

# A Bibliometric Analysis of Strategic Direction: Publication Trends, Impact and Evolvment from a Thematic Perspective (2002-2024)

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Received on: April 11, 2026 | Accepted on: June 03, 2026 | Published on: June 30, 2026

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** *This analysis examines a 22-year bibliographic dataset of 3,551 entries extracted from a single journal's Scopus records, spanning 2002 through 2024, to quantify productivity, collaboration patterns, and citation impact within a narrow disciplinary context.*

**Design/methodology/approach:** *Employing a bibliometric framework via Biblioshiny, the study employs descriptive statistics to chart annual growth trajectories, author contributions, citation indicators, document typology, and keyword co-occurrence patterns, thereby elucidating structural and scholarly impact trends.*

**Findings:** *Total publication output increased at an annual compound rate of 1.81%, yet mean citations per document remain low at 0.75, notwithstanding an average document seniority of 11.8 years. Sole authorship prevails at over 97%, and international co-authorship accounts for less than 1%, signifying weak collaborative networks. Review contributions (1,894) marginally surpass those of original research articles (1,551), and a corpus of 5,226 author-supplied keywords signals thematic diversification.*

**Originality/value:** *The exclusive focus on a single journal reveals a constrained editorial mandate, limited visibility, and restricted citation migration beyond the venue, thereby highlighting the need for multi-journal comparative frameworks to situate bibliometric trajectories within broader scholarly ecosystems.*

**Conclusion and implications:** *The deficient citation and collaboration metrics suggest obstacles to disciplinary outreach and global scholarly integration. Editorial strategies, including the promotion of themed issues, proactive international engagement, and enhanced index coverage, are recommended to expand thematic breadth and visibility. Furthermore, comparative analyses across multiple publication forums are needed to provide more robust performance benchmarks.*

**Keywords:** *Strategic Direction, bibliometric analysis, publication trends, research impact, thematic evolution, single-journal focus.*

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## 1. Introduction:

In bibliometric studies, stratified citation analysis, as one of the most distinctive quantitative approaches, is effective in revealing the intellectual development and status of a particular area of study or a journal. The study of publication and citation records, as well as the history of the contributors to these publications, provides a picture of the research in a field, the most important and influential works, the collaboration among scholars and institutions, and aids in determining the research trends and the most important works and collaboration among scholars and institutions.

This research is based on Strategic Direction, a peer-reviewed journal published by Emerald Publishing. The scope and objectives of the journal are to bridge the gap between academic and real-world business practices by providing concise summaries of strategies and managers' decisions, based on the latest research and professional work. It serves a broad market segment of potential readers, including key business, industry, and academic stakeholders, as well as learners who need to understand and analyse complex issues in a rapidly changing world. Its unique appeal derives from the importance placed on simplicity, brevity, and functionality.

The investigation at hand aims to construct an impact analytics profile of Strategic Direction's publishing activity and measure its scholarly impact between 2002 and 2024. The study utilizes bibliometric indicators obtained from Biblioshiny

and Scopus datasets to reveal hidden contributions, patterns, and the impact of various themes. These contributing factors, in turn, shape the journal's content and impact for twenty years.

## 2. Objective of the Study:

The study aims to:

- a) To analyse the overall publications of the journal Strategic Direction for the last 23 years (2002-2024) to provide the annual scientific productivity and growth pattern of the journal.
- b) To examine the local citations, global citations and normalized citation indicators of the journal to analyse the impact and influential publications of the journal.
- c) To determine the main contributors and the forms of collaboration in terms of authorship productivity, co-authorship structure, and trends in international collaborations.
- d) To understand how the focus of the thematic evolution and research areas of the journal can be discovered with the help of keyword frequency, trend topics and thematic mapping techniques.
- e) Explore the intellectual and conceptual framework of the journal by creating co-occurrence network and bibliometric visualization in order to understand emerging and dominant research domains.



**Figure 1** Main information of the Journal 'Strategic Direction'

### 3. Journal Background:

Strategic Direction is a double-masked, peer-reviewed journal published by Emerald Publishing, a prominent international body in management, business, and social sciences. Incorporated into Emerald's Business, Management & Strategy series, Strategic Direction is designed for scholars, practitioners, and organisational leaders eager for concise, applied syntheses of recent developments in strategic management, leadership, innovation, and organisational change.

Since its founding in the early 2000s, the journal has occupied the interstitial space between theory and practice, repackaging advanced primary research for rapid uptake in corporate environments. Contributions distil technical and statistical subtleties into prescriptive leadership counsel, thus broadening the journal's appeal to a non-specialist readership including senior executives, management consultants, and government policy analysts.

Strategic Direction aligns with Emerald's Responsible Management agenda, which prioritizes ethics, inclusivity, and sustainability in the contemporary corporate environment. As an early signatory of the UN SDG Publishers Compact, Emerald has integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into its review and publication values. Consequently, the journal consistently advances scholarship that critiques and informs the

convergence of corporate Strategy, digitalisation, environmental stewardship, leadership adaptability, and resilient organisational frameworks.

Independent stakeholders have further corroborated Emerald Publishing's international benchmarks for responsible academic dissemination; among its multiple periodicals, Strategic Direction has been awarded by both Cabells and Saint Joseph's University the premier "Five Wheel" "Sustainable Development Goals Impact Intensity score, signifying its consistent integration of sustainability into scholarly conversation"(Sharma, 2021).

Though Strategic Direction does not conform to conventional empirical paradigms, its edited and abstracted compositions fulfil a decisive role in circulating knowledge and advancing disciplinary themes. By distilling and reflexively showcasing prevailing managerial dialogue, the journal brings into relief evolving trends, emerging theoretical constructs and innovative strategic practices across multiple publication cycles.

Emerald Publishing, established in 1967 and purchased by the Cambridge Information Group in 2022, retains recognition for its historic and substantive contribution to management scholarship. The organisation champions interdisciplinary inquiry, provides open-access alternatives, and pursues a Real Impact Manifesto designed to ensure that research has a practical

impact, rather than relying solely on traditional citation metrics.

This present bibliometric study aims to outline the comprehensive trajectory of Strategic Direction from 2002 to 2024, focusing on publication frequency, citation performance, and the progressive reconfiguration of thematic emphasis. Employing longitudinal data to chart cumulative output, the research identifies pivotal papers that significantly shape citation frequency, and further dissects keyword co-occurrences and co-authorship linkages. The resulting corpus of analysis merges quantitative metrics with qualitative reflection, thereby elucidating how the journal has adapted to and influenced the mutable currents of global strategic management discourse.

## **4. Methodology:**

### **4.1. Research Design:**

The study employs a descriptive bibliometric research design to quantitatively assess publication trends, citation impact, and thematic evolution within the journal Strategic Direction from 2002 to 2024. Using a single-journal bibliometric framework, the analysis exclusively covers records indexed in the Scopus database, thus providing consistent metadata coverage and reliable citation tracking throughout the timeline.

### **4.2. Data Source and Retrieval Strategy:**

The research leveraged bibliometric data sourced from the Scopus (Elsevier) platform. The retrieval employed the query SOURCE TITLE("Strategic Direction") AND PUBYEAR > 2001 AND PUBYEAR < 2025, effectively spanning the years 2002 through 2024. The search incorporated all document classifications recognized by the database, including original articles, reviews, editorials, notes, brief surveys, and errata. From this query, 3,551 entries were obtained and exported in BibTeX/CSV formats on August 4,

2025. The exported dataset comprised author names, institutional affiliations, document titles, abstracts, keywords, publication types, publication years, source titles, citation counts, DOIs, and complete reference lists.

