

IMRPs and Advancing International Marketing Education

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Abstract. As academicians and students pursue market research for companies, the need to understand the issues and challenges while undertaking International Marketing Research Projects (IMRPs) is becoming increasingly important. Marketing research is the most important tool through which companies understand their existing and prospective customers. As companies contemplate the global market, they need to consider how the international arena differs from local/regional/national market research. In an endeavour to assist executives in their international business decisions many academic researchers and students design and implement IMRPs. We attempt in this paper to advance International Marketing (IM) education by providing a framework for students undertaking IMRPs and in particular, to highlight the challenges and issue involved. These need to be considered carefully in order to produce international market research of the appropriate quality to optimally support management decisions.

Keywords: IM (International Marketing), IMRPs (International Marketing Research Projects), global marketing strategies, marketing research, competitive advantage, globalization.

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1. Introduction

Today's business environment is heavily characterized by rapid internationalization. Changes in the global environment are resulting in both opportunities and challenges to both businesses and business education alike. More firms than before are now embarking on international expansion in order to increase their operations and to take advantage of economies of scale and to respond to foreign competition entering domestic markets (Douglas and Craig 1989, Shane *et al.* 2012, Tsao and Lien 2013). The literature highlights that, firms

looking to compete in the globalized economy are increasingly confronted with the task of creating strategies that effectively predict and respond to the rapid pace of change in global markets (Craig and Douglas 2001). The global economy is forcing organizations to become accustomed to a new international order (Czinkota and Ronkainen 2002, Rugman 2001, Yaprak 2002). In the initial phase of internationalization, firms are concerned with the collection of information to identify and assess internal and external market opportunities in different countries and to analyze which markets to enter and how to position their products in multiple markets for increasing enterprise value but also simultaneously managing a global strategy. To create enterprise value on a global scale companies seek new executives who have value creation and problem solving skills for contemporary global environment challenges. Not only the companies, today Business Schools are also as global as never before. All the ecosystem partners of a business schools including faculty, students, recruiters look for global orientation. Business Schools Innovative international marketing (IM) practices and advance teaching pedagogies are being used as a tool for building a positive image of an institution of higher education and increasing the competitiveness of its graduates. Globalization and in particular technical advancements are influencing international marketing (IM) specializations (Quelch and Klein 1997, Hoffman and Novak 1996, Schlegelmilch and Sinkovics 1998, Bell, Ibbotson, and Sinkovics 2001). Lundstrom and White (1997) argued, IM academicians need to better tailor their course contents to fit the outcome desired by industry practitioners time to time. In order to make International Marketing specialization more 'Internationalize' academicians need technology oriented and cost effective pedagogies (Bell, Deans, Ibbotson, and Sinkovics 2001). Therefore, research projects act as a hybrid tool that emphasize on student engagement and self-regulated learning (Ackerman, Gross, and Sawhney 2014). Considering the view of scholars emphasizing on research project as a significant and scientific way to instil experiential learning into the marketing field (Metcalf 2010, Radford, Hunt, and Andrus 2015), and also a source of competency based learning (Arroyo-Cañada, Argila-Irurita, and Solé-Moro 2016), learning through IMRPs will help IM students to configure and coordinate IM activities.

However, IMRPs have been the focus of discussion among IM scholars (Sinkovics *et al.* 2005, Young and Javalgi 2007). But considering the importance of culture in IM studies (Soares, Farhangmehr and Shoham, 2007) and changing relationships between international market research and international marketing research, role of IMRPs in advancing IM education and contribution in bridging the gap between IM theory and practice is need to brought on surface. The relevance of IM education both in academia and in the business world can be enhanced through effective teaching and learning. Therefore, academicians emphasize to make their sessions motivating and interactive through various ways

such as simulation games (Vos 2015) and also technology oriented (Shaltoni 2016).

Extending the thought, this article is an effort to narrate role of IMRPs in advancing IM education. IMRPs provide valuable hands-on and practical knowledge for students, generate low cost marketing information for firms, and help forge cooperative links between academia and industry. These research projects can have several aims: to scan for new opportunities, understand customer and market behavior (Angulo-Ruiz, Pergelova, Cheben, and Angulo-Altamirano 2016) and translate the perspectives of key customers into feasible marketing strategies (Roberts and Darler 2016). The continuous change and uncertainty in global markets is highlighting the importance of effective marketing research projects. More specifically this article is aiming at following objectives:

- To highlight the important link between enhancing IM education and industry practice.
- To construct a general framework for IMRPs highlighting the issues and challenges involved.
- To provide direction to IM students to enhance their skills in utilizing conceptual knowledge effectively.

