



Master Thesis

“Distance Dimensions in IB: A Literature Review and Research Agenda”

Background

In international business research, the concept of “distance” has evolved from a focus on geography to encompass more dimensions, such as cultural, administrative, and economic differences between countries (Ghemawat, 2001; Berry et al., 2010). Psychic distance, in particular – defined as factors that hinder information flow between firms and foreign markets – plays a central role in explaining market entry and expansion decisions (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Despite its relevance, distance remains inconsistently defined and measured, with debates both over methodical “illusions” (Shenkar, 2001) and the underlying theories and mechanisms (Beugelsdijk et al., 2018). This thesis seeks to contribute to this discourse by conducting a structured review of the distance construct in international business literature. It aims to map how different dimensions of distance have been theorized, measured, and applied, and to synthesize a framework that advances our understanding of their role in shaping internationalization strategies and outcomes.

Introductory Readings

- Berry, H., Guillén, M. F., & Zhou, N. (2010). An institutional approach to cross-national distance. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 41(9), 1460–1480.
- Beugelsdijk, S., Ambos, B., & Nell, P. C. (2018). Conceptualizing and measuring distance in international business research: Recurring questions and best practice guidelines. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 49(9), 1113–1137.
- Dow, D. & Karunaratna, A. (2006). Developing a multidimensional instrument to measure psychic distance stimuli. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37, 578–602.
- Ghemawat, P. (2001). Distance still matters. *Harvard Business Review*, 79(8), 137–147.
- Hutzschenreuter, T., Kleindienst, I., & Lange, S. (2016). The Concept of Distance in International Business Research: A Review and Research Agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 18(2), 160–179.

Tasks and Goals

This master thesis is closely related to the current research of the chair, and you will conduct your analyses in close collaboration with our doctoral students. The thesis is centered around a deep, structured literature review, analyzing the development and current state of research on the different distance dimensions in international business research. It includes

- Identifying and collecting articles in influential peer-reviewed (international) management journals
- Systematically reviewing and categorizing research and developing a coherent literature structure
- Using/developing a framework to classify and synthesize existing literature and its concepts
- Assessing the research’s impact and evaluating future research potentials

Requirements

- Good English skills
- Independent, reliable, and diligent working style with an eye for detail and high motivation
- Successful participation in one of our offered modules (see webpage)

Details

- Supervisors Prof. Dr. Thomas Hutzschenreuter and Lynn Waffenschmidt
- Timing Flexible / As of now for a duration of 6 months after the research exposé is accepted

Contact

If you are interested in writing your thesis at our chair or have questions to this topic, please contact Lynn Waffenschmidt (lynn.waffenschmidt@tum.de). Please send an email, including a tabular CV and your current transcript of records (one PDF file), to apply for a master thesis. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Professor Dr. Thomas Hutzschenreuter
Chair of Strategic and International Management
Technical University of Munich