# Trends in MBA research topics and research methodologies in South Africa

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# ABSTRACT

There is a growing demand for Masters in Business Administration (MBA) postgraduates generally. This need for business leadership is greater in South Africa and throughout the continent of Africa. MBA in South Africa is completed typically with a research report in the final year. This research identifies trends in MBA research topics and research methodologies applied while doing a research.

The research methodology used for this study was quantitative analysis, in order to identify any potential trends. Research records done by MBA students were analysed to identify the topics chosen for their research. Further study was conducted to identify the research methodology used within each research record in order to study trends in this area.

One of the key findings from the research was that research topics selected by MBA students are based on the topical issues highlighted in the business world. Of the topics selected, there is a shift in topic choice towards softer skills of business. The other substantial finding is the area of management research and research techniques. The finding indicates that researchers are moving from quantitative research techniques to other types of research methodologies.

A variety of recommendations are made, based on the findings in this research, to management education institutions, MBA curriculum setters and MBA researchers. A key point is that trends from this research can be used to influence and address skills taught in MBA programmes.

# DECLARATION

I, Shibi Mary Thomas, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

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Shibi Mary Thomas

Signed at ........Johannesburg...............................................

On the …………………………….. day of ………………………… 2010

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to identify trends in MBA research topics as well as research methodologies applied, i.e. quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. Further methodological detail was not investigated but could be an area for future research. The period analysed was from 1990 to 2008.

## 1.2 Context of the study

During 1994, South Africa's economy had undergone widespread changes to its industrial structure and trade policy (Daniels and Bag 2007). The authors describe that over a period the primary (blue collar) sector has been shedding jobs while the tertiary (service) sector has picked up newly created jobs, and that this kind of change has the potential to create a scarce skills shortage. Scarce skills have been identified to include sectors including educators, academics, medical practitioners and nurses, engineers and technicians, biotechnologists, managers, and information and communication technology professionals. Management studies and research in the field of management is aimed at addressing the shortages of managers, educators and academics.

Globalisation has also played a role to create this demand. Labour skills and costs have become central in determining comparative advantage resulting in a shift of low-productivity sectors to low wage countries and skill intensive sectors to high productivity countries (Edwards 2001).

More than 4000 MBA students enrol at local business schools every year and as the country moves into a new era of opportunity, the demand for MBA graduates is set to grow (Mba.co.za 2009). The overall demand for MBA graduates is driven by the great need for business leadership in South Africa. As the country has grown economically, both locally and globally, the pressures on business have increased. Therefore it is important to develop leaders and managers who have a balance between theory and practical. Thus MBA courses should include both aspects of it.

## 1.3 Problem statement

### *1.3.1 Main problem*

The purpose of the research is to identify trends in MBA research topics over the period of 1990 to 2008. The research will also identify trends in the type of research methodology (at the level of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods only) used for MBA research.

### *1.3.2 Sub-problems*

The first sub-problem is to identify trends in MBA research topics over the period from 1990 to 2008.

The second sub-problem is to identify trends in the type of research methodology (at the level of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods only) used for MBA research.

## 1.4 Significance of the study

It is important for educational institutions offering a degree in Master in Business Administration and management related studies to align their curriculum with the need of businesses and demand of the labour market. Successful completion of degrees is subsidised by the Government of South Africa (Council of Higher Education 2004), and the higher the qualification, the greater the subsidy. Research is compulsory as a major component (33%) in all Masters degrees in South Africa (Pfeffer and Fong 2002), so learning more about the trends in topics, methodologies and other factors affecting students' degree completion is likely to be of great value to the various stakeholders identified in the following paragraphs.

The time period over which the research is conducted spans the changeover from the pre-apartheid to the post apartheid eras in the Republic of South Africa. This might influence the new emergence or discontinuity, of choice of MBA research topics.

MBA students can benefit from this study by choosing topics for research in areas where there is perceived to be a demand for skills, assuming a link between topics selected and business need. This also gives them an opportunity to specialise in a field that has a potential opportunity.

This study will also provide guidance to educators in the area of research methodology to identify what students prefer to use as their preferred methodological approach.

## 1.5 Delimitations of the study

The scope of the study will only include research reports for trend analysis. The study excludes current trends and future projections, focusing on the historical trends between the years 1990 to 2008.

This research focuses on high level trends in research methodological approaches (quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods), but does not investigate specific research designs in greater depth; this aspect could be part of future research into MBA degrees.

The sample that is planned for this study will be drawn only from a specific geographical area, Gauteng, and only from the University of the Witwatersrand School of Business Administration or Wits Business School. However, this is not delimitation but rather indicates a convenience sample.

## 1.6 Definition of terms

| | |
|---|---|
| GPS | Global positioning system |
| HEQC | Higher Education Quality Committee |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technologies |
| MBA | Masters in Business Administration |
| QS | Quantity Surveying |
| RSA | Republic of South Africa |
| UN | United Nations |
| WBS | WITS Business School |
| WITS | University of Witwatersrand |

## 1.7 Assumptions

- It is assumed that students in MBA choose their research topics based on local and global topics that are prevailing in the respective years. This is because MBA students usually have a minimum of three years experience and the course enables them to further their careers.

- The other assumption is that the data provided by the source will be correct. This is assumed so because the records need to be kept in the library for further reference and they need to be correct.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

In today's information age, data is supplied to managers and leaders at a rapid rate and it is their role to asses this information and utilise it in a meaningful way. As a result MBA programmes need to teach students how to effectively adapt this new method of thinking and knowledge management (Pollitt 1999).

The role of managers and how business is conducted has drastically changed therefore it is vital that business schools continuously evaluate and redesign their MBA programs to meet the current demands of business (Baldwin, Bedell and Johnson 1997).

While keeping the basic skills set will always be important and remain the core of good business practices, how those skills play out or are utilised have greatly changed with time. It is therefore imperative that universities first understand these changes and then adapt curricula to better prepare their students to thrive in the changing industry.

Today's business environment requires managers to assess current information and use it to improve their business throughout the 21$^{st}$ century. To not only succeed in today's community but survive in the future, managers and leaders must re-orientate their thinking and use problem-solving skills that can be adapted to changing conditions (Williams and Reilly 2001).

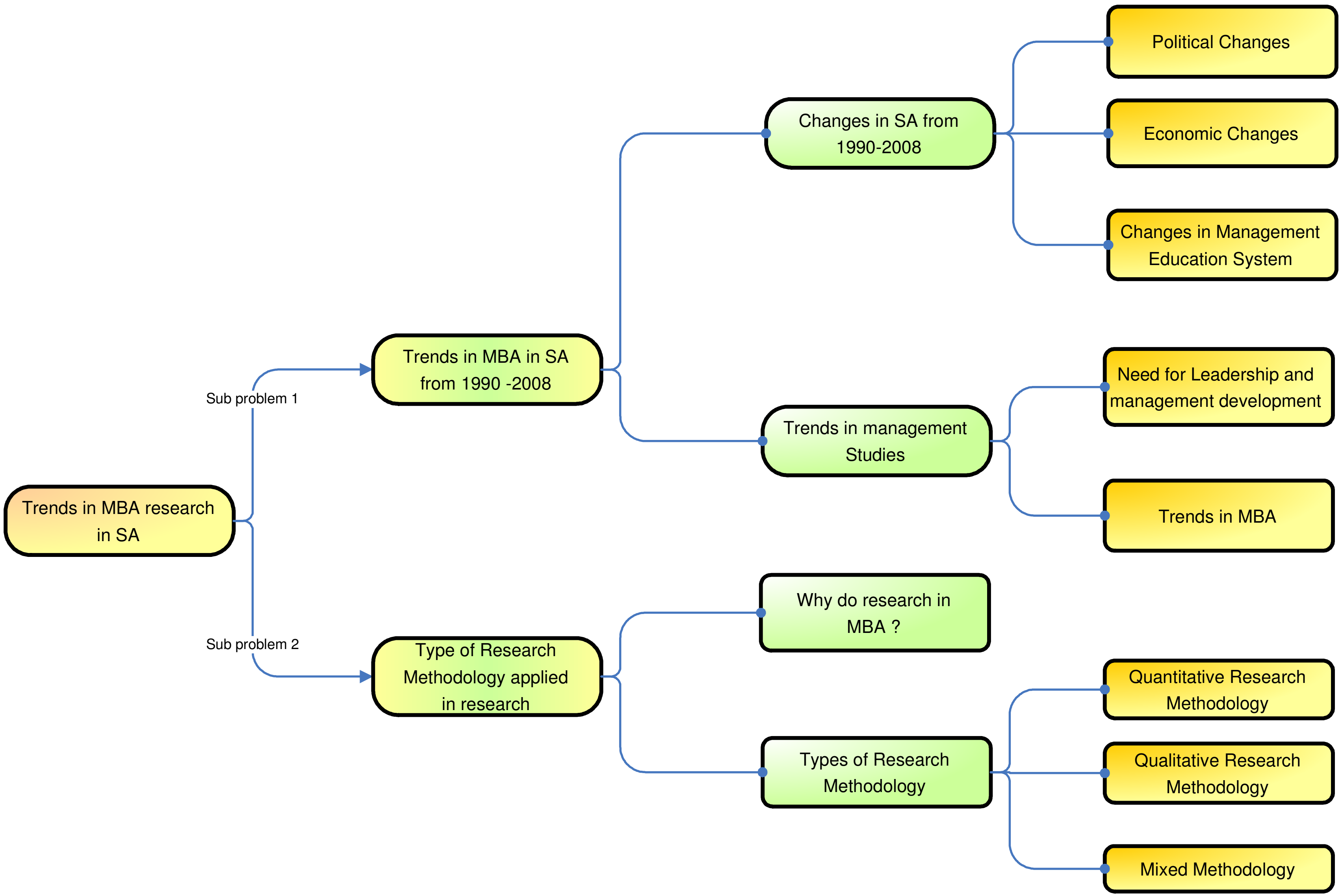


Figure 1: Overview of the literature review

The topics of discussion in this literature review are the trends in MBA research topics and methodologies in SA. The discussion carries on into four areas based on the sub problems (Figure 1). The changes in political, economical and management education in SA is studied from 1990 to 2008. Trends in management studies are discussed where the focus is on the need for leadership and management development and trends in MBA. The need for research in MBA studies is discussed next. Finally there is a discussion on the types of methodology used in management research.

## 2.2 Trends in MBA research from 1990 to 2008

By way of analogy, over the course of 100 years, cars have remained essentially the same - four wheels and an engine. However, over that time people's needs have shifted. As families venture out into the world and businesses become more global, the population has become more dependent on cars and spend more time in them.

Because of this, manufacturers have added features to match the needs of the driver – cup holders, GPS, telephones, music players and even televisions, all of this to keep up with changing times.

The same is true in business, and in MBA programs that prepare working professionals for the business world. Technology and globalisation have changed, and are likely to continue changing the economic basis and the face of business.

The standard curriculum used in most business schools now supplements so-called hard subjects, such as finance and operations management with some that could be labelled both soft, such as human resources, and organisational changes, green technologies e.g. responses to global warming. The aura surrounding the MBA, its salaries and jobs it led to, kept the degree unchanged and unchallenged for decades (Galagan 2009).

### *2.2.1 Changes in South Africa from 1990-2008*

#### *2.2.1.1 Political Changes*

South Africa's apartheid era began around 1910, and was a system whereby people were discriminated against based only on the colour of their skin. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 (No. 47) was a South African law which codified several aspects of the apartheid system. Its major provision has enforced separation of races in all educational institutions, including universities. The policy of Bantu (African) education was aimed to direct black or non-white youth to the unskilled labour market (Curtin 1993; Schroeder 2009).

In 1994 South Africa held its first election across all racial groups bringing an end to apartheid, thus opening a new chapter in its history (SouthAfrica.Info 2008). Since the advent of democracy, South Africa's economy has been undergoing structural transformation, with the implementation of macro-economic policies aimed at promoting domestic competitiveness, growth and employment and increasing the economy's outward orientation

#### *2.2.1.2 Economic Changes*

Economic sanctions were first enacted in 1962, when the UN Assembly asked Member States to break off diplomatic relations with South Africa, boycott its goods and refrain from exporting to the country (UNChronicle 1994; Giliomee

1995). This ban also extended to economic and other ties with South Africa, in the areas of trade, investment, finance, travel and transportation.

Post – apartheid, UN States were asked to lift the sanctions they had imposed over the years under numerous UN resolutions and decisions. South Africa's highly isolationist geo-political and economic policies were substantively transformed in the democratic era, forcing firms to become more competitive and export oriented. This often had the effect of augmenting capital-intensive technological change (Jansen and Taylor 2003; Daniels and Bag 2007). Business becomes more integrated into the international system, and foreign investment has increased (State.gov 2009).

#### *2.2.1.3 Changes in Management Education System*

In the decade following the transition to democracy in 1994, several far-reaching changes have taken place in South African higher education. A series of policy and legislative frameworks have laid the basis for a transition to a new higher education dispensation that is more integrated, provides more equitable access and is more responsive to the social and economic needs of the country than the higher education landscape of the apartheid era (Department of Labour 2005). The issue of improved quality and the development of an external system of quality assurance has been a critical component of the planning for the new higher education system in order to ensure that the resourcing for quality and standards transcended the former divide between historically advantaged and disadvantaged higher education institutions (Singh, Lange and Naidoo 2004).

The last two years have seen the development by the HEQC (Higher Education Quality Council) of systems for institutional audits and programme accreditation as well as a range of activities in the area of quality promotion and capacity development (Singh et al. 2004).

In South Africa as in other countries, the expectation that an MBA would open up new employment and advancement opportunities is great. For reasons to do with South Africa's history, the acute demands on the state for effective service delivery in social provision as well as the expected impact on economic productivity made the MBA even more important. One of the critical expectations of the MBA is the accelerated development of a new stratum of black and women professionals to fulfil the management and leadership needs of the public and private sectors in South Africa (Council of Higher Education 2004; Singh et al. 2004). In the light of the above, the need for some form of quality assurance for the MBA was becoming acute as the number of providers increased rapidly. Between 1990 and 2002, the number of higher education institutions offering MBA’s increased from seven to twenty seven as a range of new public and private providers entered the MBA market (Singh et al. 2004).

### *2.2.2 Trends in Management Studies*

#### *2.2.2.1 Need for leadership and management development*

In 1994, South Africa’s economy had undergone widespread changes to its industrial structure and trade policy. This has increased skills shortages in SA and specifically in the area of leadership and management (Heintz 2000; Carmichael and Sutherland 2005; Daniels and Bag 2007). Government has intervened with legislation to improve the supply of skilled labour, such as the

Employment Equity Act (EEA)(RSA, 1998a), the Labour Relations Act (LRA)(RSA, 1995a) and the Skills Development Act (SDA)(RSA, 1998b).

The Department of Labour (2008) has identified, and moved to attract and retain so called “scarce skills” in South Africa, and these are usually measured in terms of occupation or qualification. Both ‘occupation’ and ‘qualification’ have the merit of being relatively straightforward to measure and readily understood. ‘Critical’ skills refer to particular capabilities needed within an occupation, for example, general management skills, communication and customer handling skills, team-work skills, and communication technology skills. Scarce skills shortages have been identified in the occupations of CEO, general manager, senior mangers, legislators, ICT managers, operations managers, project managers (Department of Labour 2007, 2008), among others.

The Department of Labour has published its National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) that contributes to sustainable development of skills growth, development and equity of skills development institutions by aligning their work and resources to the skills needs for effective delivery and implementation (Department of Labour 2005).

Globalisation has also played a role to create this demand. Skills and costs have influenced the market and it has provided a leading edge in businesses. This has led to a shift of low-productivity sectors to low wage countries and skill intensive sectors to high productivity countries. Globalisation has also affected employment in RSA (Edwards 2001) and has lead to a greater need for skilled individuals, particularly in technology and management. Locally supplies of human capital within these areas of expertise are limited. To build a strong local economy, South Africa needs to participate in global markets and attract investment. This to a large extent is dependent on skills availability and the confidence that there are well trained human capital (Fields 2000; Carmichael and Sutherland 2005).

#### *2.2.2.2. Trends in MBA and Management Research Topics*

MBA positions are at record levels in North America, and there is increasing interest in 'green' related topics such as corporate social responsibility and non profit organisations. Historically, the financial services industry has been the top field of interest for MBAs, and successful finance related research has supported many investment banks in retaining their top performing employees (Galagan 2009; Matheson 2009).

The MBA is no longer seen as primarily a degree for those who wish to pursue careers in investment banking, consulting and consumer goods or manufacturing (Kedia and Harveston 1998). Rather, the MBA is now recognised as a degree that provides a breadth of skills that are applicable to virtually any career, including those dedicated to social entrepreneurship. There is a generational phenomenon where the key business school demographics are more socially conscious than the generation that have preceded them (Galagan 2009; Matheson 2009).

Other areas that have experienced a notable increase in student interest are in the energy industry, where clean technology and renewable energy are of much interest. There is also a significant increased student interest in Leadership development programmes which had seemed to fall out of favour for a few years but now seems to have become re-popularised (Matheson 2009).

North America is also seeing a shifting trend in career destinations. Several years ago IT organisations were popular places for MBAs to seek employment (Matheson 2009).

In business schools around the globe core features for the course, which provide skills highly valued by employers, will include strategy, marketing, finance and leadership (Geraghty 2008). While nobody disputes that those core elements will remain the central pillars of the business school education system, a QS report shows that ‘soft skills’ increasingly rate highly in importance with recruiters (Fields 2000). Development and learning of soft skills in business school is contentious, and not all agree that spending time on communication and similar topics, as opposed to finance, marketing, etc., adds value (Geraghty 2009).

Until 1994, business was competing for the limited market in SA due to sanctions imposed by the UN and participating member states (UNChronicle 1994). This was also a period in which computers and information technology was slowly seeping into business.

Following commercialisation and introduction of privately run Internet service providers in the 1980s, and the Internet's expansion for popular use in the 1990s, the Internet has had a drastic impact on culture and commerce. This includes the rise of near instant communication by electronic mail (e-mail), text based discussion forums, and the World Wide Web. Investor speculation in new markets provided by these innovations would also lead to the inflation and subsequent collapse of the Dot-com bubble (Leiner, Cerf, Clark, Kahn, Kleinrock, Lynch et al. 2001).

The dot-com bubble was a stock market bubble which popped to near-devastating effect in 2001. It was powered by the rise of Internet sites and the tech industry in general, and many of these companies went under or learned some valuable lessons when the bubble finally burst. Many investors lost substantial sums of money on the dot-com bubble, helping to trigger a mild economic recession in the early 2000s. Analysts noted that some companies did not seem to be sobered by the burst of the bubble when web 2.0 sparked a fresh round of investing and speculation around 2004 (Kraay and Ventura 2007; wisegeek 2009) .

Several factors combined to cause the dot-com bubble, which is usually defined as the period of investment and speculation in Internet firms which occurred between 1995 and 2001. A major jump in growth of Internet users, began from 1995. Companies started to recognise these users as potential consumers. As a result, numerous internet start-ups were birthed in the mid to late 1990s. These companies came to be referred to as “dot-coms” after the *.com* in many web addresses(Ljungqvist and Wilhelm Jr 2003; wisegeek 2009) .

Federal Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States raised the debit limit for investment banks in 2004 (Ritter 2003). This allowed Wall Street’s largest pure investment banks, such as Merrill Lynch, Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns and Goldman Sachs, to invest more freely with borrowed money. This option was largely denied to commercial banks that were forced to maintain higher levels of cash and securities reserves to back up their loans and investments (Kashyap, Rajan and Stein 2002).

As early as March 2007, a smattering of analysts and journalists were warning that financial markets in the United States were on the verge of a credit crunch. By early August, year 2007 it was concluded that a crunch had finally arrived in the business sector, but not yet for consumers. Then, in early September 2007, a survey sponsored by a mortgage trade group provided evidence that households were feeling the crunch too (Brunnermeier and Princeton; Bernanke, Lown and Friedman 1991) . The buyout market is just one dimension of the credit crunch. Another dimension involving "commercial paper" promise, to pay, which a wide variety of companies issue to acquire short-term funding. By the end of August 2007, the $1.2 trillion asset-backed commercial paper market, which often uses mortgages as collateral was “freezing up”. The recession following this incident had continued until 2009  (Brunnermeier and Princeton; Whalen 2007).

### *2.2.3 Proposition 1*

#### *2.2.3.1 Research Proposition 1.1*

The research topics selected by MBA students are aimed at solving topical problems, over time.

#### *2.2.3.2 Research Proposition 1.2*

There is a shift in topic choice, towards softer skills over the time period investigated (1990 -2008).

## 2.3 Type of research methodology applied in research

Over the years there has been a large amount of complex discussion and argument surrounding the topic of research methodology and the theory of how inquiry should proceed. In research, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods are simply tools, fit for a range of scientific purposes (Paley 2000) used in different types of situations. Researchers tend to choose from the above methods based on the research problem, personal experiences, and the audience at which the research is aimed (Creswell 2003).

