



A bibliometric study on Ghoshal's *Managing across Borders*

Ghoshal's
*Managing across
Borders*

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Abstract

Purpose – Some scholars imprint an academic discipline by their contribution to the manner in which people think and research, namely, by putting forward novel concepts and insights. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of Sumantra Ghoshal's work on the study of subsidiaries and multinational enterprises and organizational formats for foreign operations.

Design/methodology/approach – A bibliometric study focused on Bartlett and Ghoshal's well-known book *Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution* is performed to assess its impact in international business (IB) research. The entire record of publications in the top leading IB journal, *Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS)*, is examined.

Findings – Theoretically supported, Ghoshal's work was keenly influenced by his corporate experiences and his constant questioning of the dominant theories and assumptions. The analyses in this paper show the impact of the work on the "transnational solution", namely, on the understanding of multinationals and subsidiaries, thus being one of the most notable contributions for IB research over the past 20 years.

Research limitations/implications – The empirical analysis is limited to one, albeit the leading, journal, and to articles published, not including books, theses and other documents, perhaps under-representing Ghoshal's full impact.

Practical implications – Useful for graduate students and in writing a literature review, this paper presents an interesting manner to examine a scholar's and a theory's impact on a discipline.

Originality/value – This paper presents an extensive bibliometric analysis of research published over a time-span of 22 years in international business studies.

Keywords Business studies, International business, Research work, International business research, Bibliometric study, Transnational solution, Multinational corporations, Subsidiaries

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

As a discipline progresses through the contribution of researchers who put forward novel theories and concepts, it becomes common for scholars to examine the state of the art of the literature, doing reviews of the literature and seeking to understand the impact that specific contributions have made on the discipline. The use of some form of bibliometric technique in doing a review of the literature permits the understanding of potential patterns and, arguably, the evolution of a stream of research or topic. This is possible by specifically analyzing the extant research by a large number of authors on a given topic. As in Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro (2004), this paper starts from the hypothesis that the references utilized in a research article are an indication of their impact on the literature, and that by examining citations and co-citations, a clearer grasp



The author thanks Rui Miranda for research assistance.

of the interlinkages among scholars, concepts, and theories is gained. That is, an image of the intellectual structure of a research topic is, at least in part, able to be built. This paper focuses on a specific work by a notable international business/strategy scholar: Sumantra Ghoshal.

Sumantra Ghoshal (1948-2004) was a prominent academic in the field of management, specifically focusing his work on the discipline of strategic management and international business. During his academic career, Ghoshal looked into a variety of issues related to the strategies firms employ in their foreign operations, with the primary concerns of unbundling how multinational corporations (MNCs) should organize internally the relations among subsidiaries and between the subsidiaries and the headquarters. The chief focus was on how to compete more successfully and better exploit the potential advantages that MNCs had access to, in particular those advantages that may emerge from location in disparate geographic and technological spaces. This emphasis may be detected in a large portion of his work, which includes 12 books, about 70 papers, and several case studies. In all this work, the continuous search for useful and relevant research is visible (Ghoshal and Moran, 1996; Ghoshal, 2005), research that connects theory with the practice of managers and MNCs (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1994, 1995). His 1989 book co-authored with Harvard Business School Professor Christopher Bartlett, *Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution*, has been considered one of the top 50 most influential management books.

This paper examines specifically the work of Ghoshal, much of it in co-authorship with Bartlett and other colleagues, on subsidiaries and MNCs. Ghoshal's contribution is mainly, albeit not exclusively, identifiable to the international business discipline, arguably in the subfield of strategic management, with a clear emphasis on the issues pertaining to MNCs. This bibliometric study concentrates on the leading international business journal – *Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS)*. The study examines the entire track record of papers published in *JIBS* during the period from 1989 to 2010. The objective of this bibliometric study is not to generate new theory, but rather to scrutinize the contribution of a notable author and scholar to the discipline and research direction over the past 20 years. Ghoshal's work undeniably has had an impact on firms' strategies and on the practice of managers, and it is commonly used in undergraduate and graduate business courses.

This paper is organized in four main parts. First, Ghoshal's contribution to the study of MNCs and subsidiaries is briefly reviewed. Second, the method used, sample, and procedure are explained. Third, results are presented. The paper concludes with a broad discussion.

2. Ghoshal's work

Ghoshal's studies, while numerous, follow a rather unified stream of research, comprising topics that are chiefly interconnected. Table I summarizes some of his works, identifying briefly the focus and concepts most clearly developed in those works.

One of Ghoshal's core emphases was on international business and, specifically, how modes and formats of firms, with MNCs as a particular case, should operate in foreign markets and react to challenges. A portion of his studies relates to the organizational forms (Ghoshal and Nohria, 1989; Nohria and Ghoshal, 1997) that best suit MNCs in developing a competitive advantage. Not surprisingly, this focus led Ghoshal to delve into issues ranging from international strategy to internationalization,

Work	Focus	Concept
Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) <i>Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution</i> Bartlett and Ghoshal (1988) "Organizing for worldwide effectiveness: the transnational solution"	Issues related to the firms' transnationality	Transnational
Nohria and Ghoshal (1997) <i>The Differentiated Network: Organizing Multinational Corporations for Value Creation</i> Ghoshal and Westney (1993) <i>Organization Theory and the Multinational Corporation</i> Ghoshal and Nohria (1989) "Internal differentiation within multinational corporations"	How MNEs should organize available resources and connections among and between subsidiaries and the headquarters	Differentiation and interdependence among subsidiaries
Bartlett and Ghoshal (1990) "Matrix management: not a structure, a frame of mind"		
Ghoshal and Bartlett (1987) "Management across borders: new strategic requirements"	Combination and exchange of resources for value creation, firm advantage may be achieved by sharing resources among organizational units (or subsidiaries)	Success factors: efficiency, innovation, and value creation
Moran and Ghoshal (1996) "Value creation by firms"		

Source: Analysis of the author

Table I.
Ghoshal's contribution to the study of subsidiaries and multinationals

structural models, internal processes, innovation and the value of the human resources, and the roles of the foreign subsidiaries, among others.

Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989) and "Organizing for worldwide effectiveness: the transnational solution" (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1988) put forward a model of strategy for MNCs that focuses on, among other aspects, the coordination of flows among subsidiaries and flows of data, information, and knowledge throughout the network of subsidiaries that comprise the MNC (Gupta and Govindarajan, 1994, 2001; Birkinshaw and Morrison, 1995; Birkinshaw and Hood, 1998). The line of research on the transnational was developed in a series of articles that, in essence, pointed out the importance and role of foreign subsidiaries (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1986, 1987a) and the coordination and configuration of the relationships among subsidiaries and between subsidiaries and headquarters (Ghoshal and Nohria, 1989; Nohria and Ghoshal, 1997). The aim was, in part, to seek an understanding of national contexts, but more so to understand the strategies that MNCs must deploy to actually have an advantage *vis-à-vis* other foreign firms and local firms in host countries. The thrust is how to manage across borders (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1987b).

The influence of these ideas on the transnational solution and its relevance for international business (IB) studies is shown in Table II. Table II reveals the top ten most cited works in the most reputed IB journal (Phene and Guisinger, 1998) – *JIBS*. *Managing across Borders* is the sixth most cited work in the entire history

Citations	Author/work
241	Hofstede (1980) <i>Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values</i>
136	Buckley and Casson (1976) <i>The Future of the Multinational Enterprise</i>
131	Kogut and Singh (1988) "The effect of national culture on the choice of entry mode"
120	Johanson and Vahlne (1977) "The internationalization process of the firm: a model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments"
115	Caves (1982) <i>Multinational Enterprise and Economic Analysis</i>
94	Porter (1985) <i>Competitive Advantage</i>
93	Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) <i>Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution</i>
87	Stopford and Wells (1972) <i>Managing the Multinational Enterprise</i>
86	Dunning (1993a) <i>Multinational Enterprises and the Global Economy</i>
73	Williamson (1975) "Markets and hierarchies, analysis and antitrust implications"
73	Williamson (1985) <i>The Economic Institutions of Capitalism</i>

Table II.
The top ten most cited works in *JIBS*

Notes: The database includes 32,390 references used in the papers published in *JIBS* over its history; data refers to the citations, collected in ISI Web of Knowledge, selecting only publications in the *JIBS* Computations by the author

of publications in *JIBS*. And, it is further worth noticing that all other nine works were published prior to 1989. This rather simple observation is *prima facie* evidence of the impact of Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work on the transnational in IB research, as assessed by its citations in *JIBS*.

Ghoshal and Bartlett (1987), Bartlett and Ghoshal (1987a, b, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1995) seek to identify the core challenges of globalization to managers of MNCs in the late 1980s and delimit the best courses of action to manage internationalization. The analyses involved aspects such as productivity, employment, financial and monetary issues, social trends, organizational structures, and human resources management, among others. They observed that some firms successfully developed global responses, while other firms maintained national and international responses.

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1987a, b, 1989) advanced the need for MNCs to hold a flexible structure, whereby geographically dispersed subsidiaries were not limited to the role of replication headquarters-derived portfolios of products and strategies. MNCs, according to this view, should be better seen as a network of interdependent subunits, in which each subunit has an active role in contributing to the whole of the corporation. In fact, it should be possible for each subunit, or subsidiary, to create its own differentiated role (Ghoshal and Nohria, 1989; Nohria and Ghoshal, 1997). This solution is, according to Ghoshal and Bartlett (1987), the one that permits MNCs to hold a structure that facilitates the flow of information among subsidiaries. This solution also permits the MNC to be sensitive to shifts in the markets where it operates. By putting forward this theoretical rationale, Ghoshal and colleagues offer new insights into the more traditional reasoning related to the role of the subsidiaries, which posited that subsidiaries were absolutely integrated in the MNC, with standardized operations, rigid reporting to the headquarters, and decision-making centralized in the hierarchy at the corporate office (Stopford and Wells, 1972; Buckley and Casson, 1976; Kogut and Zander, 1993).

Ghoshal's solution consisted of a model whereby subsidiaries were interdependent at a basic level pertaining to the product (and production-related operations), and the

flow of information and transfer of knowledge could be carried out in any direction – albeit with some degree of intervention by the headquarters (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1987a, b). That is, to be internationally successful MNCs require a structure that is adequate, possibly with some degree of freedom of the subsidiaries. Ghoshal and Bartlett (1988) change the traditional analysis of the role of the subsidiaries and advance a model built on distributing responsibilities that will maximize the overall benefits for the MNC. Each subsidiary should have differentiated roles. The basic aim is that subsidiaries no longer be seen as mere distribution channels in foreign markets and, instead, start assuming an active role in building up an organization-wide competitive advantage (Birkinshaw *et al.*, 2005).

