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MULTI-LEVEL MARKETING: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW

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Abstract: The objective of this article was to identify the profile of Brazilian academic production on multilevel marketing published during the period from 2010 to 2022. To this end, the SPELL, EBSCO, SciELO and SCOPUS databases were consulted, and 14 articles were found in Portuguese on the topic multilevel marketing and direct sales. It was observed that the work is of a qualitative nature using interviews, carried out in groups and with low use of the keyword multilevel marketing. It was concluded that it is necessary to explore publications that deal with the topic, mainly with regard to Brazilian organizations, with the lack of research that investigates markets and the use of the multilevel marketing technique becoming evident. The exploration of this aspect tends to add to the academic, social, political and economic universe in Brazil.

Keywords: Multilevel marketing, Direct sales, Network marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Multilevel marketing is a method of direct sale of products and services through the recruitment of independent salespeople, with their participation in the results of sales made. This term can be conceptualized as network marketing, network marketing or symbolized by the acronym MMN (REMONATO et al., 2017). In the same sense, the Brazilian Association of Direct Sales Companies (ABEVD), denotes that multilevel marketing emerged from the evolution of direct sales with the addition of bonuses for recruiting and training new distributors in the system, remunerating and qualifying those who develop the best teams (ABEVD, 2020).

Marks (1995), Souza (2017) and Batista et al. (2022) point out in their studies multilevel marketing or network marketing as a distribution system for the consumer through a network of independent sellers without

the participation of intermediaries. This system can be recognized as a type of product marketing based on a direct distribution system through which a commercial relationship network is established with independent contractors. This model leads the distributor to adopt a structured marketing plan based on the dissemination of products, intermediation and implementation of negotiations, consequently expanding the commercial reach.

According to Kaminski (2010), multilevel marketing is a way of increasing the seller's remuneration through registered people, behaving like a marketing system established by personal contact between sellers and buyers without the limitations of fixed conventional commerce. It is worth mentioning that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the direct sales sector in 2021. Although stock availability was negatively affected, the increase in demand for supplementary income and even as a sole form of income favored the sector, with Brazil ranking seventh in the global direct sales market (WFDSA, 2021).

Costa (2001) highlights that multilevel marketing "differentiates itself from other forms of marketing and sales because it does not involve traditional forms of marketing such as advertising in mass media. The vast majority of distributors work from their homes, without using offices and support staff." This position is further corroborated by Kiyosaki (2012) when highlighting that, in the multilevel marketing model, initial investments, inventories, monthly expenses and employee hiring are not necessary.

Surveys carried out by the World Federation of Direct Selling Associations, with the English version as World Federation of Direct Selling Associations-WFDSA, indicate more than 65 million independent representatives in the world, with full-time or part-time dedication, in search of supplementary

income. It is noteworthy that, on December 31, 2021, global direct sales reached the mark of US\$186.1 billion in earnings (WFDSA, 2022).

Given the above, the research problem of this work is: what is the state of the art of multilevel marketing in academic publications? The general objective was to identify the profile of Brazilian academic production published in Portuguese on multilevel marketing based on data available in the SPELL, EBSCO, SciELO and SCOPUS databases during the period from 2010 to 2022. As specific objectives, the following were analyzed: the number of articles according to year of publication; citations per article; type of methodological approach used in research; data collection instruments used; type of data collection; data analysis techniques; keywords used; number of authors participating in the research; academic qualifications of the authors; classification of scientific production; and suggested agenda for future research.

The justification for this study is based on the understanding that multilevel marketing represents a possibility for entrepreneurial action and a way out for many who have lost their jobs over the years, which includes the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, with this system being used as a sole source of income or as a supplement to the income of many workers whose earnings were compromised. It must be noted that this direct selling model does not require age or education, and can be developed with freedom of schedule and is favored by the vast possibility of increasingly expanded communication with the use of the internet. Studying this expanding employability format around the world is important for society and the individual as technical knowledge on the application of this sales model. These reasons aroused the researcher's curiosity, seeking scientific studies on the topic.

This research provided scientific knowledge about practices regarding multilevel marketing, leading to a better understanding of the topic. The study is based on reliable information from important authors and expands knowledge on the subject, which is current, relevant, expanding and little studied, providing a basis and direction for future research and institutions.

