

# EXPLORING THE CONTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF CITED MATERIALS TO MARKETING KNOWLEDGE OVER TIME: A CITATION ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the degree to which articles appearing in JM, JMR, and JCR cite different types of references (journals, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, professional and popular press, and “others”) between 1975 and 2003. The results suggest that the number of citations to journals articles has increased over time and there have been significant falls in reference to non-journal sources of materials. References to some non-journal sources (i.e., newspaper and professional materials) have increased in JCR and JMR, but decreased in JM. The impact of shifts in the types of citation materials on knowledge development is also discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing interest in the area of marketing knowledge, which has examined the sources from which ideas are drawn (Bettencourt and Houston 2001a; Baumgartner and Pieters 2003). This and other research has identified that published works draw on a range of multidisciplinary sources (Bauerly and Johnson 2005), although there does seem to be some concentration of references within the marketing area (Bettencourt and Houston 2001b). However, there is scant discussion of the impact of differing sources of knowledge, i.e., journals, conference proceedings, etc. (Anderson and Haley 1984). The role sources on knowledge may vary. For example, Armstrong (2005) has suggested that there is limited marketing “theory” proposed in texts books. Others purport that guidance for practice might be communicated more frequently in non-journal sources such as professional publications, newspapers, industry/governmental reports, and corporate information (Rositter 2004; Uncles 2003).

While it could be argued that academic journals provide theoretical advances in knowledge, these are usually developed in an iterative process. That is the body of “knowledge” builds on a diverse range of supporting ideas, which is frequently refined through academic discourse in non-journal forums (i.e., conferences presentations, working papers, and Ph.D. dissertations). Non-journal materials, therefore, are likely to serve an essential function in the development of knowledge (Anderson and

Haley 1984; Baumgartner and Pieters 2003; Fugate and Milliman 1988; Widing et al. 1989; Zinkhan et al. 1990).

In some cases, non-journals are recognized as disseminating valuable theoretical developments. For example, several studies that rank marketing journals have included conference proceedings (see, Baumgartner and Pieters 2003; Hult et al. 1997; Theoharakis and Hirst 2002). This is impressive, given that according to a search of the Ulrich’s Publication Guide (2004), the number of marketing journals has increased from nine in 1970 to over 100 in 2003, not to mention an increase in marketing conferences and their associated proceedings. Therefore, academics have a larger number of marketing-focused journals and conferences in which to publish, as well as an increased number of journals and conferences to draw ideas from.

The objective of this paper is to examine what types of materials are cited within the leading marketing journals – *Journal of Marketing* (JM), *Journal of Marketing Research* (JMR), and *Journal of Consumer Research* (JCR), and to determine if there have been changes in citation-rates of sources over three points in time 1975, 1990, and 2003. That is, have marketers over time changed their source of ideas on which published journal works are based? One might anticipate an increased use of journals due to the increase in number of journals, combined with greater accessibility. The paper will conclude with some suggestions for future research examining the development of academic knowledge in marketing.

## BACKGROUND

Past researchers have considered the diversity of disciplines and sub-disciplines cited in marketing journals (Bettencourt and Houston 2001a, 2001b; Baumgartner and Pieters 2003), but have not examined the contribution of different sources to marketing thinking. In fact, the role of conference proceedings, books, and professional publications in the development of marketing knowledge is not extensively discussed within the literature. Although, Widing et al. (1989) did look at how different “research” activities have been valued in regards to knowledge development. Others have suggested non-journal works, such as conference proceedings, serve a critical function

in knowledge development (Fugate and Milliman 1988; Holbrook and Thayer 1985; Zinkhan et al. 1990).

Such a view is consistent with the philosophy of science literature that suggests knowledge develops by building on existing ideas, where theory is continually re-examined in an attempt to refine and develop thinking (Fuller 2003). It could be posited that the replication of existing research is essential for knowledge development (Berthon et al. 2002). This view has also been acknowledged by marketing academics, who suggest that knowledge builds on previous ideas (see Rossiter 2001, 2003, 2004; Uncles 2002).