In “Global strategy: an organizing framework”, Ghoshal (1987) suggested an organizational structure that assisted managers in formulating global strategy in three components: operational efficiency, management of risks, and internal development of learning capacity – which would ease adaptation to future changes. Efficiency could be attained by the proper configuration of the value chain worldwide. Managing risks requires MNCs to consider additional risks – macroeconomic, political, competitive, resource related, and so forth – in their decisions. Finally, learning may be promoted in MNCs (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1998), which have the capacity to learn in the different markets and technological spaces in which they operate (Kogut and Zander, 1993). It is worth noting that the transnational solution incorporates this component by proposing a model that includes the advantages of multi-location with the benefits of holding a locally adapted offering. The orientation to assist global managers in managing across borders is visible in much of Ghoshal’s work (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1986, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997).

In fact, according to Ghoshal (1987), MNCs have three advantages they may exploit: explore differences among markets, benefit from potential scale economies, and generate scope economies. The differences among markets or countries may be leveraged by allocating each activity of the value chain to the locales that offer the best advantages in terms of either the costs or the qualities. Again, Ghoshal places attention on the structural form, which should be adequate to monitor, understand, and act in the foreign markets to absorb the location-bound benefits.

To compete effectively, it is important that the MNC’s international strategy is supported in a larger production volume capable of generating scale economies. The experiential learning effects of larger production volume may generate additional competitive benefits (Ghoshal, 1987). Finally, scope economies are those resultant from pulling together internally the different value chains of a diversified portfolio – each product in the portfolio may be adapted to the host country’s idiosyncrasies.

The analysis of strategy and structure in international expansion was continued in “Organizing for worldwide effectiveness: the transnational solution”, by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1988). The core claim in this work was that managers might not restrict their actions to simple decisions based on standardization, rationalization, and centralization. The ideal solution, the transnational, combines, in varied degrees, adaptation, rationalization, and centralization of some functions and the decentralization of others. This is the motto for the expression “think locally and act globally” that presides to the transnational.

Ghoshal and Nohria (1989), in “Internal differentiation within multinational corporations”, search for a best way to formulate the ideal structure for the

interdependent relations among subsidiaries and between subsidiaries and headquarters. The crux of the dilemma is that in certain circumstances, subsidiaries may compete with each other (Ferreira *et al.*, 2010) for a share of the headquarters resources and for differentiated roles. The conundrum is how to effectively attain the cooperation of all subsidiaries without losing subsidiary-specific competencies and sacrificing the ability to absorb locally specific knowledge that could be transferred internally to the benefit of the entire MNC, while creating an environment that actually fosters such inter-subsidary cooperation. Ghoshal *et al.* (1994), in "Interunit communication in multinational corporations", advance the research on inter-subsidary communication. They suggest that it is essential for subsidiaries to know what their role is inside the MNC, and that there are models to integrate the resources (Andersson and Forsgren, 1995; Birkinshaw and Morrison, 1995; Taggart, 1998). Ghoshal *et al.* (1994) stress that inter-subsidary communication is not exclusively a matter of the autonomy of each subsidiary, but rather a matter of the relationships among people in the subsidiaries and head offices (Hedlund, 1986; Birkinshaw *et al.*, 2005; Adenfelt and Lagerström, 2006).

Ghoshal's central concern on how to organize and structure MNCs for competitive advantage was present in much of his work. In essence Ghoshal builds the idea that firms need a dynamic and flexible organizational configuration, but arguably a more urgent configuration is one capable of facing the external environment *vis-à-vis* the internal elements and processes.

3. Method

To examine the extent to which Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work *Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution* is used in the extant IB research, and the content of that research, a bibliometric study is undertaken using the leading IB journal: *JIBS*, during the period from 1989 to 2010. *JIBS* has been recognized as the leading journal for IB research (Morrison and Inkpen, 1991; Inkpen and Beamish, 1994; Phene and Guisinger, 1998; Dubois and Reeb, 2000).

This bibliometric study resorts to the analysis of published research articles, although bibliometric techniques may be employed for books, reports, and an array of other sources. The purpose of bibliometry is to examine patterns in the extant research (Diodato, 1994). Specifically, the analysis set forth here entails citation and co-citation analyses, based on the premise that authors cite other works that are relevant for their own arguments. Thus, more often cited documents are likely to have a greater influence in a discipline (Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro, 2004). The co-citation analysis consists of examining a pair of articles that are cited by a specific document. Some proximity, or similarity, of the content of the two articles to the initial document may be inferred. This rationale is identical whether identifying groups of authors or topics covered, permitting an understanding of how two different pieces of research may be interrelated (for further explanations on citation and co-citation analyses, see White and Griffith, 1981; White and McCain, 1998; Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro, 2004).

Starting from the hypothesis that the references cited in a given article at least reasonably reflect a content proximity and some degree of influence, the purpose of this study is to identify the influence of Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work on the transnational in the IB research, establishing links among authors and with the topics covered. Some degree of understanding of the intellectual interconnections of

a portion of the research in IB may be gained (Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro, 2004). Although the purpose here is not, *per se*, a content analysis of the articles published, Weber (1990) noted that by examining the content of the papers – which is done here in the form of keyword analysis, as explained below – the focus of a specific research field or subfield may be clarified and trends detected (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 1997). In fact, content analyses have been used before in international business (Albaum and Peterson, 1984; Leonidou and Katsikeas, 1996; Liang and Parkhe, 1997) and strategic management research (Phelan *et al.*, 2002; Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro, 2004; Furrer *et al.*, 2008; Schneider *et al.*, 2009). Coelho *et al.* (2009) specifically focused the research on the RBV in Brazil and abroad.

