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; RUZ-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; RUZ-NAVARRO, 2004; NERUR et al., 2008; SHAFAQI, 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; RUZ-NAVARRO, 2004; SHAFAQI, 2013). While bibliometric methods may be complemented with experts’ evaluations of the most salient papers and journals or of a discipline (RAMOS-RODRIGUEZ; RUZ-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 
involves 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 
time of times other papers have cited any 
pecific pair of publications (SMALL, 1973; 
GARFIELD, 1979). That is, a co-citation is the joint 
ocurrence 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; GUISINGER, 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 

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>N citations in ISI</th>
<th>N citations in the 12 journals</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johanson, J. &amp; Vahlne, J. (1977) Internalization process of firms: A model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments.</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>30,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oviatt, B. &amp; McDougall, P. (1994) Toward a theory of international new ventures.</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>25,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,702</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>34,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All six articles were published in JIBS
Source: Data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge.

Table 2
Journals’ ranking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years available in ISI</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Ranking classification</th>
<th>Impact factor</th>
<th>N. citations Total</th>
<th>N. publications Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983-2010</td>
<td>Academy of Management Review</td>
<td>A*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2010</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Jrl of Management</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2011</td>
<td>International Business Review</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-2010</td>
<td>Journal of World Business</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-2010</td>
<td>Organization Studies</td>
<td>A*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-2010</td>
<td>Strategic Management Journal</td>
<td>A*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.583</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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),
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.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Management Review (AMR)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia Pacific Journal of Management (APIM)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Business Review (IBR)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS)</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Management (JM)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Management Studies (JMS)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of World Business (JWB)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management International Review (MIR)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Science (OS)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Studies (OST)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Management Journal (SMJ)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>1,278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ computations based on data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge.
instance, OS was founded in 1992 and APIM was launched in 2008.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Citations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aulakh, P.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luo, Y.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beamish, P.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckley, P.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavusgil, S.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delios, A.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peng, M.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan, Y.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shenkar, O.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barkema, H.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birkinshaw, J.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose, E.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotabe, M.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zahra, S.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuervo-Cazurra, A.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kundu, S.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slangen, A.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makino, S.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liesch, P.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Computations by the authors based on data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge.
proximity among works from this data and understand to which streams of research they contribute more.

In an analysis not reproduced here (but available from the authors) we also examined the geographic impact of each of the six articles observing the nationalities of the citing authors. We identified an overwhelming concentration of US scholars (690 articles published) although with a diverse spectrum that includes the UK (218) and Canada (149), several European (Netherlands, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, France, Finland and so forth), and some Asian countries (China, Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, etc.). Other emerging economies are less represented.

Observing the nationalities of the citing authors may be particularly relevant since we often assume that knowledge flows freely across boundaries (ALMEIDA; KOGUT, 1999), national and disciplinary. We expect a rather fluid flow of that knowledge published in the top ranked journals. These are the journals that are better known by academia across the world and subscribed by most universities’ databases. Thus, we might argue that substantial differences on the citations patterns were not expected. Additionally, we may identify citation differences among countries thus revealing specific concerns. However, we did not identify significant differences accounted for by the country of origin of the citing author. Perhaps just a small difference pertaining to the Europeans that cite relatively more two works: Johanson and Vahline (1997) and Oviatt and McDougall (1994) and an interesting emphasis on the work of Kogut and Singh (1988) in countries such as France, Israel, South Korea perhaps denoting a particular interest in cultural dimensions of IB research. Nonetheless, the sociology of citations is not supportive of country of origin bias or other specific emphasis that scholars could develop due to some location idiosyncrasy. What is clear with this analysis is that all six most cited authors have an impact that cross national borders and hold international impact.

4.3. Co-citations mapping and research proximity

Co-citation metrics, as discussed previously, are a reasonable proxy for intellectual proximity, or similarity. We depicted visual co-citation network for each of the six articles (Figures 2 to 7). When reading these figures, notice that the software places at the center of the network the work we are considering and then the distance to the center is both function of the co-citations and the relative importance to all the other works in the network. For instance, figure 2, shows the co-citation network for the 330 papers citing Johanson and Vahline

![Figure 2. Co-citations network for Johanson & Vahline (1977)](image)

Source: Data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge. Network drawn using Ucinet
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(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 (HOFSTEDÉ, 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).

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 Vahline (1977), Kogut and Singh (1988) and Buckley...
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; HOFSTEDE, 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

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**Figure 6.** Co-citations network for Anderson & Gatignon (1986)

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

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**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 prescribing 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 os 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 notority (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 influent, 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; MCDOUGALL, 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 (WOODOCK 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 quality 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 pricing 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 by the widespread citations made by other scholars. Contributions have a larger impact and have the ability to drive the research attention of a larger community for at least some time.

7. REFERENCES


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O impacto acadêmico dos artigos mais citados e premiados em Negócios Internacionais
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Palavras-Chaves:
Estudo bibliométrico
Artigos mais citados
Impacto acadêmico
Influência intelectual
Redes de co-citações

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.