Studies conducted for the years 1968, 1977, 1986 show that there were relatively stable rates of quantitative and qualitative research. Approximately half of the articles were not based on primary data (Calder and et al. 1990).

Historically, quantitative research (the “scientific method”) has been the approach of choice, focusing on objectivity and generalisability of data and findings (Leedy and Ormrod 2001). However, more recent trends show that researchers are moving towards conducting more qualitative and mixed methods research (Daley 2004). This could be due to the realisation that organisations are complex in nature, and, in many cases, in-depth, perceptual data is of more value than statistically generalisable information.

In the case of mixed methods research, it has been realised that different approaches can be used to triangulate or inform other parts of a study, adding richness and depth to the research.

### 2.3.1 *Why do research in MBA?*

Learning methodologies used for management studies have been classified in terms of a number of different models (Linstead 1990; Dyrud 1997). In order that student perceptions regarding the effectiveness of different learning methodologies could be explored, only those methodologies that are applied at the institution, and had supporting literature, were investigated. These were: lecturing (both formal and interactive), computer-based instruction, case studies, formative assessments, video, individual and syndicate assignments, panel discussions, networking, conducting research, field trips, international visits, class presentations, guest speakers, simulations, action learning, and peer evaluation (Hitchcock 1996; Rothwell 1996; Malone 1997; Cadman 2000; Phipps, Phipps, Kask and Higgins 2001; Chonko, Tanner and Davis 2002; Carmichael and Sutherland 2005)

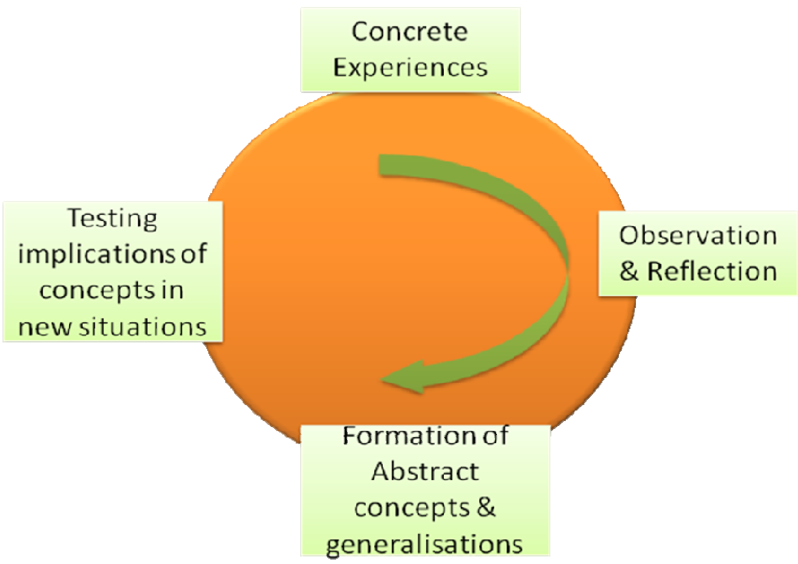


**Figure 2: Experiential learning cycle (Kolb, Rubin and McIntyre 1983; Bourner 1992)**

It is believed that the number of research degree registrations within the business studies and management subject area is low compared to other subject areas. Yet research shows that doing research is a powerful vehicle for management development (Kolb, Rubin and McIntyre 1983; Bourner 1992).

Kolb (1983) argues that a management study is a type of experiential learning and doing research within MBA is part of problem solving. In Figure1 the cycle of experiential learning includes concrete experience followed by observation / reflections leading to the formation of abstract concepts and generalisation and then testing the implication of the new situations.

Managers in adaptive organisations require the skills to make sense of complex and dense information flows. The problem within organisations is information selection from the large amounts of data, to enable more effective means of communication. The adaptive organisation needs within it those who are effective in extracting reliable information that is relevant to its purposes and distinguishing this from the irrelevant facts, half truths and unsubstantiated opinions in which it is always immersed. These are the capabilities that are developed on research degree programmes (Bourner 1992).

It is important for educational institutions offering a degree in Master in Business Administration and management related studies to align their curriculum with the need of businesses and demand in the labour market. Devaney (2004) justifies the use of public funding for research and how it creates wealth. Research is compulsory in all Masters degrees in South Africa and subsidised by the government of South Africa (Council of Higher Education 2004) .

### *2.3.2 Types of Research Methodology*

#### *2.3.2.1 Quantitative Research Methodology*

A quantitative approach is one in which the investigator primarily uses, positivist and post-positivist claims, experimental strategies of inquiry and pre-test and post-test measures of attitudes (Creswell 2003) for developing knowledge. This method also employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data.

One of the assumptions underlying the quantitative research approach, is that research designs should be based on an objective view of the world and follows the positivist model of controlling variables and testing pre-specified hypotheses (Falconer and Mackay 1999).

#### *2.3.2.2 Qualitative Research Methodology*

A qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives, ethnographic design, and observation of behaviour (Creswell 2003). This method also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenology, grounded theory studies, or case studies etc. The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data. It is also a form of inquiry which has grown over the past decade. The number and quality of qualitative studies in almost every discipline has increased phenomenally (Daley 2004) .

Qualitative inquiry employs different knowledge claims: strategies of inquiry and methods of data collection and analysis. Qualitative procedures rely on words (e.g. from interviews), text, (e.g. narratives, questionnaires) and image data, including observations, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse strategies of inquiry. The strategies of inquiry chosen in a qualitative project will have dramatic influence on the procedures (Creswell 1998; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Schwandt 2000; Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

The focus of qualitative research tends to be on understanding the meaning imbedded in participant experiences through open-ended questions with an unstructured and subjective approach (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The research is mostly conducted in a naturalist setting and sampling is often purposive or convenience based Patton(2002) and tends to be holistic, descriptive and focuses on the depth and details of experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

Data collection methods include interviews, observations, field notes and documents, amongst others (Wolcott 1994). Data is most often analysed through an inductive, ongoing and evolving process of identifying themes within a particular context (Miles and Huberman 1994a). Quantitative research is always considered ‘objective’, while qualitative methods are subjective and will seek meaning more than generalised research (Laurie and Sullivan 1991).

#### *2.3.2.3 Mixed Methodology*

Mixed methods research is both a methodology and a method in research. It involves mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study or series of studies in collecting, analysing and theorising data (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann and Hanson 2003).

Mixed methods approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds (Creswell 2003). This approach employs data collection methods associated with both quantitative and qualitative paradigms and strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems. Thus data is both numeric as well as textual / spoken so that the final dataset represents both quantitative and qualitative information.

Mixed methods are developed, in part, to meet the need to help researchers create understandable designs out of complex data and analyses (Creswell 2003). It follows a purpose statement and research questions focused on understanding a problem, using both qualitative and quantitative methods and the rationale for using multiple forms of data collection and analyses.

### *2.3.3 Proposition 2*

There is an evolution from quantitative research methodology to qualitative and more recently to mixed methodologies.

## 2.4 Summary of Literature Review

The topics of discussion in this literature review are the trends in MBA research in RSA. The discussion carries on into four areas based on the sub problems. The changes in politics, economics and management education in SA include studies from 1990 to 2008. Trends in management studies are discussed where the focus is on the need to leadership and management development and trends in MBA. The need for research in MBA studies is discussed next. Finally there is a detailed discussion on the types of methodology used in management research.

The research propositions are re-stated below, with the references used for the particular proposition.

### *2.4.1 Research Proposition 1.1*

The research topics selected by MBA students are aimed at solving topical problems, over time.

References:

- (Galagan 2002)
- (Curtin 1993)
- (UNChronicle 1994)
- (Jansen and Taylor 2003)
- (Galagan 2002)
- (Schroeder 2009)
- (SouthAfrica.Info 2008)
- (Giliomee 1995)
- (Daniels and Bag 2007)
- (Schroeder 2009)

- (Curtin 1993)
- (UNChronicle 1994)
- (Jansen and Taylor 2003)
- (State.gov 2009)
- (SouthAfrica.Info 2008)
- (Giliomee 1995)
- (Daniels and Bag 2007)
- (Singh et al. 2004)

### *2.4.2 Research Proposition 1.2*

There is a shift in topic choice, towards softer skills over the time period investigated (1990 -2008).

Reference:

- (Heintz 2000)
- (Daniels and Bag 2007)
- (Department of Labour 2005)
- (Department of Labour 2007, 2008)
- (Fields 2000)
- (Carmichael and Sutherland 2005)
- (RSA 1995)
- (RSA 1998 a,b)
- (Geraghty 2009)
- (Edwards 2001)
- (Galagan 2009)
- (Matheson 2009)

### *2.4.3 Research Proposition 2*

There is an evolution from quantitative research methodology to qualitative and more recently to mixed methodologies.

Reference:


- (Paley 2000)
- (Calder and et al. 1990)
- (Linstead 1990)
- (Hitchcock 1996)
- (Malone 1997)
- (Phipps et al. 2001)
- (Carmichael and Sutherland 2005)
- (Bourner 1992)
- (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Schwandt 2000)
- (Strauss and Corbin 1998)
- (Creswell et al. 2003)
- (Miles and Huberman 1994b)
- (Creswell 2003)
- (Daley 2004)
- (Dyrud 1997)
- (Rothwell 1996)
- (Cadman 2000)
- (Chonko et al. 2002)
- (Kolb et al. 1983)
- (Falconer and Mackay 1999)
- (Schwandt 2000)
- (Lincoln and Guba 1985)
- (Laurie and Sullivan 1991)
- (Wolcott 1994)

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section the research methodology used is discussed. A detailed discussion of the research design follows this. Thereafter the discussion is about the population and how the sample was derived. Validity and reliability are also discussed in detail and how this was applied to the study.

## 3.1 Research methodology / paradigm

The research approach employed in this study was quantitative in nature. The literature review was used to identify existing research on topics surrounding trends in MBA and related research, in South Africa.

The quantitative approach (Leedy and Ormrod 2001) was considered appropriate in this study should the findings be useful to the identified stakeholders, particularly business schools. The data required was relatively simple but sufficient counts were required for meaningful information to be made available. The trends in research topics selected by MBA students could inform curricular and employment decisions made in business schools; both lecturers and supervisors of research need to be employed in relevant areas in the appropriate proportions and numbers. It is the intention of quantitative research that generalisations can be made from sample results about the population (Creswell et al. 2003). The data source in this study was the collection of research reports in the library at the Wits Business School, and a sufficiently large sample was identified, from which it was intended to infer which topics and methodologies were being used over the period of time from 1990 to 2008. Descriptive statistics were used to plot the identified trends.

## 3.2 Research Design

The research design used in this research was documentary analysis of MBA research reports, with the intention of identifying trends in topics selected for research and the high-level methodologies employed. Document analysis is an independent technique (Strauss and Corbin 1998) and it merely aims to apply different methods to a particular investigation material. It usually applies to "documents" or a synonym for the word "source" in historical research. However, as a rule, only written sources are considered to be documents. Examples are: reports, the wordings of laws, the minutes of proceedings, records, letters, diaries, leaflets, press articles, books, organization charts, or work instructions. Since these documents have their origin in everyday contexts and there is no contact between the researcher and the production of the investigation material, document analysis is a non-reactive method (Appleton 1997; Elston 2002).

In primary data collection, the data is collected directly by the researcher. There are many methods of collecting primary data and the main methods include: questionnaires, interviews, focus group interviews, observation, case-studies, diaries, critical incidents, and portfolios. Secondary data is data that has already been collected by someone else for their own purpose and usually published if it is to be considered credible. For example, this could mean using data collected by a hotel on its customers through its guest history system, data supplied by a marketing organisation, annual company reports, and government statistics (Thames valley univeristy 2009).

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
| --- | --- |
| • Data readily available | • Limited by the availability of data |
| • Inexpensive and economical form of data. | • Inaccuracies in original material. |
| • Save time. | • Bias – 'selective deposit'. |
| • Non-reactivity – records unbiased by data collection | • Bias – 'selective survival' – missing/incomplete. |
| • Researcher does not have to be present during data collection. | • Total document or part of document? |
| • Useful for hypothesis / problem formulation. | • Data studied out of context. |
| • | • Preparation before analysis. |

**Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of using documentary analysis (Appleton 1997).**

Table 1 lists the advantages and disadvantages of using records and documents in research study. The main advantage for use of existing records / documents in research study is that it is readily available, takes little time to access and provides a relatively inexpensive time form of data. A further strength of use of documentary evidence is its non-reactivity, the fact that records tend to be unbiased as the documents are collated. The researcher is not in a position to bias subjects and authors of the document. Another advantage is that researchers can obtain data without being present in the field (Appleton 1997; Shultz, Hoffman and Reiter-Palmon 2008).

## 3.3 Population and sample

### *3.3.1 Population*

The population defined for this research includes research reports from all business schools within South Africa. Some of the leading business schools offering MBA in SA include the following in alphabetical order (Mba.co.za 2009):

- Gordon Institute of Business Science
- Graduate School of Business, University of KwaZulu-Natal
- Henley Management College (Incorporated in the United Kingdom)
- Management College of Southern Africa
- Milpark Business School (Pty) Ltd
- Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Business School
- North-West University (Mafikeng Campus)
- Potchefstroom Business School
- Regenesys Business School
- Regent Business School
- School of Management, University of the Free State
- Tshwane University of Technology
- University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business
- University of South Africa Graduate School of Business Leadership

- University of Stellenbosch Business School
- University of the Witwatersrand - Wits

### *3.3.2 Sample and sampling method*

When conducting research it has to be clear how one would analyse the sample of the population (Nicolaisen 2006). There are two types of sampling frames - probability and non-probability, and within these, there are six types of sampling methods. Within probability sampling methods there are simple samples, systematic samples, multi-stage samples. Non-probability sampling methods are convenience sampling, quota sampling and dimensional sampling (Learn Marketing .net 2009).

The sample frame was convenience based, being research reports completed by the students of Wits Business School (WBS). The Wits Business School (University of Witwatersrand) is acknowledged as one of the leading business schools in Africa. It is seated in the business capital of the continent and deeply rooted in the African environment. The campus is based in Johannesburg, widely acknowledged as one of the centres of business education excellence in South Africa and Southern Africa. Therefore the sample frame will represent various topics happening locally in South Africa, in the African continent and globally.

Research material from the period 1990 to 2008 was considered as the sample. Systematic sampling was done where alternate years were chosen. Twenty research reports were randomly selected from each alternating year.

## 3.4 Procedure for data collection

The sample taken for this research is the Wits Business School (WBS) research topics done by students in the final year of MBA curriculum. The period considered was from the period of 1990 to 2008. Research reports from alternate years were chosen as the sample. This was due to the fact that trends develop over a period of time and it would prolong over a period. Thus, a period of two years was considered sufficient to identify any shift in trends in topic selection and methodological approach.

Twenty research reports were randomly selected from alternative years to constitute the sample. The library catalogue system was used to select research reports for the data. When a particular report was not found on the shelf then the next report on the shelf was selected as part of the sample.

It was decided to conduct a library key-word search for each year in addition to physical inspection of research reports, since many reports were not physically in the library. This was based on the assumption that the library cataloguing system is reliable and valid, accurately representing the topics researched by students over the years.

## 3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

A database was created and descriptive statistics were used to summarise the trends in topic selection and methodology. Descriptive statistics describe patterns and general trends in a data set. In most cases, descriptive statistics were used to examine or explore one variable at a time. However, the relationship between two variables can also be described as with correlation and regression (Webstat 2009).

Some of the techniques that are commonly used in descriptive statistics can be categorised as graphical displays, tabular description, and summary statistics. Graphical display of the data summarises the data in graphs and facilitates comparisons. Tabular description uses tables of numbers and summary statistics which summarise the data (Statsoft 2009).

## 3.6 Limitations of the study

Some of the limitations related to documentary analysis and secondary analysis are (Shultz et al. 2008):

- One cannot ensure the appropriateness of data and completeness of documentation. This was a factor in this study, as some research reports had been taken out on loan and was not available for inspection.
- It is likely that the more popular research reports were the ones removed from the library, so it is possible that under-reporting may have taken place for these topics.
- The possibility of detecting errors/sources is often difficult.
- Unique statistical skills required to analyse the data.
- There is an illusion of quick and easy research. The data needs to be compiled in a specific format such that it can be used for analysis and this could take time.

## 3.7 Validity and reliability

Research that is to be credible requires both validity and reliability. Validity deals with the accuracy of the instrument to the extent that it measures what we wish to measure. Reliability refers to the research measurement procedure's accuracy and precision (Bendixen 2004).

Two types of validity occur: The first type, external validity deals with the 'generalisability' of the research across persons, settings and times. Thus, if research is externally valid, then the same results were obtained regardless of the researcher, the context, or the period. The second type, internal validity, includes both content and face validity and deals with the extent to which the measuring instrument provides adequate coverage of the topic under study (Bendixen 2004).

Bendixen (2004) outlines the following description of reliability of the research:

- The stability of the research – An instrument is said to be stable if it secures reliable and coherent results with repeated measurements on the same subject.
- The equivalence of the research – Equivalence is a measure of the degrees of error brought in by different researchers, or by different samples of items in the questions.
- The internal consistency of the research – This concept deals with the uniformity and homogeneity among the scaled and measurable items researched.

In order for the research to have value, it needed to have high levels of validity and reliability. Validity of the research project referred to "accuracy, meaningfulness and credibility" of the study as a whole (Leedy and Ormrod 2001). According to (Emory and Cooper 1991), reliability is concerned with the estimates of the degree that the measurement is free from random or unstable error.

### 3.7.1 External validity

External validity refers to the extent to which generalisations into other areas can be made from the results of the study (Leedy and Ormrod 2001). One method to improve external validity of the study was to use a representative sample. In other words, the researcher could only use the results, obtained from the sample studies; to make a generalisation about the entire population is when the sample is truly representative of the population. Every effort was made to satisfy the external validity of this study by using a representative stratified random sample drawn from the population (Robson 2002).

### 3.7.2 Internal validity

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), internal validity refers to the extent to which the researcher is able to draw "accurate conclusions" from the study. This involved reducing the possibility that the research results came about for reasons other than those concluded in the study. Internal validity serves to rate the credibility or authenticity of the research (Miles and Huberman 1994b), 1994; how much truth does it contain, how believable is it?

### *3.7.3 Reliability*

Reliability should ensure that similar research conducted in the future should lead to similar results (Leedy and Ormrod 2001). The reliability of the study was enhanced through establishing congruency between the research problem, the study objectives, the literature reviewed, the formulated propositions and the study method (Miles and Huberman 1994b).

# CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the results are presented where the discussion starts with a profile of the sample. In this session the proposed sample and the actual sample selected is discussed.

The next section deals with the presentation of results pertaining to proposition one and two. The analysis for proposition one was done using the following four approaches:

- Analysis of trends based on MBA subjects
- Analysis of trends based on keywords search
- Analysis of major topics over the years
- Detailed analysis of topics in 2008, the most recent year.

Results pertaining to proposition two are analysed and the trend in research methodology (at the highest level – quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods) are presented.

## 4.2 Description of the sample

It was planned that the sample taken for this research would be the Wits Business School (WBS) research topics done by students in the final year of MBA curriculum. As planned the sample was drawn from every alternate year from 1990 to 2008. Twenty research reports were selected from each of these years and they were analysed.

It was planned to select the reports from the following years for the analysis: 1990, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008. All this was done.

While analysing the data it was decided that 2007 would be included, and that further data would be sought and analysed for the two most recent years, i.e. 2007 and 2008.

In addition, in 2007 a new approach in the way in which research methodology was taught at WBS was introduced. A new template was introduced to assist students with research and submitting research proposal, and it was considered to be relevant to identify whether this affected students' choice of methodological approach.

Records of research reports in the year 2008 were further analysed to identify trends in research topics. All the reports physically in the library for that year were analysed. This was due to the fact that these reports were the most recent available and, in addition, many of them were taken out by the students for referencing. This would have skewed the results, but it was anticipated that the key-word search would provide a more accurate picture of the topics selected for that year.

## 4.3 Results pertaining Proposition 1

### *4.3.1 Research Proposition 1.1*

The research topics selected by MBA students are aimed at solving topical problems, over time.

### *4.3.2 Research Proposition 1.2*

There is a shift in topic choice, towards softer skills over the time period investigated (1990 -2008).

### *4.3.3 Analysis of Trends based on MBA Subjects*

The trends were analysed based on the following categories. The research reports were grouped into following categories:

- The major core courses within MBA and popular elective courses
- The key words used within the library to search for a particular record
- The emerging trends of subjects from the years 1990 – 2008.

The core courses in the WBS MBA course are currently:

- Strategic Management
- Economic Management
- Marketing Management
- Industrial Relations
- Research Methodology
- Finance Management
- Human Resource Management
- Operations Management
- Information Management
- Data & Decision Making
- Organisational Design & Development

The Elective courses used for categorising the subjects are:

- International Business
- General Management
- Industry & Competitor Analysis
- Entrepreneurship
- Issues in Leadership

The MBA syllabus (Faculty of Commerce 2007) has allocated each elective course into one of seven streams: Finance, Information Management, Human

Resources, International Business, Strategy, General Management and Marketing. Five of these categories are part of the main course. The other two, General Management and International Business have been included as a separate category.