3.1 Procedure and data

The empirical data were retrieved from ISI Web of Knowledge (isiknowledge.com), searching the database for the articles published in *JIBS* that cited Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work. In the "search key", the last name of the second author was entered to identify citations. Within this search, only those articles were selected that cited the relevant work: *Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution*. It is worth noting that there are many other citations to other Ghoshal works. This search procedure permitted the identification of 82 articles published in *JIBS* after 1989.

Information was collected on all the papers published in *JIBS* after 1989 that cite Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989). During this period, *JIBS* published 967 works – 846 identified as articles, 83 as reviews, and 38 identified as proceeding papers. A total of 82 articles citing Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) were identified, which means about 8.5 percent. The relevant information in these 82 papers was collected and treated using two distinct software programs: Bibexcel and Ucinet.

The analyses of the data comprise three groups: the analysis of citations and co-citations of the 82 articles, the analysis of the keywords used in each of the 82 articles, and the analysis of the authorship of the papers. By looking at the authorships, the research attention in specific domains may arguably be detected.

4. Results and analyses

Figure 1 shows the 20 most cited references in the 82 articles selected. It is worth noting that, combined, these articles use 3,567 references. The co-citations correspond to the links between the different works cited, and the thickness of the line connecting them is illustrative of the strength of the tie. As such, the thicker the line connecting a pair, the larger the number of co-citations, or put in another way, the larger the number of links detected joining them. It is thus possible to verify that there are four articles that are cited more often with Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989). These are the works by Prahalad and Doz (1987), Porter (1985), Hedlund (1986) and Buckley and Casson (1976). Considering the dynamic form in which the software includes these four authors in the figure, revealing the strength among them, these are the four most important authors in the 82 articles in our sample. A stronger tie is found linking Stopford and Wells (1972), Hofstede (1980) and Kogut and Singh (1988) with Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work.

In Table III, the top 20 most cited works in *JIBS* are distinguished in two time periods since Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) publication: period 1 from 1989 to 1999, and period 2 from 2000 to 2010. Possible changes in the manner in which Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work is cited in these two periods, and specifically the co-citations

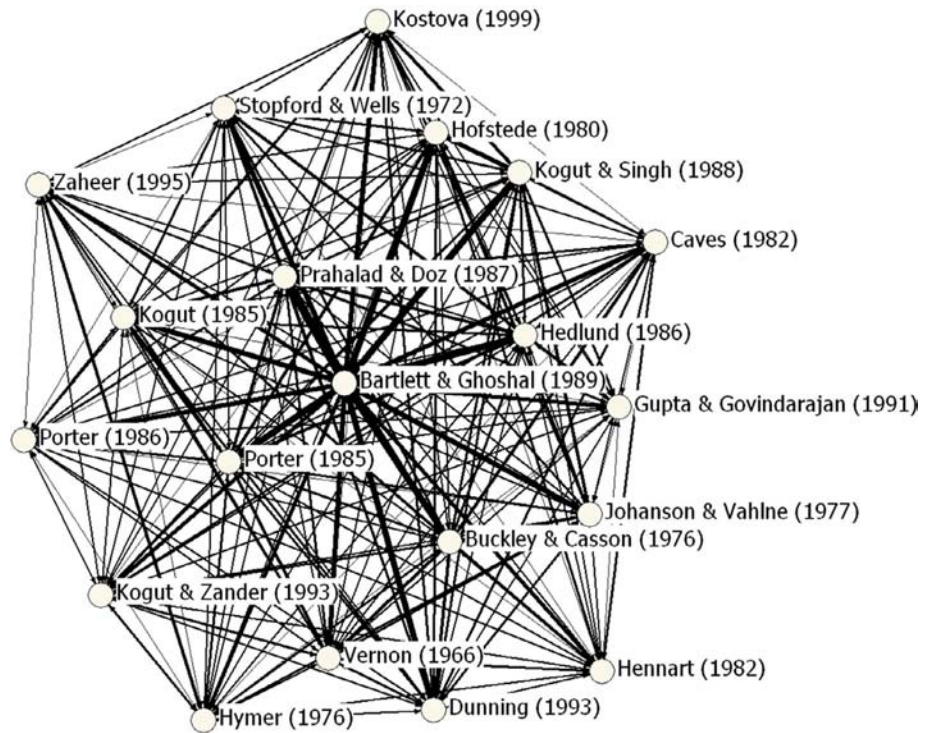


Figure 1.
Co-citations among the top
20 most cited authors
referencing Bartlett and
Ghoshal (1989) in *JIBS*

Sources: Data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge; author's computations and analysis

patterns may show some changes in the focus of the subfield. It is worth noting that during the first period, 26 articles cited Bartlett and Ghoshal, while in period 2 there were 56 articles using this reference. This is a substantial increase, which may be only partially explained by the usual time lag from publication to other authors citing a reference and publishing their papers. Relatively, this is an increase from 7.16 to 9.27 percent of all articles published in *JIBS* citing Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989). (This analysis is perhaps more relevant given that the number of papers published in *JIBS* almost doubled from periods 1 to 2.)