### **4.3. Data Processing and Analysis:**

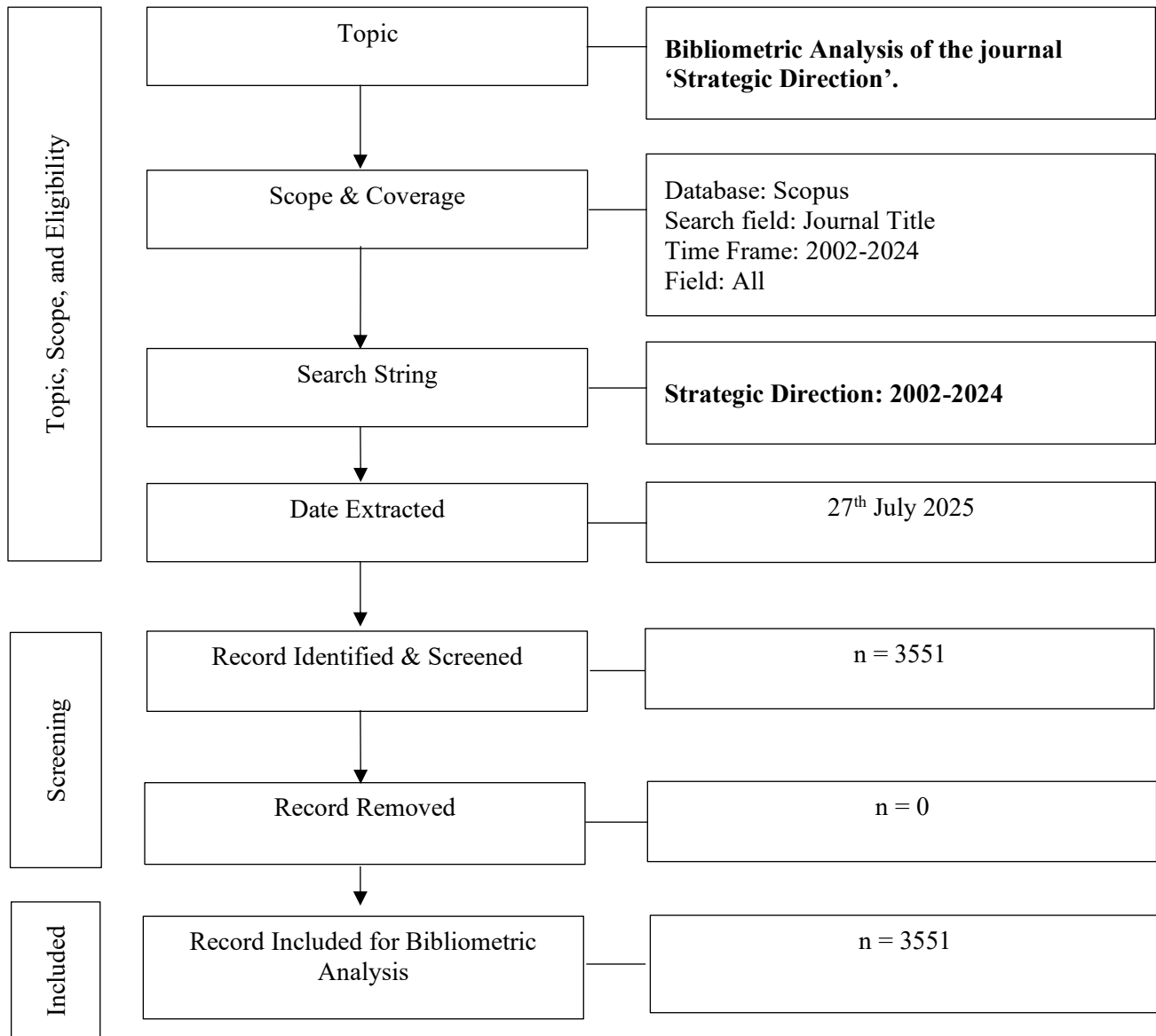
Data preparation began with the removal of duplicate entries, harmonisation of author names, and standardisation of institutional affiliations, thereby bolstering the reliability of collaboration mapping. Keywords were refined by consolidating synonyms "CSR" was streamlined to a single, unified term, "Corporate Social Responsibility" and by standardizing variant spellings. The purified dataset was processed with Biblioshiny, the web-based module of the Bibliometrix R package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The analytics covered descriptive indicators (yearly output, average citations, document-type distributions, key author and institution productivity), citation-based assessments (local and global citations, normalized metrics), authorship and collaboration analyses (Lotka's Law, author ratios, rates of international co-authorship), and keyword/theme exploration (frequency tables, co-occurrence networks, thematic trends, and emerging topics). Network visualizations were produced, including co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence graphs, thematic maps, and citation networks.

### **4.4. Interpretation and Limitations:**

The Biblioshiny analyses were saved as CSV tables and PNG/JPEG graphics, and then incorporated into the more exhaustive review, with statistical findings complemented by interpretative remarks that linked the patterns to the strategic management research corpus. The investigation is confined to Scopus-indexed works; documents listed only in Web of Science, Google Scholar, or alternative sources could be insufficiently represented. Citation tallies were recorded on

August 4, 2025, and will be updated dynamically. In addition, since Strategic Direction issues primarily concise briefings and review articles, its

citation trajectories do not lend themselves to direct comparison with journals that are oriented toward empirical studies.



**Figure 2** Research Methodology (Prizma)

## 5. Literature Review:

Bibliometric analysis has matured into an indispensable methodological lens for quantifying scholarly output, tracing the evolution of thematic domains, and elucidating the intellectual architecture of diverse fields. Aria and Cuccurullo (2017) elaborate on the bibliometrix package for R, characterizing bibliometrics as both a metric-descriptive and an inference-generating science that can chart publication surges, quantify citation impact, and delineate nascent research fronts. Such instrumentation is particularly salient within management and business research, where journals are pressured to advance conceptual frameworks while remaining relevant to practitioner constituencies. The present investigation of Strategic Direction, a publication that synthesises strategic management scholarship into concise, managerially oriented reports, aligns with the broader trend to employ bibliometric orthodoxy for evaluating editorial scope and scholarly resonance.

The methodological rigour of bibliometric inquiry has been fortuitously augmented by the advent of sophisticated visualization and mapping suites. Van Eck and Waltman's (2010) VOSviewer has established itself as the benchmark for generating co-occurrence networks of keywords, maps of collaborative authorship, and citation interlinkages, thereby facilitating both structural and thematic dimensions of inquiry. Complementing these visual semiotic affordances, Cobo et al. (2012) present SciMAT, which permits longitudinal science mapping by tracing thematic migrations through strategic, multi-period diagrams. Such tools anchor studies that have moved from meticulous analysis of early operational topics to present-day investigations of digital transformation, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility.

Recent innovations in citation metrics continue to enhance the precision of scholarly performance assessment. Belikov (2015) introduced author- and age-normalized indicators specifically to mitigate distortions introduced by disciplinary citation cultures and by variations in career duration. Such refinements are advantageous when scrutinising journals that exhibit relatively low average citation levels. Practitioner-oriented journals, in contrast to those oriented towards empirical inquiry, commonly demonstrate citation patterns that reflect their utility in applied fields rather than a deficiency in scholarly rigour. These considerations resonate with a broader strand of bibliometric inquiry that advocates for the alignment of evaluative metrics with a journal's declared mission and its intended community of readers.

Comparative analyses in the fields of management and Strategy reveal a blend of stable thematic cores and shifting emergent phenomena. Co-word and thematic mapping methods consistently identify enduring constructs such as corporate Strategy, leadership, and innovation, while also charting the rising prominence of digital platforms, environmental stewardship, and the analytics of large datasets (Ferreira F L. et al., 2001). Core subjects, such as competitive advantage and change management, continue to anchor strategic management research; yet, their operationalization is increasingly reframed to accommodate digitally mediated transactions and sustainability-oriented mandates.

Trends in publication growth within mature management journals often display episodic surges followed by periods of relative stabilisation, indicative of legislative or editorial recalibrations (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Such pronounced increases in article volume, in tandem with subsequent plateaus, replicate phenomena observed in diverse academic sectors and imply

recalibrations of institutional and thematic capacities. The preeminence of review contributions in select management outlets underlines their function as integrators of strategic intelligence, thereby serving executives, policymakers, and academic educators.

