

Global Organizations and Supply Chain: new research avenues from IHRM

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Global Organizations and Supply Chain: New Research Avenues in the International Human Resource Management

Purpose: This article aims at proposing a research agenda in the intersection of strategic supply chain management and logistics (SCML) of global organizations from the perspective of international human resource management (IHRM).

Design/methodology/approach: To disclose the intellectual structure of research to date across both fields, the content of up to 280 articles dealing with IHRM and 174 papers addressing challenges in SCML in global organizations from a human resource management (HRM) viewpoint were analyzed. A stepwise hierarchical cluster and discriminant analysis were conducted to map a joint research agenda. Approaches from Upper Echelons theory and co-evolutionary theory of global organizations were adopted.

Findings: Top management teams are crucial to manage SCML successfully in today's global organizations. Research on this intersection should draw attention to find antecedents, consequences and the process showing how those talented people grouped in dispersed teams can be a source of competitive advantage. Six different areas of research are proposed. After discussing them, it is proposed that the mainstream should focus on the human capital, those key individuals of an organization that make things happen. In the near future, the global organization's competitiveness will be shaped by how the organization manages its Human Capital (HC) in SCML. Methodologies such as meta-analysis are suggested to summarize the extant literature on IHRM when applied to SCML in global organizations.

Research limitations/implications: The search was conducted in SSCI-ISIWok and Scopus databases. As a limitation, some articles and other scientific contributions not abstracted there were not included. Nevertheless, both searches enabled obtaining balanced results between scope and richness of content.

Originality/value: Only a marginal portion of literature reviews have been conducted by using mixed methods in the fields of IHRM and SCML. The results will be useful for scholars of both fields in their attempts to enlarge the knowledge boundaries in these areas. From a practitioner's viewpoint, this research may provide an integrative framework for global organizations to build a competitive advantage based on managing HC and its SCML strategically.

Keywords: International HRM; Global organization; Strategy; Logistics and Distribution; Supply Chain; Human Capital; Upper Echelons Theory; Co-evolutionary theory

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Introduction

Strategic supply chain management and logistics (SCML) are increasingly becoming crucial parts of economics and of firms' activities all over the world (Schuler *et al.*, 2002), regardless of the type of economy (emergent, transitional, advanced) or the type of firm (Kiessling and Harvey, 2005). According to World Bank and World Trade Organization data, from 2000 to 2011 the world GDP increased 96.9%, while world trade increased up to 194.9% in terms of exports and imports.

Intangible resources are more likely, than tangible ones, to yield a competitive advantage (Hitt *et al.*, 2001). Then it follows that human resources (HR) combined with an intangible service, such as SCML can be a promising way for manufacturing firms to build competitive advantages (Barney, 2012). And yet the role of those key employees who can make the difference between succeeding and failing has not been emphasized over literature in SCML. They are the organization's human capital (HC) in terms of valuable resources and capabilities held; they tie and build valuable relationships with the organization's environment to create social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998), which can be then transformed into value for stakeholders. This human-based advantage is part of the focus of top management teams (TMT) in global organizations (Kiessling *et al.*, 2009a). Therefore, it is not a question of considering all the individuals, but only those most talented ones to form global TMT (Sambharya, 1996; Kiessling *et al.*, 2004), regardless of their level in the structure and position in the global organization (Hitt *et al.*, 2001). Over the last decades, manufacturing firms have also faced the challenges stemming from globalized competition. Globalization has brought the needs and challenges of competition against both purely domestic and international enterprises to the front (Puig and Marques, 2001). Under this increasing rivalry, SCML related issues become a crucial part of competitive advantages of both geographical areas (nations, regions, etc.) and enterprises (Klaus, 2011).

The role of managing HR strategically as a new source of competitive advantage in the global marketplace has been emphasized (Stroh and Caligiuri, 1998). Previously, Schuler *et al.* (1993) and Taylor *et al.* (1996) had already put the foundations of the integrative vision of International Human Resource Management (IRHM) and Strategic HRM (SHRM). The resulting integrative approach (SIHRM) has been built upon those pillars over the late 90s

and the first decade of the 21th century, which called for mixed-methods of research that included other approaches beside Western views (Kiessling and Harvey, 2005). An approach from SIHRM jointly with the challenges of SCML may offer an opportunity to find new research avenues concerning the importance of global managerial teams in SCML. Schuler *et al.* (2002), and Delbridge *et al.* (2011) in a more provocative tone, called for research on SIHRM undertaken from a wider strategic focus. The latter went further ahead and called for a dramatic broadening in the horizons of IHRM, beyond the enterprise, managerialism and universal theories.

The current investigation shares this philosophy and pushes theory forward by providing a picture of the knowledge boundaries in the intersection of these two issues: IHRM and challenges in SCML for global organizations. This paper aims at disclosing the intellectual structure of both fields to propose a research agenda. A content analysis of academic articles dealing with each field of research was conducted. A search of strategic challenges in the SCML yielded 174 papers published in 101 different journals. A parallel search on the IHRM delivered 280 articles in 70 journals. The remainder of the paper is organized accordingly.

