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EDITORIAL

The Past and the Future of Competitiveness Research: A Review in an Emerging Context of Innovation and EMNEs

Kirankumar S. Momaya[1]

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Abstract
Fields of strategy, competitiveness, and international business research are evolving steadily as more vexing challenges emerge and demand innovation. Key objective of this study is to longitudinally review literature on competitiveness and innovation to identify future sustainable directions. We adapt a systematic literature review approach to discern patterns in individual fields and at the intersection. This, complemented by review of patterns of trends in contributions by select countries and longitudinal experiential view of more than a quarter century of journey of author across select countries, provided new insights. We use the insights to evolve high-potential future topics for research, clustered by contexts, theory, and practices. This review—at the interfaces of theory and practice, and fields across disciplines—will help readers understand the gaps and explore opportunities for research projects in new directions. Synthesis of findings at the interface would facilitate pathways to further research and practice to enhance competitiveness across levels and sustainability.

Keywords Pathways to competitiveness · Productivity and sustainability · International business strategy · EMNE internationalization · Longitudinal review · Competitive advantage · Innovation capabilities

Introduction

Competitiveness shapes' opportunities for youth, productivity of firms, and prosperity and sustainability of clusters, cities and regions, and international business (Porter 1990; Aiginger et al. 2013; Huggins and Izushi 2015; Huggins and Thompson 2017). Competitiveness has a long history (Fagerberg and Srholec 2017). Surge of interest in field of competitiveness has linkages with changes in the world economy, e.g., rapid increase in role of Japan (in the 1970s and the 1980s) and other industrializing countries in Asia (Hamel and Prahalad 1996). Popular use of the term by politicians, the media, business people, and its persistence (e.g., Aiginger and Vogel 2015) in different contexts does create opportunities, challenges, and the need for research. The utility and high potential of understanding, experimenting, and learning about competitiveness—having relevance and linkages across levels, from product, firm, industry to cluster, city or state—particularly in contexts of large emerging countries such as India does not need much debate if one considers vast opportunities for improvement. Longitudinal review of the trends in research in past is necessary to evolve directions of research for future, as has been demonstrated for select fields of international business (IB) research (e.g., Rialp et al. 2005; Keupp and Gassman 2009; Paul et al. 2017).

Pioneering work on competitiveness by Porter and associates provided major thrust to research and practice. With the "Competitive Advantage of Nations (CAON)" project and the publication, Porter (1990) opened up a whole new perspective on competitiveness that shaped research and practice. Through the project, they showed that traditional views on competitiveness could not account for differences in firm competitiveness (e.g., Sölvell 2015), they evolved fundamental questions and model such as Diamond model that continue to shape debates about competitiveness. However, several limitations of the model in practical contexts, e.g., of Asia as well as North America, indicates exciting opportunities for research at interfaces of competitiveness and international business (IB).

Several discontinues in two decades of the new century are demanding transitions and rethink on definitions, factors of competitiveness and measurement. The global

✉ Kirankumar S. Momaya
momaya@iitb.ac.in

[1] Shailesh J. Mehta School of Management, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Powai, Mumbai 400 076, India

financial crisis of 2008 that engulfed many countries shaped "crisis of competitiveness" in several industries beyond finance and prompted transitions. For instance, welfare, wealth, work project in Europe (WWW for Europe) aimed to analyse the preconditions necessary for a transition to a more socio-ecological European growth path and new perspectives on competitiveness (Aiginger and Vogel 2015). Near 10 trillion dollar injected by central banks, since 2008 is reaching limits. Two large countries—India and China—are likely to shape practices of competitiveness and patterns in their trends can help shape context.