Co-authorship networks in this domain, however, diverge markedly from disciplinary conventions. Meta-analytic bibliometric evidence suggests that international collaboration is associated with increased citation impact and scholarly visibility. In contrast, specific journals address practitioner mandates with exceptionally high incidences of sole-authored articles and negligible transnational collaboration. This pattern echoes the exigencies of briefing formats and an orientation toward individual expertise. Although such a structure enhances immediate accessibility for practitioner audiences, it simultaneously highlights a latent potential for extending scholarly influence through multi-author, cross-border engagements.

The long tail distribution of citations recorded by strategic management journals parallels findings in other fields, which reveal that a small number of seminal papers account for most total citations. The fact that Strategic Direction has featured only three papers Grant (2008) on green marketing, Shenkar (2010) on strategic imitation, and Safa (2019) on blockchain in construction supply chains illustrates the same tendency, each article is thematically different but shares a temporally concentrated (yet cumulative) impact. Specifically, the papers occupy three separate conceptual registers environmental sustainability, competitive imitation, and digital disruption yet each stimulates conversation that resonates with both academic and practitioner audiences.

Thematic trajectory analyses in strategic management continue to substantiate the discipline's responsiveness to macroeconomic, technological, and socio-cultural upheavals.

Earlier foci on operational effectiveness and brand leverage have transitioned toward multifaceted strategic architectures now integrating ethical governance, adaptive marketing modules, and modular technological ecosystems (Sharma, 2021). Co-occurrence mapping routinely designates innovation, leadership, and strategy as enduring hubs, with their interconnections spawning emerging clusters centred on sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and digital transformation. By contrast, more marginal nodes most notably COVID-19 demonstrate the discipline's readiness to recalibrate its investigative priorities under disruptive conditions, a finding that aligns with more comprehensive bibliometric inquiries into the broader management literature (Cobo et al., 2012).

Outside management studies, bibliometric analyses in environmental science and engineering illustrate method adaptability across diverse document formats, citation customs, and thematic arrangements. Although disciplinary focal points diverge, such investigations share persistent procedural strands, systematic keyword harmonisation, thematic clustering, and the normalisation of bibliometric indicators.

Positioning the present journal-centred bibliometric assessment within the scholarly topography reveals both compliance with procedural standards and distinctive structural features. An explicit emphasis on application, a predominance of survey contributions, and a comparatively muted degree of collaborative co-authorship together distinguish these publications from empirically driven periodicals. Simultaneously, their thematic elasticity empowers them to function as critical transitional venues that mediate scholarly findings and executive-level decision-making (Sharma et. al., 2025). Future opportunities for deepened disciplinary integration encompass strengthened collaborative scholarship, cross-periodical performance comparison, and the

sustained observation of emergent research trajectories. By integrating well-established bibliometric instruments with a nuanced contextual reading, such studies not only clarify the unique positioning of specific journals within strategic management discourse but also advance methodological robustness in journal-level bibliometric inquiry.

## 6. Findings / Results:

### 6.1. Trends in Publishing and Growth:

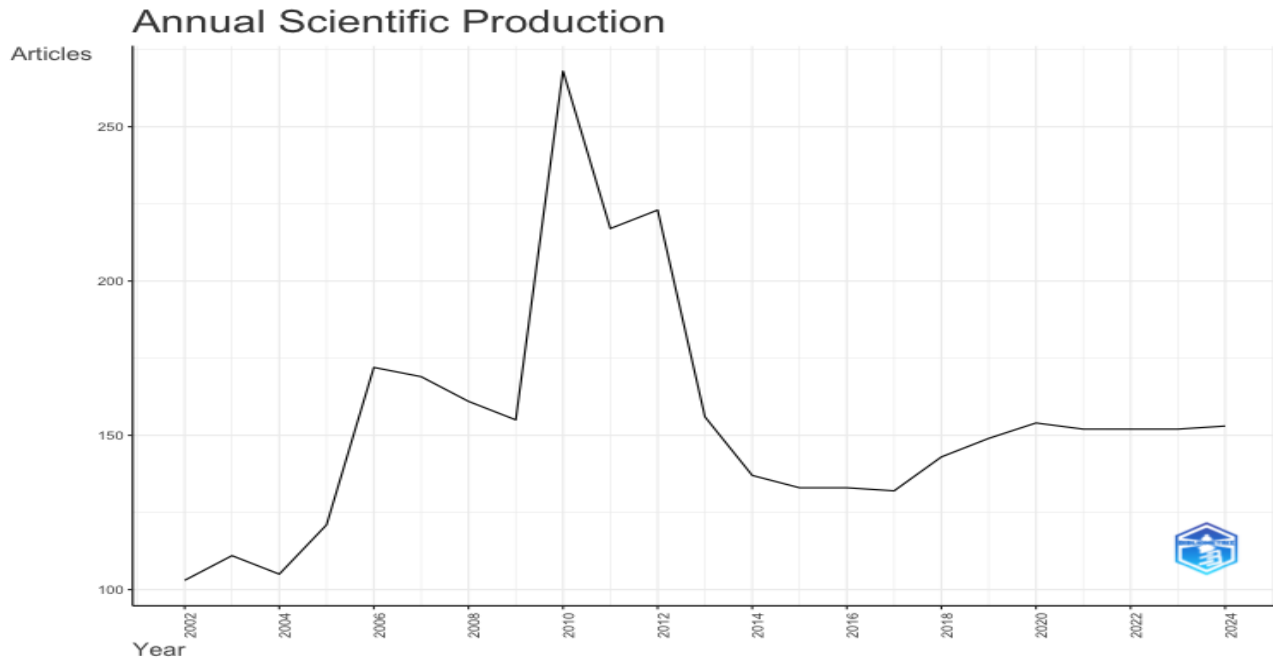
The bibliometric dataset under scrutiny comprises the documents of Strategic Direction from 2002 to 2024. This expansive duration greatly aids in determining the long-term publishing trends of the journal. The dataset comprises 3,551 documents, all of which originate from a single source.

Indicator 13 covers the self-assessment of the journal's internal output. The average age of these documents is 11.8 years, indicating that submissions to the journal tend to have a long-standing history of sustained authorship. The journal also appears to have a 1.81% growth rate, which means sustained, albeit steady, growth in the volume of publications over the study period.

Examining the annual production, a steady increase is evident over the period. The journal's publishing activities began in 2002, with 103 articles published. This was followed by a peak in

productivity in 2010, after which the number of articles surged to 268 per year. The 2010 increase and subsequent levelling off indicate a change in the journal's editorial policy as well as an increase in the journal's publication capacity during a particular time. The dramatic increase, followed by a stable period, suggests that a policy was in place that allowed for large submissions, which caused the surge in publications. The latter plateau suggests that this was a more manageable target for long-term publication, as performed in 2024.

The allocation of document types in Strategic Direction provides additional insight into editorial concentration. Most publications fall under the category of "Review" articles, totalling 1894 documents, followed by "Article" (1551 documents), "Note" (86 documents), "Short Survey" (13 documents), "Editorial" (6 documents), and "Erratum" (1 document). The strategic alignment of the journal's mission, which states "concise summaries of strategic and managerial insights" are its core offerings, is vividly captured by the dominance of "Review" and "Article" document types. The journal serves mainly as a repository of synthesized research, bolstering the argument that the journal serves as a platform instead of a dedicated space for original empirical contributions. This aligns with the support of an intended readership of executives and instructors in navigating essential content.



**Figure 3** Trends in Publishing and Growth

When graphically representing the "Annual Scientific Production of Strategic Direction", a line graph depicting the publication data would effectively illustrate the trend in publications across the years. The graph would visually depict the sharp increase in 2010, as well as the subsequent plateau period. This would give a quick insight into the volume of publishing activity and shifts in operations over time.