Interestingly, some journal editors also recognize that the presentation and discussion of ideas in non-journal forums is essential for works to be developed to a publishable level for a journal (Wittink 2004). Yet there appears to be limited explicit “recognition” of the potential value of non-journal sources to knowledge development. While citation rates of non-journal materials within journals might possibly be low in comparison to journal citation rates (Armstrong and Pagell 2003), does this reflect a limited intellectual value, or might it be that than non-journal sources are less accessible (Polonsky et al. 1999; Zinkhan 2004)? Perhaps to evolve intellectually published journal works depend on the ideas proposed and discussed in non-journal materials. For example, the presentation of ideas at conferences (as presentations and included in proceedings) might be essential in forcing authors to focus their thoughts and integrate, or at least consider alternative perspectives, as well as defend their thinking (Fugate and Milliman 1988). Some conferences, such as the *Frontiers in Services*, don’t even publish conference proceedings with complete papers, as they want to facilitate discussion and feedback on the most current thinking/research.

Might sources such as professional publications, governmental reports and newspapers serve as catalysts to developing ideas for research (Polonsky and Waller 2005)? Some types of research such as grounded theory explicitly draw on a diverse set of information sources, which are then triangulated to extract the underlying theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Goulding 2001). In these cases it is only after the processing of a range of information sources, journal and non-journal that structured communication of theory can be presented in a more formal academic format, such as a journal article.

Finally, at the very least, material presented within the professional and business press often serves as an example to support proposed theories within journal articles, and therefore plays a critical role in enhancing knowledge development (Polonsky and Waller 2005). In this way these non-journal sources provide contextualization of theory.

While researchers have examined the disciplines that are cited in marketing journals (Bettencourt and Houston 2001a, 2001b; Zinkhan et al. 1990) there has been limited examination of what sources are being cited. Work by Anderson and Haley (1984) examined the citation of conference proceedings within the JM, JCR, and JMR between 1975 and 1982. They found that the percentage of citations from conference proceedings was JM – 4.27 percent, JMR – 6.08 percent, and JCR – 7.36 percent of all materials cited, with the *ACR* being the most cited conference proceeding. More recently, Sivadas and Johnson (2005) also considered the citation to non-journal sources, although their results were equivocal and did not expressly examine the types of materials being referenced.

Zinkhan et al. (1990) examined the citation of the *ARC* proceedings within journals. Their work identified that the *ACR* has made a substantial impact on a range of journals, which is consistent with Anderson and Haley (1984). Zinkhan et al. (1990), however also identified that conference proceedings and presentations are essential to knowledge development generally.

This paper seeks to examine the citation rates of different types of materials within the three leading marketing journals at three points in time 1975, 1990, and 2003. Given the increased number of journals available (Hult et al. 1997); increased accessibility of these journals (Zinkhan 2004) the limited past literature examining citation sources, we propose that the proportion of references to non-journal materials will have decreased over time.

## METHODOLOGY

A content analysis of the references cited in articles within the four issues of JM, JMR, and JCR published in each of the following years- 1975, 1990, and 2003 (i.e., 12 issues of each journal). The reason for selecting these three years was that 1975 was the first full year the JCR was published. The year 1990 was selected, as it was approximately the mid-point between 1975 and 2003. The rationale for focusing on these three journals is that they are frequently referred to as the leading journals in the marketing discipline (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003; Bettencourt and Houston 2001; Hawes and Keillor 2002) and thus should be representative of marketing journals more widely.

Reference pages from all articles, excluding – editorials, book reviews, as well as regular columns such as legal developments in JM and computer software reviews in JMR. References cited within each article were collected and then categorized as journals, books, book chapters, proceedings/conference papers, newspaper/professional magazine, and other (working papers, “unpublished Ph.D. dissertations,” governmental reports, legal

cases, etc.). Z-tests were undertaken to compare the citation rates for each relevant category type between pairs of years (i.e., 1975–1990; 1990–2003; 1975–2003) within a journal.

