



LITERATURE IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: STRATEGIES OF MULTINATIONALS CORPORATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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Abstract

When it comes to the debate regarding corporate social responsibility and the strategy of multinationals corporations, can be said that these themes are strongly related and is an important international business issue. The literature points out those multinationals companies could be an important inductor of social and environmental behavior since they are present in several countries and deal with different stakeholders. Therefore, this paper intends to shed light on the relations between CSR and multinationals providing a systematic review about the issue (from Scopus, Web of Science and Science Direct) and directions for further research. The outcomes indicates research opportunities to analyze

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ze CSR multinationals for emerging countries by local authors through empirical research.

Keywords: CSR; Multinational; Sustainability; Strategy; Systematic literature review.

LITERATURA EN RESPONSABILIDAD SOCIAL CORPORATIVA: ESTRATEGIAS DE CORPORACIONES MULTINACIONALES Y DIRECCIONES PARA FUTURAS INVESTIGACIONES

Resumen

Cuando se trata del debate sobre la responsabilidad social empresarial y la estrategia de las corporaciones multinacionales, se puede decir que estos temas están estrechamente relacionados y es un importante tópico de negocios internacionales. La literatura señala que las empresas multinacionales podrían ser un inductor importante del comportamiento social y ambiental ya que están presentes en varios países y tratan con diferentes partes interesadas. Por lo tanto, este documento pretende hacer un análisis sobre las relaciones entre la RSE y las multinacionales que ofrecen una revisión sistemática sobre el tema (de Scopus, Web of Science y Science Direct) y las instrucciones para futuras investigaciones. Los resultados indican oportunidades de investigación para analizar multinacionales responsables socialmente para países emergentes por autores locales a través de investigación empírica.

Palabras-clave: RSE, Multinacionales, Sustentabilidad, Estrategia, Revisión sistemática de la literatura.

LITERATURA EM RESPONSABILIDADE SOCIAL CORPORATIVA: ESTRATÉGIAS DE EMPRESAS MULTINACIONAIS E DIREÇÕES PARA FUTURAS PESQUISAS

Resumo

Quando se trata do debate sobre responsabilidade social corporativa e a estratégia das empresas multinacionais, pode-se dizer que esses temas estão fortemente relacionados e são uma importante questão quando se diz respeito a negócios internacionais. A literatura aponta que as empresas multinacionais podem ser um importante indutor de comportamento social e ambiental, pois estão presentes em diversos países e lidam com diferentes stakeholders. Assim, este trabalho pretende lançar luz sobre as relações entre RSC e multinacionais, fornecendo uma revisão sistemática sobre a questão (da Scopus, da Web of Science e da Science Direct) e direções para futuras pesquisas. Os resultados indicam oportunidades de pesquisa para analisar multinacionais de RSC para países emergentes por autores locais por meio de pesquisa empírica.

Palavras-chave: RSC, Multinacional, Sustentabilidade, Estratégia, Revisão sistemática da literatura.

INTRODUCTION

The debate about the role of multinational enterprises (MNEs) in social and environmental development becomes a necessity, as well as being a contemporary theme in international business discussions (Sinkovics, Forsgren, Sinkovics, & Holmström-Lind, 2017). Such fact can be observed especially because of the reality of MNEs and its influence on global activities, as they deal with different institutional settings. This fact may accelerate or delay the process of sustainable development, both locally and globally (Dunning, 2009; Kolk & Van Tulder, 2010). However, as Egri and Ralston (2008) argue, rather than CSR and environmental responsibility, ethics and

governance have been emphasized by international management journals, which indicates that in the international business (IB) field, CSR importance is still being potentially ignored.

It is important to notice that many negative points about the MNEs operations have been pointed out by some scholars (e.g., Park, Chidlow, and Choi (2014) and Perraton (2007)) as obstacles that inhibit economic growth in developing countries. Moreover, it is said that if MNEs engage in actions that go deeper than economic and financial interests, it means, engage in actions that aims to achieve the social good through the use of their internal resources as being members of society, this negative impression can be significantly reduced (Park et al., 2014; Sheth & Babiak, 2010; Snider, Hill, & Martin, 2003).

