

Into oblivion: a closer look at the business, management and accounting research literature in Ibero-America



*Faced with institutional requirements to publish in top-tier, international journals, researchers from Ibero-American countries often express concern that their work is becoming distant from their local communities. The value of participating in international debates and being able to influence the direction of research globally is sometimes provided as justification for this. But does this withstand scrutiny? **Julián David Cortés-Sánchez** has analysed Ibero-American research on business, management and accounting to determine to what extent it is recognised by scholars from the global north and other international excellence indicators. The reality is that even the most-cited research from Ibero-American countries has struggled to make an impression internationally, and that just a few countries are overwhelmingly responsible for much of the output and impact.*

I recently moderated a symposium on business, management and accounting research organised by my institution, Universidad del Rosario, Colombia. Several speakers in, the same question was raised for the umpteenth time: “what’s the point of publishing in top-tier journals if we’re far from our local community, private sector, and state?” Is the answer to this question to participate in international debates and be able to influence the direction of research globally? If this is true, I figured, the business and management research published in top-tier journals by researchers from Colombia and other Ibero-American countries should be recognised by international research excellence indicators and have been cited by scholars from the global north, including powerhouses such as the Wharton School, London Business School or INSEAD.

So I did a little investigating, looking at two sources: the [Mapping Scientific Excellence](#) website (up to March 2018), and [a study](#) conducted by Philip Podsakoff *et al.* which aimed to identify the universities and researchers to have had the greatest impact on the field of management during the preceding 25 years, as well as the factors influencing that impact. In the former, just one Ibero-American business school appeared, the University of São Paulo. In the Podsakoff *et al.* study, among the 100 most-cited universities, just 15 were from outside the USA, with none from Ibero-America.

It seemed that Ibero-American research on business, management and accounting did not fulfil the criteria for inclusion in either of those analyses. Therefore, I asked what is the current state of the most-cited research on business, management and accounting in Ibero-America? And how does it compare with research from business schools/scholars from the global north?

Several bibliometric studies have been conducted on Ibero-American research on business, management and accounting, including those focused on specific topics (such as [accounting](#) or [corporate governance](#)), journals (e.g. [Revista de Administração de Empresas](#)), or countries (e.g. [Brazil](#)). My contribution to this discussion was to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the ten most-cited business, management and accounting documents in each of the [22 Ibero-American countries](#) from 1996 to 2017 (using Scopus data).

Besides the pure citation counting, I also considered a number of additional variables, including document type, whether it was open access, number of authors, year of publication, author gender, documents published by author, author and journal h-indices, [Field-Weighted Citation Impact](#), institutional affiliation, and institutional accreditation.

Among several findings, some were particularly notable:

1. Spain is the true powerhouse but is still far from matching business schools and scholars in the global north

The intellectual production across the whole of Ibero-America is growing, but Spain is the true powerhouse in terms of productivity and influence. Over the last 22 years, Spain has produced more documents than the 21 other Ibero-American countries combined. Spain also has the highest average number of citations and Field-Weighted Citation Impact score. The [most cited paper](#) (with more than 1,000 citations) was published in 2004 by [Elisabet Garriga](#), then of IESE. But despite authors from Spain being by far the most cited among the region, they barely make an impression globally. Compared to scholars such as [Kathleen Eisenhardt](#) (Stanford University), Garriga's total citations amount to just 5% of Eisenhardt's total. In fact, just to match Eisenhardt's total ($\approx 20,000$ citations) one would have to add up all citations to the 50 most-cited papers in Ibero-America.

2. The predominant type of publication is the article, although the majority of studies are paywalled

Those researchers, institutions, students, practitioners, or policymakers without the (abundant) resources required to access the most-cited papers are being excluded from intellectual discussions and denied opportunities to make potentially valuable contributions to decision-making in practice or policy.

3. One journal features particularly prominently

[Espacios](#) is the journal to have published the most Ibero-American business, management and accounting research. In 2017 alone, this journal [published more than 1,700 articles](#) (or 141 per month), with 13 of the 22 Ibero-American countries represented with at least one paper. The average number of articles published in this journal by these 13 countries is a considerable 280. *Espacios* is an open access journal with a relatively low submission fee of USD\$100. It also appears to have an extremely efficient peer-review process; having examined ten of 32 articles from its 2018 volume (39:2), the average time from submission to publication was one month. In two cases the entire process took just six days. While these are reasons the journal may seem attractive for researchers looking to submit papers, its visibility and impact internationally is another matter. *Espacios* has an h-index of 3 with more than 4,500 documents published since 2007, whereas the [Academy of Management Journal](#) has an h-index of 252 with just 1,636 documents published since 1975.

4. The presence of female authors is barely existent.

Less than three out of ten authors were women. This estimate is similar to the world's average as [28.8% of researchers are female](#).

5. (Hyper) Matthew effect.

There was a highly skewed distribution among documents and citations, with a very small percentage of documents (1%) accounting for the majority of all citations (between 951-1,000). Moreover, this distribution is becoming more skewed with each passing week. The 17 most-cited papers received an average of 2.2 citations over two weeks, whereas 2,607 (67%) of 3,835 Ibero-American research articles published in 2017 are yet to receive a single citation.

6. Relation to accreditations (AACSB)

Accreditation with the [AACSB](#) (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) was also found to be significant, with researchers from those Ibero-American institutions with AACSB accreditation scoring highly in a number of the metrics examined, including Field-Weighted Citation Impact, total citations, and journal h-index.

Conclusion

Business, management and accounting research in Ibero-America is in the midst of a fertile period. It is reaching its highest overall production in more than 20 years but, by looking closer, it can be seen that much of this production and influence can be attributed to a few powerhouse countries, namely Spain, Brazil, and Portugal.

For those countries found to have less output and impact, it may be that research policies and evaluations that only consider publications in top-tier journals should be reconsidered. Universities and research institutions should make decisions on hiring and promotion while considering a wider range of factors such as academic responsibilities or community outreach. This would incentivise and reward good practices, allow researchers to strengthen their competencies, and may later encourage or motivate them to engage in global discussions without necessarily leaving aside local pertinence.

In terms of female participation in business, management and accounting, national and institutional policies should be reconsidered to increase women's involvement as professors and researchers, not only in these subjects but in science more generally.

The results obtained in this study provide for a comparative analysis between Ibero-American countries, including those with relatively low production or impact in business, management and accounting research (e.g. Guatemala, Paraguay). This will allow national science and technology institutions to precisely measure how far or near their countries are in terms of production or impact when compared to others.

This blog post is based on the author's preprint, "[A bibliometric analysis of the most cited documents in business, management, and accounting in Ibero-America](#)", available in the Universidad del Rosario institutional repository.

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