The results presented in bar graphs shows how research based on each course was favoured over the years. For example, Organisation Design and Development was favoured more from 1990 to 1998. This later picks up in 2007 as shown in Figure 3.

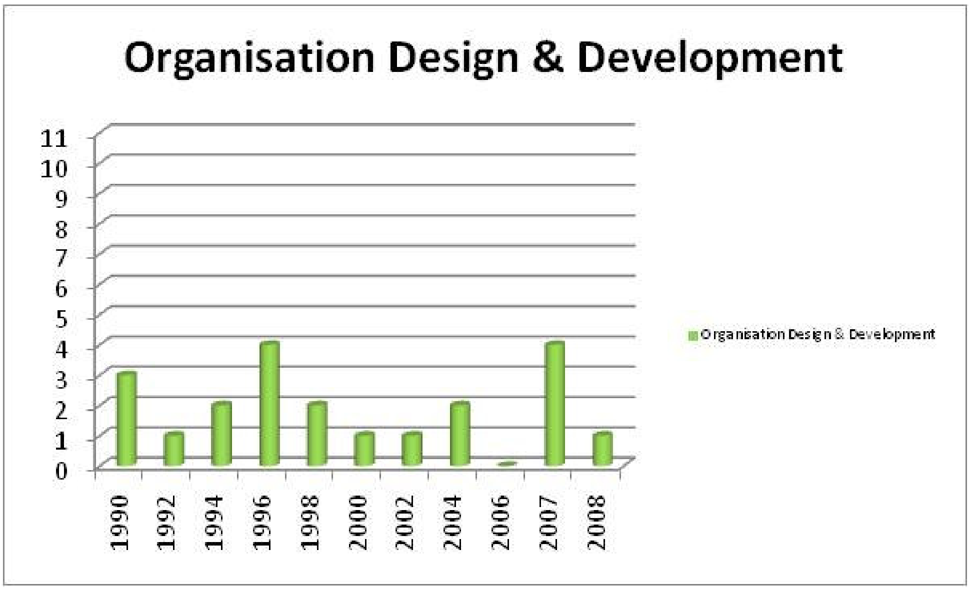


**Figure 3: Records of Organisation Design & Development done over the period 1990-2008.**

The bar chart in Figure 4 represents the trend for the selection of Information Management of a research topic by the students from 1990 to 2008. In the late 1990's there were more records. The highest amount of research was done in 1992 and 2000.

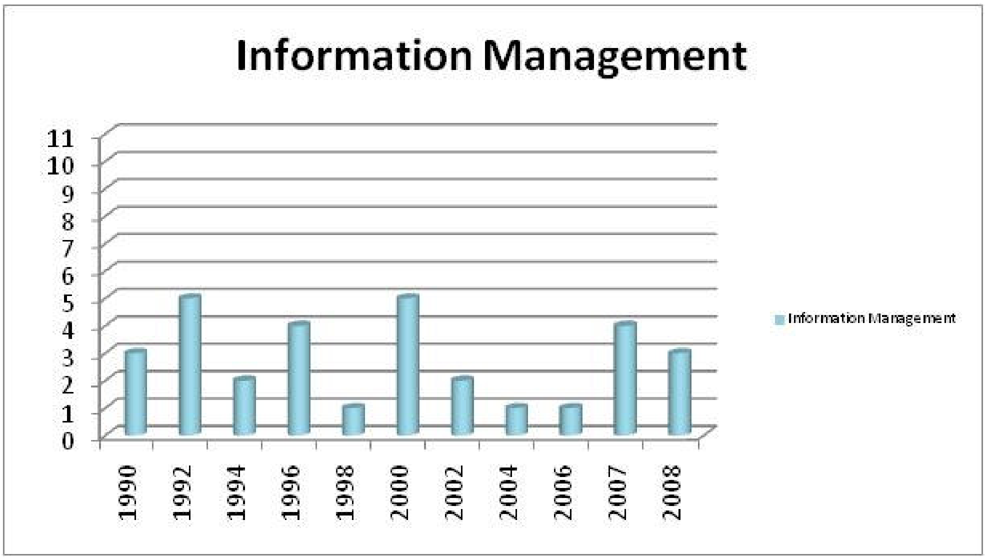


**Figure 4: Records of Information Management done over the period 1990 – 2008.**

Figure 5 shows the trend for strategic management selection by researchers from 1990 to 2008. The number of research reports related to this course shows a steady increase over the years. The highest number was recorded in 2008 with 5 records. The absence of any reports in 2004 is possibly due to sampling error, since it seems intuitively unlikely that no research was conducted in this area.


**Figure 5: Records of Strategic Management done over the period 1990 -2008.**

The bar chart in Figure 6 represents the Marketing Management selection by students from 1990 to 2008. The Figure shows a growing trend towards marketing research. Year 2007 had the highest number of research reports recorded for marketing management.

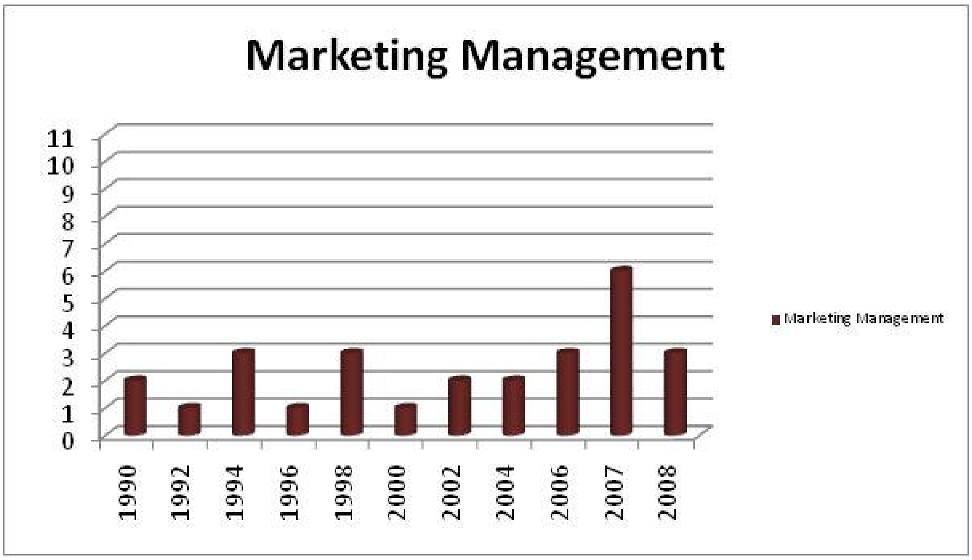


**Figure 6: Records of Marketing Management done over the period 1990 – 2008.**

The bar chart in Figure 7 represents Finance Management selection from 1990 to 2008. The number of times this subject was selected varies across the years, but it records hieghest in 2007.


**Figure 7: Records of Finance Management done over the period 1990 -2008.**

The bar chart in Figure 8 represents Operations Management selection as a research topic. This topic appears to be one of the more popular over the period investigated, given the higher numbers compared to other topics.

**Figure 8: Records of Operations Management done over the period 1990 -2008**

Human Resource (HR) Management has also been shown to be relatively popular over the years, as seen in Figure 9.

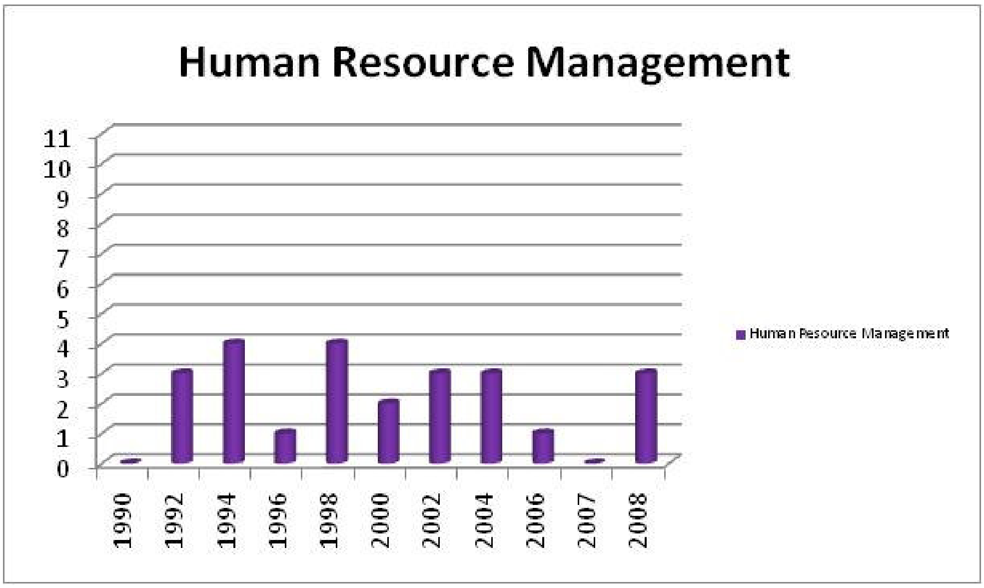

**Figure 9 : Records of HR Management done over the period 1990 -2008**

The bar chart in Figure 10 represents the trend in Economic Management. This topic choice was fairly consistent from 1990 to 2000, but erratic overall.

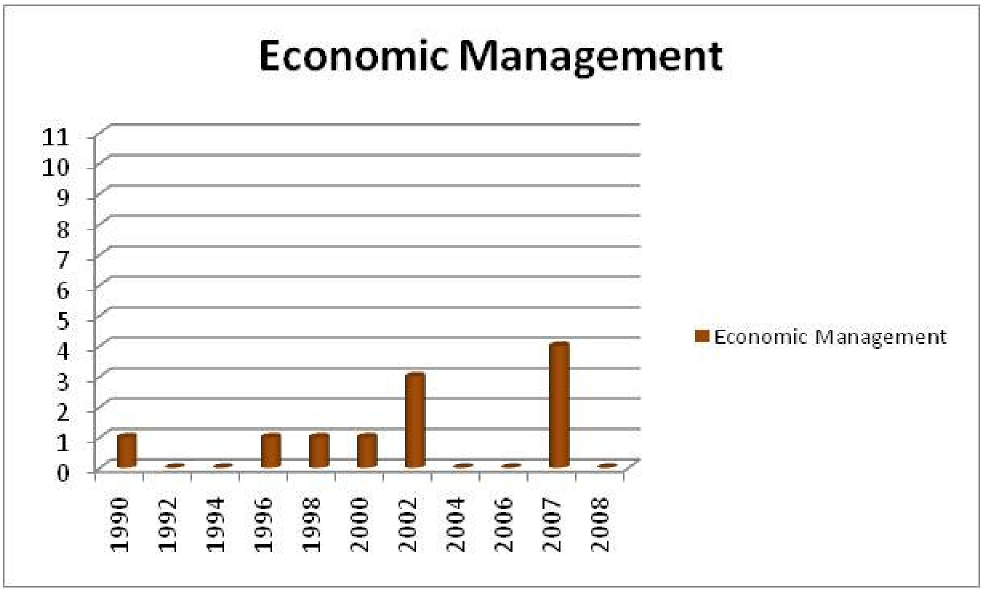


**Figure 10: Records of Economic Management done over the period 1990 -2008**

Figure 11 shows that Industry and Competitor Analysis was selected in relatively high numbers in most years by the students. The number of times this course was chosen has shown a decline over the years. The frequency of highest number was recorded in 1990 with 8 records.

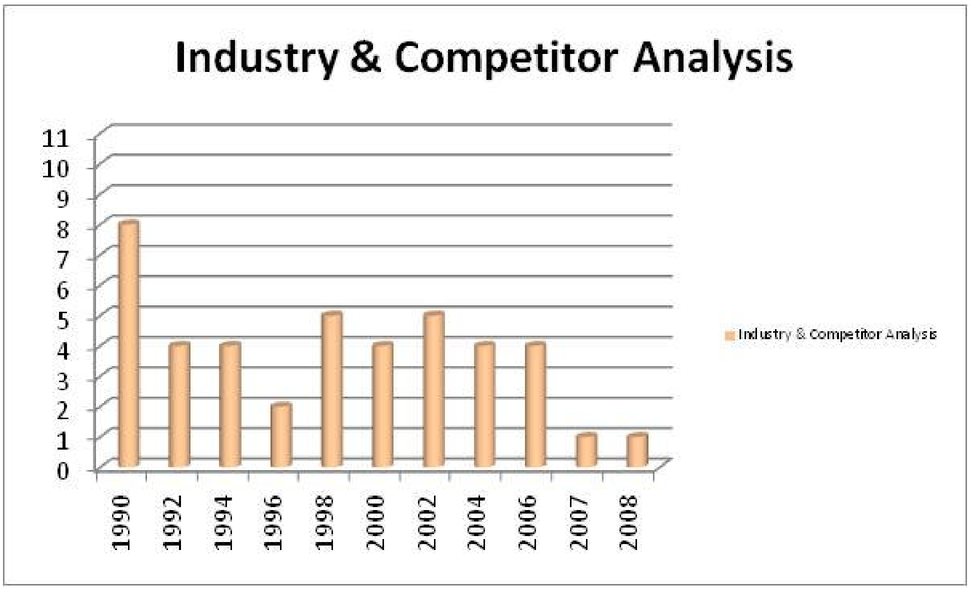


**Figure 11: Records of Industry and Competitor Analysis done over the period 1990 - 2008**

There has been some interest in the elective course, Issues in leadership in 1998, 2002, and 2004, but numbers were generally low. See Figure 12.

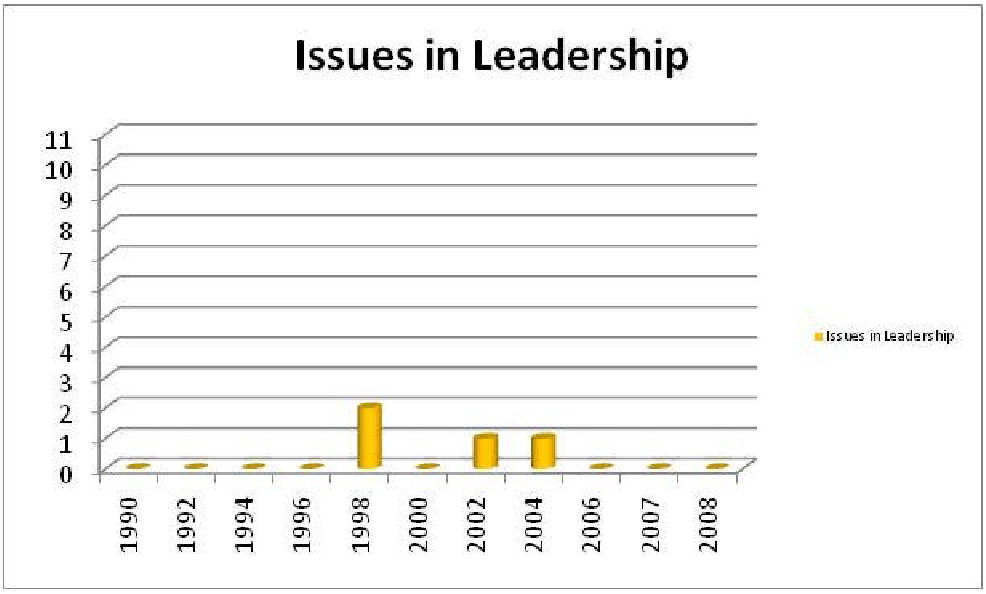


**Figure 12: Records of Issues in Leadership done over the period 1990 - 2008**

There was some interest in Entrepreneurship (Figure 13) in 1990 and 1994. Then the next incident is shown in 2008.

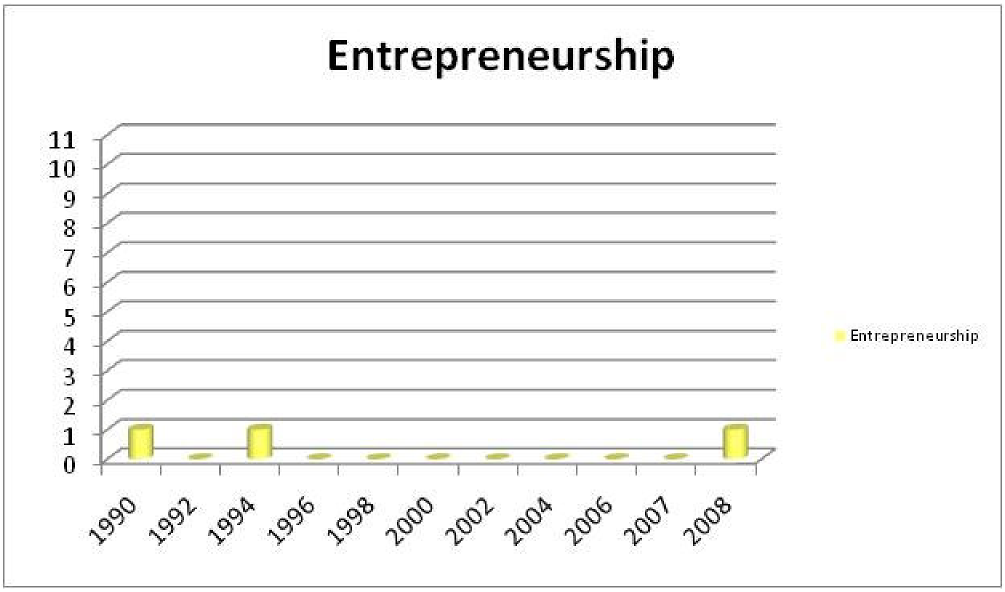


**Figure 13: Records of Entrepreneurship done over the period 1990 -2008**

The bar chart in Figure 14 represents that Industrial Relations was selected by the researchers only in the years 1990 and 2002.

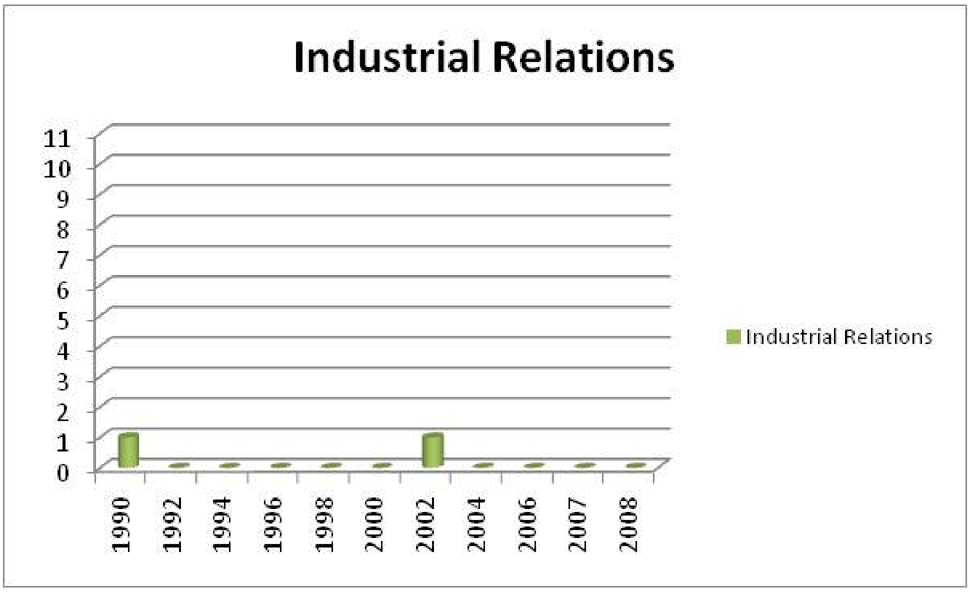


**Figure 14: Records of Industrial Relations done over the period 1990 -2008**

The bar chart Figure 15 represents that research topics related to the Data & Decision Making course was selected by the researchers only in the years 1992 and 2008.