As was suggested earlier, the increasing number of journals between 1970 and 2003 would possibly result in a reduction of the proportion of citations coming from non-journal sources. In addition authors have easier to access journal content with full-text databases (Bar-Ilan et al. 2003; Herring 2002; Zinkhan 2004).

### ANALYSIS

Table 1 provides the summary of the results for the study. The first three rows of Table 1 report the total references identified, number of articles and average number of references per article for each journal within each year. Clearly, the number of articles in each journal

appears to have varied over time. Interestingly the number of papers published has reduced by half in JMR and JM between 1975 and 2003, where articles in JCR have increased. In regards to average number of citations, it should be noted that in 1975 some papers in JM and JMR did not include any references. This may relate to the limited existing literature base during the 70's or the journal's more applied focus (Green et al. 2003; Wittink 2004). An examination of the next two rows identifies that all three journals have grown in length over the time period examined, with average article length increasing. This might partly explain the additional use of references to "justify" ideas.

Across journals, the average number of references per article in 2003 had increased over the previous two periods and was nearly double to what it was in 1975. This might relate to the increased number of journals or indeed, might suggest there have been changes in academic stan-

**TABLE 1**  
**Comparison of Materials Cited 1975, 1990, and 2003**  
 \*z-tests significant at the  $p < .05$  level

	JCR (%)				JMR (%)				JM (%)			
	1975	1990	2003	Diff*	1975	1990	2003	Diff*	1975	1990	2003	Diff
<b>Number of references</b>	915	1349	2108		1190	1376	1603		633	1751	2042	
<b>Number of articles</b>	37	43	46		59	42	34		76	32	31	
<b>Average References Per article</b>	24.7	31.4	45.8		20.2	32.8	47.1		8.3	54.7	65.9	
<b>Number of pages</b>	319	482	604		421	455	476		324	412	496	
<b>Average Pages per article</b>	8.6	11.2	13.1		7.1	10.8	13.6		5.5	13.7	16	
<b>Journals</b>	52.90	56.93	68.2	B C	56.47	67.37	72.4	A B C	36.65	56.36	71.0	A B C
<b>Books</b>	18.80	20.53	16.4	B C	17.56	16.50	13.4	B C	18.01	16.79	15.5	
<b>Chapters</b>	11.26	10.08	9.7		8.23	6.69	4.7	B C	5.21	9.88	5.2	A B
<b>Proceedings &amp; Conferences</b>	9.18	6.81	3.1	B C	7.39	3.92	1.5	A B C	4.42	4.40	1.7	B C
<b>Newspapers Professional</b>	0.66	1.70	1.4	A B C	2.35	1.38	3.3	B	14.06	3.37	4.8	A B C
<b>Others</b>	7.21	3.92	1.2	A B C	7.98	4.14	2.4%	A B C	21.64	9.19	2.8	A B C

**Within Journal Comparisons:**  
 A – 1975 to 1990 statistically different at the .05 level  
 B – 1990 to 2003 statistically different at the .05 level  
 C – 1975 to 2003 statistically different at the .05 level

**Between Journal Comparisons:**  
 Z– JCR–JMR statistically different at the .05 level  
 Y– JCR–JM statistically different at the .05 level  
 Z– JMR–JM statistically different at the .05 level

dards for supporting ideas and theory. However, more recent research suggests that full-text databases are also changing the way academics research, allowing individuals to access a wider sample of materials more easily (Bar-Ilan et al. 2003; Herring 2002; Polonsky et al. 1999; Zinkhan 2004).

The last six rows in Table 1 provide the proportion of overall citations to journals, books, book chapters, proceedings/conference papers, newspapers/professional publications, and others, for the three journals in 1975, 1990, and 2003. Z tests are used to compare citation rates between years for a journal.

