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Business Lobbying: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

In this article, we conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) on Business Lobbying. Our objective was to map the evolution of the main theories over the past 124 years, by comparing them with COVID-19 literature from recent years. We extracted a total of 1,988 publication records from Google Scholar and Scopus using keyword searching, resulting in 3,174,947 citations. Based on these records, we performed a bibliometric analysis. A careful content analysis revealed that the scholarly research revolves mainly around three themes: (a) business lobby, (b) process, and (c) regional studies. The number of citations on business lobbying has multiplied seven-fold during the past 50 years and might double in the coming decades. Our article also suggests recommendations for future studies.

Keywords: Business Lobbying, Systematic Literature Review

1. Introduction

We present a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on Business Lobbying as part of a doctoral thesis (Perman, 2024). Although traditional literature reviews offer a more flexible structure, an SLR is a comprehensive review covering numerous databases based on strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. It offers the advantage of identifying the leading authors in the field of research, trends in publications, and citations over a given period, following Hart (2018). After analyzing the data, we can present critical arguments in the literature review summary.

In sum, before presenting the SLR, we employed a systematic literature review (SLR) strategy in this study, following Goyal & Kumar (2020); Denyer & Tranfield (2009); Singh & Walia (2020); Hart (2018); Cheng et al. (2018); Prashar et al. (2020) which are discussed in following sections. The choice was made based on how widely accepted it was in bibliometric analyses. Systematic Literature Reviews (SLR) have also attracted scholarly attention recently (Dias, Vivanco, L., Teixeira, E., 2024; Schmitz & Dias, M., 2023; Dias, M. et al., 2023b; Dias, M. et al., 2023c; Dias et al., 2022). Before delving into the review, we introduce two supporting theories of business lobbying best suited to the research objectives.

2.1. Supporting Theories

In this section, the perspectives of two supporting theories are disclosed: Agency Theory (Section 2.1.1), and Social Exchange Theory (Section 2.1.2). Next, the research objectives are summarized in Figure 1.

2.1.1. Agency Theory

Agency Theory is central to business lobbying activity. It is concerned with the relationship between agents in economic exchanges, where one actor (the principal) has control over the behavior of another actor (the agent) in his favor, and the agent's decisions affect the well-being of the principal.

A concrete example of the principal-agent in Brazilian business lobbying regards the adherence to the Agency Theory's main assumptions: (a) there is an economic relationship between principals and agents. In such a case, the principal should be the head of the Government Relations Department in a company and their agents or business lobbyists, who are workers that represent their principals in the Congress Senate, to intermediate negotiations between public servants, for instance. Who are paid to work with the principal and to represent the principal and, therefore, the company. (b) there is a power relationship between principals and agents once the business lobbyist is a worker who answers to their superiors in representing the interests of a business company.

From its origins in the information economy, Agency Theory has developed two branches: positivist and principal-agent (Jensen & Roeback, 1983). The contract between the principal and agent serves as the standard unit of analysis for both flows. They also hold similar beliefs regarding individuals, organizations, and data.

Therefore, the principal's well-being cannot be maximized because the principal and agent have distinct objectives and risk preferences (Wright et al., 1996). The principal is risk-neutral because it can select from various participants (Wiseman & Gomez-Meja, 1998). In contrast, a single principal agent is required to act contrary to risk (Williamson, 1963). To protect their assets, agents are risk averse. Therefore, agency theory is concerned with minimizing costs associated with the agency relationship. According to Hatch (1997), the agency problem entails the possibility of the agent acting contrary to the principal's interests. To avoid diverging interests, contracts align interests between agents and their principals.

According to Eisenhardt (1985), a principal's capacity to determine whether agents are acting in his best interests depends on the information available. This information can be obtained either directly by observing the agents' actions or tangentially by observing the agents' results. As the outcomes are not entirely dependent on the agents, they begin to assume a portion of the risk. In order to safeguard the interests of the principals, it is necessary to implement mechanisms that reduce the likelihood of agents acting inconsistently. According to Clegg, Hardy, and Nord (1996), agency costs are incurred in this endeavor. The total agency costs consist of the principal's spending on monitoring, the costs of agent dependence, and the principal's residual loss. Considering that agency costs exist, both principals and agents act to mitigate these costs and strike a balance between both parties. Arrow (1985) identified two primary causes of agency problems: moral hazard, which is associated with concealing actions, and adverse selection, which is associated with concealing information.