Divergent patterns of country and firm competitiveness in India and China indicate some fertile arenas of research at interfaces of strategy, competitiveness, IB, and policy. India and China, both have been climbing quite well on select dimensions of country competitiveness. From the 50s and the 40s, to enter into the 30s in terms of country competitiveness ranks for India (e.g., Momaya 2011) can be considered a matter of significant progress for India, considering huge population and complexities. An effort to understand patterns at the firm level—the real level for international competitiveness—threw some surprising findings. For instance, in the sample of Global 500, while contribution from India, over the period 2005–2018, has stagnated at 8, China has leapfrogged 10× in terms of firms ahead. Such divergent patterns between country and firm competitiveness indicate major opportunities for research on competitiveness, particularly at interfaces of IB (assumed to have high overlap with strategy, so word strategy is used to include IB in this paper).

We need to review interfaces of competitiveness and related fields of strategy and IB. Since competitiveness has relevance across levels, insights from disciplines having higher relevance at micro to macro can be useful to address the vexing problems the world is facing. For instance, for firm-level competitiveness, interfaces with functional areas such as strategy, human resources, operations, finance, technology, and innovation management need to be appreciated to diagnose a firm's problems related to international competitiveness and business. Competitiveness and innovation are important and significant fields with high-potential interfaces with strategy and IB, with high potential to contribute, as to best of our knowledge, no such longitudinal review balancing many aspects exist.

The aim of this paper is threefold: first to review the literature related to competitiveness quantitatively as well as qualitatively, particularly for potential linkages of firm competitiveness to IB. Second, we want to explore linkages among competitiveness, innovation, and EMNE internationalization in context of the vexing problems affecting sustainability, a glimpse of that was given above. Third, from the longitudinal review, we want to evolve high-potential topics for further research and practice. This desire to shape practice, is a unique dimension of contribution, as linkages between theory and practice seems to have vast opportunities for improvement in strategy, IB, and competitiveness.

Longitudinal Qualitative Literature Review

Competitiveness has quite exciting and practical research literature at the intersection of business, management, engineering, and economics. While macro-dimensions of competitiveness (e.g., at country or state or regional competitiveness) are also important, the focus of this study is on micro-dimensions related to strategy, IB, and innovation or technology management. In this context, theoretical linkages of competitiveness may be strong with IB strategy, technology, or innovation management and operations. We will get some quantitative facts to understand patterns, after we start from brief review of classical works clustered in subsections below.

Macro-dimensions of Competitiveness

With urge to understand dynamics of competitiveness, research, and experimentation got major boost in the 1990s. Michael Porter (1990) introduced an exciting framework for country competitiveness aimed at redefinition of the foundations of national wealth. Porter's diamond model was extended to address some limitations. The double diamond model (Rugman and D'cruz 1993) tried to incorporate multinational activities. Efforts by Momaya to enhance utility and generalizability of competitiveness frameworks helped evolve competitiveness Assets–Processes–Performance framework (APP framework) that was tested in context of select industries in select countries (e.g., Canada, Japan and USA; Momaya 1998). The APP framework has also been used in a variety of industries and micro-contexts, such as firm level. Extension by human factors (e.g., Cho 1994) evolved into new comprehensive model that was tested to measure competitiveness of countries (e.g., Cho et al. 2016; Moon et al. 2015). Recognizing linkages among three levels of competitiveness, Banwet et al. (2003) and Bhawsar and Chattopadhyay (2015) reconfirm importance of firms as root or source of creation of economic value and competitiveness.

Connecting competitiveness with new developments in the theory of the firm, Aiginger and Vogel (2015) emphasize social investment, ecological ambitions, and the share of eco-industries as drivers as they redefine competitiveness as the "ability of a country (region, location) to deliver the beyond-GDP goals for its citizens". They emphasize quality,

sophisticated products and productivity as competitive advantages and on capabilities as drivers of competitiveness.

