

# MARKET ORIENTATION: IMPORTANCE, EVOLUTION, AND EMERGING APPROACHES USING SCIENTOMETRIC ANALYSIS\*

ORIENTACIÓN AL MERCADO: IMPORTANCIA, EVOLUCIÓN Y ENFOQUES EMERGENTES USANDO ANÁLISIS CIENCIOMÉTRICO

ORIENTAÇÃO PARA O MERCADO: IMPORTÂNCIA, EVOLUÇÃO E ABORDAGENS EMERGENTES UTILIZANDO A ANÁLISE CIENTOMÉTRICA

ORIENTATION VERS LE MARCHÉ: IMPORTANCE, ÉVOLUTION ET APPROCHES ÉMERGENTES UTILISANT L'ANALYSE SCIENTOMÉTRIQUE

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this review is to explore the importance, evolution, and emerging approaches to market orientation. The method had three steps: firstly, the importance of the topic was analyzed through the main scientometric metrics such as the number of publications per year; secondly, tree of science algorithm was applied to understand evolution. And thirdly, a citation analysis was performed to generate the approaches. The results show three approaches: product innovation, organization performance, and internal market orientation. This study used only one dataset to find the relevant literature; future studies could perform analysis with Scopus and Dimensions. Subsequent studies could identify different perspectives through qualitative methods with case studies to validate the findings of the present investigation.

### KEYWORDS:

Market, market orientation, organization performance, product innovation.

### JEL CLASSIFICATION:

M31; M13; O31.

## RESUMEN

El propósito de esta revisión es explorar la importancia, la evolución y los enfoques emergentes de la orientación al mercado. La metodología se divide en tres pasos, primero se analizó la importancia del tema a través de las principales métricas cuantitativas como el número de publicaciones por año; en segundo lugar, se aplicó el algoritmo del árbol de la ciencia para comprender la evolución. En tercera instancia, se hizo un análisis de citas para generar los enfoques. Los resultados muestran tres enfoques: innovación de productos, desempeño de la organización y orientación al mercado interno. Este estudio utilizó solo un conjunto de datos para encontrar la literatura relevante; futuros estudios podrían efectuar análisis con Scopus y Dimensions. Estudios posteriores podrían identificar diferentes perspectivas a través de métodos cualitativos con estudios de caso para validar los hallazgos de la presente investigación.

**Palabras clave:** desempeño de la organización; innovación de producto; mercado; orientación al mercado.

**Clasificación JEL:** M31; M13; O31.

## RESUMO

Esta revisão visa explorar a importância, evolução e abordagens emergentes da orientação para o mercado. A metodologia está dividida em três passos; primeiro, a importância do assunto foi analisada utilizando as principais métricas científicas, tais como o número

de publicações por ano; segundo, o algoritmo da árvore científica foi aplicado para compreender a evolução. Como terceiro passo, foi realizada uma análise de citações para gerar as abordagens. Os resultados mostram três abordagens: inovação de produtos, desempenho organizacional e orientação para o mercado interno. O estudo utilizou apenas um conjunto de dados para encontrar a literatura relevante; estudos futuros poderiam realizar análises com Scopus e Dimensions. Além disso, outros estudos poderiam identificar diferentes perspectivas utilizando métodos qualitativos com estudos de casos para validar os resultados da presente investigação. **Palavras-chave:** desempenho organizacional, inovação de produtos, mercado, orientação para o mercado.

**Classificação JEL:** M31; M13; O31.

## RÉSUMÉ

La présente révision a pour objet d'examiner l'importance, l'évolution et les nouvelles approches de l'orientation vers le marché. La méthodologie est divisée en trois étapes: premièrement, l'importance du sujet a été analysée à l'aide des principales mesures scientométriques telles que le nombre de publications par an; deuxièmement, l'algorithme de l'arbre des sciences a été utilisé pour comprendre l'évolution. En troisième lieu, une analyse des citations a été effectuée pour générer des approches. Les résultats montrent trois approches: innovation de produit, performance organisationnelle et orientation vers le marché intérieur. L'étude n'a utilisé qu'un seul ensemble de données pour trouver la littérature pertinente; des études futures pourraient être effectuées avec Scopus et Dimensions. En outre, des études ultérieures pourraient identifier différents points de vue au moyen de méthodes qualitatives et d'études de cas pour valider les résultats de la présente recherche.