Conversely, adverse selection refers to agents with information that is obscure to the principal or whose procurement costs are high. Typically, two methods exist to resolve agency issues: monitoring and punishment. According to Clegg, Hardy, and Nord (1996), monitoring involves observing agents' performance, whereas penalization is the sanction for undesirable behavior.

2.1.2 Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory is a theoretical framework investigating social behavior within interpersonal relationships. It employs a cost-benefit analysis approach to assess these interactions' potential risks and rewards. This idea encompasses many forms of social contact, including professional and transient connections and rudimentary transactions such as verbal exchanges. If the costs of a relationship outweigh the rewards, such as

putting effort or money into a relationship without reciprocation, the relationship may be terminated or abandoned (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Blau, 1964). Studies supporting this theory suggest that petitions allow the aggregation of dispersed information and allow policymakers to improve their choices when conflict is low and signals are relatively accurate.

Therefore, before engaging into a relationship involving a business lobbyist and a public servant, to give an example, parties evaluate the risks of such an involvement.

Additionally, they were conducted outside of Brazil, and it is geographically opportune to develop this veritably pioneering study in this country. Finally, in the next section, the findings of the systematic literature review on business lobbying are detailed and further discussed.

2.2. The perspective of Business Lobby: Review Objectives

Although narrative literature reviews are commonplace in most research scenarios, they do not provide an overview of trends in the field or the top authors and publications. Recency and relevance searches are the main guiding principles for narrative literature reviews. Conversely, Systematic Literature Reviews provide a broader view of trends and ranks (Goyal & Kumar, 2020; Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Singh & Walia, 2020; Hart, 2018; Cheng et al., 2018); Prashar et al., 2020), which helps deepen the subject analysis.

Therefore, we conducted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on Business Lobbying, resulting in $n = 988$ publication records extracted from Google Scholar and Scopus through keyword searching, including the words “Business” and “Lobbying,” with the Boolean operator “AND,” resulting in more than one million citations (see Table 2). Based on these records, the study performed bibliometric analysis to identify trends in the field, including the top 20 authors (see Table 3).

Despite multiple search possibilities, only published research was investigated, excluding unpublished papers, such as laws, regulations, grey papers, and finally, patents, as outlined in the upcoming sections.

2.3. Search Strategy

We conducted a review of the global scientific literature on Business Lobbying, following the guidelines provided by Goyal and Kumar (2020). Our primary objective was to map the existing research on the topic. Additionally, we followed Zahoor & Talba's (2020) approach to organizing research objectives, which included (i) identifying the leading publications on the topic and (ii) using citation network and text network analysis to identify influential research studies and emerging trends. Our findings are summarized in Table 1.