An analysis of the two periods also shows some shift of focus. Period 1 is clearly more attentive to rather classical aspects of the MNCs, as illustrated by references to Hedlund's (1986) N-form of the corporation, Perlmutter's (1969) style of managing abroad, Hofstede (1980) on culture, Vernon (1966, 1971) on the product international life cycle, Porter's (1980, 1985, 1986) industrial organization concepts of competition.

Some shifts are thus noticeable, namely, in a reduction of citations to the work of Prahalad and Doz (1987), but also in an increase in citations to Buckley and Casson's (1976) on the future of the multinationals. The interaction of firms and environments gains momentum with a larger inclusion of culture (Hofstede, 1980; Kogut and Singh, 1988) and the concerns with the hazards firms may encounter in their foreign operations (Hymer, 1976; Zaheer, 1995; Kostova, 1999). The resource-based view (RBV)-related approaches (including knowledge and capabilities), namely, in what pertains to learning

Number of cites	Period 1: 1989-1999		Number of cites	Period 2: 2000-2010	
	%	Authors		%	Authors
15	4.13	Prahalad and Doz (1987)	20	3.31	Buckley and Casson (1976)
9	2.48	Kogut (1985)	18	2.98	Kogut and Singh (1988)
9	2.48	Porter (1985)	18	2.98	Hedlund (1986)
8	2.20	Porter (1986)	18	2.98	Dunning (1993a)
6	1.65	Stopford and Wells (1972)	17	2.81	Hofstede (1980)
6	1.65	Hedlund (1986)	16	2.65	Porter (1985)
6	1.65	Perlmutter (1969)	16	2.65	Johanson and Vahlne (1977)
6	1.65	Hofstede (1980)	15	2.48	Prahalad and Doz (1987)
5	1.38	Thompson (1967)	15	2.48	Kostova (1999)
5	1.38	Bartlett and Ghoshal (1987a, b)	12	1.99	Stopford and Wells (1972)
5	1.38	Kobrin (1991)	12	1.99	Caves (1982)
5	1.38	Ghoshal and Nohria (1989)	12	1.99	Kogut and Zander (1993)
4	1.10	Vernon (1966)	12	1.99	Vernon (1966)
4	1.10	Ghoshal (1987)	12	1.99	Hyer (1976)
4	1.10	Gupta and Golvindarajan (1991)	10	1.66	Szulanski (1996)
4	1.10	Dunning (1993a)	10	1.66	Penrose (1959)
4	1.10	Vernon (1971)	10	1.66	Hennart (1982)
4	1.10	Porter (1980)	10	1.66	Zaheer (1995)
4	1.10	Williamson (1975)	9	1.49	Birkinshaw and Hood (1998)

Notes: In the first period, from 1989 to 1999, *JIBS* published a total of 363 articles; in the second period, from 2000 to 2010, *JIBS* published 604 articles; number of cites – indicates the number of papers citing this work identified in the column labeled “authors”; % – weight, in percentage, of the number of articles citing this author, over the total published articles in *JIBS* in the period

Source: Data collected from ISI Web of Knowledge; author’s computations

Table III.
Ranking of most cited authors in two periods: 1989-1999 and 2000-2010

and leveraging the MNCs capabilities, grow in the discipline (Penrose, 1959; Szulanski, 1996; Kogut and Zander, 1993).

Figure 2 shows all the authors of the 82 papers published in *JIBS* citing Bartlett and Ghoshal’s (1989) work. The networks are formed according to co-authorships in these 82 papers. The networks are drawn with the software Ucinet. Each set of connected authors presupposes that they have at least one article together, although there may be several articles and co-authorships. The thickness of the tie binding authors probably indicates a larger number of articles involved – that is the case with the line connecting Alan Rugman and Alain Verbeke, given that they co-authored several articles. Looking at the networks displayed, three different sets, or clusters, are observed, that are signaled in the figure, and that correspond to the three networks involving a larger number of authors. Nonetheless, one primary conclusion that may be drawn is that from this diversity of authors a diversity of lenses may be inferred, namely theoretical, which presupposes that Bartlett and Ghoshal’s work is relevant for a large breadth of areas.

To better understand the topics focused on the 82 articles, the main issues covered in each article need to be assessed. Presumably, the author-supplied keywords reflect the content of each article. Of the 82 articles, 48 contained keywords, and only these were further assessed. The author-supplied keywords were used to code and analyze the content of the articles. Given the large number of idiosyncratic keywords provided by the authors (197 keywords), the fact that many keywords were used only once,