Methods

Criteria for Searches

Challenges within the SCML were defined as the first area of interest for this research. The second area was how IHRM could provide responses to those challenges. In both cases, the object of research pivoted around global organizations. As such, two parallel searches were conducted in two commonly used databases (Social Science Citation Index-SSCI and Scopus). These databases granted access to homogenous information, while controlling the quality of scholarly relevant contributions. The time scope was limited to the period between January 1980 and December 2012. The extraction was closed by mid-February to include late volumes published in 2012.

Managing SCML has been defined in several ways. In one of the most cited reviews of this concept, SCM is defined as “[...]the systemic, strategic coordination of the traditional business functions and the tactics across these business functions within a particular company and across businesses within the supply chain, for the purposes of improving the long-term performance of the individual companies and the supply chain as a whole[...].”

(Mentzer *et al.*, 2001: 18). Since scholars have researched SCML extensively in the last decade, a refined search strategy was needed in order to select a set of papers that had significantly dealt with strategic challenges. A general search on SCML terms was refined with expressions such as “challeng*” or “strateg*”⁽¹⁾, combined with “research agenda” or “literature review”. It returned a list of 174 academic articles once duplicated registers were deleted. Certainly, SCML has covered IHRM-related issues. Those articles were categorized within the IHRM field instead of its inclusion in this first area.

IHRM has been defined as the set of activities, functions and processes that aim at attracting, developing and maintaining HR in international organizations, both in the country of origin and overseas (Taylor *et al.*, 1996). Some authors centered the attention in Multinational Enterprises (MNEs). For instance, Schuler *et al.* (2002) defined the IHRM as a research field dealing with the worldwide management of HR with the purpose of enabling the MNE to be successful globally. Since this could be too narrow a perspective, the search was not limited to any type of organization.

A broader definition of IHRM claimed that it is about “*understanding, researching, applying and revising all human resource activities in their internal and external contexts as they impact the process of managing human resources in enterprises throughout the global environment to enhance the experience of multiple stakeholders, including investors, customers, employees, partners, suppliers, environment and society*” (Briscoe and Schuler, 2005: 20). Thus combinations of HRM terms and practices (e.g. “human*”, “human resource*”, “human resource* management”, and acronyms) with “international*” and “global*” expressions were the key words for this search. It yielded 280 articles. In both cases, searches were limited to areas related to business management (business, management, economics, and the like). A manual review was conducted to ensure the validity of results and a correct categorization of articles.

Building the families of keywords

Wordstat software for content analysis was initially used to extract nouns, verbs and meaningful compound forms from both lists. This software was used by Ghadge *et al.* (2012) in their review of SC risk management. As a result, two lists comprising most frequent keywords were built. In the case of strategic challenges in SCML, keywords were merged into similar families thematically. In the case of IHRM, this process was supported by families included in the Wasti and Robert’s appendix (2003) and an own draft list from key

articles, either literature reviews or conceptual ones (Schein, 1986; Napier and Vu, 1998; Cheng and Cooper, 2003; Schuler *et al.*, 2002; Wright *et al.*, 2005; Brewster and Suutari, 2005; De Cieri *et al.*, 2007; Delbridge *et al.*, 2011).

Statistical procedure

In order to find shared topics between both fields a stepwise procedure was conducted. Seuring and Müller (2008) used a similar technique to propose a conceptual framework by merging two different research streams, SCM and sustainability management. Instead of the researcher's intuition, a statistical analysis delivered the groups of keywords' families by a hierarchical cluster analysis of cases. It allowed for the discovery of keywords, in a similar vein as Hagen *et al.* (2012) did to identify strategic types of international SMEs. The method is supported as adequate for conducting content analyses in other disciplines (Kishida, 2003).

Both lists of keywords with their correspondent frequencies were merged. Only families appearing in both fields were selected. The scree plot of eigenvalues showed the optimal number of groups of cases (families). Six families appeared to be optimum, according to an analysis related to the sudden jump in the coefficients' agglomeration schedule and the number of remaining clusters. The squared Euclidian distance was next used to measure distance between cases as cluster membership was saved. Next, a discriminant analysis of those six groups was performed. This provided a two-dimensional map of the six families. The scales were then transformed so that each axis represented the frequencies ranging from 0 (the lowest value of frequency for each) to 100 (the highest). This method eases the interpretation of this map. Final families can be consulted in the appendix.

Background

Challenges in SCML in Global Organizations

A number of main concerns were found from the content analysis of the 174 articles. Obviously, SCM and similar expressions were in all the articles. When carefully analyzed, only a small number of key issues arose. Listed by frequency of appearance, groups of keywords above 10% of share are highlighted: Strategic and decision making issues along with global chain management (e.g. Tavasszy *et al.*, 2003; Roth *et al.*, 2008b; Hameri and Hintsa, 2009; Schiele *et al.*, 2011); Green concerns (e.g. Oglethorpe and Heron, 2010; Yan and Sheu, 2007; Mollenkopf, *et al.*, 2010); Industrial operations and outsourcing &

offshoring matters (e.g. Wee *et al.*, 2010; Pazirandeh, 2011; Min and Kim, 2011; Mefford, 2010; Dreyer *et al.*, 2009); and Information technologies-related issues (e.g. Roth *et al.*, 2008a; Ahmed *et al.*, 2011; Beth *et al.*, 2003; Kiessling *et al.*, 2004; Fawcett *et al.*, 2008).