Micro-dimensions of Competitiveness

Why firms from a particular country are able to create and sustain competitive advantage in a particular industry has been a fundamental question of competitiveness since long (e.g., Porter 1990; Momaya 2001). The answers are of great significance to firms that have strategic intent and must compete in international or regional markets. Relevance of select constructs for competitiveness of firms started attracting research attention. Theories of strategy have provided many useful linkages to address sources of competitiveness. Views such as industry structure view (ISV) and complementary resource-based view [e.g., Penrose (1959), Barney (1986), Hamel and Prahlad (1990)] were quite popular to address some issues. Teece et al. (1997) introduced a new approach called the dynamic-capability view (DCW) as an extension of the RBV. Dynamic capabilities are organizational processes embedded within the firm, are path-dependent and hence can help build deeper competitiveness. Relevance of aforementioned theories for competitiveness of firms is enormous. Still, these theories were less able to explain competitiveness of firms in emerging countries, where societal and governmental institutions are much stronger than market-based institutions. Institution-based view (e.g., Peng 2002; Peng et al. 2009) tries to address the limitations.

Learning from such profound contributions from strategy and other streams of management, alternate frameworks are evolving that can provide simpler and generalizable approaches to define and measure competitiveness. Research aimed at exploring competitiveness linkages across levels gave generic framework competitiveness Assets-Processes-Performance (APP, Momaya 2001) that is being tested across mature to emerging industries (e.g., software, Banwet et al. (2003), Ambastha and Momaya (2004), nanotech, Momaya 2011) and firms. Krishnan (2010) emphasized role of a critical mass of new, innovative, technology-driven firms (e.g., technology ventures that scale-up, Momaya and Bardeja 2005) for shift from 'Jugaad to Systematic Innovation'.

Pioneering work on competitiveness by Moon (2016) and associates has high relevance for firms. While their contributions span across levels (e.g., NCR at country level), their findings based on decades of work on efficient catch-up by Korean firms and industrial houses are perhaps most insightful. After several extensions to diamond framework, Moon proposed the "ABCD" model based on four key factors: agility, benchmarking, convergence, and dedication. Productivity of the people who produce, exchange, and manage technological and other resources is very important for competitiveness of firms. In the above context, we are keen to pursue questions such as:

- What topics at interfaces of competitiveness, innovation, strategy, and MNEs provide insights to generate impactful knowledge and practices?
- What are future directions of impactful research related to competitiveness in terms of contexts, theory, and practice?

Methodology

For the unique context of this study, we explore an innovative synthesis of mixed methods. Potential of synergy from a more insightful combination of quantitative and qualitative studies with longitudinal horizons have been mentioned by Rialp et al. (2005). While analysis of quantitative and archival data is a major pillar, we adapt a taxonomy of mixed method proposed by Bryman and Bell (2011). They suggest the taxonomy based on priority and sequence between quantitative and qualitative research. Considering the complexity of levels and interfaces of competitiveness, qualitative research was given higher priority. Still, patterns that emerged from quantitative methods preceded qualitative research.

For quantitative research, we adapted the approach of systematic literature review (SLR) based on search methods on select databases to find patterns of contributions by sub-disciplines, regions (or countries) and specific centres or institutes. The first step in performing the review was to explore research questions. For keyword-based search approach, we selected the Scopus database for its advantages. After discussions with domain experts and iterative searches, 'competitiveness' and 'innovation' emerged to be two most important generic keywords to focus on in context of this study.

Two longitudinal independent searches on each keyword were supplemented by a search at intersection to find the patterns. We started with full period of half century from 1968 to 2018, but focused on recent snapshot of 5 years to discern patterns. Among major contributing subject areas, 'Business, Management and Accounting' emerged to be distinctly ahead of other areas, e.g., economics, engineering, and social sciences. This is quite commensurate with context and focus on strategy and IB in this study. Since select leading countries accounted for more than 50% contribution of all countries, focus in this study was on these countries.

Emerging Findings

Findings from Quantitative Review of Literature

Efforts at systematic literature review (SLR) provided some interesting insights about patterns of contributions from different countries. For competitiveness field, the subject area 'Business, Management and Accounting (BMA)' emerged to be the largest contributor with 32.6%. The contribution of BMA was found to be even higher for the field of innovation and intersection of 'innovation and competitiveness'. The percentage contribution increased when we focused on recent period (of 5 years, 2013–18) for each field. In fact, it increased to 49.22% and 51.75% for intersection set of 1363 and 576 papers for total and recent (Table 1). For instance, for the intersection sub-sample in recent period (total 1113), BMA (576) was far ahead of the other fields 'Economics, Econometrics and Finance'(270), Social Sciences (243) and Engineering (231), indicating high interest among researchers of business to contribute at micro level.

