INTERNATIONALIZING SALES RESEARCH: CURRENT STATUS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

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With economic activity in emerging markets growing at 40 percent, and with 10 percent and more of the firms in the Global Fortune 500 now headquartered in emerging economies, intense interest lies in the globalization of business activities, including the sales function. This systematic review of the international sales literature in a selection of the most influential journals explains, consolidates, and analyzes current knowledge. This paper also explores the challenges inherent in conducting international sales research, including conceptualization, research management, and data collection issues. Finally, we suggest ways to move forward for researchers in this field, including pertinent topics and how methodological and practical constraints might be addressed.

The business world is experiencing an unparalleled change in the functioning of global markets. Economic activity in emerging markets is growing at compounded rates of around 40 percent as compared with 2 percent to 5 percent in the West and Japan (Ready, Hill, and Conger 2008). Consequently, many companies are looking for growth in less developed or emerging countries, such as those in Central and Eastern Europe or Brazil, Russia, India, and China (collectively referred to as the BRIC) (Economist Intelligence Unit 2007; Ghemawat and Hout 2008). Furthermore, new powerful players from emerging countries are beginning to dominate the world markets as a result of the denationalization and liberation of

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government-owned corporations. In fact, over 50 firms in the Global Fortune 500 are now headquartered in emerging market countries (*Fortune* 2010). As a consequence of these trends, companies are increasingly interested in learning about how they can effectively compete in the global marketplace. This is especially true for sales organizations, since the sales force is responsible for customer acquisition and retention.

The intense interest in the globalization of business activities has also been reflected in recent calls for research within the academic literature (Boles 2009; Steenkamp 2005). However, research conducted in the developed Western societies (i.e., the United States and Europe), and conducted primarily by U.S.-based academics (albeit sometimes with a significant minority of European scholars), has tended to dominate the extant sales literature. This means that our knowledge of how selling and sales management is conducted across cultures and countries is limited to certain contexts. Because companies are increasingly interested in learning how to effectively market their products to emerging countries, it is important to examine the issues, challenges, and opportunities associated with selling to and within these countries. It is against this backdrop that this paper was conceived. Specifically, this paper is the result of the first three meetings of the Global Sales Science Institute (GSSI), formed in 2007 as a scholarly organization dedicated to the promotion of rigorous sales research and teaching in a global context. The content of this paper was shaped by the many formal and informal meetings of the GSSI executive committee (the authorship of this paper). The paper seeks to contribute to the extant international sales (IS, hereafter) literature in three important ways. First, we identify what has been done to date. Second, we suggest a research agenda comprising topics that we see as potentially fruitful for future studies in the IS domain. Finally, we address the challenges that researchers might confront when conducting IS research. We take as our primary context IS research, which is focused on multicountry or cross-cultural comparisons and theories—in other words, which collects data from multiple countries simultaneously. However, we recognize that a significant body of work exists, which explores sales-related issues within a single country outside the United States and EU-15 Europe. We do not wish to imply that this research is less important; however, it is undeniable that such work presents less significant operational problems than multicountry work, and therefore we chose to focus this piece on the most potentially problematic of the IS research contexts. Nevertheless, we would consider that the majority of our recommendations and conclusions apply to all IS work.

We begin with a comprehensive search of the literature, leading to a discussion of the key opportunities and challenges in conducting sales research in a global context. Subsequently, these threads are drawn together in an agenda for future research in a global sales environment.

CURRENT STATUS: A REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL SALES LITERATURE

Research Method

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the publication activity in the IS area, a thorough review of the literature was undertaken. The goal of the review was to uncover articles published in major marketing journals during the period 1980–2009 (November) that were related to IS issues in a business-to-business (B2B) context.[1] Both manual and electronic searches were performed using key words such as *global, international, cross-national, cross-cultural,* and *cross-country* in the following journals: *European Journal of Marketing (EJM), Journal of Marketing (JM), Industrial Marketing Management (IMM), International Journal of Research in Marketing (IJRM), Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing (JBIM), Journal of Business Research (JBR), Journal of Global Marketing (JGM), Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS), Journal of International Marketing (JIM), Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice (JMTP), Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management (JPSSM), Journal of Selling and Major Account Management (JSMAM), Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS),* and *Marketing Science (MKTS).*

These journals were selected on the basis of their (1) influence on the marketing field (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003) and (2) relevance for sales/IS research in the B2B area (Williams and Plouffe 2007). Specifically, the journals included in the literature review cover three of the most prestigious publishing outlets in marketing (*JM, JMR,* and *MKTS*), two leading European-based journals (*EJM* and *IJRM*), three journals that are positioned toward publishing international research studies (*JGM, JIBS,* and *JIM*), and seven journals that are either exclusively devoted (*JPSSM* and *JSMAM*) or largely receptive (*IMM, JBIM, JBR, JMTP,* and *JAMS*) to publishing sales-related articles. Thus, the sample of journals reviewed for the present study can be considered as broadly representative of the population of IS research articles.[2]

Findings

The literature review resulted in the identification of 97 articles published during the past 30 years (see the Appendix). To illustrate the relative paucity of IS research, reviews of more general sales research by Plouffe, Williams, and Wachner (2008) and Williams and Plouffe (2007) returned figures of 1,270 and 1,012 articles for just the period 1983–2006 and 1983–2002, respectively. When comparing the number of IS articles identified in the current study and the total number of general sales articles identified by prior reviews, it becomes obvious that the amount of work devoted to the area of IS represents a small portion (i.e., less than 10 percent) of total

Figure 1
Number of Published Articles in International Sales Research, 1980–2009
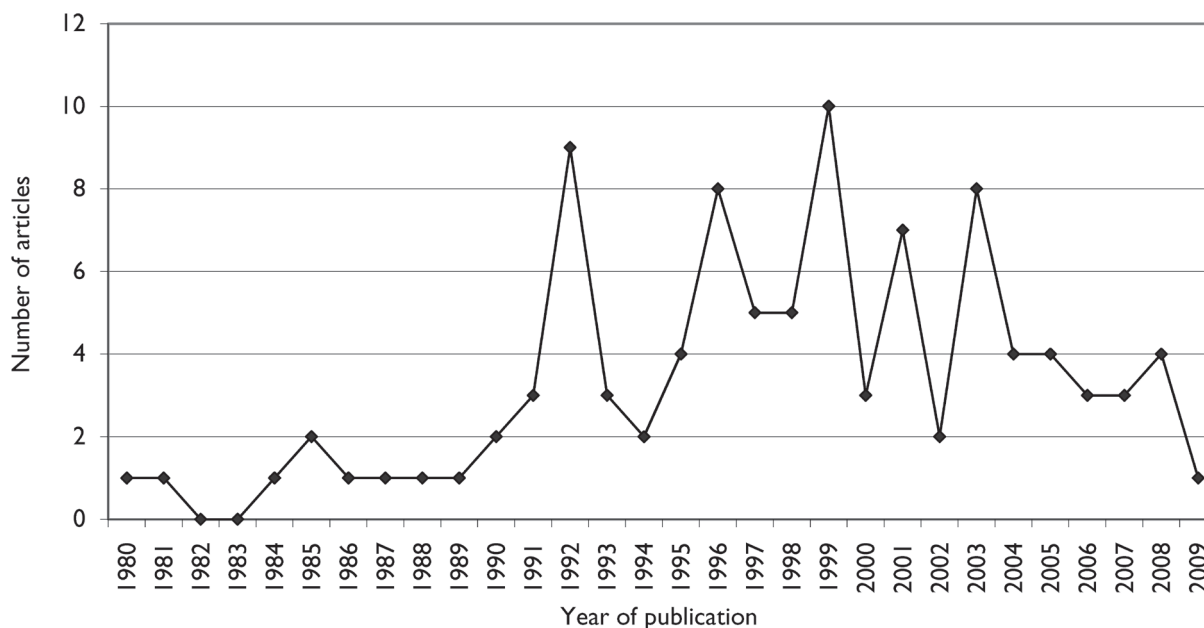
research activity in the domain of sales. In what follows, we elaborate on the major findings of the literature review, beginning with findings regarding the general nature of the literature as a whole and trends in its development over the past three decades.

Type of Prior International Sales Studies

The first important insight comes from examining the type of study employed in the reviewed articles. Most (74 percent) of the articles reviewed were empirical and the rest conceptual or theoretical. Even among the empirical pieces, however, many are descriptive in nature in that their main contribution is to report basic statistics regarding sales management practices across a sample of countries, rather than testing specific theory-driven hypotheses. The absence of a critical mass of conceptual articles also speaks to the low level of theoretical development in the IS research area, something that should be remedied in future research.

*Trends in International Sales Research Productivity*

Second, the number of published articles appears to follow an upward trend until 1999 (see Figure 1). However, it can be seen that after 1999 an overall decline in IS publication productivity is observed—although there are isolated periods when the number of articles increases. The finding that the number of IS articles decreases over time is both surprising and disconcerting, given the ever-growing importance of in-

ternational research for contemporary marketing theory and practice. Consequently, it is apparent that IS research is an area that needs to be further pursued and developed.