Industries are represented in an unbalanced way. The Textile industry was addressed by 6.9% of papers (e.g. Taylor, 1999), the Paper industry by 6.3% (e.g. Dolan, 2003), Automotive by 4.6% (e.g. Liao *et al.*, 2011) and Food Industries by 3.4% of the cases (e.g. Wagner and Young, 2009). Geographical areas and countries explicitly included have been considered from a broader focus than industry. China (7.4% of papers) was the most frequent area (e.g. Lu and Dinwoodie, 2002), India (4.0%) was next (e.g. Daspal, 2004), followed by the USA (3.6%, e.g. Hofer *et al.*, 2012), South Korea (2.3%, e.g. Park *et al.*, 2010) and UK (2.3%, e.g. Samuel *et al.*, 2012). Broader areas detected were Developing countries (1.7%) and Emerging economies (1.1%). Particularly interesting is the Sawhney and Sumukadas' article (2005), addressing uncertainties in global sourcing when it comes to developing economies, where collaboration along the SC becomes crucial.

Finally, a somehow surprising finding was that of Storey *et al.* (2006). In a panel study all over Europe, they found that SCML is one of the most unknown disciplines by practitioners. From the HRM perspective of a global organization, it means that more training and information is required, particularly if one considers the complexity that these organizations have to face in their SCML.

Main issues from International HRM

Despite the increasing number of articles in the last decades, the potential role of the IHRM practices is just now beginning to be recognized. By 2003, Wasti and Robert had found only 77 articles in their review from 1991 to 2000. That period was not the most productive in terms of articles, because seminal works had just been published by the early 1990s (Taylor *et al.*, 1996). From an average of 7.7 articles each year in that period, the production rose over the next decade up to an average of 16.7 articles.

The initial focus of research was strongly on MNEs, which enabled more robust development without diverting the attention. And yet it also points out some new research avenues by extending the findings towards other organizations becoming internationally competitive, e.g. INVs, or by emerging forms such as born-globals (those new ventures that enter several foreign markets at a rapid pace and shortly after their establishment) and the

cases of emerging market multinationals. These results are in line with Delbridge *et al.* (2011): yet there is a need to broaden the scope and horizons of this field.

The resulting outcome was split into three main descriptors: keywords describing the IHRM field; geographical areas and countries; and types of enterprises. These outcomes were counted if explicitly mentioned in the article's title, abstract or keywords. The results presented strong evidence of how research on IHRM has been governed by a small number of topics, around virtually the same issues: expatriates, as well as the dilemma between convergence-divergence of IHRM practices. Knowledge management (KM) and strategic issues also achieved a relevant share.

In a critical review of IHRM, Schuler *et al.* (2002) departed from some guiding lines, active by that time: (a) models for handling the inherent complexity of global management of HR; (b) the systematic interaction between the IHRM function and both external elements and internal units to a firm; and (c) theoretical perspectives to predict and explain any kind of relationships from the IHRM viewpoint. This approach was labeled as an integrative stream of research between the IHRM and strategy, with clear foundations on general strategic management issues (Schuler *et al.*, 1993; Taylor *et al.*, 1996; Stroh and Caligiuri, 1998). This approach is represented by families such as *Strategy Issues* (a 5.71% of papers) and *Strategic (I)HRM* (3.93%). Nevertheless, it is still underrepresented over the literature on the IHRM to date: roughly 9.6% of articles included it explicitly, which is negligible in comparison to its scientific relevance.

Geographical models. A second large group of issues relates to geographical models, which is somehow controversial in terms of the direction implied by research: from US-based models towards the rest of the world. The question issued was the universal validity of the predominant practices in IHRM stemming from US multinationals (e.g. Delbridge *et al.*, 2011; Ozbilgin, 2004). That perspective has been adopted by 12.8% of the articles analyzed. China agglutinated 6.4%, India 3.9%, and Australia 2.5%. A vast majority of empirical research has tried to test hypotheses built upon the foundations of the American multinationals' practices in HRM. However, the inverse direction has rarely been investigated. New journals have tried to bridge that gap, such as "Asia Pacific Journal of Management" (Tung, 2005). Virtually all the research exploring this issue in countries other than the USA arrived at the same finding: the need for adaptation (Dabic and Zorko, 2011; Caldas *et al.*, 2011). However, the Western view has been predominant (e.g. Ross and

Buchner, 2010). In short, IHRM has been investigated in several contexts. The main finding is the obvious need for adaptation, as well as the lack of research from just the opposite direction: whether practices from emerging and transitional economies could be transferred to Western economies.

Type of organizations. This area is perhaps one of the biggest gaps detected in IHRM to date, since there is a lack of diverse types of organizations other than multinationals. Only 0.7% of papers explicitly addressed the case of international SMEs. Noticeable examples are Festing (2007), and Tanova and Nadiri (2005), who provided an in-depth vision of HRM practices in Turkish SMEs when going international. IJVs were the focus of research of 6 articles (e.g. Chen and Wilson, 2003; Wilson *et al.*, 2006). Meanwhile, multinationals are explicitly mentioned in more than 17% of articles. Schuler and Tarique (2007) provided some hints for advancing research on IJVs: most complex forms labeled as cross-border alliances.

The International HRM and SCML:

Discussion on Mapping the Common Intellectual Structure

After this review, a joint analysis yielded the shared topics between both fields of research. As a result of a hierarchical cluster and a discriminant analysis, Figure 1 maps the intellectual structure of both fields of research to date.