Analysis of innovation field and intersection to find synergy with competitiveness provided rich insights and some surprises. As an important field with higher maturity and bigger numbers of journals (including one in related fields such as technology management and R&D), contributions for innovation (93,634) were significant multiples of competitiveness (9702) and again BMA contributed 32% overall (about 36% in recent period). While the USA, Britain and China contribute most (more than 33%), more recent results indicate that Germany, France, The Netherlands, and Switzerland are major drivers of innovation, including practices. Sample in intersection set is bit smaller (2769, of which BMA contributed 1363 or 49%), but provides exciting inferences about interface. In terms of relatively higher

Table 1 Patterns of contributions to research related to competitiveness, innovation, and interfaces for select countries Source: developed by author based on Momaya (2018), systematic queries on database scopus

	Contribution to competitiveness research				Contribution to innovation related research				INTERSECTION			
Country	Total	During recent 5 Years 2013-2017	% contribution of the 5 year	% contribution of the country in the sample in the 5 years	Total	5Y-13-17	% contribution of the 5 year	% contribution of the country in the sample	Total	5Y-13-17	% contribution of the 5 year	% contribution of the country in the sample
BRITAIN	281	84	29.89	7.18	3494	1268	36.29	10.53	129	45	34.88	7.81
CANADA	68	18	26.47	1.54	925	376	40.65	3.12	23	11	47.83	1.91
CHINA	305	77	25.25	6.58	2483	948	38.18	7.87	140	45	32.14	7.81
FRANCE	61	27	44.26	2.31	1143	567	49.61	4.71	36	16	44.44	2.78
GERMANY	**103**	**41**	39.81	3.50	**2101**	894	42.55	7.42	75	23	30.67	3.99
INDIA	**109**	**43**	39.45	**3.68**	**574**	286	49.83	**2.37**	37	17	45.95	2.95
ITALY	126	65	51.59	5.56	1466	791	53.96	6.57	75	42	56.00	7.29
JAPAN	39	21	53.85	1.79	520	222	42.69	1.84	28	9	32.14	1.56
KOREA	64	32	50.00	2.74	458	232	50.66	1.93	27	8	29.63	1.39
NETHERLANDS	39	11	28.21	0.94	1359	513	37.75	4.26	26	9	34.62	1.56
SWITZERLAND	25	11	44.00	0.94	483	212	43.89	1.76	10	7	70.00	1.22
USA	527	120	22.77	10.26	5957	2044	34.31	16.97	155	54	34.84	9.38
Contribution from Asia in the Sample	517	173	33.46		4035	1688	41.83		232	79	34.05	
As % the Sample	30.17	21.82			19.25	20.21			30.49	27.62		
Sub total	1747	550	31.48	47.01	20963	8353	39.85	69.36	761	286	37.58	

Blue color is used to help identify peak in a series and red color to identify low values. Some numbers have been made bold for India, a focus of this study

contribution as compared to individual samples, China and Italy have better contribution at the intersection, whereas India lags.

Findings from an Analysis of Practical Reality

Analysis of patterns of reality of competitiveness, particularly at the firm level provides some useful insights to enhance contribution of this study to competitiveness practice. We have been watching patterns of contributions of select countries to competitiveness through longitudinal samples. While samples such as Global 2000 are more informative, they face issues such as shorter horizons and volatility. Let us review trends contributions of India and select countries (Table 2). India increased contribution from 48 in 2008 to 58 in 2018, a significant jump of 10 firms. Still, this increase is very marginal in context of jump of 157 for Asia that was driven by more than 15× jump of China. In percentage terms of the sample, jump to 2.9% (in 2018) from 2.4% (2008) is too low for an entrepreneurial country of the size of India. In terms of revenue share (1.8%) and profit share (1.5%), India has much worse performance as compared to China and USA. Scenario for India is much worse if one reviews samples such as Global 500 (e.g., Momaya 2015) that has better longitudinal views and stability. Worries that comparatively no Indian consumer goods company comes closer to kind of capabilities and global brand recognition of MNEs from Asian peers and that global competition is entrenched in India (e.g., Thompson et al. 2013) should not be wished away, particularly by leaders of firms of Indian origin (FIOs).