MULTI-LEVEL MARKETING

In Kotler's (1998) classic definition, marketing represents the social and managerial process through which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want from the creation and exchange of products and values. Marketing seeks to understand the needs of consumers, through the integration of human resources, production, finance and sales of an organization (COBRA, 1992). Direct sales are a sales strategy in which the seller goes to the buyer to expose products or services (MORGADO; GONÇALVES, 1999), in turn multilevel marketing is an adaptation to direct sales so that participants create their network, being remunerated according to the effort, dedication and performance of their team (GRACIOSO; NAJJAR, 1997).

The direct selling system offers an opportunity to workers in the market and is considered by some customers to be a system without guarantee and security regarding receipt of the product (PETERSON; WOTRUBA, 1996). With an empowerment proposal, salespeople end up losing the limits between time and what is or is not work. As Soares (2017) explains, the work of consultants makes what is at stake recognizable: worker-consumers who are rarely able to discern how much they earn for their work and how much they invest in consuming the products, as well as how much time they dedicate to sales, as This is work intertwined with other activities.

According to Platchek, Arboith and

Carvalho (2015), multilevel marketing is the sales process in which independent professionals make profits by reselling products and attracting new sellers, further increasing their earnings. For Batista et al. (2022), “a multilevel marketing company is the sales and distribution business at different levels, making it possible to recruit other people to participate in the actions.”

Contributing to this line of thought, Rosenbloom (2002) explains that direct selling is a method in which sellers go directly to consumers, their homes, offices or other points. In these cases, salespeople present products to customers individually or in groups. In the same direction, Fernandes (2008) states that, in single-level direct selling, the seller makes sales to an end consumer and receives payments for these sales, with no sales team associated with him. In multilevel marketing, there is a network of sellers who join together and profits originate from this network.

Therefore, in the multilevel marketing model, the network member earns through the sale of products or services and the recruitment of new participants, being remunerated according to the revenue generated by the sales of the members of their network. Investment in advertising is allocated to commission and bonuses for members. Contributing to the reasoning, Bergo (2014) emphasizes that the distributor receives money for its sales and also for the sales of the members it recruits. In turn, Souza and Capdeville (2014) highlight that, in multilevel marketing, it is not necessary to have a sales point, nor to spend money on highly visible advertising campaigns. Thus, the seller, who is also the advertiser, buys cheaper products or services, passing them on to end customers at more affordable prices.

For Aragão (2009), in multilevel marketing, investment in advertising is intended to

remunerate distributors. In this sense, it is the distributor network itself that passes on the manufacturer's information and promotes the product in order to attract the public. Kiyosaki (2012) adds that, in addition to guaranteeing income in the present, multilevel marketing favors the opportunity to guarantee income in perpetuity, that is, residual income that continues to arrive, even if no effort has been spent to create this source of income.

Souza and Capdeville (2014) and Fernandes (2008) highlight that companies that operate in multilevel marketing present solutions to people's daily needs, offer financial supplements to their salespeople at the end of the month and even a salary greater than what the person is used to receiving. This motivates promoters to work directly with their clients and they can even be part of their network and benefit from the advantageous financial compensation offered to promoters and companies. In the same vein, Elizondo and Alvares (2018) define multilevel marketing as a system that goes beyond the traditional one. In this system, the seller's relationship network triggers the marketing of products through sellers linked to him, with participation and collaboration in sales, as well as the receipt of income from the resale itself.

In his work, scholar Kiyosaki (2012, p. 35) defends the growth of this marketing model worldwide. In the words of the author, “today, network marketing is recognized by many experts and successful businessmen as one of the fastest growing business models in the world”. It is noteworthy that a broader debate on this topic provides scientific knowledge regarding multilevel marketing. Those who benefit most are the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), since the more a certain topic is discussed in the academic world, the more relevant the HEIs are perceived.

According to Aragão (2009), network marketing evolved from direct sales starting

with David McConnel, in 1886, who worked in New York, in the United States, as a bookseller who went door to door and offered a bottle of perfume. as a toast. The business prospered greatly, leading to the emergence of California Perfumes, which, in 1939, adopted the name Avon. According to the same author, the doctor, chemist and industrialist Carl Rehnberg instituted multilevel marketing in 1941 at the company Nutrilite, with salespeople, until then, being remunerated for their direct or single-level sales, later receiving bonuses from sales. sales of people they recruited for the company, thus implementing multilevel marketing.

