Research Article

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

International Journal of Engineering Business Management
Volume 10: 1–9

DOI: 10.1177/18479790177514 84
journals.sagepub.com/home/enb
SAGE

The most influential countries in market orientation: A bibliometric analysis between 1990 and 2016

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the most productive and influential countries engaging in market orientation (MO) research between 1990 and 2016. This article shows the general trajectories of these countries, the relationships among them, and their research in the area of MO by analyzing results on citations and publications. The article uses applied bibliometric techniques on available information found in the Web of Science. The results show that the 10 leading countries produce more than 70% of total publications, where the United States leads in all indicators, followed by the United Kingdom and China. Furthermore, although there has been a steady increase in overall number of publications, this trend is not shared evenly among different nations.

Keywords

Market orientation, bibliometric indicators, Web of Science, leading countries

Date received: 29 August 2017; accepted: 29 November 2017

Introduction

The evolution of organizational approaches shows that there has been a slow but steady increase in the importance of marketing orientation (MO).[1] This trend becomes apparent when we look at the transition from a focus on the internal processes, with marketing being just another department to a greater focus on clients and competition, thus involving the whole organization. Furthermore, studies have established a positive relationship between the MO and marketing intensity,[2] which partially addresses important rising aspects in current business practices.[3]

Although no commonly accepted definition of MO[4–6] has emerged[7–9] from various studies on the subject,[10–12] the most prominent and cited research comes from Narver and Slater[13] and Kohli and Jaworki.[14]

Narver and Slater[13] define MO as an organizational culture that is more effective and efficient in promoting the behaviour required to create greater customer value, which in turn implies a superior outcome for the organization. This definition is similar to the one suggested by Narver et al.[15] who argue that the fundamental value of MO is the commitment from all the members of an organization to the continuous process of creating superior value for clients. On the other hand, Kohli and Jaworki[14] find that the fundamental value is instead the ability of an organization to generate information regarding the needs of all its current and future clients. By disseminating this information

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through all its departments, an organization is able to generate proper responses to various scenarios.

The field of MO has two main approaches: cultural and behavioural.[16–18] Although Van Raaij[19] suggests a combination of both approaches, it is important to bear in mind that there is an additional perspective on the subject: philosophical.[20]

In addition, the main philosophy behind MO focuses mainly on business performance based on three main constructs: client orientation, competitive orientation and inter-functional coordination (the latter is directly related to the firm's profitability[13]). However, another MO approach centres instead on three main areas: generation of information and intelligence, dissemination of information and intelligence and timely response.[14]

There is a rising concern regarding current investigations that promote scientific knowledge in MO, given that the underlying organizational philosophy in MO would constitute too much of an important paradigm shift for these organizations. Some authors, therefore, consider organizational ambidexterity – defined as an organization's ability to align and manage current business demands while adapting to environmental changes – as a viable alternative; this kind of progressive approach has seen a growth in interest in recent years.[21] However, given that another stream of research instead favours corporate social performance,[22] we can see how the importance of MO theory has generated a vast array of approaches, significantly broadening our knowledge in the field.

Industries that have successfully implemented MO have thus created a culture where members of an organization believe that the client is the centre of business, which consequently has inspired them to be actively engaged in satisfying the client's every need, generating value and prioritizing them in the company's philosophy.

Furthermore, incorporating this paradigm shift into their business strategy, companies can increase their profitability because, from the point of view of the salesperson, there are a large number of alternatives available for creating added value for the client by either raising benefits and/or minimizing costs.[13]

Regardless of the above, there is scarce use of quantitative methods to explore research on MO.[23,24] In general, the analysis of the progress in the field at the international level has been based on the current literature,[25–28] which is compatible with current bibliometric research.

This state of affairs is concerning to us since productivity and scientific visibility are key to measuring research excellence.[29] Moreover, a further study of countries could improve the conceptual understanding of the philosophy of MO.[30] In fact, reviewing the published articles of various nations provides clear evidence on the evolving process in the field, which allows us to identify the emerging issues in theory and practice, thereby shedding light on the development of knowledge in the field of MO.[31,32]

In the following study, we will analyze the development and productivity of scientific knowledge on MO as produced by different countries, focusing not on which marketing techniques or activities are used but on the continuous generation of value to clients to secure long-term survivability,[33] thus proving the evolution of marketing.

