

Competitiveness and meetings: Bibliographic survey of scientific publications in the Scopus database

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Abstract

Meetings are part of the daily lives of people in the professional environment, companies dedicate time to these meetings, as decision making and problem-solving take place through them, so such events can be a relevant aspect in competitiveness. The proposed objective was to present an overview of research on competitiveness and meetings on the international Scopus base. This paper presents results of a study based on literature review and content analysis through a bibliographic survey of scientific articles available in the international database Scopus which deals with competitiveness and meetings. The results show the need for research on competitiveness and meetings, as the approach on the subject in the analyzed texts reveals that companies understand the importance of meetings, so much that in the tourism and events segments it is evident the use as a strategy to generate competitiveness. The result of this work generates theoretical foundation for other researches and the final considerations point mainly to the continued need for research on the theme.

Keywords: Competitiveness; Meetings; Bibliographic survey; Scientific articles; Scopus.

1. Introduction

Companies seek to be competitive in this globalized market, so increasing productivity becomes one of the main focuses and, for that, the organizational processes must be agile, dynamic and efficient, thus the meetings are not outside this reality. A meeting contributes to the communication and interpersonal relationships of the teams involved when focusing on some tasks that will generate increased productivity, then the company remains competitive.

Basically, in a meeting it is possible to define goals, inform, plan and create strategies for the business, but this demands to structure the event, through agendas, physical space reservation, duration control, content direction and meeting registration. A planned meeting can also build trust among the participants, as well as show the importance of each individual in achieving the goals and objectives of the company.

Considering the importance and frequency of meetings in daily life, especially corporate, the research problem of this study was: what is the panorama of competitiveness research and meetings in an international database? The proposed objective was to present an overview of competitiveness research and meetings at the Scopus international base.

The applied methodology was bibliographic survey and content analysis, because we live in a time and society driven by information, that being an updated person with so much content available becomes a challenge, then, in this context, it is possible to see the relevance of the bibliographic survey, because it has the summarization as its characteristic (Moreira, 2004).

Figueiredo (1990), comments that doing a bibliographic review assents for the continuity of the studies on a given theme, but without repeating the specific issues, thus the new research will continue to be of a current nature. Regarding content analysis, Bardin (1977), explains that it is a set of techniques for communication analysis, with a focus on gaining an understanding about deeper meanings of communication, besides the overcoming of uncertainties and the contribution to the enrichment of literature, resulting in discoveries and confirmations.

Research of this character forms a theoretical reference and deepening of studies in the face of this technological context, which brings together content-creators researchers from different nationalities and languages. Companies and young people are the ones who most deal with meetings by digital means, in need to remain competitive, so that's why the search for discussions on the topic is made.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Competitiveness

An indisputable truth is that companies must keep an eye on transformations, as organizations, as an open system, evidences this need, since the higher the level of competition in the market in which that company operates, the more it proves the reality that companies live to follow and adapt to the market.

These transformations are political, social, environmental, technological, new configurations of social actors, as well as competitors, consumption patterns and economic indicators (Machado-da-Silva & Barbosa, 2002; Fontenele, 2010) indicate that these aspects cannot be neglected because they affect business competitiveness, so they represent agenda items in the decision-making process.

Competitiveness is a term present in everyday business, and it happens because companies maintain their participation in the world market, which suffers from slowing productivity growth, wage stagnation and trade deficits. Companies from the same niche, as part of the same environment, find this difficult to live in a balanced way, as they are looking for similar resources, so companies end up subjecting themselves to competitive selection and exclusion, an action that also stimulates new production methods, management or structural arrangements (Machado-da-Silva & Fonseca, 2018).

The competitiveness treatment still revolves, with more emphasis, around organizational efficiency, through operations, that is, a technical view of the environment. But what does that mean? This reveals that competitiveness is the result of entrepreneurial excellence for performing activities that can be measured, however studies show that competitiveness also depends on a valued and accepted social conduct, this generates legitimacy and survival in the segment of activity (Machado-da-Silva & Barbosa, 2002; Machado-da-Silva & Fonseca, 2018). The aspects of social conduct involve stakeholders, considering the image and adequacy of the rules of the segment.

