



# A Detailed Examination Of Multinational Corporations, Their Organizational Frameworks, Strategies, And Their Connection To Global Human Resource Management.

**RAJ KAMLESHKUMAR MODI**

Student

School of Liberal Arts and Management

PP Savani University

NH 8, GETCO, Near Biltech,

Dhamdod, Kosamba,

Surat, 394125,

Gujarat, India

Orcid [Id- 0009-0009-6848-0366](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6848-0366)

## Abstract:

This paper critically evaluates multinational companies, exploring their advantages and disadvantages for host countries and examining the different types of structures and strategies they employ. The focus of this analysis is on the varying structures and strategies employed by multinational companies when operating internationally. Instead of a chronological approach, a thematic approach is utilized to allow for a detailed examination of specific topics or themes without strict adherence to the order in which research was conducted. The paper begins by defining a multinational company, discussing its strengths and weaknesses, analyzing the components of its strategies and structures, and comparing the pros and cons of these different approaches. The latter part of the paper delves into the connection between these strategies and international human resource management, emphasizing how different company strategies and structures impact international HRM. Ultimately, the paper concludes that the role of IHRM differs based on organizational structures, leading to varying implications for international HRM.

**Keywords:** International HRM, Models, Strategies, Global.

## I. Introduction:

Over the last three decades, there has been significant advancement in the formulation of global strategies by Multinational Corporations (Adler, 1997; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1998), and the impact of these strategies on international human resource processes and practices has been equally significant (Black et al., 1999). Despite these advancements, there are still significant gaps between global structures and the necessary international human resource processes required for their implementation (Heidenreich, 2012). In today's global economy, multinational companies (MNCs) play a crucial role as key players. The importance of MNCs in the current global business landscape cannot be overstated. MNCs are responsible for coordinating and supervising subsidiaries across different countries and must operate within various national contexts (Heidenreich, 2012).

### Goals of the Research:

The purposes of this research are:

- To analyze multinational corporations critically; evaluate their advantages and disadvantages for host countries and discuss the different types of structures and strategies they employ.
- To analyze critically the different types of structures and strategies that multinational companies use when operating internationally.
- The aim is to investigate how these strategies are connected to global human resource management.
- Emphasizing the consequences of various companies' strategies and structures on international human resource management (IHRM).

Instead of following a chronological order, this review uses a thematic approach because it aligns with the purpose and method required. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of a particular topic or theme without being restricted by the order in which the research was conducted.

## II. Meaning of Multinational Corporation

There is no internationally agreed upon definition of a multinational corporation. Multinational Corporations are generally described as business entities that have investments in other countries that add value. Based on (Spero and Hart 1999), a multinational corporation (MNC) is described as a company that makes direct investments in different countries and possesses valuable assets in numerous nations. A company cannot be considered multinational if it only operates overseas or acts as a subcontractor for foreign companies. Multinational companies send capital, technology, management expertise, and marketing skills abroad to conduct production in foreign countries. (Dunning 2008) shares a similar perspective, defining MNCs as companies that participate in foreign direct investment (FDI) and possess or control valuable assets in multiple countries.

(Hennart 2008) offers a unique definition of MNCs as privately owned institutions designed to coordinate interdependencies between individuals in multiple countries through employment contracts. In contrast, Multinational Corporations, as defined by Kogut and (Zander 2003), are economic organizations that expand across borders from their national origins. According to an (ILO 2010) report, the key characteristic of a multinational company is that its managerial headquarters are in one country while it operates in several other countries simultaneously.

### Advantages of Multinational Corporations:

(Heidenreich 2012) listed the primary advantages and disadvantages of multinational corporations as follows:

- Assisting in boosting investment, income, and employment within the host country.
- Sharing technology with developing nations.
- Playing a significant role in fostering new inventions and innovations.

## Drawbacks of multinational corporations:

While it is true that multinational corporations offer certain benefits to the countries they operate in, they have also faced criticism on several fronts.

- MNCs technology aims to maximize profits globally, rather than focusing on the development needs of impoverished countries.
- MNCs can undermine the economic independence and regulation of individual countries by using their power and adaptability, enabling them to conduct activities that go against the national interest.
- Multinational corporations result in rapid depletion of certain non-renewable natural resources within the country they operate in.

## Strategic goals:

In this section of the review, we will explore the strategic goals of multinational corporations and examine how they adopt various competitive strategies to reach these goals. According to (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1992), MNCs have three main strategic objectives.