Taking the aforementioned into account, the purpose of this article is to analyze the most productive and influential countries that have engaged in research on MO between 1990 and 2016. This study seeks to help researchers produce trustworthy information so that they can judge the reliability of their results and their global impact. In this context, it is important to highlight the tremendous opportunity for parties involved in the editorial/publishing trade and related fields, as they can serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for other groups.

To achieve its objectives, this study analyses the development and contributions of countries engaging in MO research in a 25-year period (1990–2016) using the database of Web of Science (WoS) and corresponding indicators such as total number of publications (TPs), total number of citations (TCs) and the quality and prestige measuring h-index.

This article begins with a comprehensive literature review, followed by a description of the research methodology. Afterwards, there will be a general examination outlining each country's situation, which in turn will be evaluated through a quinquennial analysis throughout the study's time frame and finally a dissertation about conclusions and results of the study.

Literature review

Although the core concepts of MO were developed in the 1990s through the commissioned works by the Marketing Science Institute, it was Kohli and Jaworski[14] and Narver and Slater[13,34] who established the conceptual framework behind MO and highlighted its suitability to business and marketing philosophy.[35,36]

The concept of MO proposes an outwards looking perspective, where the true importance of organizations lies in creating value for its clients. Thus, Nerver and Slater recommend focusing on organizational culture based on three main constructs: client orientation, competitive orientation and inter-functional coordination.[34] On the other hand, Kohli and Jaworski define MO based on generation of information and intelligence, dissemination of information and intelligence throughout the organization and timely response.[14]

These different approaches can – and should – be considered as interrelated perspectives.[37] Thus, strategic orientation will shape the company's philosophy on how to handle and perform business through a set of deeply ingrained values and beliefs that guide the company's attempt to achieve a higher level of performance.[38] These

values and beliefs determine the resources that should be employed, going beyond individual capabilities and unifying resources and aptitudes in a cohesive manner.[4] It is crucial to highlight that the aforementioned capabilities are intangible and are based on interaction and knowledge.[4,39]

Furthermore, the effects of MO can be divided into four categories: market, clients, employees and innovative capability. As a result, the strategic marketing literature asserts that MO produces an improvement in market detection capabilities and client bonding, thereby increasing organizational performance as a whole.[4,40]

This also affects employees because improving bonding among co-workers/employees helps MO create a committed organization (defined as the willingness of individuals to sacrifice for the organization), team spirit, motivation to satisfy clients' needs and workplace satisfaction.[14] Furthermore, MO can reduce role conflict, that is, the incompatibility of expectations that affects employees' performance.[14]

Finally, it is crucial to consider other effects of MO on an organization's innovation capacity[40] and innovative marketing processes.[41] In particular, MO promotes innovation by creating a proactive attitude to satisfy clients' needs by dissemination of information across departments.[42]

Bibliometric research in MO

Research on a country's contribution to marketing studies has been carried out using bibliometric research,[43] which is defined by objectives to study, tally, classify and evaluate the production and consumption of scientific information.[44,45]

Bibliometric research can also measure the productivity and influence of scientific investigation by analysing indicators that show statistical data.[46] Among the most widely used indicators in this article are the number of publications,[47] the number of citations[48] and the impact factor.[49]

The general evolution of marketing and MO is linked to global changes in the field's scientific development. Until recently, this has been strongly encouraged by marketing-oriented scientific journals since the lack of a centralized research sharing space at the international level has constrained growth in the field.[27] Thus, its impact has been reflected in the excessive advancement of the sciences as a whole.[50]

As a direct consequence, we can see the development of knowledge regarding the efficient practices in marketing[51]; this trend must continue, and as nations keep contributing in the scientific development of this area, the benefits will be of great value.[52]

In this context, it is important to mention the main journals that publish relevant (and vital) research on the quantitative analysis of MO, such as *Journal of Marketing*, *MIS Quarterly*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Information Systems Research*, *Journal of Retailing*, *Management Science*, *International Journal of Technology Management*, *Harvard Business Review* and *Organization Science*.

Methodology

This study uses bibliometric analysis on data obtained from the WoS for the years 1990–2016. This database is a subgroup of the Web of Knowledge, a system owned by Thomson and Reuters (currently Clarivate Analytics). WoS has more than 15,000 journals and 50,000,000 newspapers/news classified in 251 categories and 151 areas of investigation/research. Note that in the literature, there are many other approaches for representing academic research, which are strongly connected to scientometrics and informetrics.[53] It is worth mentioning, among other things, the VOS viewer software, which is very useful for developing a graphic analysis of the bibliographic material.[54–56] WoS is commonly regarded as the most influential database for classifying academic research. It indexes journals recognized to be of the highest quality. Analysing the bibliographic information using this database is therefore fairly representative. There are other databases that we could have used such as Scopus and Google Scholar. Scopus follows a similar methodology to that of WoS, and therefore, it would have been appropriate. However, this study has to select one database and we decided to use WoS.