Multilevel marketing or network marketing companies emerged in the USA after the Second World War in the form of so-called network Direct Selling Organizations (DSOs), using the social relationships of sellers. In 1941, distributors could receive bonuses on sales made by the people they sponsored. In 1959, Amway was founded and then others emerged (BIGGART, 1989). Founded by Jay Van Andel and Rich De Vos, who worked with Dr. Carl Rehnberg in the 40s and 50s, the American Way Association, under the acronym Amway, distributed home cleaning products, and this company later acquired Nutrilite (ARAGÃO, 2009). In the aforementioned study, the author also highlights the story of Mary Kathryn Wagner who founded the company Mary Kay in 1963. In the 1950s, Mary created an opportunity in the multilevel marketing system for women who received performance rewards that included jewelry and even a car.

Paes (2002) states that multilevel marketing arrived in Brazil in 1991 with Amway, which sold its products without a physical store and without mass advertising. Later, others followed, such as: Tupperware, Momentum Multinível, Pierre Alexander, Herbalife, Mary Kay, Contém1g, One World, Victoria MR, among others. More recently, Content (2017)

highlights the most important multilevel marketing companies operating in Brazil, among which we can mention: Hinode, Herbalife, Amway, Mary Kay and Boulevard Monde, with Hinode, among them, the only one of Brazilian origin.

Multilevel marketing in Brazil introduced by companies such as Amway, Tupperware and others such as Avon, Herbalife and Mary Kay have assumed a type of direct sales that mostly involves products aimed at housewives and health or cosmetic businesses. Avon products arrived in Brazil at the end of 1950, being a pioneer in the world aimed at women and offering them a source of income and financial autonomy. In Brazil, Avon has 86% of women in executive positions, having invested more than 170 million in social projects and impacting 7.5 million people in the 2000s (ABEVD, 2021).

Herbalife has been operating in Brazil since 1995, offering nutrition products aimed at a healthy lifestyle. Its products are distributed by independent sellers who are present in around 80 countries. In 2010, the company was considered the fifth largest MLM in the world in terms of sales volume in dollars (EMMERT, 2012). Mary Kay arrived in Brazil in 1998, being a company that offers beauty products in several countries such as the USA, Germany and Canada. In 2009, the company reached 2 million consultants worldwide, having been considered, in 2010, the sixth largest direct selling company in volume sold in the world (EMMERT, 2012). Natura&Co, since 2020, controls Avon, Natura, Aesop and The Body Shop. It must be noted that Natura has approximately 2 million consultants. During the pandemic, the number of consultants with online stores jumped from 500 thousand to 1.3 million (ABEVD, 2021).

It is important to highlight that, in 2019, ABEVD brought together managers from large MLM companies in São Paulo to discuss

planning, priorities and draft laws with the aim of strengthening the image of companies in the sector. Representatives from Amway, Herbalife, Hinode, Racco, Polishop, Liconet, Jafra, Jeunesse, 4Life Research and Royal Prestige were present at the event (ABEVD, 2019).

In this new context, personal contact with the customer strengthens relationships with the seller who seeks a bond and loyalty from this audience, bringing multilevel marketing closer to relationship marketing (CHURCHILL; PETER, 2000). Furthermore, this contact also facilitates the company's rapprochement with the customer, allowing the company to know their needs and desires (SOUZA; SERRENTINO, 2002). It is a marketing structure that works like word of mouth marketing, having been defined by Kotler and Keller (2012) as the action that starts from an interpersonal communicative process in verbal or written form or, even, electronically. Word of mouth marketing is carried out through personal contact with the customer and is the basis for promoting products and forming a sales team (MARKS, 1995). According to Kotler and Armstrong (2003), companies that practice MLM come to know the needs and desires of customers, thus being able to perform better than their competitors.