This article is organized as follows: After briefly reviewing the literature in terms of IM education and IMRPs, the conceptual framework on the research process for effective IMRPs is outlined in Section 3. The key issues, challenges and IMRPs as advancing tool of IM education are discussed in Section 4, with conclusions drawn in the final section.

2. Literature Review

Most of the literature has focused on overall development and trends of IM as a subject. The relevant education literature appears to be in three groups: The first covers views and opinions on IM specializations (Chonko 1993, Javalgi *et al.* 1997, Kedia and Cornwell 1994, Nehert 1987, Porter and McKibbin 1988, Tesar and Moini 1998, Thanopoulos and Vernon 1987). These studies argue for, and generally support, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business's (AACSB) requirement that business curricula should concentrate on the international dimension of business education. A second group of studies focuses on the research status and subject acceptance of IM (Albaum and Peterson 1984, Aulakh and Kotabe 1993, Li and Cavusgil 1995, Cavusgil 1998, 2003, and

Nakata and Huang 2005, Rana and Sharma 2015). The third group is based on industry leaders (Burton 1990, Lundstrom, White, and Schuster 1996, Patrick 1986, Peters 1984, Porter and McKibbin 1988, Toyne 1992) and indicate the level of dissatisfaction which firms have with the skills of graduating students entering industry. For this reason many large firms provide training in IM for their own executives before sending them on any overseas market research projects. This training can be costly and time consuming.

Taking time and cost into account, IMRPs can act as an appropriate solution through which IM students shall have practical as well as conceptual learning. IM students can undertake the market research for a company, providing the necessary information for decision purposes, and at the same time allowing the students to gain a better understanding of the global issues before entering the field. Thus, it would be rational for the students to get familiar with the research process, and in particular the issues and challenges involved. To successfully address the concept of IMRPs the literature needs to be understood across three domains areas; international marketing concepts and theories, international marketing research, and international marketing operations and practices.

2.1. International Marketing Concepts and Theories

Much of the literature on international marketing has contributed from generalization to specialization of the subject knowledge. Previous studies have found a lag between theory and practice of the subject. *World Marketing* by (V. D. Collins 1935, Collins) explained the prerequisites for successful business abroad. Three key factors for effective international marketing are explored by Karmer (1959). Since IM has been recognized as an independent subject numerous books and research articles have been published. The nature and number of governing variables establishing the IM concept vary according to different researchers. Identified variables and streams heading the IM subject seem to vary. It is important for IM students to have an understanding of the theoretical domain of the subject to understand the dimensions that configure the subject and the different research streams dominating IM. A clear picture of this is depicted by: Albaum and Peterson (1984), Aulakh and Kotabe (1993), Li and Cavusgil (1995), Cavusgil (1998, 2003), and Nakata and Huang (2005), Rana and Sharma (2015). These review articles represent the different concepts and theories that have been added to and merged into IM and also provide information about research streams and their configurations.

2.2. International Marketing Research Methods

An appropriate research method is required of IMRPs for them to give appropriate and scientific results. The literature provides insights into the role of research

methods pertaining to: methodological problems in comparative analysis of international marketing system (Winter and Prohaska 1983), research design, data collection and analysis of data (Nasif *et al.* 1991, Harris 2000, and Samiee and Jeong 1994), confirmatory factor analysis (Madsen 1987, and Douglas and Craig 1983), conjoint analysis (Baalbaki and Malhotra 1995), methodological issues in empirical cross-cultural research (Cavusgil and Das 1997), sampling choice (Reynolds *et al.* 2003), textual data (Sinkovics *et al.* 2005), measurement equivalence (Mullen 1995, Herk *et al.* 2005, and Salzberger and Sinkovics 2006) and qualitative research (Sinkovics *et al.* 2008 and Brecic *et al.* 2013). Other important issues include application of different methodologies suited for international marketing research such as; transaction cost analysis (Klein *et al.* 1990 and Seggie 2012), outlier analysis and structural equations (Mullen *et al.* 1995 and Mostafa 2010), partial least squares path modelling (Henseler *et al.* 2009), and bibliometric analysis (Saimee and Chabowski 2012).