**Mots clés:** innovation de produit, marché, orientation vers le marché, performance de l'organisation.

**Classification JEL:** M31; M13; O31.

## INTRODUCTION

In highly competitive environments, an organization must create advantages that allow it to generate value for customers and differentiate from the competition (Han et al., 1998). To achieve this, the organization must know and master its environment, inside and outside with their customers, competitors and supply and demand relationships in the market, which means a strong Market Orientation (MO), as the basis for improving the performance of the organization (Grinstein, 2008). For example, organizations that have the typical characteristics of market orientation have the opportunity to segment their customers according to their needs and expectations in order to achieve customization of products (Kirca et al., 2005), in addition to anticipating possible turbulence in the market in which they operate. It helps especially to small enterprises (Gáti & Bauer, 2019). Likewise, previous studies show that the combination of market orientation and other strategic orientations such as innovation orientation or entrepreneurship

orientation allows organizations to have better performances (Grinstein, 2008) and get better in market practices (Ružić & Benazić, 2018). These combinations show a close relationship between market orientation and performance in the organization (González-Benito & González-Benito, 2005) and product differentiation (Setiadi et al., 2017).

Likewise, previous precedents such as those of Liao et al. (2011) present a conceptual framework of market orientation from 1995 to 2008, giving the main bases of the concept for researchers who wish to relate to this topic. On the other hand, Ellis (2006) made a meta-analysis of 56 studies in 28 countries, proving the relationship between MO and the performance of the organization. However, there is a need to update the literature because of the growing interest of new researchers. Also, Shah et al. (2015) offer a review of literature focused on small enterprises in the tourism sector of developing countries, identifying factors that can lead to or hinder MO activities in this field, and give some suggestions to understand how MO influences tourism organizations in developing economies. However, this approach is limited to only one sector. Lastly, Vega Rodríguez & Rojas Berrío (2011) analyzed the two most cited models to measure the MO: Markor and MKTOR together with the application in Latin American contexts, however, although the view from developing countries is impressive, this study concentrated only on one country in a region.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the main contributions of MO nowadays. We first searched in Web of Science (WoS) with the topic "market orientation" from January 2000 to December 31, 2019, giving 641 articles related to the theme. The results were then uploaded to the Tree of Science (ToS) web platform to identify the evolution of MO. Finally, we recognize the main articles according to the position in the tree, an example of the seminal articles in the root is the study of Narver & Slater (1990) and Jaworski & Kholi (1993). The structural ones in the trunk, such as Gonzalez-Benito & González-Benito (2005) and Kirca et al. (2005).

Consequently, the current article in the leaf is Monterres et al. (2015). The tree-shaped visualization allows us to understand the evolution of the concept and the different contributions over time and identify the different current approaches. For Scientometric analysis, we use citation analysis to determine the different

methods (Zuluaga, Robledo, et al., 2016). Thus, the approaches found were the importance of product innovation, the relationship of MO with performance, and the need to create an Internal Market Orientation (IMO).

Next, the theoretical framework that guides the document is presented. The method details the process of searching for and identifying the main articles, the contributions in a chronological way until arriving at the different perspectives identified from the sheets that derived the three most important approaches of the MO that result from this research work.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From a conceptual perspective, Market Orientation (MO) has traditionally been approached from two positions, the first conceiving it as a business philosophy (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), and the second as organizational behavior (Narver & Slater, 1990). The organizational philosophy is characterized by corporations whose activities are consistent with the achievement of information that allows the dissemination of the same throughout the organization, as well as the acceleration of the firm's response capacity. The other position is part of the company's work from the standpoint of organizational culture.