Journal Representation of International Sales Research

The third finding relates to the fact that IS articles are not well-represented in the generally accepted list of "elite" marketing journals: *JM, JMR,* and *MKTS* (see Figure 2). In fact, we were able to uncover only two IS-related articles (i.e., Graham 1985; Rouziès et al. 2009) appearing in *MKTS* and *JM,* respectively, for the entire period under examination; no IS article was found to have been published in *JMR,* however. That said, one should note that a significant number of articles have appeared in *JIBS,* which is a premier journal not directly related to the marketing discipline. This finding echoes some recent evidence in which it was shown that published sales articles at the most prestigious marketing journals have experienced a marked decline (Plouffe, Williams, and Wachner 2008). Consistent with the downward trend in sales research's representation in premier journals, a plausible explanation for the relative paucity of IS articles is the general difficulty associated with obtaining high-quality, multiple-source data, which constitutes a prerequisite for publishing in premier journals. Indeed, there is evidence that sales research response rates are not only declining over time but they are also lower than their marketing counterparts (Carter, Dixon, and Moncrief 2008). Related to this is the general difficulty in obtaining the experimental, laboratory, or archival data that, in many instances,

Figure 2
Number of Published Articles in the International Sales Domain per Journal
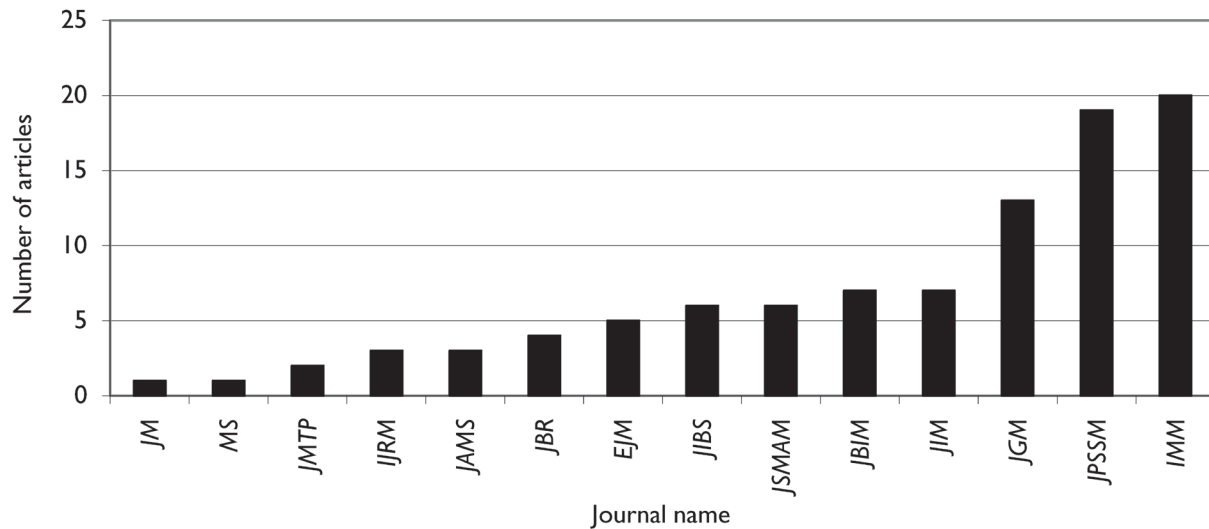
Notes: *JM = Journal of Marketing; MS = Marketing Science; JMTP = Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice; IJRM = International Journal of Research in Marketing; JAMS = Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science; JBR = Journal of Business Research; EJM = European Journal of Marketing; JIBS = Journal of International Business Studies; JSMAM = Journal of Selling and Major Account Management; JBIM = Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing; JIM = Journal of International Marketing; JGM = Journal of Global Marketing; JPSSM = Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management; IMM = Industrial Marketing Management.*

are necessary for publishing in elite journals. Considering the added burden of collecting responses across a wide range of countries and cultures in IS research, it becomes apparent why previous IS studies are not represented in top journals. A second explanation may be the lack of a conceptual sophistication in the area of IS, since most studies were either comparing relationships of interest among samples or simply not providing a discernable theoretical explanation for the role of culture, economic, and legal forces shaping the international environment (being solely descriptive). This low level of conceptual development may have hindered the acceptance of such work into marketing's top-tier publishing outlets.

As expected, most articles (54 percent) were published in the four outlets that are exclusively (*JPSSM* and *JSMAM*) or largely (*IMM* and *JBIM*) devoted to publishing sales research. Finally, a substantive number of articles (i.e., 20) is included in two "international-oriented" journals (*JGM* and *JIM*), whereas another significant number of articles (17) is published in five journals with a broader thematic orientation (*JAMS, IJRM, EJM, JMTP,* and *JBR*).

Geographical Representation of International Sales Research

Given the international scope of IS research, a relevant question that might be posed at this point is how truly "international" is IS research? In other words, is IS research conducted primarily by researchers outside the United States or not?

Specific to the geographical context that has been examined in prior IS studies (see Table 1), two points are worth mentioning in this regard.

First, the number of countries compared ranges from two to seven, though most studies (73 percent) involve a comparison between one to three countries, usually between the United States and another country. The dominant position of U.S. and European samples in IS research is natural given the time and cost constraints associated with sampling over a wide range of countries, especially those outside the "westernized" world. That said, however, it is notable that a handful of studies (Dubinsky and Hanafy 1996; Hill and Allaway 1993; Hill and Birdseye 1989; Hill and Still 1990; James and Hill 1995; Sa Vinhas and Anderson 2008) have relied on data from a large number of countries, ranging from 20 to 61.

Second, although a few studies have been conducted in emerging countries (e.g., China, India, Malaysia, and Nigeria), most research (67 percent) has been undertaken in highly developed countries, such as Australia, Canada, the EU-15, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. As a consequence, our knowledge on how selling is being conducted in less developed countries is sparse, at best.

The aforementioned results regarding the geographical scope of samples involved in prior research echoes the sentiment of Walters (2001), who concludes that much of the work in international marketing and management is limited to the Northern hemisphere. Likewise, the majority of IS

studies has been conducted by American and European scholars who appear to collaborate periodically with one or more colleagues outside these two regions. According to Walters (2001), many reasons exist that explain this lack of global focus such as data collection, methodology, and language barriers involved in conducting research in less-developed markets. Our speculation for the relatively small number of samples from emerging countries is that, in these regions, academic research in the field of sales (and more generally) may be less developed and as such, few academics are available to form research partnerships. In addition, many academics in emerging countries are not expected to attend international conferences or publish in American/European journals. Consequently, the chances of forming research partnerships with scholars from the "westernized" world may be low. Finally, and probably most significantly, professors in developing countries often have high time commitments to teaching, with no expectation for research. Publishing may actually be perceived as negative. We gauge that as faculty evaluation systems change and more emphasis is placed on research productivity in emerging countries, there should be an increase in the number of studies stemming from these countries in the future.

Overview of Topics Examined in International Sales Research

The final major finding of our review of the extant literature is concerned with the topics examined. As seen in Table 2, the topics that have received the greatest attention over the years involve sales negotiation, sales force control systems, export sales, sales force compensation, global account management (GAM), buyer–seller relationships, and training, though the absolute number of studies examining each of these topics remains relatively small. Less attention has been given to other key sales issues such as motivation, leadership/supervision, sales strategy, sales organization/structuring, sales technology (e.g., sales force automation [SFA] or customer relationship management [CRM] systems), and the relationship between sales with other functions such as marketing. While one may speculate, there is no apparent explanation as to why researchers have tended to place relatively more emphasis on some topics compared with others. Presumably, researchers have selected topics either because of personal research interests, or because of data availability. Another explanation may be that researchers may follow trends, with "hot" topics being investigated more often in certain time periods, such as the relationship of sales with other company functions, or the emphasis on sales technologies.

Next, we elaborate on the thematic focus of prior IS research with the aim of summarizing current knowledge and offering insights to scholars interested in pursuing further research.

Table 1
Countries Examined in Prior IS Research

Countries	Frequency of occurrence
United States	35
United Kingdom	15
Japan	14
France	7
Several Countries (not specified)	7
China	6
Germany	6
India	6
Australia	5
Mexico	5
Sweden	5
Italy	5
Philippines	4
Austria	3
Korea	3
Norway	3
Netherlands	3
Single Country (not specified)	3
Spain	3
Malaysia	3
Canada	2
Europe (country not specified)	2
Greece	2
Thailand	2
Taiwan	2
Brazil	1
Hong Kong	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Turkey	1
Africa (country not specified)	1
Asia (country not specified)	1
Indonesia	1
Ireland	1
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	1
Singapore	1
Slovakia	1
Turkey	1
South America (country not specified)	1
Denmark	1
Middle East (country not specified)	1
Poland	1
Russia	1
Finland	1
Total	170

Note: The total number shown in the second column exceeds the number of articles reviewed because several articles used samples from more than one country.

The topic that has received the greatest attention in IS research is negotiation between buyers and sellers from different cultures (e.g., Graham 1985; Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer 1996). Almost all the work accomplished in

Table 2
Topics Addressed in Prior International Sales Research

Topics	Frequency of occurrence
Negotiation	11
Control Systems	9
Export Sales	9
Compensation	8
Global Account Management (GAM)	8
Buyer–Seller Relationships	7
Training	7
Recruitment/Selection	6
Ethics	5
General Sales Management Practices	5
Role Stress Processes	4
Selling Skills/Abilities	4
Leadership/Supervision	3
Motivation	3
Sales Organization	3
Sales Profession	3
Sales Strategy	3
Expatriate Sales Force	2
Formalization	2
Measurement	2
Performance Evaluation	2
Territory Design	2
Communication	1
Goal Setting	1
Governmental Selling	1
International Marketing Research	1
Market Orientation	1
Organizational Fairness	1
Performance Expectations and Attributions	1
Personal Selling	1
Sales Technology	1
Sales-Marketing Relationship	1
Values	1
Total	119

Note: The total number shown in the second column exceeds the number of articles reviewed, since several articles focused on more than one topic.

this area is empirical; most typically involving comparisons between American and Asian negotiators, with just one study being purely conceptual (Weinstein and Still 1990). A major conclusion from this line of research is that negotiation between buyers and sellers is a difficult process because of cultural or other environmental variation (e.g., government differences). For instance, one study demonstrates that the degree to which negotiation tactics are considered morally acceptable can vary greatly among different cultures (Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser 2001). Thus, the outcome of the negotiating process can be enhanced if sellers adapt their negotiating styles to fit buyer culture (Pornpitakpan 2003).

