; RAMOS-RODRIGUEZ; RUIZ-NAVARRO, 2004; SHAFIQUE, 2013). While bibliometric methods may be complemented with experts' evaluations of the most salient papers and journals or of a discipline (RAMOS-RODRIGUEZ; RUIZ-NAVARRO, 2004; PENG; ZHOU, 2006) they are especially useful by avoiding subjectivity and supporting the analysis with quantifiable and observable data (NERUR *et al.*, 2008) that may or may not confirm what scholars intuitively think they know.

Given the overwhelming volume of new publications (see HARZING'S, 2010) on publish or perish) it is increasingly impossible to keep track of all that is being published (MACRAE, 1969). This is the milieu making bibliometry useful for providing a structured analysis of a large body of data, to infer

trends and assess the accumulated knowledge, identify shifting boundaries of the disciplines, detect most prolific scholars and institutions, and show the “big picture” of extant research. These studies may make visible what would otherwise remain ‘invisible colleges’ (CRANE, 1972).

The most common bibliometric techniques involve examining citations and co-citations. Citation analysis relies on counting citations to a given work by other authors. The assumption of citation analysis is that authors cite existing works that are significant for building their own arguments. That is, when an author cites other work, he does so because there is some proximity between the works (GARFIELD, 1979; MCCAIN, 1990; RAMOS-RODRIGUEZ; RUIZ-NAVARRO, 2004; FERREIRA, 2011). Citations may be assessed in the reference list; in fact, the list of references is often thought to describe what a paper is about (GARFIELD, 1979). Examining patterns of citations we are able to distinguish links between works (GARFIELD, 1979). These links are regarded as the conduits of knowledge structuring the intellectual connections. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that those papers that are more often cited are the ones that bear a larger impact in a discipline or field of study (RAMOS-RODRIGUEZ; RUIZ-NAVARRO, 2004) which permits us grasp the intellectual structure of the discipline or a given area of study (CHABOWSKI *et al.*, 2010; SHAFIQUE, 2013).

Co-citation analysis is another commonly used bibliometric method to investigate similarity between works (SMALL, 1973; MCCAIN, 1991; RAMOS-RODRIGUEZ; RUIZ-NAVARRO, 2004). Co-citation analysis is a method of document-coupling supported on counting, and then analyzing, the number of times other papers have cited any specific pair of publications (SMALL, 1973; GARFIELD, 1979). That is, a co-citation is the joint occurrence of two works (a paper, a book, or other document) in the reference list of another publication. The assumption is that the frequency of co-occurrence of a given pair of works reflects both a link between the citing and the cited documents and some degree of similarity between the co-cited works. Examining co-citations reveals the intellectual ties in a field. Culnan (1987), for instance, applied co-citation techniques to explore the intellectual structure of the discipline of information systems. McCain (1990) noted that observing authors we also capture the scholarly landscape being studied. Moreover, we may then analyze and represent

visually the relationships, or networks, among works and authors. Social network analysis have gained substantial momentum after emerging in sociology (see WASSERMAN; FAUST, 1994) and may be applied to bibliometric studies by observing the proximity – taken as a measure of mutual influence – between works or authors.

3. METHOD

This bibliometric study uses citation and co-citation data to analyze articles published in scholarly journals.

3.1. Sample

To select the sample, we first identified the six most cited articles ever published in the leading journal for publishing IB research - the *Journal of International Business Studies* (JIBS). JIBS has been recognized as the highest stature journal for IB research (PHENE; GUISSINGER, 1998; DUBOIS; REEB, 2001). Moreover, JIBS recognizes one of the most cited papers published ten years before with the “JIBS decade award”. All six articles were recipient of the JIBS decade award and as stated on the Academy of International Business website:

“The award is designed to recognise the most influential paper published in the *Journal of International Business Studies* volume one decade prior and is presented at the AIB Annual Conference. One measure of influence is the degree to which candidate articles have been cited in the ten years following their publication. In order to be considered for this award, a paper must be included among the five most cited papers published in the *JIBS* Volume of that year.” (underline added)

Using *ISI Web of Knowledge* (isiknowledge.com) and selecting specifically the journal JIBS in the search options, we identified the six articles that were most cited (see Table 1). Similar data is provided in JIBS website. It is worth noting that these six articles are also the most cited articles in all IB research.

As shown in table 2, the most cited article was Johanson and Vahlne’s (1977) study on the internationalization process of firms (1,097 citations). The followers include Kogut and Singh (1988) where they propose a measurement for cultural distance (838 citations), Kogut and Zander

(1993) with 604 citations, Dunning (1988) with 420 citations, Oviatt and McDougall's (1994) 374 citations and Anderson and Gatignon's (1986) article applying a transaction costs view to the modes of entry into foreign markets, with 369 citations.

We then conducted a bibliometric study that involved examining citations to these six articles in other outlets. The six most cited articles were cited 3,702 times in all journals included in ISI. Since examining such a large dataset would be unfeasible and probably would not yield clearly identifiable

patterns, we restricted the analysis to a subset of the top ranked Business and Management journals that are known for publishing IB-related research. We used Harzing's (2011) journal quality list, the impact factor and the total number of citations to select the journals (Table 2). We searched for citations to each of the six papers in the period 1983 to 2010 in these twelve journals. The initial year of the study was 1983 since prior to this year ISI records are not complete.