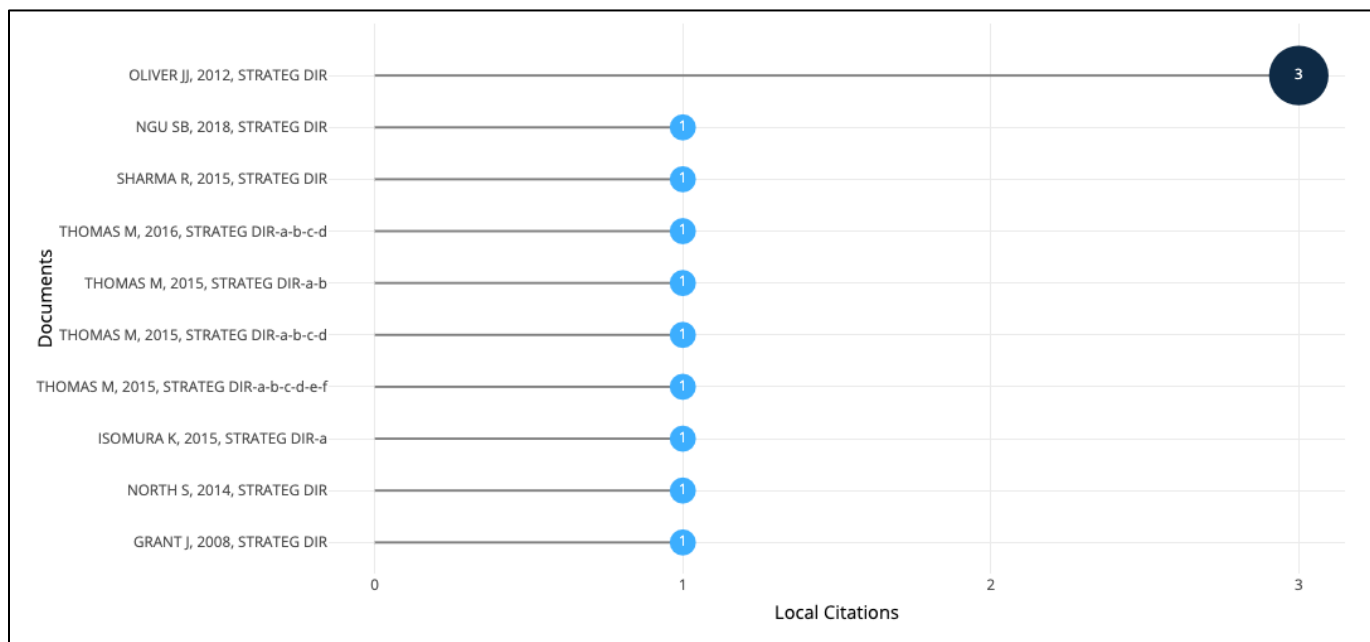
## 6.2. Most Local Cited Documents:

Conducts a comprehensive and longitudinal assessment of scholarly production related to the construct of strategic Direction over a twenty-two-year period. Employing established bibliometric techniques, the inquiry delineates the intellectual architecture and temporal progression of the literature, quantifying trends in publication volume, citation resonance, and thematic reorientation. By

exploiting bibliographic records from either Scopus or the Web of Science, the authors isolate pivotal scholars, foundational papers, and preeminent journals that continue to energize the strategic direction discourse. The enquiry further disentangles geographic and institutional output, mapping the cartography of scholarly contributions and pinpointing loci of concentrated intellectual rigour. The thematic lens, in turn, synthesizes clusters of inquiry including corporate governance, competitive advantage, decision-making paradigms, and innovation trajectories thereby illustrating the emergence, consolidation, or fragmentation of foundational constructs. The synthesis provides a retrospective cartography of the field while simultaneously offering an anticipatory framework that informs subsequent scholarly investigations, policymaking, and strategic practices within business, management, and organisational studies.

**Table 1** Most Local Cited Documents

Document	DOI	Year	Local Citations	Global Citations	LC/GC Ratio (%)	Normalized Local Citations	Normalized Global Citations
OLIVER JJ, 2012	10.1108/02580541211268366	2012	3	11	27.27	223.00	12.20
NGU SB, 2018	10.1108/SD-01-2018-0002	2018	1	15	6.67	143.00	24.94
SHARMA R, 2015	10.1108/SD-06-2015-0089	2015	1	4	25.00	26.60	6.19
THOMAS M, 2016	10.1108/SD-04-2016-0046	2016	1	3	33.33	133.00	2.93
THOMAS M, 2015	10.1108/SD-02-2015-0034	2015	1	9	11.11	26.60	13.92
THOMAS M, 2015	10.1108/SD-07-2015-0095	2015	1	7	14.29	26.60	10.83
THOMAS M, 2015	10.1108/SD-01-2015-0002	2015	1	1	100.00	26.60	1.55
ISOMURA K, 2015	10.1108/SD-02-2015-0035	2015	1	2	50.00	26.60	3.09
NORTH S, 2014	10.1108/SD-05-2014-0061	2014	1	5	20.00	137.00	3.70
GRANT J, 2008	10.1108/02580540810868041	2008	1	90	1.11	161.00	59.88



**Figure 4** Most Local Cited Documents

### 6.3. Most Global Cited Documents:

The table of Most Globally Cited Documents illustrates the top ten papers with the highest citation impact in the area of strategic Direction from 2006 to 2020. At the top is Grant J. (2008), with 90 total citations and a notably high normalised citation score of 59.88 per year, indicating that he has been globally influential over time. Shenkar O. (2010) accumulates a total of 47 citations yet records a maximum normalized

TC of 60.85, underscoring persistent cross-disciplinary pertinence. Safa M. (2019) and Verma A. (2020) register pronounced citation velocities, TC/year of 6.57 and 5.50, respectively, signalling growing esteem in their targeted domains. Canonical scholars Rumelt RP and Shepherd C also continue to secure robust citation throughput. The interaction of these varied high-impact contributions delineates the intentional trajectory of the literature’s consolidating underpinnings and the acceleration of novel scholarly inquiry.

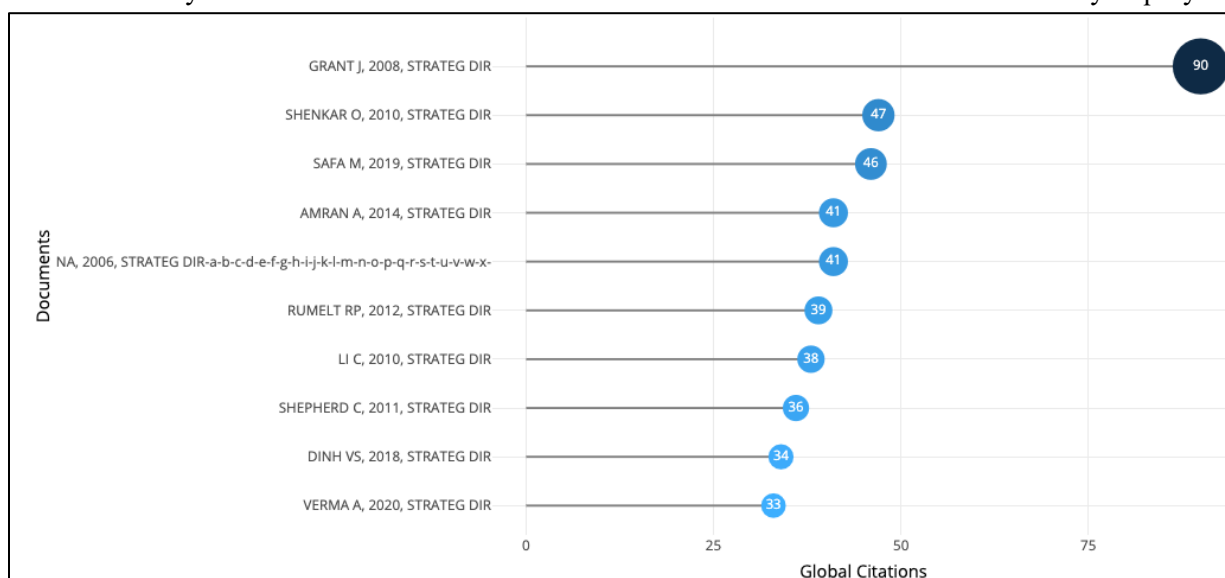


Figure 5 Most Global Cited Documents

Table 2 Most Global Cited Documents

SN	Paper	DOI	Total Citations	TC per Year	Normalized TC
1	GRANT J, 2008	10.1108/02580540810868041	90	5.00	59.88
2	SHENKAR O, 2010	10.1108/02580541011080474	47	2.94	60.85
3	SAFA M, 2019	10.1108/SD-03-2019-0062	46	6.57	34.10
4	AMRAN A, 2014	10.1108/SD-03-2014-0035	41	3.42	30.36
5	NA, 2006,	10.1108/02580540610635942	41	2.05	38.12
6	RUMELT RP, 2012	10.1108/sd.2012.05628haa.002	39	2.79	43.27
7	LI C, 2010	10.1108/sd.2010.05626hae.002	38	2.38	49.20
8	SHEPHERD C, 2011	10.1108/02580541111103882	36	2.40	55.40
9	DINH VS, 2018	10.1108/SD-08-2017-0126	34	4.25	56.53
10	VERMA A, 2020	10.1108/SD-12-2019-0235	33	5.50	41.32