In this sense, MNEs have to deal with the challenge of balancing their internationalization strategies with the range of actions within the scope of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Kolk & Van Tulder, 2010), setting up an average that companies can use to contribute in achieving the sustainable development accordant with society. Thus, a change can be observed in the reality of international business, since CSR begins to be considered strategic for multinational as it configures relevant part of the challenges of globalization (De Chiara & Spena, 2011; Dunning, 2009).

The attention given to CSR goes beyond a contemporary social concern, but it represents an important issue of international business, which is strongly related to the strategic behavior of multinational companies. While it can be seen as negative for some companies, it represents new business opportunities to others, allowing them to gain competitiveness by entering in new markets and developing new products and services (Pinkse & Kolk, 2012) and building up social legitimacy (Hawn, Chatterji, & Mitchell, 2011).

Based on the strategic position that CSR has had on the role of the MNEs, it is formulated the following research question: what is the panorama of international scientific research regarding corporate social responsibility of multinational companies? In this context this research aims to analyze the international scientific production on the subject CSR in the strategy of multinational companies. In order to do this, it was developed a systematic review of literature of articles published in national and international journals indexed by Web of Science, Scopus and Science Direct.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY STRATEGY IN MNES

Multinational companies are acting not only as economic agents, but especially as moral ones, responsible for global changes (De Chiara & Spena, 2011). They shall become aware of their power to create and destroy in order to choose the most appropriate strategies for supporting the sustainability and future prosperity of the global economy (Collier & Wanderley, 2005; De Chiara & Spena, 2011).

In analysis of multinational companies, a relevant topic is the relationship of such organizations with its stakeholders for the achievement of corporate social responsibility strategies. It highlights the importance of relationships with suppliers, since CSR is increasingly significant regarding supply chain management, as can be said that stakeholder engagement influences the effect of CSR on financial performance (Ansong, 2017; Ansong & Agyemang, 2016; Freeman, Harrison, & Wicks, 2007). in which can be seen a growing pressure to increase the level of monitoring to ensure greater control of the supplier. When considering that the CSR strategy of a multinational company is able to transfer effectively these practices to their foreign subsidiaries, the MNEs have the potential to function as mechanisms for the harmonization on the progress of standards of CSR into the international level (De Chiara & Spena, 2011).

Multinational companies live the challenge of adapting their CSR strategy in different institutional environments, which differ in the regulation of the company's activity, labor rules and en-

environmental and social requirements (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006). According to stakeholder demands, MNEs should respond to both local and global issues, with institutional pressures mostly leading to CSR actions (Husted & Allen, 2006). To meet these demands, companies have some tools for monitoring, measuring, encouraging and engaging CSR actions.

Moreover, MNEs need to work on obtaining local legitimacy and stakeholder recognition through the adoption of CSR practices that fit each environment. As Reimann, Ehrigott, Kaufmann, and Carter (2012) states, local legitimacy is essential for corporate survival and it can be achieved by acting in accordance to the local stakeholder environment rules and belief systems.

Preuss, Barkemeyer and Glavas (2016) emphasize the complexity of relating corporate values to practice in the reality of MNEs since, in general, the CSR strategy is assigned to the company's headquarters, and the practice must by that time take place in the different countries where it acts. Thus, the institutional theory is widely used in CSR studies, since corporate social behavior is influenced by institutional requirements (Frynas & Stephens, 2015; Lau, Lu, & Liang, 2016). In this sense, it is suggested that institutional pressures are closely related to stakeholder demands (Park et al., 2014; Reimann et al., 2012).

For a company to be considered as having a corporate social responsibility strategy, it has to go through what is called for Munilla and Miles (2005) as Social Responsibility Continuum. It begins with a compliance perspective with legal and ethical requirements. Moreover, it undergoes a strategic perspective, in which there is a change of business models. In this case, there is the inclusion of CSR strategies aiming to create economic return for shareholders. When it comes to a forced perspective, there is a pressure from stakeholders for companies to go beyond compliance interests or strategic and invest resources that may not be on the interest to shareholders (Miles, Munilla, & Darroch, 2006).

The term CSR should go beyond the management objectives of multinational companies. Even though being essential the effort to achieve its competitiveness goals through a global production network, such companies cannot fail to include questions about the adoption of a responsible behavior (Mohan, 2006). Corporate social responsibility extends the view of nature and the management of multinational companies, calling for a new theoretical point of view, requiring a new way of thinking the strategies of multinationals (De Chiara & Spina, 2011).