Tools such as total quality management, benchmarking, reengineering and change management are used by companies to manage and increase productivity, quality and speed, generating operational improvements, but they do not guarantee a privileged position or provide support for the competitive position (Machado-da-Silva & Barbosa, 2002).

Talking about business competitiveness allows us to observe that it does not summarize the struggle of companies to have diverse resources, it contemplates the difference in meanings, symbols and expectations of the actors that are part of the context. Thinking about competitiveness only from the angle of quantitative indicators of quality or production is limiting, understanding and considering social values, built and instituted, proposes a legitimate permanence in this global and competitive environment, resulting in better access to resources.

In the analysis of the competitiveness phenomenon, in addition to the need to verify both competitive and institutional standards, it is considered that the concept, in the same way that it may prove structurally and

symbolically differentiated by business segment, may also have a different connotation when taking into account different levels of the environmental context: local/regional, national and international (Machado-da-Silva & Barbosa, p. 9, 2002).

These different possible connotations happen because of the different values or meanings assigned and found in society at different levels of environments. The different environmental levels are delimited by the type of pressure that the company receives and the multiple response possibilities that the organization can grant. Therefore, having clarity of the level of pressure helps the development of organizational strategies, when the company faces more than one level, considered for the strategies, the one that understands to be what impacts the most it, or the one that will lead it to the objective of the company.

Migrating to a position of encouraging competitiveness with a focus on quality, requires the incorporation of actions that focus on: the customer, continuous improvement, human resources training and quality management (Santos, Carpinetti & Gonçalves, p. 122, 1997), when these points are not applied, we have them as the outcome for the cases of failure.

According to Mariotto (1991), there are four aspects that contribute to the decline in competitiveness: the failure in the development of human resources, insufficient incentives, commercial policies disconnected from international trade and deficiencies in the commercialization of new technologies.

This economic progress and global competitiveness is strongly driven by innovation, regardless of the nation, developed or developing (Feldmann *et al.*, 2019), so much that when we talk about companies and nations, we use the word competitiveness to express their ability to succeed in markets where there is competition.

It is worth understanding here that the economy studies the forms of market structures (forms of competition) to verify the efficiency of the economy as a whole, distributing the resources adequately, thus not focusing on the study of the conditions that companies need to have in order to compete in that market (Mariotti, 1991; Fontenele, 2010).

Market structures can be: monopoly, pure or perfect competition and oligopoly. In monopoly there is only one seller, in pure competition there are several small companies that sell the same thing and in the oligopoly we have a small number of large producers of the same thing. Economic studies are usually done considering pure competition markets, says Mariotti (1991).

However, studies originated from business strategy consider the market to be oligopoly, so companies compete so much through innovation, that competitive advantage is part of the components for the business strategy. Therefore, the need to identify the effects of competition on the company and analyze how to face these influences (Abreu Azevedo & Gartner, 2020; Lemos & Nascimento, 1999), as they compete with each other.

Competitive performance depends not only on characteristics of the firm or the technology, but on a collection of combined skills and action models. Thus, in order to analyze competitiveness, it is necessary to keep in mind the influence of sectoral standards and socio-cultural characteristics present in organizations and in the environment wherever they operate (Machado-da-Silva & Barbosa, p. 11, 2002).

The main competitive strategies are: leadership in total cost, which refers to achieving the lowest cost; differentiation aimed at creating new products or services, which may lead consumers to pay even more for it; and an approach that corresponds to identifying a group of buyers (niche market). When the company is able to successfully formulate and implement a value creation strategy, it is achieving strategic competitiveness (Hitt, 2018; Proença *et al.*, 2015).

Competitiveness is directly related to the dispute for the customer, and the maintenance of the customers happens due to the advantages that the competitors cannot copy (Hitt, 2018; Teixeira *et al.*, 2014; Oliveira, 2013), however, no competitive advantage is permanent, as Moraes (2003) explains: competitiveness is the company's ability to create and implement strategies which remain in the market in a sustainable way.

Nering & Feger (p. 84, 2019) comment briefly that "competitiveness can be described as the ability to generate profitable economic activities to competitors, in an organized and superior way, taking into account the aspects of management and planning". To achieve this result, companies have had increasingly interactive strategies to be more efficient in reaching the target audience.

