Special Issue — Leveraging India's Context for Global Information Systems Insights: Location-specific Research and Theory Building

Special Issue Guest Editors

Sujeet Kumar Sharma

Indian Institute of Management Nagpur
(Coordinating Editor)

Priya Seetharaman

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta

Anuragini Shirish

Institut Mines Telecom Business School

Jang Bahadur Singh

Indian Institute of Management Tiruchirappalli

Abstract:

We invite research that examines how information systems can tackle critical issues in India or highlights unique IS phenomena specific to India, with implications for stakeholders both within and beyond the country. This call for papers also aims to develop contextualized theories rooted in the Indian context.

Keywords: Information Systems Research, Contextual Research, India.

Call for Papers

India has long been recognized as a global IT services powerhouse, often called the "back office to the world[1]", powering a significant part of the global economy. India's IT sector employs over 5 million people[2] and provides a significant talent pool for the world's leading technology companies, with a 55% share of the global outsourcing market. As well as supporting the growth of global technology companies, this vibrant sector is a major contributor to the development of technology skills and innovation. Indian-origin executives now lead some of the world's largest technology companies[3]. This underscores the immense contribution of the Indian diaspora in shaping the global technology landscape. However, despite this prominence of information systems (IS) practice, IS research originating in India remains relatively modest, especially when compared to its immense potential (Bandi et al., 2014; Seetharaman et al., 2024). Despite the increasing amount of research on IS, scholars note that this does not fully reflect the complex and dynamic environment in which emerging technologies are being designed, developed, and used. India presents a unique and dynamic environment for IS research, with its rapid economic growth and ambitious Digital India initiative (Draboo, 2020). The Indian context offers unique opportunities for meaningful research that bridges the gap between practice and academia, characterized by diverse socio-cultural factors.

Recently, scholars have argued that location matters in IS research, especially in a developing country such as India, and that conscious efforts can be made to conduct research that is responsible and relevant to the immediate context and problems that it faces. Seetharaman et al. (2024) conceptualize location-specific responsible research along two dimensions: addressing the problems that are located in the country and development of contextual theories. This special issue seeks to capture research on these two dimensions of location-specific research. First, we call for research that explores how IS can address critical issues in India, or that sheds light on unique IS phenomena that are specific to India and that may have implications for stakeholders within or outside of India. Second, we also seek to develop contextualized theories within the Indian context. In doing so, we encourage researchers to draw on the country's rich socio-cultural diversity, local histories, ideologies, languages, and value systems to drive theory development. In this way, India-specific research can offer insights that are adaptable to other contexts, enhancing our global understanding of IS phenomena. By focusing on these two dimensions, we hope to contribute to a body of IS research that is both locally relevant and globally impactful. Pertinent examples of such research (e.g., Srivastava & Shainesh, 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2016; Ravishankar, 2021) that have appeared in top-tier IS outlets. This special issue intends to provide insights that are rooted in the local context while also informing broader theoretical discussions.

Over the last two decades, India has made significant progress in developing digital infrastructure as a public good, known as the India Stack (Raghavan et al, 2019). The India Stack is the name given to a family of APIs, open standards, and infrastructure components that enable a user in India to digitally request services. These digital public goods have made possible an array of services: verifying identity (Aadhaar), managing paperless documents (eSign, DigiLocker), and cashless payments (UPI). By providing efficient and cost-effective solutions to complex problems, especially in areas such as finance, welfare, and governance, it has fundamentally transformed service delivery in India. As a real-world example for other countries seeking to improve digital inclusion, India Stack provides a compelling model for other countries seeking cost-effective innovation built on scalable digital assets.

Similarly, there are many other IS phenomena that are unique to the Indian context and need to be studied more closely and rigorously, with implications for global IS research. For example, prior to the advent of e-commerce, cash-on-delivery (COD) was an important part of global commerce. However, India stands out as one of the largest markets where COD is a dominant payment method in e-commerce transactions and has been touted as a major driver of the growth of e-commerce in India[4]. There are rich opportunities for research into consumer behaviour, trust, and payment innovation due to its prevalence in Indian e-commerce. The topics discussed above are only examples of new avenues for research, with roots in the context. We encourage submissions that develop novel and contextualized theoretical insights by drawing on the rich context of India. This includes drawing on Indigenous theorizing. It also includes