The CSR concept adopted by the present study was proposed by Knorrington & Nadvi (2016, p. 56) which states that Corporate social responsibility is "a process wherein corporate actors integrate economic, social and environmental concerns into their core business activities."

The CSR activities in multinational companies are seen as increasingly strategic in the sense that they affect the core business of the company and its growth, profitability and survival, as well as being a potential source of competitive advantage (Kolk & Pinkse, 2008; Porter & Kramer, 2006). Thus, Kolk and Van Tulder (2010) state that some companies are looking to link their CSR strategies for basic activities in order to manage international operations and thereby gain "permission" to act in different cultural and institutional contexts.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research is characterized as a systematic literature review. According to Waddington et al. (2012, p. 360) "a systematic review has a clear protocol for systematically searching defined databases over defined time period, with transparent criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of studies, as well as the analysis and reporting of study findings".

The criteria used to compile the survey were as it follows:

- a. chronological: it did not have search period of restriction to reach all possible work referred on the subject, so it was used throughout the range of databases Web of Science (1900-2015), Scopus (all years-2015) and Science Direct (1900-2015);
- b. terminology: the construction of the search string was made from the selection of key terms in the literature that matched the base “Corporate social responsibility + strategy + multinational corporation”. In addition the terms used in the sustainability reports of the companies belonging to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index were used to unite theoretical and practical data in the composition of a comprehensive and robust string;
- c. After different combinations, it came to the following string: Multinational AND (enterprise* OR Corporation*) (Topic) AND Strateg* (Topic) AND “Corporate social responsibility” or “Corporate responsibility” or “Corporate sustainability” or “Sustainability” or “Sustainable Performance” or “Sustainable Value” (Topic).
- d. databases: the intention was to have a broader view of what is being scientifically published on the subject, so we chose the three bases Web of Science™ Core Collection, Scopus and Science Direct, seeking complementarity among them (Affeldt & Vanti, 2009; D. F. Cruz et al., 2015; Manjarrez, Pico, & Díaz, 2016; Sartor, Orzes, Di Mauro, Ebrahimpour, & Nassimbeni, 2016; Vitorino Filho et al., 2015; Zimmer, Fröhling, & Schultmann, 2016);
- e. research areas: the papers were filtered into Web of Science™ Core Collection by Business economics, social sciences other topics, Engineering and, Operations research management Science. Therefore, into Scopus and Science Direct were used as filters Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences and, Engineering;
- f. document types: it was chosen to check for Article + Review, because it works peer reviewed;
- g. language: it was decided to search for articles in English only.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The articles found through search terms were submitted to the following exclusion criteria in order to refine the sample. Initially refinement was performed by reading the abstracts, being considered the following exclusion criteria: those works that did not address the three main themes of this research - corporate social responsibility, strategy and multinationals. The refined sample from these exclusion criteria underwent read the full text to perform the steps of the data analysis. However, if the study did not present adherence to the research topic as well as the absence of the necessary elements for their classification, it would also be deleted.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was done in two stages. In the first stage, descriptive analysis of articles, data were analyzed using one of content analysis techniques, categorical analysis (Bardin, 1977; Govindan, Rajendran, Sarkis, & Murugesan, 2015). Studies were used to classify some categories: nationality of the authors, surveyed sectors, journals, year, methodological procedures and number of citations. The second stage of analysis, called exploratory, it consists on the identification of the CSR settings present in the analyzed articles as well as theories used to address the issue.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The consultations were held 2016. The search results are shown in Table 1, along with their respective search terms.

Table 1.
Deleting steps and final articles sample.

Steps of Exclusion	Quantity of Found Papers
(=)Total articles found	270
(-) Duplicated articles eliminated	38
(-)Articles eliminated by reading the abstracts	76
(-)Articles eliminated by reading the full paper	41
Total Articles	115

After collecting an initial sample of 270 works, the exclusion steps were performed. The first step was to identify the duplicated works, that were collected in more than one database. Right after that, by reading the articles was possible to remove works that didn't fit into the research topics, and the sample had then the size of 156 works.

To perform the steps of the data analysis, the articles were subjected to a full reading of the texts. Those studies that showed no adhesion to the subject of research and that did not present the required elements for the achievement of the analysis steps were also discarded.

