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Exploring the Intersection of Professional Social Networks and Competitiveness: A Systematic Review and Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract. *This study explores how professional social networks affect competitiveness using a bibliometric approach. The study uses data from the Web of Science database from 1998 to 2024 and a selection of 165 scholarly publications. The selection was made according to PRISMA guidelines for systematic literature review in 2020, while data analysis was done using Bibliometrix R package. The objective was to identify major research areas, spot new topics of interest, and chart the conceptual platform for this area by looking for co-citation, co-occurences from keywords, and thematic clusters. Early findings show how professional social networks help improve competitiveness by facilitating knowledge sharing, driving innovation diffusion, and generating strategic linkages. The clusters found were grouped into four broad categories: motor themes, basic themes, emerging themes, and niche themes, each described according to how they contribute to forming competitive advantage. This original comprehensive systematic review, to our knowledge, explores how professional social networks intersects with competitiveness, providing a sound groundwork for future studies.*

Keywords: Professional networking platforms, Competitiveness, Literature analysis, Bibliometric methodology, PRISMA 2020 protocol.

Introduction

The emergence of professional social networks has made them essential platforms for people wishing to improve their career and build professional networks in a more interconnected global world (Pînzaru et al., 2016; Vătămănescu et al., 2018a, 2018b). At the same time, competition at a professional level has now reached a new level. This surge in competition has driven people and organizations to utilize a range of assets, including social networks, to get a competitive advantage over others (Bratianu & Orzea, 2016; Vătămănescu et al., 2014, 2023a, 2023b). Professional social networking sites have since become essential tools for career advancement and networking (Hota, 2024) while this ever-changing dynamics continue to evolve. Effective use of platforms like these will be essential for people trying to employ strategies to navigate complexity in today's modern professional world and to utilize social networking for career growth.

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Platforms like LinkedIn, Xing, Meetup, Viadeo, and Yammer have radically changed the way people communicate, share knowledge, and develop career ambitions (Nikolaeva et al., 2021). In a highly competitive business environment, organizations and individuals alike strive to utilize available resource pools, including social networks, to gain a competitive edge (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2021). Current scholarly discussions highlight the central function played by social networks in recruitment, specifically favoring students by providing them with exposure to industry experts, alumni, and experts in domains (Bu et al., 2024). For instance, applying LinkedIn not only enables users to showcase their skills and experience, but also helps them connect with industry experts, ultimately leading to a more favorable status in the job market (Mogaji, 2019). Furthermore, incorporating social networks into professional settings has demonstrated a positive impact on collaboration and knowledge sharing—pillars essential for competitiveness across several industries. These networks provide users with extensive means for interaction with industry experts, showcasing capabilities, and active engagement in information sharing, all essential building blocks for career exposure and development (Nikolaeva et al., 2021).

Additionally, integration of social networks into business practices has proven to be highly effective in facilitating collaboration and information exchange, key to maintaining competitiveness across industries (Vătămănescu et al., 2018b). Empirical studies indicate that impact from these sites stretches beyond interaction to include construction of professional identities and building communities of practice (Andriievska et al., 2023). Professionals from disparate sectors, for example, utilize social networks to access online communities, share knowledge, and participate in discussions beneficial to their career growth (Ray et al., 2022). The advent of new sites and ongoing development of current sites have enriched professional social network landscapes, placing importance on selecting platforms in line with certain career ambitions and milestones (Khan et al., 2023).

The overall objective of this research is to conduct a systematic review of literature relating to professional social networks and competitiveness, utilizing bibliometric analysis as a chief methodology to identify trends, key contributors, and thematic frameworks within this area.

With the increased importance of career development through professional social networks, this research aims to respond to a number of research questions:

RQ.1: What are the latest developments in studies pertaining to professional social networks and competitiveness in a variety of industries?

Q.2: Which future research directions can be discerned from conclusions reached through bibliometric analysis?

RQ.3: What are the bibliometric trends evident from literature on professional social networks and competitiveness in the last decade?

Q.3.1: Which articles and authors are most often cited in the area of professional social networks and competitiveness in the last decade?

RQ.3.2: How have research emphases in studying professional social networks changed over the last decade in terms of thematic focus, methodologies applied, and geographic representation?

Q.3.3: What are the gaps in extant scholarship concerning interactions between professional social networks and competitiveness, and how might future studies pick up where extant scholarship leaves off?

To this end, the remainder of the paper was organized as follows. Firstly, materials and methods are clearly introduced. Following this, the descriptive results will be presented alongside

literature clustering and in-depth cluster analyses. Finally, the conclusion will synthesize the findings of the systematic literature review and suggest opportunities for future research.

Methodology

The central purpose of this report is to perform a systematic review of studies investigating the relationship between competitiveness and professional social networks. This objective was realized by undertaking a bibliometric analysis, guided by PRISMA to promote transparency and methodological quality during the selection of studies to include in the systematic review or in a meta-analysis (Figure 1). The data used in this study were obtained from Web of Science database.