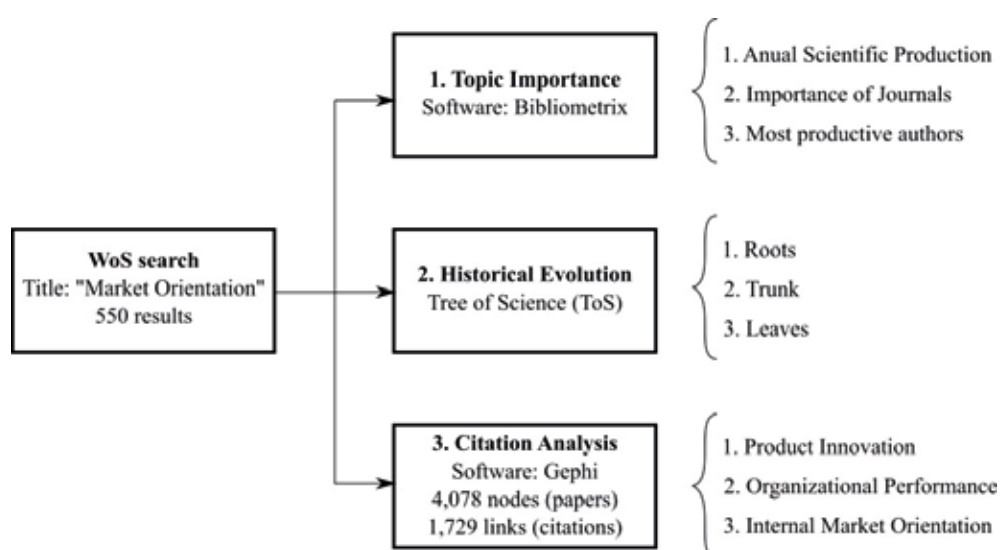
From the perspective of organizational philosophy, MO has a background and consequences (Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995). The first ones explain the interdepartmental dynamics, those of centralization and decentralization, formalization, reward systems, and the position of the management against the risks. The consequences refer to business results that are modulated by competition, market, technology, and business performance. On the other hand, the organizational behavior approach of Narver and Slater does not detract from the notion of the market but instead has to do with a scheme of sustainable competitive advantage, taking into account customer orientation, competition, and coordination inter-functional, from a framework of long-term focus and profitability.

Likewise, for these two perspectives, two MARKOR and MKTOR scales have been applied and validated in different geographical and sector

contexts have been developed, in addition to considerable sample sizes, such as various adaptations and suggestions (Vega Rodríguez & Rojas Berrío, 2011) for the advancement of knowledge in this field. Therefore, how this concept has been constructed from a historical perspective is insisted; thus, the evolution can be evidenced over time, and even more importantly, its current approaches. In such a way that the revision and updating of the field can be approached from this perspective, based on the most relevant approaches, beyond the theoretical, emphasizing the empirical.

## 2. METHODS

The methodological strategy contemplates three phases (see Figure 1); in the first one, we use scientometric metrics to analyze the importance of the topic to have an overview of its relevance (Hrehová & Žiaran, 2016; Hurtado-Marín et al., 2021, Sepulcri et al., 2020). Secondly, the Tree of Science algorithm to understand scientific development over time. In the third, an analysis of co-citations to identify the main subareas of the MO. In the next part, each of the steps will explain in detail.



**Figure 1.** Methodological procedure.  
Fuente: Elaboración propia.

**Table 1.** Popular journals in MO.

Journal	Papers	Quantil	I.F.
Journal of Business Research	41	Q1	1,26
Industrial Marketing Management	30	Q1	1,66
European Journal of Marketing	28	Q1	0,97
Journal of Small Business Management	16	Q1	1,34
Journal of Strategic Marketing	16	Q2	0,59

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

### 2.1 Step 1: Importance of the topic

We searched the indexed Web of Science database to identify articles that refer to MO. For this, the following search equation was used: Title = "market orientation" and with these results, Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2 were constructed, a total of 550 documents were obtained.