Finally, 41 works were excluded resulting in a final sample of 115 articles for analysis.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF ARTICLES

As posted by Govindan et al. (2015) and Jabbour (2013) the following categories were analyzed in this stage: nationality of the authors, main researchers of the topic, surveyed sectors, journals, years, methodological procedures and citations.

The first category, nationality of the authors, was considered with the purpose of verifying which countries are having a research focused on the issue of CSR as a strategy of multinationals. The analysis as presented in Figure 1, showed that most of the authors (20%) are from the United States.

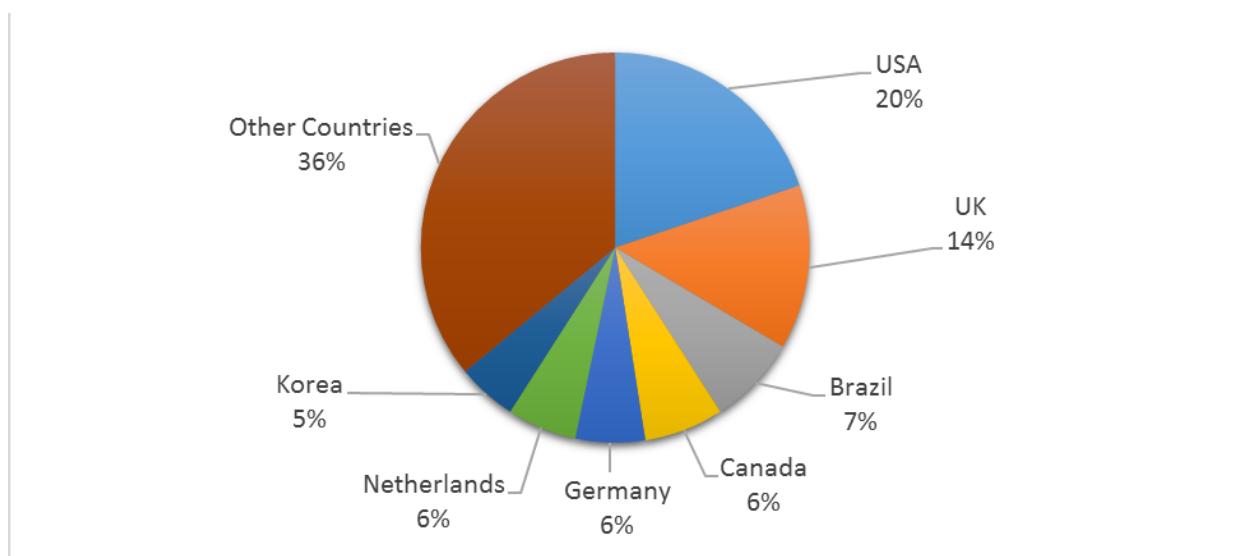


Figure 1. Nationality of the authors of the sample.

As for the main researchers of the topic, it can be seen that some authors stand out in the sample analyzed by providing a quantitative production superior to the others. Table 2 shows the names and absolute quantities of articles of each author. The literature is dominated by authors from developed countries. This fact shows the importance of increasing the presence of authors from emerging countries as analyzed by Amui, Jabbour, Jabbour, and Kannan (2017) about dynamic capabilities and sustainability.

Table 2.
Main researchers sample.

Researchers	Quantity of Papers
A. Kolk	6
L. B. Cruz	4
D. B. Allen	3
B. W. Husted	3
D. Jamali	3
J. Tan	3
R. van Tulder	3

Regarding the surveyed sectors, it is observed the absence of a definition, where in 81% of the articles was not possible to know the analyzed sector for two reasons: lack of information or multi-sectorial analysis without discretionary what could be these sectors. Articles presenting such data, analyzed the following sectors in descending order of representativeness: oil (29%), mining (26%), retail (15%), food (15%) and automobile industry (15%).

In this case, we pointed out the strong presence of extractive activities in the analysis. Few industries influence the society’s welfare as extractive companies, such as oil, gas, mining, petrochemical. In one sense, the large scale extraction of natural resources causes social impacts and alarm environmentalists (World Bank, 2003). However, the growth of these companies can generate substantial life quality improvements for poor communities and boost many manufacturing activities (Hilson, 2012). From this perspective, it would be important to analyze multinationals from emerging countries from CSR perspective. Besides, it would be interesting to compare the CSR behavior of multinationals of emerging countries abroad and origin country.