*****INSERT FIGURE1 HERE*****

Six intertwined families of keywords were detected as the most significant in terms of common research: (i) context, culture and institutions; (ii) CSR, economics, innovation and change; (iii) KM & information technologies and performance; (iv) globalization; (v) industry; (vi) strategy.

The context-dependency of strategy has drawn much attention (e.g. in MNCs Dickmann and Müller-Camen, 2006). Shen *et al.* (2005) proved that IHRM is associated with a variety of contextual and firm-specific factors in their study of Chinese MNEs. Novicevic and Harvey (2001) proposed an evolving change of focus from international towards globally related concepts. A transition that ran parallel to the general IB field of research faced by scholars since the 1980s (Buckley, 2002). In this strategy stream, Milliman *et al.* (1991) developed an extremely interesting framework to deepen our understanding of the old debate on the contingency between strategy and structure (Chandler, 1962). They included

flexibility-related issues and an organizational life cycle of MNCs comprising four types of fit at both internal and external levels. This framework has been applied by 40 of the articles analyzed, including those of the main proponents of SIHRM. In the ever-changing fitting between strategy-structure in industrial value chains, SCML employees are constantly in touch with key agents in the global organization's environment, so the way SCML activities are implemented becomes a critical decision to achieve a competitive edge (Barney, 2012). Transitions from a triadic (3PL) toward a tetradic (4PL) relationship is a challenging field for future research under this stream.

The latter can be related to an overemphasized topic of IHRM: the dilemma between developing global IHRM or to what extent it should be adapted to the local conditions (De Cieri *et al.*, 2007). Terminology varies across literature. Terms included were standardization, centralization, integration, assimilation or convergence versus adaptation, autonomy, separation, novelty or divergence (Lu and Bjorkman, 1997; McGaughey and De Cieri, 1999; Fenton-O'Creevy *et al.*, 2007). Yet, virtually all the terms refer to the same phenomenon: the need to balance global HRM practices for the sake of efficiency and the adaptation to the local context. Sparrow *et al.* (1994), among others, raised the question of whether MNEs were walking towards similar HRM practices worldwide while somehow disregarding their national particularities (acculturation).

Branine and Dvorakova (2000) found several factors of divergence, while implying a very clever solution: perhaps convergence practices are a question of common geographical areas but no universal solutions can be found since cultural and economic differences exist across areas. De Cieri *et al.* (2007) concluded that imitation rather than integration was a better solution. This is to say that some parts can be standardized – but it does not mean to centralized necessarily, while others must diverge (also c.f. in Brewster and Suutari, 2005). Therefore, research efforts should be devoted to find where the optimal boundaries of geographical areas are for a balanced and congruent development of global practices (Paik *et al.*, 2011). For instance, Bonache-Perez and Pla-Barber (2012) applied this crossvergence solution by considering Latin America as the area.

Nevertheless, globalization and global HRM have not yielded a substantial number of articles yet – only a marginal 4.6% of IHRM papers. Noticeable are two Special Issues of the *Int. J. of Human Resources Management* (Rowley and Warner, 2007) and in the *Int. J. of Human Resources Development and Management* (Dabic and Harvey, 2011).

The most frequent IHRM research topic is related to expatriation, which has been dealt with from virtually all possible geographical viewpoints (e.g. the USA in Harvey, 1997; Australia in Welch, 1994; China in Tung and Worm, 2001; some European cases in Bonache-Pérez and Pla-Barber, 2005 or Kupka and Cathro, 2007; South Africa in Vogel *et al.*, 2008).

Harvey *et al.* (2011) provided a striking state-of-the-art appendix on the key dimensions on expatriate research. The problems of HRM related to different alternatives of international assignments are the questions addressed. Theoretically, Caligiuri *et al.* (2001) contributed with the theory of met expectations: expatriate adjustment is more successful if made through tailored cross-cultural training. Harvey *et al.* (2001a) developed a theory-based framework for Strategic Global Human Resource Staffing: an inpatriate manager candidate pool enables an organization to manage staffing needs proactively. Festing and Maletzky (2011) provided an interesting approach to their theory of structuration: leadership adjustment predicts performance of expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment, but leadership adjustment is a reciprocal process. In short, several examples of empirical research showed the need for adaptation (e.g. Tarique *et al.*, 2006; Soltani and Wilkinson, 2011), which should be explored more in-depth in SCML. The latter individual viewpoint leads towards a subsequent controversial issue: the myth of the "international manager" (Forster, 2000). Its natural evolution may advance in two new directions: global manager and, even most interestingly, global TMTs (Sambharya, 1996; Kiessling *et al.*, 2004).

Accordingly, a competence-based approach may offer fruitful research avenues (Scullion and Starkey, 2000). In such an extremely complex issue, IHRM plays a key role when it comes to knowledge management (KM) practices across organizational units and organizations (e.g. Adler and Bartholomew, 1992; Kamoche, 1997; Tsang, 1999; Bhagat *et al.*, 2002). Initially, the focus was on knowledge creation but soon it evolved towards organizational learning and knowledge transfer within and across units, which is of particular interest for SCML. Organizational change and knowledge depends highly on the actors, in particular on the drivers who make things happen, i.e. the HC. Differences among transitional and developed economies on KM were also reported (Kiessling *et al.*, 2008; Kiessling *et al.*, 2009b). Harvey *et al.* (2000) provided a competency-based perspective on global human resource staffing. Global talent management was also the object of a literature review and research agenda (Tarique and Schuler, 2010; Schuler *et al.*, 2011). Kiessling *et al.* (2010) considered corporate venturing issues from the management team viewpoint. As future

research, an entrepreneurial approach may provide fruitful findings on boosting the performance of global organizations and management teams (Dabic *et al.*, 2011).