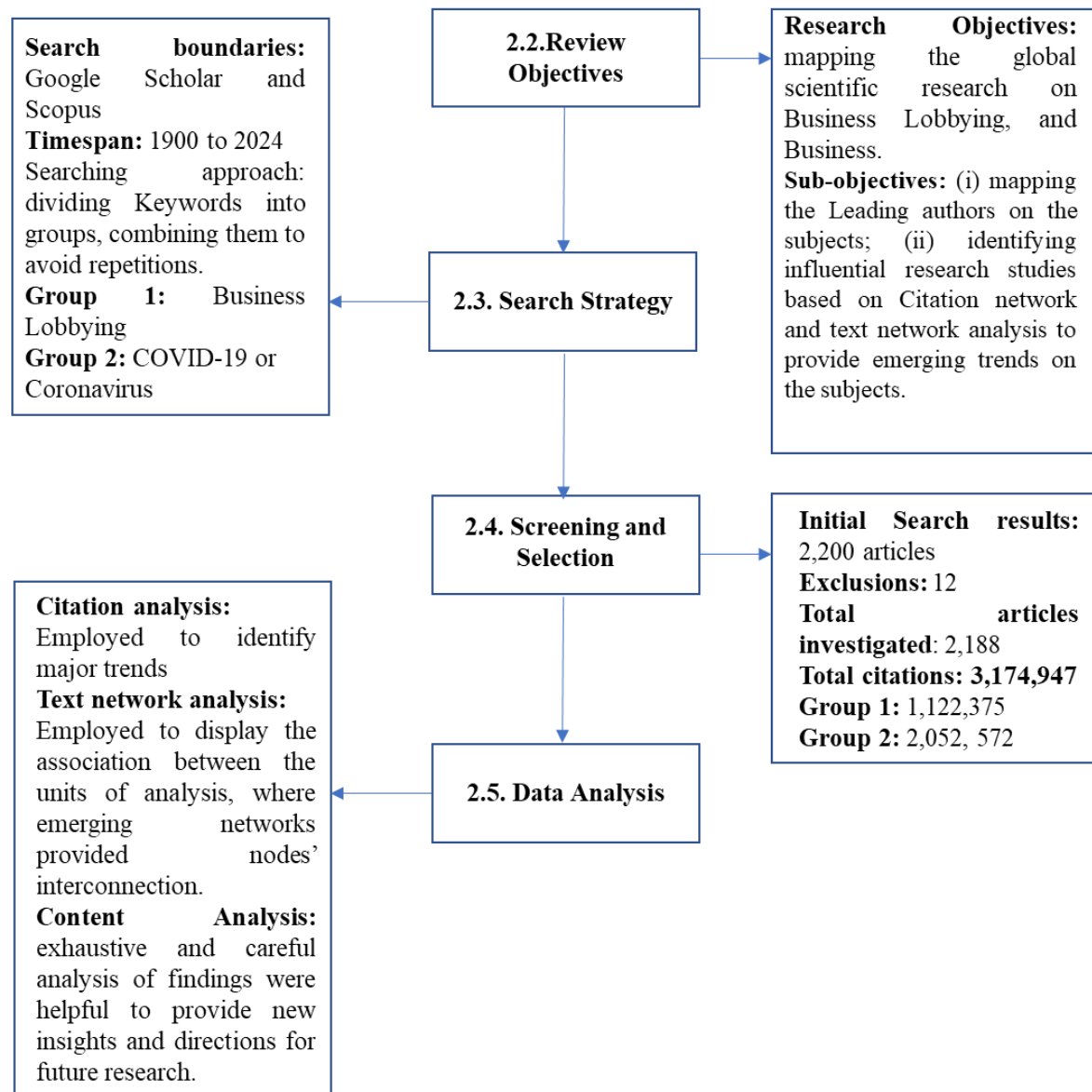


Figure 1: Research Design

2.4. Screening and Selection

Table 1 illustrates the total number of valid sources and exclusions, abiding by the software limitations, such as (a) Google Scholar, limited to 1,000 results per search, and (b) Scopus, limited to 200 results per search, as a default.

Table 1: Source/Exclusions

Source/Exclusion	Total
Scopus + Google Scholar	2.200
Exclusions	212
Total Valid sources	1.988

Table 1 shows that 212 (9.6 percent) out of 2,200 publications were excluded due to failing to meet the established criteria or because they were duplicates. Nine hundred eighty-eight valid sources resulted in approximately one million citations (see Table 2). We also used Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2007) to examine the research coverage from 1900 to the present—the search parameters contained only English-language terms. The databases Google

Scholar and Scopus were selected as the academic datasets. After the initial round with Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2007), a text network analysis was conducted to identify the most pertinent emerging themes. These were then used as keyword entries in a subsequent iterative round.

Table 2: Business Lobby (1900-2023)

Timeline	Business Lobbying	
	Publication	Citation
1900-1949	2	2.498
1950-1969	5	8.173
1970-1979	15	76.293
1980-1989	56	53.302
1990-1999	198	252.359
2000-2009	390	397.759
2010-2023	322	331.991
Total	988	1.122.375

2.5. Data Analysis

Table 2 shows 1,122,375 citations from 1,988 valid sources from 1900 to date. The iterative process led to several sessions to accomplish the research findings. The themes were organized into two groups, such as (a) Process, and (b) Regional Study. Analysis indicated cases where the word “Business Lobby,” or simply “Lobby,” appeared in the title but in the keywords “Business Lobbying,” therefore, satisfying the inclusion criteria.

2.5.1. Trend Analysis

Between 1900 and 2023, Figure 2 depicts the number of publications in Business per year. Since the 1980s, the quantity of publications has increased steadily. This phenomenon may be attributed to the emergence of the Internet, which made information accessible to everyone. Conversely, the number of publications decreased in 2020, mainly because of COVID-19 (Dias et al., 2023, 2023b).