As to the main Journals present in the sample, a concentration was observed as approximately 40% (Figure 2) of publications related to CSR in multinationals were concentrated in five Journals as it follows in descending order of representativeness, with the respective absolute values of articles: Journal of Business Ethics (24), Business Strategy and the Environment (4), International Business Review (4), Journal of International Business Studies (4), and Journal of World Business (4).

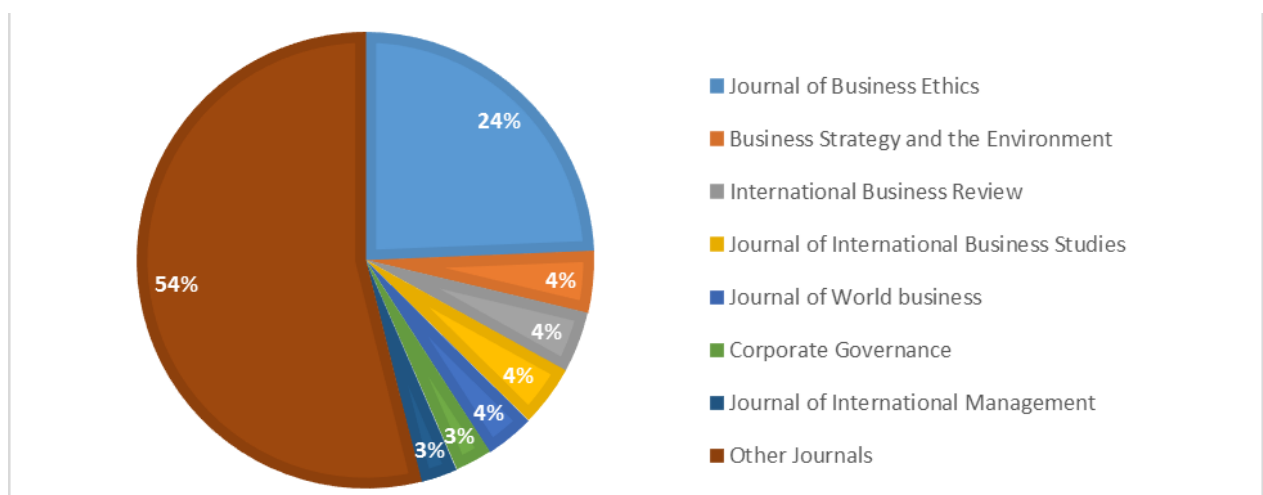


Figure 2. Journals contained in the analyzed sample.

The distribution of articles per year, even though not having been placed any restriction on the period of searching, introduced from the year 1993 with only an article, with the continuation of the research on the topic in 1998 (Figure 3). The quantitative peak of the studies took place in 2009, and from there the researches remained being represented in all subsequent years.

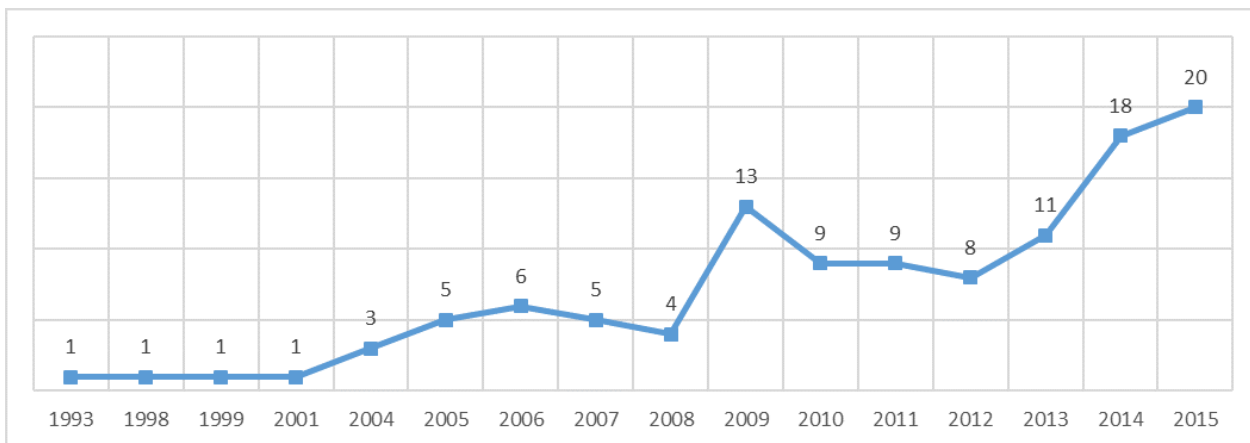


Figure 3. Year of the articles analyzed.