Seen as an alternative to traditional employment, multilevel marketing is a way of promoting financial compensation for people with a low level of education, as this commercial model does not depend on the level of education (VILTARD, 2019). Given this ease of entry, since the beginning of 2020, the percentage of men participating in the direct sales model reached 42.2% of the total number of employees, this number being considered high for an activity dominated by women. In 2021, according to the Brazilian Association of Direct Sales Companies-

ABEVD, there were 4 million direct sales consultants in Brazil, more than half (57.8%) of whom were women and almost half (49.6%) had secondary education complete or incomplete higher education (ABEVD, 2022).

Federal Senate Project, number: 413/2018 regulates multilevel marketing activities, which are identified by the payment and sale of products or services by independent entrepreneurs. The aforementioned law establishes the characteristics of multilevel marketing, creating obligations for companies and entrepreneurs. According to the legal text, the independent entrepreneur has the obligation to be registered as an individual taxpayer under the terms of Law Number: 8212, of June 24, 1991, or as an Individual Microentrepreneur (MEI) under the terms of Complementary Law Number: 123, of December 2006. The project establishes that companies and entrepreneurs are prohibited from using unfair deceptive practices or practices that could lead future entrepreneurs and consumers to make mistakes (SENADO FEDERAL, 2018)

In this sense, it is clear that multilevel marketing is a model that, if applied, benefits everyone, especially those who are self-employed entrepreneurs and micro-entrepreneurs. This topic has been constantly debated in order to provide understanding and achieve greater visibility in the current market so that it is possible to increase the global capital market.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

To achieve the proposed objective, which was to identify the profile of Brazilian academic production published in Portuguese on multilevel marketing exposed in the SPELL, EBSCO, SciELO and SCOPUS databases during the period from 2010 to 2022, a bibliometric analysis was carried out.

The objective of bibliometric analysis is to qualitatively and quantitatively measure scientific production on a given subject. In this sense, it can be said that the bibliometric method makes it possible to locate a country in relation to its scientific communities. According to the purpose of the bibliometric study, the data can be the text that makes up the publication, the elements present in records about publications extracted from bibliographic databases, the name of authors, the title, the source, the language, the word key, classification and citations (ZHU et al., 1999).

According to Pritchard (1969), works of a bibliometric nature concern “all studies that attempt to quantify the processes of written communication”. Bibliometrics, therefore, aims to map a given field of study and, consequently, generate treatment and management indicators in a given scientific community.

This research initially adopts a qualitative approach, seeking to concisely present the themes raised and the results denoted in the studies covered, and also a quantitative approach, being descriptive in terms of objectives and bibliometric in terms of procedures. In the study, articles related to the following keywords were analyzed: multilevel marketing, network marketing, direct sales and sales promotion. After consulting the SPELL, EBSCO, SciELO and SCOPUS databases, 31 articles in Portuguese published between January 2010 and October 2022 were found.

Of these 31 articles, 17 were selected that addressed the topic of multilevel marketing and direct sales, considering that the multilevel marketing system is a type of direct sales that takes place from the supplier to the consumer through a chain of independent contractors (MEIRA; GHISI, 2009).

Data base	Articles	%
SciELO	11	64,71
SPELL	4	23,53
SCOPUS	2	11,76
EBSCO	-	-
TOTAL	17	100

Table 1: Distribution of articles by databases

Source: Research Data (2022).

In Table 1, 64.7% (11) of the articles are listed, which were found in the SciELO database. Next, we find the SPELL database, with 23.5% (4), SCOPUS, with 11.7% (2) and EBSCO with no research found.

Of the 17 articles, 3 were repeated in more than one database and, therefore, were excluded from the total, leaving 14 articles for analysis, which were analyzed with the help of the Excel spreadsheet. In addition, the necessary quantifications were carried out to extract the following data: number of articles according to the year of publication; citations per article; type of methodological approach used in research; data collection instruments used; type of data collection; data analysis techniques; keywords used; number of authors participating in the research; academic title of the authors; and classification of scientific production.

Authors	Title	Data base
Cruz e Troccoli. (2014)	From the Direct Sales channel to supporting Environmental Responsibility: The Case of ``Natura``.	SPELL and SciELO
Santos <i>et al.</i> (2017)	The differences between Multilevel Marketing and Financial Pyramids or “Pyramid Schemes”.	SPELL and SciELO
Lovatto <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Relationship and loyalty between farmers and consumers in direct sales groups of agroecological foods in Florianópolis- SC	SciELO and SCOPUS

Table 1: Articles selected and found in more than one database. Source: Research Data (2022).