### 2.2 Step 2: Historical evolution - Tree of Science

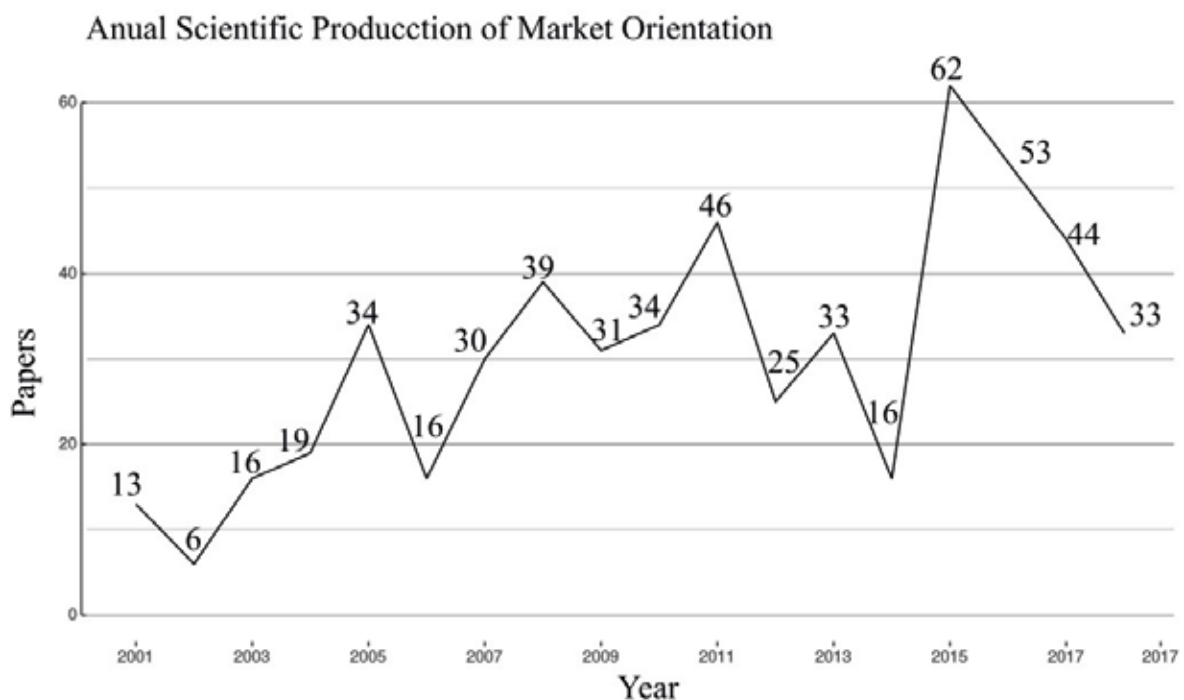
We uploaded the results to the Tree of Science (ToS) web platform (Valencia-Hernandez et al., 2020). ToS enables the construction and practical understanding of the theoretical framework and state of the art from the initial search in WoS. ToS has been used in other literature reviews, for example, in a bibliographical review on management (Hernández-Betancur et al., 2020), medicine (Martínez & Arenas, 2019), solidarity economy (Duque et al. 2021), neuroeconomy (Trejos-Salazar et al., 2021), neuromarketing (Duque-Hurtado et al., 2020) and internationalization (Acevedo-Meneses et al., 2020). ToS algorithm is explained in detail in Zuluaga et al. (2016), this paper shows the

citation network. In the end, the algorithm explains the articles located in root (classic or seminal), trunk (structural), and leaves (current or emerging perspectives) (see Figure 2).

### 2.3 Step 3: Citations analysis

We apply the method proposed by Robledo et al. (2014) to extract the citation network. We obtained 4,078 articles (nodes) from the 550 registers and then, the modularity algorithm (Blondel et al., 2008) to identify the most critical approaches. Although the algorithm identified 16 groups, we selected the three most significant with a total of 1729 articles (42.2% of the total network). The first cluster represented 16.55%, the second 16.48% and the third, 9.37%. For each one, the articles were identified according to the network metrics such as indegree, outdegree, and betweenness (Zuluaga et al., 2016). We visualize the results with Gephi (Bastian et al., 2009).

The results are described below according to the three elements of this work: importance, history, and approaches.



**Figure 2.** Scientific Production of MO.

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

**Table 2.** Five most productive authors in MO.

Author	Production	h-Index
Thomas Hult	9	78
Bulent Menguc	6	39
Seigyoung Ahn	6	36
Óscar González-Benito	6	26
Dolores M. Frías-Jamilena	6	22

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Bibliometrics Analysis: Market Orientation Importance

The scientometric analysis allows us to deduce that MO is a mature area and has had constant development over time. For example, a stable behavior with a growth of 5.63% is shown in Figure 1. In 2015, there was an increase of 62 articles; this is because the *Journal of Strategic Marketing* gave a limited edition to the subject that year. Although in recent years, it presents a decline, it can be concluded that MO is a mature area that is divided into several approaches.