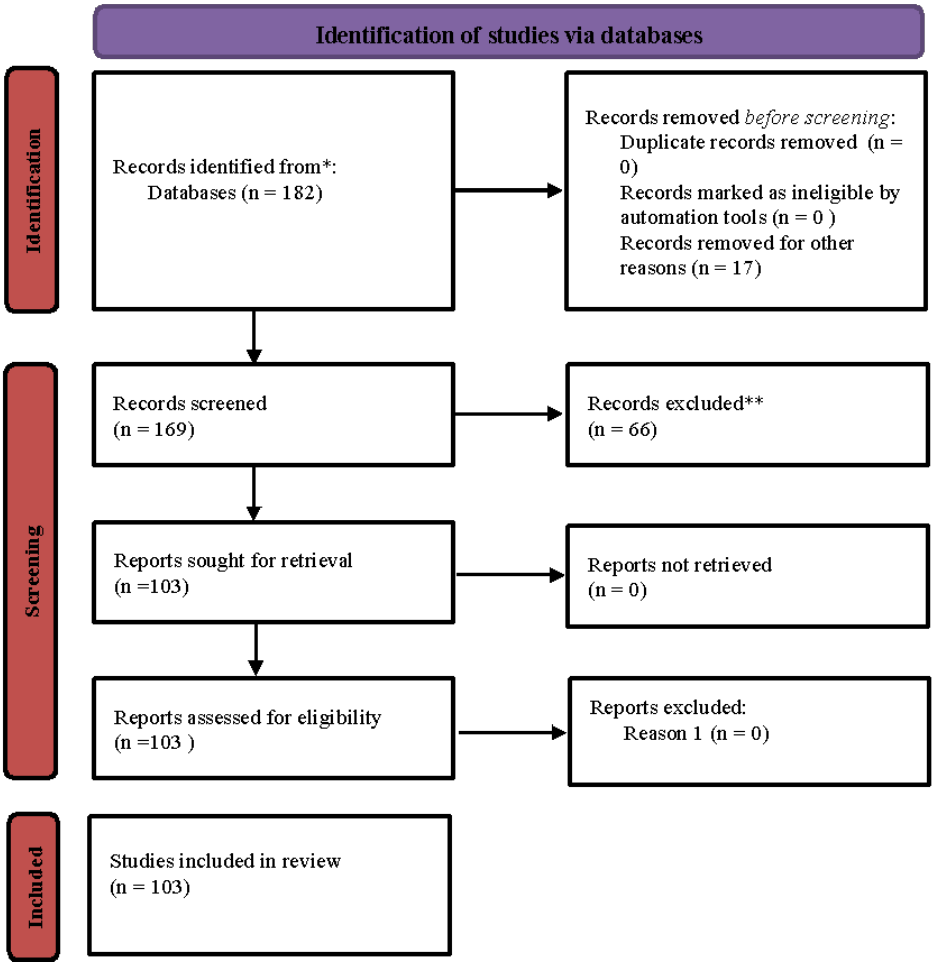

Figure 1. Systematic literature review procedure according to PRISMA guidelines

Source: own processing on PRISMA guidelines.

The keyword search was limited to title, abstract, and keywords in order to keep track of relevance in selected studies, leading to a primary dataset of 182 articles. In a second screening phase, articles published in a language other than English were discarded, bringing down the dataset to a level of 169 articles. It was noteworthy, however, that no duplications were found during this phase. Qualitative synthesis was then carried out by paying a detailed attention to each article's title and abstract in determining whether it was fitting relative to the purposed studies. At this step, 66 articles were disqualified due to them dealing with non-relevance topics, poor

methodologies, not being part of social science, or inadequate result interpretation, leaving a final selection level of 103 articles for a bibliometric analysis.

Multiple analytical aspects are part of bibliometric analysis, like overall citations, geographic spread of authors or institutions, institution-level contributions, sources from publications, or author-provided keywords. The approach enables thorough investigation into literature, giving a complete assessment of bibliographic data (Pop et al. 2024, Catrina and Ghigiu, 2024).

Besides this, the research deals specifically with researching the relationship between competitiveness and professional social networks between the years 1998–2024. In order to sharpen the search strategy, we decided to use a combination of terms related to "professional social networks" and "competitiveness." These terms were selected in order to view how professional social networks relate to managerial competitiveness (Table 1).

Table 1. General information about the extracted records

Description	Results
Timespan	1998:2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	93
Documents	103
Authors	309
Single-authored docs	16
article	49
article; early access	4
proceedings paper	68
Review	2

Source: Authors' own research.

The table shows data from bibliometric analysis from 1998–2024, where a total of 103 sources were included (including journals, books and other types of scholarly publications as well as conferences), with 309 authors, where 16 signed unique documents, and the majority are scientific articles (49 articles), followed by 4 early access articles, 68 conference papers and 2 reviews, pointing towards a significant diversity in types of publications and a major contribution by scholarly conferences to the area.

Results and discussions

Identifying patterns and impact: descriptive scientific metrics in professional social networks and competitiveness

The results obtained in Figure 2 indicate a fluctuating, yet increasingly active academic interest in the relationship between professional social networks and competitiveness during the period analyzed 1998-2024. The number of published articles has registered a notable increase, especially since 2011, suggesting a growing recognition of the relevance of the topic. The early years, such as 1998 to 2000, had very limited activity, with no articles published in 1999 and 2000 and only one in 1998. The trend sees a gradual upsurge starting from 2001, with isolated contributions spread across 2003–2009. The years between 2011-2015 witness a steady rise in publications. Conversely, the subject had its peak productivity between 2016-2020, where the years 2016 and 2018 gave a stellar performance with 19 pieces each.