### 6.4. Word Frequency over Time:

The longitudinal tracking of keyword prevalence from 2002 to 2024 delineates marked evolution in the landscape of strategic direction scholarship. Corporate Strategy consistently occupies the apex of cumulative frequencies, underlining its persistent authoritative position. In parallel, the terms Innovation and Leadership display marked and sustained upward slopes, particularly between 2005 and 2015, mirroring their accelerated theorisation and applied prominence. The term

Marketing Strategy registered a marked peak circa 2010, yet subsequent years witnessed a stabilisation in its frequency. Conversely, Social Media, Sustainability, and Corporate Social Responsibility entered the discourse with substantial impetus after 2010, indicating a clear disciplinary drift toward digital and ethical exigencies. Taken together, the analysed corpus signals a broadening of the research portfolio, through which emergent focal areas interlace with established, enduring preoccupations.

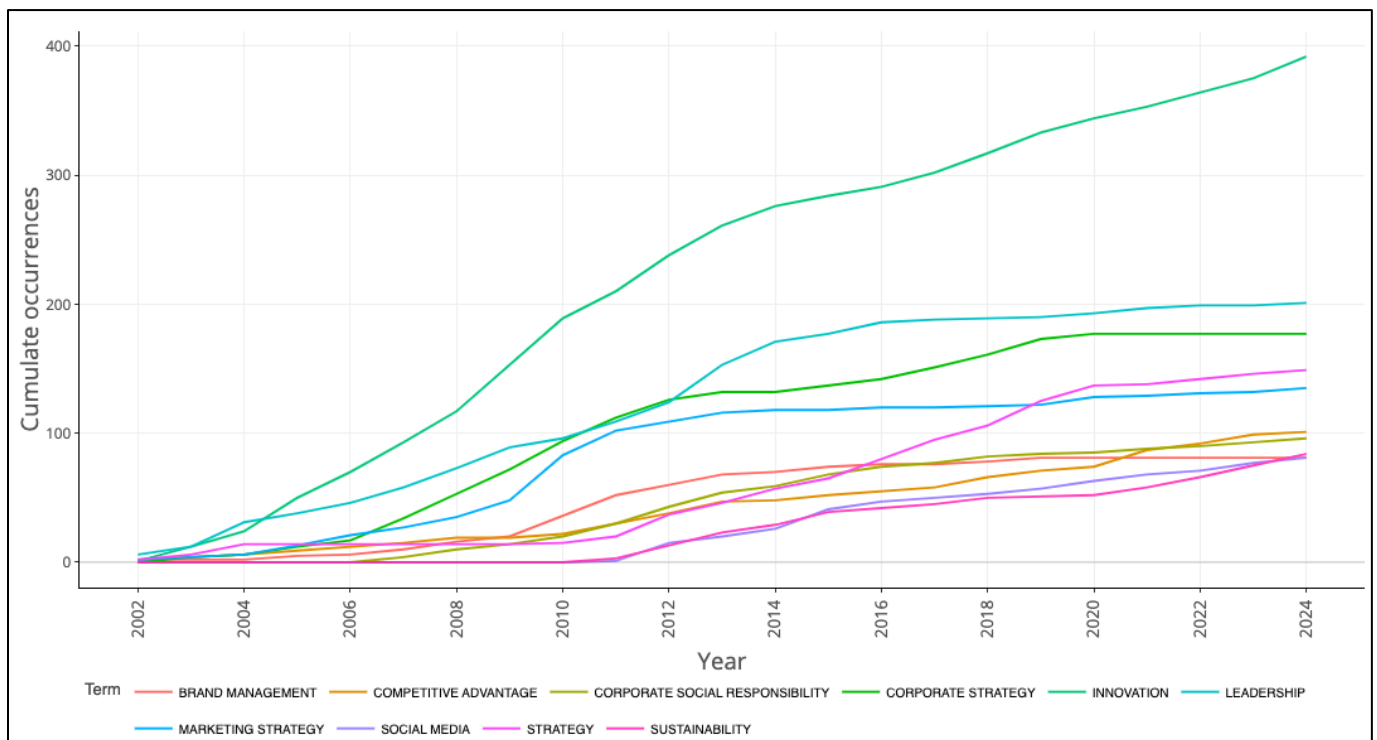


Figure 6 Word Frequency over Time

**Table** Word Frequency over Time

Year	INNOVATION	LEADERSHIP	CORPORATE STRATEGY	STRATEGY	MARKETING STRATEGY	COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	SUSTAINABILITY	BRAND MANAGEMENT	SOCIAL MEDIA
2002	1	6	0	2	2	2	0	0	2	0
2003	12	12	4	6	4	4	0	0	2	0
2004	24	31	6	14	6	6	0	0	2	0
2005	50	38	12	14	13	9	0	0	5	0
2006	70	46	17	14	21	12	0	0	6	0
2007	93	58	34	14	27	15	4	0	10	0
2008	117	73	53	14	35	19	10	0	16	0
2009	153	89	72	14	48	19	14	0	20	0
2010	189	96	94	15	83	22	20	0	36	0
2011	210	109	112	20	102	30	30	3	52	1
2012	238	124	126	37	109	38	43	13	60	15
2013	261	153	132	46	116	47	54	23	68	20
2014	276	171	132	57	118	48	59	29	70	26
2015	284	177	137	65	118	52	68	39	74	41
2016	291	186	142	80	120	55	74	42	76	47
2017	302	188	151	95	120	58	77	45	76	50
2018	317	189	161	106	121	66	82	50	78	53
2019	333	190	173	125	122	71	84	51	81	57
2020	344	193	177	137	128	74	85	52	81	63
2021	353	197	177	138	129	87	88	58	81	68
2022	364	199	177	142	131	92	90	66	81	71
2023	375	199	177	146	132	99	93	75	81	77
2024	392	201	177	149	135	101	96	84	81	81

**6.5. Trends topics:**

Analysis of keyword trajectory indicates a clear movement within the empirical literature aligned to the concept of strategic direction. Early 2000s datasets foreground terms such as “business process re-engineering,” “brand equity,” and “automotive sector,” directing scholarly attention toward operational optimisation and sector-specific case studies. The corpus of subsequent decades evidences a redistribution of focus to integrated strategic bundles; terminology like “corporate-level strategy,” “transition management,” and “strategic innovation” grows

steadily, with the sharpest uptake observable post-2010. The annotated bubble chart that accompanies this commentary depicts a widening substantival domain and rising analytical density, and the present apex comprises keywords such as “digital transformation,” “big-data analytics,” and “value co-creation,” together intimating a necessary re-encoding of strategic priorities along technological lines. Taken as a whole, the evidential base substantiates a systematic departure from core managerial heuristics towards complex and digitally-mediated strategy design in the emergent scholarly agenda.