Table 1

The six most cited articles

Reference	N citations in ISI	N citations in the 12 journals	%
Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J. (1977) Internalization process of firms: A model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments.	1,097	330	30,1
Kogut, B. & Singh, H. (1988) The effect of national culture on the choice of entry mode.	838	371	44,3
Kogut, B. & Zander, U. (1993) Knowledge of the firm and the evolutionary theory of the multinational corporation.	604	200	33,1
Dunning, J. (1988) The eclectic paradigm of international production: A restatement and some possible extensions.	420	128	30,5
Oviatt, B. & McDougall, P. (1994) Toward a theory of international new ventures.	374	95	25,4
Anderson, E. & Gatignon, H. (1986) Modes of foreign entry: A transaction cost analysis and propositions.	369	154	41,7
Total	3,702	1,278	34,5

All six articles were published in JIBS

Source: Data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge.

Table 2

Journals' ranking

Years available in ISI	Journal	Ranking classification			Impact factor ⁴	N. citations Total ⁴	N. publications Total ⁴
		Abcd 2010 ¹	ABS 2010 ²	Cra 2010 ³			
1958-2010	Academy of Management Journal	A*	4	4	5.250	137,026	2,902
1983-2010	Academy of Management Review	A*	4	4	6.720	124,921	1,998
2008-2010	Asia Pacific Jrl of Management	B	2	3	3.355	338	113
2005 - 2011	International Business Review	A	3	3	1.489	1,976	279
1983-2010	Journal of Management	A*	4	4	3.743	45,423	1,241
1976-2010	Jrl of International Business Studies	A*	4	4	4.184	39,239	1,747
1966-2010	Journal of Management Studies	A*	4	4	3.817	29,430	2,796
1997-2010	Journal of World Business	A	3	3	1.986	4,478	432
1966-1990 & 2008-2010	Management International Review	A	4	4	3.800	2,149	2,005
1992 – 2010	Organization Science	A*	3	3	2.339	55,325	968
1981 - 2010	Organization Studies	A*	3	3	0.882	21,490	2,066
1990 - 2010	Strategic Management Journal	A*	4	4	3.583	121,388	1,819

¹ABDC ranking: Australian Business Deans Council, Journal Rankings, List February 2010 (scale: A*, A, B, C),

²ABS ranking — Association of Business Schools Academic, Journal Quality Guide, March 2010 (scale: 1, 2, 3, 4, 4*),

³Cra ranking — Cranfield University School of Management, Journal Rankings, List February 2010 (scale: 1, 2, 3, 4),

⁴Data retrieved from <http://admin-apps.webofknowledge.com> (accessed January 2012)

Source: Harzing, Anne-Will (2011). Journal Quality List, Thirty-eight Edition, Australia.

Table 3

Citations per journal

Journal	Johanson & Vahlne (1977)	Kogut & Singh (1988)	Kogut & Zander (1993)	Dunning (1988)	Oviatt & McDougall (1994)	Anderson & Gatignon (1986)	Total
Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)	19	23	14	5	4	7	72
Academy of Management Review (AMR)	9	9	8	4	2	4	36
Asia Pacific Journal of Management (APJM)	4	1	5	1	0	2	13
International Business Review (IBR)	58	39	23	16	19	17	172
Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS)	122	159	68	66	34	63	512
Journal of Management (JM)	5	13	7	4	7	8	44
Journal of Management Studies (JMS)	19	23	13	4	0	6	65
Journal of World Business (JWB)	32	31	15	10	23	13	124
Management International Review (MIR)	27	17	6	3	3	14	70
Organization Science (OS)	9	11	10	2	0	5	37
Organization Studies (OSt)	0	6	3	1	0	1	11
Strategic Management Journal (SMJ)	26	39	28	12	3	14	122
Total	330	371	200	128	95	154	1,278

Source: Authors' computations based on data collected from *ISI Web of Knowledge*.

Our sample comprises 1,278 articles published in the 12 journals identified that cited any of the six most cited articles.

3.2. Procedures

We examined citation records, namely in terms of authorship and nationality of the citing authors, and delved into the co-citation networks to infer themes researched, thus observing the conceptual ties of the most cited articles to IB-related themes and theories. We also conduct citation analyses to identify the trends in citations over time to each of the six articles and identify who (or which work) cited. Frequently cited works are deemed to hold a greater influence, or impact, on the progress of knowledge than works less cited (CULNAN, 1987; CULNAN *et al.*, 1990; TAHAI; MEYER, 1999). It is consensual that a large number of citations to a specific article is revealing of the article's scholarly influence. To at least some extent this is the assumption underlying the *JIBS decade award*.

We also conducted co-citation analyses to observe the intellectual ties among works. We represented the co-citation ties and networks visually using the social networks software *Ucinet*, which permitted examining proximity between works. We constructed one network for each of the six articles. Graphically, in co-citation networks, each work is a node and two works are connected if they are co-cited. The co-citation networks were

constructed using the articles published in the twelve journals selected.

4. RESULTS

We measured the number of citations to each most cited article in the twelve journals selected (Table 3). Citation counts are higher in JIBS (512 citations), IBR (172) and JWB (124). Among the IB specific journals, these citations seem proportional to the number of papers published (see Table 1). SMJ had 122 citations, which may be explained by an increasing stream of global strategy research (PENG; ZHOU, 2006). A relatively smaller number of citations was found in MIR (70 citations) but it may be due to a substantial gap on the database (MIR is only available in ISI for the periods 1966-1990 and 2008-2010). Moreover, the citation data partly denotes the international emphasis of non IB-specific journals, such as SMJ, AMJ and JMS.

4.1. Citation chronology

Examining the impact of a specific work warrants observing the evolution of citations over time. Figure 1 shows an upward trend in the evolution of citations to each of the six articles. The causes of this trend are somewhat unclear as it may be the consequence of a growing number of papers being published or a herd effect. It is also worth noting that new journals have been appearing. For

instance, *OS* was founded in 1992 and *APJM* was launched in 2008.