This growth demonstrates expanding scholarly focus toward the interaction between social networks and competitiveness, likely driven by enhanced digitalization and widespread networking practices during this period. The trend shows how the subject matter is evolving, with earlier years concentrating more on theoretical foundations, while more recent studies trend toward empirical investigations of practical applications. For clearer representation of trends in this publication dynamic, graphical illustrations or tables would be well-suited to help visualize the data.

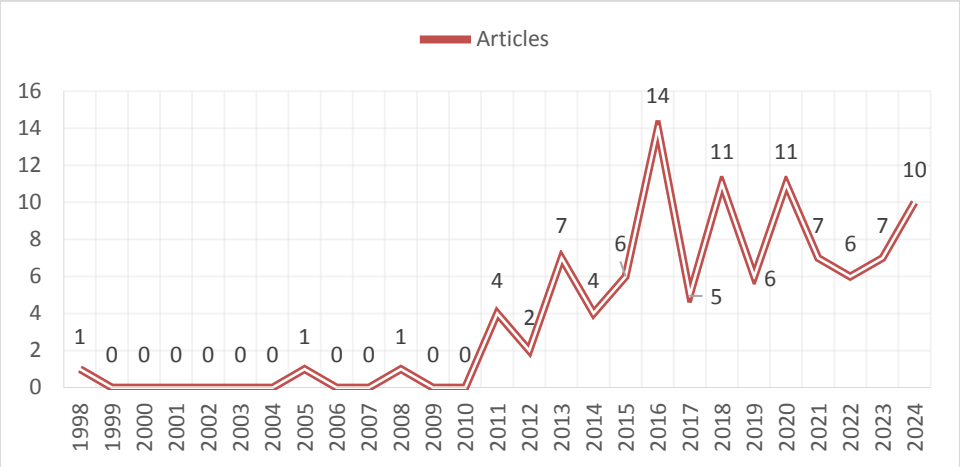

Figure 2. Quantifying articles on professional social networks and competitiveness topic

Source: Authors' own research.

Table 2. Top sources of publication on professional social networks and competitiveness topic

Sources	No of articles	Type of publication
Comunicar	4	Journal
Competitiveness Review	2	Journal
Management Research Review	2	Journal
Small Business Economics	2	Journal
14th International Technology, Education and Development Conference	2	Conference
7th International Technology, Education and Development Conference	2	Conference
EDULEARN13: 5th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies	2	Conference
ICT Management for Global Competitiveness and Economic Growth in Emerging Economies	2	Conference
Others	85	Journal and Conferance

Source: Authors' own research.

Table 2 gives an overview of the literature related to this study on professional social networks and competitiveness, with a lot of diversity concerning sources and types. Specifically, the journals Comunicar are highlighted with four articles published here. A few conferences, including 14th International Conference on Technology, Education and Development (Inted2020), International Conference on Technology, Education and Development (Inted2013) and EDULEARN13: International Conference on Education and New Technologies, also contributed importantly, each with two articles. This tendency indicates how important the conferences are in terms of sharing recent literature and triggering scholarship discussions regarding this subject.

Table 3. Most cited articles on professional social networks and competitiveness topic

Paper	Total Citations	Average citiation/Year
Guerrero M, 2021, Small Bus Econ Group	104	20,80
Borges R, 2013, Manag Res Rev	80	6,15
Osuna-Acedo S, 2018, Comunicar	57	7,13
Digalwar A, 2020, Bus Strateg Environ	51	8,50
Vătămănescu E.M, 2016, J Knowl Manag	49	4,90
Alberti F, 2015, Compet Rev	49	4,45
Alberti Fg, 2017, Eur J Innov Manag	41	4,56
Lange B, 2011, Entrep Reg Dev	33	2,20
Pena-Fernandez S, 2016, Comunicar	33	3,30
Lacalle C, 2016, Comunicar	31	3,10

Source: Authors' own research.

Analysis of Web of Science database citation data indicates a strong impact from studies concerning professional social networks and competitiveness, quantified in terms of total and average citations per year. The most cited work in this data sheet, written by Guerrero M. et al., (2021) in Small Business Economics, counted 104 citations with a remarkable average rate of 20.8 citations per year, thus emphasizing its relevance and strong acceptance within academia. In addition, other works with significant contributions include those by Borges R. (2013) published in Management Research Review, with 80 citations with an average rate of 6.15 citations per year, and Osuna-Acedo S. (2018) in Comunicar, having achieved 57 citations with a rate average of 7.13 per year. Likewise, Digalwar A. (2020) in Business Strategy and the Environment reached a value of 51 citations at a rate average of 8.5 citations per year, emphasizing how future-oriented are concepts concerning sustainability and environment strategies if related to professional network and competitiveness.