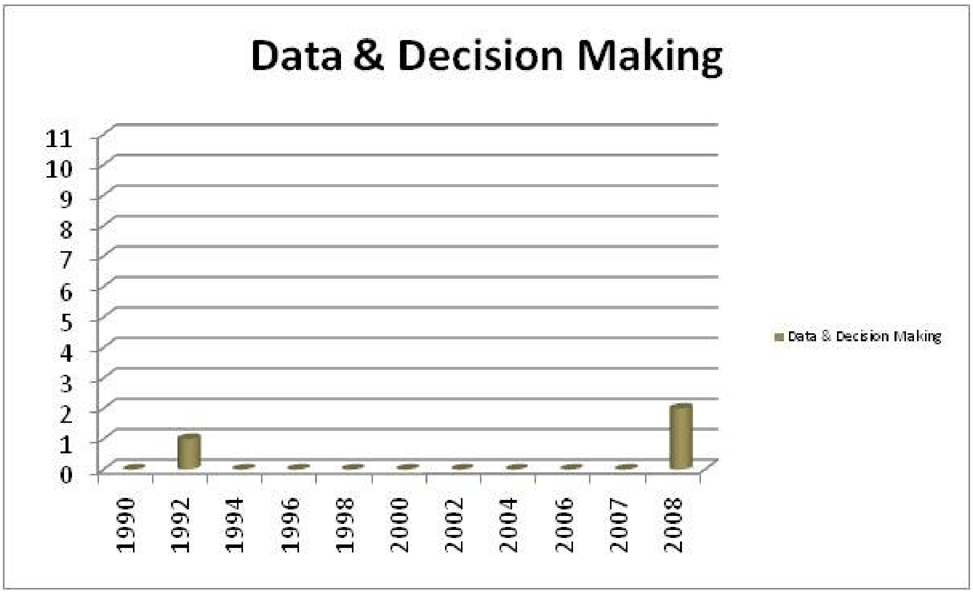


**Figure 15: Records of Data & Decision Making done over the period 1990 -2008**

Figure 16 shows that the elective General Management was selected by the researchers from 2002 and 2004. There was an increased interest in 2004.


**Figure 16: Records of General Management done over the period 1990 -2008.**

International Business has not been of any interest to researchers in any of the years as nothing was recorded in these years. See Figure 17.

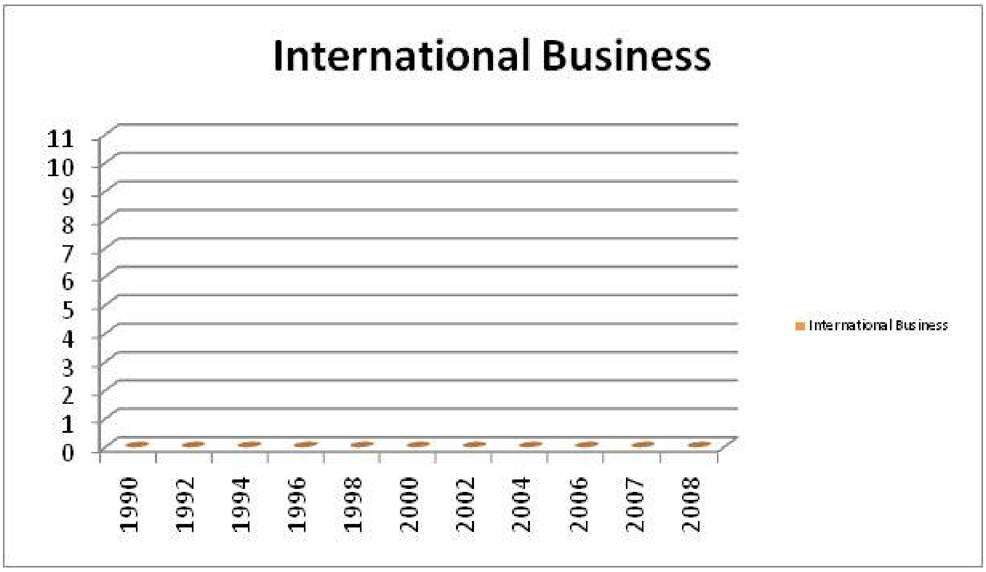


**Figure 17: Records of International Business done over the period 1990 -2008.**

Research Methodology is the only core course that has not been the topic of research according to the records. See Figure 18.

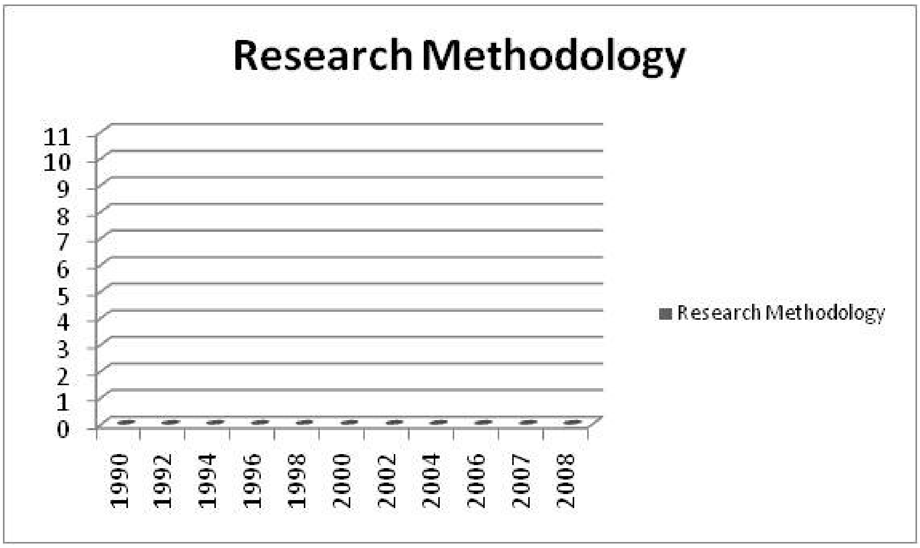


**Figure 18: Records of Research Methodology done over the period 1990 -2008.**

### *4.3.4 Analysis of Trends based on Keywords Search*

The data collected was analysed based on the keyword used to catalogue the research reports in the library. Keywords are used in the library search system. When entering the keyword to search for a particular set of reports it returns a result with theses registered under that particular subject area. Various subject areas are associated with a particular thesis. For example Knowledge management, Organisational learning, Newspaper publishing, South Africa, Sunday Times and Mail & Guardian are all key words associated with one particular thesis.

The keywords over the period 1990 to 2008 were analysed and the most frequent key words were listed. Table 2 in Appendix B shows the list of frequent keywords selected in each year. If a new keyword was identified subsequent to the year 1990 this was listed next to the year, as shown in the Table 2. The numbers of occurrences were also listed against each key word. There are forty two keywords selected which are shown below:

- Medical industry
- Labour unions
- Strategic planning
- Information Technology
- Marketing
- consulting Engineers
- Economic aspects
- Taxation
- Monetary policy
- Small business
- Computer Networks
- Customer service
- Management Education
- Service industry
- Risk
- Entrepreneurship
- Job satisfaction
- Plant maintenance
- Consumer behaviour
- Brand choice
- Affirmative action
- Privatisation
- Labour productivity
- Export marketing
- Technological innovations
- Production Management
- Stock Exchange
- Merger & Acquisition
- International Business
- Economic Value Add (EVA)
- Banking / Finance
- Organisational Change
- Corporate Management
- Social Entrepreneurship
- Leadership
- Tourism
- Investment
- Negotiation
- Social Aspects
- Green Technology
- Credit / Loan
- Research Techniques

It is anticipated that the key-word search would overcome, to some extent, the removal (and unavailability for analysis) of certain research reports from the library.

Below are the charts which represent the number of times a particular keyword occurred for each year. The charts are displayed in the order 1990 to 2008. The keyword for each year is sorted in descending order.

The least number of occurrences was recorded in the year 1990 (Figure 19). The keywords Medical Industry, Labour Unions, Strategic Planning, Information Technology, Marketing, Consulting Engineers, Economic Aspects, Taxation, Monetary Policy, Small Business, Computer Networks and Customer Service recorded the same frequency.

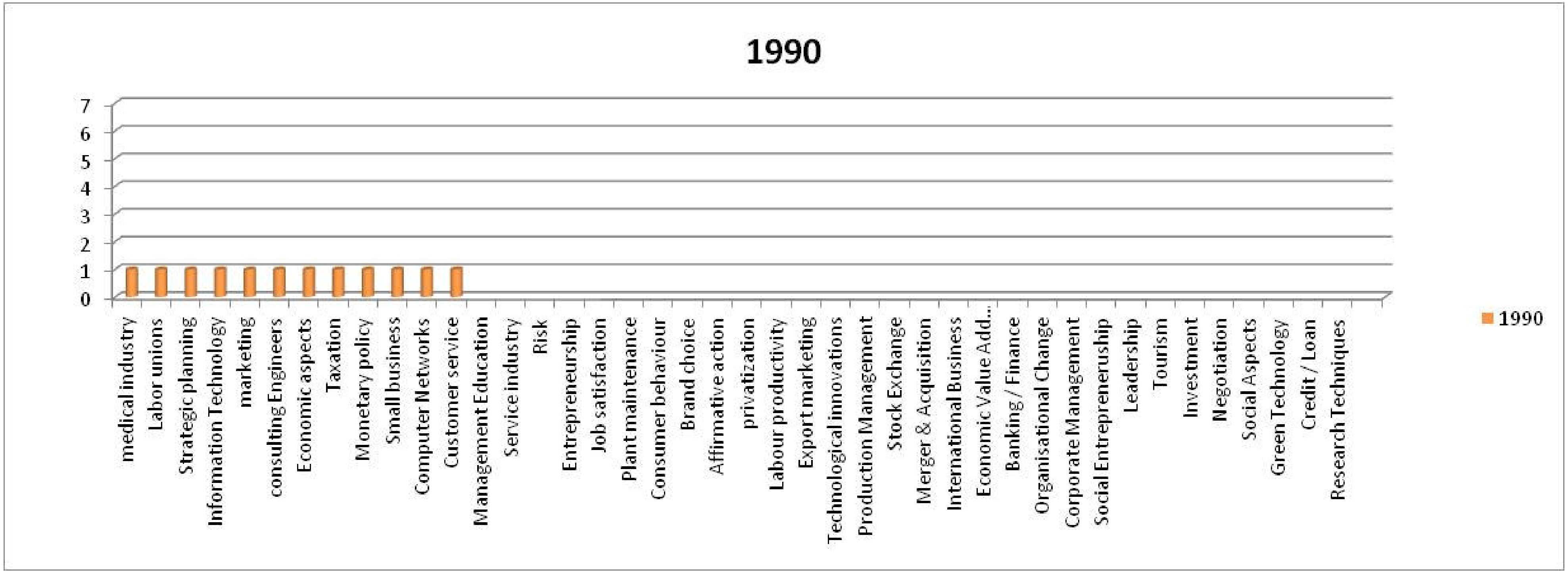


**Figure 19: Occurrence of Keywords in the year 1990**

In year 1992 (Figure 20) the keywords Service Industry, Information Technology recorded the highest of four times. This was followed by the keywords Consulting Engineers and Job Satisfaction. The keyword Small Business followed next, which occurred two times.

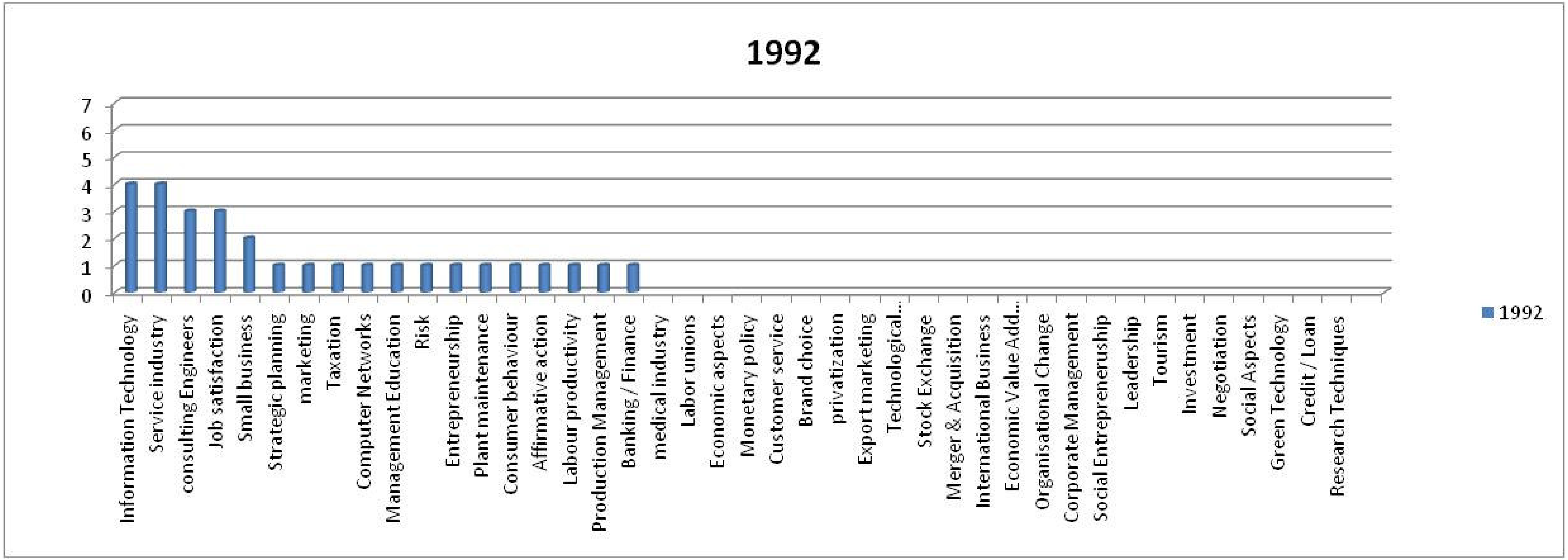


**Figure 20 : Occurrence of Keywords in the year 1992**

Figure 21 recorded the frequency for keywords for the year 1994. The keywords Medical Industry, Information Technology had the highest frequency of three. This was followed by keywords Marketing, Customer Service, Affirmative Action, Labour Productivity, Production Management.

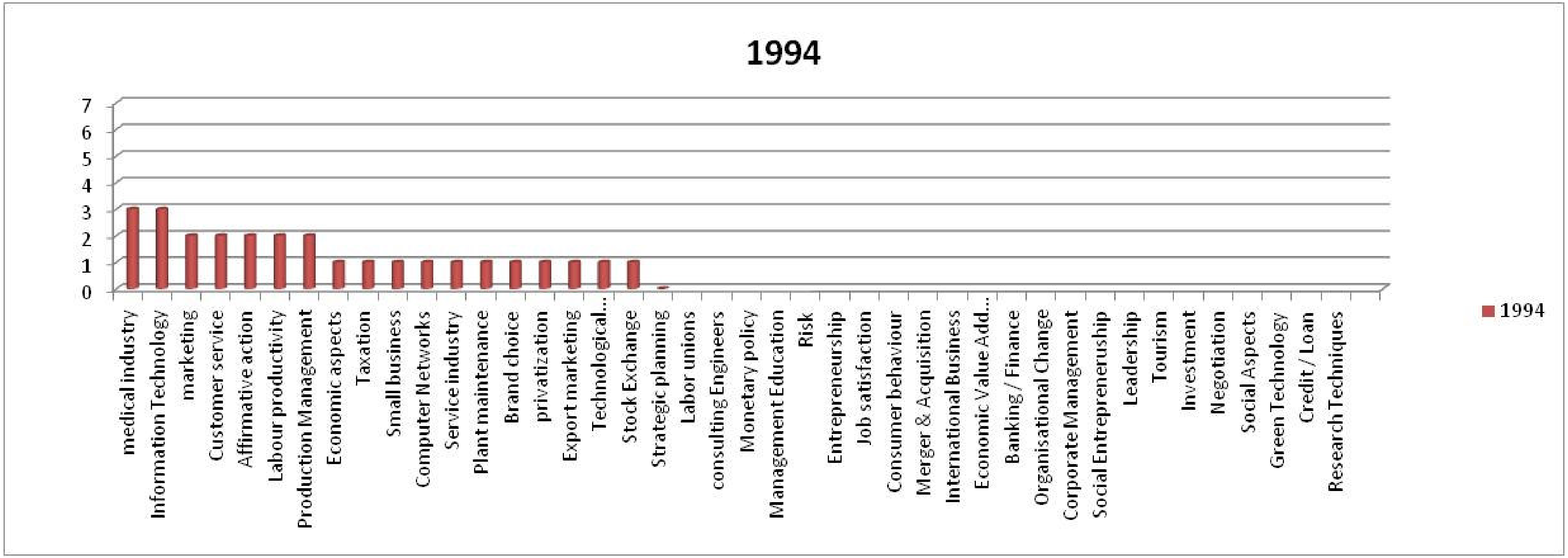


**Figure 21: Occurrence of Keywords in the year 1994**

Year 1996 (Figure 22) recorded the keywords Information Technology with the highest frequency of three. This was followed by Production Management, Stock Exchange, and Corporate Management with the frequency of two.

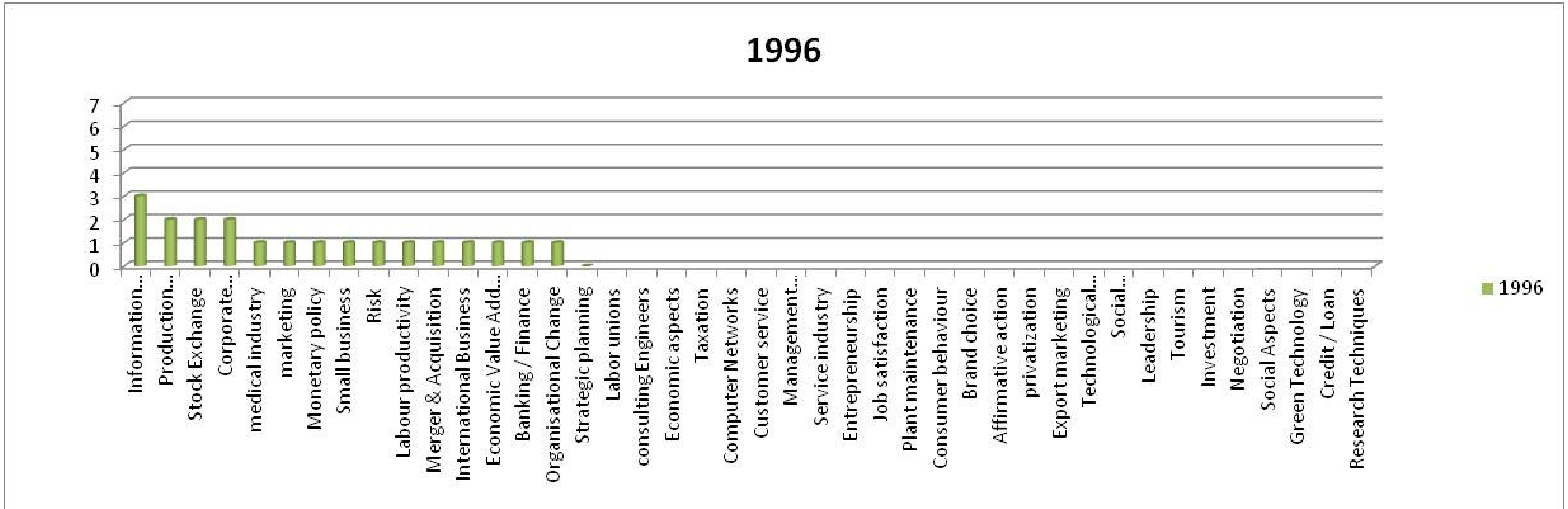


**Figure 22: Occurrence of Keywords in the year 1996**

Year 1998 (Figure 23) recorded the highest number of occurrence where Banking and finance recorded the highest of seven times. This was followed by information technology in second and labour productivity in being the third highest.

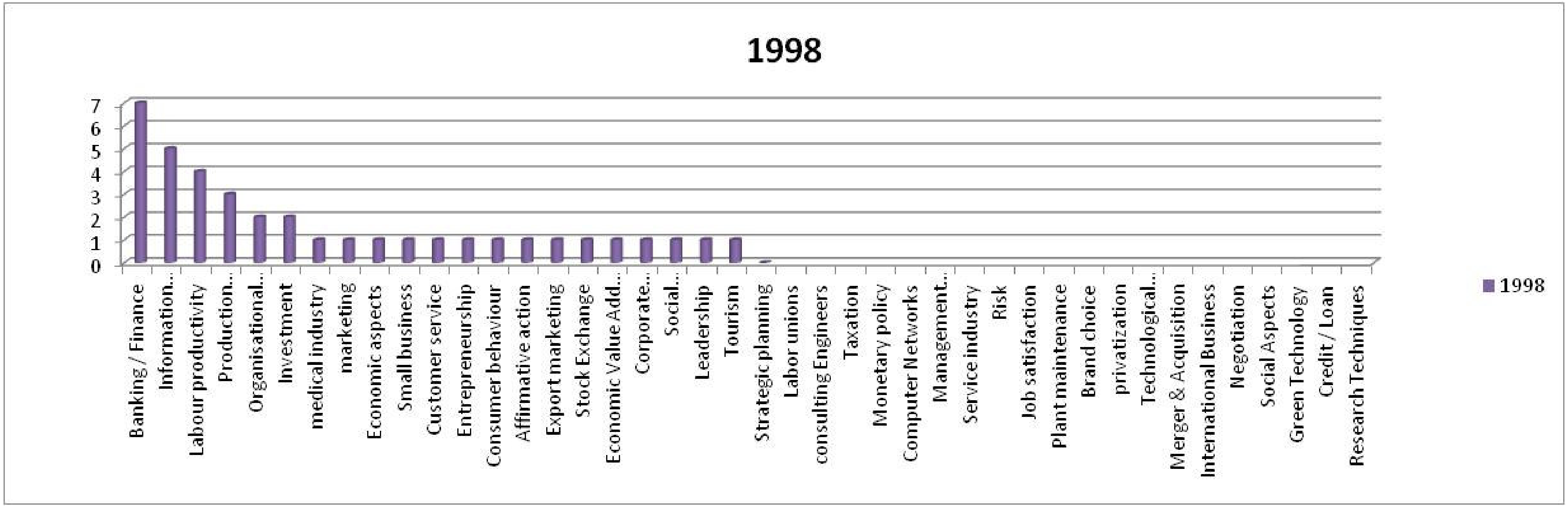


**Figure 23: Occurrence of Keywords in the year 1998**

Year 2000 (Figure 24) recorded the keywords Information Medical Industry with the highest frequency of three. This was followed by Strategic Planning with a frequency of two. Interest was also shown in the keywords Small Business, Computer Networks, Stock Exchange, Mergers & Acquisitions, and Corporate Management.