Competitiveness should not be seen only from a technical point of view; competitive standards and institutional standards should be reconciled, since the environment exerts pressure for organizations to be efficient and effective, but also to conform to the standards of action considered legitimate by society (Machado-da-Silva & Barbosa, p. 12, 2002).

The guarantee of competitiveness occurs when the company manages to establish a privileged and sustainable position in the environment, normally this result is obtained when the organization acquires a consolidation of the competitive company image, which also depends on what is being valued in the environment at that time, that is why it is important to monitor changes, making it possible for the company to adapt in a timely manner and maintain its competitive company brand.

2.2 Meetings

A meeting aims to seek solutions to problems or decision making, the meeting is a meeting between people (Hindle, 1999; Elbanna, 2007), it can also be understood as spaces for reflection, discussions, exchange of ideas and knowledge, therefore, a more comprehensive form of understanding, as the idea of solving emergency problems is not limited (Santos *et al.*, 2017, Eisenbart *et al.*, 2016).

Every meeting between people has its challenges, in this case we have the difficulty of finding an appropriate time, compatible with all involved, Gomes *et al.* (2000) explains that the best way to align this time is through previous contact with participants to check availability, but also happens attitudes of negligence of the person who should make the consultation, because they end up acting in an informative and imposing way on the proposed schedule.

In addition to the time, it is necessary to think about the place for the meeting, size and structure, as well as having prepared the supporting documents related to the theme of the meeting, notify, in advance, the reason for the meeting and the contribution that each participant can bring to the subject, also informing the purpose of the meeting (Gomes *et al.*, 2000; Scherer *et al.*, 2007). Following these protocols when receiving participants generates acceptance, but this lack of hospitality is still noticeable in the professional or social meeting environment.

Besides the face-to-face meetings, we have an increase in digital meetings, also called web conferences, online conferences or video conferences, due to the advent and increase in technology. The internet has become the main platform on the planet for communication, entertainment, business, relationships and learning, this scenario full of possibilities, connections and expansion of human potential also brings profound transformations and new challenges (Gabriel, 2018).

The more connected people, the more interdependence between them we have, thus increasing the complexity in the world. The challenge is to live with all this without losing the human essence, when it is still necessary to identify the evidences about the welcoming process carried out before and during a web conference, as well as in clarifying how the participants feel in this type of meeting.

According to Gabriel (2018, p. 26) we moved from the "reaction web to the participation web. From web speech to web conversation. And we are moving towards the web of interaction: the semantic web, powered by the internet of things associated with artificial intelligence."

In both types of meetings the responsible must be flexible when dealing with different people and their different opinions in order to be able to control the stipulated duration time, so as to avoid delays and allowing everyone to speak. He also needs to synthesize ideas, intervene when necessary, but without being long-

winded, know how to listen without prejudice (Hindle, 1999), therefore, the driver is responsible for the well-being of the participants.

Furthermore to the difficulty of scheduling the time with the participants, we have other negative points such as absence or delay of participants, stoppage when dealing with the first item on the agenda, reducing the time for dealing with the next topics, lack of contribution from the participants, loss of focus, some participants who have no adherence to the actions promoted to solve the problems, and after the meeting having a feeling of irritation, frustration or tiredness among the participating members (Hardingham, 2000).

Santos et al. (2000, p. 610) says that “it is common for professionals to refer to the meeting as a tiring activity, as a waste of time, without objectivity. However, benefits are perceived for joint planning, for the socialization of knowledge and for important discussions that can support decision making”.

Cardoso and Hennington (2011); Grando and Dall'agnol (2010) mention that it is necessary to think about the meeting organization and its dynamics, these two aspects, other than avoiding the meeting from being tiring, take the event to a stage that results in the transformation of the service or product, prioritizing the exchange of knowledge and stimulates the team decision on the interventions to be performed.

It is also necessary to mention the public meeting, a type of meeting focused on informing, in addition to providing the company with a direct contact, management aims to reveal products, operations, customers and suppliers, results and perspectives, macroeconomic vision of the sector and directions of the economy (Reiter; Procianoy, 2013).