Again, the role of a portion of the HR is emphasized: the HC. The identification of key employees across units is still underestimated in literature. It gives rise to global challenges in IHRM: the role of people within the frame of processes and systems (Morris *et al.*, 2009). Majeed (2009) made a remarkable review by comparing HR practices in knowledge-intensive SMEs and MNEs. They found advantages of SMEs when compared with MNEs in terms of the strength of the former in implementing knowledge-based practices more flexibly than the latter.

To summarize, there is room for extending IHRM theories and practices to the SCML of global organizations. Table 1 provides a summary of findings useful for the purpose of proposing a joint research agenda.

*****INSERT TABLE 1 HERE*****

The International HRM and SCML in Global Organizations: A Research Agenda

The aim here was to disclose the intellectual structure of research on IHRM and SCML in order to propose a research agenda for global organizations. To do so, 174 papers published in 101 journals dealing with strategic challenges in SCML, and 280 articles from 70 journals covering the IHRM issues were analyzed. Six areas emerged from confronting both fields of research:

Context, Culture and Institutions, including the need for balancing the convergence-divergence practices to find the ideal combination of standardization and local context. Evidence points to the need to investigate further the extent to what broader contexts may bring, by grouping geographical areas in terms of similar response to IHRM or SCM practices (e.g. Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the like).

CSR, Economics, Innovation and Change. Perhaps one of the most challenging issues is how to cope with innovation and change in SCML activities. The velocity of changes in both directions and speed make this even more difficult in global organizations. More

empirical research is required to find out how IHRM practices can help to cope with organizational change in SCML without losing sight of economic efficiency. Managing talented global teams, geographically dispersed by nature, will also benefit from further empirical and theoretical research.

Globalization, in its wider sense. Once more, particularities of industries, contexts, as well as the process of how strategic decision-making is carried out, are relevant challenges for global organizations. If IHRM deals with the ways of enabling the multinational enterprise (MNE) to become successful globally because of people, then it should extend its scope to other arenas such as international SMEs.

Performance, which is extremely linked to the main goal of IHRM. People are the foundation on which all the organizational efforts to be successful are laid. They initiate relationships, make decisions and have a primary role in the organization's performance. How IHRM can help to improve SCML in global organizations or the impact of HRM practices on performance is still an under-investigated issue and deserves further attention. Particular attention must be drawn to the impact of global talented teams on local and global performance. This is a complex and multileveled phenomenon that requires robust empirical methods.

KM and ICT. This is one of the key research arenas for the future. How theory on KM can be extrapolated and applied to IHRM and SCML of global organizations are promising research avenues in the near future. Not only from an operational viewpoint, but also in terms of how the rules of a competitive advantage can be applied to KM in the SC on a global marketplace.

Strategy. The strategic approach to IHRM is still an emerging field that deserves further attention. Managing SCML is also considered a strategic capability that in combination with HC, can be a source of potential competitive advantage. This could be the main challenge for global organizations in the coming decades: competing against/with local organizations and the role of talented individuals in TMTs. A resource-based approach may be useful to cope with this challenge. This stream may not lose sight of the meaning of strategy itself, in terms of overcoming competitors and the interactive relationship of the organization with its environment (Ronda-Pupo and Guerras-Martin, 2012).

All in all, the areas detected are intertwined and, therefore, combinations of them may deliver fruitful outcomes for both theory and practice. Scholars are suggested to consider contextual particularities, in light of findings from both areas. From a general viewpoint, the Upper Echelons perspective (Hambrick and Mason, 1984) could be the glue to paste the pieces. Organizational performance can be predicted, to some extent, from the characteristics of the managerial team, i.e. the organization is a reflection of the managers' attitudes, skills, abilities and personality traits. This perspective has been largely ignored by research on IHRM and needs to be revisited from the perspective of the global organization and SCML. A noticeable exception is that of Harvey *et al.* (2003), who also emphasized the role of intangible relational resources: those managers with local market knowledge and contacts, the key HC.

Another interesting theoretical approach is the co-evolving theory of MNEs (Madhok and Phene, 2001; Madhok and Liu, 2006): how MNEs and their environment co-evolve by means of the former's co-evolutionary capabilities, shaped by the causal ambiguity and their absorptive capacity. If combined, performance in SCML can be predicted depending on the top talented HC. Different organizational levels, different locations of organizational units, different internal and external agents are actually involved in the value chain. So those theories may need to be revisited in light of the latter challenges. The institutional approach is appropriated when it comes to the changing contextual conditions between the country of origin and destination, with a clash between dominant Western culture in the research on IHRM and practical cultural differences in emerging and some transitional economies (e.g. Eastern European countries).

Advancing in the co-evolutionary theory, the absorptive capacity of knowledge is a critical input to build a sustained competitive advantage globally. The combination then, of KM and information and communication technologies (ICT) will become an increasingly critical system in global organizations. KM practices and the critical role of HC in the learning organization will shape sources of competitive advantage, in particular in the case of services related with SCML. This is because of the intangible nature of services, which make them an ideal field to investigate further.