Several researchers have focused on the international marketing research issues and challenges, such as different methods of questionnaire administration for collecting data in international marketing research (Malhotra 1991). Also Sarkees and Luchs (2011) discussed the advantages of different methods that can be helpful in research in international marketing. Other issues concern the timing effects of data collection in case studies (Roberts and Boyacigiller 1984), and in establishing intra-country comparison groups as pre requisites to inter-country effect interpretations. To provide a clearer understanding of the research methods undertaken in IM, a summery is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Literature Focusing on the Methodological State of IM

Year	Author(s)	Research Design	Process Methodology (Sampling, Instrument and Data Collection, Data Analysis)	Contribution
1976	Green and White	Conceptual and Functional equivalence	Sampling equivalence and Instrument equivalence	Presented fundamental considerations that are involved in the studies of cross border consumer behavior and suggests methods of incorporating them into research project.
1978	Van Raaij	Functional Equivalence	Ethnocentrism, Construct Validity, Instrument Equivalence	Compartmentalizes measures into four distinct types, i.e., etc, ipsatized, modified and emic.
1981	Davis, Douglas and Silk	Functional Equivalence	Trade off between sampling and non sampling error, equivalence and reliability	Invested efforts to control and minimize Non equivalencies
1983	Sekaran	Conceptual equivalence, functional equivalence	Response bias and equivalence, timing, subject status, measure equivalence and reliability	Scale development and validity measurement
1983	Winter and Prohaska	Contextual grounding	Non-rep samples, Equivalence of measures, Univariate techniques	An examination of methodological issues in comparative analysis and proposed solutions in international marketing systems
1983	Douglas and Craig	Conceptual , Problem formulation	Unit of analysis, sample size and comparability	Offered analysis of the appropriateness of different data collection techniques (surveys, interviews etc.)
1983	Adler	Conceptual / Literature Review	Content validity, Unit of analysis, sample selection match and size, Equivalence of admn, responses, manipulation, variable scale, language, Multivariate techniques	Drive upon methodological aspects into comparative research
1984	Albaum and Peterson	Conceptual / Review		What has been researched and how the research has been conducted
1984	Jaffe and Nebenzabe	Conceptual	Questionnaire format measure reliability	Analyzed questionnaire formats for country images
1987	Bradley	Conceptual	Literature Review based	Determining the extent of development in international marketing literature
1987	Parameswaran and Yaprak	Experimental	Reliability of sample, Reliability of scale, Interaction effects	Developed and compared research measures for global consumers
1989	Cheng	Design Process	Heterogeneous sample frame	Focused on the organization as the level of analysis and suggest a logical contextual approach to cross- border research
1991	Netemeyer, Durvasula and Lichtenstein	Empirical	Consistency, dimensionality, nomological validity	Developed and validated CETSCALE
1991	Nasif, Al-Daeaj, Ebrahimi and Thibodeaux	Decisive	Selection of sample, Equivalence of language, variables, scales and experiment manipulation, timing, status etc., Univariate vs. multivariate analysis, qualitative vs. quantitative data, non parametric vs. parametric statistics	Introduced the aspects of methodological simplicity and level of analysis

1993	Aulakh and Kotabe	Conceptual, Literature Review	Sampling equivalence, research designs, measure equivalence, Uni/bi variate techniques	An assessment of changes in both substance theoretical and methodologies employed in international marketing
1993	Martin and Eroglu	Empirical	Construct validity and reliability	Introduced scale construction and measurement criteria for international marketing research
1993	Mintu, Calantone and Gassenheimer		Low response rate and response biasness	Provided procedures for survey method
1994	Samiee and Jeong	Content analysis	Unit of analysis, country variety and sample comparability, Ethnocentrism, reliability, dimensionality, extreme resource patterns, Complexity of issues. Uni-variate and Bi-variate analysis	Brought critical factors on surface related to methodological aspects of international advertising
1994	Sanders	Fictional conceptual	Country Variety, Measurement consistency, Complexity of issues	Pointed out developments in multi-level modelling also estimated individual and regional effects.
1995	Mullen, Milney and Doney		Outlier treatment	Suggested a two-step approach for detecting and analyzing multivariate outliers in structural equation models in international marketing.
1995	Li and Cavusgil	Conceptual / Literature Review	Literature Review, Conceptual and Empirical Research Designs, data analytical techniques	Research stream development, research designs and data-collection techniques employed in international marketing
1996	Malhotra et al.	Decisive	Literature Review, trends and methods	Organising methodological issues around a six-step framework describing the marketing research process
1997	Cavusgil and Das	Conceptual / Literature Review	Literature Review	Identifying relevant methodological issues in empirical cross-cultural research
1997	Cavusgil and Das	Literature review / Conceptual	Literature review, empirical assessment	Addressed functional and conceptual equivalence for global sourcing
2001	Craig and Douglas			Examining the capabilities and skills international researchers will need to acquire in order to conduct research in the increasingly diverse and rapidly changing marketplace
2003	Schaffer and Riordan	Content Analysis	Emic – Etic, Equivalence of samples; Semantic equivalence, Conceptual and scaling equivalence	Identified methodological issues and common practices in cross cultural organizational research studies
2003	Reynolds et al.	Qualitative	Sampling techniques	Providing justification for sampling issues in international marketing research
2005	Nakta and Huang	Literature review / conceptual	Research designs, data collection, uni-variate, bi-variate, multi-variate	Development of the theoretical and research methods in international marketing
2005	Cavusgil et al.	Conceptual		Critically evaluating the progress in international marketing throughoutological, thematic and methodological lenses
2005	Herk et al.	Conceptual		Presenting a framework for establishing equivalence of international marketing data