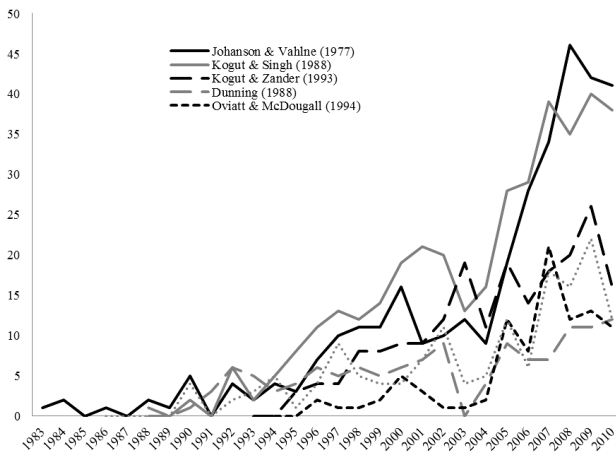


Figure 1. Evolution of citations
Source: Authors' computations based on data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge.

4.2. Authorship and nationality

The impact of a work may be assessed within and across theoretical, disciplinary and geographical boundaries. Observing the authorships we may at least partly infer the content of the papers. The

1,278 citing papers were authored by 2,163 scholars (Table 4). Two notes must be made regarding the data on the authors with the largest number of citations to the six articles: first, some scholars, as noted before, simply publish more and hence will cite more, second, in each paper an author may cite more than one of these six articles. Despite these caveats, we can observe the research themes on which the six articles are more used and also some noteworthy differences. Take the example of Stephen Tallman whose works have resorted to citations to Dunning (1988) and Kogut and Zander (1993) but less to the four other articles. Given Tallman's theoretical emphasis on the RBV and capabilities this is also evidence of the intellectual ties that these works hold to these streams of research. Klaus Meyer's work appears citing Kogut and Singh (1988), Kogut and Zander (1993) and Anderson and Gatignon (1986), which is likely denoting cross-country comparisons and a transaction costs approach. Yadong Luo's citing Johanson and Vahlne (1977), Kogut and Singh (1988) and Dunning (1988) but less the other three articles, or Zahra's appearing only citing Oviatt and McDougall, which is a reflection of the focus on entrepreneurship. That is, we can infer some

Table 4
 Citations per journal

Johanson & Vahlne (1977)		Kogut & Singh (1988)		Kogut & Zander (1993)		Dunning (1988)		Oviatt & McDougall (1994)		Anderson & Gatignon (1986)	
Aulakh, P.	10	Luo, Y.	18	Meyer, K.	9	Pan, Y.	6	Zahra, S.	5	Makino, S.	9
Luo, Y.	9	Delios, A.	10	Makino, S.	7	Luo, Y.	6	McDougall, P.	4	Meyer, K.	7
Beamish, P.	9	Reuer, J.	9	Beamish, P.	6	Vachani, S.	5	Knight, G.	4	Beamish, P.	7
Buckley, P.	8	Beamish, P.	9	Verbeke, A.	5	Aulakh, P.	5	Liesch, P.	3	Delios, A.	5
Cavusgil, S.	7	Shenkar, O.	9	Hashai, N.	5	Hashai, N.	5	Musteen, M.	3	Aulakh, P.	5
Delios, A.	7	Pan, Y.	8	Kotabe, M.	5	Makino, S.	4	Hitt, M.	3	Datta, D.	5
Peng, M.	6	Makino, S.	8	Delios, A.	5	McDougall, P.	4	Lyles, M.	2	Demirbag, M.	4
Pan, Y.	5	Cavusgil, S.	8	Buckley, P.	4	Buckley, P.	4	Thomas, D.	2	Chen, S.	4
Shenkar, O.	5	Meyer, K.	7	Salomon, R.	3	Chan, C.	4	Shrader, R.	2	Pan, Y.	4
Barkema, H.	5	Park, S.	7	Birkinshaw, J.	3	Kotabe, M.	3	Zucchella, A.	2	Shenkar, O.	4
Birkinshaw, J.	5	Hennart, J.	7	Martin, X.	3	Shenkar, O.	3	Oviatt, B.	2	Herrmann, P.	4
Rose, E.	5	Brouthers, K.	6	Simonin, B.	3	Zahra, S.	3	Jantunen, A.	2	Reuer, J.	4
Kotabe, M.	5	Demirbag, M.	6	Isobe, T.	3	Teegen, H.	3	Di Gregorio, D.	2	Glaister, K.	3
Hennart, J.	4	Barkema, H.	6	Zander, U.	3	Isobe, T.	3	Dimitratos, P.	2	Buckley, P.	3
Zahra, S.	4	Aulakh, P.	6	Tallman, S.	3	Sarkar, M.	3	Acedo, F.	2	Hennart, J.	3
Cuervo-Cazurra, A.	4	Ellis, P.	5	Dunning, J.	3	Demirbag, M.	3	Coviello, N.	2	Contractor, F.	3
Kundu, S.	4	Datta, D.	5	Galan, J.	2	Tallman, S.	3	Jones, M.	2	Erramilli, M.	3
Slangen, A.	4	Buckley, P.	5	Rugman, A.	2	Oviatt, B.	3	Keupp, M.	2	Tatoglu, E.	3
Makino, S.	4	Glaister, K.	5	Guillen, M.	2	Denekamp, J.	2	Gassmann, O.	2	Peng, M.	3
Liesch, P.	4	Slangen, A.	5	Haas, M.	2	Doh, J.	2	Peng, M.	2	Kumar, V.	3
N. of authors	534	N. of authors	553	N. of authors	434	N. of authors	204	N. of authors	195	N. of authors	243

Source: Computations by the authors based on data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge.

(1977). These 330 papers used a total of 24,571 references, from which we selected only the 30 most co-cited with Johanson and Vahlne's work. This simplification is needed since representing a network with over 24 thousand works and ties would not render a clear image.

