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Information technology combinations decision model for supply chains information systems integration

Dissertation

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doktorin der Ingenieurwissenschaften (Dr.-Ing.)

Submitted by
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April 2013
Oldenburg, Germany

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Place of the Dissputation: Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg
Dissputation Date: 13.01.2014

Oldenburger Schriften zur Wirtschaftsinformatik

Band 11

Dania Pérez Armayor

**Information Technology Combinations Decision Model
for Supply Chains Information Systems Integration**

Shaker Verlag
Aachen 2014

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Zugl.: Oldenburg, Univ., Diss., 2014

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Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-8440-2554-5

ISSN 1863-8627

Shaker Verlag GmbH • P.O. BOX 101818 • D-52018 Aachen

Phone: 0049/2407/9596-0 • Telefax: 0049/2407/9596-9

Internet: www.shaker.de • e-mail: info@shaker.de

Acknowledgements

The years dedicated to this project have been a challenge that would not have been possible if not for the support and help of many people. I cannot express in words the great debt of gratitude to these people, but at least I have to mention some of them because of its proximity and personal and professional influence.

Thanks to my supervisors, professors Dr.-Ing. Jorge Marx Gómez and Dr.-Ing. José Antonio Díaz Batista. Your guidance has been a beacon to improve myself and to manage this research according timely and proficiently. Without their advice it would have been nearly impossible for me to accomplish what has been achieved at the time and under the requirements presented.

I also want to acknowledge the assistance of other professionals such as Dr. Rafael Espín, Dra. Liane Haak, Dra. Mercedes Delgado, Dr. Inty Saez, MSc. Ariel Valdés, MSc. Roberto Pérez, MSc. Alberto Pérez, Dr. Rafael Corchuelo and so many other that help me to achieve important milestones during the research process.

My recognition also to the friends (since most of them are so much more to me than colleagues) from the Very Large Business Applications in Germany and from the Business Informatics in Havana, that stood by me and make possible that could devote myself to research more than to other necessary tasks. I will only name Julia Franke and Yadary Ortega as representatives on a long important list.

A heartfelt dedication to my dear husband, Alexei Ramos, who has become an irreplaceable pillar to keep my sanity and perspective. Even in the worst possible moment he finds the proper word, the right action to make calm and keep me going.

I need to specially thank my parents, my baby sister, and the rest of my family, for their unconditional support, nourishment and concern. They are the best possible team to rely on.

And finally to my friends, that let me keep them on hold till the end of this project.

Summary

The growing necessity to satisfy a more demanding customer in a scenery where deadlines and costs must be constantly reduce to maintain competitiveness, simultaneously with increased uncertainty about demand, has been leading organizations to collaborate to such a level competition is between supply chains rather than among isolated enterprises (Davenport *et al.*, 2004).

Inter-enterprise coordination is a core issue in supply chain management. Companies invariably need to electronically exchange information and integrating such information into each member information system. The traditional solution consists on providing interfaces that allows the access of providers and clients to the necessary data for management (Weske, 2007). However, because of the large number of diverse information systems, the data format (syntax) of each exchange (message) and the meaning (semantics) of both of them usually differs from company to company, or sometimes even within the same company if more than one software product is used as information system (Glazner, 2006; Hohpe *et al.*, 2004; Themistocleous, Irani & Love, 2004; Weske, 2007).

In such environment the information systems integration is a recognized problem. This problem, among other factors, is aggravated by the selection complexity of a combination of technologies to support, to the greatest possible extent, the supply chain performance.

This investigation proposes the bases of a decision support model based on compensatory fuzzy logic, in order to assist the selection of technological combinations to integrate information systems in a supply chain.

In order to so, theoretical definitions are given about main supply chain characteristics, about the use and role of information technology in the integration of this supply chains, and also regarding information systems integration and enterprise application integration technologies. Later a model proposal is explained, together with a general idea of the employed decision making approach, that include multi-criteria and compensatory fuzzy logic elements. After that are described finding and insights derived of the application through a case of study of a software prototype that use the model proposal. And finally, conclusions and recommendations are discussed.

Although stronger practical results are desirable, it can be said that the technological combinations assessment process proposed by the model contributes to the development of a global integrated IT infrastructure that responds to the supply chain strategic objectives.

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