2007	Young and Javalgi	Conceptual	Exploratory	Providing a framework for conducting international marketing research projects and presenting several factors that should be considered in global market research studies
2008	Kuada	Conceptual and Review Based	Discussed literature and experiences on the foundations of international marketing analysis	Distinction between soft and hard economics, arguing that economic growth must be converted into social change that benefits poor for it to be described as development-oriented.
2009	Cavusgil, Knight, Riesenberger, and Yaprak	Descriptive and Conceptual	Discussed the issues in developing new marketing opportunities in markets overseas	Discussed and evaluate issues in projects and research in foreign markets such as: sampling and analysis of data etc.
2011	Taylor et al.	Content Analysis	Literature assessment, research designs, data collection	Summarizing guidelines for conducting cross - national research
2012	Buil et al.	Conceptual emic and etic	Measure equivalence, sampling equivalence, data collection equivalence	Provided theoretical robust related to international marketing research
2013	Andriopoulos and Slater	Systematic Review	Qualitative Research, Thematic Focus	Highlighting the value of qualitative research for advancing theory in field of international marketing.
2015	Marieke de Mooij	Conceptual	National Culture, Cultural Models,	Lighten the dimensions of national culture, for international marketing.
2016	Rana and Sharma	Conceptual / Literature review	Conceptual qualitative, conceptual quantitative, empirical qualitative, empirical quantitative	Identified research trends and governing methodologies for latest international marketing literature
2016	Jean et al.	Systematic Review	Endogeneity in IM research, Internationalization-performance relationship and innovation-export nexus	Elaborates the origins and consequences of the three most frequently confronted types of endogeneity in IM research.
2016	Sintonen et al.	Multi – Stage Method	Sample of real data, three variations of input data are tested	Cross -country and cross-survey approaches to international marketing, and discussed different procedures utilized in imputation affect the results and their validity and reliability.

There have also been studies on IM which have provided a consolidated and general investigation on the theoretical and methodological state of the subject (see Malhotra *et al.* 1996, Cavusgil and Das 1997, Young and Javalgi 2007, Taylor *et al.* 2011, Rana and Sharma 2016).

2.3. International Marketing Operations and Practices

This section of the literature review focuses on IM literature which deals with IM planning, practice and management. There are many ways by which a firm can participate in business activities outside its domestic boundaries; effort is needed to have a good understanding of the business practices and procedures in foreign markets (Weinrauch and Rao 1974). In international marketing it is essential to take cultural differences into account and make sure there is a balance between

culture and strategy in the foreign market. The role of international culture (Soares et al. 2007), and measurement of international marketing (Krieger 1957) needs to be highlighted. Brandt and Hulbert (1977) discussed how to segment world markets and rank countries; and global competition (Terpstra 1987, Arora and Gambardella 1997). Integration of the processes in international markets (Wichmann 1974); marketing decisions of subsidiaries in international markets are also some important IM operations that students should be familiar with. Weber (1974) focused on international promotional management and Douglas and Dubois (1977) explored the need for international marketing planning. These issues act as pillars to tailor international marketing operations and their strategies which contribute to understanding the host and home government and societies (Keegan 1977). Moreover, IM students need to gather knowledge about different contents that configure international marketing as a subject. Therefore, studies contributing to the various domains of IM operations such as: global strategy (Jain 1989, Samiee and Roth 1992), global branding (Roth 1992), liberalization policies (Gillespie and Teegen 1996), pricing (Cavusgil 1996), international direct marketing (Mehta *et al.* 1996), competitive positioning (Hooley, Broderick, and Möller 1998), market characteristics (Kenneth 1999), international marketing behavior (Rundh 2001), market selection (Davidson 1983, Papadopoulos, Chen, and Thomans 2002, Ozturk, Joiner and Cavusgil, 2015), buyer-supplier relationship (Cavusgil 2005, Wilkinson, Anna, and Widmier 2007, Jurse and Jager 2017), technical environment (Chirapanda 2012) and consumer co-creation (Roberts and Darler 2016) shall be helpful in establishing the knowledge about different IM operations.

It is evident in literature that there has been ample research carried out on different domains of IM. However, few concentrate on IMRPs but with a different angle and objective. This paper seeks to add value to the existing literature by pulling together a general conceptual IMRPs research process framework for IM students, highlighting the issues and challenges associated with each step and role of IMRPs in advancing IM education.