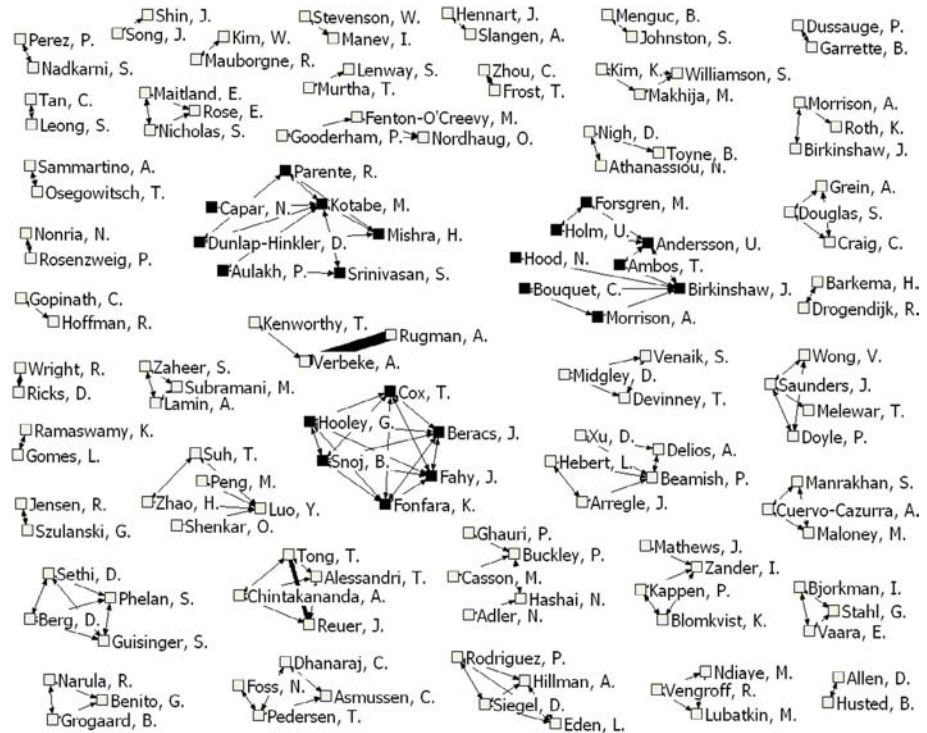


Figure 2.
Networks among
authors that cite Bartlett
and Ghoshal (1989)

Source: Data collected in ISI Web of Knowledge; analyses and graphs with Ucinet
Author's analysis

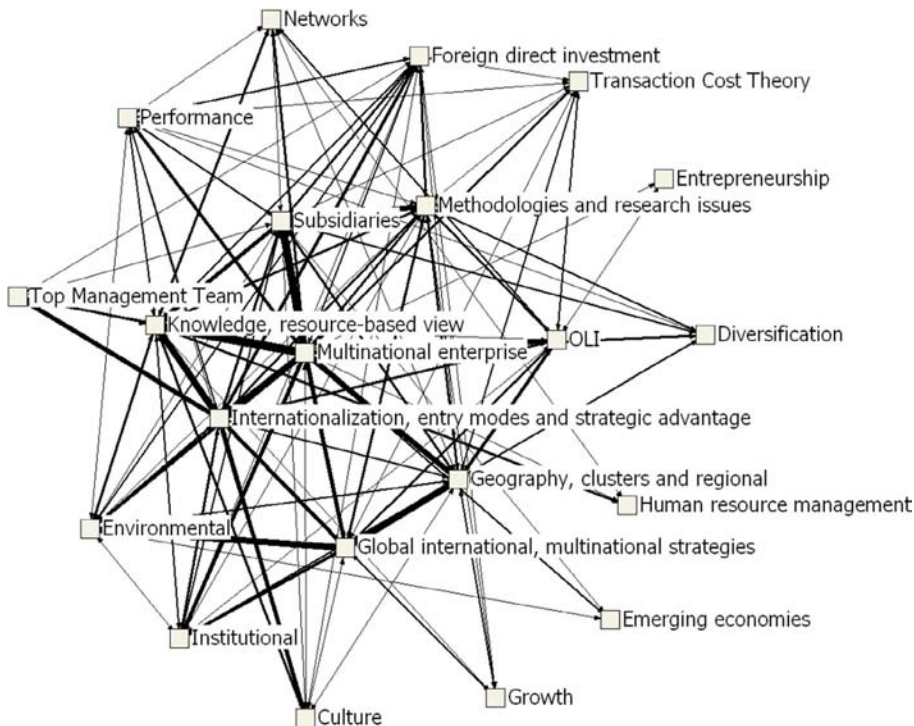
and that treating such a large number of keywords does not permit a clear picture of the topics focused upon, the first step involved grouping all keywords into a manageable number. The procedure used here is based on the work by Furrer *et al.* (2008), who built a list of major keywords to analyze the content of strategic management research published in the *Strategic Management Journal*. Two coders examined the entire list of keywords and sorted them into major categories; any doubts were discussed between the coders. The grouping of keywords resulted in 21 major keywords (shown in the Appendix).

The analysis of the frequency of major keywords shows that multinational enterprise (MNE) was the most frequent keyword (29); followed by knowledge, RBV (26); internationalization, entry modes, and strategic advantage (20); global, international, multinational strategies (16); geography, clusters, and regional (15); and subsidiaries (15). Entrepreneurship, top management teams, human resource management, and culture, despite their importance in international business research, warranted relatively less attention in these articles. Given the focus of Bartlett and Ghoshal's work, it may not be surprising that these receive less focus. On the other hand, the RBV (capabilities, knowledge) has emerged as one of the major paradigms in international business, thus explaining its relative prevalence in this analysis of the major topics.

In Figure 3, the proximity between keywords reflects the strength of the tie. That is, greater proximity between keywords is reflected when a greater number of articles treat them together; when they are farther apart, it is because fewer articles treat them jointly. For instance, the keywords “MNE” and “subsidiaries” are closer, because there is a large number of papers dealing with multinationals that also deal with subsidiaries. Conversely, keywords such as “human resource management” and “knowledge, resource-based view” are far from each other, because only a few papers on knowledge, RBV also deal with human resource issues.

