Global Information Management Research: What have we Learned in the Past Decade?

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the past decade in the GIM domain, based on Journal of Global Information Management (JGIM) research findings. Based on the issues addressed by these articles, the authors develop 11 topical categories and discuss each in terms of the accumulation of knowledge contributed by these findings. The authors also discuss for each topic possible extension and further understanding based on related research in international business. In consideration of the topics of these articles, a large number simultaneously addressing multiple topics and potential of explicitly linking these topics in future research are discussed. Additionally, the authors update prior quantitative analysis considering JGIM citations of key international business scholars, evolution of research methods, and levels of scope and analysis in these articles. Finally, the authors indicate gaps in the body of research within categories, when categories are considered in relationships, and when looking further from the perspective of recent IB research.

Keywords: Culture, Diffusion and Adoption, E-Commerce, E-Government, Global Information Management, International Business, Knowledge Management, MIS in Developing Countries, MIS in the Multinational Company (MNC), National Infrastructure and Virtual Teams, Offshoring and Outsourcing

INTRODUCTION

The last decade has been a time of reflection about the state of international business research largely initiated by Buckley’s (2002) asking if the field has ‘run out of steam’. Numerous responses to this question have been published and recent special issues of the Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS) and Journal of International Management (JIM) have reflected on the past and future of international business research. Such reflections highlight the need for on-going reexamination of the state of research disciplines, including international business. They also suggest that as the field of global information management addresses a set of issues overlapping concerns of information systems

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and international business, such questions need also be asked of this growing field.

The relationship between international business thinking and global information management is complex. As discussed in Deans and Ricks (1993), Niederman, Boggs, and Kundu (2002), and Niederman (2005), the field of GIM in targeting the intersection of global and information systems interests, could logically draw from both traditions. By intersection, we refer to topics that have simultaneous interest for international business and MIS. From the international business perspective, these typically involve using of information systems to support various multinational functions (whether within a firm like ERP or across industries such as with global supply chains). From an MIS perspective these include use of information systems in a multinational context, such as diffusion of new technologies by people of different cultures. Topics involving information systems and international business aspects are of interest and concern to scholars in both areas where there is a growing body of theory, methods, traditions, and accumulated knowledge that can be brought to bear.

This study focuses on progress in the past decade in the GIM domain, as exemplified by the work presented in the Journal of Global Information Management (JGIM). In addition to simply counting the number of articles published on various research topics, we consider the accumulation of findings within each topical area. More specifically, this paper extends Niederman, Boggs, and Kundu (2002) which examined the first decade of research published in JGIM. The major goals of the paper are (1) to consolidate findings regarding global information management based on the findings of JGIM published work; (2) to consider effects of evolution of international business research on the GIM domain; and (3) to integrate lessons learned over the past 10 years with those of the previous 10 years. It is recognized that MIS and IB research continue evolving with emerging thought and data in both areas. It is of importance to consider these emerging trends in terms of their effects on extant GIM research as well as for creating future opportunities.

**BACKGROUND**

Our thinking since Niederman, Boggs, and Kundu (2002) has remained relatively consistent regarding the nature of cumulative tradition and the definition of GIM. We view individual articles as intrinsically important but also as “pebbles” that when combined form a mosaic and larger picture. It is not our mission in this study to evaluate the quality of individual articles; we trust that the peer review process had accomplished that task. Rather our purpose is to extract essential findings and future questions from each article, then consider their collective meaning and impact. It is our hope that such an examination lends insight to the strength of various conclusions regarding key topics in the GIM domain and exposes areas of varied interpretation and targets for further illumination.

**Trends in IB Research**

Aharoni and Brock (2010) in introducing their special issue on the history and future of IB, reference Buckley (2002) in asserting that three topics have been “well addressed” by IB researchers: (1) explaining foreign direct investment, (2) explaining the existence of the multinational enterprise, and (3) understanding institutional processes. Given that the primary interest of MIS researchers revolves around technology artifacts, information systems and management of these, key IB issues are unlikely to be uppermost in MIS researchers’ agendas. At the margin, some researchers may be interested in the role of information technology or knowledge in supporting, perhaps accelerating, foreign direct investment activities or in the information, and technical infrastructures that help facilitate country entry. It is unlikely that information systems would be instrumental in explaining why multinational enterprises exist, though at the margin they may make a difference.
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