For each journal there was a statistically significant increase in the proportion of citations attributed to journals sources between 1975 and 2003. This increase appears to have been incremental, as there was also an increase between 1975–1990 for JMR and JCR, as well as between 1990–2003 for all three journals. This implies that there was a decrease in the non-journal material cited, although the results for each non-journal category are less clear. The citation of books appears to have reduced over time, although these reductions are only statistically significant for the JCR between 1990 and 2003 and the JMR between 1990–2003 and 1975–2003. There is no statistical difference in book citations for any periods for JM. In regards to book chapters, these also seem to have reduced over time. There were no differences in citation of book chapter for JCR, but there was a decrease for JMR (1990–2003 and 1975–2003). For JM there was an increase in book chapter citation rates between 1975 and 1990, which then fell in 1990–2003 back to 1975 levels.

There was a clear reduction in citations to conference proceedings and papers presented between 1975 and 2003 for all three journals. The drop in citations attributed to conference works was statistically significant between 1990 and 2003 for all three journals, and was only statistically significant between 1975 and 1990 for the JMR. The significant drop between 1990 and 2003 could possibly be attributed to the development of the World Wide Web and other database technology allowing broader journal access, which only came into existence in this period (Bar-Ilan et al. 2003). Results related to the citation of references to professional publications and newspapers are mixed. These increased for the JCR, while decreasing for JM. Between 1990 and 2003 reference to the business press decreased in JCR, but increased in JMR and JM. Between 1975 and 2003 there was no statistical difference in JM for the citation of references to professional materials, statistically significant increases in JCR, and statistically significant decreases in JM.

Finally, there has been a decrease within all three journals in regards to ‘other materials’ cited for all pairs of

comparisons (i.e., 1975–1990, 1990–2003, and 1975–2003). We did not tabulate the sub-groupings in this category (i.e., working papers, unpublished Ph.D. dissertations, governmental reports, legal cases, etc.). It did appear that in 1975 there were extensive citations to unpublished Ph.D. dissertations and working papers and the reduction may be related to the increased publishing opportunities for ideas.

## LIMITATIONS

There is of course a range of possible limitations with the research. It is assumed that there is no bias in the work published in a given year. For example, extensive legally focused works would draw on legal cases (i.e., other materials) and possibly bias results. Thus, if there were a special issue or interest in such works in a given year it would impact on citations used. The categorization of materials as book chapters could possibly be problematic.

In some cases conference proceedings are published as monographs, which are not easily identified as such. If this were to occur, it would under-represent the impact of conferences proceedings and papers on knowledge development, via citations. It is unclear how various materials would be used. For example, methodological or statistical texts may be extensively used in methodology sections, where book chapters on more specialized topics might be used with sections of works focusing on theory development with applied works being used to identify the need for research into an issue (i.e., background) or to demonstrate the applicability of research to practice.

A final limitation is the lack of previous research on citation types. As readers will note many of the references within this paper discussing, conference papers are from themselves from conferences proceedings. This does not limit their relevance, but identifies that the issue is one that has not been extensively studied

## CONCLUSIONS

The results suggest that citations within academic articles appear to rely on journal articles more frequently today than they did in 1975. There are differences in the citation of various non-journal categories of references within journals over time. While, on the one hand this might seem to suggest that non-journal materials contribute less to knowledge development, the number of marketing focused journals has expanded significantly since the early 1970’s, and thus the citations of other materials should have potentially fallen even further, as more materials are available to be cited.

There are of course many issues that need to be examined in regards to how these non-journal materials

have been, and are being used within academic articles to develop or assist in developing marketing knowledge. While not examined empirically, a cursory check of the data suggested that in the past, books cited included both general texts and methodology texts. The 2003 data seemed to suggest that there was a shift to more research focused books, with methodology books still being used as well. In the past, book chapters might have been associated with conference proceedings published as books. However, there now seems to be an increasing numbers of specialized edited books that might also be cited. Thus while not empirically examined in this research, the type of book chapter being cited may have shifted over time. In regards to conference papers, although these works may disseminate the latest ideas, their contribution to knowledge may not be recognized in the same way that journal sources are recognized. There may of course be good reasons for this view. As an increasing number of conferences publish abstracts rather than full papers, plus there is a lower level of dissemination of conference proceedings. However, given that some conference papers present early versions of leading ideas, one might be expected these conference works to be more highly cited. The reference to conference papers could possibly also benefit from the use of new technologies, i.e., the web, that potentially allow for wider dissemination of knowledge. This might partly explain why the ACR proceedings are still the most frequently cited in journals (Zinkhan et al. 1990). ACR works are now included in databases and searchable in their own right in this study, which from anecdotal evidence is the only conference proceedings listed in business related journals