Figure 2 shows at the center the most co-cited works with Johanson and Vahlne (1977), such as Kogut and Singh (1988), Hofstede (1980), Johanson and Vahlne (1990), Barkema *et al.* (1996) and Buckley and Casson (1976). The papers in a more peripheral position in the network are those that hold weaker co-citation ties with J-V. In this group of thirty we observe intellectual ties to works on entry modes, often using transaction costs theory but also, albeit perhaps in a lesser extent, to seminal IB works (such as STOPFORD; WELLS, 1972 or VERNON, 1966) and works that we relate to the RBV and learning in international operations. Hence, the intellectual network is not very diverse, but J&V's work is a fundamental reference on studies in the internationalization of firms.

The 371 articles that cited Kogut and Singh (1988) used a total of 27,595 references, from which we select the thirty most used. The co-citation network (Figure 3) shows a stronger tie between K&S's (1988) work on cultural distance and Hofstede's (1980) work on the cultural dimensions.

This is not surprising since K&S (1988) used Hofstede's cultural dimensions and values to compute a cultural distance index that has been much used in IB research. Other strong ties are found to the transaction costs in IB (ANDERSON; GATIGNON, 1986; HENNART, 1988; GOMES-CASSERES, 1990), entry modes and learning in foreign markets (AGARWAL; RAMASWAMI, 1992; BARKEMA *et al.*, 1996; BARKEMA; VERMEULEN, 1998), hazards and costs of conducting foreign operations (HYMER, 1976; KOSTOVA, 1999) and culture (HOFSTEDE, 1980; SHENKAR, 2001; RONEN; SHENKAR, 1985). Albeit not the primary purpose of K&S's work, it seems to especially influence the stream of research on the difficulties of operating abroad, often due to idiosyncratic country differences. Nonetheless, many of the citations actually refer to the manner in which they measured cultural distance. It is not novel that much of IB research has used culture and cultural differences as either dependent, independent and control variable (see, for instance FERREIRA *et al.* 2009)

The co-citation network for Kogut and Zander (1993), in figure 4, denotes stronger ties to Kogut and Zander (1992), Buckley and Casson (1976), Johanson and Vahlne (1977) and to Barney (1991). The co-citation network of Kogut and Zander (1993) comprises mostly intellectual ties to works

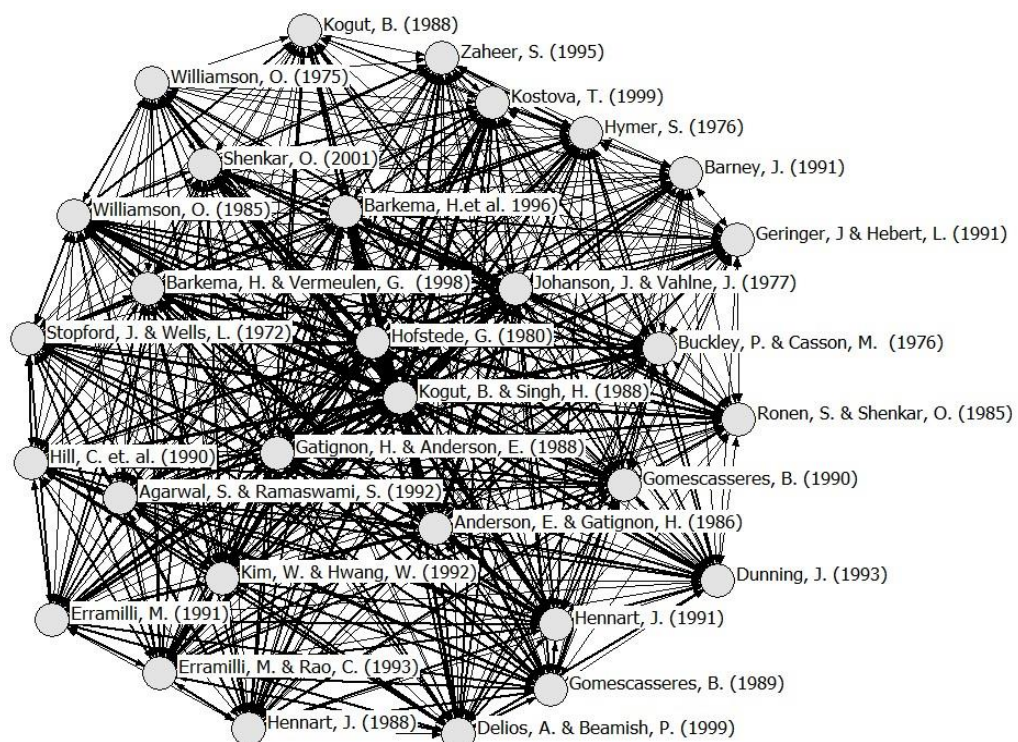


Figure 3. Co-citations network for Kogut & Singh (1988)