Table 2 Trend in contributions of select countries in terms of competitive firms, Global 2000

Country	Year					
	2008	2018	2018 as %	Jump	Jump as % firms	Trends
Britain	119	88	4.4	−31	−26.05	↓
CANADA	59	51	2.55	−8	−13.56	↓
CHINA	**70**	**233**	11.65	163	232.86	↑↑
FRANCE	67	57	2.85	−10	−14.93	↓
GERMANY	59	54	2.7	−5	−8.47	↓
INDIA	**48**	**58**	2.9	10	20.83	↑
ITALY	37	26	1.3	−11	−29.73	↓
JAPAN	259	228	11.4	−31	−11.97	↓
KOREA	52	67	3.35	15	28.85	↑↑
NETHERLANDS	24	22	1.1	−2	−8.33	↓
SWITZERLAND	37	41	2.05	4	10.81	↑
USA	598	559	27.95	−39	−6.52	↓
Contribution from Asia in the Sample	429	586	29.3	157	36.60	↑↑
Sub total	1429	1484	74.2	55	3.85	↑

Source: Developed by team at Competitiveness Lab at DMS & SJMSOM, IITB based on data from Fortune Global 2000 companies, snapshot of 2008 and 2018. Sources last accessed on July 5, 2019 at https://www.forbes.com/global2000/#7800fb32335d

1, Countries were selected for their significant contributions. 2, Two arrows in the last column if % jump is more than 25

Some important numbers have been highlighted in bold for China and India

More insights on competitiveness challenges for firms of Indian origin emerge when we consider qualitative dimensions. For instance, a majority of the FIOs in the 2018 sample (e.g., about 21 out of 58) are from banking and financial services industry (BFSI). They are often classified as 'Regional banks' (by international media) and not 'Major banks'; China has 3 in 'Top 10'; and India has none in even top 100 in Global 2000. Competitiveness, particularly international, of many of the FIOs from that industry may not be considered high enough to address a fundamental question of international competitiveness—what determines the international competitiveness and success of firms. Even in computer services—one of the most internationally competitive industry of India—there are only three firms, and at ranks beyond 300, e.g., TCS (404), Infosys (643), and Wipro (857). While these firms have high degree of internationalization—both exports as well as FDI (e.g., Parthasarathy et al. 2017), big challenges that were diagnosed long ago (Ambastha and Momaya 2004; Umamaheswari and Momaya 2008) remain less addressed on their journey up the value curve.

Sustained efforts by the author in cooperation with capable professionals and brilliant students at Indian Institutes of Technology (popularly called IITs) provide interesting insights. Many professionals cannot easily see bigger picture of competitiveness at higher levels. It takes a lot of efforts to dispel deeply entrenched myths such as "competitiveness and competition are same", particularly in India. A key reason may be hyper-competitive environments that prevail in India; one remain trapped in over-competitive mind-set, missing options to cooperate. Many firms fail to think holistically about 'International competitiveness' and ultimately face survival crisis, as they lose competitiveness in not only vast domestic market in India, but even regions of India. Many business groups in India have lost massive market shares due to neglect of international competitiveness.