To generate the paper's database,[57,58] data were extracted from the WoS on 1 October 2017, using the following documents: articles, reviews and notes. A search through the system with the prementioned filters up until 2017 yielded 2653 relevant publications. Nonetheless, minor complications arose by the use of specific keywords. For example, when entering 'MO', the database would show a large number of documents unrelated to the subject of interest. Thus, to focus our search, the following keywords (relevant to MO) were used: MO, customer orientation, competitor orientation, inter-functional coordination, intelligence generation and intelligence dissemination. In addition, to increase the accuracy of the search, the study classified the research area as 'Business Economics'.

Once the corresponding information per country was obtained, the next step was to classify countries according to the TPs, which serves as a proxy of the country's productivity, and the TCs, which serves as an input that highlights the influence of the article/document. Additionally, we used Hirsch's[59] H-index to measure a publication's quality through the number of times it was published and cited.[60] We consider several bibliometric indicators to give a general picture of the variables, thereby allowing each reader to obtain a different perspective depending on his particular interests. The main advantage of this approach is

Table 1. Ranking of the 37 sample countries based on the H-index indicator (1990–2016).[a]

R	Country	H	TP	TC	TC/TP	>200	>100	>50
1	USA	120	958	66,256	69.16	64	150	268
2	UK[b]	49	367	10,628	28.96	4	23	49
3	Australia	45	200	7382	36.91	5	17	42
4	China[c]	44	241	8091	33.57	8	17	39
5	The Netherlands	38	131	6183	47.20	6	12	28
6	Spain	37	217	4255	19.61	1	9	21
7	Germany	37	163	5510	33.80	5	14	26
8	Canada	35	112	3920	35.00	3	10	25
9	Taiwan	28	192	2626	13.68	0	2	7
10	Denmark	23	53	2207	41.64	4	7	10
11	Sweden	22	74	2324	31.41	2	5	13
12	Finland	20	95	1460	15.37	0	1	9
13	Switzerland	19	44	1596	36.27	1	2	7
14	Belgium	19	32	1428	44.63	1	3	10
15	South Korea	18	70	1201	17.16	1	2	8
16	Turkey	17	58	860	14.83	0	1	5
17	Italy	17	38	886	23.32	0	2	5
18	New Zealand	16	34	623	18.32	0	0	3
19	France	15	43	851	19.79	1	1	3
20	Greece	15	42	673	16.02	0	0	2
21	Norway	15	36	1337	37.14	1	5	9
22	Austria	13	26	499	19.19	0	1	2
23	Portugal	13	24	962	40.08	1	2	7
24	India	12	41	448	10.93	0	1	1
25	Ireland	12	18	751	41.72	1	2	4
26	Israel	9	22	503	22.86	0	1	3
27	Singapore	8	24	478	19.92	0	1	3
28	Slovenia	8	24	407	16.96	0	1	3
29	Brazil	7	21	111	5.29	0	0	0
30	United Arab Emirates	6	19	187	9.84	0	0	1
31	Japan	6	17	222	13.06	0	0	2
32	Malaysia	5	25	166	6.64	0	0	1
33	Thailand	5	15	138	9.20	0	0	1
34	South Africa	5	13	77	5.92	0	0	0
35	Russia	5	11	85	7.73	0	0	0
36	Liechtenstein	5	8	93	11.63	0	0	0
37	Mexico	5	8	53	6.63	0	0	0
38	Cyprus	5	6	169	28.17	0	0	1
39	Poland	4	13	342	26.31	1	1	2
40	Chile	4	8	197	24.63	0	0	2
41	Hungary	4	6	232	38.67	0	0	2
42	Colombia	4	6	175	29.17	0	1	1
43	Lithuania	4	5	34	6.80	0	0	0
44	Pakistan	3	13	57	4.38	0	0	0
45	Vietnam	3	7	229	32.71	1	1	1
46	Croatia	3	7	195	27.86	0	0	2
47	Philippines	3	3	31	10.33	0	0	0
48	Czech Republic	2	10	15	1.50	0	0	0
49	Nigeria	2	9	10	1.11	0	0	0
50	Iran	2	8	17	2.13	0	0	0

Source: Elaborated from the WoS database.
[a]R: ranking; >500, >250, >100, >50, the number of papers with more than 500, 250, 100, 50 citations. WoS: Web of Science; TC: total number of citation; TP: total number of publication.
[b]UK: England, Scotland, Wales, North Ireland.
[c]China: Hong Kong, People's Republic of China.