Table 1 presents the selected articles that were repeated in more than one database. The 14 articles that remained for analysis were read and transcribed into an Excel spreadsheet and then descriptive statistics were performed. Therefore, in the next section the results obtained through the quantitative analysis carried out will be presented, added posteriori to the considerations established in this academic investigation.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The final data collection resulted in 14 articles that dealt with the topic of multilevel marketing, with the publication in Portuguese found in the SPELL, EBSCO, SciELO and SCOPUS databases. Aiming for a textual arrangement that facilitates understanding for readers, this section begins with the qualitative content analysis carried out on the selected studies.

For Platchek, Arboith and Carvalho (2015, p. 179), multilevel marketing is a type of direct sales in which the customer is part of the sales structure, recruiting new members and participating in the profits. Even with negative variations in GDP in 2015 (estimated at -3.6%) and private consumption (-3.8%), the direct sales sector remained stable that same year. According to a survey by ABEVD in 2016, direct sales generated R\$41.3 billion in 2015, with an increase of 3.6% in resellers compared to 2014 (ABEVD, 2016). In turn, in the 1st half of 2017, the direct sales sector generated R\$20.9 billion throughout Brazil. The good results of the modality caught the attention of several companies, which led them to expand their way of competing in the market (ABEVD, 2017).

During this period, Brazil was facing a major crisis, with GDP falling for 11 consecutive semesters in the period between 2014 and 2016. Unemployment increased to more than 14 million people (13.8% of the

economically active population) in March 2017 (MINISTRY OF FINANCE, 2018). From the data presented in Table 2 below, it can be seen that there was a greater number of publications in the years 2017, 2015 and 2014. This information corroborates the latent need for scientific empirical studies on multilevel marketing and direct sales as an alternative for economic development in periods of recession.

Year of Publication	Articles	%
2010	1	7,14
2011	1	7,14
2012	1	7,14
2013	1	7,14
2014	2	14,29
2015	2	14,29
2017	3	21,43
2019	1	7,14
2021	1	7,14
2022	1	7,14
TOTAL	14	100

Table 2: Years with the highest number of publications

Source: Research Data (2022).

Table 3 presents the investigation of the quantitative approach carried out, observing the number of citations that the selected articles had on Google Scholar in December 2022. The most cited article was “Food Production and Consumption: New Networks and Actors”, whose objective was to analyze alternative forms of food supply and production based on the role played by consumers in this process.

The article with the lowest number of citations, “Effects of institutional purchasing policies on the organization of family producers in Vale do Ribeira”, addresses the direct and permanent sale of food from 4 cooperatives and an association of banana producers in the interior of São Paulo. Paul. The creation of cooperatives meant that

Authors	Title	Number of citations
Cassol e Schneider (2015)	Food Production and Consumption: New Networks and Actors.	76
Santos e Martins (2012)	Agroecology, sustainable consumption and collective learning in Brazil.	40
Santini et al. (2015)	Perception of value, attractiveness and purchase intention: Revisiting sales promotion techniques.	12
Pedroso, Neto (2010)	The dynamics of Network Marketing: social relationships and expectations of a new lifestyle.	11
Rocha Junior et al. (2019)	Analysis of the determinants of the use of technical assistance by family farmers in Brazil in 2014.	10
Anjos e Caldas (2017)	The dynamics of short marketing channels: The case of the Campagna Amica project in Italy.	10
Santos et al. (2017)	The differences between Multilevel Marketing and Financial Pyramids or "Pyramid Schemes".	9
Cruz e Troccoli (2014)	From the Direct Sales channel to Support for Environmental Responsibility: The case of "Natura".	4
Lovatto et al. (2021)	Relationship and loyalty between farmers and consumers in direct sales groups of agroecological foods in Florianópolis - SC.	4
Dill et al. (2014)	Direct Sales: The main sales channel for beef and pork from rural agribusinesses in Brazil.	3
Scalco et al. (2017)	The Independence of the Choice of Marketing Channels on the Income of American Organic Producers.	2
Copiano et al. (2013)	Network Marketing: Structuring and the Role of Motivation in this Strategy.	2
Chiodi et al. (2022)	Effects of institutional purchasing policies on the organization of family producers in the Vale do Ribeira.	1
Pratte et al. (2011)	Adequacy of Direct Selling Strategies to consumer behavior in the cosmetics sector: Case Study of "PH6 Cosméticos".	0

Table 3: Articles and number of citations

Source: Research Data (2022).

farmers' production reached the markets, allowing, through direct sales, that the largest proportion of the value generated remained in the hands of family workers.