In Figure 3 the topics that are most often used in those papers citing Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work may be seen. A stronger cluster may also be observed, comprising issues pertaining to “subsidiaries”, “MNEs”, “knowledge, resource-based view” and “internationalization, entry modes”. This cluster is not surprising given the focus of Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work on the transnational, and more broadly on MNCs and subsidiaries.

Unsurprisingly, Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) concepts on the transnational are used with six themes identified in the keywords analysis, which are MNE; knowledge, RBV; internationalization, entry modes, and strategic advantage; global, international, multinational strategies; geography, clusters, and regional; and subsidiaries.



Note: Keyword data is available in the papers published only after 2003
Source: Data collected in the ISI Web of Knowledge Author's analysis

Figure 3.
Issues focused:
a keyword analysis

5. Final discussion and concluding remarks

This paper briefly describes some of Ghoshal and colleagues' contribution to the research and discipline of international business and, specifically, the importance of Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) *Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution*. During Ghoshal's two decades of intense research, teaching, and consulting activity, Ghoshal maintained the quest for meaningful research, useful for the practice of managers. This is interesting because the intellectual development of a discipline is punctuated by specific works and is shown in the citations that authors make when writing a research article. The use of a type of bibliometric technique to explore the citation patterns, the topics covered, and the linkages binding authors allows for a better grasp of how the community accepts and uses a given work. To some extent, this allows for better comprehension of the intellectual structure in a relevant topic for IB research.

There are numerous studies comprising literature reviews of diverse IB-related facets. For instance, to point out some recent reviews, Cartwright and Schoenberg (2006) assessed 30 years of research on mergers and acquisitions; Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro (2004), the intellectual structure of the strategic management field using the publications in the *Strategic Management Journal*; Minkov and Hofstede (2011), the evolution of Hofstede's doctrine; Trevino *et al.* (2010) reviewed the field of international business, examining publications in elite journals as a measure of institutional and faculty productivity; Phelan *et al.* (2002) examined the *Strategic Management Journal's* record, identifying co-authorships and time lag to publications among other indicators; and Morrison and Inkpen (1991), an analysis of the more significant contribution to the field. Less frequent has been the use of bibliometric techniques as employed here to examine a specific topic or author's contribution.

Ghoshal's early academic career focused on the internationalization of firms from diverse industries. The emphasis, shown in several articles and case studies, was on the causes and consequences of expanding internationally under two core lenses: the strategy of the multinationals and the organizational forms better suited to permit firms to develop or maintain an advantage. In fact, there are different types of advantages that MNCs may explore in their foreign operations. Some of these advantages are based on the exploitation of scale and scope economies, and other advantages are related to the learning potential of holding subsidiaries operating in diverse geographic and technological markets. According to Ghoshal, the true challenge lies in how to better exploit these advantages in its favor.

The organizational issues, the structural model of the multinationals, were important in Ghoshal's work. The transnational solution offered combined the benefits of a multidomestic strategy with those of a global strategy. This solution includes matters pertaining to the hierarchical control of the headquarters over the subsidiaries. Ultimately, firms should gradually adopt a federation-like structural form.

The analyses here provide some interesting results. The initial compilation of citation data relative to all citations in *JIBS* (Table I) reveals that eight of the ten most cited works are books. These are the most influential materials. A similar conclusion was found by Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro (2004). Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work, which is examined in greater detail in this paper, is itself a book. Also notable is how the traditional or classical works, such as Caves (1982), Porter (1985), Buckley and Casson (1976), Hymer (1976), Stopford and Wells (1972) and Hofstede (1980), are still highly influential. Nonetheless, there is more recent work that has a growing impact

on the discipline, such as the work on the resource-based (learning and knowledge) perspective – only during the 1990s has RBV gained a larger impact on the discipline.

An increase in citations to Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) is also observed, which is likely the result of a large and growing focus on the firm and on the strategy and structure, rather than the traditional perspective based on industrial organization, the existence of the multinational *per se*, or other environment-related factors.

Future research could be set to expand on this study, for example, by including a larger number of outlets publishing IB research. *JIBS* is recognized as the leading journal in the discipline; thus, it is arguably representative of all research being done. Yet novel insights may be gained by expanding this analysis to other IB journals and possibly journals from other disciplines, such as human resource management, as there are noteworthy implications of Ghoshal's work for managers and employees in subsidiaries around the world.

This study has some limitations, some of which are derived from the method itself. The choice of a single journal, albeit the leading journal in the discipline, limits the scope of the analyses and results, given that only a small fraction of all research carried out on the topic is included. It might be possible to find different connections if a larger sample of articles was included, namely, from other disciplines that also do IB-related research (e.g. strategic management, international marketing, human resources). Nonetheless, by selecting a leading journal, this paper focuses on the most visible research, which inspires reasonable confidence that a representative sample of the research is being captured.

Another limitation is often recognized in bibliometric studies of this type. While citations and co-citations are used, it is not possible to distinguish the reason why a citation is made. In some instances, authors use citations in disagreement, and in others to complement a point of view or an argument. Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro (2004) noted that some papers have missing references because some knowledge is already taken for granted in the discipline and authors do not cite them. It should be noted that in examining a top journal, it is expected that the manuscript review process, which is an integral part of scientific publishing, was able to identify possible hazards or essential missing references.