The next topic that has frequently been studied in the IS literature is sales force control systems (SFCS). This line of literature is broadly represented by two major streams of research. The first stream refers to comparisons of SFCS among firms operating in different countries (e.g., Baldauf, Cravens, and Piercy 2001; Cravens et al. 1992; Rouziès and Macquin 2003). The emphasis here is to provide an answer to the question of whether SFCS function differently and have different performance consequences, across different cultures. The evidence is somewhat mixed; whereas one study demonstrates that the differences are limited (Cravens et al. 1992), a second study shows that culture plays a key role (Rouziès and Macquin 2003)—though the differences between studies may be a function of the different approaches utilized to operationalize the concept of SFCS. The second stream of research involves examining SFCS in an export context (e.g., Katsikea and Morgan 2003; Katsikea, Theodosiou, and Morgan 2007). Studies comprising this stream of research have mainly focused on examining the antecedents and consequences of SFCS in exporting firms. A major conclusion that can be drawn from this stream is that the concept of "psychic distance" plays an important role in explaining the outcomes of SFCS and that SFCS can have a great influence on the performance of exporting firms (Katsikea and Skarmeas 2003; Theodosiou and Katsikea 2007).

Despite their different orientations, the two streams share some common themes. The first commonality is that both involve solely empirical studies, with no theoretical development regarding why or how SFCS may be expected to function differently across various societal and cultural contexts. The second commonality is that, with one notable exception (Piercy, Low, and Cravens 2004), neither of the two streams illuminates the functioning of SFCS outside developed countries. This represents an important void, particularly in light of the finding that transferring sales management practices across different countries might cause problems (Piercy, Low, and Cravens 2004). In summary, our ability to generalize knowledge pertaining to the governance mechanisms enacted by domestic or multinational firms, operating in less developed countries in order to control sales efforts, remains especially limited.

Studies examining issues in export sales are also frequently mentioned in the relevant literature. Within this line of enquiry, most of the work has been empirical and has tended to either look at SFCS in an export setting (as mentioned above), or at what sales management issues multinational firms should pay attention to when entering foreign markets, such as the choice of an integrated or independent sales force, or the use of global intermediaries (e.g., Ingram, Day, and Lucas 1992; Rosenbloom and Larsen 1992; Schuster and Keith 1994; Thorelli and Glowacka 1995). The issue of developing an international market entry strategy is very important for

contemporary global firms. However, it has not been systematically examined in previous IS studies. For instance, despite the fact that many countries rely on diplomats in foreign countries to stimulate export sales (i.e., government selling), knowledge in this area is limited to the work of Dubinsky and Hanafy (1996). The same can be said for expatriate selling as a mode for entering new markets. Expatriate salespeople present several interesting problems, such as culture shock and sojourner adjustment, when assigned to a psychically distant country. Related to these problems of expatriate salespeople are the results of one study (Tsalikis, Deshields, and LaTour 1991) that shows that for an American audience, a sales pitch in a standard American accent evoked more favorable judgments on all effectiveness dimensions than one in Greek-accented English. Yet in spite of the importance of expatriate sales force management, work in the area is limited (e.g., Bhuian and Abdul-Muhmin 1997; Guy and Patton 1996). In addition, no research appears to have been conducted regarding how to repatriate salespeople who have completed an overseas sales mission.

Several authors have devoted a substantial degree of effort to studying sales force compensation in a global context (e.g., Liu 1998; Rouziès et al. 2009; Segalla et al. 2006). These studies have examined several decisions related to sales force compensation, such as pay level, pay structure, and the type of rewards that salespeople prefer. One solid conclusion that can be drawn from these studies is that the response of salespeople to compensation decisions varies greatly across different cultures and countries (e.g., Apasu, Ichikawa, and Graham 1987; Money and Graham 1999). As such, firms should take national culture and economic environment into account when designing compensation packages for international sales forces (Piercy, Low, and Cravens 2004; Rouziès et al. 2009; Segalla et al. 2006).

Increasing globalization of firms' activities and the emergence of powerful global customers are two of the most important drivers of GAM programs. The sales organization plays a critical role in GAM programs, considering that global customers buy from the same supplier but at different geographic locations, thereby increasing the need to coordinate sales resources and activities across countries. However, the number of studies examining the role of sales in GAM programs is limited. Interestingly, sales-related GAM research is characterized by an emphasis on conceptual rather than empirical work. Nevertheless, studies in this area have attempted to provide answers to such questions as how to compensate global account managers (e.g., Weilbaker 1999), how to structure a GAM program (Millman and Wilson 2001; Naude and McLean 1999), what are the processes of GAM (Shi et al. 2005), or what are the roles and activities of global account managers (Harvey et al. 2003; Holt and McDonald 2001). Finally, only one article has examined the consequences of GAM programs for the selling firm (Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold 2001).

Although international buyer–seller relationships (e.g., manufacturer–distributor relationships) have been extensively studied in the general business and marketing literature, studies that make a specific reference to the sales aspects of global interfirm relationships are quite limited. Notwithstanding this general trend, the few studies that are delving into this issue have examined whether interpersonal relationships (e.g., Young and Albaum 2003) or organizational processes and products (e.g., Iyer, Sharma, and Evanschitzky 2006) are critical in establishing success in global interfirm relationships. Other studies demonstrate that cultural factors, such as "cultural distance" or "cultural sensitivity," can have an impact on the mechanisms (i.e., relationship quality, trust, and performance) underlying international buyer–seller relationships (e.g., Harich and LaBahn 1998; Oh 1996; Schultz, Evans, and Good 1999; Solberg 2008).

Sales management practices, such as sales force recruitment/ selection and training, have also been the subject of investigation in a number of studies, many of which are theoretical in nature. The general conclusion that can be drawn by reviewing these studies is that sales management practices should adapt to local conditions in order to be effective; indeed, the evidence shows that culture affects a wide range of activities such as sales force organization, goal setting, sales territory design, recruiting, selecting, promoting, training, and performance evaluation decisions (Anderson and Rosenbloom 1992; Apasu, Ichikawa, and Graham 1987; Baldauf, Cravens, and Piercy 2001; Campbell 1985; Cook and Herche 1992; Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2004; Hill and Allaway 1993; Honeycutt et al. 1999a; Piercy, Low, and Cravens 2004; Rouziès, Segalla, and Weitz 2003). For instance, in an early theoretical discussion of how culture affects sales management practices, Still (1981) lists several anecdotal examples of companies facing difficulties in managing salespeople in non-U.S. cultures because of ethnocentrism in foreign countries. In the same vein, other studies attempt to offer recommendations and guidelines to global sales managers for effectively selecting, training, and supervising an international sales force—either based on anecdotal examples and theoretical reasoning (e.g., Attia, Honeycutt, and Jantan 2008; Bush and Ingram 1996; Edwards, Cummings, and Schlacter 1984; Honeycutt and Ford 1996; Lewin and Johnston 1997) or on descriptive analysis of data collected in several countries (e.g., Hill and Birdseye 1989; Weilbaker and Bennion 1999).

A related theme refers to leadership and supervisory styles enacted by sales executives in order to motivate and control the activities of their salespeople. In spite of the importance of leadership behaviors, only a handful of studies have been devoted to this issue (Agarwal, DeCarlo, and Vyas 1999; DeCarlo, Rody, and DeCarlo 1999; Larsen and Rosenbloom

1999). The extant evidence appears to suggest that national culture affects the relationship between leadership style and salespeople's organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and effort, although no specific conclusions can be drawn from the limited evidence.

Besides studying sales management practices, prior IS studies have examined issues at the individual salesperson level, such as motivation, role stress processes, performance expectations/attributions, and selling skills/abilities of salespeople located in various parts of the world. Generally speaking, the majority of these studies are empirical in nature and, in a few instances, they investigate the measurement properties of sales constructs across cultures. These studies provide mixed evidence regarding the effect of culture. A relatively large number of studies show that salespeople of different cultures respond in a different manner in terms of motivation, performance expectations, and selling skills/abilities (Apasu, Ichikawa, and Graham 1987; DeCarlo, Agarwal, and Vyas 2007; Hanna and Srivastava 1998; James and Hill 1995; Money and Graham 1999). However, studies in the area of role stress processes show that culture plays a limited role (Dubinsky et al. 1992; Lee and Mathur 1997; Mintu and Calantone 1992). To complicate things further, two other studies provide evidence that both selling abilities and salesperson strategies (i.e., customer orientation and adaptive selling) function differently across cultures (Cuddihy and Weilbaker 2001; Herche, Swenson, and Verbeke 1996). In fact, Herche, Swenson, and Verbeke (1996) argued that the development of theory in this regard would make sales constructs more generalizable. It is obvious that more theoretical work and empirical testing are needed in the area of salesperson-related issues in order to obtain a clearer picture of the influence of culture.

Given salespeople's unique boundary-spanning role, as well as their role in servicing customers, it is not rare to find them confronting ethical dilemmas, especially in an international context, where the distinction between an ethical and an unethical practice may not always be clear to salespeople. Indeed, a limited number of studies in this area provide evidence that the notion of ethics is not the same across cultures. These findings highlight that nationality influences salespeople's beliefs about the ethics of selling practices and the need for company policies to guide those practices (Blodgett et al. 2001; Dubinsky et al. 1991; Weeks et al. 2006).