For the company, the public meeting brings feedback from investors, feelings about the market, gaining of knowledge, creating reliable bonds with investors, so the public meeting is an important economic event of information for companies and investors as it contributes to the definition of the stock price. Another point of relevance for an executive about the public meeting is the opportunity to get to know the company's executives better, as it is not a contact possible to be made through written communication (Reiter; Procianoy, 2013).

The face-to-face contact that a meeting provides the creation of an unfolding of information, in addition to specific doubts that can be remedied, increases dialogue and reading of body language, thus, contributes to the analysis of honesty in negotiations, as well as domain of the segment, we can then say that they are subjective factors surrounding the decisions of investors.

The information flow in real time is the great differential, because it allows the expression and perception of emotions, thus being able to take the plot through unknown paths, generating surprise and involvement, it is observed that normally this risk of not knowing that comes from the other is what facilitates and contributes to the generation of bonds.

Another particular feature of public meetings is that they usually take place in financial centers. Public meetings are advantageous because in addition to being practical, it is also a tool of economic communication, since it is voluntary, such attitude results in increased visibility (Reiter; Procianoy, 2013).

3. Method

This study has a qualitative and exploratory approach with the following procedures: bibliographic research and content analysis. Researchers have developed research based on systematic literature review (Ulker-Demirel & Ciftci, 2020; Lai *et al.*, 2017; Tsai, 2009), as it allows mapping the areas of nebulous studies or with little or no research done yet, but that new studies are still necessary.

For this study, some questions were raised as the goal of the review, they are: what is the current state of knowledge about competitiveness and meetings in the Scopus database? In what context were these researches on competitiveness and meetings studied? And finally, what are the directions for future research and its implications?

The literature review was carried out in the Scopus database, in the search filter of the database, the keywords 'competitiveness' and 'meeting' were used, in this filter it was considered that the words indicated should appear in the title of the scientific article.

Seven texts were found, but only five were considered suitable for the study of this research, being a *Conference Paper*, a *Review* and three *Articles*, these modalities of scientific texts were maintained because they are texts that undergo evaluation by editors or reviewers specialized in the segments of approach to the themes of the texts. Regarding the two unused texts, one was not found and the other referred to a book chapter.

Following the proposal of Bardin (1977), the stages of content analysis of scientific articles were: pre-analysis, exploration of the material and treatment of the results with inference and interpretation. In the pre-analysis stage, scientific articles were collected in the Scopus database and the five texts chose were read; in the exploration phase of the material, the data was inserted into the NVivo software and data obtained through the software; the last step, treatment of the results with inference and interpretation, performed the classification of frequency of words and synthesis of articles presented.

Nvivo software was used to obtain data for analysis, at first automatic codification was performed, then query for the word frequency in each article, the data from both procedures were exported to Excel. Finally, the word cloud was generated.

In the codification were analyzed the references of texts presented and exclusion of items which were not part of the article's content. During the verification of data on word frequency, numbers were not considered. Next, it was identified how many times the keywords 'competitiveness' and 'meeting' appeared in each text. The evaluated texts were:

Article 1: Meeting technology needs of enterprises for national competitiveness (2005).

Article 2: Meeting the New Challenge to U.S. Economic Competitiveness (2004).

Article 3: Price competitiveness and government incentives for simulating the meetings industry. A critical look at the case of Macau (2015).

Article 4: Advancements in RRIM Fascia Application Provide Cost Competitiveness While Meeting Performance Requirements (1997).

Article 5: The Competitiveness of International Meeting Destinations in Asia: Meeting Planners' versus Buying Centers' Perceptions (2005).

4. Results and Discussion

As pointed out in the steps of the method used, initially it was made an individual codification of the themes, for each article, as shown in Table 1. Then, the themes codification made with the five articles together shown in Table 2, where it is possible to observe some differences in the results.