One of the elements considered to identify the importance of MO is the quality of the journals. In this regard, MO has publications in Q1 and Q2 in journals such as *Journal of Business Research* and *Industrial Marketing Management* (see Table 1).

In addition to the journal quality, the importance of the authors is measured by the production and h index. Doctor Thomas Hult has an h index of 78, and the lowest is Dr. Dolores M. Frías-Jamilena with 22 (see Table 2). This Table shows that people recognized in the field are investigating MO.

The next section shows the development of MO using the Tree of Science process.

### 3.2 Historical evolution

The articles in the root are the more cited and show the importance of the MO. For example, Kohli & Jaworski (1990) raise the concept

of market orientation based on market intelligence, customer focus, coordinated marketing, and profitability. Narver & Slater (1990) propose to deploy it as a culture in the organization to create companies with a focus on the market and innovation, which will guarantee competitive advantage and high performance. Later, Day & Nedungadi (1994) find a relationship between competitive advantages and market orientation; in the same way, Slater & Narver (1995) gives the essential elements for an organization to enter the culture of learning. Finally, Han et al. (1998) refer to the concept of market orientation to innovation.

The trunk papers shape the theory of MO and connect the root concepts with the new millennium. The two concepts that stand out in the trunk are innovation and the relationship with performance. Regarding novelty, the works of Sandvik & Sandvik (2003) highlights the contribution of innovation processes and the generation of new products in the MO. Likewise, Ellis (2006) and also Im & Workman (2004) relate the concepts of creativity and generation of new products to market orientation. Regarding the relationship with performance, Grinstein (2008) states that MO contributes to the organization's performance more than other alternative orientations such as innovation and entrepreneurship. Ellis (2006) conducted a study in 28 countries in 56 companies verifying the contribution of market orientation in the performance of the organization. Therefore, the articles located in the trunk highlight the need for market-oriented companies to carry out innovation processes to improve performance.

In the branches, the articles relate to case studies of MO; for example, Leng et al. (2015) propose the development of a new concept between technology orientation and MO in the advancement of new products. Kamboj & Rahman (2017) suggest the association of market orientation, marketing capabilities, and sustainable innovation in order to determine the contributions of marketing capabilities, sustainable consumption, and competitive advantages as mediators. Frösén et al. (2016) analyze the relationship between MO between companies (B to B) to offer a particularly important safeguard for companies against fluctuations in market forces. However, Perez-Luño et al. (2016) raise the inconvenience of using market orientation in small businesses and using other directions such as innovation and entrepreneurship. Finally, there are several studies in different sectors such as restaurants (Salehzadeh et al., 2017), tourism services (Shah et al., 2015), and service companies (Polo Peña et al., 2015).

### 3.3 Market Orientation Perspectives

We apply a modularity algorithm to identify the different approaches to the topic. The following graph shows the network of citations of the three clusters with the word cloud together.

#### 3.3.1 Approach 1: Product Innovation

Following the same process of ToS, we presented the contributions of this approach in the form of a tree, root, trunk, and leaves. According to the cluster analysis and the word cloud (see Figure 4), this sub-area shows that product innovation improves the organization's performance in a market-oriented context. For example, one of the first classic works that highlighted this feature was Day (1994). This work proposed that one of the elements to take a start up was creativity in the use of technological information. In this sense, Slater & Narver (1995) highlighted the ability to learn that an organization complemented with a market orientation would improve performance generating a superior

