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Introduction to the Special Volume on Globalization and E-Commerce

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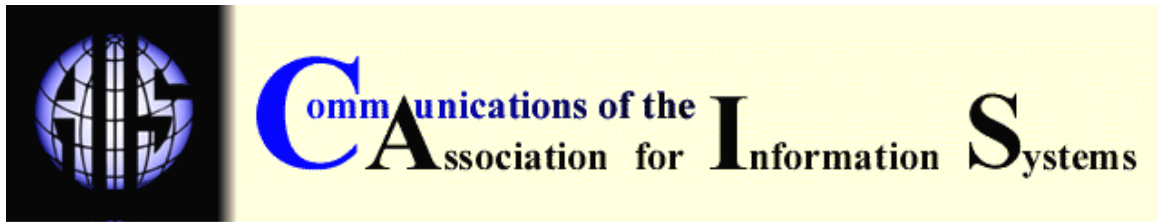
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INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL VOLUME ON GLOBALIZATION AND E-COMMERCE

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ABSTRACT

The ten papers in this special volume of CAIS focus on environmental and policy influences on the diffusion of e-commerce in selected countries in the Americas, Asia-Pacific, and Europe. They are part of a multi-year, multi-country study entitled, "Impacts of Electronic Commerce in the Global Networked Economy: A Multi-Country Study". [www.crito.uci.edu/GIT/Project3d.asp]

KEYWORDS: Globalization, E-Commerce

I. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The premise behind the globalization of e-commerce study is that the Internet and electronic commerce are bringing countries together to create a global networked economy. Internet technology is said to have no regard for national borders. However, the people and companies that use the technology function within very different national environments. So, one might reasonably expect national differences in the character of e-commerce when compared across countries. Thus, the research addresses the following questions:

- How do global trends such as innovation and economic liberalization influence the international diffusion of the Internet and e-commerce?
- How do national environments and policies influence e-commerce use within countries?
- What are the economic and social impacts of e-commerce and how are they affected by national environment and policies?

This research project examines the impacts of e-commerce on a multi-country basis. It includes selected country case studies looking at the growth of e-commerce nationally, and also in more detail in three critical industry sectors: manufacturing, financial services, and distribution. These studies serve as a basis for cross-country analysis identifying key environmental and policy

factors that influence the diffusion and impacts of e-commerce (Gibbs et al. forthcoming).

In addition, data is being collected in over 40 countries on e-commerce revenues and on environmental variables, such as openness to trade, foreign direct investment, industry structure, income, education, and information infrastructure, that might impact e-commerce diffusion. This data is being used to identify trends and to analyze the relationship between environmental factors and diffusion of e-commerce use. More detailed data is being gathered on the three industry sectors to use in comparative analysis. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies facilitates the study of new, fast-changing e-commerce innovation in a fluid market environment.

The project is being carried out by a team of researchers from around the world. The effort is led by CRITO (Center for Research on Information Technology and Organizations) at the University of California, Irvine. It involves collaboration with from one to four experts on each country.

II. THE SPECIAL VOLUME

This special volume focuses on the second major question of the research study:

- How do national environmental factors and policies influence the diffusion of e-commerce use within individual countries?

THE COUNTRIES

The special issue presents ten country case studies, each of which systematically reviews major environmental factors and policies that might influence the diffusion of e-commerce use, and examines the extent to which they are major influences on business-to-business and business-to-consumer e-commerce in each country. The countries represented are:

• Brazil	• China	• Denmark	• France
• Germany	• Japan	• Mexico	• Singapore
• Taiwan	• United States		

THE CONTENT

Each case study presents the same basic information and then interprets it in terms of the expected or actual impacts on e-commerce. A typical outline covers:

- National Environment
 - Demographics (urbanization, population density, age distribution)
 - Economy (wealth, GDP, foreign trade, industry structure, foreign investment)
 - Human Resources (education, IT skills)
 - Infrastructure (transportation, distribution, telecommunications and information, Internet)
 - Business and consumer readiness, preferences, attitudes
- National Policy
 - Policy institutions
 - Enabling policy (telecommunications liberalization, financial deregulation, investment in infrastructure, IT skills development)
 - E-commerce policy (tax treatment of electronic transactions, e-government initiatives, R&D, incentives to private sector, legal framework, promotional efforts)
- Extent of E-Commerce use (overall, B2B, B2C)

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- Conclusions about the influence of environmental and policy factors on diffusion currently and in the future.

By following the same outline, the papers allow easy comparison across the ten countries. As the papers show, differences in environmental and policy factors are significant and do, indeed, shape the extent, timing and impacts of e-commerce adoption.

The papers contain a large amount of information and, as a result, are quite long, typically requiring 50 pages in Journal format and 75 in Article format. With CAIS being electronic it is possible to publish this extensive material.

We believe that the data that is collected in these papers is fundamental input not only to the group of scholars researching the world-wide impact of e-commerce, but to those interested in other international information systems questions.

THE AUTHORS

The authors of the articles in this volume were selected for their knowledge of e-commerce, their understanding of the nature of business and culture in their country, and their access to the statistical data about the country. On the whole, the authors believe that e-commerce is in its ascendancy and are optimistic about its future despite the recent economic slowdown. They present both the drivers and barriers to e-commerce adoption in their countries. The authors also tend to reflect the special perspectives of their country in their conclusions about the current and future status of e-commerce. The contributions of the authors to this series is greatly appreciated.

THE INITIAL PAPERS

The first four papers in this special volume deal with China, Germany, France, and Mexico. They are being issued together with this Introduction. The six remaining papers in the series will be published individually.

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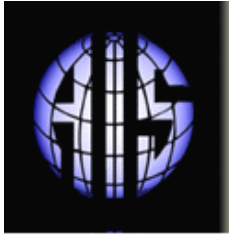
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