Table 2. Summary of the publications of the selected countries during the years 1990–2016.

TC	Number of publications based on their TC values	Percentage of publications based on the total
>200	111	10.7
>100	295	28.5
>50	628	60.7
Total	1034	100

Source: Elaborated from the WoS database.
WoS: Web of Science; TC: total number of citation.

that it gives a quick overview of the leading trends in the literature.

Results

The results of the study present and analyse the scientific contributions of the 50 sample countries, showing the evolution of publications in the last 27 years. Every one of the sample countries was analysed individually, followed by a quinquennial analysis in accordance with the previously mentioned indicators (presented in the following data tables).

Country results at the general level (1990–2016)

Given that countries are understood to be promoters of knowledge, the 50 sample countries were ranked based on their TP levels (in descending order). The other previously mentioned variables are also presented in the corresponding tables.

Table 1 demonstrates that the TP indexes of the first 10 ranked countries hold more than 70% (72.8%) of the total publications on MO. This clearly shows the inequality among countries as 24% of the ranked nations have an H-index value greater than 20, reflecting the development, quality and prestige of their respective contributions to knowledge in this particular area.

It is important to note that the United States leads in all the indicators in the field of marketing among the selected sample countries, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, China and the Netherlands, according to the H-index.

Moreover, there is clear evidence of the meagre presence of Latin American countries in the rankings, where only Brazil (an H value of seven) and Chile and Colombia (both with an H value of four) are present. This exposes a huge difference (and distance) between the developed and Latin American countries, which stems from the fact that the latter countries only began research in marketing at the beginning of the 21st century, that is, 30 years after the research in this field had begun in developed countries.[12]

Resuming our analysis in Table 2, the TC indicator – which shows a paper's number of citations. Papers are to be evaluated if they have received 200, 100 and/or 50 citations.

Table 3. Quinquennial analysis, 1990–2016 period.

	1990–1994				1995–1999				2000–2004				2005–2009				2010–2016			
R	Country	H	TP	TC	Country	H	TP	TC	Country	H	TP	TC	Country	H	TP	TC	Country	TH	TP	TC
1	USA	19	22	13,658	USA	39	67	11,744	USA	71	149	17,582	USA	71	224	14,869	USA	46	496	8403
2	UK	2	2	151	UK	18	25	987	UK	24	40	2578	UK	34	83	4098	UK	29	217	2814
3	Australia	1	1	177	China	6	6	1634	Australia	20	27	2361	Australia	31	49	3011	Australia	26	117	1707
4	Canada	1	1	53	The Netherlands	5	6	556	The Netherlands	19	26	2841	China	29	51	3431	China	24	167	1973
5	Switzerland	1	1	39	Australia	5	6	126	China	14	16	1048	Spain	22	45	1497	Spain	24	165	2258
6	China	1	1	5	Canada	5	5	380	Germany	13	16	1582	Canada	21	34	1915	Germany	24	121	1958
7	Ireland	1	1	5	Germany	4	5	77	Canada	11	12	848	Taiwan	17	33	992	The Netherlands	23	79	1477
8					Italy	3	3	27	Denmark	10	13	802	Germany	17	21	1893	Taiwan	22	157	1583
9					Ireland	2	2	245	Sweden	7	7	560	South Korea	15	17	735	Sweden	17	54	838
10					South Korea	2	2	95	Spain	7	7	500	The Netherlands	14	20	1309	Finland	16	75	791
11					New Zealand	2	2	46	Finland	6	8	202	Denmark	12	12	908	Canada	15	60	724
12					South Africa	2	2	28	Norway	5	6	741	France	12	12	589	Switzerland	15	34	759
13					Hungary	1	2	29	India	5	5	185	Turkey	10	15	555	Italy	14	28	654
14					Belgium	1	1	117	Belgium	3	3	461	Sweden	10	13	926	Greece	12	29	372
15					France	1	1	39	Ireland	3	3	183	Finland	9	11	467	Denmark	12	28	497
16					Israel	1	1	36	Singapore	3	3	53	Greece	9	11	286	Belgium	12	20	579
17					Taiwan	1	1	28	Hungary	2	2	174	Belgium	7	8	271	Austria	11	18	193
18					Norway	1	1	25	Slovenia	2	2	174	Italy	7	7	205	India	10	33	217
19					Malta	1	1	21	New Zealand	2	2	83	Switzerland	6	7	777	South Korea	9	50	345
20					Austria	1	1	16	France	2	2	31	Portugal	6	6	426	Turkey	9	42	274
21					Greece	1	1	9	Austria	2	2	19	Singapore	5	6	298	New Zealand	9	26	398
22					Switzerland	1	1	7	Israel	1	1	101	Norway	5	6	226	France	8	28	192
23					Singapore	1	1	5	Poland	1	1	88	Austria	5	5	271	Norway	8	23	345
24					India	1	1	3	Croatia	1	1	72	Slovenia	4	4	168	Portugal	8	17	524
25					Czech Republic	0	1	0	Turkey	1	1	31	Japan	4	4	163	Israel	8	16	128
26					Finland	0	1	0	Malaysia	1	1	26	New Zealand	4	4	97	Ireland	7	10	160
27									South Korea	1	1	26	Israel	3	4	238	Singapore	6	14	122
28									Taiwan	1	1	23	United Arab Emirates	3	3	123	Malaysia	5	24	140
29									Philippines	1	1	16	Thailand	3	3	102	Brazil	5	19	66
30									Mexico	1	1	14	Poland	2	2	243	Slovenia	5	18	65