Few studies have been conducted with the explicit purpose of developing an international personal selling theory or that deal with the sales profession as viewed by multiple constituents (i.e., managers, prospective employees, and society). In particular, one early attempt to demarcate the personal selling area within the confines of IS was made by Walle (1986). Based on Hall's (1976) theory of culture, Walle argued that personal selling should be more than an exchange process within the realms of an international context; yet progress

in this area has stagnated, apart from the study of Lackman, Hanson, and Lanasa (1997). In another study, Tanner et al. (2008) presented the perceptions of sales executives from the United States, France, and Mexico regarding expectations for the future of the sales profession and sales position. The authors argue that greater professionalization is needed in many countries. This latter finding—combined with the negative stereotyping of the sales profession among students of different cultural backgrounds (e.g., Honeycutt et al. 1999b)—should serve as a stimulus for more research in assessing the stages in the evolution of the sales profession and its attractiveness across nations and cultures. Finally, few attempts have been made to frame the effective conduct of personal selling in target countries not only on the basis of culture but also depending on the type of economic or legal environment (e.g., Dawson 1980; Ferrell, Ingram, and LaForge 2000; Marshall, Brouthers, and Lamb 1998).

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES IN INTERNATIONAL SALES

Both the relatively small number of studies and the many unexplored areas denote that IS is rife with research opportunities. Perhaps of utmost importance is the clear indication that research in the area of international selling and sales management has largely been dominated by studies conducted in Western, developed countries such as the United States and EU-15 countries. Given the vital importance of understanding how selling is conducted outside such contexts, it is our contention that researchers should focus their attention on emerging or less developed countries, at least to the same extent. To keep the sales academy in line with recent advances in global corporate activity, we believe the time is right to expand IS research in countries such as Russia, Latin America (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Chile), Africa, the Middle East (e.g., Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Turkey), India, China, and Central and East European (CEE) countries (e.g., Poland, Hungary, Estonia).

Another research opportunity stems from the lack of focus on theory development of prior work. Specifically, few attempts have been made to develop theory on how culture influences selling (e.g., motivation, selling process) and sales management variables (e.g., organizing, goal setting, leading, and training salespeople). The work of Still (1981) constitutes one of the earlier attempts to contribute a framework to this area. Since then, several researchers have made notable attempts to develop theoretical frameworks by largely drawing on the work of Hofstede (1980) on national culture (e.g., Attia, Honeycutt, and Jantan 2008; Chaisrakeo and Speece 2004; DeCarlo, Agarwal, and Vyas 2007; Dubinsky et al. 1992; Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2004; Ferrell, Ingram, and LaForge 2000; Lewin and Johnston 1997; Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer

1996; Rouziès, Segalla, and Weitz 2003; Weeks et al. 2006). In spite of these advancements, however, our understanding of how cultural and societal characteristics influence selling/sales management is limited to these few studies, and no generally accepted theory of IS has been proposed.

Given that theoretical progress is very important for the advancement of any discipline, researchers should focus their efforts on developing new theoretical frameworks that have the power to capture the complexity and idiosyncrasies of international selling, and in particular selling outside the traditional Western context. This is critical since prior theoretical models of sales force behavior and performance have been developed in developed countries, mostly in the United States. Thus, there remains much uncertainty as to whether these theories can be applied to other cultural contexts (Herche, Swenson, and Verbeke 1996). While theories developed in the United States have undeniably served as the basis for the advancement and growth of our field, there is an imperative for developing new theories that can enhance our knowledge of the process of selling across different countries.

In developing cross-cultural theories of selling and sales management, researchers should consider expanding their current theoretical focus, which appears primarily predicated on the long-standing cultural framework introduced by Hofstede nearly 30 years ago (Panagopoulos 2009). Indeed, most of the studies reviewed have either implicitly or explicitly relied on the cultural dimensions identified in the work of Hofstede. Despite its importance, however, Hofstede's framework has received frequent criticism, since it is based on data collected during the late 1970s from a single organization. To overcome its limitations, several recent lines of research have advanced our knowledge on how national culture should be conceptualized and measured. One such prominent work is the GLOBE Project (House et al. 2002), which enriches and updates Hofstede's framework with several new dimensions (see Table 3). It is our belief that considering these updated dimensions may provide a richer and more accurate picture of how a society's culture affects important sales phenomena. Onyemah, Rouziès, and Panagopoulos (2010), for instance, have recently applied one dimension from the GLOBE framework in a cross-cultural study of SFCS. They found that a society's performance orientation moderates the relationship between control systems and sales force outcomes. In Table 3, we highlight the more recent cultural dimensions identified in the GLOBE Project and we offer some examples of how they could be applied in IS research.

Nevertheless, any change in the focus of IS research should be accompanied by the acknowledgment that culture operates across different levels, which might simultaneously shape and influence sales force attitudes and behaviors (Panagopoulos 2009). According to this view, culture is manifested at the national, industrial, and organizational levels, which might interact to influence salespeople. Consider, for instance, a Spanish salesperson working for IBM's affiliate in Madrid. The salesperson is influenced by (1) his or her national culture, (2) the industry culture, and (3) IBM's global organizational culture. Thus, the salesperson might behave differently than a Spanish salesperson working in Spain for another organization or in another industry. An apparent implication of acknowledging the existence and interplay of different levels of culture is that researchers need to model such interactions among levels of culture when studying global sales phenomena.

Many other topics remain completely unexplored in the literature, and seem likely to be of significant use to managers. Attention should be directed at cultural differences both among sales force members and between salespeople and customers, relationship management with international partners, knowledge structures and information from foreign markets, the interface between sales and other functional areas, price competition, understanding of export procedures and bureaucracy abroad, and human resource management in the IS area. The development of a skills-and-knowledge typology for success in the IS arena could also be a fruitful area for research. Another critical area is likely to be the interplay between culture and ethics, particularly concerning how home-country nationals operate in foreign cultures that may have significantly different ethical philosophies from their own. Furthermore, the influence of Western business practices on the ethical beliefs and practices of developing economies is also likely to be fruitful.

Finally, there might be opportunities to explore and uncover new promising constructs that have the potential to enrich our knowledge on IS processes and activities. In particular, there might be situations in which a construct is only applicable in a certain cultural context and may or may not generalize across other settings. Recent studies have emphasized how interpersonal and business relationship development might occur in a different manner across countries. Further, they send a strong signal that important differences exist in how selling processes may function outside Europe and the United States. For example, there is evidence suggesting that the notions of *guanxi* in China and *ubuntu* in Africa can dominate interorganizational relationships (Steenkamp 2005) and can have several implications for studying how people behave in groups (e.g., within the context of buyer–seller relationships or within a selling team). Specifically, *ubuntu* is the sense of solidarity or brotherhood that arises among people within groups and influences how people behave, whereas *guanxi* refers to social networking and relationship formation between two individuals where both parties derive some kind of benefit. Also, in the Middle East, bargaining is considered an inherent characteristic of the selling process; however, it is unacceptable for two people to bargain when they are bound

Table 3
GLOBE's Cultural Dimensions (House et al. 2002) and Their Possible Applications in
International Sales Research

Dimension	Definition	Applications in International Sales Research
Human orientation	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.	Organizational Citizenship Behaviors Leadership Behaviors
Performance orientation	The extent to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.	Sales Control Systems Sales Compensation Sales Contests
Future orientation	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification.	Motivation Customer Orientation
Assertiveness	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships.	Customer Relationships Leadership Behaviors
In-group collectivism	The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.	Team Selling Organizational Citizenship Behaviors
Societal collectivism	The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.	Organizational Commitment Organizational Identification

by reciprocity or by other social relations (Khuri 1968). A fourth, less-known example is concerned with the Greek notion of *philotimo.* Deeply embedded in the Greek culture, *philotimo* means "love of honor" and is associated with values such as politeness, generosity, self-sacrificing, reliability, dutifulness, honesty, respect, love, conscientiousness, and morality (Vassiliou and Vassiliou 1973). The concept can have many prominent implications for studying how salespeople operate in their work setting, especially within the context of a selling team. This is because *philotimo* can regulate salespeople's behaviors in that they conform to group norms due to a sense of self-respect rather than coercive influence tactics from their supervisors. According to Triandis and Vassiliou, someone who has *philotimo* "behaves towards members of his/her in-group the way they expect him/her to behave" (1972, pp. 308–309). Conversely, being *aphilotimo*s (i.e., the opposite of being *philotimos*) means that one betrays the in-group, something that is considered the worst offense in the Greek value system (Triandis and Vassiliou 1972; Vassiliou and Vassiliou 1973).

Based on the results of the literature review undertaken, as well as on the topics discussed hereinabove, Table 4 lists a research agenda of topics that we view as important to IS research and that should be further pursued. Taken together with Table 3 and its associated discussion about different approaches to operationalize national culture, we consider this to represent a preliminary framework for future research.