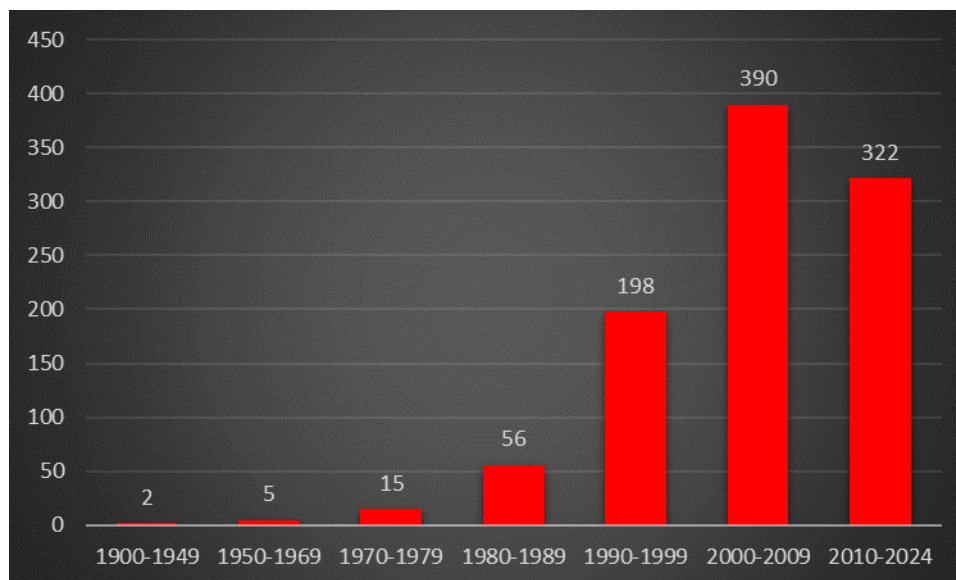


Figure 2: Business Lobbying Publications (1900-2024)

In addition, Figure 3 illustrates total citations from 1900 to 2024. Note that from 2000 to 2009, the most considerable frequency (397,759 citations), representing approximately 35 percent of the total number of citations, was as follows:

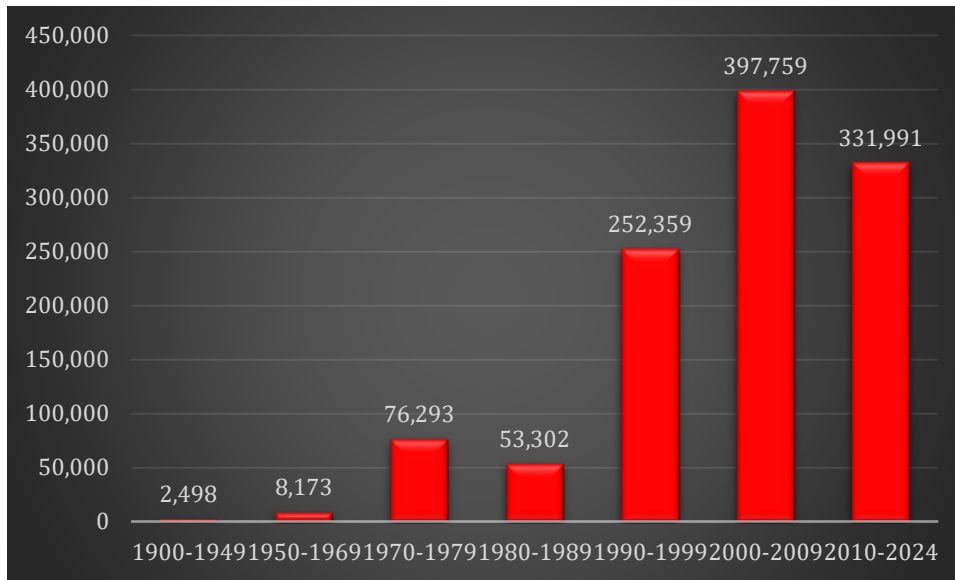


Figure 3: Business Lobbying Citations (1900-2023)

As mentioned earlier, the COVID-19 research had a direct impact on the number of citations (Dias et al., 2023; 2023b). The pandemic caught the attention of scholars across the world, affecting various research fields, including business lobbying. To illustrate the comparison between Business Lobbying and COVID-19 or the coronavirus pandemic, Table 3 and Figure 4 have been included.