Source: Data collected from *ISI Web of Knowledge*. Network drawn using *Ucinet*

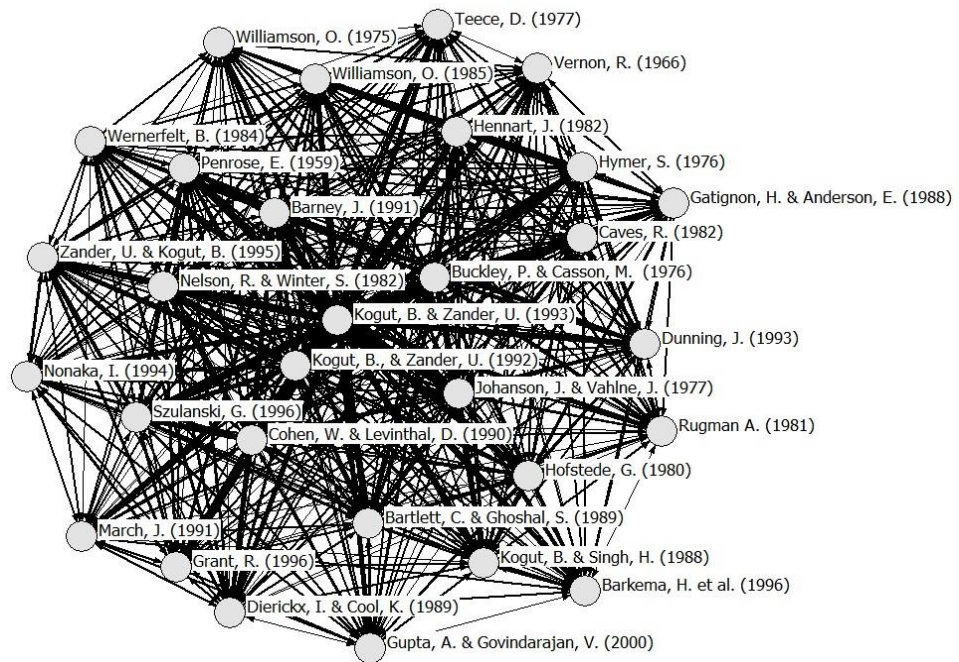


Figure 4. Co-citations network for Kogut & Zander (1993)

Source: Data collected from *ISI Web of Knowledge*. Network drawn using *Ucinet*

employing a resource-, learning-, knowledge-based view (WERNERFELT, 1984; BARNEY, 1991; GRANT, 1996) of the multinational. Some of these works discuss the hazards involved on knowledge transfer within and across boundaries (NONAKA, 1994; SZULANSKI, 1996), and the multinationals' advantage in learning (COHEN; LEVINTHAL, 1990; NELSON; WINTER, 1982). In the more peripheral ring on the top and left we observe a concentration of transaction costs-based works. Kogut and Zander's

contrast to the explanations based on the market imperfections and transaction costs is thus also visible on the network (WILLIAMSON, 1975, 1985; RUGMAN, 1981; HENNART, 1982). Kogut and Zander's work has marked research on learning in multinationals.

Dunning (1988) was cited by 128 papers in our sample. Figure 5 depicts the co-citation network revealing that the ties are stronger to Johanson and Vahlne (1977), Kogut and Singh (1988) and Buckley

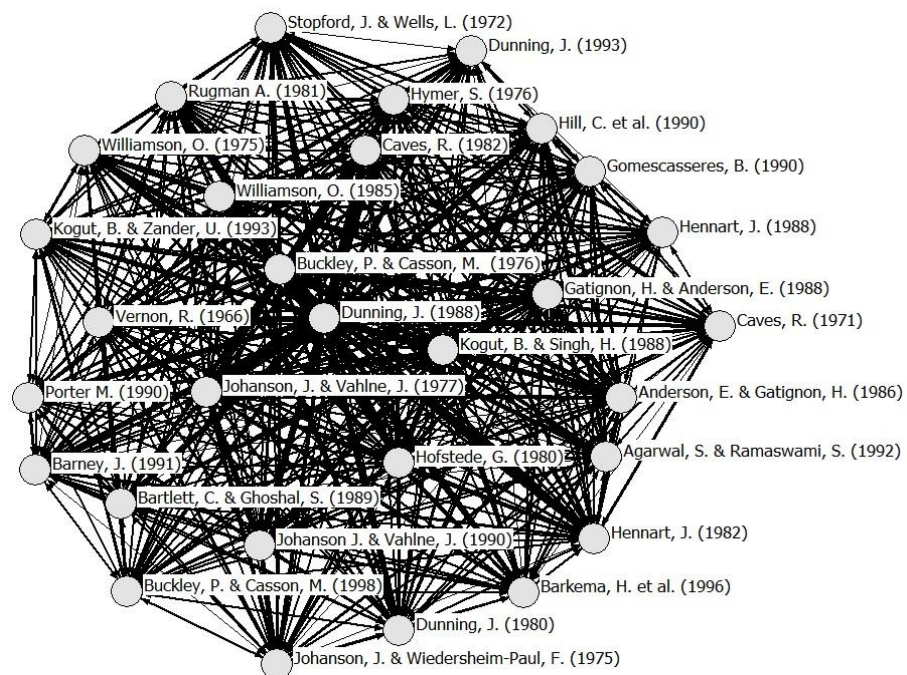


Figure 5. Co-citations network for Dunning (1988)