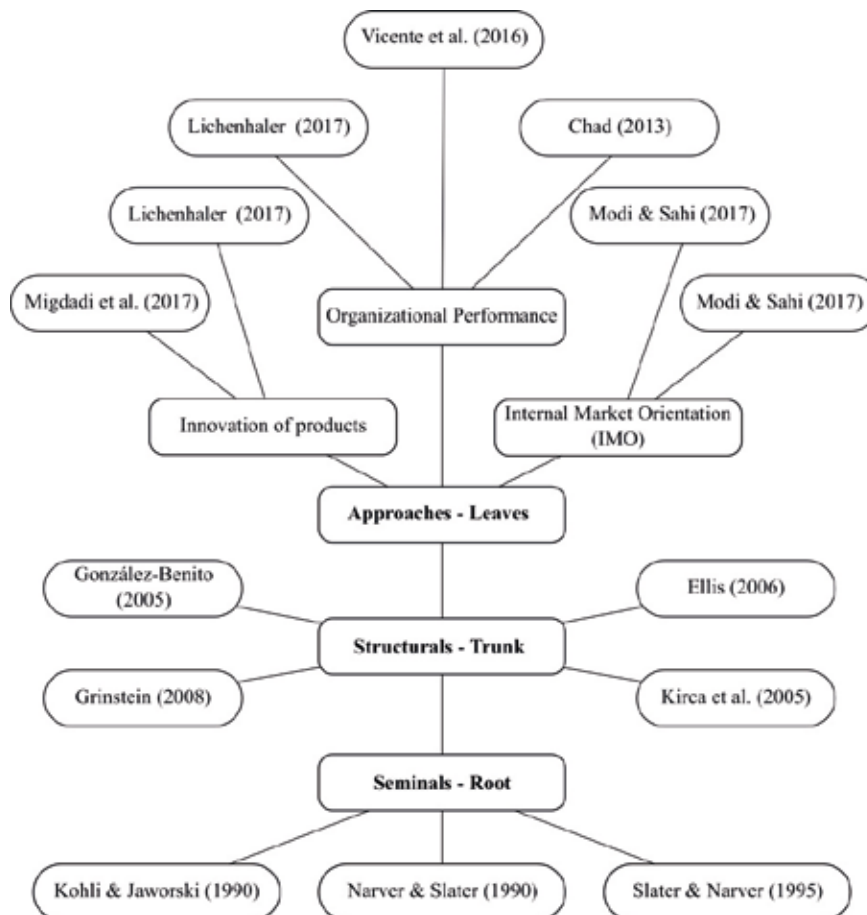


Figure 3. Visualization of MO - Tree of Science (some selected articles).

Fuente: Elaboración propia.



value to its members. Finally, Christensen & Bower (1996) develop a model that shows how customers shape the allocation of resources that a company should give to product innovation.

The trunk papers focus on the positive influence on the creation of new products and market orientation. For example, Narver et al. (2004) show that there is little research on this relationship and, in this way, it broadens the concept of MO towards proactive MO and the need for organizations to generate new products continually. Within this relationship, it is essential to consider creativity so that the development of new products is successful. Im & Workman (2004) showed that MO mediated the development of new products and creativity in marketing programs. On the other hand, Zhang & Duan (2010) stated that proactive and reactive market orientation has a positive effect on improving the performance of innovative products.

In the most recent studies in this approach, the importance of knowledge in MO is persistent. For example, Migdadi et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of the involvement of knowledge management and MO could lead to better innovative capacities in organizations and better

performances. These results were confirmed by the work of Lichtenhaler (2016), where they emphasize internal technologies and propose that market knowledge is critical for the development of absorption capacity. This MO perspective highlights the importance of product innovation to improve business performance.

### 3.3.2 Approach 2: Organizational Performance

Continuing with the root, trunk and leaf analysis and according to the cluster analysis and the word cloud (see Figure 4), this subarea shows concepts directly related to the organization's performance, being very recent works compared to the others trends, such as performance, relationship, management, and business. The articles of the root show seminal authors relate this orientation directly to the accomplishment of organizations (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; Slater & Narver, 1994). At this time, the organizational performance relates some orientations with a focus on the market, such as customer orientation, innovation orientation, and organizational culture (Deshpande et al., 1993). The MO is also included from the organization's strategy as a deployment throughout the