Source: Elaborated from the WoS database.

R: ranking; WoS: Web of Science; TC: total number of citation; TP: total number of publication.

Table 4. Progress of TPs and TCs in each quinquennial.

Q	Year	Total TP	% Growth TP	Total TC	% Growth TC
1	1990–1994	29		14,088	
2	1995–1999	146	403	16,280	16
3	2000–2004	360	147	33,405	105
4	2005–2009	720	100	41,089	23
5	2010–2016	2185	203	30,556	−26
	Total	3440		135,418	

Source: Elaborated from the WoS database.
Q: quinquennial; WoS: Web of Science; TC: total number of citation; TP: total number of publication.

We can perceive that the majority of the published documents produced by the selected countries have received 50 or fewer citations. This is interesting given that out of 1034 documents, only 111 (10.7%) have received more than 200 citations, whereas 628 papers (60.7%) have received 50 or fewer citations.

Temporary quinquennial analysis on research performed by countries

A quinquennial analysis conducted from 1990 to 2016 was designed to evaluate the evolution of the selected countries with respect to their contributions to the study and research of MO.

In this section, the study employs Table 3, which shows results for 5-year periods over the sample period, except for the final period, which is 7 years. Each table shows the countries that published MO-related documents, ranked from highest to lowest by their respective TP indicators. The TC, H-index and TC/TP values are shown for reference.

At a general level, there is clear evidence of a substantial increase in the number of countries that do research on MO. This can be seen from the fact that in the first quinquennial (1990–1994), only seven countries engaged in research on MO, yet within 10 years, this number almost quadrupled (30 countries).

The tables further show that throughout the years, the United States has maintained its first place ranking in number of publications in each period (which is related to the previously mentioned result in the general analysis). Over the sample period, the United Kingdom has maintained its second-place ranking, with slight variations in the rankings of Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and China; the latter proving Asian countries' increasing contribution to marketing research. However, note that in absolute terms, the number of publications of the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia has decreased in the last period (2010–2016). Since MO is a very specific topic, the reason may have to do with the fact that a couple leading authors have diverted their attention to other fields.

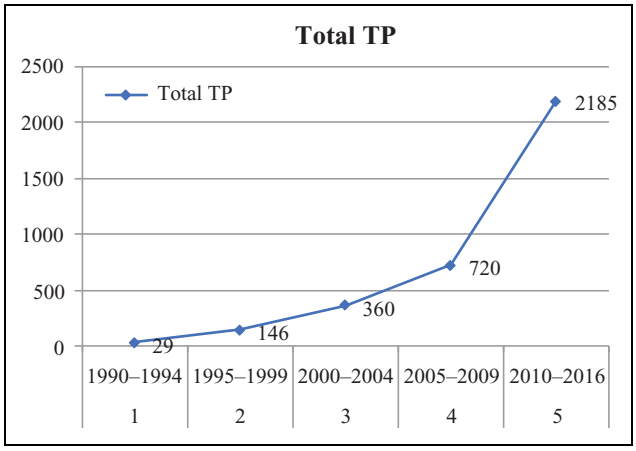

Figure 1. Evolution of total number of publications in each quinquennial. Source: Elaborated from the WoS database. WoS: Web of Science.

