
Special issue on IS research issues in Asia-Pacific Region

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The Asia Pacific region is experiencing the fastest economic growth recently in the world and this high growth rate is expected to sustain for years to come. Empowered by the fast growing economy, countries in this region have embraced information technology as a powerful force to shape their social and economic development. The launch of ambitious strategic IT/IS plans in this region imposes a great challenge to IT/IS researchers and practitioners. The majority of lessons learnt and published so far have been derived from experiences in Western countries, which have very different social, political, and economic environments from the Asia Pacific. Those even successful experiences may not be completely and readily applicable to the Asia Pacific. Thus, research on IS/IT issues in this region is imperative and significant to extend our understanding of key IS issues and provide guidelines for IT development in this region.

Given the current situation, we believe that it is important to set up a forum where international scholars and practitioners, interested in IS/IT issues associated with the Asia Pacific region, can come together and know each other, sharing research and practice experiences, and encouraging and promoting research collaboration in this field. In response, the Special Interest Group (SIG) on IS in Asia Pacific (ISAP) has been set up. As an academic association, SIG-ISAP has been approved by the Association of Information Systems (AIS). Here, the scope of Asia Pacific countries follows up the definition of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), which includes member countries of USA, Australia, China, Singapore, Korea, Chinese Taipei, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, *etc.*)¹

This special issue of International Journal of Internet and Enterprise Management (IJIEEM) is devoted to papers from the Symposium organised by AIS SIG-ISAP and held in December 2004 in Washington DC with the support of International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) 2004. Seven papers were selected from the Symposium's conference proceedings (the acceptance rate for the proceedings was 40%). All papers went through another round of double blind review process based upon the standards of IJIEEM. A total of three research papers and one research note were accepted for publication in this special issue.

The papers in this special issue cover several issues and challenges of IS development in Asia Pacific. The first paper titled 'Using IT to create business value in China: what can be learned from IT research and practices in the developed countries' is a research note by Quan and Hu. They contribute a valuable analysis on the different views of IT business value and provide an outline of recommendations regarding IT applications in China, based on its unique set of cultural, economic, and political characteristics. Whether IT matters has been a fiercely debated issue in recent years (*e.g.*, Brynjolfsson, 1993; Brynjolfsson and Hitt, 1996; Triplett, 1999; Gordon, 2002; Carr, 2003). Quan and Hu take the stance that IT, if appropriately deployed and properly managed, can create significant business value to the firms. Thus, they focus on how firms can generate value from their IT investment. From the perspectives of micro-economics-based views, the process-based view, the resource-based view, and the digital option-based view, coupled with the special cultural, economic and political environments in China, Quan and Hu suggest that IT is not for everyone in China, given the labour cost being much lower than IT cost; it is critical for Chinese firms to invest in IT capability, rather than emphasising IT asset investment only; firms should invest in human resources by offering employees with opportunities and incentives to undergo self-improvement programmes. In addition,

the authors emphasise the importance of aligning IT investment with strategic goals for Chinese firms. These recommendations and analysis can be relevant and useful to some other developing countries as well.

Another important issue in Asia Pacific is the implementation of package software. Due to the cultural difference, implementation process of large-scale software packages in Asia Pacific can be very different from that in Western countries, in which these packages were developed. Dologite *et al.*, explore the roles a manager can play to support the package software implementation process by a US-Chinese joint venture. They offer a framework for perceiving how managers can provide change agent support in an IS implementation project. The authors offer insights into the possible changes enabled by the implementation of package software and how managers can facilitate this process. Their analysis and research findings could be useful to those Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) with investment and branches in a developing country, to deal with issues related to effective global information management.

How software development performance can be enhanced by different documentation techniques is studied by Wong. As more and more Western companies have outsourced their IT/IS development projects to some developing countries in Asia-Pacific, the research on this issue helps us understand the factors influencing software development performance and allows us to better manage the process. Wong studies the effect of explicit inputs on software review performance by conducting a survey in Australia. She found that previously reviewed software documents are the key driver to the performance, while other explicit inputs do not help the performance improve. Wong's findings provide some guidelines to help effectively manage the software review.

The fourth paper, titled 'Classification of customer loyalty based on Hidden Markov Model', comes from Shen and Zhao. The authors propose a data mining process, which helps identify customers' loyalty based on customers' purchase behaviour, price perception, service perception and quality perception. Their study provides a useful tool for firms to target their marketing programs at the right group of customers by using data mining technique.

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Note

- 1 www.APEC.org