At this point, because of the variety of topics in need of attention, it is virtually impossible to generate a comprehensive

set of specific hypotheses for future work—such a list would be prohibitively long. Figure 3 presents a broad theoretical framework that brings together the various strands already discussed, displaying critical aspects of the international sales environment and their interaction with more general factors, which prior non-IS research has modeled as influencing salesperson behavior. More specifically, both Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1977; see also Churchill et al. 1985) and Bagozzi (1978, 1980) presented seminal work on the determinants of sales performance, which are summarized in the four boxes on the lefthand side of Figure 3. However, that early work did not take into account the influence of the international environment on salesperson behavior. Four broad categories are shown at the top and bottom of Figure 3, moderating the relationships between key antecedents and salesperson behavior (already well established in non-IS work). These categories together take in the specific research topics presented in Table 4. Specifically, "general culture factors" represents the influence of broad national culture, as in Hofstede's work, or perhaps the more recent GLOBE study. "Cultural idiosyncrasies," such as *ubuntu,* are also likely to be influential. "Expatriate factors" represent the various issues concerning how those working in foreign environments may behave, and the possible problems in managing them. Finally, "global business factors" take into account many critical aspects of the nature of today's multinational commercial environments, which may also be of major interest to researchers. However, there are likely to be many interactions among these concepts;

Table 4
A Proposed Research Agenda for IS Research

Example Topic	Questions for Future Research
SFA/CRM	Are there factors that organizations need to consider when implementing an international sales-based CRM system? If so, what are they?
	Does national culture play a role in technology acceptance? In what way?
	Do customers' views of CRM systems differ across cultures? How?
	Is technology affecting communication across cultures? In what way?
Global Account Management	How should compensation be arranged?
	How can conflict among salespeople be alleviated?
	What is the optimal organizational design?
	Is there a best mix of talent to address global account management? If so, what is that mix?
Customer Management/ Salesperson Behaviors	Is it realistic to pursue loyal behaviors to the same extent across cultures? Are some cultures more prone to loyalty?
	Is customer orientation universally effective across cultures? Does selling orientation work better than customer orientation in some contexts? What selling approach is more appropriate in government-regulated economies?
	Do buyers in certain contexts expect salespeople to be more adaptive to their needs than in other contexts? If so, in which contexts?
	Are there cultural differences in the buyer-seller relationship? If so, what are these differences?
	How do buyers from different cultures define trust and commitment? Do social norms influence trust/commitment perceptions?
	How can relationship management be enhanced in different parts of the world and between sellers-buyers in different cultures?
International Sales Negotiations	How do sellers and buyers negotiate across cultures?
	Can the same negotiation strategy be effectively used regardless of the cultural context?
	Does the influence of nonverbal communication differ across cultures? Do people in different cultures translate nonverbal messages differently?
	How does national culture interact with industry- and organization-specific factors in influencing negotiating styles?
	How can price competition and its role in sales best be understood across cultures? Are there certain contexts that are more prone to price competition?
Recruiting, Training, and Control Systems	Should human resource systems be designed locally or centrally? Is standardization or adaptation the best strategy?
	Are there differences across countries regarding sales talent management processes? If so, what are these differences?
	Do companies in developed countries face different problems in recruiting and selecting salespeople than their counterparts in less-developed countries? If so, what are these differences?
	How is sales training material transferred across cultures?
	Can the same sales control system have a different effect on salespeople in different cultures?
	Is negative stereotyping toward the sales profession commonly held across nations? Which societies perceive the sales profession more positively and why?
	How can knowledge best be developed about foreign markets, exporting regulation, bureaucracy, and so on?
	Is there an ideal profile for international selling? If so, what is that profile?
Expatriation/ Repatriation	How should an expatriate sales force be managed?
	How should salespeople be repatriated?
	How should prospective expatriates be prepared?
Leadership/Supervision	Is leadership style a function of culture? Are some cultures more prone to specific leadership styles?
	Do salespeople in certain countries expect their leaders to follow a specific style of management?
	How do salespeople from different countries respond to closer supervision?
	Does the level of performance expectations have differential effects to salespeople across countries?
	Are salespeople equally responsive to motivation methods?
	Do salespeople differ across different cultures? If so, in what way?
Organizational Design	Is the relationship between sales and other functions (e.g., marketing) influenced by the cultural context? If so, in what way?
	Do multinationals adjust the structure and design of the sales organization to idiosyncrasies of each country in which they operate? Should they?
	How do salespeople from different countries respond to a narrower (wider) span of control?
	Is personal selling equally important across different cultural, economic, and legal contexts?
Sales Ethics	How do expatriate salespeople interpret and respond to ethical standards of their host country?
	How (and why) do ethical ideas and practices differ across countries?
	Is ethics a universally applied notion, or are there differences in what sellers and buyers accept as being ethical?
	Do salespeople from different cultures respond differently to corporate sustainability programs?
	How have Western business practices influenced ethical standards of developing economies?

Figure 3
Basic Framework for International Sales Theory Development
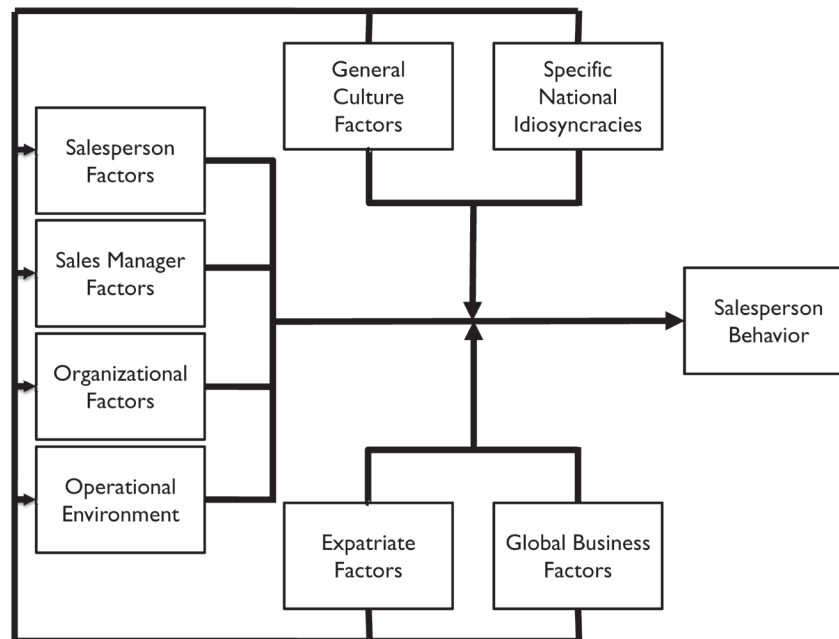
aspects of them may even fit into or influence the left-hand side concepts at times. For example, national culture may result in specific differences in sales management tools used or salesperson individual differences. These interactions are represented also in the model.

CHALLENGES IN CONDUCTING INTERNATIONAL SALES RESEARCH

The preceding analysis and discussion have helped to highlight several topics of interest to sales academics who wish to pursue research across countries and cultures. Engaging in IS research, however, implies that researchers may be confronted with myriad challenges. These challenges span from conceptual and data collection issues to research organizational difficulties. While these and similar issues have received attention in the wider international and cross-cultural marketing literature, they are conspicuous by their absence in the IS literature. In what follows, we elaborate on these challenges in the hope of moving them to the forefront of future debate and scholarship in IS.

Conceptual Challenges

The first challenge concerns what is commonly referred to as construct equivalence. Although a detailed discussion on the concept of construct equivalence is beyond the scope of the present paper, it generally involves the examination of the following three aspects for a given construct (Singh 1995): (1) conceptual/functional equivalence (i.e., whether a concept is expressed similarly and serves the same function across cultures), (2) instrument equivalence (i.e., whether questionnaire stimuli are interpreted similarly across cultures), and (3) measurement equivalence (i.e., whether scale items equivalently measure the underlying notion). These aspects should always be examined in order to ensure that data from different cultures can be meaningfully compared. However, while construct equivalence is well established in the international marketing literature, there is little coverage of the issue in the IS field. One exception is the work by Reynolds and Simintiras (2000), who examine the impact of various types of cross-cultural equivalence on each stage of the sales negotiation process; their work provides useful guidelines to IS researchers aiming at determining the universality of constructs and the validity of measures across cultures.

Unfortunately, the fact that the meaning and functioning of constructs (especially higher-order constructs) can differ substantially across cultures poses many problems to IS researchers. It is important to note, however, that this situation may not only appear in studies involving comparisons between emerging countries, but it can also appear in studies involving comparisons between well-developed Western countries. Consider the following example: in the Finnish language, only one word exists to describe both leadership and management: *johtaminen.* Specifically, the word *johtaa* is used for both "to lead" and to "manage." People, however, mentally distinguish

their separate meanings. Thus, to lead someone is identified with intellectual influence, whereas to manage someone is identified with the operative, administrative influence/function. However, when Finnish people talk about titles and status they use the word *johtaja* to describe leaders and directors, and another word, *päällikkö,* to describe managers. Conducting a cross-national study on sales leader behaviors should take these differences into account, along with how constructs function and are used across different cultures if meaningful implications are to be derived.

Instrument equivalence biases are also an issue, and may occur for several reasons (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998). In particular, biases can arise when subjects across cultures respond differently to measures due to differences in demographics (e.g., age, education), instrument administration procedures, or interviewer language. For example, there is evidence showing that respondents might differ in how they respond to survey items across cultures (Harzing 2006). These differences can be attributed to different response styles, such as extreme response and acquiescence stemming from idiosyncratic cultural characteristics (e.g., power distance, uncertainty avoidance).

The aforementioned examples provide an illustration of how important it is to examine whether constructs originating from developed countries, mostly in the United States, can be successfully transferred to other cultures (i.e., construct transferability). As previously mentioned, it might also be fruitful to study new constructs that are relevant in a given sociocultural context and may have the power to better explain behaviors and attitudes.

Data Collection Challenges

If there is one certain commonality across countries and cultures, it is that organizations are becoming increasingly reluctant to share proprietary data for research purposes. This is especially true when sharing involves sales force data. Carter, Dixon, and Moncrief (2008), for instance, have recently provided evidence that sales studies are more difficult to complete compared to other marketing (nonsales) samples. While this is a common issue in all sales research, this reluctance is further elevated in cross-cultural IS research, which often calls for gaining buy-in from either a small number of multinational organizations, or many different domestic companies, with both cases compounding the problem. One typical strategy for overcoming this obstacle might be for researchers to form some type of an alliance with a multinational organization's headquarters. Unfortunately, even if researchers obtain headquarters' commitment to the research project, there is no guarantee that global subsidiaries will cooperate and allow access to their local sales forces. Thus, if such problems occur, gaining buy-in from these organizations should normally be best pursued through a global network of local researchers that can form personal relationships with each country's affiliate on a local basis.

