Abstract
Research breeds research. When the environment (politics, human and capital resources, and the demand for the good) is right, research activity compounds itself. The growth rate continues until research activity is at the limiting level which its environment can support. However, what influences the work-flow of the research, and what is the limiting level? Does there really exist a breaking point where the scientist gives up discouraged by the surrounding and overwhelming odds? (Clowell, 1963). This study documents the trend of scientific research on synthetic fuels production technologies between 1972 and 1988. The goal is to understand if the environment has really influenced the research; and, whether it is possible to determinate or not a precise breaking point in the flow of the research. The conclusions reached in this thesis are based on the comparison of historical facts through the lens of a bibliographic study on the contemporary technical-scientific literature available from the Department of Energy.
Synthetic fuels in the United States is an issue of rising importance due the crude oil prices, and geopolitical and economic considerations. Synthetic production of liquid fuels (i.e., gasoline and oil substitutes) in the United States has a long history. In the 19th century, dozens facilities produced oil, gas, grease and paraffin from coal, but by 1873, cheap petroleum caused the last coal oil plant to close. The commercial scale shale oil extraction began in 1857 at shale oil retorts retorting the tertiary literature include science magazines, newsletters, science articles in newspapers, introductory textbooks and encyclopaedias. The GREY LITERATURE refers to sources of scientific information that are not published and distributed in the usual manner and which therefore may be difficult to obtain. Gray literature includes theses and dissertations, technical reports with a limited distribution, journals published by special interest groups that have a limited distribution, abstracts of conference papers and conference proceedings that are only made available to conference participants, E