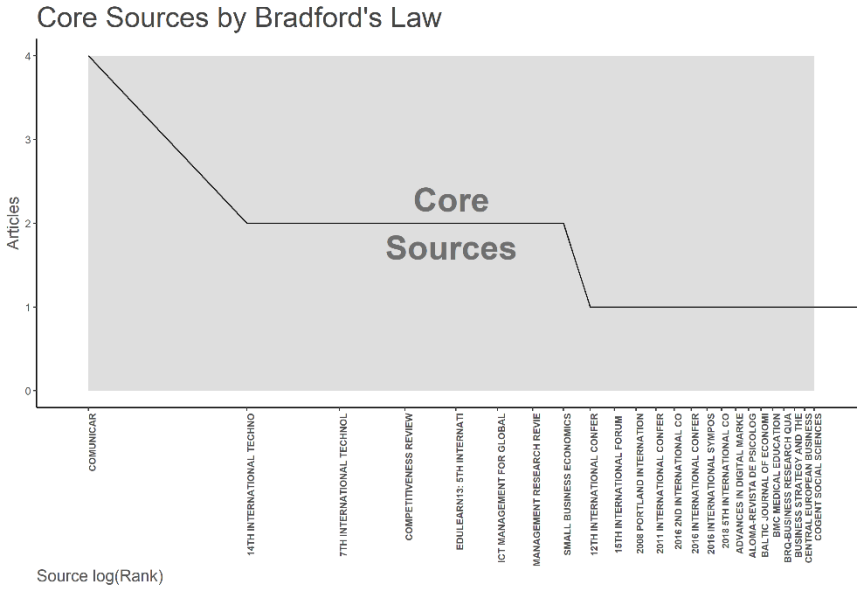

Figure 3. Bradford's Law Grouping of Sources

Source: Authors' own research.

Applying Bradford's law to data in Table 4 shows a balanced and even spread of sources and articles over the three identified domains in a topic area in professional social networks and competitiveness. Area 1 consists of 24 sources (25.81% of sources) and holds a share of 34 articles

(33.01% of articles). Area 2 holds 36 sources (38.71% of sources) and slightly surpasses Area 1 by having a share of 36 articles (34.95% of articles). Likewise, Area 3 holds 33 sources (35.48% of sources) and makes a contribution of 33 articles (32.04% of articles). Still, the relatively even spread of articles over the three domains shows a homogeneous and even allocation of research findings. Bradford's law, where a declining density of core sources with a move from a core area to peripheral ones is expected, appears to correlate well with this observed trend, pointing out to diversity and even-handedness in scholarly contribution within a topic area. However, a multidisciplinary nature of a topic is brought out, where whereas this research has not been limited to a few core conferences or a few core journals, it crosses a broad horizon of sources, emphasizing scholarly relevance of studies tracking professional social networks and competitiveness in a diversity of disciplines and topic areas.

Table 4. Distribution of sources by area

Zone	Sources	% of sources	Articles	% of articles
Zone 1	24	25,81%	34	33,01%
Zone 2	36	38,71%	36	34,95%
Zone 3	33	35,48%	33	32,04%
Total	**93**	**100,00%**	**103**	**100,00%**

Source: Authors' own research.

Table 5. Calculations for Lotka's law

Documents written	Number of authors	Proportion of Authors
1	304	98,40%
2	4	1,30%
3	1	0,30%

Source: Authors' own research.

Table 5 findings demonstrate the collective and pluralistic nature of research in this subject area, where a large number of scholars are undertaking single studies in contrast to consistent contributions following Lotka's law. Furthermore, according to Lotka's Law, we can see that a large majority of contributing authors in the subject area of professional social networks and competitiveness are contributing a single piece of work, with 304 authors representing 98.40% to fall into this group. This trend follows closely Lotka's law assumption that a decreasing percentage of authors produce a given quantity with a corresponding exponential increase in a given quantity.

Figure 4 shows the most contributing authors to the area of professional social networks and competitiveness by the number of documents written. Out of the contributing authors, the most productive one is Kowal Jolanta, having written three documents, signifying a major contribution to this area of research. Second to Kowal are multiple authors with Gaile-Sarkane Elina, Oberst Ursula, Pizzurno Emanuele, and Sceulovs Deniss having written two documents.