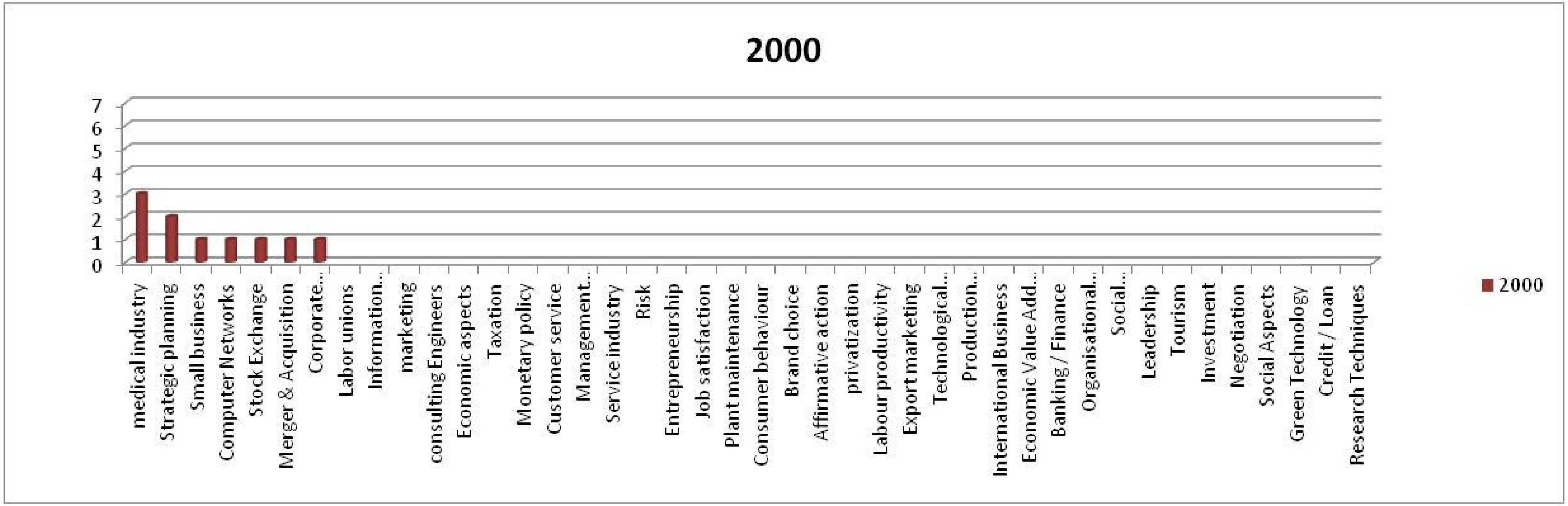


**Figure 24: Occurrence of Keywords over the year 2000**

Year 2002 (Figure 25) recorded the keywords Investment being the highest of four times. This was followed by keywords Information Technology, Brand Choice which occurred two times.

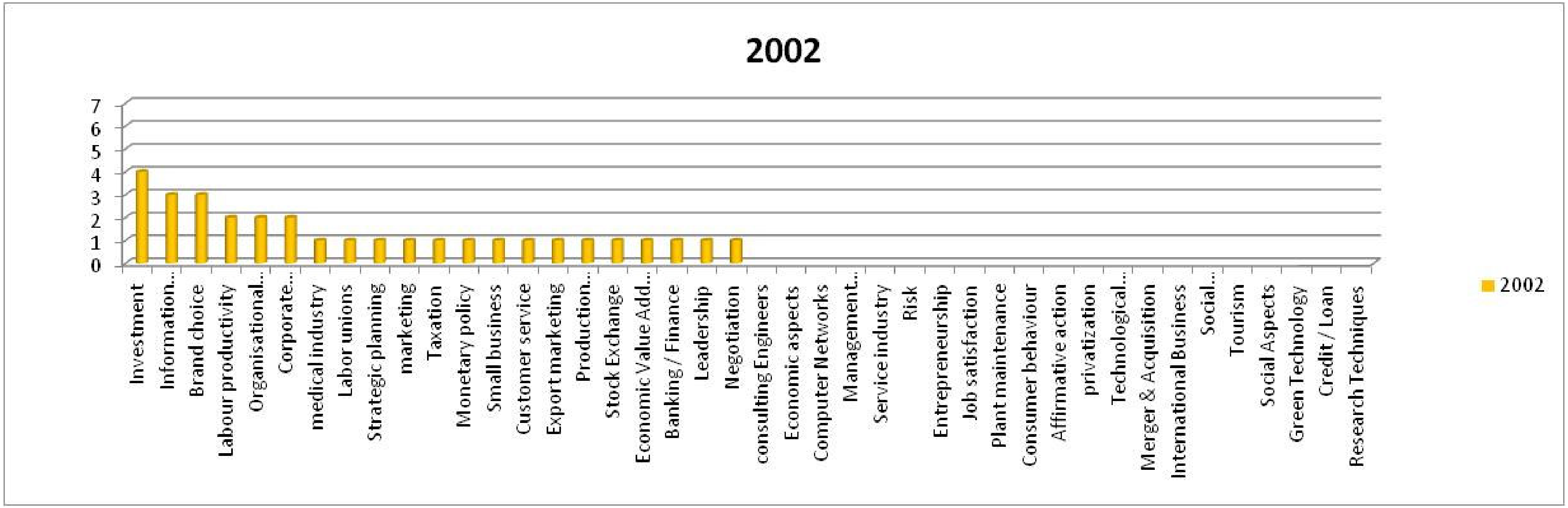


**Figure 25 : Occurrence of Keywords in the year 2002**

Year 2004 (Figure 26) recorded the keywords Social Aspects with the highest frequency being four. This was followed by Production Management with the next highest frequency of three. The keywords Strategic Planning, Economic Aspects, Stock Exchange and Investments were the third highest recorded frequency.

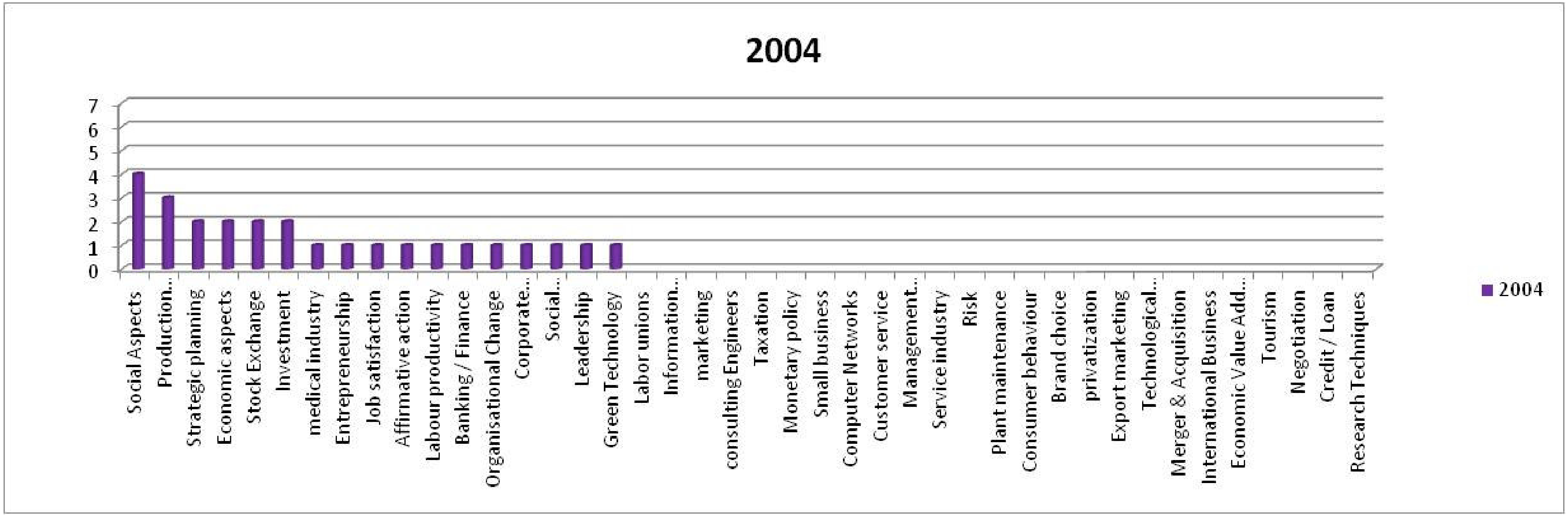


**Figure 26: Occurrence of Keywords in the year 2004**

In the year 2006 (Figure 27), Stock Exchange recorded the highest of five times. This was followed by the keywords Strategic Planning, Marketing, Banking & Finance, and Investment etc which were all recorded as two.

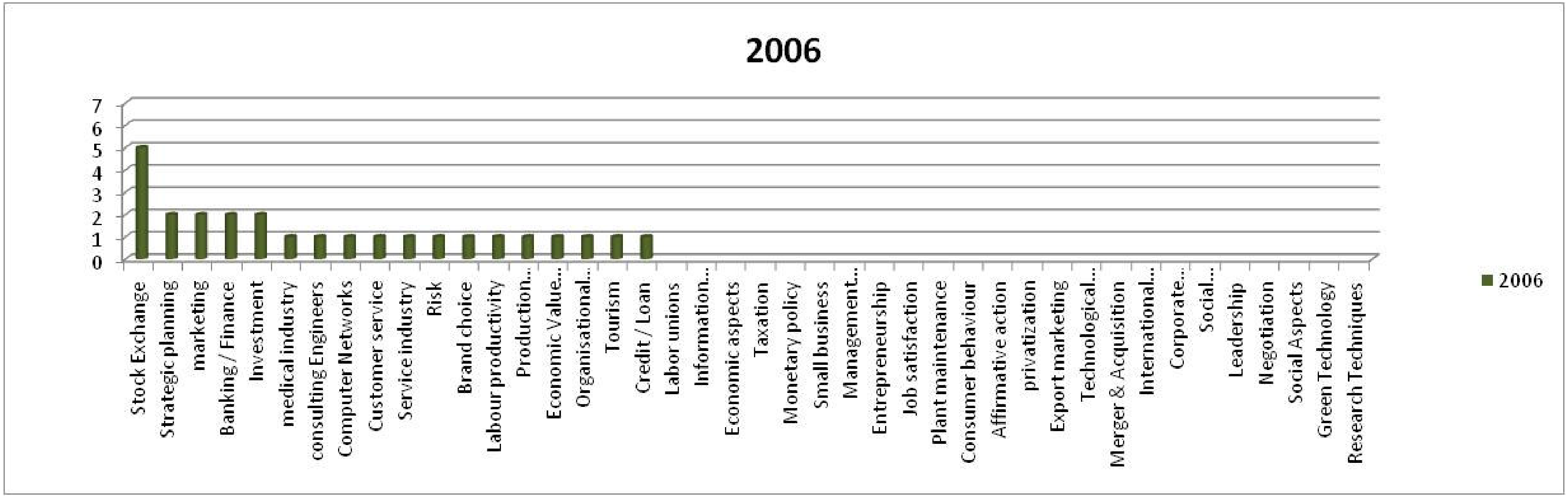


**Figure 27 : Occurrence of Keywords in the year 2006**

Year 2007 (Figure 28) recorded the keywords Banking & Finance with the highest frequency of three. This was followed by Medical Industry, Marketing, Small Business, Labour Productivity, Technological Innovation, production Management, Stock Exchange with the frequency of two.

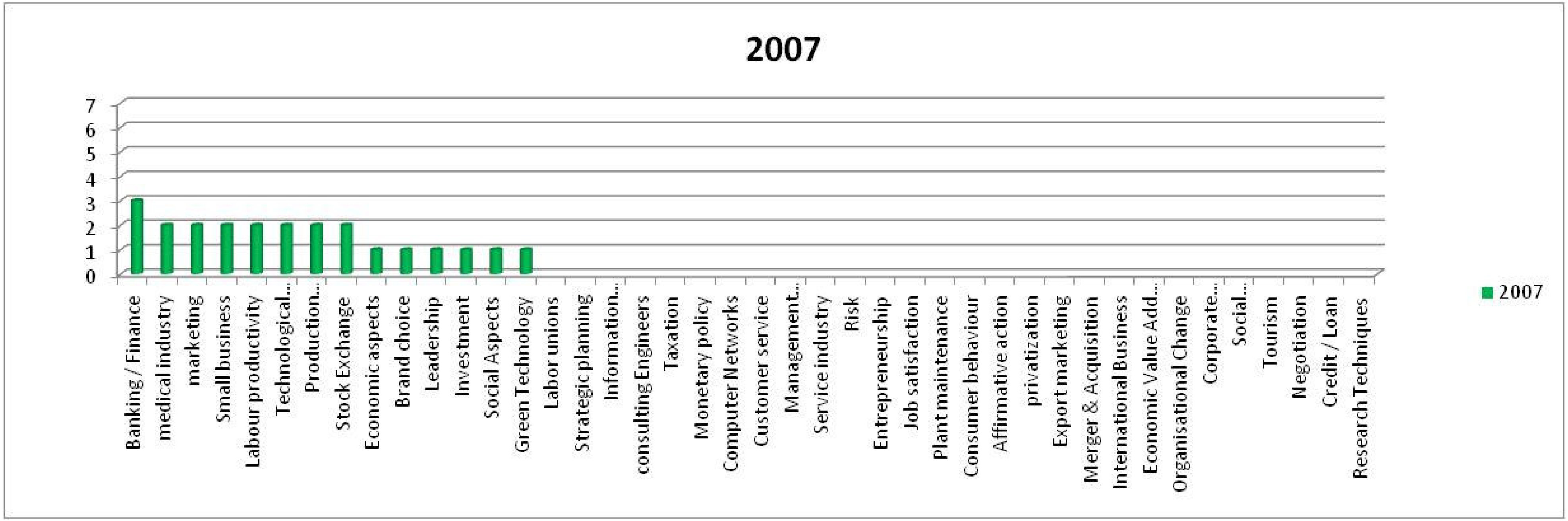


**Figure 28: Occurrence of Keywords in the year 2007**

Year 2008 (Figure 29) recorded the keywords Information Technology with the highest frequency being four. This was followed by keywords Strategic Planning, Small Business, Labour Productivity, Technological Innovations, Merger & Acquisition, Banking & Finance, Organisational Change, Investment all holding the same frequency.

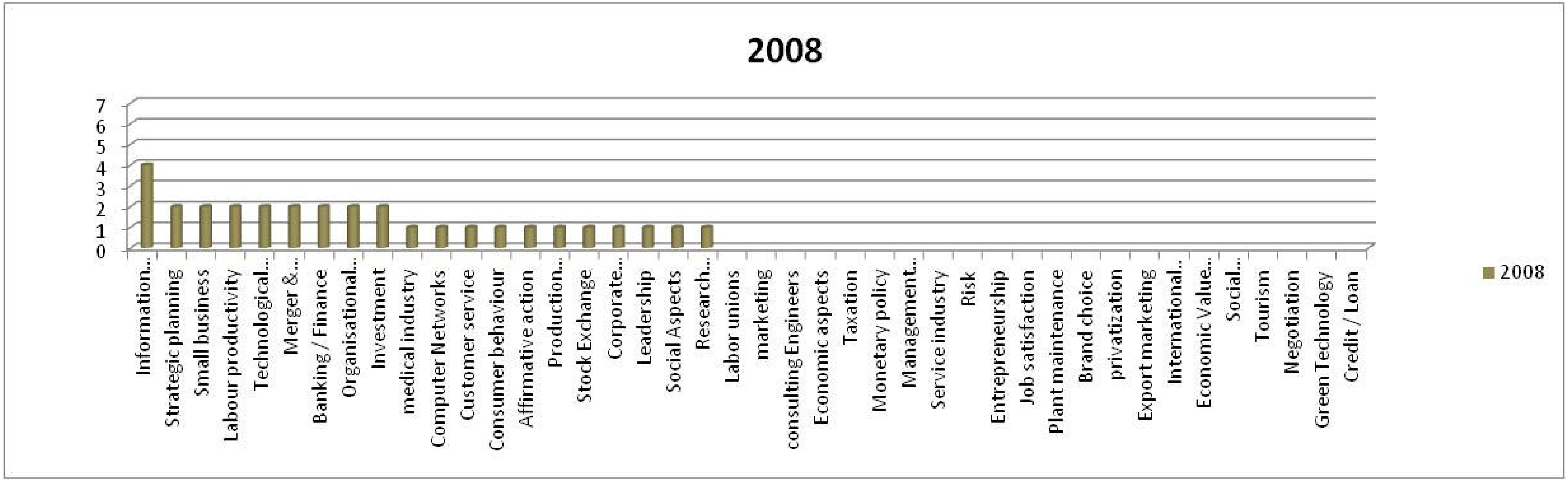


**Figure 29: Occurrence of Keywords in the year 2008**

### *4.3.5 Analysis of Major topics over the years*

From Table 5 in Appendix B, the total number of times a keyword occurs can be obtained as recorded in the column "total occurrence". The ten keywords which recorded the highest frequency were selected. The trend of these keywords were analysed over the period 1990 to 2008. The keywords selected for the analysis are:

- Strategic planning
- Medical industry
- Marketing
- Information Technology
- Small business
- Stock Exchange
- Labour productivity
- Production Management
- Investment
- Banking / Finance

Figure 30 shows the trend in the keyword Strategic planning used in research reports. Very little interest was shown in strategic planning in the early 1990's. Since year 2000 up to 2008 was there was an increased interest in strategic planning.

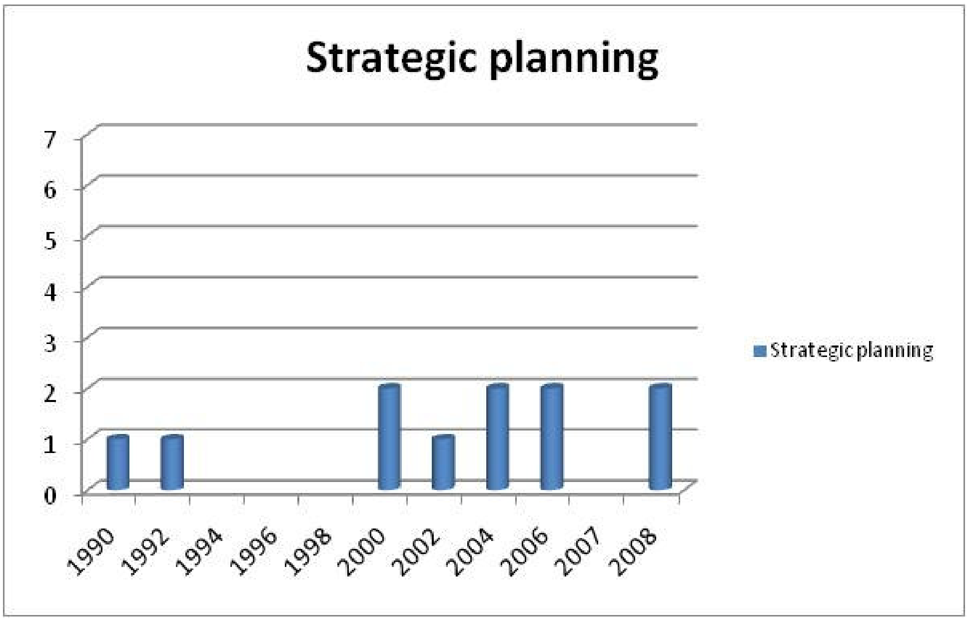


**Figure 30 : Trends of Strategic planning over the years**

The bar chart Figure 31 represents trends in the keyword Medical Industry over the period 1990 to 2008. The trend is varying over the years with 1994 and 2000 recording the highest of three times. But the keyword medical industry has consistently come up in all the years except 1992.