The article "Adaptation of direct selling strategies to consumer behavior in the cosmetics sector: PH6 Cosméticos Case Study" had no citations on Google Scholar. It is noted that the most cited publications address the commercialization of rural products.

Considering the studies analyzed, the qualitative approach was the most prevalent, with 6 articles classified in this category, of which 5 used an interview guide and 1 used secondary data. Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate in a stratified manner the types of data collection approaches and instruments used.

Types of Approach	Articles	%
Qualitative	6	42,86
Mixed	5	35,71
Quantitative	3	21,43
TOTAL	14	100

Table 4: Type of article approach

Source: Research Data (2022).

The applicability of the qualitative research method combined with the interview collects the complete speeches to investigate and proceed with an interpretation of the perception of those involved. The use of a qualitative approach demonstrates that there was a search to understand the nature of the topic, enabling a better understanding. This type of approach, combined with the use of an interview guide, mostly exposes subjective

aspects of the interviewees' thoughts achieved spontaneously.

Data Collection Instrument	Articles	%
Interview guide, questionnaire, secondary data and case study	12	85,72
Participant research	1	7,14
Technical visits and photographic record analysis	1	7,14
TOTAL	14	100

Table 5: Data collection instruments
Source: Research Data (2022).

Table 6 reinforces the use of interviews as the main type of data collection. The scholar Kuhn (1992) declares that the use of interviews as a scientific data collection instrument must be the reflection of a conscious and informed methodological planning, which offers the researcher clear contours and definitions regarding the type of problem to be investigated.

Data collected	Articles	%
Interview, questionnaire, case study and participant observation	7	50,00
Secondary data analysis	3	21,44
Focus group and field research	1	7,14
Recorded speeches	1	7,14
Experiment	1	7,14
Search job advertisements and company websites	1	7,14
TOTAL	14	100

Table 6: Type of data collection
Source: Research Data (2022).

When investigating the techniques used to analyze data, Content Analysis comes out ahead of the others, being present in 50% of the articles gathered. In total numbers, 7 articles used this technique. Content analysis seeks to objectively and subjectively interpret what was collected in a survey, mainly in qualitative research, as shown in Table 7.

Data Analysis Technique	Articles	%
Discursive and content analysis	7	50,00
Descriptive statistical analysis	3	21,44
ACM, Cluster and content analysis	1	7,14
Comparative analysis	1	7,14
Graph analysis and world cloud	1	7,14
Normality test, hypothesis test, non-parametric statistical test, U and H test	1	7,14
TOTAL	14	100

Table 7: Data analysis techniques
Source: Research Data (2022).

Regarding the keywords applied in the searches, it was possible to group the most used and cited in the articles, as shown in Table 8. The most frequently found words were network marketing, family farming and direct selling. In other words, those that are related to the topic covered in each article or research location are concentrated.

Keywords	Number of times appearing in articles	%
Network marketing	3	5,26
Family farming	3	3,52
Direct sales	3	5,26
Other words	49	85,96
TOTAL	57	100

Table 8: Key words
Source: Research Data (2022).

In Table 9, within the national academic scenario, we can see the predominance of group work, with a concentration of between 4 and 2 authors. Only 1 of the articles analyzed concerns an individual work. It is noteworthy that publications in partnerships demonstrate the need to aggregate knowledge and information on the topic.

Number of Authors	Articles	%
4	5	35,72
2	4	28,57
3	2	14,29
6	1	7,14
5	1	7,14
1	1	7,14
TOTAL	14	100

Table 9: Number of article authors

Source: Research Data (2022).