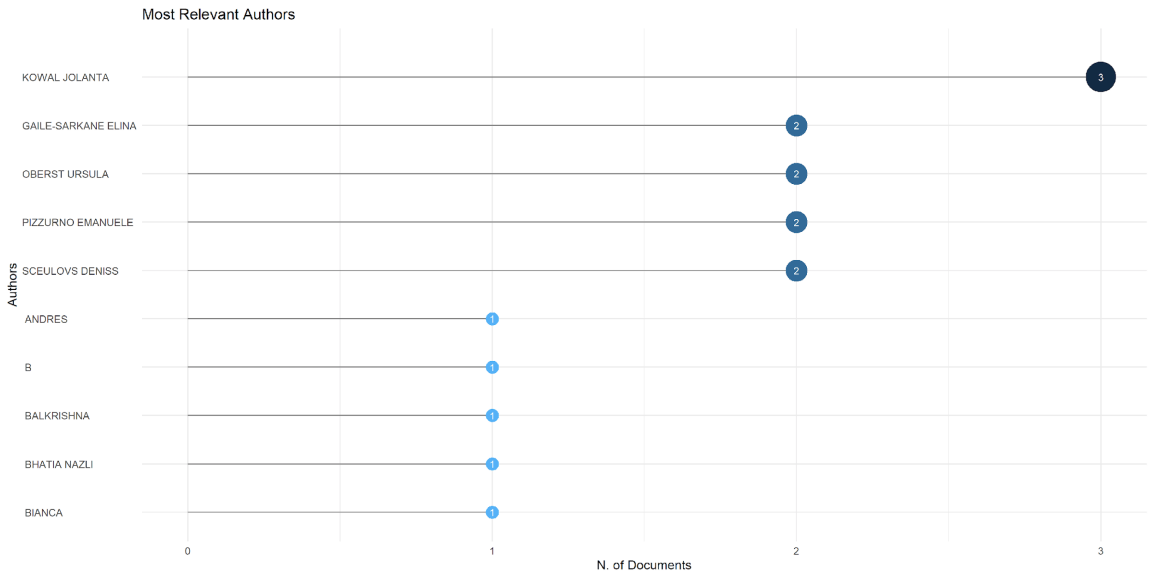

Figure 4. Most relevant authors

Source: Authors' own research.

An In-Depth Analysis of Clustering in Academic Literature

To identify the primary aim of examining the various building themes over the interaction between competitiveness and professional social networks, in Figure 5, through Bibliometrix software, were revealed the themes over this interaction along with clusters rendered in Table 6 according to this interaction. As seen in Figure 5, 12 clusters were found like: corporate social-responsibility, education, facebook, firm, higher-education, impact, job-satisfaction, perspective, proximity, students, support and systems, each with a name given by described keywords.

To proceed with analysis, previously generated clusters were categorized into 12 significant themes according to centrality-density relation indicators as are shown in Figure 6 and Table 6. Additionally, in Table 7 were included a detailed description concerning the connection of professional social networks with competitiveness. Furthermore, clusters of

The "Impact" cluster is the most central and dense, with words like "impact" (12 times), "performance" (11 times), "innovation" (7 times) and "management" (7 times). With a high centrality, this cluster is a core cluster for discussions concerning performance, innovation and management, with organizations being concerned primarily with growth and performance. Conversely, however, are the "Support" and "Perspective" clusters, utilizing words like "support" and "determinants" implying a concern for constituent determinant factors, while "perspective" and "work" imply a concern with competitiveness and dynamics at work. In addition, however, the "Social Networking" cluster utilizes words like "facebook", "LinkedIn" and "social networking websites", having a lower centrality suggesting an evolving trend concerning social networks and their influence across society. A closer analysis shows that the "Proximity" cluster concerns itself with strategic alliances and firms, having a relevance concerning inter-organization relations, while "Corporate Social Responsibility" and "Higher Education" clusters imply evolving subjects concerning corporate social responsibility and higher education. Meanwhile, however, the "Systems" cluster remains the least central, having a lower relevance in the network of concepts observed.

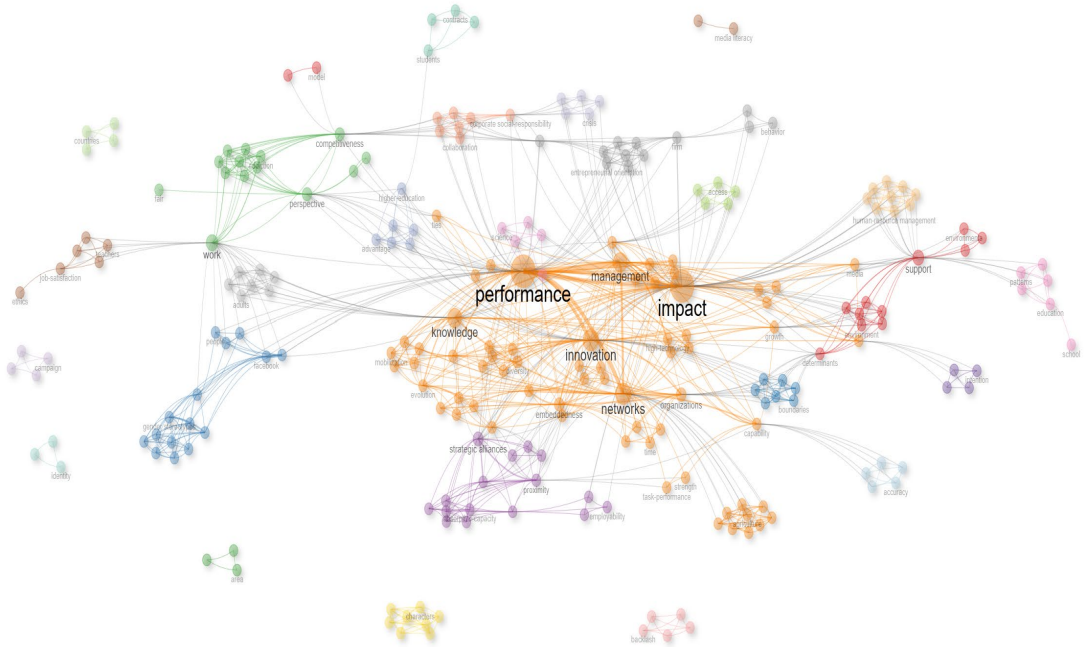

Figure 5. Thematic map

Source: Authors' own research.