Even if researchers manage to gain buy-in, other issues may stall the data collection procedure. An important issue in the context of IS research is related to legislation concerning employee data privacy. The ramifications of such legislation are so many and so important that they may quickly result in the abandonment of a research project. In fact, regulation regarding employee privacy varies greatly across countries, with each country taking its own approach to collecting and releasing employee data (Privacy International 2007; Roberts 2008). In the United States, for example, privacy is conceived primarily as a commodity controlled through the free market with protection focused on narrow categories of sensitive data, such as data held by financial institutions and data relating to children (Ashworth and Free 2006). In the European Union, however, the 95/46/EC Data Protection Directive requires all member states to protect the "fundamental right to privacy" of individuals and restrict the transferring of data to countries that do not ensure an equal level of protection (Ashworth and Free 2006). From a data collection perspective, such strict EU laws imply that getting firms to share proprietary data on salesperson attitudes (e.g., satisfaction, loyalty) and performance might be difficult. This can be further complicated when the transferring of employee-related data involves a non-EU country (e.g., the United States). In addition, legislation may prohibit the collection of secondary/syndicated data on customer performance, as is the case with pharmaceutical companies operating in the European Union, where—because of health-care privacy concerns—companies in many EU countries can collect data only at the sales territory level (rather than at the individual physician level).

In addition, much international selling may also occur in small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), and in many countries, SMEs may be far more important than multinationals for the economy. Yet SMEs' strategies and processes for selling globally are very different than those of multinationals. For example, SMEs have far less specialization, place more importance on an entrepreneurial spirit, may rely more on outsourced sales forces, and are not likely to adopt information-intensive decision processes. We need to understand these differences and what topics may be most relevant to SMEs compared to multinationals. This has the potential to cause issues with data quantity, particularly when there is a necessity to run sophisticated multivariate analysis.

Another challenge is that data collection methods may be unequally effective across countries. In many emerging countries, for instance, common data collection methods, such as using mailing lists and online surveys, may not be applicable. Consider, for example, the case of China, where surveys di-

rected at industrial populations (e.g., executives, employees) cannot be distributed effectively through the mail because of problems with the infrastructure of the Chinese postal system and people may not trust the mail survey (Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2004). In such contexts, researchers can rely more on personal relationships to distribute surveys and increase response rates (Roy, Walters, and Sherriff 2001). However, this may pose additional problems in comparing data from different countries that have been collected via different methods. A related problem that can emerge in cross-national mail surveys is concerned with the dramatic variability in response rates due to cultural influences (Harzing 2000). Again, this poses the issue of comparability across samples because of the usage of different data collection methods and response rates achieved.

Given these difficulties, how feasible is it to collect data from multiple countries and multiple sources? What should IS scholars do to increase firms' participation? One particularly useful nexus of guidelines regarding how to increase firm participation in academic surveys is offered by Carter, Dixon, and Moncrief (2008); they find that response rates and obtained samples sizes can be positively affected by the judicious selection of response facilitators. Their focus, however, is not on conducting IS research. Building on their recommendations as well as our own experience, we propose that it will be fruitful to examine the possibility of building a global panel of international firms, as well as building collaboration among researchers across countries. This could significantly increase the chances of collecting high-quality data from a truly international sample of organizations. For instance, the GSSI is currently working on a Global Sales Barometer to provide benchmark data from at least ten different countries that may be a first step toward the data issue. In addition, conferences such as the National Conference in Sales Management, the Sales SIG of AMA, the Houston Conference in Selling & Sales Management, the Sales Force Productivity Conference, the New Horizons in Professional Selling & Sales Management Conference, and the GSSI provide venues for bringing together researchers from multiple countries. These organizations could also deliberately expand their reach by offering Web forums, research tutorials, and faculty exchange (physically or electronically). Activities that help to build relationships around the world can help to promote the globalization of sales research.

Research Organization Challenges

Due to the internationalization of markets, segments, companies, managers, and students, essentially the total environment in which sales scholars work, a key issue is the researcher's ability to develop and run projects with teams and networks of researchers, without isolated individuals and laboratories. With the appearance of organizations like the GSSI come new opportunities to implement mutually beneficial partnerships with large companies or professional groups who are interested in developing a deep understanding of their relevant key success factors. If IS has become a logical approach to sales in the twenty-first century, then perhaps one can conceive of a similar change in the nature of contemporary scientific sales research.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE ROAD AHEAD

Understanding how selling and sales management are being conducted in all parts of the world is an interesting and intellectually stimulating process. We need to provide answers to questions that allow for global commerce to act more efficiently and better serve customer needs as well as allow scholars to more clearly understand the underlying way in which IS works. As demonstrated in this paper, many topics deserve the attention of the global community of sales scholars as well as needing additional theoretical development. To capitalize on this opportunity, researchers must face and overcome several problems, which can range from differences in the meaning and functioning of constructs across cultures to methodological and practical constraints imposed in conducting IS research. Despite the potential problems, the area represents a potentially fruitful and promising subject that is much in demand by practitioners and academics alike. While there will be challenges, this represents a way to marry sales research to international business research as well as looking at sales research from a more strategic point of view. Accomplishing either of these will help to elevate the level of the research and open up new outlets for academic sales work. Recent developments in IS work, conferences, and collaborations testify to the promise of the area.

The primary contribution of this paper is the review and synthesis of global sales articles in major journals over the past three decades. More specifically, we use this synthesis to develop a critical analysis of key challenges for both aspiring and veteran sales researchers. This analysis provides a fruitful agenda for future work in sales, both setting out a map of critical theoretical areas in need of advancement and also in pointing out vital areas of methodological improvement that are needed for IS research to move forward in a scientific sense. In a more specific sense, one can divide key tasks for advancing IS knowledge into those concerning the application of our existing U.S./Western culture-centric models to an international context and those concerning the development of specific new theory regarding IS.

Regarding our existing models and theories, developed primarily in the U.S. and other Western cultures, further

work still needs to be done in synthesizing this knowledge. In particular, where possible, meta-analytic studies would provide fruitful areas of enquiry for sales researchers. Such work may give evidence as to how generalizable our models are across various contexts. Furthermore, testing the validity of existing articles in terms of equivalence, translation, sampling, and so forth is also essential for transferring our models across cultures, and further work on improving methodological issues will also help advance the area. In terms of new areas of specific new theory relevant to IS, we provide a comprehensive list of useful new topics, drawing from existing work and research. This research agenda should provide significant inspiration both to aspiring sales researchers beginning their career, as well as more experienced scholars looking for new challenges. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we believe that cross-national collaboration is the primary way in which scientific advances can be made in as complex an area as IS. Thus, we hope that this paper will stimulate more global collaboration among researchers toward advancing our knowledge in this important area in the near future and that we are able to offer some insight into the best and most promising ways to proceed in this regard.

NOTES

1. In a few instances (e.g., Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer 1996), we selected articles for inclusion that were directly dealing with IS research topics although the respondents comprising the samples in these articles were not necessarily labeled as "salespeople." However, these respondents were actively involved in conducting selling activities in an international/export setting, and they can thus be regarded as "salespeople" in the broader sense of the term and irrespective of the function that they represent in the selling organization. Although it would be easy to skip articles like the aforementioned ones, it is our contention that their inclusion allows us to capture studies that fall within the realm of IS research, but would have been discarded had we limited our selection to only those articles that specifically label their samples as "salespeople."

2. The list of journals selected for inclusion in our literature review is by no means exhaustive, given the criteria that we employ to select articles for inclusion. For instance, two premier journals, the *Journal of Retailing (JR)* and the *Journal of Consumer Research (JCR),* were not included in the literature review because their editorial focus is on publishing articles from the business-to-consumer/retailing domain. In addition, other journals representing the broader domain of business/management research—such as the *Journal of Business Ethics (JBE)* and the *International Journal of Human Resource Management (IJHRM)*—were not included in the analysis. Although the exclusion of such journals represents a potential limitation of our study, it was deemed necessary in order to make selection of articles a realistic task, especially when one considers the great number of journals that exists.