Discussion

Maturity of competitiveness and its linkages across levels, disciplines seems to be evolving quite well in some countries in Europe and Asia. For instance, in research related to competitiveness, contributions from select countries in Asia and Europe are increasing significantly. A recent dip-stick review found that Italy, Korea, Germany, France, The Netherlands, and Switzerland driving the research (e.g., Momaya 2018). More importantly, maturity of translating such research into practice, including at higher levels of city, cluster or nation, seems high or improving fast in the countries, including select countries in Eastern Europe. Slow improvements in countries such as India (with vast gaps) indicate a huge untapped opportunity for research and pilots. While gaps in linkages between firm and higher levels are there, gaps in research on competitiveness at interfaces of functional areas of management is perhaps most promising for strategy, competitiveness, and IB.

Quite popular approaches to competitiveness are needing major rethink. For instance, core competence thinking was a popular, a powerful and widely promoted approach to focus and mobilize an organization's resources (e.g., Gallon et al. 1995), but executives often failed to define the core technical competencies of their companies. They defined a generic method to help organizations to put core competence thinking into practice, but results need to be reviewed. Similar challenges are being faced by several other popular frameworks (e.g., diamond, DDD, and competitiveness APP) and provide major opportunities for research and tools to deploy them in varied contexts.

From theory development view, process nature of competitiveness is emerging to be promising. Whether pragmatic definitions across developed countries (e.g., OECD) or researchers (e.g., Fagerberg and Srholec 2017; Momaya 2001) focus on abilities is emerging as a core construct of productivity and competitiveness. Actor focus adapted by the World Economic Forum (WEF, e.g., institutions and policies) may be more relevant at macro-level, process-based approach proposed by Momaya (e.g., 2001, where competitiveness processes are made a core pillar) remains important for the context.

Pragmatically, the vexing problems such as "Pre-mature stagnation in capabilities for FIOs" provide enormous opportunities for research and practice. FIOs neither match in strengths with Asian counterparts in assets or innovation capabilities (e.g., intellectual property). Other choice for FIOs is to scale-up mass or muscle or capabilities quickly towards an ideal situation when a company has size, scale, reach or intangible assets such as brands, proprietary knowledge, or innovation capability (Thompson et al. 2013).

Transition to a sustainable business model and economic model provides exciting opportunities for competitiveness practice and research. At macro-level, there are no inherent trade-offs between business growth, social, and environmental factors if an organization can adapt a holistic approach to competitiveness. Few progressive firms and countries seem to be already pursuing such approaches and sustainable pathways. Research to evolve linkages among relevant asset and process factors of competitiveness APP framework with international, environmental, and financial factors provide an exciting opportunity for research.

Competitiveness indices are proposed as much needed economic compass (e.g., Klaus 2019, Global Competitiveness Research {GCR}), but can have some limitations (e.g., gaps in macro or micro-foundations of the model, not grouping similar countries, too many criteria, and interpretation).

Hence, there is scope for further research and next section provides some directions.

Directions for Future Research

Since most firms, industries, and countries are quite far from their relevant competitiveness frontiers, there is an enormous scope for further research and practice. Unique methodology of this study based on systematic literature review and longitudinal study provides rich patterns and perspectives. We logically cluster the directions for future research that are emerging under three sections.

Future Directions: Contexts

Since competitiveness has relevance across levels, contexts at different levels can be quite different. For instance, for country competitiveness, economic, political, institutional, international relations, and other contexts become quite important.

Let us highlight contexts of high relevance for firm level. Innovation capabilities were identified to play vital role for sustained success in exporting (e.g., Paul et al. 2017). Which innovation capability (e.g., process or product or technology) can be more useful for what market characteristics (e.g., developing or advanced) in what industry context provides an exciting context for research.

Factors related to origin of firm (e.g., region of origin, Paul et al. 2017), founders, and industry of origin can shape the strategy and pace of internationalization (e.g., staged approach vs. born global). Which antecedents are of higher relevance for accelerated export performance in context of large domestic market such as in India, provides an exciting research context.