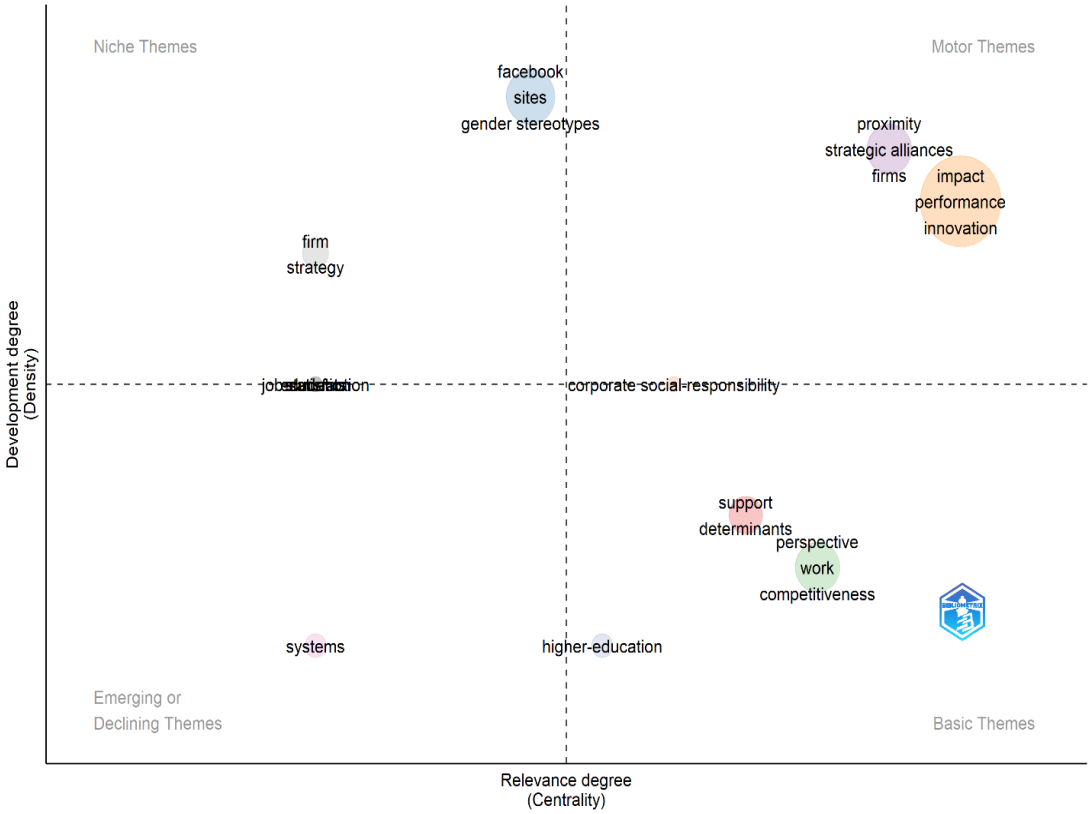

Figure 6. Thematic evolution

Source: Authors' own research.

Table 6. Works on topics of interest

Cluster	Centrality	Density	Centrality level	Density Level	Theme frequency	Main theme
impact	1,76	67,05	12	10	82	Motor
facebook	0,11	109,72	6	12	14	Niche
proximity	1,17	71,88	11	11	11	Motor
perspective	0,96	35,42	10	3	11	Basic
support	0,58	43,75	9	4	6	Basic
firm	0,00	62,50	3	9	4	Niche
systems	0,00	33,33	3	1,5	3	Emerging
higher-education	0,17	33,33	7	1,5	3	Basic
corporate social-responsibility	0,25	50,00	8	6,5	2	Motor
students	0,00	50,00	3	6,5	2	Emerging
education	0,00	50,00	3	6,5	2	Basic
job-satisfaction	0,00	50,00	3	6,5	2	Niche

Source: Authors' own research.

Table 7. The main themes resulted from grouping the clusters into themes

Theme	Keywords	Occurrences	Cluster	BTW centrality	Close centrality	Centrality page rank
support	support	4	1	1.452,62	0,0020	0,0110
	determinants	2	1	527,11	0,0020	0,0060
facebook	facebook	3	2	271,36	0,0020	0,0050
	sites	3	2	271,36	0,0020	0,0050
	gender stereotypes	2	2	15,42	0,0010	0,0050
	linkedin	2	2	1.347,44	0,0020	0,0060
	selection	2	2	15,42	0,0010	0,0050
	social networking websites	2	2	15,42	0,0010	0,0050
perspective	perspective	4	3	1.145,92	0,0020	0,0090
	work	4	3	2.399,38	0,0020	0,0120
	competitiveness	3	3	904,80	0,0020	0,0080
proximity	proximity	4	4	540,88	0,0020	0,0080
	strategic alliances	3	4	774,46	0,0020	0,0090
	firms	2	4	147,88	0,0020	0,0060
	wine	2	4	143,63	0,0020	0,0050
impact	impact	12	5	5.441,84	0,0020	0,0280
	performance	11	5	7.272,18	0,0030	0,0290
	innovation	7	5	2.259,00	0,0020	0,0160
	management	7	5	1.195,81	0,0020	0,0150
	networks	7	5	2.704,29	0,0020	0,0170
	knowledge	6	5	2.181,87	0,0020	0,0140
	capability	3	5	1.244,54	0,0020	0,0070
	embeddedness	3	5	293,01	0,0020	0,0080
	evolution	3	5	204,02	0,0020	0,0060
	information	3	5	516,46	0,0020	0,0060

