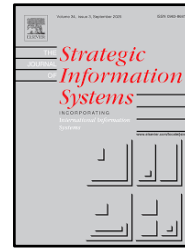


**Special Issue**  
**The Journal of Strategic Information Systems**

**India at the Intersection: Reconfiguring  
Commerce, Capabilities and Culture in Age of  
Technological Acceleration**



**Guest editors:**

**Pankaj Setia**

Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, India

**Priya Seetharaman**

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, India

**Abhishek Kathuria**

Deakin University, Australia

**Marco Marabelli**

Bentley University, USA

Contemporary Information Systems (IS) are marked by transformations at the intersection of technology, people and organizations (Setia 2024). These are shaped by, and are shaping how firms, communities, and societies evolve. As researchers unravel these dynamics, India presents a compelling context. Rooted in millennia of cultural and commercial history, India is now rapidly being reshaped by the forces of digital innovation. Indian business landscape is a vibrant mosaic where ancient artisanal traditions, kinship-based commerce, informal enterprises, and social ventures coexist with state-owned firms, family conglomerates, and home-grown blue chips. This landscape often collides with large multinationals, platform economies, and globally scaled startups. Together, India's palimpsestic business environment, pluralistic culture, and demographic vastness form a powerful trifecta that offers a unique context for researchers. Specifically, unlike a monolith landscape, India represents a living, evolving environment of practices, identities, and aspirations.

This special issue invites submissions focused on how rapid technological acceleration in India is strategically reshaping the country's business environment. We particularly welcome submissions that explores how culture, capabilities, and commerce evolve amid the transformations of a historically layered, institutionally complex economy. Traditionally, India's artisanal industries and cultural expressions were deeply entwined with its commercial practices (Tharoor, 2016). Centuries of colonial domination disrupted local crafts and knowledge systems; today, the digital wave carries a similar dual potential, risking the displacement of traditional modes of production while also offering new avenues for visibility and market access. India's contemporary platform economy, with its roots in the historical *bazaar* and *emporium* systems (Athique, 2020), exemplifies this paradox.

The expansion of digital technologies into an informal, fragmented economy has introduced elements of structure and visibility long described by Scott's notion of "legibility" (1998), a concept which relevance persists as states and platforms alike seek to render local practices more standardized and governable in the digital age. Could the drive for scale, efficiency, and algorithmic appeal lead to a

flattening of cultural nuance in favor of standardization and mass reproducibility? This scenario becomes real if Information Technology (IT) education and digital skilling emphasize surface-level technical credentials and globalized templates of “digital competence” (Rangaswamy & Narasimhan, 2022) rather than contextually grounded, socially attuned capabilities.

Research on India’s digital transformation offers opportunities to develop new theoretical insights for the global IS community. India’s “*digital revolution*” began with the IT services boom of the 1990s, expanded through the telecom and mobile internet surge of the 2000s, and has accelerated since the mid-2010s (Seetharaman & Cranefield, 2019) along with more recent initiatives such as Digital India (nationwide digital infrastructure and e-governance), Aadhaar (biometric digital identity) (Addo, 2022), UPI (Unified Payments Interface, i.e. inter-bank peer-to-peer and person-to-merchant real-time payments), and ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce - a decentralized, interoperable open e-commerce). The early IT services phase delivered major economic gains, creating an entire industry, generating jobs, boosting exports (Bhatnagar & Madon, 1997). More recently, the focus has shifted to attracting foreign investment and expanding access to information (Parthiban et al., 2024). Yet some scholars have questioned the limited societal spillovers and skewed labor composition (Barnes, 2013) of India’s IT industry. Others note that emerging digital technologies may help move beyond low-end services toward more diversified, socially embedded growth (Das & Sagara, 2017).

The current IT development phase, characterized by digital platforms embedding services related to fintech, e-governance, and mobile ecosystems, has expanded access to resources, formalized parts of the informal sector, and holds promise for reducing poverty and inequality. These developments offer models for the wider global majority, even if significant challenges remain. The complex dynamics of new technological affordances and constraints, ranging from cross-platform interoperability to fraudulence (Kumar et al., 2025) and lack of sufficient regulations that balance conflicting interests (Marabelli & Davison, 2025; De’ et al., 2024), hinder the equitable spread of these digital platforms across socio-economic groups.

IS research, including studies published in *JSIS*, highlights how digital technologies may afford the creation of economic opportunities for the informal sector, help small and medium enterprises access new markets (Parthiban et al., 2024; Shirish et al., 2025), and transform service delivery in high impact industries such as healthcare (Hiriyur, 2022; Setia, 2023). In India and in the wider global majority countries, digital technology has also been socially transformative such as through, amplifying marginalized voices, lowering barriers to political participation (Kulshreshth, 2023), and supporting creative industries through digital media (Mehta & Cunningham, 2023), though always mediated by prevailing social norms and values (Oreglia & Srinivasan, 2016). This ongoing transformation is however complicated by geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and economic nationalism which are leading to a rethink of globalization’s promises (Butollo et al., 2024). Although digital technologies, AI (artificial intelligence) in particular, are deeply entangled with environmental sustainability challenges exacerbating global resource inequalities; yet they also enable strategic responses to climate risks through innovations in smart cities, agriculture, and disaster prediction (Marabelli & Davison, 2025). For India too, this shift opens up both risks and opportunities: it may create greater space for indigenous enterprises, self-reliant supply chains, and localized innovation, while also changing the nature of export-led sectors and globally networked business models (Witt et al., 2023). The interplay between fractured globalizing forces and India’s own plural, multi-scale economy raises pressing questions about sovereignty, resilience, and cultural-economic autonomy.