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APPENDIX
LIST OF PUBLISHED IS ARTICLES IN THE PERIOD 1980–2009

Study	Type of Study	Major Findings
Dawson (1980)	Theoretical	Broad theoretical discussion on how the strategy of economic development might be affecting the way personal selling is conducted in a given country.
Still (1981)	Theoretical	Differences in cultures (i.e., ethnocentrism and polycentrism) affect sales management activities. Lists several anecdotal examples of companies facing difficulties in managing salespeople in non-U.S. cultures.
Edwards, Cummings, and Schlacter (1984)	Theoretical	Provides an evaluation process for solving the Paris-Peoria problem in promoting, training, and compensating salespeople from different countries and performing different sales jobs.
Campbell (1985)	Empirical	Firms in Germany and Japan organize their sales teams differently. Japanese suppliers more frequently organize salespeople by type of customer and have more frequent interactions with their customers.
Graham (1985)	Empirical	Based on exchange theory, the study collects data from Japanese and U.S. businesspeople. Cross-cultural marketing negotiations are difficult; the effect of cultural variation of the parties on negotiation outcomes is mediated by the process of marketing negotiations.
Walle (1986)	Theoretical	Uses Hall's theory of culture. Views personal selling as more than an exchange process within the realms of an international context.
Apasu, Ichikawa, and Graham (1987)	Empirical	Study shows differences in how Japanese and U.S. salespeople respond to corporate values and in sales management practices; however, some similarities are also observed.
Ghauri (1988)	Empirical	Analyzes the negotiations between Swedish firms as sellers, and firms in developing countries (i.e., India and Nigeria) as buyers. The role of the respective government and environmental differences emerge as factors on the process of negotiation itself.
Hill and Birdseye (1989)	Empirical	Four major cultural elements affect MNCs recruitment practices across 45 countries: education, ethnic composition, religious orientation, and social class environment; selection criteria are weighted differently in overseas situations, where level of education gets extra attention. The authors argue that use of standardized hiring criteria overseas may be dangerous.
Weinstein and Still (1990)	Theoretical	Develops a four-step model of international sales negotiation. Analyzes the role of communication in international sales negotiations.
Hill and Still (1990)	Empirical	Descriptive study on how MNCs organize their overseas sales forces. Industry habits rather than environmental factors account for major differences in subsidiary sales structures abroad.
Dubinsky et al. (1991)	Empirical	Findings from a study conducted in the United States, Japan, and South Korea indicate that nationality influences salespeople's beliefs about the ethics of selling practices and the need for company policies to guide those practices.
Chonko, Tanner, and Smith (1991)	Empirical	Discusses how and with what success U.S. MNCs are using their international sales forces in gathering international marketing research data. The use of expatriates is not a universal process; rather, many practices are in use.
Tsalikis, Deshields, and LaTour (1991)	Empirical	Study findings show that for an American audience, a sales pitch in standard American accent evoked more favorable judgments on all effectiveness dimensions than Greek-accented English.
Rosenbloom and Larsen (1992)	Empirical	Deals with how foreign manufacturers can establish distribution channels in U.S. markets. On four of the six most basic marketing functions needed to enter and sustain distribution to business and organizational markets in the United States (market coverage, sales contact, inventory holding, and order processing), the manufacturers gave industrial distributors very high marks.
Anderson and Rosenbloom (1992)	Theoretical	Argues that sales managers must be culturally sensitive to succeed in today's marketplace; gives examples of how to accomplish that.
Cravens et al. (1992)	Empirical	Compares sales control systems between Australia and the United States; finds few differences between the two countries.
Ingram, Day, and Lucas (1992)	Theoretical	Discusses the use of global intermediaries as an important selling mode in international markets.
Herche and Swenson (1992)	Theoretical	Proposes "the global productivity matrix" as a method for setting global sales force deployment/allocation strategies.
Mintu and Calantone (1992)	Empirical	Shows that the concept and measure of role ambiguity is applicable to cross-cultural research settings; however, some differences were found between the United States and Canada.

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Reference	Type	Description
Dubinsky et al. (1992)	Empirical	Results indicate general consistency in role stress processes across the United States, Japan, and Korea. The constructs of role conflict and ambiguity may well be applicable to sales organizations in different countries.
Cook and Hersce (1992)	Theoretical	The authors argue that assessment center technique is an excellent tool for making selection, training, and promotion decisions but has to be adapted to local conditions.
Hill and Allaway (1993)	Empirical	Finds differences regarding how MNCs control and evaluate their foreign-based sales forces across 45 countries.
Agarwal (1993)	Empirical	Found several differences between the United States and India regarding the influence of formalization on role stress processes. Uses Hofstede's concepts of individualism and power distance.
Dubinsky, Kotabe, and Lim (1993)	Empirical	Examines the effects of organizational fairness on Japanese salespeople. The findings indicate that equity theory and organizational fairness may be somewhat generalizable to Oriental cultures although some dimensions of fairness were either unrelated or reversely related to work outcomes.
Samli, Wirth, and Wills (1994)	Empirical	Argues that international sales management is one of the keys in developing a competitive edge for high-tech companies. Presents a model and examines its key attributes based on a survey of U.S. firms. Makes recommendations to improve international high-tech sales management on the basis of seven factors.
Schuster and Keith (1994)	Empirical	Based on interviews conducted in Singapore, Thailand, and Japan, the study determines factors that might affect the decision of a firm to employ an integrated or independent sales force when entering foreign markets.
Honeycutt and Ford (1995)	Theoretical	Discusses how sales managers make decisions regarding the management of an international sales force according to cultural characteristics of each country.
Leuthesser, LaBahn, and Harich (1995)	Empirical	Presents a method for manufacturers to assess how their support efforts are received by distributors based on a survey of Mexican distributors who assessed their relationships with U.S. manufacturers. Shows that manufacturers providing training for distributor sales representatives are more favorably evaluated.
Thorelli and Glowacka (1995)	Empirical	Reports on factors thought to have an affect on decisions of purchasing professionals to source internationally. Results reveal country stereotyping in terms of industrialized versus developing countries, reliance on personal experience, and compliance with top management's perceived interests among the decision rules used by buyers to reduce perceived risk. The findings also suggest the importance of foreign suppliers' establishing warehouses or sales offices in the United States.
James and Hill (1995)	Empirical	Descriptive study of market environment as perceived by salespeople in foreign markets. Two groups of salespeople emerged: technical and nontechnical sellers who should be managed differently.
Herche, Swenson, and Verbeke (1996)	Empirical	Assesses the appropriateness of administering personal selling measures to sales personnel outside the country/culture where the measures were developed. Evaluates the psychometric properties of SOCO and ADAPTS, in a cross-national context, revealing mixed support for the etic approach. Argues that the development of theory on how certain aspects of culture affect various sales activities would make sales constructs more generalizable.
Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer (1996)	Empirical	Describes an investigation into the individual, organizational, and demographic-related antecedents to industrial negotiation encounters in the Philippines and the United States. Results suggest that the antecedents leading to cooperative negotiation behaviors differ between Filipino and U.S. sales representatives. Uses Hofstede's (1980) power distance and individualism dimensions to explain findings.
Mengüç (1996)	Empirical	Tests whether the influence of market orientation on a sample of Turkish salespeople is similar to that observed in prior U.S. studies. Finds similarities and differences between the two countries.
Bush and Ingram (1996)	Theoretical	Addresses training of salespeople selling to international markets and develops a conceptual framework that incorporates the role of intercultural communication in developing international buyer–seller relationships.
Guy and Patton (1996)	Theoretical	Explores the nature of culture shock and sojourner adjustment in terms of their impact on expatriate sales performance and turnover.
Honeycutt and Ford (1996)	Theoretical	Discusses issues and gives guidelines related to international sales force hiring and training based on anecdotal examples.
Oh (1996)	Empirical	Provides guidelines to U.S. sales managers on how to develop relationships with Japanese customers and how to penetrate the Japanese market.
Dubinsky and Hanafy (1996)	Empirical	Reports the results of a study that examined non-U.S. politicians' government selling approaches as a complement to export selling efforts.

(continues)

Study	Type of Study	Major Findings
Lewin and Johnston (1997)	Theoretical	Discusses issues and gives guidelines related to international sales force management.
Dubinsky et al. (1997)	Empirical	Findings indicate that values have some influence on behavioral and attitudinal outcomes of salespeople in Japan and the United States. Some differences, though, were found between U.S. and Japanese salespeople.
Bhuian and Abdul-Muhmin (1997)	Empirical	The authors explore the nature of job satisfaction and organizational commitment among "guest worker" expatriate sales forces in Saudi Arabia.
Lee and Mathur (1997)	Empirical	Results suggest that the overall influence of formalization on role stress processes of Korean salespeople is similar to U.S. samples although some differences exist.
Lackman, Hanson, and Lanasa (1997)	Theoretical	Four cultures are compared in terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Substantial differentiation in line with Hofstede's dimensions is required across cultures in the industrial sales function to generate effective marketing results.
Marshall, Brouthers, and Lamb (1998)	Theoretical	Outlines the goal tendencies of client firms operating within the four main contemporary political economies: market, production, social-market, and command. Based on these goal tendencies, issues are discussed that influence the strategic direction of international sales organizations. Argues that culture alone is no longer a sufficient criterion on which to base international sales strategies.
Harich and LaBahn (1998)	Empirical	Drawing on interviews with Mexican purchasing directors, the study provides a working definition of salesperson role performance that includes customers' perceptions of cultural sensitivity as a key dimension. A conceptual framework is presented that identifies the antecedents and consequences of salesperson role performance.
Hanna and Srivastava (1998)	Empirical	Evaluates the nature and dimensionality of motivational forces influencing the behavior of Japanese sales representatives and sales managers. Results suggest that salesperson behavior in Japan might, in many respects, parallel salesperson behavior in cultures such as the United States though there are many differences between the two countries. Uses Hofstede's individualism dimension of culture.
Kamins, Johnston, and Graham (1998)	Empirical	Based on Hall's theory of cultural context and exchange theory, the study investigates negotiation between U.S. and Japanese buyers and sellers. Findings support the existence of differences between the two countries.
Liu (1998)	Empirical	The perceived importance placed on various kinds of organizational rewards differs between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese salespeople. Uses Hofstede's culture dimensions.
Honeycutt et al. (1999a)	Empirical	Respondents from global and domestic firms in China and Slovakia reported similar managerial practices for selecting salespeople while greater differences were evident in the sales training area.
Honeycutt et al. (1999b)	Empirical	In all three countries, the United States, New Zealand, and Philippines, students most preferred marketing management as a career path, while few, if any, selected industrial sales.
Schultz, Evans, and Good (1999)	Theoretical	Explores key issues relating intercultural interaction to relational selling, as well as strategies and tactics designed to encourage these interactions.
Larsen and Rosenbloom (1999)	Theoretical	Based on path-goal theory of leadership and Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the paper offers several general propositions linking the use of different leadership styles by global sales managers to varying cultural environments.
Agarwal, DeCarlo, and Vyas (1999)	Empirical	Presents a framework for understanding the role of culture in relationships between leadership behaviors and organizational commitment. Based on samples from the United States and India, the study founds that the two most relevant cultural factors affecting perceptions of leadership may be Hofstede's "individualism" and "power distance."
Money and Graham (1999)	Empirical	A model of salesperson performance and satisfaction that is tested using data collected in Japan and the United States seems to work well for both cultural groups. However, culture appears to moderate the relationships among constructs. Uses individualism and context as cultural dimensions.
DeCarlo, Rody, and DeCarlo (1999)	Empirical	Results indicate significant differences between Australian and U.S. sales personnel regarding the relationships of perceptual congruence of management behavior and its effects on salesperson job satisfaction and effort.
Naude and McLean (1999)	Theoretical	Theoretical paper discussing how to structure a GAM program in an organization.
Weilbaker (1999)	Theoretical	Theoretical paper discussing how to compensate global account managers.
Weilbaker and Bennion (1999)	Empirical	Based on perceptual mapping, the authors conclude that training needs differ across the United States and six European countries.
Ferrell, Ingram, and LaForge (2000)	Theoretical	Based on research, practice, and government initiatives, the paper develops guidelines to promote legal and ethical conduct in a global sales organization.
Engle and Barnes (2000)	Empirical	Significant SFA usage, belief, and sales performance differences among three countries were found.