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[1] https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/ites/india-worlds-best-back-office/articleshow/7449132.cms?from=mdr
[2] https://www.statista.com/statistics/320729/india-it-industry-direct-indirect-employment/
[3] https://www.forbes.com/sites/dileeprao/2022/12/14/the-3-skills-that-have-helped-the-growth-of-indian-origin-ceos/
[4] https://www.fortuneindia.com/venture/idea-of-cash-on-delivery-was-a-major-innovation/105984

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exploring the values, experiences, and ideologies that are unique to India. Papers addressing the dark side of IS at the micro/meso/macro level are also encouraged, especially if they address the specific legal, political, and ethical challenges in the Indian context.

We are particularly interested in papers that examine phenomena that are specific to India, such as (but not limited to):

- Digital phenomena that thrive in low digital fluency environments such as COD in e-commerce
- The evolution and impact of large-scale digital public infrastructure (DPI) such as India's digital stack (e.g. Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker)
- The development of innovative FinTech solutions
- Opportunities presented by scale and diversity for health tech and wellness platforms
- Access to digital technologies and their impact on cost, scale, intensity, and quality of education at all levels, K-12, college, vocational, and continuing education
- Impact of cultural values and local nuances on the innovation, development, acceptance, use, and diffusion of technology
- Emergence and rapid spread of digital industries such as online gaming, crowdfunding, digital entertainment, OTT, data aggregation and asset-light information, resource-sharing platforms
- Access and diffusion of decentralized knowledge systems through digital (given India's history of decentralized and oral knowledge systems) such as in religious and spiritual, agriculture, wellness, architecture, folk traditions, art forms, etc.
- Challenges accompanying digital systems in low digital literacy contexts such as low trust, scale and diversity of cyber-crimes and scams, cyber addiction amongst youth, trafficking
- The need and potential of impact sourcing specifically on rural social and economic environments.
- Digital platforms as opportunities for the subaltern while also deepening existing social inequalities and discrimination
- Influence of locally accepted ethics, social norms, and policy/governance frameworks on technology development and use
- Dualities of contemporary digital platforms in a socio-culturally rich, collectivistic environment such as YouTuber as an economically viable profession and the resulting impact on privacy
- Government's role in fostering and monitoring appropriate, productive and culturally-sensitive use of IS
- Role of academia and industry in shaping socio-technical environments of people-rich less-developed economies

We invite researchers to contribute to this special issue by submitting their best work on these topics or related to the theme. We believe that this special issue will not only address critical challenges within India but will also contribute to a richer, contextually grounded understanding of IS phenomena globally.

Submission Requirements

All manuscripts submitted to CAIS should be submitted in Microsoft Word format. Authors are encouraged to follow the CAIS style guide (available on the CAIS website https://aisel.aisnet.org/cais/format.html) and use the CAIS author template for submissions of their manuscripts. Submissions must be made to the CAIS ScholarOne site (https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/cais). If you do not have an account already, you will need to create one. Once you have logged in, and you begin the submission process, you will have the opportunity to submit the manuscript to the special issue ("SS" designation).

Paper Development Workshop at INCIS 2025

Authors have the option to present their extended abstracts and receive feedback on how best to develop their article for submission to the special issue with CAIS. This in-person workshop will take place during the *India Conference on Information Systems* (INCIS) at the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta between March 07-09, 2025. Extended abstracts (2,000-3,000 words) must use the CAIS paper template. This word limit does not include references, tables/figures. *Technical papers and systematic literature reviews are not within the scope of this special issue.* If you have any further questions, please consult any of the guest editors. **Kindly note that acceptance of papers for this workshop do not guarantee publication in the special issue.** All submissions made to this special issue will go through a rigorous review process and the final decision to accept papers will remain with the Co-editors-in-Chief.

Important Dates

- Submission deadline: ~~1 May 2025~~. 1 July 2025
- First round notification: ~~1 July 2025~~ 1 Sept 2025
- Invited revisions deadline: ~~1 November 2025~~ 1 Dec 2025
- Second/final editorial decision: ~~1 Feb 2026~~ 1 Feb 2026
- Second revision deadline: 1 April 2026
- Projected Publication: ~~April 2026~~   1 June 2026

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