Future Directions: Theory

Competitiveness—having relevance across levels—links with theories across disciplines. Competitiveness research should aim at insightful and innovative studies that break new ground. Studies should address real-world phenomenon or vexing problems such as 'inadequate opportunities for capable youth to shape their and other youth's future through sustainable innovations'. Researchers can redirect or initiate a line of inquiry, integrate across disciplines and levels. For instance, for the above problem, sustainable technological innovation that can be competitive in front of vast architectural resources of incumbent firms and system need to draw from disciplines of engineering, management, economics, and entrepreneurship.

Focal firms—large or small—can be anchors of innovation-based productivity improvements within the firm, its supply chains and clusters. While information technology (IT, traditional, and emerging one such as cloud or IoT) promises productivity enhancements, but improvements are often marginal or short term, particularly in emerging countries. New theories of management of technology and innovation (MoT) are needed to guide on strategic choices about MoT and other functions of management for international competitiveness and IB. Maturity of International MNEs, e.g., European (Jha et al. 2018), to leverage resources from emerging country knowledge hubs for global innovation indicates opportunities for EMNEs to improve innovation capabilities for competitiveness through international networks. Track record of exports and other forms of IB is often an outcome of sustained capability building for international competitiveness. International business competencies (i.e., international orientation, innovativeness, marketing (Knight and Kim 2009, and project management) are vital firm-specific advantages (FSAs, Rugman 1981). Reviewing the literature on exporting challenges for SMEs, Paul et al. (2017) suggested several areas for contemporary further research. Entrepreneurial and international orientation of SMEs that show sustained success as exporters was identified to be a promising topic for future study (e.g., Paul et al. 2017). More specifically, how to build innovation capabilities for scale-up in export market (e.g., depth vs. breadth, cost, or differentiation) is a high-potential topic.

Departing from theories and frameworks based on school of competition (e.g., competitive advantage, Porter 1990), new theories that build on contextual basis of cooperation, sharing economy, and ecological balances need to be tested, adapted, and refined. Competitiveness Assets–Processes–Performance (competitiveness APP) framework that strives for better balances among processes and performance (e.g., kind of means and ends approach) can help achieve more sustainable competitiveness. Proper attention to the finishing, strengthening of the means is what we need (Vivekananda 1993).

Future Directions: Practice

Since practices related to competitiveness are less understood, documented, discussed, and refined, they provide vast opportunities for innovation, particularly in contexts of large transition country such as India. Most organizations have activities related to specific management functions that can be mapped to specific process factors of the competitiveness APP framework (Momaya 2001)—from strategic management, HRM, operations to supply chain management (SCM), and technology or innovation management (TIM). Diagnosing gaps on relevant performance factors (e.g., productivity, financial, and international) and their root causes in competitiveness assets or processes provides rich opportunities. The specific processes such as HRM can be diagnosed for maturity using frameworks such as people capability maturity model (P-CMM) (e.g., Ambastha 2013).

For firm-level competitiveness, practices related to quality and business excellence are becoming mature, but there is enormous potential to enhance practices related to IB, HRM, and technology or innovation management. For instance, Japanese practices related to quality in manufacturing and European practices related to business excellence are maturing and have spread to many countries, including India. Vast gaps in potential and actual international performance of FIOs (see Table 2), indicates opportunities to refine practices related to competitiveness, IB, and TIM.

Hidden potential of competitiveness has been hinted at by select veterans from competitiveness giant countries and provide rich opportunities for exploration. Human resources are one of the most important sources of competitiveness for Japanese corporations (e.g., Tomisaka 2008). While concerned about low ranks of Japan (e.g., 22 in world competitiveness report in 2008), Japan has consistently maintained top 5 ranks in factors such as 'product competitiveness' and regained ranks in Top 15 (as per WEF Global Competitiveness Report, rank was 5th in 2019), despite aged human resources. Several veteran leaders, particularly, one is practice, believe in hidden potential as a key factor in competitiveness (e.g., Tomisaka 2008). Ventures play an important role for innovation; Mikiharu (2014) explored role of corporate venture capital (CVC) for innovation and competitiveness. Similarly, Simon (2016) gave examples of how German hidden champions have been competing internationally in so many segments or industries. Work like above indicate at enormous potential for research and learning.