Theme	Keywords	Occurrences	Cluster	BTW centrality	Close centrality	Centrality page rank
	media	3	5	903,06	0,0020	0,0050
	organizations	3	5	605,03	0,0020	0,0080
	clusters	2	5	213,94	0,0020	0,0060
	growth	2	5	1.176,99	0,0020	0,0060
	industry	2	5	374,09	0,0020	0,0060
	information-technology	2	5	856,66	0,0020	0,0050
	resources	2	5	131,78	0,0020	0,0060
	social-structure	2	5	110,64	0,0020	0,0060
	ties	2	5	285,21	0,0020	0,0040
job-satisfaction	job-satisfaction	2	6	211,00	0,0010	0,0040
education	education	2	7	211,00	0,0010	0,0040
	firm	2	8	174,39	0,0020	0,0050
firm	strategy	2	8	443,12	0,0020	0,0070
students	students	2	9	627,00	0,0010	0,0040
corporate social-responsibility	corporate social-responsibility	2	10	344,17	0,0020	0,0060
higher-education	higher-education	3	11	833,17	0,0020	0,0040
systems	systems	3	12	18,16	0,0020	0,0030

Source: Authors' own research.

Theme 1 - Impact, proximity and corporate social responsibility

Professional social networks' impact on competitiveness have been a topic of interest for the last few decades. We combine cluster such impact, proximity, and corporate social responsibility into a single theme, illustrating for us how central a part it plays in competitiveness discussion. These topics indicate a significant attention to how professional networks and proximity can affect the organizational performance as well as the dynamic within the industries. The most critical studies having examined these relationships are outlined in Table 8.

Table 8. Most relevant studies form clusters *impact, proximity and corporate social responsibility*

Study	Type of work	Research method
Borges, R. (2013)	Article	Partial least squares (pls) analysis
Alberti, F. G., & Pizzurno, E. (2015)	Article	Analysis techniques
Alberti, F. G., & Pizzurno, E. (2017)	Article	Multiplexity analysis
Lange, B. (2011)	Article	Semi-standardized interviews and case reconstructions.
Gretzinger, S., Fietze, S., Brem, A., & Ogbonna, T. (Toby) U. (2018	Article	Case study
Peng, J., Quan, J., Zhang, G., & Dubinsky, A. J. (2015)	Article	Regression analysis based on a questionnaire
Edo, C., Yunquera, J., & Bastos, H. (2019).	Article	Analysis techniques

Source: Authors' own research.

This work by Borges (2013) examines how organizational culture, personality attributes, and social context impact tacit knowledge dissemination among IT experts. The approach employed is quantitative, relying upon a survey administered to a sample of 143 individuals, while

data analysis was carried out through partial least squares (PLS) modeling. The variables considered are organizational culture (team-oriented and supportive), personality attributes (extraversion, conscientiousness, stability), social environment (social ties' strength). The findings are that IT experts who are conscientious and introvert are more likely to share tacit knowledge, above all within a team-oriented and supportive work environment. Alberti and Pizzurno (2015) in their work investigate knowledge exchange within a cluster of aerospace firms in Italy, looking upon knowledge types exchanged (technological, managerial, market) and social roles played by the various actors. Employing social network analysis (SNA) and a survey carried out among the companies within a cluster, the research demonstrates open technological knowledge exchanges, whereas exchanges are selective concerning managerial and market knowledge. Large companies and SMEs are responsible for most exchanges, while universities mediate mainly market knowledge. Alberti and Pizzurno (2017) further explore knowledge leakage in open innovation networks involving start-ups, referring specifically to a cluster within Italy in the aerospace sector. They use social network analysis (SNA) in conjunction with multiplexity analysis to pinpoint intentional and unintentional flows from large firms, SMEs, start-ups, and R&D organizations. The findings are that start-ups gain from open innovation, yet are at a serious risk of losing knowledge, above all, in exchanges with large firms. This research makes theoretical and managerial contributions regarding how such networks are to be managed to reconcile collaboration with knowledge preservation.

Lange (2011) examines how entrepreneurs in Berlin's creative industries construct market access strategies and strategies for professionalization in a volatile economic environment. The approach is qualitative, grounded in social interaction analysis and spatial strategies. Spatial reorganization strategies, learning processes, and social relationships are explored, with findings suggesting that adaptability and exploitation of interpersonal ties are key to success. Gretzinger et al. (2017) evaluate how knowledge and social capital affect entrepreneurial innovation, with a qualitative approach grounded in joint correspondence analysis (JCA) applied to a sample of prospective entrepreneurs. The research studies entrepreneurs' skills, social relationships, and types of generated innovations, pointing out how strong and weak social relationships differently affect transforming creative concepts into marketable products. Peng et al. (2015) explore how social relationships and performance in a context affect knowledge sharing in organizations, through a questionnaire completed by experts in a research and development department, China. The analysis focuses on social relationships, interaction frequency, and IT skills between workers, concluding with social relationships having a positive influence on knowledge sharing, while IT skills mediate this influence. Lastly, Edo et al. (2019) explore how expanding the Internet and social platforms affect digital journalism, evaluating how news aggregators and algorithms affect gatekeeping. The approach consists in evaluating 30 aggregators and eight semi-structured interviews with digital press editors in the US, Spain, and Portugal. The findings reveal a declining journalistic role in news selection, with growing algorithmic influence coupled with user preferences.