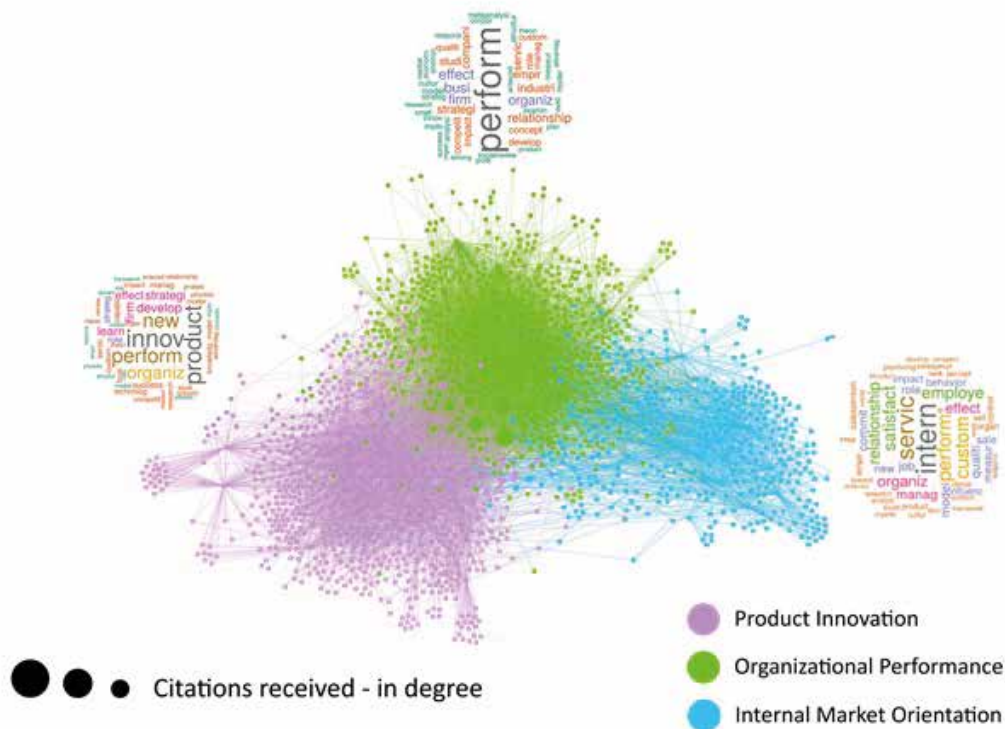


Figure 4. Citation network and word clouds of MO.

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

company (Deshpande et al., 1993; Ruekert, 1992), studies of market orientation application in small organizations are initiated (Pelham & Wilson, 1996) and the first market orientation applications for other countries appear, depending on the performance of the organizations (Deshpandé & Farley, 1998; Pelham & Wilson, 1996; Selnes et al., 1996). At this time, some MO measurement scales appear (Deshpandé & Farley, 1998; Pelham & Wilson, 1996) and are complemented later by the performance of organizations (Homburg & Pflesser, 2000).

The trunk articles show specific studies of the influence of MO on the performance of the organization. For example, Harris (2001) spoke about the link between MO and the organization's financial objectives. At the same time, Grewal & Tansuhaj (2001) study the relationship between MO and strategic flexibility as a tool for the market crisis, concluding that this mix provides a positive influence. Finally, Ellis (2006) ratifies the relationship between MO and performance in organizations through a meta-study in 28 countries; However, it highlights that in the mature markets there is a stronger relationship of the MO than in less structured markets.

The articles in the sheets present new applications in order to improve the performance of the organization, new relationships such as the influence of customers and the relationship between organization and sustainability are explored (Kazemian et al., 2016; Subramanian & Gopalakrishna, 2001). Research is also expanded with applications in small and medium-sized organizations (Kara et al., 2005; Polo Peña et al., 2015). For example, Shah et al. (2015) studied tourism organizations in developing countries, and Ellis (2005) studied the influence of MO on developing economies. The applications are extended to non-profit organizations; some studies analyze the change of strategy within non-profit organizations through the incorporation of MO as a tool for performance improvement and the acquisition of resources to fulfill its corporate purpose (Chad, 2013; Vicente et al., 2016) complement the performance of organizations (Homburg & Pflesser, 2000).