Evolving practices in many countries provide rich contexts, phenomenon, and opportunities for research or experimentation. For instance, some best practices of business and competitiveness have been naturally evolving in India and have withstood competitive pressures for centuries. Still, they have survived. Some of them are best practices from sustainability and other perspectives, and have potential to become next practices (e.g., Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004) of productivity, competitiveness, and IB that can benefit many countries. For instance, learning from Gandhiji's experiments (1982) continue to inspire more experimentation in "Laboratories of LIFE" and are benefitting masses. Team at the International Journal of Global Business and Competitiveness (JGBC) has been building capabilities to evolve a knowledge platform to share best of your empirical research about such phenomenon, practices, and experiments.

Concluding Remarks

The practice, research, and literature on competitiveness are young, exciting and have enormous scope for improvements. It is just starting to make inroads into the leading journals. Considering findings in this study, the field of competitiveness has tremendous potential to push frontiers of knowledge and practice to open new vistas or opportunities of strategy and IB for capable youth, ventures, firms, and clusters. Considering the interdisciplinary and multi-level nature of the field of competitiveness, we need to consider different methodologies and approaches to analyse contexts, situations and data collection to draw inferences. Editors and reviewers should encourage authors to cooperate to study novel contexts and methods to examine so many exciting dimensions of competitiveness; only a glimpse of some dimensions in context of strategy, innovation, and IB could be given in this study.

Insights gained through this study indicate enormous potential of evolving research at interfaces that can shape practices not only in firms and industry, but also in other types of organizations, policy, and clusters. Pioneering work by Porter and colleagues across countries has demonstrated useful practices (e.g., in strategy and competitiveness) and tools (e.g., five forces and diamond) that emerge from research. Since, firms (not countries) compete in international arenas that are becoming more challenging, they need to be innovative to upgrade competitive advantage. We hope that contexts and findings highlighted in this article prompts novel ideas, so that we can have long-term competitiveness, sustainable enterprises, cities and clusters. Since enhancing competitiveness is still key to prosperity, let us think strategically about discontinuities and innovation to shape a sustainable future for our organizations and people.

Key Questions Reflecting Applicability in Real Life

1. In what way, can competitiveness thinking inspire values, strategic intent, and initiatives for actions at your level?
2. How competitiveness and interfaces with innovation or other functions can be measured?
3. How groups on competitiveness or related fields (e.g., strategy, operations, etc.) can be initiated and sustained? Which activities (e.g., Research, courses, MDP, workshops, CSR, etc.) can help initiate and grow the "Group on Competitiveness (GoC)"?
4. Which topics are more relevant in contexts in your organization?
5. How can learning or knowledge from your research and pilots be diffused widely to start creating awareness about competitiveness?

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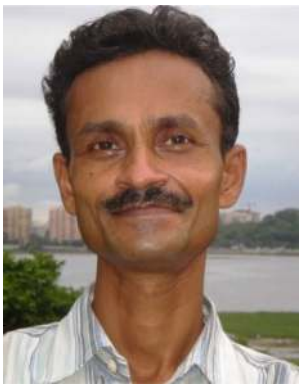

Kirankumar S. Momaya is a Professor of Technology Management and Competitiveness at Shailesh J. Mehta School of Management, IIT Bombay. He was an Associate Professor at the Department of Management Studies, IIT Delhi and founded the Strategy and Competitiveness Lab. He is a past President of the Global Institute of Flexible Systems Management (2018–19). His topics of interest include the role of AI, digital platforms and other emerging technologies for competitiveness of firms, industries and clusters. His research has been published in the Vikalpa, IIMB Management Review, Competitiveness Review, JSSPRM (Japan) and other leading journals of competitiveness in Asia. His international roles have included being a visiting professor at Ritsumeikan University in Japan, on Advisory Board of National Competitiveness Research. He serves on Editorial Board of leading journals of management from Asia such as JFSM, JAMR.