A networking approach also appears to be a promising area for future research on IHRM and SCML. Agglomeration economies, industrial district, clusters and collaborative areas all share a common strategy: co-operation of linked organizations, i.e. collaborating

while competing. Ties of both global multinationals and purely domestic local enterprises will shape local clusters, where global organizations and SC&LD are crucial.

Figure 2 summarizes the evolving research in the joint fields of IHRM and strategic challenges in SCML. Organizations evolve from international to global, which causes and will keep on causing the environment to become more complex. From a single environment where the organization is purely domestic, towards an international context in the first country of entry, and from there toward intertwined levels and interactions among local environments, global environment and dispersed organizational units. This is an even more complex process when it comes to the relationships in the SCML activities, (multi-stakeholder perspective).

Combinations and intersections of the six families should deliver partial empirical results, while qualitative analysis combined with quantitative methods will enable summarizing findings (e.g. meta-analysis). In spite of the relevant number of empirical papers addressing both fields of research, as far as we know, methodologies such as meta-analyses are still unreleased in both fields. An example of its application to IB research can be consulted in Bausch and Kirstch (2007). Structural equation modeling from a Bayesian approach can also be suggested (Fienberg, 2006). The Markov Chain Monte Carlo models may provide some of the most interesting results when it comes to hierarchical decision models, with uncertainty propagation across organizational units and changing impacts on performance over time.

*****INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE*****

As a mainstream, research should focus on HC, the enablers of an organization's competitiveness (González-Loureiro and Figueroa-Dorrego, 2012; González-Loureiro and Pita-Castelo, 2012), particularly those managers with the valuable knowledge of making a difference within global competition (Harvey *et al.*, 2003). An approach linking HC with Social Capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998) may be particularly interesting when investigating ties across units while considering the local specificities. Then it follows that resource-based, knowledge-based or competence-based approaches hold greater prospect for global organizations to advance into the next stage. Under the hypercompetitive markets paradigm (Harvey *et al.*, 2001b), transitions from a purely domestic small business toward an international SME and further toward a global organization – if possible – will be of interest.

Organizational flexibility of SMEs has elicited a lot of interest and become internationally a point to start with (see Kiessling *et al*, 2012).

With the emergence of the challenges to manage global organizations, it is expected that IHRM and SCML play a determinant strategic role: a research field is called upon to become one of the main explanations of global organizations' competitiveness in the global marketplace. Deeper research on how the supply chain and logistics become source of competitive advantages, what are its precincts, and how has it changed as result of managers' actions is necessary. Hot topics for future research demand more holistic approaches to the intersections of strategy, global organizations, and the human dimension in the SCML. As a social research domain, strategy is about human choices among a variety of alternatives to overcome competitors and obtain an above normal profit. The blurred boundaries of the firm become even muzzier when it comes to global organizations and SCML, a complex network of relationships and knowledge. Since SCML research has become more theoretically prosperous and methodologically accurate, there are various opportunities for further advancing theory, methodology, and the managerial relevance of future inquiries.

NOTES:

(1) Wildcards "*" were used to ensure that all the possible variations of the lexeme were found.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 7. Key findings from research on strategic challenges in SCML and in the IHRM for the case of global organizations

Key issues	Strategic Challenges in SCML	IHRM contributions
Context, culture and institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to adapt SCML practices to local contexts • Is there an optimal geographical scope for managing contextual particularities in SCML? • Role of (business) culture to classify contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of networking to create and maintain social capital • Multicultural ambiance and need for crossvergence in managing HR • Role of (global vs local) culture to understand the need for adaptation
Institutional approach to emerging and transitional economies. Contingent approach to mutual fit between country of origin and country/ies of destination		
CSR, Economics, Innovation & Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic, social and environmental value for all the agents involved in SCML activities and society (CSR) • Need to implement innovative services in SCML • Organizational change throughout the whole value chain • Links with sharing K between headquarters and local units to boost innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Boards and mid-line executives • Social capital: stakeholders approach • Global management of teams for innovation: role of talented individuals in teams (HC)
Networking and social capital approach: creating sustained value for stakeholders. Relational management		
Globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global competition • Hypercompetitive environment in the global context • SCML is critical in global organizations • Global standardization versus local adaptation • Need for security assurance: piracy, hijacking and terrorism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossvergence: finding which parts should be standardized globally and which ones should be adapted locally. • The key role of expatriates and talented individuals in TMTs instead of one individual alone (myth of global manager) • Building trust inside and outside the global organization • Considering IHRM models other than the Western style's models
Contingent approach: fit between structure and strategy depending on contexts		
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance on SCML depends highly on key individuals and on efficient tools based on ICT • Impact of flexibility on performance in industrial value chains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossvergence: analyzing its impact on global vs. local performance • Impact of expatriates in managerial roles on performance
Transaction costs economics approach: efficiency and flexibility Entrepreneurial approach: entrepreneurial orientation of HC		
KM & ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can valuable K be transferred/ shared safety throughout and across organization units? • The learning organization: creating value by means of K • Role of ICT to create value and to speed up the process of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key competences in TMTs to manage K in global organizations? • What new competences/ skills does KM and ICT need? • Key role of people in managing processes and systems
KBV and dynamic competences approach: transfer and sharing K in the learning organization and across organizational units (customer-supplier relationships). Role of ICT and key competences for TMTs.		
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCML activities involve valuable resources and capabilities • TMTs are determinant in deploying strategy successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in managing HR globally vs internationally • Managing HR strategically: finding and empowering HC
RBV approach to shape competitive and corporate strategy: competitive advantage based on a combination of HC and excellence in SCML		
Competitive advantages in global organizations will be increasingly underpinned on the combination of excellence in SCML with TMTs (HC in SCML)		