Table I – Automatic codification of themes - individual analysis of articles

Article	Competitiveness	Meeting
1	17	Did not appear
2	Did not appear	Did not appear
3	13	Did not appear
4	3	Did not appear
5	Did not appear	16

Source: The Authors (2020)

Table II - Automatic codification of the 5 themes - joint analysis of the articles

Article	Competitiveness	Meeting
1	17	4
2	8	0
3	13	24
4	3	0
5	3	16

Source: The Authors (2020)

Considering the results of the codification of the themes, we chose to work with the data in Table 2, as it presented more data to be analyzed. When checking in the scientific texts the excerpts pointed out in the codification of themes, we observed that some were not related to the proposed theme, that is, they should contain excerpts with the words *competitiveness* and *meeting*, therefore, the conference resulted in a third table, as follows:

Table III – Result of the conference on automatic coding of the 5 themes

Article	Competitiveness	Meeting
1	8	0
2	3	0
3	10	16
4	2	0
5	0	11

Source: The Authors (2020)

In Article 2, the codification presented 5 sentences with the term 'competitive', therefore considering only the keyword 'competitiveness' there were found 2 mentions. In Article 3, the same happened, 3 mentions for the term 'competitive'. Article 4 contains one term and Article 5 the term appears three times, therefore they were neither accounted nor analyzed.

Through the codification presented in Table 3, in Article 1, nine sentences were found addressing competitiveness in a national context that occurs through the diffusion of scientific knowledge, innovation technology that generates competitive advantage, leading, of course, to winners and losers, industries need to acquire this knowledge and technologies, but this takes time, because it is a long-term development.

In Article 2, the approach comments on global competitiveness, so innovation in the service and manufacturing segment is necessary, for this some countries create policies to help remain in economic leadership.

When observing Article 3, competitiveness does not only happen by price, but it happens based on a long-term competitiveness and the interest of taking events (meetings) to Macau, a region that according to the article experiences stagnant tourism and through corporate meetings seeks to position itself in this market, but

understanding that it is necessary to balance accuracy, comparability and simplicity. They understand that there is a need to identify the destination's price competitiveness relationship with the ability of this destination to attract meetings.

The two sentences presented by the codification in Article 4 comment, in a short way, a cost competitiveness, but that does not harm performance and such competitiveness needs to have a long-term look. Article 5 did not present codification, as shown in Table 3.

Now, a brief analysis on the sentences referring to the word meeting according to Table 3, eventhough, Articles 1, 2 and 4 have not been codified. Through the codification it was possible to realize that Article 3 addresses meeting, first stating that financial investments may not be enough to attract meetings and that Macau has made a lot of efforts to remain competitive in this market of corporate events, it also shows the importance of the government to participate and that such support should appear in the statistics. Association meetings are also a niche that has gained prominence in Macau compared to Hong Kong.

Article 3 also shows the advantages of attracting meetings, namely: setting up convention centers, promoting the destination, easing access without a visa and, in some cases, monetary subsidies. Competitiveness through these advantages must also be analyzed in an interrelated way, as it is also clear that not only economic factors interfere with competitiveness, but it is known that it is still the most considered aspect in the segment, factors such as location, distance, accessibility can be aspects that, together, will be more competitive than cost. But the authors of Article 3 conclude the study, understanding that the result was inconclusive about attracting meetings and cost in Macau, also pointing out that international competition is intense in the meeting segment.

Article 5 applied the e-mail survey with meeting organizers and shopping centers to investigate selection attributes in five Asian cities: Bangkok, Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore and Tokyo, as meetings in Asia increased from 2002, but in 2003 there was an acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), affecting the international meetings sector in the region, resulting postponement or cancellation of the events.

Therefore, the interest in Article 5 is to identify competitive strategies to resume activities and one of the most important attribute is decision making, so the study sought to know what the organizers are looking for, thus the regions work towards brand construction and services for the sector in order to attract more international meetings. The items most considered by the organizers are the meeting room facilities and the quality of the hotel's service. The literature points to other factors, such as accessibility, local support, technologies available during the meeting and information.

The identification of the frequency of the words 'competitiveness' and 'meeting' in the five articles analyzed, has been another action taken, as shown below in Table 4. In Articles 3, 4 and 5 the result of the frequency of the words 'meeting' and 'meetings' were added, in the respective order, the word meeting appeared 82, 85 and 221 times, while the word meetings 120, 120 and 177 times. The numbers obtained are expressive and affirm the articles' focus on competitiveness and meetings, but in this type of data it is not possible to infer that there is a direct relationship of competitiveness with meetings in each text.