It is worth highlighting that almost 65% were articles produced by scholars with a doctorate degree (Table 10). The investigation of this data elucidates that the topic addressed in this study is a vast field of relatively new knowledge and great possibilities to be explored.

Author titles	Articles	%
Doctorate degree	9	64,30
Master	2	14,28
Graduation	2	14,28
Post-Graduation	1	7,14
TOTAL	14	100

Table 10: Authors of articles and academic titles

Source: Research Data (2022)

Regarding the classification of a scientific production, it varies according to the quality indicators of the study. These indicators range from A1, which is the highest grade, and can be classified up to C, with zero weight. Qualis Capes for periodicals is characterized and stratified as follows:

- A1 and A2: Includes journals of international excellence;
- B1 and B2: Covers periodicals of national excellence;
- B3, B4 and B5: Considers periodicals of medium relevance;
- C: Includes journals of low relevance,

that is, considered non-scientific and inaccessible for evaluation.

In Table 11, it is observed that 50% of the studies analyzed were classified as B1, a fact that provides robustness to the present work and denotes that the multilevel marketing theme is present in the best journals and annals in the country.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this research was to identify the profile of Brazilian academic production in Portuguese published in the main databases from 2010 to 2022.

To achieve this objective, the following were specifically analyzed: the number of articles according to the year of publication; citations per article; type of methodological approach used in research; data collection instruments used; type of data collection; data analysis techniques; keywords used; number of authors participating in the research; academic title of the authors; classification of scientific production; and suggested agenda for future research.

The work is mostly qualitative using interviews, mostly carried out in groups and with little use of the keyword multilevel marketing. In the search for publications on multilevel marketing, we researched the direct selling modality, as this gave rise to multilevel marketing. Of the articles analyzed, there is a concentration on the topic of direct sales of rural products and the importance of this practice for rural producers. Some directly address multilevel marketing in its social relations and expectations, the role of motivation in the multilevel marketing strategy and the differentiation of the financial pyramid scheme modality. The companies Natura, Mary Kay, Herbalife and Avon are mentioned in the articles analyzed. A review of sales promotion techniques was found, not just an approach to the modality under study.

Grade: Qualis	Number of Articles	Articles in each Magazine	Magazine
A1	2	1	Anthropological Horizons Magazine
		1	Society and State Magazine
A2	1	1	Brazilian Business Management Magazine
		1	ReMark - Brazilian Marketing Magazine
B1	7	1	Magazine of the Faculty of Education and Research, São Paulo
		1	Lua Nova, São Paulo
		4	Journal of Rural Economics and Sociology
B2	2	1	Organizational Management Magazine
		1	Magazine on Agribusiness and Environment
B3	1	1	UNIMEP Professional Administration Notebook
C	1	1	Magazine: Liceu <i>on-line</i>
TOTAL	14	14	

Table 11: Classification of scientific production – Qualis Capes

Source: Research Data (2022)

It is concluded that publications on the area of cosmetics and perfumery and the use of the multilevel marketing technique are scarce, despite the sector generating high volumes of profits and are a form of income in times of economic recession and pandemic like the one we are experiencing. The existence of few books and publications, the lack of knowledge about this modality brings distrust, and it may be believed that companies that practice multilevel marketing advertise it as direct sales. It was researched in the Directory of Research Groups in Brazil Lattes/CNPQ, and it was observed that, currently, there is no research group focusing on the theme of multilevel marketing.

The demand of the Brazilian population to know and consume products from national and international companies that practice multilevel marketing tends to reflect the search for knowledge and understanding of the application of this sales model, resulting in improvements in the modality and new

research.

As a suggested agenda on multilevel marketing, and given that there is a vast field to be studied, other bibliometric and systematic studies could be carried out, encompassing articles, dissertations and theses. In this sense, the aspects and rules of the modality, characteristics, benefits for workers and companies, reasons that lead companies to not disclose the use of the modality and the future prospects of this model in the market can be explored. It is also suggested that studies be carried out, mainly within companies operating in Brazil, for a better investigation of the cosmetics and perfumery market, which generates high values for multilevel marketing in the country. The exploration of this aspect tends to add to the academic, social, political and economic universe in Brazil. Furthermore, these studies will be important for the continuity of research involving this topic.

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