3. Conceptual Framework on the Research Process of IMRPs

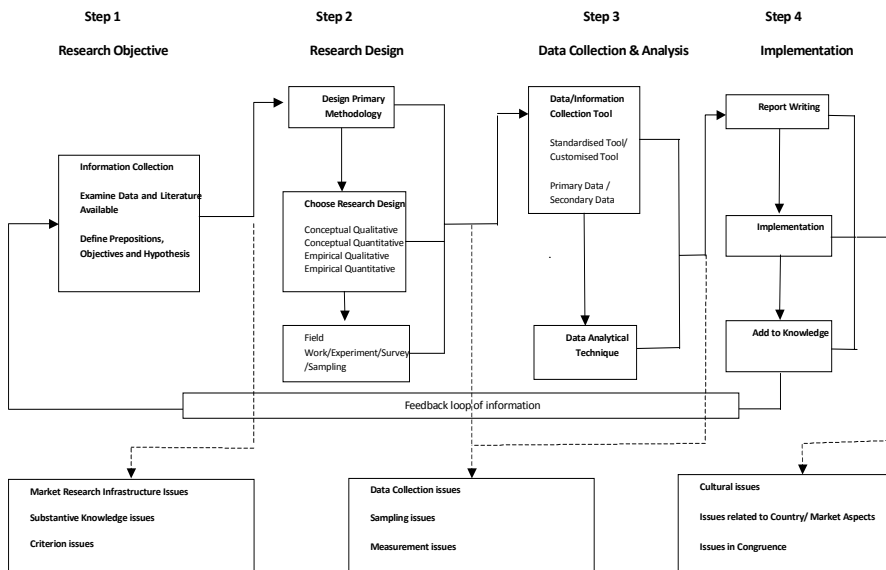
The preliminary step in performing an IMRPs is to understand how the research should be conducted. An understanding of the research process will enable students to appreciate the role and importance of the challenges involved at different levels of IMRPs. Previous authors have already put forward conceptual frameworks on IM research process (Craig and Douglas 2000, and Young and Javalgi 2007, Rana and Sharma 2015). But they are short in addressing the complex issues and challenges for academicians and students. Firms have been forming international R&D alliances with increasing frequency to acquire and leverage technological capabilities across markets. However, research has shown

that such alliances are more often than not an ineffective and inefficient mechanism for internationalising R&D activities (e.g. Robson *et al.* 2012). Therefore, the use of an effective research process should contribute to and yield more effective results. Through the use of efficient marketing research process, IM students can perform their field and laboratory assignments, internship projects, live projects, and consultancy projects etc. and develop more effective understanding that lead to good placement and learning. The conceptual framework on the research process of IM projects is illustrated in Figure 1. It shows the process within the context of four common phases: research objective, research design methodology, data collection, and analysis of results with issues and challenges faced at each stage. Although this framework is not new in the business management education, however, proposed framework enable us to bring into spotlight the potential issues and challenges faced in IMRPs.

The information requirements at different levels at the corporate, regional, and local levels will vary widely internationally. Strategies that help the product or service in one geographical area may not necessarily fit within the broader tactical international goals of the organization. Likewise, collecting secondary data may be difficult in certain countries due to cultural differences and depending on the market research infrastructure present in that particular region. Adding to this, within the methodology step, the analysis stage has four different levels: global, regional, country and local. The unit of analysis differs from existing studies to projects conducted internationally. It is much easier to construct a questionnaire focused on a single market, as opposed to a study that represents international unit analysis. Furthermore, conducting fieldwork across national boundaries poses several issues and challenges. Screening and analysing data, incorporating new knowledge and amending business strategies accordingly are more difficult and time consuming when the unit of analysis is done on a wide geographical context. Each step of the research process when applied to an international setting holds far more challenges.

Figure 1 illustrates the international marketing research project process within the context of four general stages of research with the issues and challenges faced at each stage. These challenges are not addressed in literature previously in connect with the research process.

Figure 1: International Marketing Research Process Framework



The figure illustrates what IM students and practitioners need to understand in IM research projects. The first step in the research process is to decide the area of research, collect the relevant information, assess previous findings, and develop propositions and questions. As with domestic market research, the international market research process begins with a clear understanding of the specific research objectives. If the research objective is not well defined, the research data collected may not answer the specific problem or need. The international environment makes the consideration of previous and secondary data difficult. The second step is to decide on an appropriate research design. To adopt the most suitable and effective research design, the researcher must have knowledge of the available options and their usefulness. Research design necessitates specification of the data to be collected as well as tools and instruments used to collect it. Based on the research design chosen by the researcher, further decisions, such as the nature of data to be collected and tools through which data are to be collected effectively and efficiently, need to be made. Further decisions, such as those regarding the appropriate sample size, the sampling technique, field survey and experimental setup, are then executed in the third step of the process. The last step involves an analysis of the data and an evaluation of results. Researchers generally analyse data using different analytical techniques and validate the results using various validation standards to establish the authenticity of the results (Rana and Sharma, 2016). Sometimes researchers use more than one analytical technique to evaluate the authenticity of results, to make comparisons or to better explain the results. After an analysis of

the data, the findings are examined in detail and conclusions made in the context of the relevancy for future use. If the findings do not confirm the expected result, then this process may have to be repeated. The conceptual framework does provide a clear idea of how international research should be conducted and where researchers should take important decisions.