Figure 1. Mapping a research agenda for Global Organizations in SCML from IHRM

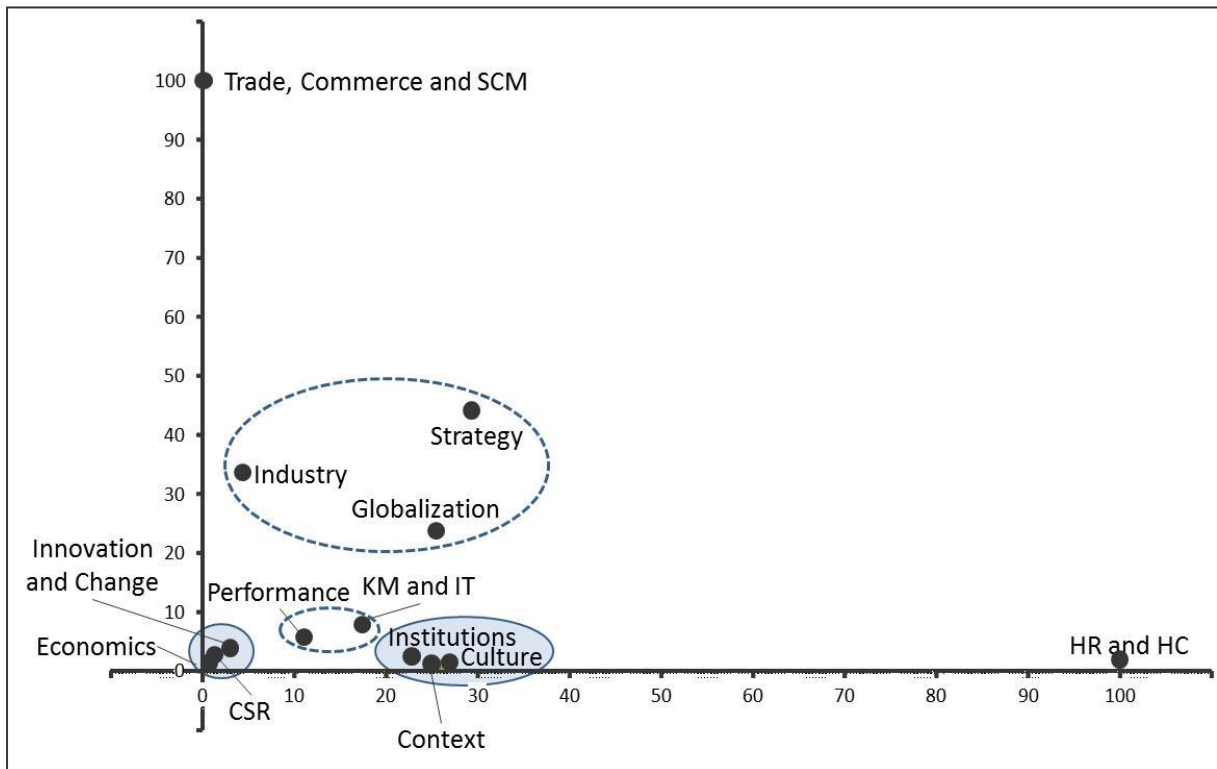
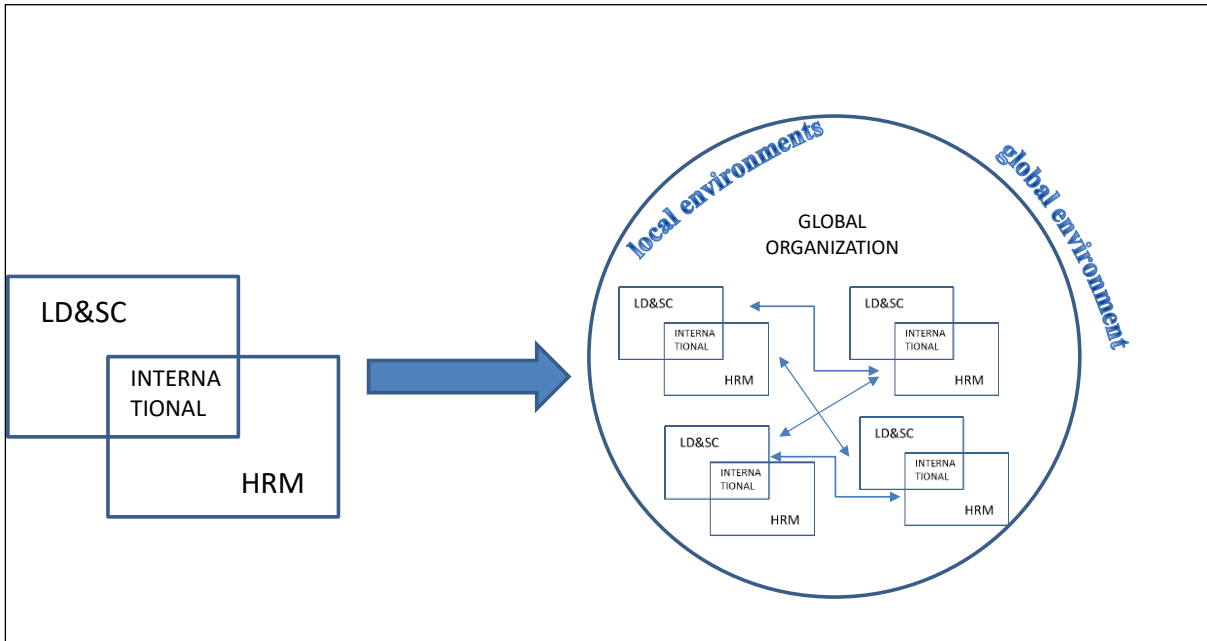