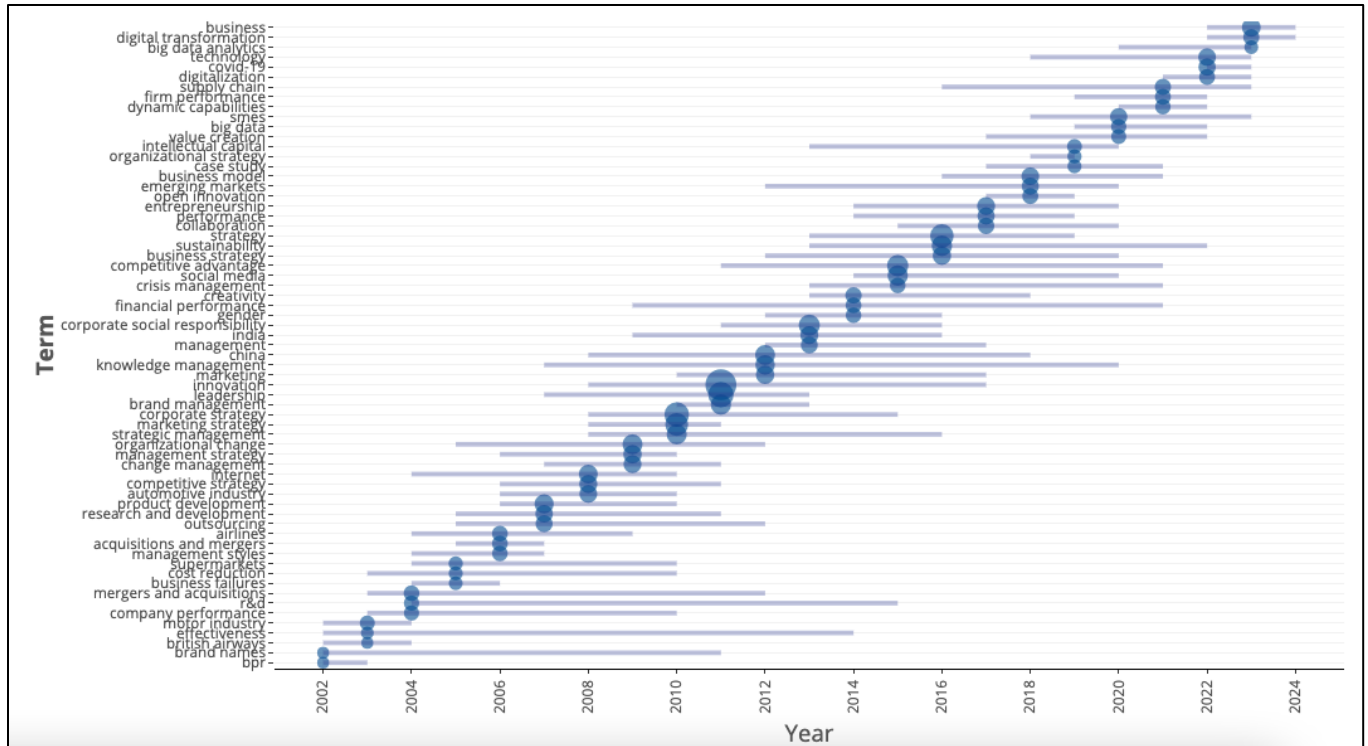


Figure 7 Trends topics

### 6.6. Co-occurrence Network:

The co-occurrence network constructed for the bibliometric survey elucidates the interconceptual web that undergirds the literature on strategic Direction. By registering the concomitant appearance of terms within individual publications, the network visually segregates cohesive clusters of mutually reinforcing ideas. In the corpus, three prominent thematic clusters regularly emerge the first amalgamates “corporate strategy,” “leadership,” and “innovation;” the second integrates “sustainability,” “corporate social responsibility,” and “social media;” and the third assembles “marketing strategy,” “brand management,” and “competitive advantage.” The spatial separation and directional intensity among these clusters quantify the degree of conceptual interpenetration, thereby distinguishing well-established research centres from emerging, less-mature domains. Dense co-occurrence arcs denote solidified convergences, whereas faint or

discretely neighbouring nodes point to conceptual avenues that remain to be elaborated. The resulting configuration serves as a navigational chart for mapping prevailing intellectual currents, cross-disciplinary convergence points, and understudied intervals within the domain of strategic Direction.

Visualisation of the co-occurrence network elucidates the thematic entwining of pivotal constructs within the scholarship on strategic direction. At the network barycentre, the triad comprising innovation, leadership, and strategy manifests as mutually reinforcing, high-centrality vertices, thereby asserting their sustained epistemic dominance across divergent research milieus. Their propensity to traverse and amalgamate disparate thematic topologies further attests to their cross-field resonance.

The azure cluster, centering on marketing strategy, brand management, and social media, accentuates

consumer-engagement dilemmas and charts the evolving frontiers of digital marketing scholarship.

In juxtaposition, the verdant cluster, germinating from corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and environmental management, delineates the normative and ecological imperatives now interwoven with strategic formulation.

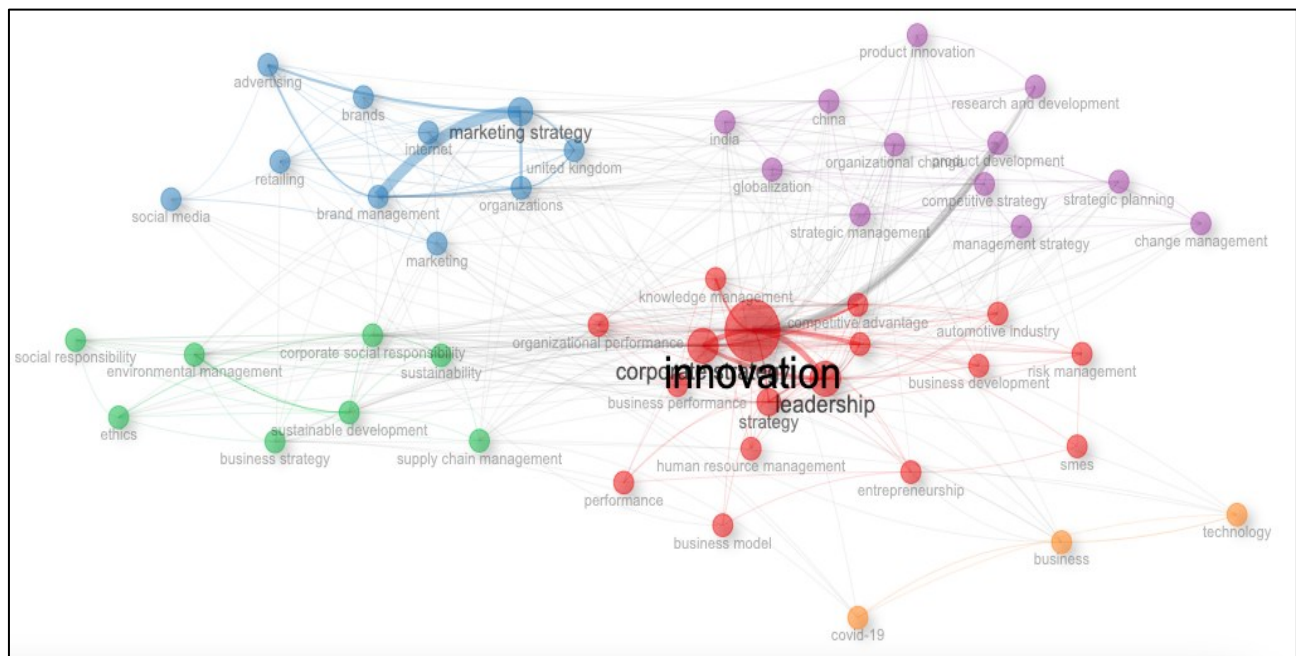
Immediately adjacent, the amethyst cluster, synthesising product innovation, research and development, and organisational change, signals a sustained preoccupation with transformation and the flexible orchestration of technological capabilities.

Finally, the crimson cluster, aggregating competitive advantage, knowledge management, entrepreneurship, and business performance,

preserves the traditional foci of the discipline while recasting them within emergent, innovation-centred constellations.

A peripheral orange grouping, in which “technology” and “COVID-19” co-occur, signals emergent disruptions and their re-constitutive effects on strategic cognition.

Collectively, the network corroborates the reconstitution of strategic Direction as a multidimensional construct enveloping innovation, ethical stewardship, marketing agility, and technological adaptability. The visualisation further reveals zones of dense thematic co-occurrence, which signify research strands of established maturity, alongside more loosely interlinked domains that invite systematic, future-oriented inquiry.