Due to the inherent difficulties in conducting and managing market research projects internationally, there are many factors which if not effectively addressed, can harmfully impact project management and, as a result, project deliverables. These factors can impact at any stage and indeed at every stage. For example, shifting cultural norms across different countries or continents may impact research objectives as well as cause significant challenges in the data collection. Similarly, language barriers can have a substantial impact on the data collection and lead to significant new learning cost and time for the organization.

In order to take full advantage of international growth opportunities over the long run, companies looking to the global market place continually need research that identifies changing consumer behaviour accurately and helps with product or service positioning strategies. Close attention is required to data collection and questionnaire design issues, and also to cultural differences related to language and legal aspects, and government restrictions on market research studies (Chen 2011, Alon *et al.* 2011). These challenges are highlighted in more detail in the following sections.

3.1. Behavioural Challenges

3.1.a Market Research Infrastructure Issues: The availability of media, quality control, internet penetration and the overall market research infrastructure considerably impact the success of international research projects. Where no or little media exists, there is a huge challenge to international researchers. A lot of emphasis is placed on collecting information via the internet these days, but in some regions, as per (Dodd 1998), internet penetration may be confined to males under the age of 40 with above average household income and education. Unless its usage rate increases to a point that approximates a broader section of customers, the internet cannot be considered a feasible primary market research instrument in such areas (Chiu, Chiu and Mansumittrchai 2016). Other infrastructure issues can cause problems such as: control of media (Okazaki and Taylor 2013) and telecommunication, etc.

3.1.b Substantive Knowledge Issues: It has become self-evident that knowledge and learning are at the root of understanding and implementing IMRPs successfully (Kogut and Zander 1992, Grant 1996). In general, the knowledge “relates to present and future demand and supply, to competition and to channels for distribution, to payment conditions and the transferability of money, and those

things vary from country to country and from time to time” (Carlson, 1974, Johanson and Mattsson 2015). As IMRPs are, by their very nature, in a state of constant change, then existing successful projects are typically characterised by different dynamics. Incorporating the new knowledge is more difficult and more time consuming when the unit of analysis includes a larger geographical and international context (Young and Javalgi 2007, Alone and Jaffe 2012). While undertaking IMRPs researchers/academicians are increasingly widening the boundaries of enquiry by continually questioning and exploring the suitability and applicability of research paradigms (Craig and Douglas 2005).

3.1.c Criterion Issues: Every research project is carried out with a unique strategy and sticking to the pre-defined standards can sometimes restrict the overall successful impact. Comparability with regards to pre-defined criteria can be a difficult task since these are not often similar in every country. The existence of various criterion issues in IMRPs results in further complications due to the numerous challenges involved in a cross-cultural context (Young and Javalgi 2007, Alao, Brown, and Choudhary 2016). To overcome these challenges researchers need adequate time and attention to address the complexities of presence, acceptance, and utilization across worldwide markets (Young and Javalgi 2007).

3.2. Methodological Challenges

3.2.a Data Collection Issues: The process of managing vendors in international rather than in domestic markets is much more difficult and multifaceted and much more time consuming and expensive. Mall/Shopping Centre intercept methodology, scanner data and reliable postal delivery are available in developed countries and can be taken for granted there. However, this assumption is not true for many other parts of the world. Unreliable postal services in developing countries makes conducting mail surveys problematic (Malhotra 2004). Access issues in locating appropriate respondents and gaining their cooperation to participate in market research are also sensitive issues in an international context (Craig and Douglas 2005). Respondent and vendor trust and confidentiality are also important considerations in the global context (Kumar 2000).