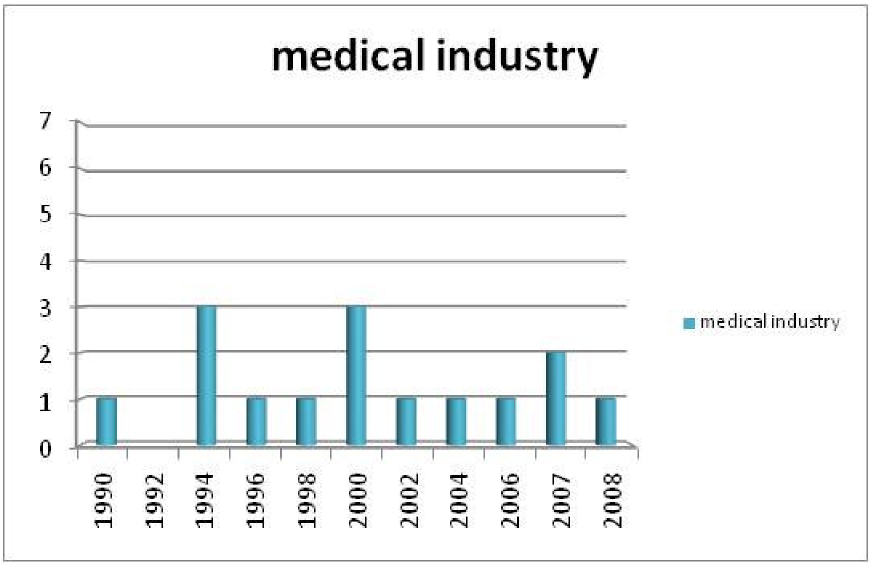


**Figure 31: Trends of Medical Industry over the years**

The keyword Marketing (Figure 32) has shown a varying trend over the years 1990 to 2008.

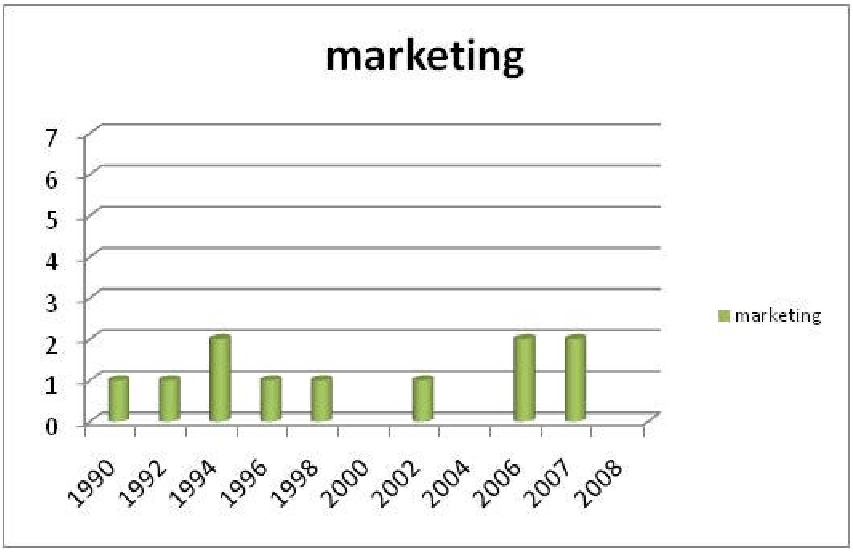


**Figure 32: Trends of Marketing over the years**

Figure 33 shows the trend in the keyword Information Technology used in research reports. High frequency of five was recorded in the year 1998. There was an increased interest in information technology from 1990 till 2002 and in the later years this interest has declined until 2008.

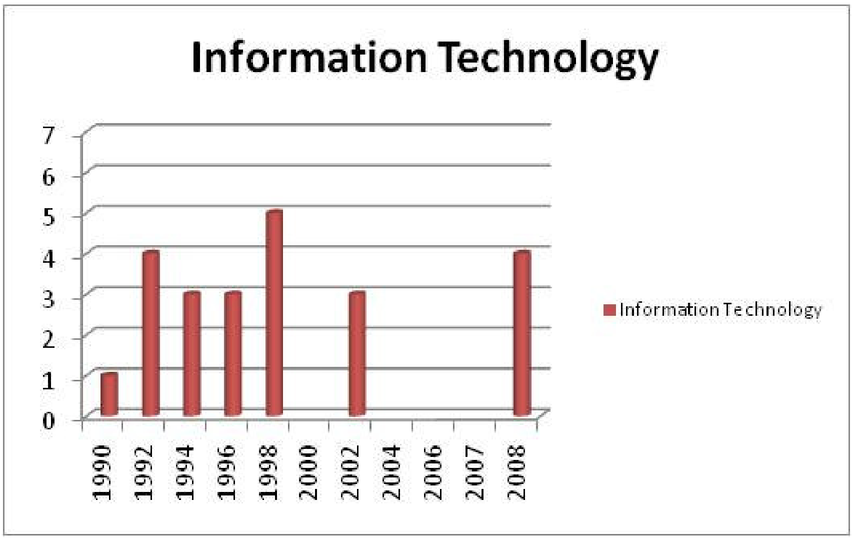


**Figure 33: Trends of Information Technology over the years**

The bar chart Figure 34 represents trends in the keyword Small Business over the period 1990 to 2008. The trend is varying over the years with at least one record coming up every year except in 2004 and 2006. There was an increased interest in 2007 and 2008.

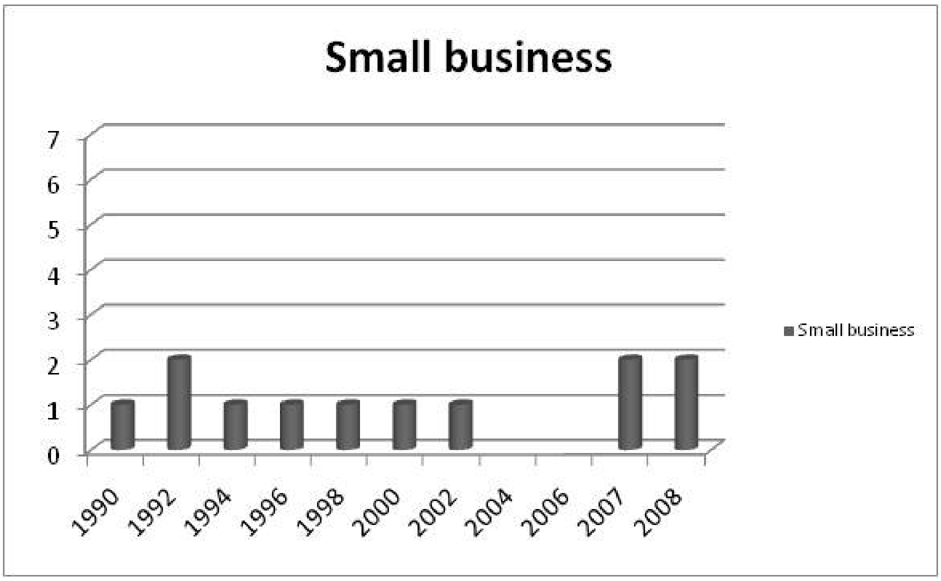


**Figure 34: Trends of Small Business over the years**

Figure 35 shows the trend in the keyword Stock Exchange used in dissertations. High frequency of five was recorded in the year 2006. There was an increased interest in Stock Exchange from 1994 till 2008.

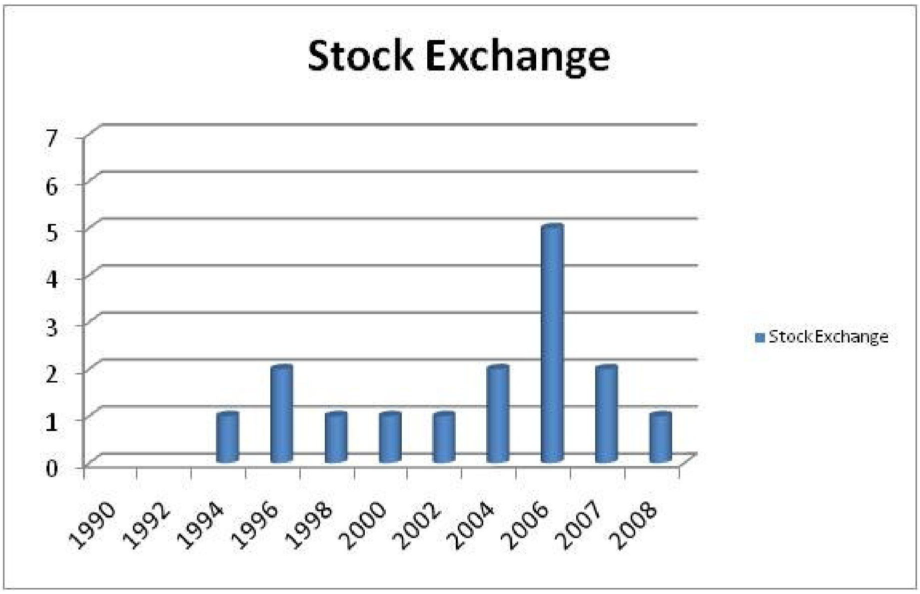


**Figure 35: Trends of Stock Exchange planning over the years**

The keyword Labour Productivity (Figure 36) has shown a varying trend over the years 1990 to 2008. A frequency of four was recorded in the year 1998. There was no apparent interest in Labour Productivity in the year 1990 and 2000.

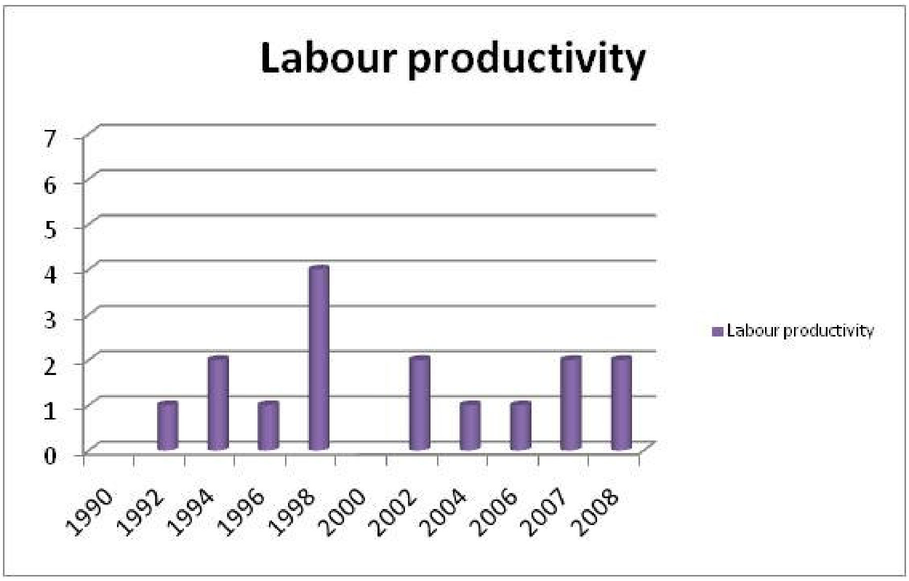


**Figure 36: Trends of Labour productivity over the years**

The bar chart Figure 37 represents trends in the keyword Production Management over the period 1990 to 2008. There was an increased interest in Production management between 1996 and 2004. This has reduced later in the years.

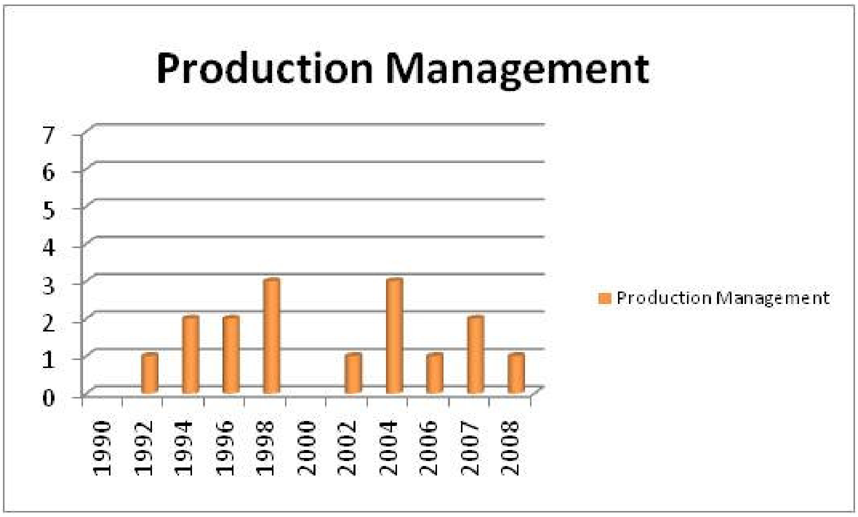


**Figure 37 : Trends of Production Management over the years**

The keyword Investment (Figure 38) has a highest frequency of four in the year 2002. This decreases in the later years. There were no theses recorded from 1990 to 1996.

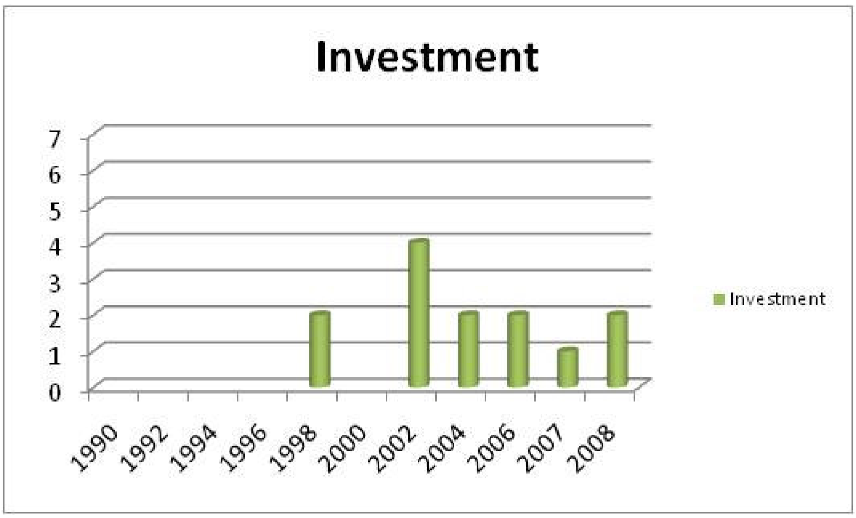


**Figure 38 : Trends of Investment over the years**

Figure 39 shows the trend in the keyword Banking / Finance used in research reports. High frequency of seven was recorded in the year 1998 and the second highest was in the year 2007 with three. There was an increased interest in Banking from 2002 till 2008.

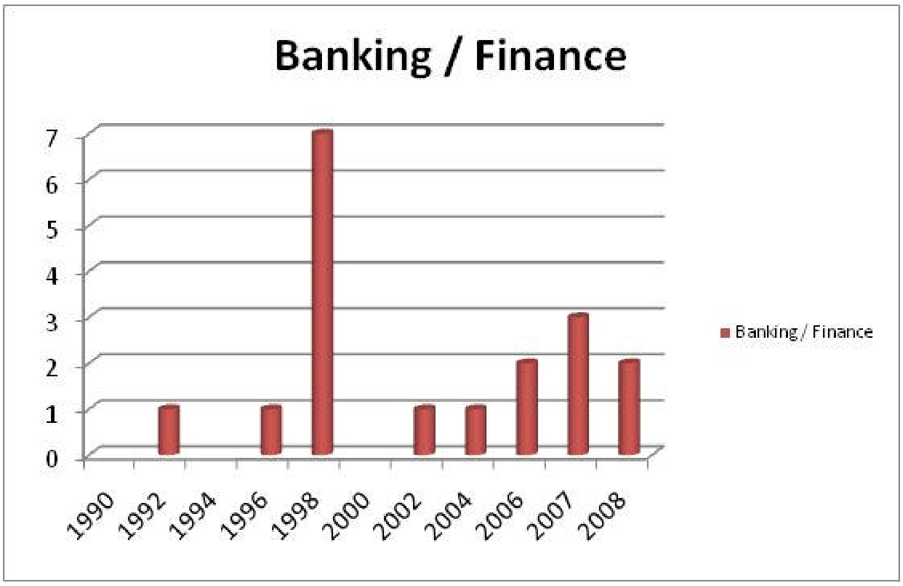


**Figure 39: Trends of Banking/ Finance over the years**

### *4.3.6 Analysis of topics in 2008*

Records of research reports in the year 2008 were further analysed to understand trends in research topics. All the reports physically present in the library were taken into account for the research. This was done because many of them were taken out by the students for referencing. These records were the latest submission to the university. Therefore all the records in the library were used in the research.

Table 2 shows the frequency of topics selected in the year 2008. Figure 40 graphically represents these figures. Finance Management recorded the highest with twelve. Marketing management followed next with a frequency of ten.

Operations management and strategic management recorded a frequency of nine and they took the third position.

| MBA Course | 2008 |
|---|---|
| Finance Management | 12 |
| Marketing Management | 10 |
| Strategic Management | 9 |
| Operations Management | 9 |
| Human Resource Management | 6 |
| Information Management | 5 |
| Organisation Design & Development | 4 |
| Economic Management | 3 |
| General Management | 3 |
| Entrepreneurship | 3 |
| Data & Decision Making | 2 |
| Issues in Leadership | 1 |
| Industrial Relations | 0 |
| Research Methodology | 0 |
| International Business | 0 |
| Industry & Competitor Analysis | 0 |

**Table 2: Frequency of MBA research topics selected in 2008**

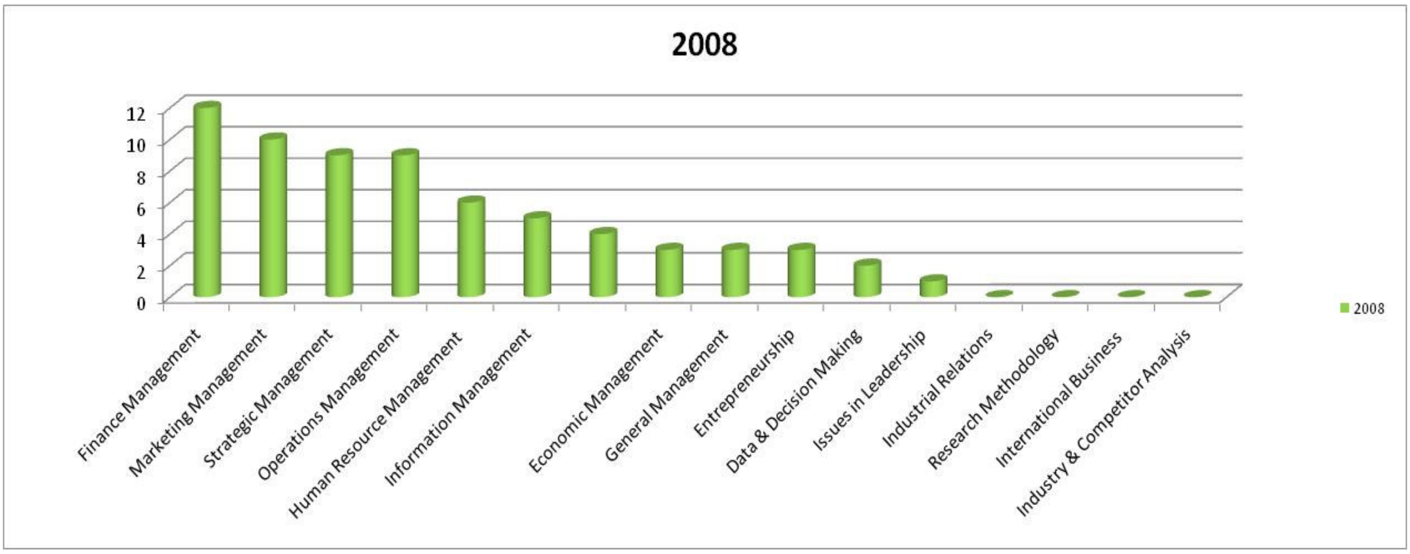


**Figure 40 : Trends in MBA subjects in 2008**

### *4.3.7 Summary of Proposition 1.1*

There is a visible trend observed in the bar charts figures mentioned above. In Figure 46 (Appendix B) the whole MBA courses selected by students from the year 1990 to 2008. Table 3 represents the highest selected topics and the second highest selected topics per year. This conclusion is based on the Figure 47 (on Page 101).

| Year | Highest Selected | Second Highest Selected |
|---|---|---|
| **1990** | Industry & Competitor analysis | Operations Management |
| **1992** | Operations Management | Information management |
| **1994** | Human Resource Management<br>Industry & Competitor analysis | Marketing Management<br>Operations Management |
| **1996** | Operations Management | Strategic Management<br>Organisation Design & Development<br>Information management |
| **1998** | Industry & Competitor analysis | Human Resource Management |
| **2000** | Operations Management<br>Information Management | Strategic Management<br>Industry & Competitor Analysis |
| **2002** | Industry & Competitor Analysis | Economic Management<br>Human Resource Management |
| **2004** | Operations Management<br>Industry & Competitor analysis | Finance Management<br>Human Resource Management |
| **2006** | Finance Management | Strategic Management<br>Operations Management<br>Industry & Competitor Analysis |
| **2007** | Operations Management | Marketing Management |
| **2008** | Finance Management | Marketing Management |

**Table 3 : Summary of highest and second highest MBA courses selected for research**

### *4.3.8 Summary of Proposition 1.2*

Table 4 summarises soft skill keywords selected by researchers over the years. This shows that there is a growing interest in soft skills over the period 1990 to

2008. Especially since 2002 researchers have shown interest in social aspects, organisational change and labour productivity. Therefore it can be concluded that there is a shift towards softer skills over the time period selected in this study.

| Year | keywords |
|---|---|
| 1990 | None |
| 1992 | Affirmative Action |
| 1994 | Affirmative Action<br>Production Management |
| 1996 | Organisational change |
| 1998 | Labour productivity<br>Organisational Change<br>Social aspects |
| 2000 | None |
| 2002 | Organisational Change<br>Negotiations |
| 2004 | Social Aspects<br>Job satisfaction<br>Labour productivity<br>Organisational Change<br>Social Entrepreneurship<br>Green Technology |
| 2006 | Labour productivity |
| 2007 | Labour productivity<br>Leadership<br>Social aspects |
| 2008 | Social aspects |

**Table 4: Summary of the soft skill keywords selected over the years**

## 4.4 Results pertaining to Research Proposition 2

**Proposition 2**: There is an evolution from quantitative research methodology to qualitative and more recently to mixed methodologies.