**Figure 8** Co-occurrence Network

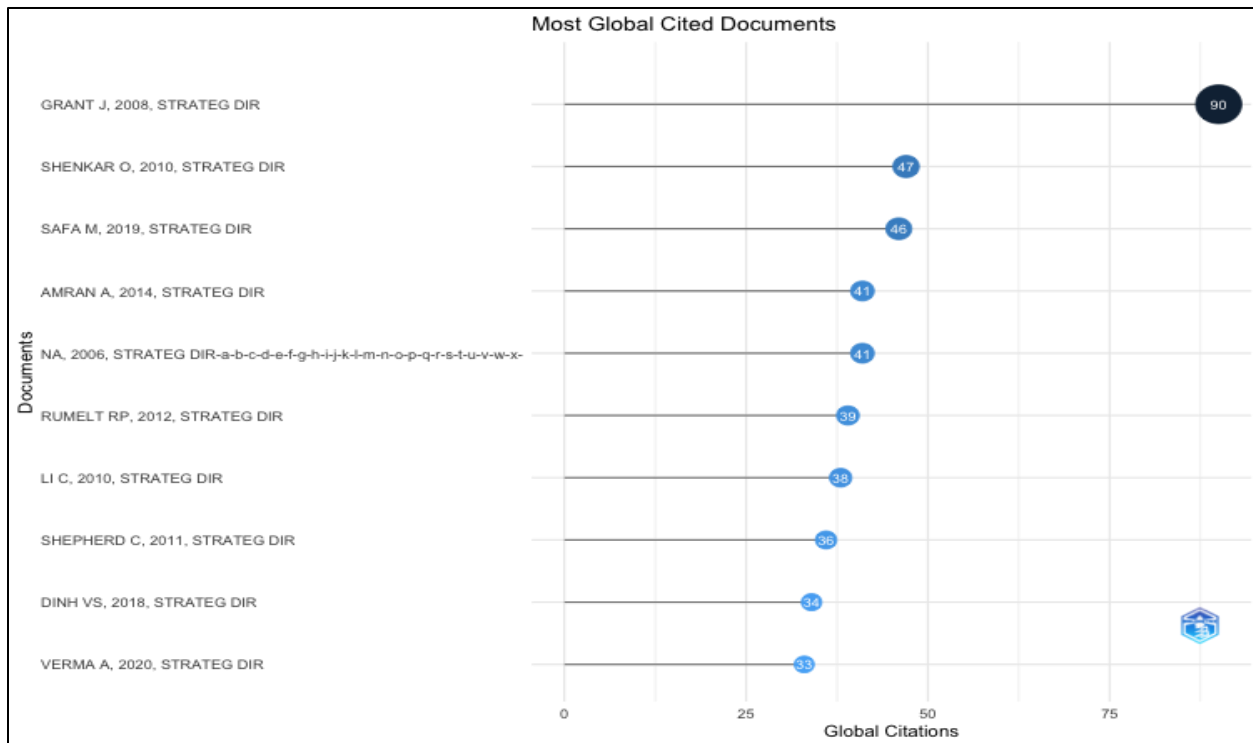
### 6.7. Citation Impact and Influential Works:

For Strategic Direction, the overall citation metrics yield an average of 0.7496 citations per document. The "MeanTCperYear" (mean total citations per year) has been ranging over the years, peaking at 0.19 in 2019, only to fall to 0.01 in 2024.1. In contrast to journals where all papers receive a reasonable amount of citations, in this case, the average citation count is low. The presence of a few highly cited articles suggests a "long tail" distribution of the journal's impact. This suggests that a greater number of articles are written to fulfil the need for brief and concise, sharp summaries for practitioners, and that a small number of seminal papers or extremely essential papers disproportionately determine the journal's citation count in the academic world.

Notable papers have had a significant impact, garnering attention from a global audience and demonstrating a notable influence within the discipline. The publication by Grant J. "Green marketing, A strategic balancing act for creating value" has the highest total global citations of 90 and "STRATEG DIR" as the journal name. This shows how strategic sustainable businesses continue to be discussed. "SHENKAR O, 2010, STRATEG DIR" has 47 total global citations for the work "Copycats: How Smart Companies Use Imitation to Gain a Strategic Edge". This still shows the attention paid in competitive strategy evolution and learning from the frontrunners in the market. "SAFA M, 2019, STRATEG DIR" also received 46 total global citations for "barriers to

blockchain adoption in construction supply chain management" 1, demonstrating the journal's responsiveness toward new technologies and discipline-specific problems.

While analysing the documents which are locally cited, " OLIVER JJ, 2012, STRATEG DIR" which is titled "WINNING IN HIGH VELOCITY MARKETS: THE CASE OF BSKYB" starts with three local citations and has a significantly high normalised local citation count of 223.1. Another interesting locally cited document, "NGU SB, 2018, STRATEG DIR," has one local citation but attracts a remarkably high normalised local citation count of 143.1. 2019 appears to be a peak year for "MeanTCperYear", but it is followed by a sharp decline, despite the consistent rate of publication being maintained; a notable drop still occurs. These could point towards several outcomes, such as a shift in the general research focus, a seemingly natural pause in citation accumulation for newer research themes, or a change in the content focus of the particular journal that has not yet gained traction with the academic audience. This observed pattern suggests that, over the last several years, the work has become less focused on foundational theories or less rich in rigorous formal academic structures, or actual formal citations. Regardless, the highly cited older works on green marketing, imitation, and the adoption of blockchain technology remain highly indicative of the journal's high level of success in disseminating important and relevant insights on enduring as well as emerging challenges in the business world.



**Figure 9** The Top 10 Most Globally Cited Documents

### 6.8. Author name (The Top 10 Cited Globally SR Articles):

The citation includes the other tables and showcases them together. It would draw attention to the disparity in citations received within the indicated period and the significance of these documents to the field of strategic direction (2.3), major Participants and their developments.

Analysis of the Strategic Direction contributors reveals notable trends. “THOMAS, MARK” emerges as the most active contributor, possessing eighteen articles and thirteen fractionalized contributions reflecting a consistent and significant engagement with the journal’s content. Other productive contributors include “BELL, GARETH” with ten articles and 9.5 fractionalized contributions, “EXTON, ROSEMARY” with ten articles and 5.5 fractionalized contributions, and “NORTON, JULIET” with ten articles and ten fractionalized contributions.

Author creation patterns exhibit progression, as well as varying styles of contributions over time. For example, Gareth Bell's works were primarily produced between 2012 and 2013, a period marked by a high number of "Interview" articles. Similarly, Juliet Norton's contributions are clustered in 2010-2011, also dominated by "Interview" articles. This concentrated mode of dissemination, particularly that associated with a definable structure, such as interviews, suggests that the contributions of authors like Gareth Bell and Juliet Norton may have more editorial or memorable features.

The productivity of authors such as Mark Thomas, whose works were published in 2015 and 2016, suggests either a more traditional scholarly output or a greater breadth of content contributed. The variation in types of contributions underscores the diverse modalities through which individuals engage with the journal’s content, a factor of considerable significance in light of the journal’s objective to present information in the form of succinct and readily assimilable briefings.