3.2.b Sampling Issues: The sampling plan is much more complicated in the international environments. Consider the process of conducting marketing research in India. India has a total population of 1.29 billion, 419 million of which live in urban areas of different cities and smaller towns (www.worldbank.org). Since very few small towns and villages in rural areas are included in international market research projects, gaining a nationally representative sample is problematic. Considering the framework in Fig. 1 and the nature of IMRP in a

complex single country like India, the consultation varies widely between national, regional, and/or local. Add to this a number of similarly underdeveloped countries in a project, and it clearly makes it more challenging for international market researchers. A practical means of reaching the largest sample possible within countries, including people who do not live in major population centre's, involves interviews by e-media or telephone. Unfortunately, technological capabilities are not the same across countries or regions (Malhotra 2004). A large variety in communication technology can have a dramatic impact not only on the method of conducting marketing research but also on how the results are incorporated and disseminated into management's decision. Additionally, respondents worldwide are becoming more sensitive to being interviewed which resulted in more denial rates for participation. An important reason for high denial rates is the questionnaire time. After 15-20 minutes most respondents become fatigued and bored with the process and end the interview and this can be problematic for researchers. Add to this the frequent language difficulties and the need for more effective questionnaires becomes increasingly important. (Lee and Wong, 1996)

3.2.c Measurement Issues: It is critical to establish the equivalence of measures and scales used when obtaining data from different countries in international market research (Han, Lee, and Ro 1994). One of the important issues that must be dealt with early is the equivalence of data (Kumar 2000). This includes whether the constructs being studied are equal, and which means are the same in different countries? Secondly equivalence of measures of the concepts under study has to be determined. Thirdly, the equivalence of the sample being studied in each country or culture must be considered (Kumar 2000). A conceptual framework to reduce confusion about equivalence issues, to guide the design of studies and data analysis on international marketing subject is provided by Herk, Poortinga and Verhallen (2005). Measuring instruments are critical in an international environment. The concepts of reliability and validity, ie what the instrument is actually measuring, are especially important in international market research.

3.3. Implication Challenges

3.3.a Cultural Issues: Conducting IMRPs requires a great deal of new learning. Various cultural elements e.g. gender roles, religions, semantic challenges, social institutions, time orientation are closely related with national culture (Javalgi and White 2002). The effect of culture is multifaceted in the sense that cultural values that are important to one group may mean little or nothing to another group (Soares *et al.* 2007). Although a country may have a large population, only a small segment of that population may be equipped with the knowledge necessary to

understand or employ research tools either at work or at home (Griffith and Lee 2016). In international research projects researchers should take different languages into account when designing questionnaires. Language represents the obvious factor that makes international market research very challenging. While English is accepted by most peoples worldwide, levels of competency vary so English may not be employed solely when conducting research. The most common problem in questionnaire design involves translation into other languages. A questionnaire developed in one country may be difficult to translate because of languages concepts, intreprations, etc. Different Time Zones existing in different countries also present difficulties in international market research. Differing time zones impact project communication and ultimately project timing. Researchers should also consider the calendar - holiday schedule of the country of research; nearly every Monday is a holiday somewhere in the world (Rydholm 1996). India has a list of approximately 20 standard holidays per year, the U.S. has approximately 12 standard holidays per year. Many countries vary and holidays can certainly add to the total time frame required to complete the research project across national boundaries.

3.3.b Political Issues: Different countries have different political structures. Many developing countries tend to have poorly developed institutions and less stable political systems and regulations (Djankov *et al.* 2002) compared to developed countries. It is difficult to conduct IMRPs in a politically unstable country due to frequent fluctuations in policies and legal frameworks due frequently changing and unstable governments (Khanna and Palepu 2010).

3.3.c Market Related Issues: Market structures are different across countries. Each country has its own economic cycle, which is linked to the industry cycle and then ultimately the firm cycle. Even if two countries have the same economic cycle, the market structure may be different as the structure depends on the historical perspective of industry evolution, culture, infrastructure and local business practices.

3.3.d Issues in Congruence Analysis: One of the major issues in IMRPs across national boundaries is the lack of congruence on what an international marketing research project is by definition, and the lack of supporting measurable criteria for the determination of its success (Kaustin 1994, Zou and Cavusgil 2002).

3.4 Further Challenges:

Doing business internationally always involves the risk of changes in a particular country's currency. Market researchers are also impacted by these fluctuations because of the numerous field services that are usually hired to complete the research assignment. To finish a given project, several countries may be involved. At any time, one or more country may face unstable currency conditions,

affecting the lead research supplier (Iyer 1997). Legal and privacy restrictions may also cause unique challenges in the international research arena. Many countries with severe privacy regulations can potentially shut down marketing activities that profile or collect personal information. Gaining access to specific information and obtaining respondents for conducting IMRPs may be problematic in certain countries.