Table 3: Business Lobbying and COVID-19 Citations (1900-2024)

Timeline	Business Lobbying	Coronavirus or COVID-19
1900-1949	2.498	0
1950-1969	8.173	0
1970-1979	76.293	1.020
1980-1989	53.302	2
1990-1999	252.359	4.580
2000-2009	397.759	75.288
2010-2023	331.991	1.971.682
Total	1.122.375	2.052.572

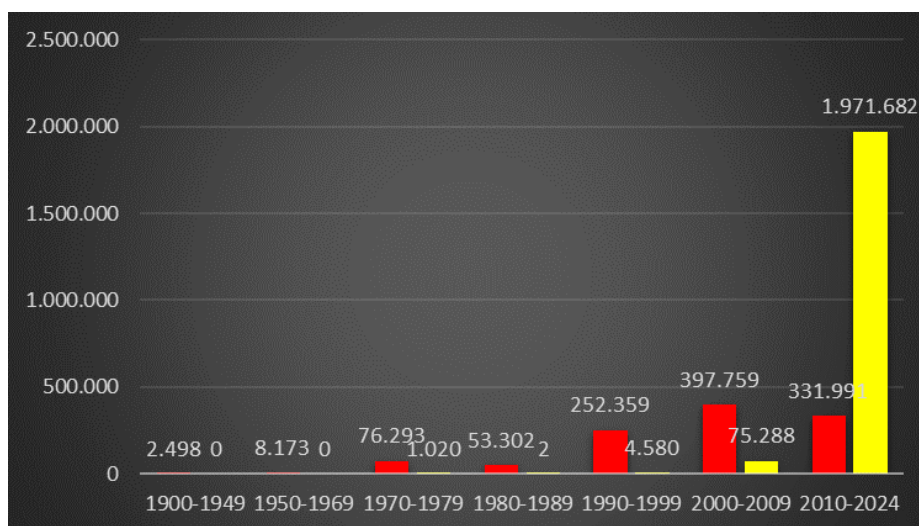


Figure 4: Business Lobbying and COVID-19 Citations (1900-2024)

Table 4: Top 20 Most influential authors

Rank	Citation	Author(s)	Year	Journal
1	1.928	TM Liggett	2012	Academy of management review
2	1.372	RL Hall, AV Deardorff	2006	American Political Science Review
3	1.198	BK Richter, K Samphantharak...	2009	American Journal of ...
4	1.164	P Bouwen	2002	Journal of European public policy
5	707	MR Baye, D Kovenock, CG De Vries	1993	The american economic review
6	696	J Beyers	2004	European Union Politics
7	658	FR Baumgartner, BL Leech	2001	The Journal of Politics
8	630	D Coen	1997	Journal of European Public Policy
9	566	P Utting	2005	Development in practice
10	561	M Bertrand, M Bombardini, F Trebbi	2014	American Economic Review
11	557	RF Doner, BR Schneider	2000	Business and politics
12	526	D Mitra	1999	American Economic Review
13	521	D Coen	2007	Journal of European Public Policy
14	505	C Mahoney	2007	Journal of Public Policy
15	482	A Dür	2008	European Union Politics
16	433	D Coen	1998	Journal of Public Policy
17	161	P Bernhagen, NJ Mitchell	2009	European Union Politics
18	94	JM Drope, WL Hansen	2006	Business and Politics
19	85	T Lawton, T Rajwani	2011	European Business Review
20	53	S Della Vigna, R Durante, B Knight...	2016	American Economic Association

Source: Harzing, 2007

Table 4 illustrates the most influential authors in the research field, ranked by the number of citations. An iterative process kept articles from widely recognized as distinct journals, such as the Academy of Management Review and the American Political Science Review. Please observe that the most influential research is not the most recent because we are more concerned with quality than recency. It may take time for recent articles to be extensively cited.

2.5.4. Thematic Analysis

Two themes emerged from the SLR on the Business Lobbying thematic analysis: (a) business lobby; (b) process; (c) regional studies. Table 5 summarizes the emerging themes from content and network analysis regarding the most influential authors in practice, and also because the thematic analysis proved a valuable resource for providing the research gap discussed in the upcoming section.