About the methodological procedures, first it was made the subdivision between qualitative, quantitative and mixed approaches where it was observed that 81% of the sample showed a qualitative approach, followed by 16% with a quantitative approach and only 3% mixed. Finally, the articles were divided between theoretical and empirical, and 76% were defined as empirical.

Using the Google Scholar statistics, it was possible to identify the number of citations for each article, being able to get the total citations of articles published in each year, as it follows in Figure 4. Based on these results, it was possible to identify that the articles published from 2006 and 2008 were the ones with the higher citations average. In complement, the average of citation per year of each article (Appendices A) shows that the highest averages (more than 30 citations per year) are from articles published in 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2013.

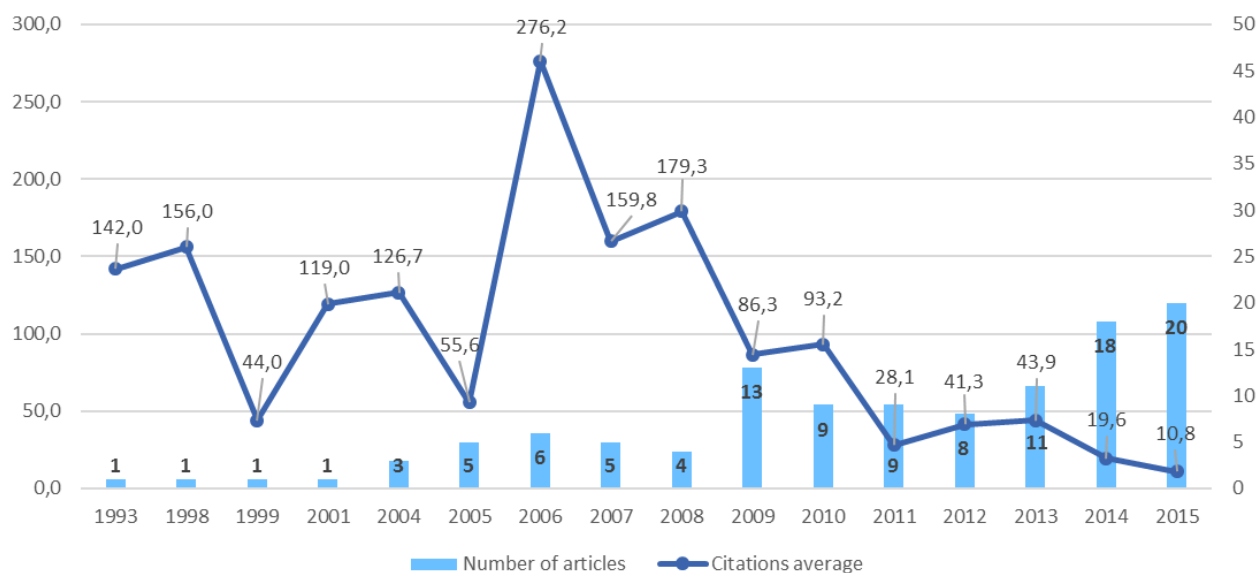


Figure 4. Citations average.

These statistics strengthen the fact previously stated in this article that, since 2009, the number of articles has significantly increased, that is to say, the papers published just before this period can be seen as a role model and a start point for the further studies.

EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF ARTICLES

In about 50% of the sample of articles analyzed it could be identified a definition of the term corporate social responsibility, which were separated to check whether there was a conceptual coherence in the articles or not, considering they are about the same subject matter. The first article of the sample analyzed dated from 1993 and presented the believes that the concept of social responsibility as “involves decisions, actions and outcomes regarding the issues, the stakeholders and the society at large” (Amba-rao 1993, p. 555).