Figure 2. Research agenda: transition from international to Global Organizations' competitive advantages based on SCML and on managing strategically global HR



Appendix: family of keywords for mapping a research agenda

A change of scale was done in such a way that the lowest value of each column was computed as 0 and the highest as 100. This was in order to homogenize both scales with the same amplitude.

Family of keywords	Keywords included	Score on LD& SC	Score on IHRM
Context	Convergence / divergence issues (Convergence, Divergence, Integration, Global integration, Differentiation, Adaptation, Local adaptation, National Culture(s), National Business Systems) Employment Localization Location Working conditions	0.00	25.02
CSR	CSR (Corporate social responsibility, CSR, International aid) Ethics Stakeholder analysis	3.10	1.10
Culture	Comparative and cross-cultural HRM (Comparative HRM, Comparative management, cross-cultural management) Cross-national and Cross-cultural Cultural issues (Culture, Cultural difference, Cultural distance, Cultural intelligence, Management Culture) Intercultural issues (Intercultural communication competence, Intercultural communication training)	0.01	26.12
Economics	Economics (Economics, Economics and social effects) Transaction cost economics	2.07	0.00
Globalization	Global HRM Global issues (Global business, Global economies, Global financial crisis, Global logistics, Global logistics strategy, Global manufacturing, Global market, Global operations, Global sourcing, Globalization) Global supply chain Globalization International assignment(s)	23.72	25.02
HR AND HC	Adjustment	2.07	100.00

Family of keywords	Keywords included	Score on LD&SC	Score on IHRM
	Assessment Careers Control mechanisms (Control, Coordination, Coping) Expatriate-related issues (Expatriation, Expatriates, Inpatriates, Inpatriation, Repatriation, Expatriate Management, Expatriate Adjustment, Host country nationals, Ex-host country nationals, Third country nationals) HRM Practices (Training, Training and Development, Selection, Recruitment) Human capital (Talent management, HC) Job satisfaction Leadership issues (Leadership, Leader, Leader-member exchange) Management issues (Management, Management practice, Managerial values, International Management) Manager(s) Supervisor/subordinate relations		
Industry	Industrial issues (Industrial development; Industrial economics, Industrial management, Industry, Industrial research) Industrial issues (Industrial practice, Industrial relations, Industrial relations systems) Inventory issues (Inventory control, Inventory management) Lean production Manufacturing and Operations issues (Manufacturing strategy, Operations management, Operations research, Operations strategy, Optimization, Production Control) Packaging issues (Packaging, packaging materials)	33.68	4.35
Innovation, and Change	Change Innovation issues (Innovation, Technology Development, Research and Development, R&D, R&D management)	3.78	2.16
Institutions	Civil service Collectivism Institutionalism (Institutions, Institutional theory, Neoinstitutional theory) Labor market(s) Laws and legislation Organizational citizenship behavior Social identity theory Societies and institutions Trade unions	2.40	22.77

Family of keywords	Keywords included	Score on LD&SC	Score on IHRM
KM and IT	Information systems issues (Information management, Information sharing, Information systems, Information technology, Internet) Knowledge (Knowledge, KM, Knowledge Transfer, Knowledge Exchange, Learning) Policy transfer	6.88	17.38
Performance	Performance issues (Investments, Profitability, Performance, Resource allocation, Business performance) Performance issues (Performance, Performance appraisal, Performance Management, Turnover)	5.50	10.90
Strategy	Competitive advantage Corporate and Business strategy issues (Competition, Competitive Advantage, Competitiveness, Business strategy, Corporate Strategy, Strategy, Strategic Management, Strategic Planning) Decision making (Decision support systems, Decision, Decision making, Decision support systems, Cost-benefit analysis) International business (international cooperation, IB) Mergers and acquisitions Strategic (I)HRM (Strategic international management, Strategic IRHM, Strategic Resource Management) Strategy issues (Strategy, International strategy, International business)	44.33	29.35
Trade, Commerce and SCM	Distribution management E-commerce (Electronic commerce, E-commerce) Foreign direct investment Foreign Trade issues (Export, Import, International trade) Logistics Offshoring Outsourcing Purchasing Risk management issues (Risk assessment, Risk management) Supply chain management (Supply Chain(s), SCM, Supply Chain Management, Supply management, Supply, Supplier(s), Sourcing) Transportation	100.00	0.00