Source: Data collected from *ISI Web of Knowledge*. Network drawn using *Ucinet*

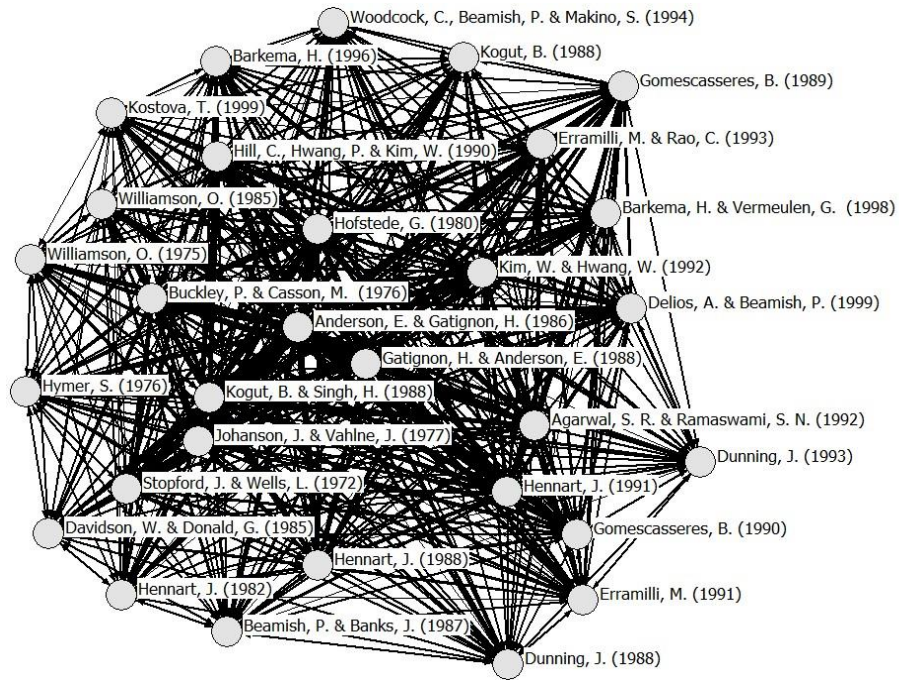


Figure 6. Co-citations network for Anderson & Gatignon (1986)
Source: Data collected from *ISI Web of Knowledge*. Network drawn using *Ucinet*

and Casson (1976). However, this networks is rather eclectic – showing Dunning’s work has a broader theoretical influence - and comprises ties to several of the seminal works in IB (e.g., VERNON, 1966; HYMER, 1976; HOFSTED, 1980; CAVES, 1982; RUGMAN, 1981; HENNART, 1982). At the periphery we identify works using a transaction costs perspective such as Hennart (1982, 1988), Anderson and Gatignon (1986), Rugman (1981) and Williamson (1975, 1985), among others. Then we

may associate it with internationalization considering the transaction costs influence on firms’ decisions.

Anderson and Gatignon’s (1986) work had 154 citations in the sample. The co-citation network in Figure 6 shows at the center the stronger co-citation ties to Gatignon and Anderson (1988), Buckley and Casson (1976) and Kogut and Singh (1988). This network largely comprises works on the transaction costs in entry modes, both in the choice among

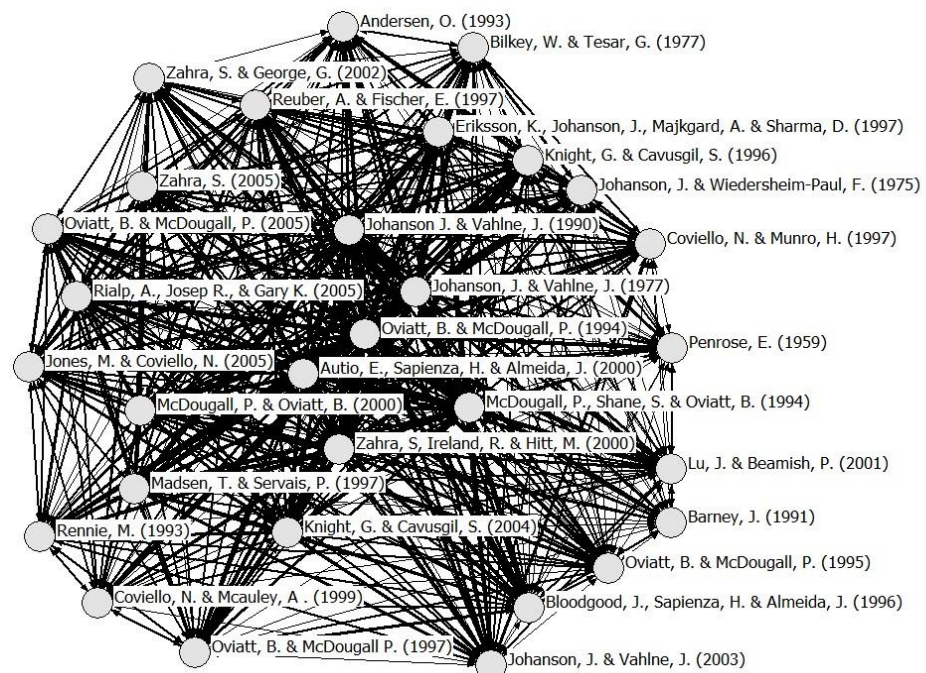


Figure 7. Co-citations network for Oviatt & McDougall (1994)
Source: Data collected from *ISI Web of Knowledge*. Network drawn using *Ucinet*

entry modes and in the rationale presiding to the choice of a specific mode. The network is less diverse than the prior showing lesser ties to other research themes. Anderson and Gatignon's work is a premier on TCT in IB studies.

Finally, Oviatt and McDougall's (1994) work is the sixth most cited article with 96 citations. Overall, these 96 articles used 7,739 references. The co-citation network in Figure 7 shows a stronger tie to Johanson and Vahlne (1977, 1990), Autio *et al.* (2000), McDougall, Shane and Oviatt (1994). The composition of this network differs markedly from the other co-citation networks, including several papers pertaining to entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, we observe some ties to the RBV (e.g., PENROSE, 1959; BARNEY, 1991) and the entry modes research (JOHANSON; VAHLNE, 1977, 1990). Oviatt and McDougall initiate more pronouncedly the still rather inexpressive line of research on the internationalization of small and medium enterprises, born globals and international entrepreneurship.

5. DISCUSSION

In this paper we set to identify and examine the most cited articles in IB research and observe their impact within the discipline and across theories. Specifically, we sought to understand the impact of the most cited IB articles by conducting a bibliometric study examining how they were cited. We then selected a sample of the papers published in twelve highly ranked management journals that publish IB research (PENG; ZHOU, 2006) that cited any of the six most cited articles in IB. These were articles published in the top journal for IB research. A sample of 1,278 papers published since 1983 sustained our analyses of citations and co-citations and also infer research themes and theories as a manner to capture the impact of these articles. It is also worth noting that this study complements Peng and Zhou's (2006) study of the most cited articles in global strategy, as none of these six most cited was in their listing.