Theme 2 - Perspective, support and education

The role of professional networks on the competitiveness of employees are strongly related to the perspective of the organization and the support that is offered but also the education of the employees, being a basic theme. Thus, the the Table 9 present the most relevant papers on the cluster's perspective, support and education

Guerrero et al. (2020) analyze the influence of entrepreneurial ecosystems on the entrepreneurship process in developed and developing economies, through a literature review from

2000 to 2017. The study uses a methodology based on the analysis of 67 academic papers to identify environmental conditions that influence entrepreneurs at various stages: potential, emerging and consolidated. The variables analyzed include policies, support programs, financing, professional infrastructure, university education, the labor market and market dynamics. The results highlight that factors such as professional support, incubators and R&D investments favor entrepreneurship, while limited access to financing and social norms can constitute barriers. On the other hand, Pereira and Barbosa (2013) investigate stress management strategies among medical students through a qualitative study conducted at the Federal University of Goiás, Brazil. The methodology includes a focus group with nine students and an evaluation questionnaire completed by 31 participants. The variables analyzed are perceived stressors (heavy study load, competition, lack of time) and coping strategies used (relaxation, recreational activities, prioritization). The results indicate that the students considered the course useful for improving their quality of life and awareness of stress management strategies.

Table 9. Most relevant studies form clusters perspective, support and education

Study	Type of work	Research method
Guerrero, M., Liñán, F., & Cáceres-Carrasco, F. R. (2021)	Article	Structured literature review
Pereira, M. A. D., & Barbosa, M. A. (2013)	Article	Focus group
Bata, H., Pentina, I., Tarafdar, M., & Pullins, E. B. (2018)	Article	Regression analysis based on a survey
Abreu, L., Nunes, J. A., Taylor, P., & Silva, S. (2018)	Article	Interviews analysis

Source: Authors' own research

Bata et al. (2018) investigate maladaptive technology addiction in mobile social media use by salespeople in a survey of 242 US sales managers. The approach entails developing and empirical testing a maladaptive addicting behavior scale. The variables explored are emotional attachment to technology, excessive use, and impact upon sales performance. The findings show that social media use for maintaining work relationships can create dysfunctional behaviors and impact task performance and team activity. Furthermore, Abreu et al. (2017) investigate people with type 2 diabetes in Portugal, exploring how social networks and personal stories contribute to self-management. The qualitative approach utilizes semi-structured interviews with 26 patients and narrative analysis from their views concerning the diagnosis and social support. The variables explored are levels of awareness, social network support, and self-management. The findings identify three types of stories: minimization (patients who view a diminished impact of the illness), empathy (those who comply with treatments without reservation), and disruption (patients who actively engage in controlling the illness), emphasizing the value of social networks in enhancing health literacy.

Conclusion

Based on these findings, a number of future lines of inquiry can be proposed. Scholars can investigate qualitative aspects of professional social networks, including how organizations and persons operate within them to promote competitiveness. Longitudinal studies can also shed further light into how these types of networks change over time, specifically the impact of technological innovations in addition to shifting market dynamics. The current research sets the stage for future investigation into how crucial a part professional social networks are in promoting competitiveness in different sectors.

This research has conducted a systematic bibliometric assessment of the nexus between competitiveness and professional social networks, providing critical insights into the developing body of knowledge. Through a review of 165 articles in Web of Science, we found thematic clusters that stress the complex function of professional social networks in knowledge sharing, strategic collaboration, and innovation-led competitiveness. The studies reveal that the networks not only promote career development at the level of individuals but also help organizations achieve business acumen by providing information sharing, talent sourcing, and strategic positioning in more digitalized and globalizing markets.

These thematic clusters revealed in this study: impact, support, and education, demonstrate the multiple mechanisms by which professional social networks influence competitive dynamics. The "Impact" cluster highlights how they contribute to innovation and performance, while "Support" and "Education" clusters underscore how mentorship, skills development, and learning at the institutional level are critical to effectively tapping into these networks. In addition, the consistent uptick in scholarly interest in this area since 2011 indicates how the nexus between competitiveness and professional networking remains a rich area for more studies.

However, this research is subject to certain limitations. The sole use of the Web of Science database might have caused exclusion from this analysis of studies from other sources, including non-English language publications, potentially bringing other insights. Second, although bibliometric analysis can be useful for determining publication trends and thematic organization, it cannot fully account for the qualitative contexts within which professional social networks are practiced. These gaps can be plugged by future studies using qualitative methods, e.g., case studies and qualitative interviews, to examine strategic employment of professional social networks in actual organizational contexts.

Based on these findings, a number of directions for future research are presented. Long-term studies might provide more detailed information on how professional social networks develop over time in reaction to new technological developments and changes in competition maps. Furthermore, interdisciplinary methods integrating network analysis, behavioral economics, and internet strategy might deepen knowledge of their overall implications. This study establishes a starting point for further investigation into how professional social networks are becoming central drivers of competitiveness across sectors.

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