Study	Type	Description
Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer (2000)	Empirical	Shows that problem-solving levels between high- (i.e., Philippines) and low- (i.e., United States) context groups were significantly different. Uses Hall's concept of cultural context.
Blodgett et al. (2001)	Empirical	Finds several differences between U.S. and Taiwanese salespeople regarding their ethical sensitivity. Uses Hofstede's dimensions.
Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser (2001)	Empirical	Shows that there are differences regarding the degree to which different negotiation tactics are considered morally acceptable across six countries.
Birkinshaw, Toulan, and Arnold (2001)	Empirical	Examines GAM across six countries and finds support for the two theoretical perspectives examined.
Baldauf, Cravens, and Piercy (2001)	Empirical	Reports some differences between the United Kingdom and Austria regarding the effects of control systems and territory design on sales force performance.
Holt and McDonald (2001)	Theoretical	Based on role theory, boundary role theory, and the literature on buyer–seller dyads, a conceptual framework for understanding the roles and activities of global account managers is presented.
Millman and Wilson (2001)	Empirical	Develops a three-category typology of GAM structuring in the United States and Europe.
Cuddihy and Weilbaker (2001)	Empirical	Differences were detected between the United States and Ireland regarding 14 selling abilities; uses Hofstede's and Hall's frameworks.
Honeycutt, Karande, and Jantan (2002)	Empirical	Based on a sample of Malaysian firms, the authors find that companies engaging in high-tech sales training practices report significantly greater levels of needs determination, objective setting, instructional methods, and training program content than their low-tech counterparts. Also, firms that employ high-tech training methods report teaching the "soft area" of salesmanship via computer.
Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer (2002)	Empirical	Shows that there are differences between the United States and the Philippines regarding the influence of demographic variables on the problem-solving approach in negotiation. Uses Hall's, Gouldner's, and Hofstede's frameworks to explain findings.
Katsikea and Skarmeas (2003)	Empirical	Study shows that compared to poorly performing export units, highly effective export sales organizations are characterized by higher levels of export sales management control and organizational design.
Rouziès, Segalla, and Weitz (2003)	Empirical	Results indicate that the regional culture of decision makers has a strong effect on their choice of recruitment and promotion policies in six European countries. Draws on Hofstede's framework to form hypotheses.
Wilson and Millman (2003)	Theoretical	Introduces a contextual model of political–entrepreneurial behavior and integrates this with previously published work on the political entrepreneur, the model of global account manager boundary-spanning behavior, and the relationship development model.
Harvey et al. (2003)	Theoretical	Provides a theory-based explanation for the adaptive variations in a supply manager's role within a GAM relationship.
Katsikea and Morgan (2003)	Empirical	Based on a sample of UK exporters, the authors conclude that the sales management function is more effectively organized and managed at advanced levels of export involvement.
Pornpitakpan (2003)	Empirical	Based on samples from China, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the study shows that collectivist cultures will react favorably to cultural adaptation by Americans.
Young and Albaum (2003)	Empirical	Differences are found between Australia and the United States pertaining to the relationships of a newly developed construct of trust with other constructs.
Rouziès and Macquin (2003)	Empirical	Shows that culture has an affect on the relationship between governance structures and salespersons' behavioral strategies across five European countries. Uses cultural frameworks of Hofstede, Trompenaars/Hampden-Turner, Hall, and Ronen and Shankar.
Fang, Palmatier, and Evans (2004)	Empirical	Using data collected in both the United States and China, the study provides evidence to suggest that the effects of goal difficulty and specificity on sales behaviors and performance may vary across different cultures.
Chaisrakeo and Speece (2004)	Empirical	Shows that intercultural communication competence is an important moderator in the relationship between culture and negotiating style.
Piercy, Low, and Cravens (2004)	Empirical	Finds differences regarding the effects of sales management's behavior- and compensation-based control on salesperson and organizational performance across Greece, India, and Malaysia. The authors draw attention to the dangers in the transfer of sales management practices across different countries without careful attention to local differences. Uses the four dimensions of Hofstede.
Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer (2004)	Empirical	Based on a sample of international salespeople, the study's results run counter to findings in domestic studies assessing the relationship between experience and the problem-solving negotiating strategy.

(continues)

Study	Type of Study	Major Findings
Dawes and Massey (2005)	Empirical	Finds that there was a surprisingly low level of interpersonal conflict between marketing managers and sales managers and that there were no differences between the United Kingdom and Australia.
Shi et al. (2005)	Empirical	Proposes a framework of GAM capability, which comprises three processes.
Katsikea et al. (2005)	Empirical	The results indicate that export market expansion strategy has important implications for a firm's export sales management arrangements.
Segalla et al. (2006)	Empirical	Based on insights from diverse lines of inquiry, Ronen and Shankar's cultural representation of Europe (Anglo, Latin, and German) and two dimensions from Hofstede (uncertainty avoidance, individualism), the authors examine both the choice of implementing a variable pay plan and the way variable rewards should be distributed across six European countries. The results illustrate the importance of considering national culture when designing sales force compensation policies applied across multiple countries.
Iyer, Sharma, and Evanschitzky (2006)	Theoretical	Examines the issue of whether interpersonal relationships are critical for global marketing of industrial products. In contrast to prior research's emphasis on interpersonal relationships, the authors propose that firms can both conceive and enhance marketing strategies based on developing high-quality and consistent processes, products, services, or outcomes.
Weeks et al. (2006)	Empirical	Important differences and similarities are uncovered between Mexican and U.S. salespeople regarding moral/ethical development, perceived ethical climate, and outcomes of perceived ethical climate. Uses Hofstede's four cultural dimensions to explain findings.
Katsikea, Theodosiou, and Morgan (2007)	Empirical	Based on a sample of UK-based small and medium-sized export firms, the study shows that psychic distance is a key construct that influences the development of effective export sales management strategies.
Theodosiou and Katsikea (2007)	Empirical	The results indicate that psychic distance moderates the relationship between behavior-based control and behavioral performance in a sample of UK exporters.
DeCarlo, Agarwal, and Vyas (2007)	Empirical	Shows that there are differences regarding the role of causal attributions of past performance on expectations of future performance between salespeople from independent (i.e., United States) and interdependent (i.e., India) national cultures. Uses Hofstede's individualism dimension.
Attia, Honeycutt, and Jantan (2008)	Theoretical	Proposes a framework that identifies and explains the relationships of input, mediating, and output variables for global sales training programs. Uses Hofstede's four dimensions and Hall's dimension of context. Suggests that cross-cultural sales training is more likely to succeed when the program is introduced by firms in lead cultures to subsidiaries/partners located in lag cultures that are similar and when the program is adapted to local training conditions.
Tanner et al. (2008)	Empirical	Present perceptions of sales executives from the United States, France, and Mexico regarding expectations for the future of the sales profession and sales position. Found that greater professionalization is needed in countries where the state of the profession is less developed. Argues that researchers should consider classifying sales research by sales strategy, rather than industry or country, unless those aspects are factors being studied.
Solberg (2008)	Empirical	The study addresses the way an exporter should manage its relationship with its intermediaries given different levels of performance ambiguity by exploring four different settings of performance ambiguity that involve cultural distance (external uncertainty) and product complexity (internal uncertainty) in a sample of Norwegian exporting companies. The results suggest that cultural distance and product complexity are two key contingency factors that moderate the role of relational mechanisms used by exporters in creating relationship quality with their foreign sales intermediaries.
Sa Vinhas and Anderson (2008)	Empirical	The study examines double compensation strategy by using data from firms operating in 20 countries. The authors find that manufacturers sacrifice short-term profits (by double compensation) when the expected costs associated with failing to compensate a channel that has responsibility for a sale increase.
Rouzies et al. (2009)	Empirical	The authors examine sales pay level and structure decisions in five European countries. Findings show that firms offer more take-home pay in countries with higher costs of living. The authors conclude that the level of tax regime should affect compensation actions for firms moving to Europe, as well as being inadvisable for U.S. firms to transfer their sales force compensation plan structures to Europe.

Notes: MNCs = multinational corporations; SOCO = selling orientation–customer orientation; ADAPTS = adaptive selling behaviors; GAM = global account management, SFA = sales force automation.