While a broader study comprising ten or fifteen most cited articles, instead of six, could be interesting, we are constrained by the journals' space limitations, but it is further worth noting that the number of citations drops substantially as we move towards less cited. In addition, while the choice of JIBS to draw the six articles may be

criticized as limiting the scope, we need to state that our focus is not on the journal, but rather on the most cited articles in IB studies, and these were published in JIBS. Different journals have different notoriety (BALDI 1998), rendering that an article may have greater impact simply because it was published in one journal rather than another. Since JIBS is the premier journal for IB research it is not surprising that the most cited articles were published in JIBS. Nonetheless, this questioning is relevant given the common assumption that more cited articles are more influential. In fact, this assumption may read a bit differently: more influential articles (or more cited) bring novel insights and move the discipline forward. Moreover, it is worth noting that our sample, over which we conducted the analyses, was drawn from twelve journals.

Examining the impact of the most cited articles seems relevant since these are articles that also received an award (*JIBS decade award*) for their impact. We may consider an article's influence based on objective criteria such as the citation counts, or we could use other albeit more subjective criteria based on surveys to scholars (PENG; ZHOU, 2006) or other methods involved content analysis. Sternberg (1993) pointed out subjective dimensions to assess an article's influence: whether it contains a surprising result given the theory, the results have practical or conceptual impact, entails novel ideas for studying an old problem or contradicts prior existing knowledge. All these metrics are interesting but difficult to assess objectively and probably prone to criticisms. Thus, an advantage of using citation data is that it permits an accurate measure of impact that is based on the use by peers. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that citation frequencies may not be the best measurement for quality even if they assess impact (PENG; ZHOU, 2006).

The results of our study show that citations to these six articles are still increasing (see Figure 1), most notably to Johanson and Vahlne (1977) and Kogut and Singh (1988). They also show (Table 2) that IB research has extended beyond its disciplinary boundaries as we find a large number of citations in non IB-specific journals. For instance, we identified 1,097 citations to Johanson and Vahlne (1977) in ISI web of knowledge, for which 330 (just under a 1\3 of the total) are accounted for in the twelve journals sampled. This means that other scholars in other

disciplines have also cited. In fact, except for Anderson and Gatignon (1986) all other articles had over two thirds of the citations in other journals. This is an interesting indicator of reach of these articles and is evidence that IB as a discipline does not simply rely on absorbing contributions from other fields but also contributes to those fields.

Another result worth pointing is the large number of citations to Johanson and Vahlne (1977), followed by Kogut and Singh (1988). All other papers were substantially less cited and the date of publication does not account for the citation differences (there is a tendency for older papers to have higher citation counts). In fact, one of the drawbacks of counting citations is time dependence whereby older papers tend to be more cited than recent papers (MACRAE, 1969). However, Oviatt and McDougall's paper was published only one year after Kogut and Zander's but had 60% of the citations, and just a bit less than Dunning's (1988) paper, published 6 year before. Hence, date of publication does not suffice in explaining citation differences which leaves us with a truer measure of actual impact.

5.1. What was the contribution of these most cited articles?

Examining Sternberg's (1993) criteria for what makes an article influential, all six most cited articles presented novel perspectives at the time they were published and to at least some extent they launched novel perspectives that would unveil new streams of research. Albeit these works are well-known by IB scholars, it is worth briefly explaining the basis of their contribution. Johanson and Vahlne (1977) introduced firms' internationalization as a gradual process of incremental commitment and dealt with concepts such as psychic distance and the sequencing of markets firms were likely to select. Kogut and Singh (1988) conceptualized the widely used measure of cultural distance. Kogut and Zander (1993) was a marker on the transition that was taking place in the literature from the more traditional transaction costs and internalization approaches to a more resource-, capabilities- and knowledge-based explanation. It is the knowledge held and the relative efficiency of internal transfer within the multinational that explains the boundaries of the multinationals.

Dunning (1988) extended upon the Eclectic Paradigm (DUNNING, 1980, 1993), whereby firms' foreign investment decisions ought to be based on the analysis of ownership (O), location (L) and internalization (I) advantages. This framework was put forward in 1976, in the Nobel symposium, in Stockholm, Sweden. Anderson and Gatignon (1986) examined how a transaction costs analysis impacted foreign entry mode decisions. Actually, they examined a set of choices regarding control, costs, risk and efficiency as determinants of the entry mode choice. The transaction costs theory has been the theoretical foundation most often used in IB studies, albeit during the past two decades the resource-based and its progenies – knowledge and capabilities perspectives – explanations have emerged to capture scholars' attention.

Finally, Oviatt and McDougall's (1994) work, the least cited of the six, was somewhat pioneering in advancing a theoretical basis for the study of international new ventures. These were firms that "from inception, [seek] to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and the sale of outputs in multiple countries" (p. 49). The IB research has not spurred substantially in this stream but some studies have delved on born globals (MADSEN; SERVAIS, 1997), and on how thinking of smaller firms (in contrast to the traditional IB focus on large multinationals) may challenge received wisdom on the internationalization process (OVIATT; MCDUGALL, 1997).

The intellectual ties of the most cited articles were depicted in the co-citation networks (Figures 2 to 7). The co-citation networks for each of the six articles denote significant differences, which might have been expected since the articles deal with different issues. The larger differences were found in the co-citation networks of Oviatt and McDougall and that of Anderson and Gatignon. Oviatt and McDougall's network comprises mostly ties to entrepreneurship, the Resource-based view (e.g., PENROSE, 1959; BARNEY, 1991), and the internationalization process of firms (e.g., JOHANSON; VAHLNE, 1977, 1990), while most other perspectives are absent. Anderson and Gatignon's (1986) co-citation network is also very homogeneous, with intellectual ties to the transaction costs theory in IB research (e.g., WILLIAMSON, 1975, 1985; HENNART, 1988, 1991; AGARWAL; RAMASWAMI, 1992) and the potential

hazards of doing business abroad (HYMER, 1976). Both these works have less prominent ties to other topics such as diversification and performance of international operations (WOODCOCK *et al.*, 1994; DELIOS & BEAMISH, 1999), the internationalization process (JOHANSON; VAHLNE, 1977) and the impact on firms' choices of differences and distances across countries (KOGUT; SINGH, 1988; ERRAMILLI, 1991).