To Husted and Allen (2006, p. 839) “corporate social responsibility is defined as the firm’s obligation to respond to the externalities created by market action”. This view is supported by Fukukawa and Teramoto (2009), Huemer (2010) and Wiig and Kolstad (2010), and they complement by saying it’s the sense of social obligation of the company that stimulates them to make decisions that are beneficial to the goals and values of society. In addition, Rodriguez et al. (2006), Husted and Allen (2009), Hah and Freeman (2014) and Park and Ghauri (2014) understand CSR as the commitment of the company beyond legal obligations, advancing in social and environmental causes.

One of the difficulties on CSR concepts of service is the definition of what would be the company’s stakeholders. It is important to point out that the term “stakeholder” appears in about 30% of the definitions of the term found in the sample. Authors such as Strike, Gao, and Bansal (2006), Hartman, Rubin, and Dhanda (2007), L. B. Cruz and Pedrozo (2009), Pedersen (2009), Tan (2009), Yang and Rivers (2009), Wiig and Kolstad (2010), García-Rodríguez et al. (2013) and Ghalib and Agupusi (2014) present CSR as attendance of the needs of stakeholders, however the challenge for managers is to identify who would be such stakeholders and what are their needs. This fact indicates the importance of external factors leading to companies CSR behavior. Nevertheless, the broad aspect of CSR containing workers, society, consumers, environment is not considered in all CSR concepts found. One example is the paper of Hede Skagerlind (2015) that states the social aspects as only labor conditions.

In general, we observe that the latest definitions (2010-2015) highlight CSR as a set of voluntary actions aimed to both social benefit as the company’s reputation and competitiveness of it. It is observed that with the advance of the discussion of sustainability, the own concept of CSR has incorporated the term, thus the work of Wesselink et al. (2015, p. 497) states that “CSR concentrates on the contribution of companies to achieve said sustainability goal, for instance by balancing people, planet, and profit in their business practices”.

Regarding the theories used to treat the subject, Figure 5 shows the percentages that each theory was found in the sample.

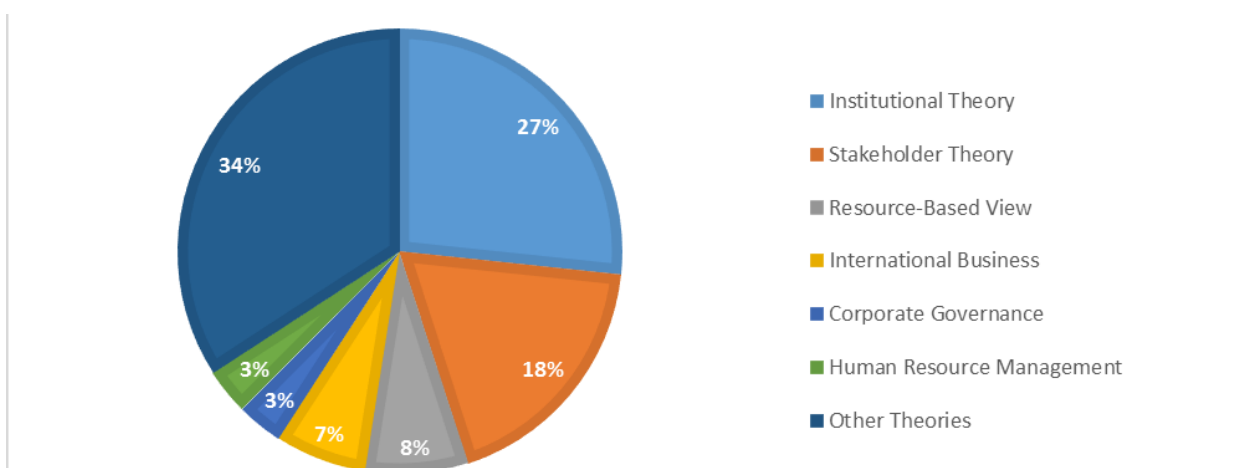


Figure 5. Theories used in the analyzed articles.