4. Discussion

Research in international marketing is transforming the way that IM activities are created and practiced. IM researchers, academicians and practitioners aim to treat world market as global shopping centres. Opportunities are huge as various countries grow in economy, reduce trade barriers, develop infrastructure, which in turn help in increase of consumption pie of the world market. Simultaneously with the growth in economy, issues like economic cyclicality, uncertainties in global forces and technology makes the IM full of challenges. It becomes essential for IM students to learn IM practices for reaching out vast markets and manage uncertainties and create value globally. The fundamental “Four Ps of Marketing” (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) have limitations to define and articulate IM education. Hence, IM students require to scan of world wide data and information and interpret the data to take decisions for increasing enterprise value. IMRPs enable the students to access, incorporate and inference these vast and varied sets of data and information to understand IM research and practices under one umbrella.

To conduct IMRPs students can have this data and information through various sources available world-widely in online and offline mode. For example, political and economic trends can be scanned through international agencies such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and United Nations (UN) to private agencies as Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). While conducting IMRPs students require accessing descriptive information about countries, mainly available in form of market research reports and industry research reports, sources like Euromonitor International and IBISWorld can be useful for such information. Social trends are indicators are also sourced by different agencies like: Editorial Code and Data Inc. (ECDI), Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Students may also be interested in using penal secondary data and index, can access to sources like Prowess, Capitaline and BERI Index. While conducting empirical report and survey students do not feel challenge of long distance and boundaries and there are many sources available to collect data from worldwide such as: Surveymonkey, CVENT, Questionpro etc. that can be utilized to make a successful IMRP and overcome the challenges.

5. Conclusion

As companies continue to seek new opportunities across national boundaries, being cognizant of the variety of international marketing research challenges as discussed in this paper provides an essential ingredient to the IM executives and students ultimate success. The purpose of this article has been twofold. First, we provide a framework for conducting international market research; second, we outline the critical challenges and issues involved while conducting IMRPs in support of IM education. The framework is developed within the context of the four steps of the research process in IM. To help IM students to implement more effective global research studies, we highlight the factors that must be considered prior to conducting research across global markets. Relevant and timely information collection such as: market growth rate, market structure, environmental concerns, market potential, customer segments, positioning process etc. increasingly become the foundation of international screening and gaining competitive advantage. Therefore, IM students and practitioners need to have a comprehensive understanding of IMRPs. In order to take full advantage of international opportunities over the long term, firms will look to recruit graduates and practitioners who are able to conduct effective marketing research.

Implications of the Study

Academics:

Teaching and Course Design

This study will help IM faculty upgrade their IM courses. The framework's learning objectives can be incorporated readily into teaching. For business schools which focus or differentiate themselves with an IM specialty, the framework can form the basis of a course's curriculum. This research will help faculties develop teaching materials which includes cases, mini cases, real time situations as well as collaborate with companies, software firms to develop simulations and participative pedagogical tools .

Corporate:

This study will help corporates in recruiting, develop performance evaluation criteria, capabilities gap analysis, for their global employees. Corporate leaders and HR department can design their IM training programs for their employees. For software companies they can design simulations for education purposes for both business schools and corporates.

Appendix

Sources for Collecting Data and Information to perform IMRPs

Sources for Primary Data Collection

1. www.surveymonkey.com
2. <http://www.questionpro.com>
3. <http://www.cvent.com/en/web-survey-software/>
4. <http://www.nielsen.com>
5. www.b2binternational.com
6. European Fieldwork Group
7. Market Probe International
8. CatalystMR
9. ICRA Limited
10. CRISIL

Sources for Secondary Data Collection

Websites:

1. www.stat-usa.gov
2. www.ita.doc.gov
3. www.usatradeonline.gov
4. www.census.gov/foreign-trade/www/
5. www.odci.gov/cia/publications/pubs.html
6. www.customs.ustreas.gov
7. www.opic.gov
8. www.exim.gov
9. www.eiu.com
10. www.imf.org
11. www.ibisworld.com
12. www.wto.org
13. www.oecd.org
14. www.jetro.go.jp
15. www.euromonitor.com
16. www.marketsize.com/
17. www.worldchambers.com
18. www.ipl.org/ref/RR/static/bus4700.html
19. <http://iserve.wtca.org>
20. www.worldtrademag.com
21. www.webofculture.com

Other Resources

Advertising Red Books—International Advertisers and Agencies
 Country Commercial Guides
 Country Report (EIU)
 Country Reports on Economic Policy and Trade Practices
 Country Study Series
 Country Watch
 CultureGrams
 Export Sales and Marketing Manual
 Exporters' Encyclopedia
 Foreign Trade Reports
 Global Competitiveness Report
 International Advertising and Marketing Information Sources
 International Economic Indicators
 International Media Guides
 Market Research Reports
 National Trade Data Bank
 Official Statistical Sources from Trade Associations
 Political Risk Yearbook
 Press and Media Directories
 WARC's Pocket Books
 World Advertiser and Agency Database
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 World Economic Outlook
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