### *4.4.1 Analysis of Research Methodology (Proposition 2) Trends*

The research methodology was recorded for each thesis. The research methodologies considered were:

- Quantitative Analysis
- Qualitative Analysis
- Mixed Methods

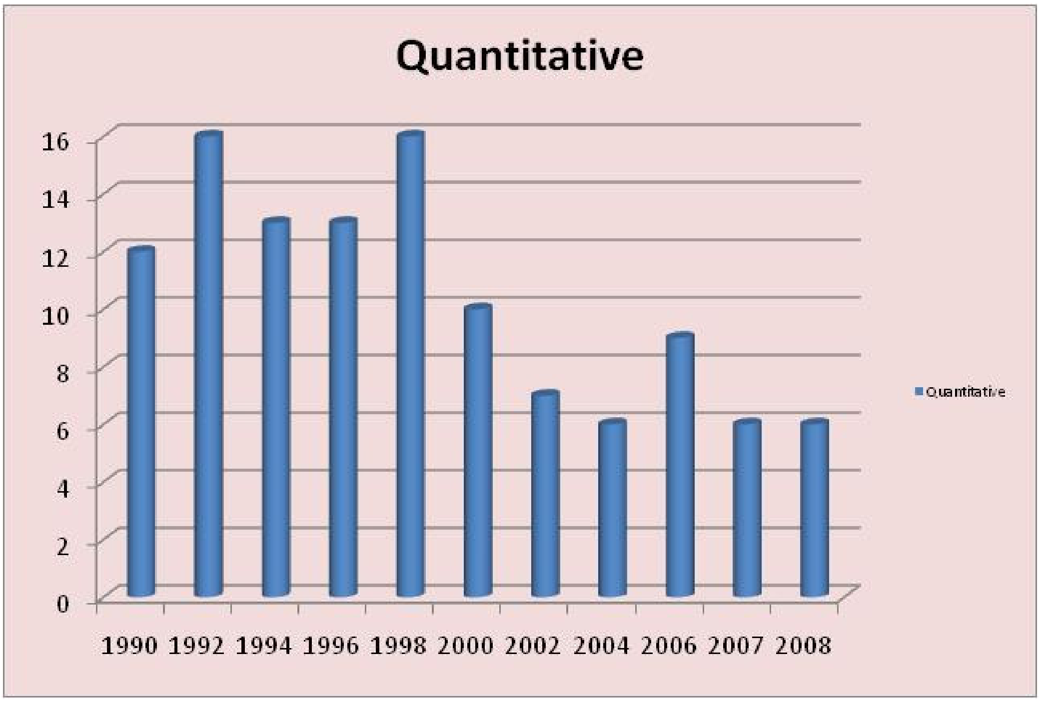


**Figure 41 : Trend of Quantitative Research selection over the period 1990 -2008**

Figure 44 shows the trends of all the above research methodologies from the year 1990 to 2008. Quantitative research methodology (See Figure 41) had the highest frequency of sixteen in two years 1992 and 1998. But over all there is a gradual decline in the number of research done using quantitative methodology.

Qualitative Research methodology as shown in Figure 42 has increased over the years. The highest recorded were in the year 2002, 2004, 2007 and 2009 with a frequency of 15. The lowest frequency recorded was four.

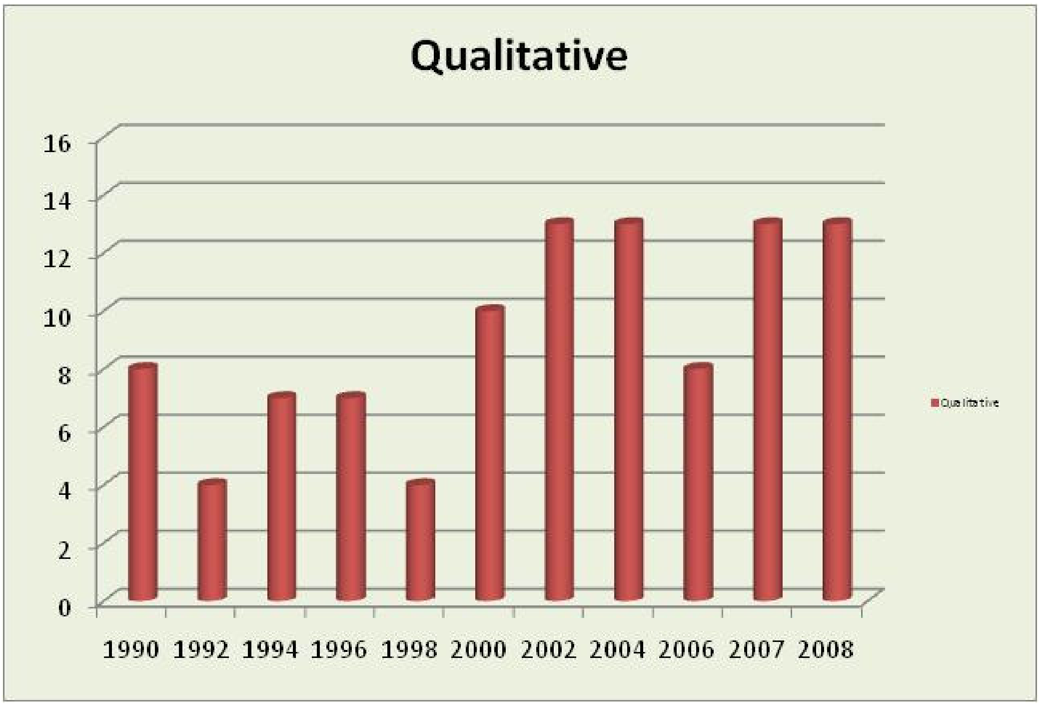


**Figure 42: Trends of Qualitative Research selection over the period 1990 - 2008**

Mixed research methodology has been used in the later years 2004, 2006 and 2008. The highest score was three in the year 2006. In 2004 and 2008 only one thesis from the sample used mixed methodology. This conclusion was drawn from Figure 43.

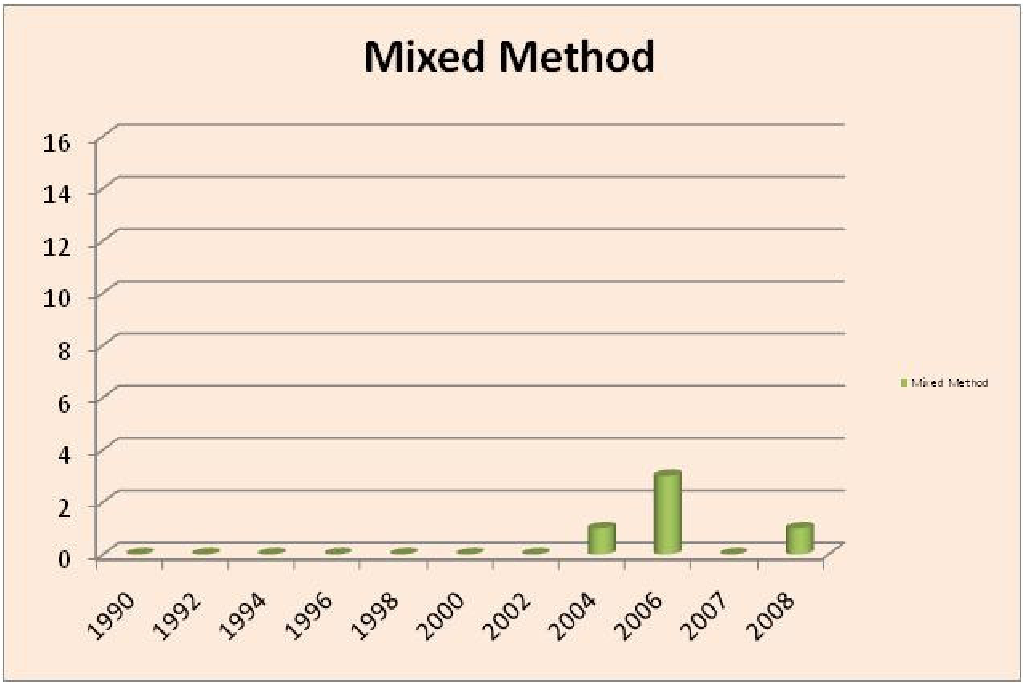


**Figure 43: Trends of Research methodology over the period 1990 – 2008**

### *4.4.2 Summary of Proposition 2*

Figure 44 shows the trends of all the theses records over the years. We can summarise the following from the figure:

- Quantitative research was more popular in the early 1990's but it is used in the later years.
- Qualitative research has started recording high growth from 2000.
- Researchers have used mixed methodology from 2004 which is fairly recent.

## 4.5 Summary of the results

Results for all the three propositions have been presented individually in this chapter. The results have been analysed and described by proposition.

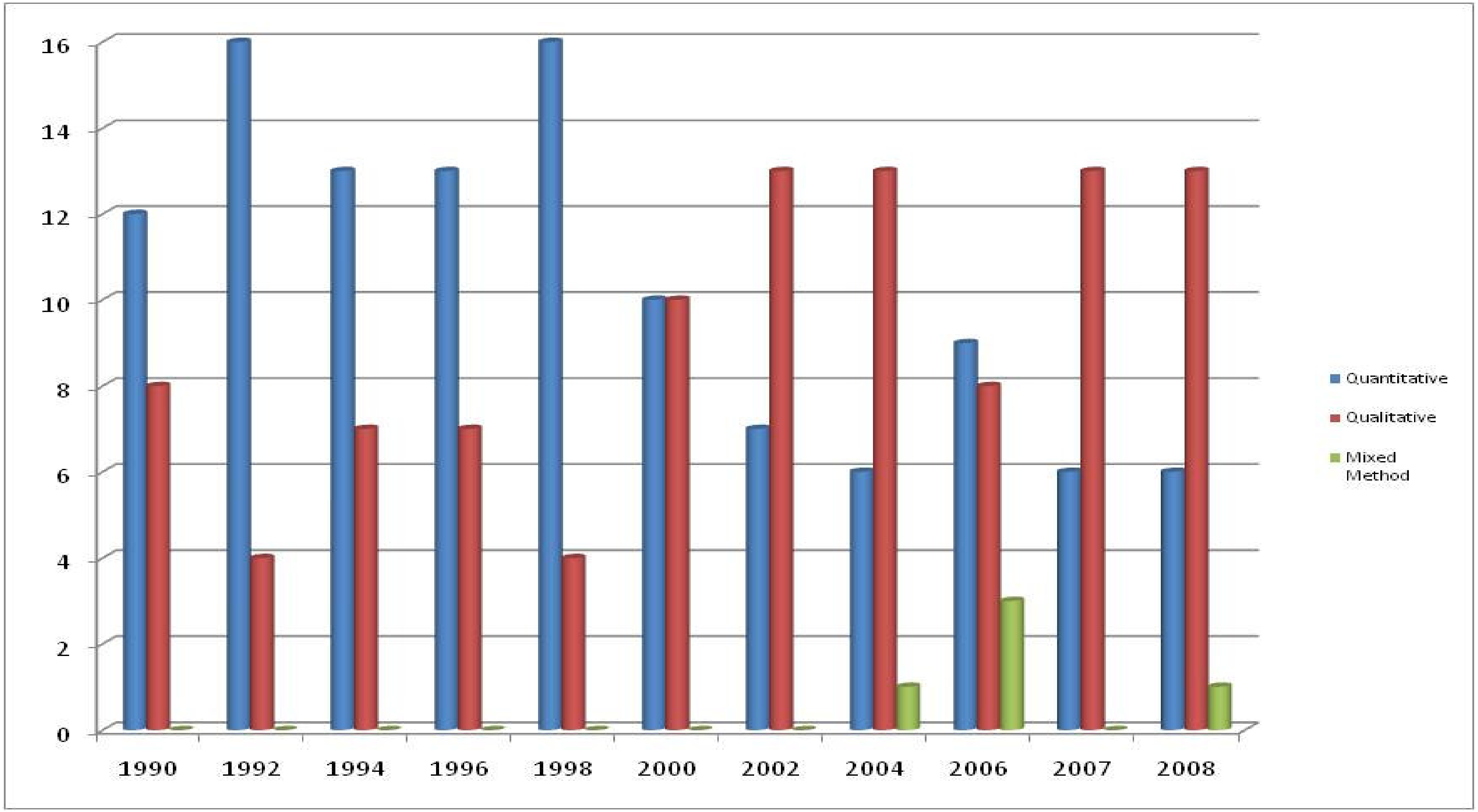


**Figure 44 : Trends of Research approach selected over the period 1990 - 2008**

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of results in the context of the reviewed literature and in relation to the propositions. The first proposition deals with trends in MBA topics. This is further divided into two sub propositions. Each of them is discussed in turn.

The second proposition addresses the type of research methodology used in MBA research. This proposition tries to identify possible trends over the years in research methodology. Further observations and discussion based on the literature and the results observed are discussed in detail.

## 5.2 Description of the sample

The respondents were the research reports of MBA graduated students at Wits Business School. The sample was obtained from the years 1990 to 2008. This is over a period of 18 years. Records were chosen from every alternate (even) year for the analysis. The year 2007 was also included in the analysis.

It was assumed that the trends in business do not change drastically but rather more slowly with time. Therefore considering records every two years assisted in the analysis of these trends. One of the key assumptions made is that the students in MBA choose their research topics based on the local and global topics that are prevailing in the respective years.

## 5.3 Discussion pertaining Proposition 1

### *5.3.1 Discussion of results pertaining to Proposition 1.1*

**Proposition**: The research topics selected by MBA students are aimed at solving topical problems, over time.

The data in this research includes topics when South Africa was undergoing a transformational period i.e., pre and post apartheid era. There was a social and political transformation (Hirsch 2005) at that time. This influenced the business environment in South Africa.

The discussion is based on Table 3 in Chapter four. The table describes the highest selected topic and the second highest selected topic in MBA course for a particular year. During the period 1990 we see that industry and competitor analysis was one of the MBA topics where researchers showed major interest this was followed by the topic operation management.

In 1992 operations management again was critical. This is a period when sanctions were exercised strongly against South Africa due to the apartheid regime. Other members of the UN assembly broke off diplomatic relations with South Africa boycotting its goods, hence reducing exports (UNChronicle 1994; Giliomee 1995; Hirsch 2005).

Business had to come up with strategic plans to ensure cost of production and operations within the organisation were optimal (Johnson 1992). Hence, it was essential to establish a market base within South Africa and maintain the customer base.

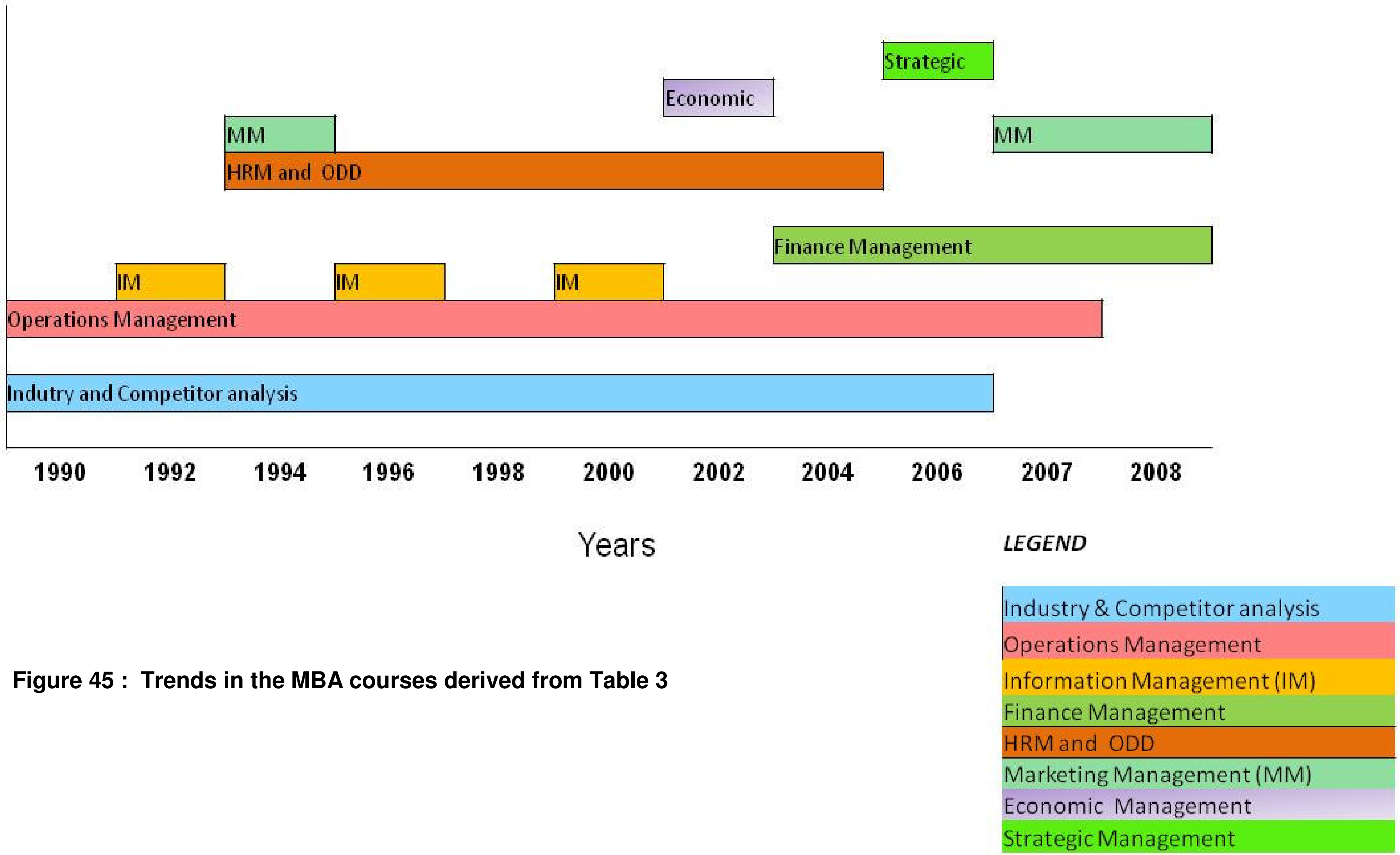


**Figure 45 : Trends in the MBA courses derived from Table 3**

In 1992 we see further use of information technology to optimise operations and productions cost. Moreover the internet played a role in the early 1990's (Leiner et al. 2001). Organisations were trying to optimise every aspect of the business from day to day communication and operations were all interconnected in a means to optimise. Ecommerce, which includes selling and buying online, also started in order to optimise the trading industry (Molla and Licker 2001).This trend continues until 1996. Most companies started using information technology as the differentiator for their products and services in the market.

Information technology also led to globalisation. This enhanced the business and trading across the world. Online businesses were also affected due to the fact that the labour skills and cost became central in determining comparative advantage. There was a new trend in outsourcing of jobs to take advantage of lower wage and time difference across countries (Edwards 2001).

South Africa saw the end of apartheid in 1994 and a new president and constitution was created. This changed many things in the country. On one side there were fears that the economy will collapse and many people left the country while others were more optimistic. Equality in the workplace and business emerged where non-white people had to be employed in position at various levels in the organisation. Hence we see Human Resources management as a research topic in that particular year.

The business has also undergone a lot of organisational restructuring and new cultures were introduced in the organisation. Globalisation also had an influence in culture, as highly skilled expatriates were coming in to fill vacant positions in South African organisations (Senge and Sterman 1992). This caused interference within the organisation's culture. We can see Organisation Design and Development as a frequent research topic selected by researchers from the year 1996.