### 3.3.3 Approach 3: Internal Market Orientation

This perspective is about Internal Marketing (IM); in Figure 4 in the word cloud, there is no word "market" because it was removed since it was in the search equation. Internal marketing is related to the training of all employees to satisfy

consumers; that is, a planned effort using a part of marketing to overcome organizational resistance to changes, producing an alignment, motivation, and integration of employees towards the effective implementation of business strategies through the process of motivating workers towards customers (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). Additionally, George (1990) highlights the importance of guiding organizational behavior to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these initiatives. This process can be carried out through a framework that can facilitate activities (Ahmed et al., 2003). Therefore, the articles in the root create the foundations of the IM, along with its definitions and implementation.

After establishing the bases of the IM, it was necessary to propose scales to measure it within organizations. One of the recommended ranges was the Internal Market Orientation (IMO), which includes five dimensions: customer satisfaction, relative competitive position, compliance, retention, and staff attitudes (Lings & Greenley, 2005). Customer satisfaction can be improved if the organization focuses on customer service contact (Gounaris, 2006). This contact improves the behavior in the roles of the employees, therefore, influencing the success of the marketing activities (Lings & Greenley, 2010).

The most current research focuses on the connection between MO and IMO, together with the application in different types of industry. For example, Modi & Sahi (2018) showed a connection between MO, IMO, and performance by establishing that IMO does not directly influence performance but is a mediating variable between MO and performance. Finally, building performance in non-profit companies and their connection with IMO can be difficult, which is why Modi & Sahi (2018) investigates this relationship, concluding that IMO generates a more reliable link between employees and the firm.

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article was to identify the importance, evolution (past, present, and future) and emerging approaches to MO. MO can be considered a mature theory in science since it has had a stable growth of 5.63% since 2004. Using the analogy of Tree of Science (root, trunk, and leaves), a path was made from the classic articles to the most current. Finally, three main approaches were found according to

the number of items in each cluster: product innovation, organizational performance, and Internal Market Orientation (IMO).

The results showed that product innovation is an essential pillar for proper MO implementation in organizations. For example, it is currently mandatory for organizations to implement processes of technological implementation and to update aimed at improving products. In this sense, knowledge management also appears as an essential variable for companies to improve their MO. Additionally, marketing campaigns become more natural to implement if there are innovative products in contrast to promoting the same products for a more extended period.

One of the results that have been confirmed from this analysis is the close relationship between MO and performance. MO becomes a fundamental strategy to improve performance in organizations; that is, companies with better organizational strategies and structures to connect with the needs of their clients stand out over those that do not have these characteristics. This approach shows that MO is improved in developed countries but that there are no differences between company sizes.

The latter approach shows the importance of the organization's employees being trained with a customer orientation defined as an Internal Market Orientation (IMO). IMO stands out today because companies are in closer contact with customers due to information technologies and the Internet. Therefore, it is necessary for companies to train their employees in customer service processes and to become an organizational culture.

The relationship between technology and innovation could provide exciting elements in the future to better understand MO (Duan et al., 2020). Due to the rapid technological development that has been generated in recent years, companies are increasingly facing challenges within their organizations to understand the dynamics of their customers. Additionally, disruptive businesses such as Netflix, Uber, and Airbnb have shown the importance of technology in the development of new products by changing market rules. This technology is also related to the ability of organizations to manage their clients' information and operations, which leads to Big Data processes internally and externally (eg, social networks) (Lin & Kunnathur, 2019).

Regarding the use of MO in organizations, the authors cited to conclude that the use of MO will give organizations the ability to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Concerning the use of MO with other organizational orientations, the articles consulted showed that MO could be mixed with entrepreneurship orientation and innovation orientation to generate competitive advantages in organizations. For proper MO implementation in organizations, they must understand the climate, culture of the firm, and the environment in which they operate. For example: for the analysis of the conditions in the firm, the following questions can be used: is there a facility for leadership? Is there decentralized strategic planning?, learning capacity of the organization? Correct alignment of these aspects will be reflected in the development of new products, consumer satisfaction, and increased sales (Slater & Narver, 1995).

One limitation of the research was the use of only one database for the selection of scientific articles. Subsequent studies could identify different perspectives through qualitative methods with case studies to validate the findings of the present investigation. For organizations that pursue competitive advantage it is necessary to deploy the concept of marketing throughout the organization and, according to the business model, define a strategy with other orientations that allow them to be unique in the market and achieve the satisfaction of all the exciting parts.

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