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A decade plus long introspection of research published in *Information & Management*

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ABSTRACT

It is insightful for a leading publication in information systems like *Information & Management* to conduct a deep introspection of what it publishes and how it has evolved over the years. It informs all constituencies: readers, authors, reviewers and editors in future research efforts. *Information & Management* (*I&M* for short) is one of the oldest journals in the information systems field and has been continuously regarded as a top journal with high quality publications. The purpose of this study is to conduct a detailed examination of the research *I&M* has published in a 10+ year period from 2004 to 2014. Specifically, we consider four dimensions of research: topics, research methodologies, research models, and paradigmatic research approaches. Patterns and trends for these four dimensions are presented in order to provide an in-depth examination. For benchmark purposes, we compare our results to a major US-based journal: the *MIS Quarterly* (*MISQ*) and a major European journal: the *European Journal of Information Systems* (*EJIS*).

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1. Introduction

Research in information systems (IS) is characterized by constant change due to a number of reasons. First information technology (IT) itself is inundated by new products, processes and innovations (e.g., social media, smart devices, and new delivery mechanisms). Second, new research paradigms (such as interpretive and critical research) and methodologies (such as design science, action research and qualitative methods) have emerged and are gaining wider acceptance. Third, new researchers, many with different background and training, have entered the field while others have left due to natural causes. It is therefore prudent to examine the state of IS research on a periodic basis to identify trends and spot shifts.

In this study, we focus on the journal: *Information & Management*. *Information & Management* (*I&M* for short) is one of the oldest journals in the information systems field, having started publication in 1977. It has maintained a high focus on quality and has been continuously regarded as a top journal in the field. We conduct a meta-analysis of more than ten years of articles

published in *I&M*. Meta-analysis is a useful mechanism for capturing the information that we need to generate and analyze it further. Stemler [21] has pointed out that meta-analyses enable researchers to navigate a massive knowledge base with relative ease and systematic methods. Similar analyses for *I&M* were reported by Claver et al. [4] which covered the period from 1981 to 1997, and later by Palvia et al. [19] which covered the period from 1992 to 2005. This study covers the period from 2004 to 2014, thus bringing our readers up to date with the latest information.

We focus on specific dimensions of research which will be of wide interest to *I&M* readers as well as readers in general. These include: research topics, research methodologies, research models, and paradigmatic research approaches. Patterns and trends for these four dimensions are presented in order to provide in-depth understanding of the published research. For benchmark and comparative purposes, we compare our results to a major US-based journal: the *MIS Quarterly* (*MISQ*) and a major European journal: the *European Journal of Information Systems* (*EJIS*).

Besides introspection, this study contributes to the literature by providing directions to both new and experienced researchers. New and budding researchers will benefit by knowing the trends in IS research; senior scholars can evaluate the trends and focus on the areas that need more attention. Readers and practicing IT

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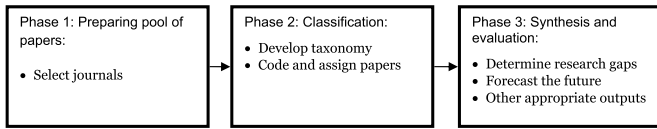


Fig. 1. The Research Process.

professionals can identify the research trends in IS topics and utilize these resources at their work as well as inform the research community if there are new areas deserving more attention. Finally, editors and reviewers can utilize this information to assess their journals and further improve them.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we review the methodological framework for the study which includes its various steps, journal selection, typology of the research dimensions, the dimensional classification framework, and the coding process. In Section 3, we provide our results which include research topics, methodologies, models, and paradigmatic approaches; as well as their trends. Section 4 provides a discussion of the results along with a comparison with two other leading journals and implications for various constituencies. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Method

The research method for this study was adopted from Palvia et al. [15] where methodological and topic trends were identified in information systems research for a ten year period (2004–2013). We used a three phase process based on the work done by Cumbie et al. [5] and Levy and Ellis [12]. This three phase process is illustrated in Fig. 1. In this process, the researchers first select journals to pool papers in order to satisfy the boundaries of the study. Second, the classification is developed for coding, and the selected papers are coded based on the classification. Third, the data is synthesized and evaluated.

2.1. Phase 1: journal selection and pool of papers

The papers were pooled from three journals from 2004 to 2014, an eleven year period. The journals selected are considered some of the top ranking publications in the IS field [13,20]. As this study is focused on *Information & Management*, we selected all papers in *I&M* during this period. In addition, we selected papers for the same period from the *Management Information Systems Quarterly (MISQ)*, a high-ranked journal in the IS field, and the *European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS)*, another reputed journal that serves as an outlet for research outside of the United States, especially Europe. The selection of these two journals for comparison allows us to compare *I&M* with cutting-edge research in IS along with diverse research from many parts of the world. A summary of the journals selected and a count of papers pooled from 2004 – 2014 are presented in Table 1. Fig. 2 visualizes the number of papers published in each of the three selected journals year-by-year.

Table 1
List of Selected IS Journals and Count of Articles (2004–2014).

Journal	Number of Issues	Number of Papers
<i>Information and Management (I&M)</i>	79	645
<i>European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS)</i>	62	437
<i>Management Information Systems Quarterly (MISQ)</i>	45	446
Total	186	1528

2.2. Phase 2: classification

A four-dimensional framework comprised of topics, research methodologies, research models, and paradigmatic research approaches for classifying research articles was developed by Palvia et al. [15], and we use all four of these dimensions in this paper. In addition to this four-dimensional framework, we also adopt their typologies for these dimensions. Three of the four dimensions are shown in Fig. 3; the fourth dimension is the research topic. Any single dimension can be examined by itself. The same single dimension can be examined over time providing trends and developments over that period of time. Dimensions can also be examined in relation with one another yielding further insights. While we have the data for multi-dimensional analysis, it was not included in this paper due to space limitations. The four dimensions are described below.

2.2.1. Dimension 1: research topics

Many of the research topics are originally from Palvia et al. [16]. These were derived by building on the work done by Alavi and Carlson [2] and Barki et al. [3]. Initially, the topics were developed using the top three levels of Barki et al. [3]. Some changes were made, and several topics were added to those in Palvia et al. [16]. The addition of new topics was made due to the emergence of new research topics and trends in IS research during the 11-year since 2004. Some topics were added at the beginning, a few topics were discovered and added during the coding process, and a few topics were eliminated. The final topic classification based on this process is displayed in Table 2.

2.2.2. Dimension 2: research methodologies

Palvia et al. [17] developed a classification for research methodologies. This classification was slightly modified in Palvia et al. [15] and is adopted in the present study as shown in Table 3.

2.2.3. Dimension 3: research models

Research models are logical representations for describing and explaining the relationships between variables and constructs of interest. According to Levy and Ellis [12], a model or a theoretical framework is “a generalized type of theory that indicates relationships between constructs or latent variables” (p.198). Vessey and V Ramesh [24] developed a classification for research models. Their classification included: listing of variables, influence diagram, mathematical model, and combination. This categorization was extended and formalized by Palvia et al. [18]. We use the Palvia et al. [18] categorization as being the latest and most comprehensive to date (Table 4).

2.2.4. Dimension 4: paradigmatic research approaches

In a landmark paper, Orlikowski and Baroudi [14] defined three major paradigmatic research approaches in information system research: positivist, interpretive, and critical. These approaches are widely used in the literature but do not capture the entire domain of IS research. Therefore, we added “mixed” and “descriptive” to this list. The mixed approach combines elements of positivist and interpretive research as well as qualitative and quantitative

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