This special issue seeks to examine strategic opportunities, disruptions and challenges arising from the intersection of culture, commerce, capabilities and technology in the Indian context. We welcome research that shows how digital technologies reshape strategic choices, organizing logics, and competitive positioning while remaining embedded in India's uniqueness. The special issue also aims to foreground location-specific research agendas and contextual theorization (Avgerou, 2019), emphasizing the need for research that is not only rigorous and relevant, but also responsible to its context (Seetharaman et al., 2024).

We welcome theoretical, empirical, and practice-based contributions that explore topics including, but not limited to:

### ***Craft, Culture, Civilization, and Vernacular Economies***

- The impact of digital technologies on traditional crafts, artisanal economies, and vernacular industries
- The influence of cultural values and local practices on the adoption and adaptation of technology in contemporary Indian businesses
- The ways in which modern hybrid enterprises blend tradition with technology
- The role of platforms and algorithms in promoting or marginalizing cultural specificity
- The shaping of digital consumption patterns in India by cultural values and vernacular preferences
- India's civilizational heritage as a source of new knowledge to the world economy
- Privacy, ownership, and representation in India's digital cultural economy
- The role of digital enterprises in shaping cultural circulation and diasporic identity formation in global markets
- The contribution of India's civilizational wisdom to the evolution of global thought and practice

### ***Digital Platforms, Inclusion, and Ecosystems***

- Role of e-commerce and logistics platforms in integrating small producers into formal value chains
- Rethinking "success" in the Indian startup ecosystem: Beyond unicorns and IPOs
- The engagement of diverse communities in India with technology and its implications for digital equity
- The evolution of Indian digital platforms and the strategic lessons they offer for other Global Majority contexts
- The design and governance of public digital infrastructure in India, including Aadhaar, UPI, DPI, and ONDC
- Gender, caste, and community and how they shape access to and benefits from digital technologies

### ***Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Labor***

- The rise of startups, unicorns, and new business models in India's digital economy
- Micro-entrepreneurship on digital platforms
- Frugality as a design and innovation principle in digital India
- Tech-driven ventures addressing developmental challenges—health, education, sanitation, livelihood—while building scalable businesses
- Social enterprises and the bridging of digital divides in rural or marginalized communities

- Barriers and breakthroughs for women-led tech ventures and gig workers in India
- Workforce transformations and the future of employment in India's digital economy
- Labor conditions in gig work and platform economies: Precarity, control, and bargaining power.
- Jugaad: Informal and grassroots innovators' contribution to India's digital and entrepreneurial ecosystems

### ***Policy, Scale, and Governance***

- The role of government in shaping India's digital future
- Policy frameworks governing digital trade, content regulation, and data flows
- Regulatory frameworks that are emerging (or failing) to protect gig and informal digital workers
- Infrastructure, policy, and local culture shaping innovation geographies
- Role of metrics, narratives, and hype in shaping investor and policymaker behavior
- Role of educational institutions, accelerators, and skilling platforms in nurturing tech and innovation ecosystems
- Digital literacy, reskilling, and entrepreneurial mindsets evolving across India's socio-economic spectrum

### ***Firm-Level Strategy and Organizational Change***

- The responses of Indian firms—across sectors and sizes—to digital transformation through reconfigured business models, organizational practices, and value chains
- Indian tech companies embracing high-value digital innovation and its implications for global markets
- The role of digital technologies in shaping firm capabilities, governance structures, and decision-making in traditional as well as tech-native enterprises
- Digital readiness, resilience, and innovation across micro, small, medium, and large firms operating in the regulatory and constrained infrastructural settings in India
- Indian companies cultivating internal innovation through digital initiatives—labs, accelerators, intrapreneurship
- Organizational practices amongst Indian firms that support (or hinder) digital experimentation and agility
- Tech-enabled supply chains affecting innovation capabilities among MSMEs

By bringing together diverse ideas and a deeper understanding, this special issue aims to reframe India not as a battleground between tradition and modernity but as a dynamic site of ongoing negotiation, reinvention, and possibility.

We welcome both empirical and conceptual contributions. Please refer to JSIS' guidelines for authors to prepare the manuscript and select the Special Issue titled "*India at the Intersection: Reconfiguring Commerce, Capabilities and Culture in Age of Technological Acceleration*" when submitting your manuscript.

### ***Important Dates and Tentative Publication Timeline:***

- March 6 - 8, 2026: Developmental workshop for interested authors at InCIS 2026. This is optional.
- May 1, 2026: Deadline to submit a 1000-words extended abstract on the JSIS portal (not required but highly recommended) to check the fit with the special issue.
- July 1, 2026: Submission of full papers opens

- September 30, 2026: Deadline for full papers submission on the JSIS submission portal
- January 31, 2027: Initial feedback to authors
- April 30, 2027: Deadline for resubmission of revised papers
- July - August, 2027: Second and subsequent round of reviews
- September 30, 2027: Final Submissions due
- December 1, 2027: Final editorial decisions communicated to authors

### ***Developmental Workshop for Selected Authors:***

A developmental workshop for selected papers will be organized as part of the India Conference on Information Systems (InCIS) 2026, scheduled for 6–8 March 2026 at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. The invitation-only workshop will provide detailed feedback and mentorship to authors whose submissions show strong potential for contributing to the Special Issue. Invitations will be extended to authors of InCIS main conference papers that align closely with the expectations of the Special Issue. Participation in the workshop does not guarantee acceptance into the Special Issue; rather, it aims to help authors strengthen their manuscripts and align them with the theme. For submission details, please visit the InCIS website: <https://inais.org.in/> and <https://conference.iima.ac.in/incis2026/call-for-submissions/>

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