It is to be noted that researchers were equally keen in the subject area of Industry and Competitor Analysis. Sanctions were lifted in South Africa and investments and international companies were flowing in to the country. Hence it was important to have strategic plans in place to take advantage of the situation (UNChronicle 1994).

From 2004 researchers have shown an increased interest in finance management. As indicated in the literature, finance has been one of the areas where MBA students have shown a keen interest. But there has been further interest due to the financial problems around the world in the recent years.

Thus Proposition 1.1 may be accepted.

### *5.3.2 Discussion of results pertaining to Proposition 1.2*

**Proposition**: There is a shift in topic choice, towards softer skills over the time period investigated (1990 -2008).

Information and technology era has introduced and influenced business in a positive and negative way. There is increased communication, where emails are sent a fraction of time compared to letters yet the relationships within organisation are going through rough patches. Human resource management has topped as a research topic since 1994.

Whilst we look at the common topics selected labour productivity, job satisfaction, social aspects, leadership and organisational change are some of the topics that have higher frequency but there is still equal focus on the core subjects.

During 1992 and 1994 (See Figures 19, 20) we see affirmative action as an emerging interest among researchers. This could be due to the changes in the political environment in South Africa. New employment policies were introduced in the work place after the apartheid era. Employment equity and Broad Based Economic Employment was introduced at public sector and private companies. Companies started employing across races and cultures.

The introduction of virtual work place and flexible work time enable by information technology has also had an influence in the organisation's work culture.

From Table 7 one can observe some of the topics that have emerged along the years. Some of the topics that would fall under soft skills can be observed emerging over the later years. In 1998 we see social entrepreneurship and leadership as a new area of interest. This time the business was leading into a new phase. The entrepreneurs in the business were interested in the well being of society and also finding new opportunities to make money (Ulhøi 2005).

In 2002 negotiation is another subject that has sparked interest and in 2004 there are some new research topics done in the area of social aspects and green technology. As the business began to grow and the number of employees increased in the organisations, it also increased the number of issues within the organisation. This led to negotiation for solving the problem (Ganesan 1993).

Researchers are equally selecting subjects from the core skills for research purposes. But there is an emerging trend towards soft skills due to the work environment and the business demand in organisations.

Thus Proposition 1.2 may be accepted.

## 5.4 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 2

**Proposition:** There is an evolution from quantitative research methodology to qualitative and more recently to mixed methodologies.

From the results in Figure 46 there is a clear trend observed in the research methodology. Quantitative research methodology is popular in the 1990's and subsequent years but more researchers are switching to other research methodologies. Research done in quantitative methodology is still a significant in number. The decline can be observed from the year 2000 and thereafter declining gradually.

Qualitative is the preferred methodology in the late 2000's.  Based on the data collected from 1990 there is a clear indication that qualitative was not used as frequently as quantitative methodology. But from 2000 there is a definite shift in the type of methodology used.

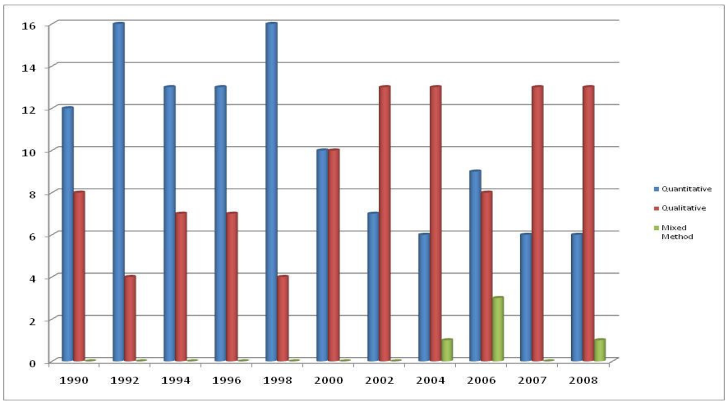


**Figure 46 : Trends of Research approach selected over the period 1990 - 2008**

More and more research is using qualitative methodology, but a quantitative approach, although giving way to qualitative research in this study will certainly never be replaced completely. This shift might be due to more and more researchers doing their research in topics that have a sociological and behavioural impact in the business environment (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). Qualitative research is subjective and the inherent philosophies underlying it enable one to do research from this perspective.

Mixed methods were used quite recently but are not yet as popular as the more conventional methods. The evolutionary process towards the use of mixed method and mixed model studies has been occurring at an ever increasing pace during the past thirty years due the following factors:

- The introduction of new methodological tools both in quantitative and qualitative research.
- The rapid development of new information technologies  to access and use those methodological tools more easily.

- The increase in communication across the social and behavioural sciences (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998).

In MBA research there is a similar trend with mixed methodology where it is used since the year 2004. Since mixed methodology is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques, it can be assumed that this is time consuming. MBA dissertation is meant to be completed within a limited period with a minimum of six months. Therefore this might be one of the reasons why mixed methodology is not popular.

The general shift from quantitative methods to qualitative methods might be influenced by the data collection phase in the research. Issues such as insufficient data and reliable data were not available for the topic etc., might have influenced the approach. In other instances organisations would have been reluctant to provide sensitive information to the researchers to publish them in the research material.

Thus Proposition 2 may be accepted.

## 5.5 Conclusion

From the above discussion one can conclude that the three propositions were found to be acceptable. In the first sub-proposition, the research sets out to find if research topics selected by MBA students were aimed at solving topical problems. The research concludes that this trend is observed right through out the years. Current economical and business topics pertaining to a particular time period has topped the mind of the researcher. Therefore proposition 1.1 can be accepted.

The second sub-proposition articulates that there is a shift in topic choices towards softer skills. The research re-affirms this finding with the data provided. “Softer skills” have gained equal popularity with the “hard skills” identified in the literature. Therefore proposition 1.2 can be accepted and it can conclude that softer skills are gaining much more focus in the later years.

There is a clear trend in the research methodology used when doing MBA research or dissertation. The next proposition was that there is an evolution from quantitative research methodology to qualitative and more recently to mixed methodologies. The findings in the results chapter can affirm this proposition and proposition two can be accepted.

# CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1 Introduction

This research report has identified and plotted apparent trends in research topics and topical issues in the business environment. It also analyses trends in research methodologies used while doing research.

This chapter concludes the finding in the study and affirms the propositions put forward based on the context in which the study was initiated. This is followed by the recommendations made to the various stakeholders identified for the research. Finally suggestions for further research are identified and raised.

## 6.2 Conclusions of the study

The findings from the research have suggested that research topics selected by MBA students are based on the topical issues highlighted in the business world. South Africa's economy had undergone widespread changes to its industrial structure and trade policy (Daniels and Bag 2007). Therefore there is an increased demand for skills in the management studies and research.

Due to the credit crunch and the subsequent recession there has been an outcry for better governance and ethical practice. This has added onto the demand for developing leaders and managers who have a holistic perspective and a social obligation to the organisations (Kochan and Osterman 1994). The information technology era which has enabled globalisation has introduced new fields of interest in the management and management studies. Human behavioural science and social skills has also played an active role in the business. Therefore there is a shift in topic choice, towards softer skills over the time period investigated.

The other substantial finding is the area of management research and research techniques. The finding in this report confirms a shift in trend in management research methodologies. It is important that management institution and research related institutions are aware of this need and influence the curriculum of MBA from that perspective.

## 6.3 Recommendations

### *6.3.1 Recommendation for Management Education Institutions*

- Use the trends identified in this study in order to identify what business wants in potential future MBA students.
- Analyse the current curriculum and identify key topics that need special focus for that particular time period.
- Apply the new information and perspectives obtained from this study in marketing campaigns.
- The analysis done in this study can be used as a list of research topic areas. Create special focus for research by creating areas of interest and offering specialist advice in these areas.
- One of the time consuming phases in research is the time taken to finalise a research area and hand in the proposal. This time can be reduced by having special interest areas for research.
- One of the challenges faced in the MBA programme is completion of the course especially the research part of the programme. This benefits both the student and the institution. But the institution needs to put emphasis on research completion as this contributes financially to the institution through government subsidies.
- From the literature review it is clear that doing research is a powerful vehicle for management development. Kolb (1983) argues that a management study is a type of experiential learning

and doing research within MBA is part of problem solving. This element can be used as a powerful marketing strategy to differentiate the institution from their counterparts.

- Using the findings from this study could create learners who are aware of the current business issues and also able to tackle these work related issues.
- Management Institutions must do the trends analysis in their industry. This study must be carefully conducted in terms of finding out the business trends in the country. The institutions can then formulate a strategy which gives competitive advantage over their competitors.
- Identify if your library is just a space consuming entity written off as an operating expense or is it adding value and generating revenue to the institution. Based on this finding one could take the necessary actions to improve this facility.

### *6.3.2 Recommendation for MBA Students*

- The students should be open to the fact that business is a constantly changing field. The business interest of this year need not be the same for the next year. Research selected can add value to the organisation that they are working or the field in which they are planning their career path.
- The MBA students who are the future researches will get information from this research to understand the business trends including current business trends. They may also be able to predict the upcoming trends in accordance to the change in global and economical conditions.

- Selecting topics that are key issues in the business environment might give an added advantage to the learner over their counterparts.

#### *6.3.3 Recommendation for MBA Curriculum Setters*

- According to my research, management institutions should consider the global and economic changes in the business world and continuously adjust the curriculum for MBA.
- They should also conduct surveys and perform researches to incorporate their topics and aligned it with the current business world. This will be helpful for the future MBA students to understand what is happening in the business currently and prepare them to be good leaders and managers in their organisations.
- Research methodologies used for research should be reviewed and address the trend identified in this report findings.

#### *6.3.4 Recommendation for Management library*

- The library should be gathering information about the trends and also keep an eye on the shift of business needs on a yearly basis. This will be helpful for the future MBA students to do their future research on their selected topics.
- The library database should also be equipped to pick up necessary changes to inform the MBA curriculum setters about the changes / shifts happening in the business world.

- Since the library is the central database to an institutions research house it is recommended that they provide efficient and appealing services both to the student and the supervisors. For example cataloguing the theses based subject areas, printing the topics on the side of the records could ease the readability and finding the records.

- Using information technology efficiently to ensure that theses and records are accessible electronically.

- Use the library systems to easily draw out reports on trends about MBA and use this information to evaluate the course content. This will enable the educational institution to identify what business expects from a potential MBA student.

## 6.4 Suggestions for further research

The research cannot claim to have reviewed and evaluated all the literature available on management research trends and research methodologies. Although findings in this research have been informed by an extensive literature review, it is acknowledged that the research on MBA research topics is scarce. Therefore some of the further research suggestions would shed light into this area.

The following are therefore a number of recommended potential future areas of research:

- One could further this research to identify specific topics and trends in management research. These trends can be used to create sets of possible research areas for MBA students, hence allowing the university to have areas of research focus.

- The study can be broadened to other learning institutions within SA or globally to validate the findings.

- This study focuses specifically on trends in research topics selected. This can be broadened to understand trend analysis of the topics in MBA courses offered by the learning institutions.

- It will be useful to identify specific research techniques used frequently such as factor analysis, conjoint, case study etc. This would give an understanding of the practicality of these methodologies and inform curriculum reviews.

- The research can be broadened to understand knowledge and skill needs in the business environment and tailor these needs into the curriculum of MBA courses, and research areas.

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# APPENDIX A

## Consistency matrix

A consistency matrix is a powerful tool used to align your sub-problems, the references that were investigated to each sub-problem in turn and the proposition that resulted from the literature that you reviewed. It also lists the analysis method that will be used to analyse the data.

| Research problem stated here | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sub-problem** | **Literature Review** | **Propositions** | **Source of data** | **Type of data** | **Analysis** |
| First sub-problem is to identify trends in MBA research over a period from 1990 to 2008. | (Galagan 2002)<br>(Schroeder 2009)<br>(Curtin 1993)<br>(SouthAfrica.Info 2008)<br>(UNChronicle 1994)<br>(Giliomee 1995)<br>(Jansen and Taylor 2003)<br>(Daniels and Bag 2007)<br>(Galagan 2002<br>(Schroeder 2009)<br>(Curtin 1993)<br>(SouthAfrica.Info 2008)<br>(UNChronicle 1994)<br>(Giliomee 1995)<br>(Jansen and Taylor 2003)<br>(Daniels and Bag 2007)<br>(State.gov 2009)<br>(Singh et al. 2004) | 1.1 The research topics selected by MBA students are aimed at solving topical problems, over time.<br><br>1.2 There is a shift in topic choice, towards softer skills over the time period investigated (1990 -2008). | The library database at WITS business school will provide the data source for the research. | The type of data will be mostly ordinal. | Descriptive statistical methods will be used for analysis. |

| Research problem stated here | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sub-problem** | **Literature Review** | **Propositions** | **Source of data** | **Type of data** | **Analysis** |
| Second sub-problem is to identify trends in the type of research methodology used for MBA research. | (Paley 2000)<br>(Creswell 2003)<br>(Calder and et al. 1990)<br>(Daley 2004)<br>(Linstead 1990)<br>(Dyrud 1997)<br>(Hitchcock 1996)<br>(Rothwell 1996)<br>(Malone 1997)<br>(Cadman 2000)<br>(Phipps et al. 2001)<br>(Chonko et al. 2002)<br>(Carmichael and Sutherland 2005)<br>(Kolb et al. 1983)<br>(Bourner 1992)<br>(Falconer and Mackay 1999)<br>(Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Schwandt 2000)<br>(Schwandt 2000)<br>(Strauss and Corbin 1998)<br>(Lincoln and Guba 1985)<br>(Creswell et al. 2003)<br>(Laurie and Sullivan 1991)<br>(Miles and Huberman 1994b)<br>(Wolcott 1994) | There is an evolution from quantitative research methodology to qualitative and more recently to mixed methodologies. | The library database at WITS business school will provide the data source for the research. | The type of data will be mostly ordinal. | Descriptive statistical methods will be used for analysis. |

# APPENDIX B

| Year | Strategic Management | Finance Management | Economic Management | Human Resource Management | Marketing Management | Operations Management | Organisation Design & Development | Information Management | Industrial Relations | Data & Decision Making | Research Methodology | International Business | General Management | Industry & Competitor Analysis | Entrepreneurship | Issues in Leadership |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| 1992 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 1994 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| 1996 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1998 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| 2000 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2002 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| 2004 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| 2006 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2007 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 11 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2008 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

**Table 5 : Frequency of MBA courses from 1990 - 2008**

| year | Quantitative | Qualitative | Mixed Method |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1990 | 12 | 8 | 0 |
| 1992 | 16 | 4 | 0 |
| 1994 | 13 | 7 | 0 |
| 1996 | 13 | 7 | 0 |
| 1998 | 16 | 4 | 0 |
| 2000 | 10 | 10 | 0 |
| 2002 | 7 | 13 | 0 |
| 2004 | 6 | 13 | 1 |
| 2006 | 9 | 8 | 3 |
| 2007 | 6 | 13 | 0 |
| 2008 | 6 | 13 | 1 |

**Table 6 : Frequency of research methodologies from 1990 -20008**

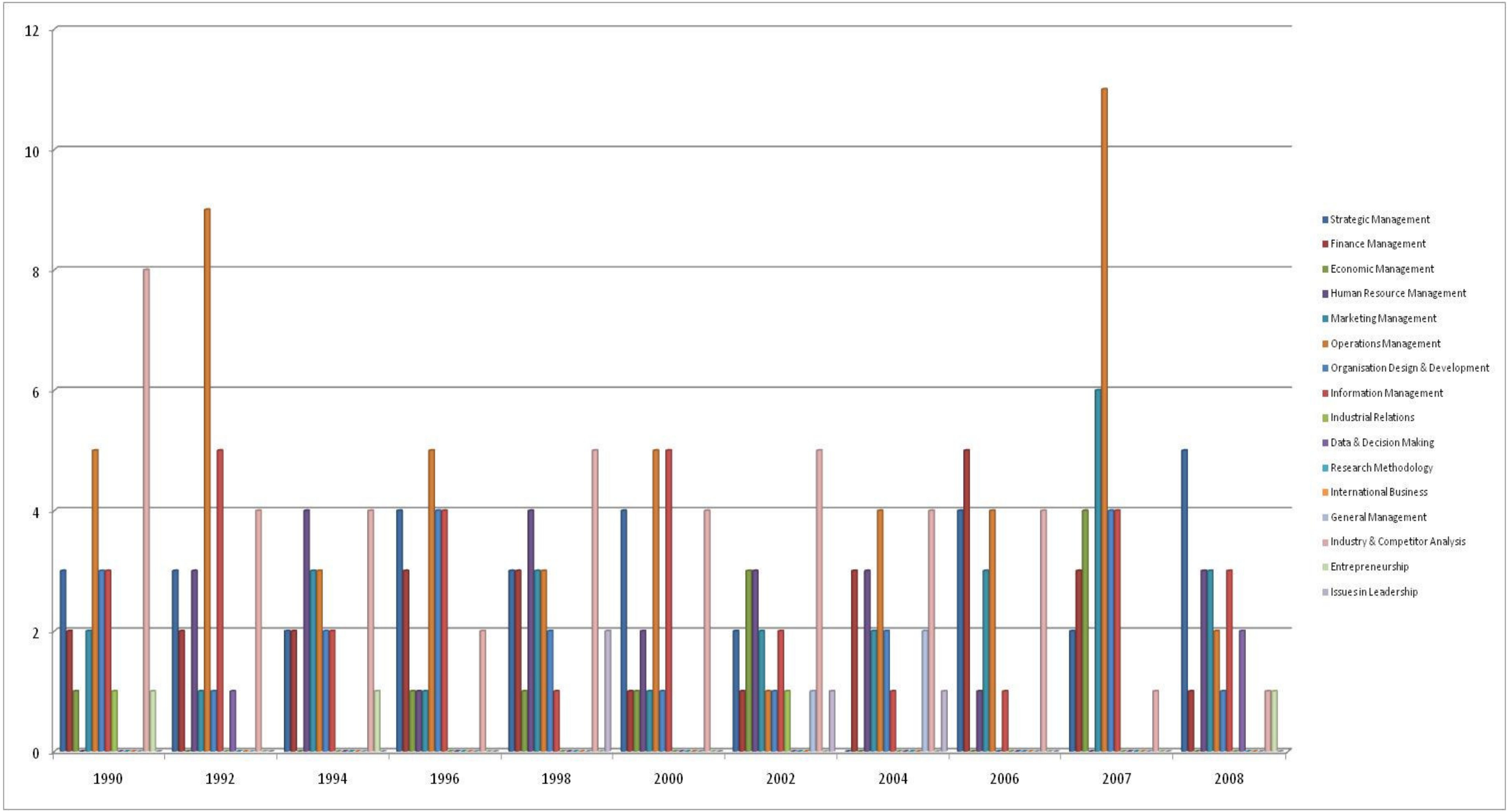


**Figure 47 : Summary of MBA courses selected for MBA research.**

| | | Occurance in a year | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| year | Key Search Words | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | Total Occurance |
| 1990 | medical industry | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 15 |
| | Labor unions | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 2 |
| | Strategic planning | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | 2 | 11 |
| | Information Technology | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 | | 3 | | | | 4 | 23 |
| | marketing | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 2 | 2 | | 11 |
| | consulting Engineers | 1 | 3 | | | | | | | 1 | | | 5 |
| | Economic aspects | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 1 | | 6 |
| | Taxation | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | 4 |
| | Monetary policy | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | 3 |
| | Small business | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | 2 | 12 |
| | Computer Networks | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | 6 |
| | Customer service | 1 | | 2 | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 7 |
| 1992 | Management Education | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | Service industry | | 4 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | 6 |
| | Risk | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | 3 |
| | Entrepreneurship | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | 3 |
| | Job satisfaction | | 3 | | | | | | 1 | | | | 4 |
| | Plant maintenance | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| | Consumer behaviour | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 3 |
| 1994 | Brand choice | | | 1 | | | | 3 | | 1 | 1 | | 6 |
| | Affirmative action | | 1 | 2 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | 6 |
| | privatization | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | Labour productivity | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 16 |
| | Export marketing | | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 3 |
| | Technological innovations | | | 1 | | | | | | | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| | Production Management | | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 16 |
| | Stock Exchange | | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 16 |
| 1996 | Merger & Acquisition | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 2 | 4 |
| | International Business | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | Economic Value Add (EVA) | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | 4 |
| | Banking / Finance | | 1 | | 1 | 7 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 18 |
| | Organisational Change | | | | 1 | 2 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 2 | 9 |
| | Corporate Management | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | | 1 | 8 |
| 1998 | Social Entrepreneruship | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | 2 |
| | Leadership | | | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| | Tourism | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | 2 |
| 2000 | Investment | | | | | 2 | | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 13 |
| 2002 | Negotiation | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| 2004 | Social Aspects | | | | | | | | 4 | | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| | Green Technology | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 2 |
| 2006 | Credit / Loan | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| 2008 | Research Techniques | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |

Table 7 : Frequency of emerging keywords over the period 1990 - 2008