Table 5: Emerging Themes

Author(s)	Year	Theme	
		Process	Regional Study
TM Liggett	2012	yes	no
RL Hall, AV Deardorff	2006	yes	yes
BK Richter, K Samphantharak...	2009	yes	no
P Bouwen	2002	yes	yes
MR Baye, D Kovenock, CG De Vries	1993	yes	no
J Beyers	2004	yes	yes
FR Baumgartner, BL Leech	2001	no	no
D Coen	1997	yes	yes
M Bertrand, M Bombardini, F Trebbi	2014	yes	no
RF Doner, BR Schneider	2000	yes	no
D Mitra	1999	yes	no
D Coen	2007	yes	yes
C Mahoney	2007	yes	yes
A Dür	2008	no	yes
D Coen	1998	no	yes
P Bernhagen, NJ Mitchell	2009	no	yes
JM Drope, WL Hansen	2006	yes	no
T Lawton, T Rajwani	2011	yes	no
S Della Vigna, R Durante, B Knight...	2016	no	yes

Source: Harzing, 2007

Table 5 shows the emerging themes “process” and “regional studies” as complementary evidence regarding the research gap, introduced in the following sections. However, before presenting the research gap, there are some remaining noteworthy considerations, such as research limitations and discussion on the analysis of findings, detailed in the next section.

We collected the affiliations of the publications from the .csv file obtained from Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2007). The geographical distribution of the top publications is shown in Figure 6 using Google My Maps at <https://www.google.com/intl/pt-BR/maps/about/mymaps/>.



Figure 4: Geographical location of publications

2.6. Research Limitations, Implications, and Discussion

This research is limited to (a) published papers, excluding grey papers; (b) Business and Lobbying keywords; (c) Google Scholar and Scopus databases; (d) Publish or Perish (PoP) software algorithm; and (e) InfraNodus.com cloud processing parameters. Other papers, such as conference papers, regulations, and other software or databases, are not part of the scope of the present study and should be investigated separately.

This chapter investigated the current epistemology of Business Lobbying and supporting theories, such as Agency and Social Exchange theories (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, respectively), and Business Lobbying, which is the unit of analysis of this work, investigated through a systematic literature review. Although the analysis of the findings revealed trends and “champions” of Business Lobbying from 1900 to date, some important considerations are noteworthy: (i) the number of publications and citations were affected somehow by the entrance of internet technology in the 1990s; (ii) atypical situations like the COVID-19 somehow interfered with the number of publications and citations because coronavirus research has attracted drastically scholars’ attention from 2020 to 2022; situations (i) and (ii) were revealed in the analysis and are helpful to understand the research trends on business lobbying; (iii) algorithms are not perfect. In many circumstances, the keywords found did not refer primarily to Business Lobbying; instead, the research focus was something else, such as business strategy. Therefore, only through careful text analysis could we exclude duplicated entries to deal with reliable evidence. (iv) In worst cases, only text analysis on the abstracts proved to be the best article selection approach. (v) New articles generally have fewer citations than older ones. Once again, text analysis was paramount, so separate most cited articles, but with less research significance.

Next, the text analysis ultimately proved to be a valuable source of information for the research gap determination, as detailed in the upcoming section. Table 5 shows the findings from the thematic analysis: whereas most researchers focus their attention on regional studies (Hall & Deardorff, 2006; Richter & Samphanthark, 2009; Bouwen, 2002; Baye et al., 1993; Beyers, 2004; Baumgartner & Leech, 2001; Coen, 1997; Bertrand et al., 2014; Doner & Schneider, 2000; Mitra, 1999), for instance, others addressed the process of business lobbying (Bertrand et al., 2014; Doner & Schneider, 2000; Mitra, 1999), while others studied both themes (Coen, 1997; 2007;

Mahoney, 2007; Bouwen, 2002). Other subthemes were also considered as noteworthy to business lobbying: (a) global trade (Woll, 2008); (b) influencing oligarchies (Frye, 2002); (c) environmental groups (Gullberg, 2008); (d) professionalization, strategy, and influence (Santos et al., 2017), and (e) organized interests (Lowery, 2007).

Finally, despite the multiple emerging themes and subthemes in this SLR, more evidence was needed regarding the influencing factors on business lobbying in the Brazilian scenario. In sum, we could observe the research trends in the Business Lobbying research field over the past 124 years and visualize the most influential publications in the sector, which proved to be a valuable resource for determining the research gap as to orient our research efforts in tackling the most suitable research approaches to address the factors affecting the activity in Brazil.

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