In regards to professional materials and “other sources” the increased availability of journals might have also resulted in a diminished citation of these works in journal articles. Some could argue that this is a positive outcome, whereby researchers have increasingly drawn on more objective ideas and sources. But does this potentially mean that academics are ignoring valuable sources

of information, and valuable ideas that could be applied within a more structured research context?

There is most certainly a need to examine the role of non-journal materials to knowledge development. In some cases these sources are essential for knowledge development. For example, how do conference papers contribute to the overall development of theory, research and knowledge? Even though there has been some suggestion in the literature that conference papers and proceedings are important for knowledge development, the existing literature does not consider the impact of formal and informal sharing ideas at conferences on knowledge development (Sellitto 2005). The intellectual discourse occurs at various levels within the conference environment, including; reviewer’s reports, discussant’s comments, audience input, stimulation from ideas presented in other papers, or two presenters may see links in their works and progress forward through collaborative partnerships (Fugate and Milliman 1988; Holbrook and Thayer 1985; Zinkhan et al. 1990).

As was suggested earlier, more examination as to how non-journal materials are being used within published works would also be useful. That is, are books in fact used primarily in regards to methodological issues? Is the popular/business press used to develop a rationale for research or possibly to support empirical findings?

Lastly, the role of technology, i.e., full text databases seems to be an issue that might impact on research activities in marketing (Polonsky et al. 1999; Zinkhan 2004). It might be expected that a broader set of materials from journal and non-journal sources may be cited, as these become easier to access. If this were to occur, academics might ultimately be more concerned with whether materials are listed in various databases (Harter 1998) rather than the “journals ranking” or “Social citation index impact rating,” as access could then drive citations.

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## AUTHORS INDEX

Aiken, K. Damon	229	Dupuis, Rachelle J.	300
Al-Shuridah, Obaid	158	Durmusoglu, Serdar S.	209
Alexandrov, Aliosha	116	Dutta, Sujay	390
Alpert, Frank	147	Dwyer, Paul	308
Anderson, Beverlee B.	378	Echambadi, Raj	267
Antia, Kersi D.	294	Eggers, Felix	127
Arnold, Mark J.	267	Eggert, Andreas	172
Arnold, Todd J.	396	ELSamen, Amjad Abu	316
Asare, Anthony K.	126, 324	Engelen, Andreas	55
Ashill, Nicholas	310	Enke, Margit	51
Ashraf, Mohammad	102	Faber, Ronald	122
Austin, Caroline Graham	361	Fang, Shyh-Rong	394
Avlonitis, George J.	20, 84	Fassnacht, Martin	191
Babakus, Emin	302	Fassott, Georg	16
Baker, Brent	129	Fenollar, Pedro	334
Ball, A. Dwayne	388	Fiedler, Lars	353
Bambauer, Silke	231	Fliess, Sabine	306
Bartikowski, Boris	16	Foscht, Thomas	365
Basu, Amiya	41	Franke, Nikolaus	14, 273
Bearden, William O.	205	Frankwick, Gray L.	316
Bell, Tyler	396	French, Warren	177
Bhowmick, Sandeep	390	Gabbott, Mark	30
Bindroo, Vishal	267	Gammoh, Bashar S.	154
Biswas, Abhijit	49	Ganesh, Jaishankar	304
Bloch, Peter H.	396	Garbarino, Ellen	1
Bode, Matthias	252	Gaskins, John N.	376
Bonner, Joseph M.	170	Gaur, Sanjaya S.	57
Brashear, Thomas G.	126, 324	Gazley, Aaron	225
Brettel, Malte	55, 261	Geigenmueller, Anja	51
Brodowsky, Glen H.	378	Ghosh, Haren	355
Bruner II, Gordon C.	158	Godar, Susan H.	380
Calantone, Roger J.	170, 246	Goldschmidt, Ayalla	177
Cannon, Hugh M.	227	Gounaris, Spiros	20
Cavusgil, Erin	150	Gremler, Dwayne D.	39
Cavusgil, S. Tamer	141	Gruber, Thorsten	47
Chabowski, Brian R.	382	Gruen, Tom	298
Chakraborty, Goutam	316	Guth, Gordon	51
Chang, Chiu-chi (Angela)	65	Gwinner, Kevin P.	39
Chao, Mike C.H.	16	Haas, Sarah M.	152, 254
Chen, Linda Xiaoyun	248	Hagtvedt, Henrik	357
Claas, Susanne	261	Harcar, Talha	181
Clark, Terry	42	Harrison, Tina	207
Cohen, Daniel	94	Hassan, Salah S.	114
Cohen, William A.	71	Haugtvedt, Curtis P.	241
Commuri, Suraj	396	Haws, Kelly L.	205
Coote, Leonard V.	288	Heinemann, Florian	55, 261
Cornwell, T. Bettina	288	Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten	39, 127, 252
Coulter, Keith S.	43	Hennigs, Nadine	292
Cuestas, Pedro J.	334	Henning, Victor	127
Dean, Dwane Hal	290	Hershey, Lewis	102
Deitz, George D.	296	Hewett, Kelly	174
Dmitrovie, Tanja	179	Hibbett, Lee E.	71
Donthu, Naveen	213, 298, 384	Hirunyawipada, Tanawat	45
Dou, Wenyu	145	Hodge, Sharon K.	376