Corroborating with Frynas and Stephens (2015), the Institutional Theory showed a higher percentage in the sample, such fact suggests that the performance in different institutional environments can be a factor that influences the corporate social responsibility of the company, and this can be presented to a greater or lesser degree of requirement on reality of the country. The second theory with greater representation, Stakeholder Theory, corroborates the results of the CSR settings, where the term stakeholder is frequent, and it serves as the basis for the company to define its practices of corporate social responsibility.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this article was to analyze the international scientific production on the subject CSR in the strategy of multinational companies. Therefore, it was performed a systematic review having as basis of consultation papers published in journals indexed to Web of Science, Scopus and Science Direct. As posted by Amui et al. (2017) and Lage Jr and Godinho Filho (2010) this type of paper is important to frame the knowledge involved and to provide directions for further research.

Given the results found it was observed that the research topic comes from a recent data, as the main articles published that address concomitantly the CSR topics and strategy of multinational companies were from 2009. The countries that stood out as researchers of the theme were the US and the UK and the main journal that has published works referred on the topic of this study is the Journal of Business Ethics.

Besides the concentration in the articles published almost a decade ago, it is possible to note that recent studies also have important citation averages, which means that, with new theories and studies developed in the field, scholars are also being able to use these new publications as a start point to create new research projects.

About the definition of corporate social responsibility, it is highlighted the lack of consensus on the concept coverage, since the authors that deal with the topic diverge from each other, while some incorporate the social and environmental perspectives, others take only one of them and with different approaches within them. One bright spot that had been observed is that the companies of the analyzed sample have incorporated CSR strategy not only on reactive laws, but as business competitiveness source, advancing what is imposed by the rules of the countries where they operate.

Regarding the main theoretical approaches used to address CSR in multinational, it was observed that 66% of the analyzed sample uses the same 6 theories, which are in descending order of representativeness: Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Resource-Based View, International Business, Corporate Governance and Human Resource Management. The relationship between stakeholders and institutional differences that multinational companies have to face justify the featured use of such theories, where the key terms contained in these CSR settings.

As directions for further research, the results demonstrate that there is plenty of space to develop studies about CSR in multinationals for emerging countries by local authors. We understand the local authors would have advantage in analyzing these multinationals, undertaking qualitative and quantitative research.

Another possibility is to undertake qualitative research in emerging countries formulating propositions comparing to results reached in developed countries. In this sense, there is room for partnerships between researchers from emerging and developed countries. From sectorial perspective, considering the environmental accidents of extractive companies, it would be interesting to investigate the CSR behavior of these companies from Resource-Based View perspective, which means the resources involved in CSR actions and programs and how they are evolving.

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APPENDICES A

Table 3.
Main studies according to average citations by year.

Author	Title	Year	Citations	Average Citations By Year
Kolk, A.	Sustainability, accountability and corporate governance: Exploring multinationals' reporting practices.	2008	498	55,3
Husted, B. W., & Allen, D. B.	Corporate social responsibility in the multinational enterprise: Strategic and institutional approaches.	2006	576	52,4
Kolk, A., & Van Tulder, R.	International business, corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.	2010	293	41,9
Baumann-Pauly, D., Wickert, C., Spence, L. J., & Scherer, A. G.	Organizing Corporate Social Responsibility in Small and Large Firms: Size Matters.	2013	161	40,3
Strike, V. M., Gao, J., & Bansal, P.	Being good while being bad: social responsibility and the international diversification of US firms.	2006	373	33,9
Rodriguez, P., Siegel, D. S., Hillman, A., & Eden, L.	Three lenses on the multinational enterprise: Politics, corruption, and corporate social responsibility.	2006	362	32,9
Gugler, P., & Shi, J. Y.	Corporate Social Responsibility for Developing Country Multinational Corporations: Lost War in Pertaining Global Competitiveness?	2009	230	28,8
Aragón-Correa, J. A., & Rubio-Lopez, E. A.	Proactive Corporate Environmental Strategies: Myths and Misunderstandings.	2007	284	28,4
Park, B. I., & Ghauri, P. N.	Determinants influencing CSR practices in small and medium sized MNE subsidiaries: A stakeholder perspective.	2015	53	26,5
Hartman, L. P., Rubin, R. S., & Dhanda, K. K.	The communication of corporate social responsibility: United states and European union multinational corporations.	2007	245	24,5
Bondy, K., & Starkey, K.	The dilemmas of internationalization: Corporate social responsibility in the multinational corporation.	2014	66	22,0
Gold, S., Hahn, R., & Seuring, S.	Sustainable supply chain management in "Base of the Pyramid" food projects-A path to triple bottom line approaches for multinationals?	2013	86	21,5