**Table 3** Author name (The Top 10 Cited Globally SR Articles):

SN	Paper	DOI	Total Citations	TC per Year	Normalized TC
1	GRANT J, 2008, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/02580540810868041	90	5.00	52.44
2	SHENKAR O, 2010, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/02580541011080474	47	2.94	56.31
3	SAFA M, 2019, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/SD-03-2019-0062	46	6.57	34.04
4	AMRAN A, 2014, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/SD-03-2014-0035	41	3.42	30.08
5	NA NA, 2006, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/02580540610635942	41	2.05	33.86
6	RUMELT RP, 2012, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/sd.2012.05628haa.002	39	2.79	41.17
7	LI C, 2010, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/sd.2010.05626hae.002	38	2.38	45.53
8	SHEPHERD C, 2011, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/02580541111103882	36	2.40	52.09
9	DINH VS, 2018, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/SD-08-2017-0126	34	4.25	56.14
10	VERMA A, 2020, STRATEG DIR	10.1108/SD-12-2019-0235	33	5.50	41.05

An important insight gleaned from the author's production data is the occurrence of 'NA' entries, which are in the form of article titles and DOIs. Some of these entries even exhibit high Total Citations per Year (TCpY). This indicates that a substantial amount of content within the journal may be disseminated without proper author attribution in the dataset used. Such entries could

result from unpublished journal content, edits, amalgamated contributions by multiple authors, or even from complex parsing systems. The existence of "NA" anomalies alongside author-centric analyses suggests that not all impactful works are accounted for, highlighting a shortcoming of the present dataset regarding the multifaceted impact of authors.

**Table 4** The 5 Most Productive Authors in Strategic Direction

SN	Authors	Articles	Articles Fractionalized
1	Thomas Mark	18	13.00
2	Exton Rosemary	10	5.50
3	Totterdill Peter	10	5.50
4	Bell Gareth	9	8.50
5	Norton Juliet	9	9.00
6	Paget Philip	9	9.00
7	Southby Katherine	8	8.00
8	Harrison Juliet	7	6.00
9	Coulson-Thomas Colin	6	6.00

Depicted in a bar graph, the "Number of Articles by Top 5 Most Productive Authors" would visually and instantly demonstrate their individual and collective input and highlight the most productive authors in the journal's history.

### 6.9. Thematic Evolution and Research Foci:

Thematic changes in Strategic Direction, like other areas of strategic management and international business, have been responsive to shifts in the business environment. The strategic management "foundational" articles that exerted the most significant early influence, as seen by their global citation numbers, were written in a given sequence. For example, Grant (2008) "Green marketing: A strategic balancing act for creating value" and Shenkar (2010) "Imitation as a Strategic Edge" showcased the journal's interest in sustainability and competitive advantage. These strategic management issues have been and will always remain intractable. That these works continue to be cited speaks volumes about the field's evolution and their enduring value.

The publications released through 2024 demonstrate the journal's responsiveness to emerging issues and strategic aspects of contemporary business.

Topics include:

- a) The Contribution of Digital Platforms in Fostering Resilience Among Food Entrepreneurs.
- b) The influence of "Knowledge management on sustainable performance.
- c) ERP and survival: The neglected principal aim of a firm.
- d) COVID-19 and the use of office space, alongside remote work policies.
- e) The efficacy of TikTok as a marketing tool in the context of social media marketing.

- f) The "Standardized advertising campaigns for born global B2B SMEs.
- g) Analysis of Shein's business practices and their impacts on fast fashion.
- h) The importance of after-sales services in the maintenance of performance.
- i) Using CSR to stay competitive through mimetic isomorphism.
- j) The role of electronic word of mouth on sales of dietary supplements.
- k) Dynamic knowledge management: An enabler of innovation, resilience in the supply chain, and efficient supply chain operations.
- l) Green Communication as a Management Tool for Crisis Situations.

The progression of themes from basic ideas to contemporary issues demonstrates how the journal addresses the dynamics of change, responsiveness, and evolution within the field of strategic management. The immediate consideration of and inclusion of COVID-19, along with the strategic employment of TikTok, signal prompt responsiveness to actual business activities. The capacity to address timeless strategic problems and simultaneously deal with contemporary issues is essential for journals that seek to provide business executives with relevant information. Every article is infused with practice. Regardless of the topic, the "practical implications" section is positioned with the preeminent focus, which, from the journal's perspective, is its strongest selling point. This likely steers the choice of subjects and the respective results to be presented in a manner that the findings that can be acted upon and used by professionals outweigh the theoretical ones.

### 7. Discussion:

#### Effects on Strategic Management Research and Its Practical Applications:

Strategic Direction holds a special and crucial position in the academic publishing ecosystem, as it balances scholarly research and rigorous academic work. It serves as an important summary of broader academic work that is accessible to and applicable to key business stakeholders, including executives, educators, and students. This role serves a critical need of the market in a rapidly changing business environment where information is plentiful, but aiding in boardroom-ready insights is lacking.

The journal's contribution to strategic management rests on the synthesis and application of existing knowledge. Through the "briefings" and "reviews" sections of Strategic Direction, the journal curates and distributes research to address practical strategic issues. This may lead to differences in citation patterns relative to other journals specializing in original empirical research, but there is also a compelling value proposition to this form of publication. The journal's capacity to rapidly integrate and communicate emerging equity themes, including digital transformation, organizational resilience, and the strategic role of social media, illustrates agility in the modern business environment. This thematic adjustment keeps the content relevant and anticipatory, fulfilling the immediate and long-range strategic requirements of the readers.

Further impact could be attained by developing the contemporary themes published in Strategic Direction through future research. For example, research into the long-term consequences of digital transformation within organizations, the development of resilience strategies in response to continuous global disruptions, and the relationships between new technologies, business models, and ethics would be immensely valuable. The journal would also achieve its aims of providing tangible value by continuing to examine case studies demonstrating the practical

applications (and failures) of strategic concepts in business.

## 5. Conclusion and Future Directions:

Between 2002 and 2024, a bibliometric analysis conducted on Strategic Direction reveals that the journal maintained a steady publication output and successfully fulfilled its goal of connecting scholarly work with executive practice. Although the average citation rate across all documents was relatively low, the presence of highly cited foundational works indicates the journal's ability to publish relevant and scholarly content that resonates with the broader academic community. The journal demonstrates a constructive thematic shift, transitioning from enduring strategic concepts, such as green marketing and competitive imitation, to digital platforms, the COVID-19 pandemic, and newer marketing channels, including TikTok. Responsiveness to executive needs is one of the key enduring strengths of the journal, as well as its relevance to senior executives and business leaders. The analysis also noted the diverse contributions of key authors, some of whom wrote exclusively editorial or interview content collated in the journal's "briefings".

To enhance the journal's academic influence and clarify its shifting place within strategic management scholarship, additional examination of conceptual frameworks is recommended. Archiving existing models and resilience-testing their empirical foundations might reveal saturation points and emerging research gaps. Comparative studies that juxtapose enduring frameworks against novel, context-specific propositions can also illuminate the domain's theoretical progression. Lastly, meta-analyses aggregating these frameworks by methodological rigor and the novelty of explanatory processes will elucidate their practical versus theoretical pull and direct future editorial priorities.

For a more nuanced grasp of the scholarly terrain surrounding the journal, the strategy of relying solely on Scopus must be broadened. Integrating alternative bibliographic sources, notably Web of Science and Google Scholar, stands to unveil papers disseminated through niche outlets or authored by researchers under-represented in the Scopus corpus. This triangulation of databases enables a more panoramic capture of the journal's intellectual milieu.

Moving forward, the analysis of co-authorship must be rendered more sophisticated. The journal's inclination toward “briefing” formats, culminating in solitary authorship for many contributions, constrains the breadth of the inquiry. Nonetheless, a probing of the pre-existing co-authorship topology can illuminate prevailing research alliances and spotlight latent collaborative niches within the journal's purview.<sup>1</sup> Such a mapping exercise would reveal the degree to which joint authorship and ancillary cooperative mechanisms circulate and disseminate scholarly ideas among authors in the journal's orbit.

An ongoing assessment of the journal's corpus must include an audit of both author-supplied and indexed keywords. By systematically tracking the frequency and evolution of these terms, a researcher can discern how particular research themes coalesce, detect emergent clusters, and chronicle their growth over successive publication cycles.

This would yield a nimble intellectual map of primary themes and subordinate threads constituting the journal.

The appearance of “NA” designations within the author dataset several of which are marked by noteworthy citation tallies invites analytical inquiry. Determining the character of these unattributed items whether they are editorials, collaborative compilations, or manifestations of

bibliographical error illuminates the journal's role in circulating influential works and clarifies the accurate lineage of intellectual influences. Furthermore, this categorisation is critical for the construction of a bibliometric profile that is both precise and exhaustive.

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## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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

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