The citation and co-citation analyses also have some drawbacks. First, the older the work analyzed, the more likely it is known by peers and the more citations it is likely to have. This paper notes that Bartlett and Ghoshal's (1989) work on the transnational has seen an increase in citations over time. Future research may find an even larger impact. Examining co-citations has difficult interpretation beyond the joint use of specific works, and a deeper content analysis of the papers should provide greater detail. It is reasonable to say, nevertheless, that stronger ties binding some pairs of works may clearly be seen. Future research could partly resolve these issues by extending the sample to other journals to better the understanding of the graphic networks depicted.

In this paper, the keywords are used as proxies for the article content. This is not a novel procedure, but additional understanding might be captured from a more in-depth content analysis of the papers that use Ghoshal's work. This study may be seen as a complement to other qualitative analysis of the literature.

For researchers there is an intrinsic value in identifying a broad picture of the extant research. The work of Ghoshal and colleagues has had an undeniable influence in the field and has arguably opened pathways for the coming research. The study of multinationals and subsidiaries has gained from the work on the transnational solution.

Moreover, the benefits of Ghoshal's work extend beyond the transnational model; rather, it extends to thinking about the subsidiaries in their various components (including the human and managerial) and the inter-relationships among subsidiaries and with the headquarters. The ultimate goal of the researcher is still the quest for those factors, external, or environmental, but increasingly internal to the firms, that provide them with a competitive advantage.

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(The Appendix follows overleaf.)

Knowledge, RBV (26)	Absorptive capacity; capability transfer; exploitation and exploration; innovation; knowledge flows; knowledge management; knowledge processes in the MNC; knowledge sourcing; knowledge spillovers; knowledge transfer; learning; organizational learning; overseas R&D; Penrose theory; R&D; relative capabilities; resource dependence; resource dependence theory; resource-based theory; stickiness; technology diffusion
Internationalization, entry modes and strategic advantage (20)	Accelerated internationalization; acquisitions; cross-border acquisition; early internationalization; entry mode; international experience; international HRM; international sourcing; internationalization; internationalization theory; MNE strategy; mode of entry; multidomestic strategy; optimisation; post-entry growth; strategy
Environmental (11)	Adaptation; business and society; business-government relations; corruption; cost of doing business abroad; down-side risk; liability of foreignness; nordic countries; politics
Geography, clusters and regional (15)	Agglomeration; countries and locations; definition of region; economic geography; industrial clusters; intra-regional assets; intra-regional sales; language design; location-bound knowledge bundles; regional integration; regionalization
Top management team (4)	Attention management; cognition; executive skills; managerial resources
Subsidiaries (15)	Australian subsidiaries; headquarters-subsidiary roles and relations; interdependence; parent subsidiary links; strategic initiative; subsidiary autonomy; subsidiary competence configuration; subsidiary development; subsidiary embeddedness; subsidiary influence; subsidiary management; subsidiary performance; subsidiary size
MNE (29)	Born globals; centralised control; differentiated networks; federative MNC; headquarters knowledge; host-country experience; intraorganisational power; MNE environment; MNE; multidivisional governance; multinational; MNCs; MNEs; multinational firms; multinational performance; multinationality; organizational control and design; theory of MNEs
Institutional (6)	Comparative institutional analysis; host-country institutions; institutional incentives; institutional theory; neo-institutional theory
Global international, multinational strategies (16)	Corporate political strategies; corporate social responsibility; global strategy; globalization; international strategy; international technology transfer; organizational strategy; semiglobalization; strategic context; regional strategy
Diversification (3)	Corporate-level diversification; international diversification; within-country diversification
Culture (5)	Cultural differences; cultural distance; domestic mindsets; multilingual system

Table AI.
Major keywords identified

(continued)

Emerging economies (2)	Emergent market; emerging economies
Methodologies, theories and research issues (11)	Evaluation of current theories; inverted U-shaped model; measurement issues; meta-analysis; methods; modeling; moderating effect; multilevel analysis; panel study; statistical process control; subsidiary roles; subsidiary roles innovation and R&D longitudinal (or time series) studies; triphasic model
Foreign direct investment (8)	FDI; foreign direct investment; greenfield; greenfield investments
Transaction cost theory (4)	Firm boundaries; governance structure; transaction cost analysis; uncertainty perception
Growth (3)	Growth dynamics; growth options; valuable growth opportunities
OLI (9)	Internalisation; internalisation theory; localization of foreign subsidiaries; location; location strategy; off shoring; OLI
Entrepreneurship (1)	International entrepreneurship
Network (3)	Network embeddedness; network externalities; networks
Performance (6)	Performance; prior conditions; real options; rent-seeking
Human resource management (1)	Personnel mobility

Note: In parentheses the keywords' frequency

Table AI.

About the author

Manuel Portugal Ferreira is an Associate Professor in Strategy and International Business and directs the globADVANTAGE – Center of Research in International Business & Strategy. He holds a PhD in Business Administration from the David Eccles School of Business of the University of Utah. His research focuses on the strategy of multinational enterprises, cross-border acquisitions and the role of subsidiaries and a variety of institutional and cultural dimensions that influence MNCs' strategies, mainly using the resource-based view as the main theoretical foundation. Manuel Portugal Ferreira can be contacted at: manuel.portugal.ferreira@gmail.com

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