Hoffmann, Jonas A.	16	Mazumdar, Tridib	41
Hofstetter, Reto	314	McDonald, Heath	147
Hogreve, Jens	306	McGorry, Sue Y.	111
Homburg, Christian	328	Meilich, Ofer	378
Honeycutt, Jr., Earl D.	376	Meng, Juan (Gloria)	42
Hooley, Graham J.	53	Meyer, Anton	366
Houston, Mark B.	127	Michel, Stefan	392
Hsu, Li-Chang	394	Miller, Klaus	314
Hung, Kineta	161	Moeller, Sabine	191
Hunter, Gary L.	207	Möller, Kristian	53
Hüper, Katrin	201	Money, R. Bruce	96
Hurtado, Christopher	203	Morgan, Robert M.	296
Hwang, Yun-Yong	120	Morschett, Dirk	131, 365
Hyvönen, Saara	53	Mueller, Melanie	269
Ibrahim, Essam B.	330	Mummalaneni, Venkatapparao	112
Jensen, Ove	201, 328	Muzellec, Laurent	345
Jiang, Ying	386	Myers, Jun Rong	122
John, J. Denise	49	Myers, Susan D.	263
Jones, Joseph M.	241	Nasco, Suzanne A.	42
Joseph, Mathew	275	Nelson, Eugene C.	221
Jung, Jae Min	120, 241	Nevins, Jennifer L.	96
Kajalo, Sami	53	Nyaga, Gilbert N.	246
Kaleka, Anna	100	Obadia, Claude	179
Kantsperger, Roland	366	Ouyang, Ming	223
Kara, Ali	181	Oyedele, Adesegun	159
Kasi, Vijay	298	Pan, Yue	177
Kessell, Andreas	55	Panagopoulos, Nikolaos G.	84
Kessler-Thönes, Tino	363	Papastathopoulou, Paulina	20
Kirchgeorg, Manfred	353	Parvatiyar, Atul	298
Kono, Ken	336	Patrick, Vanessa M.	357
Korchia, Michaël	80	Paul, Michael	39
Krasnikov, Alexander	174	Pentina, Iryna	284
Kreuzer, Michael	392	Piercy, Nigel F.	82
Krohmer, Harley	314	Piller, Frank T.	269
Kshetri, Nir	256	Poddar, Amit	384
Kucukemiroglu, Orsay	181	Polonsky, Clair	338
Kühn, Richard	392	Polonsky, Michael Jay	338
Kulviwat, Songpol	158	Pomirleanu, Nadia	304
Kundu, Sumit	203	Ponder, Nicole	124
Kusari, Sanjukta	94	Porter, Constance Elise	213
Lambkin, Mary	345	Pötz, Marion	273
Lane, Nikala	82	Poznanski, Steffi	51
Larose, Robert	286	Prügl, Reinhard	271
Li, Stella Yiyang	161	Punj, Girish	386
Liu, Xin	156	Purinton, Elizabeth F.	359
Lueg, Jason E.	124	Quilliam, Elizabeth Taylor	286
Lynch, Daniel F.	246	Raj, S.P.	41
Ma, Jun	219	Rajala, Arto	53
Magnini, Vincent P.	376	Reith, Christina	191
Magnusson, Peter	152, 254	Richey, R. Glenn	296
Malkewitz, Keven	229	Rifon, Nora J.	286
Mani, Sudha	294	Ritter, Thomas	332
Marinova, Detelina	94	Rod, Michel	225
Martin, W.L.	277	Rojas-Méndez, José I.	181
Matear, Sheelagh	53	Román, Sergio	334
Mathwick, Charla	211	Rosa, José Antonio	1
Matsui, Kenji	183	Rosenbaum, Mark S.	37