Table IV – Word frequency per article

Article	Competitiveness	Meeting
1	55	23
2	77	38
3	134	202
4	139	205
5	147	398

Source: The Authors (2020)

Despite the expressive presence of the words competitiveness and meeting in the texts, when observed together with the data of the codification, which aim to show the link of the terms used, we see the existing difference of result, according to the method applied. The two forms of analysis are valid and complement each other, however, to identify the relationships the codification method is more effective.

The following is a cloud of words together from the five articles, where it is possible to observe in the results of the codification and frequency of words, other terms that support or guide the discussion of the theme analyzed in this study. See the presence of the words technology, international, investment, strategic, destination, economic, these terms are present in the analysis of the sentences presented in the codification of Table 3. There is a confirmation of results between encoding, frequency, and word cloud.

These highlighted words in the cloud of words are also part of the vocabulary used by the authors in the text of the theoretical framework on competitiveness and meetings presented in this study, showing the conformity of the theme addressed and its connections with other contexts, strengthening and confirming the coherence of the proposed study.



Figure 1: Cloud of words

Source: The Authors (2020)

By observing Figure 1, we can comprehend that the need to discuss the theme of meetings is real considering the technologies, because through them it is possible for companies to promote meetings without the necessity to organize physical space, especially for small companies or even for those that promote home office work. Of course, for international companies, in the word cloud we see the mention of countries, China, international, national that refers us to physical distance, but that can be transposed with agility through digital meetings.

In relation to the questions asked, it is evident that the current state of knowledge about competitiveness and meetings in the Scopus database is still initial and sporadic, what is observable by the spaced dates of the publications and the amount of scientific texts found.

Regarding the context in which the researches were carried out, there are different contexts in which the content was addressed in each text, however the definitions of competitiveness and meeting are similar in all texts, for example, the treatment of the theme can be seen in the segment of tourism and events, technology and innovation.

Finally, the direction for future research and its implications is observable as a vast field for research on the topic, due to globalization and the use of technologies benefit, the need for meetings, as well as the possibility of digital meetings, which can be a favorable aspect for the competitiveness of companies.

5. Final Considerations

It was possible to understand that meetings have as concept of meeting people for a period delimited in advance in order to solve problems or making decisions. Competitiveness aims at success and maintenance in the market, being a globalized market with intense competition, meetings can be formed to make decisions about competitiveness, but they can also be a strategy to keep competitive in certain sectors, for example, tourism and events.

This study using the Scopus platform to obtain the articles for the research resulted in the need to produce research on competitiveness and meetings. The objective was to present the reality of research on competitiveness and meetings in the international Scopus base, the analysis proved prudent, as it was evident the need for research on the subject and since it presented few research on the subject and none of them even mentioned digital meetings, a modality already explored in daily professional and social life.

It is worth mentioning that the data presented in this work is an initial fragment of the ongoing research, which focuses on investigating the theme of meetings in the digital context, justifying the importance of bibliographic survey for theoretical framework and identification of gaps for new research to work in these loopholes.

In Article 3, considering the competitiveness filter, it was observed that it was the content which came closest to the perspective of corporate meetings as a way to remain competitive in the market. As for the meeting filter, Articles 3 and 5 go through the corporate meetings promoting competitiveness.

The frequency of words shows the bias of the articles content, but the process of analyzing the sentences of the studied texts pointed out by the codification, despite presenting lower numbers when compared to the numbers of the frequency of words, gives a more assertive result on the content of these scientific articles. The cloud of words, in addition to allowing a quick and clear visualization, confirmed the results presented in the encoding and in the frequency of words.

It is evident that the main challenge was the little scientific literature on competitiveness and meetings on the Scopus platform, so it also becomes an opportunity for research and carry out a similar survey in other scientific publication bases, where another possibility is to include other languages in the search, in addition to Portuguese, Spanish and English considered in this study.

Time and space issues begin to be overcome, through an emancipation that occurs due to the creation of telecommunication technologies and means of locomotion, in which it is increasingly possible to choose the places and moments of communication and individual exchanges, so another research suggestion on this topic would be to involve the context of meetings held by digital means, mainly due to the fact that we have been passing through a pandemic period and many companies joined strongly the home office in 2020.

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