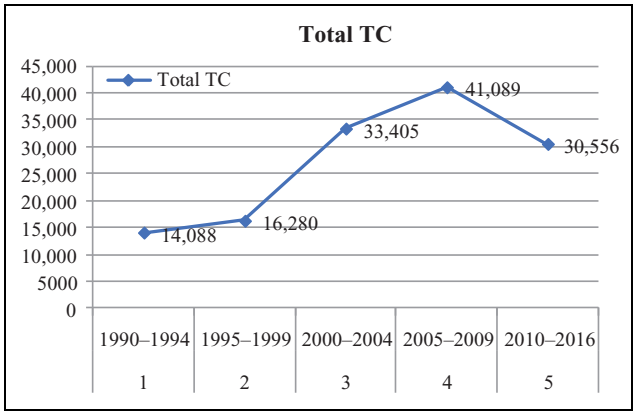

Figure 2. Progress of total number of citations in each quinquennial. Source: Elaborated from the WoS database. WoS: Web of Science.

Furthermore, the tables demonstrate that Australia has maintained its top 10 ranking while holding the highest TP value in the years 1990–2016. Interestingly, the Netherlands followed a similar behaviour to Australia according to the TP indicator.

Another interesting aspect of the data is the evolution of the TP and TC indicators in the different countries, where a substantial increase of approximately 400% (403%) in TP occurred during the second quinquennial, whereas the growth of the TC indicator has been decreasing at the start of the fourth quinquennial (reaching values of −26% between 2010 and 2016).

In Table 4 together with Figure 1 and Figure 2, can be better seen in a graphic representation of the TP indicator progress, which shows the constant increase in published publications during the study's time frame.

On the other hand, progress of the TC indicator doesn't follow the same pattern of growth. As seen, from the fourth quinquennial onwards, the number drops dramatically.

Conclusions

The objective of this study is to show the trajectory of the development and respective contributions of countries in the field of MO during the years 1990–2016. Using a bibliometric analysis on information from the WoS database, a general quinquennial ranking was performed taking into account the indicators for H-index, TP, TC and TP/TC.

The results show that 24% of the countries possess an H-index value greater than 20 and that the first 10 ranked nations possess 72.8% of the total publications (TP). This reflects a very unequal situation between nations (in terms of development and progress), where the United States leads on all indicators, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, China, and the Netherlands in the H-index and TC indicators.

Regarding the TC indicator, the majority of publications in the sample countries receive 50 or fewer citations, which represents 60.7% of the studied countries. Furthermore, the growth rate of this indicator at the start of the fourth quinquennial decreases considerably, reaching negative values of −26% in the years 2010–2016.

On the other hand, the quinquennial analysis shows a significant increase in the number of countries that engage in MO research, growing from 6 in the first quinquennial (1990–1994) to 30 in the third quinquennial (2000–2004).

Through this study, we aim to provide a better understanding of the evolution of interest in MO[29] by identifying tendencies at both the country and MO levels through applied bibliometric. Our results can help public officials, businessmen and entrepreneurs, professors and publishing groups by providing objective values regarding their publications in the area of MO, thus attracting professionals, researchers, donors and other relevant agents.[61] The work identifies the leading countries (regions) in which research in the MO field is carried out. Therefore, both PhD students and newcomers to the field can quickly identify the leading regions for doing research in MO or find a more specific place to visit and engage in such research. Policymakers may also quickly identify the leading countries doing academic research in this field. This could be very helpful in deciding where to develop new research projects related to this field.

In this sense, research on MO has contributed to a greater and better understanding of the philosophy underlying this field, thereby encouraging companies to incorporate MO-based insights into their strategic and organizational culture, while responding to the dynamic and ever-changing environment that surrounds them.

Applying insights from MO has also been established as an effective way for companies to achieve better performance and results. This translates into a greater return on investments, profits and social impact as the market-oriented firm understands that it can create additional consumer benefits through a sustainable competitive advantage.[34]

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the collaboration in this article of students Maria José Martinez and Valentina Soto, both from the Department of Business Administration, School of Economics and Business at the University of Chile. Support from Research fund awarded by the Research Department of the School of Economics and Business and the Chilean Government through the Fondecyt Regular program is gratefully acknowledged.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Research Department of the School of Economics and Business and the Chilean Government through the Fondecyt Regular program (project number 1160286).

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