Rosier, Markus	366	Tolba, Ahmed H.	114
Sandhu, H.S.	250	Townsend, Janell D.	265
Sarangee, Kumar	259	Treiblmaier, Horst	18
Satishkumar, Meena	310	Tsarenko, Yelena	30
Sattler, Henrik	127	Tuominen, Matti	53
Schamel, Guenter	243	Ulaga, Wolfgang	172
Schirr, Gary R.	217	Ullrich, Johannes	363
Schmidt, Jeffrey B.	259	Vasudevan, Hari	57
Schramm-Klein, Hanna	131	Venkatesan, M. Ven	378
Schreier, Martin	14, 271	Vida, Irena	179
Schuster, Camille P.	378	Voss, Kevin E.	154
Sen, Sandipan	215, 302	Voss, Roediger	47
Shannahan, Kirby L.J.	300	Waite, Kathryn	207
Shen, Anyuan	388	Walcher, Dominik	269
Sherrell, Daniel L.	116	Walsh, Gianfranco	252, 330
Shi, Linda Hui	143	Wang, Chao-Hung	394
Simpson, Lisa S.	193	Wang, Fang	223
Sinclair, Jollean K.	215	Wang, Guangping	145
Singh, Deeksha A.	57	Webster, Cynthia	163
Singh, Jagdip	94	Wei, Yujie	384
Singh, Nitish	16, 203	White, Chris	143
Sinha, Ashish	225, 310	Wiedmann, Klaus-Peter	292
Sivakumar, Soumya	112	Wiertz, Caroline	39
Smith, J. Alexander	227	Wieseke, Jan	363
Soch, Harmeen Kaur	250	Williams, David L.	227
Sohn, Youngju	2	Williamson, Nicholas C.	256
Song, Xuebao	177	Wilson, Rick T.	244
Spake, Deborah F.	275	Wood, Paula	102
Spanjol, Jelena	258	Worthy, Sheri Lokken	124
Stanko, Michael A.	170	Xu, Shichun	141
Strebinger, Andreas	18	Yaprak, Attila	141
Stringfellow, Anne	392	Yeniyurt, Sengun	265
Sussan, Fiona	118, 326	Yeoh, Poh-Lin	98
Swoboda, Bernhard	131, 365	Zhang, Hongxia	223
Szmigin, Isabelle	47	Zhao, John Hongxin	254
Talay, Mehmet Berk	143, 150, 382	Zhou, Kevin Zheng	248
Tam, Leona	258	Zhou, Nan	145
Taylor, Ronald D.	124	Zhu, Zhen	221
Terawatanavong, Civilai	163	Zolfagharian, Mohammadali	45, 284
Thiagarajan, Palaniappan	124	Zur, Andrew	163
Tokman, Mert	296		