The other works are similar, although not identical, in their co-citation networks. The similarity among these networks is explained by how they are connected. The article by Johanson and Vahlne (1977) deals with internationalization and the psychic distance that influences the entry modes and markets selected, while Kogut and Singh's (1988) article deals with how countries differ in their cultural milieu, and how these differences must be considered selecting the entry modes to minimize risks. The third article, by Dunning (1988) explains the eclectic paradigm (Ownership-Location-Internalization) driving foreign entry through foreign investment. The intellectual ties of these three articles are more diverse as they bound to a variety of IB-related issues and conceptual underpinnings from the resource-based view (and its variants, capabilities- or knowledge-), learning, transaction costs approaches, hazards of foreignness, organizational challenges and choices, and the theory of the multinational. All these streams emerge on the networks, even if with varying weights.

5.2. Limitations and future research

This study has limitations. Our study cannot disentangle the article versus journal impact. Citations may also be biased towards top ranked journals and well known scholars. Future research may inquire how articles dealing with similar topics, published in different outlets, may be unequally cited and thus unequally influential, not necessarily due to their merits but rather by those of the journal in which they were published. That is, how much does the journal matter for an article's influence? On a broader perspective it is especially interesting to understand whether the research published on the top ranked journals actually has the strength to drive the research emphasis of the discipline. If the journals' reputation account for at least some citations, those articles that are published in top ranked journals are likely to have a greater number

of citations than articles published in second-tier journals. Moreover, possibly due to larger circulation, namely when the journals are associated to some scholarly association, increases the number of citations. Our study cannot disentangle any of these effects but future research may assess whether there is any journal effect. For instance, it is possible that some journals have greater circulation in some circles and hence localized impact.

Despite their usefulness and merits, bibliometric studies have shortcomings. First, bibliometric methods often treat metrics based on citation counts, counts of the number of publications, counts of co-citations and co-occurrences; they do not assess the qualities of academic work (HASSELBACK *et al.*, 2000). Indeed, citations as a measure of impact of a given work may also fall short since a citation is not necessarily an indicator of acceptance and it can be used to contrast or criticize (CROOM, 1970). Using citation counts in our analyses we were unable to uncover the motivation underlying the citations. However, that factor is also not objectively taken into account when prizing specific articles. To a large extent this is a limitation of citation analyses. To accurately assess influence we may need to examine the content of the citing articles. Further research may, for instance, conduct in-depth content analyses of the articles to examine the specific contributions of the six articles, and include characteristics of the citing articles to better grasp how these six articles are cited. In fact, such study could render a better idea on how and why citations are made and the actual contribution of the most cited to IB and other disciplines. Finally, we did not discount self-citations but it is highly unlikely that a specific article would climb to a most cited list through self-citations. Despite criticisms, we believe that a large number of citations to a specific article is a reasonable measure of scholarly influence.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Scientific knowledge evolves as scholars put forward novel ideas and insights and break the boundaries of what is already known to advance – often recombining existing knowledge – our understanding of a phenomena or theory. International business as a discipline with a now clearer domain has certainly evolved by absorbing theories from disciplines as diverse as economics and sociology but has also contributed to upgrade

these theories (PENG, 2001) and provide firms with frameworks and a rationale to improve the odds of success of their undertakings in an international setting. Knowledge is created and disseminated among the scientific community and to the practitioners, business persons and citizens. No contribution is minor in this quest but some contributions have a larger impact and have the ability to drive the research attention of a larger community for at least some time.

The six articles examined in this paper were awarded for their contribution to the field. Contribution was, at least to some extent, measured by the widespread citations made by other scholars. In their idiosyncrasies, these articles have imprinted the theoretical drive of the discipline raising novel perspectives, but they have also provided

practitioners with relevant insights that allow multinationals to perform better, to understand and prepare for the risks and differences entailed in international operations. In essence these works have raised wider attention to such aspects as thinking internationalization as an evolutionary process, the impact of culture, the potential for learning abroad and looking at internationalization beyond an exploitation strategy, hazards involved in foreign operations and how may firms organize internally, firm- and location-specific advantages for undertaking foreign investment. All these aspects have marked future research and in that regard they were truly relevant in opening up new avenues for scholarly inquiry while calling attention of multinationals' managers.

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O impacto acadêmico dos artigos mais citados e premiados em Negócios Internacionais

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RESUMO

O conhecimento e evolução de uma disciplina são sustentados em múltiplas contribuições de acadêmicos por meio da sua pesquisa, mas alguns trabalhos têm maior impacto na área. Neste artigo examinamos os artigos mais citados na pesquisa em Negócios Internacionais. Metodologicamente, identificamos os seis artigos mais citados publicados no principal periódico para os estudos em Negócios internacionais – o Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS). Estes são artigos agraciados com a premiação ‘JIBS decade award’. Este prêmio simboliza o seu contributo para a área. Aferimos o impacto dos seis artigos de topo medindo citações numa amostra coletada de outros doze periódicos de Administração. Os procedimentos de análise incidem em contagem de citações e redes de cocitações de cada um dos seis artigos premiados para observar quão difundida é a sua influência para domínios fora das fronteiras imediatas dos temas pesquisados nos artigos..

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