- Maximizing overall effectiveness
- Adaptability
- Sharing knowledge within the organization

According to Bartlett & Ghoshal, the objectives outlined are crucial for multinational corporations, with the level of importance differing for each company. In order to achieve global efficiency, it is vital to ensure that all potential sources of competitive advantage are recognized and exploited. Global efficiency can be improved by boosting revenues and reducing costs. Key factors that impact efficiency include labour, productivity, capital intensity, economies of scale, learning-curve effects, and a company's overall cost culture (John et al., 1997).

According to Bartlett and Ghoshal (2000), multinational flexibility refers to a company's capability to navigate the challenges and take advantage of opportunities presented by the diverse and unpredictable global environment. Another key goal of MNCs is to promote knowledge exchange among various units. Apart from promoting continuous learning, MNCs also support and facilitate the dissemination of fresh insights.

## III. The meaning of strategy

(Chandler 1962) defines strategy as the identification of the fundamental long-term goals and objectives of a company, along with the selection of methods and allocation of resources needed to achieve these goals. (Bartlett and Ghoshal 2000) categorize four distinct strategic approaches that emphasize various combinations of competitive advantage sources (means) and strategic objectives ends.

According to (Chandler 1962), strategy involves determining the core long-term objectives and goals of a business and deciding on the actions and resources required to achieve these goals. (Bartlett and Ghoshal 2000) describe four strategic methods based on various combinations of competitive advantage sources and strategic objectives. In the view of (Chandler 1962), strategy is centred around defining the essential long-term goals and objectives of a company, as well as planning the courses of action and resource allocation necessary to accomplish these goals.

(Bartlett and Ghoshal 2000) differentiate between four strategic approaches that prioritize varying combinations of competitive advantage sources and strategic objectives. As per (Chandler 1962), strategy entails establishing the fundamental long-term goals and objectives of a company and making decisions on the actions and resources needed to achieve these goals. (Bartlett and Ghoshal 2000) elaborate on four strategic approaches that highlight different mixes of competitive advantage sources and strategic objectives.

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## IV. Strategy of International Differentiation

This strategy places a strong emphasis on national differences in order to achieve various strategic objectives. It consists of a network of largely independent businesses, each with a concentration on a specific domestic market. The company allows these subsidiaries to operate with minimal direction from the headquarters. By tailoring their products and services to meet consumer preferences, as well as government regulations, these companies are able to enhance global efficiency and boost revenue. Embracing national differences also enables them to take advantage of opportunities related to multinational adaptability. Due to its country-centric nature, knowledge and innovation are maintained within national borders: subsidiaries recognize local needs and utilize their own resources to address them. (Bartlett and Ghoshal 2000) refer to this as local-for-local innovation (Harzing and Ruysseveldt, 2005).

In summary, the key features of this approach include the following:

- Operating in a decentralized and self-sustaining manner on a national level.
  - Recognizing and taking advantage of local opportunities.
  - Building and preserving knowledge within individual units.
- Multidomestic industries, such as consumer packaged goods like laundry detergent and retail sectors, provide examples.

### Benefits:

- Decentralization boosts the motivation and morale of employees at the local level, consequently enhancing the effectiveness of the firm.
- Tailor product offerings and marketing strategies to meet local preferences and cater to customer's needs.
- These companies are able to enhance their global efficiency and boost revenues by adapting to local variations.

### Drawbacks:

While it is true that this approach offers certain benefits, there is also some criticism directed towards it.

- Failure to achieve cost savings that come from locating operations in an optimal area.
- Not taking advantage of the benefits of the experience curve effect.
- The inability to effectively share important skills and knowledge in international markets can result in missed opportunities for cost savings and efficiency. Not taking advantage of the benefits of producing goods on a larger scale can also be a consequence of this failure.

### Global Strategy

Companies that adopt an international strategy tend to focus mainly on global learning. This approach is aimed at meeting the demand for learning by sharing innovations worldwide. This strategy works well for companies facing limited pressures for local responsiveness and cost reduction, but it may not excel in achieving global efficiency or flexibility. According to (Marbey and Salaman 1995), in this strategy, knowledge and competencies are transferred to foreign markets.

Here are the key features of this strategy in brief.

- Centralized sources of core competencies are located in one central location, while others are distributed throughout different locations.
- Limited demands for adapting to local needs and reducing expenses.
- The centre has developed knowledge and shared it with its international branches.

McKinsey & Company serves as an example of this method.

### Benefits:

- Sharing innovation globally.
- This approach effectively transfers knowledge between countries.
- Concentrating core strengths.

### Drawbacks:

The main critique directed towards this approach is as follows:

- Failure to understand the concept of location economy.
- Not taking advantage of the benefits of the experience curve effect.
- Because of a centralized system, it negatively impacts local motivation and morale, ultimately leading to decreased efficiency and flexibility.

## V. International business planning

Global corporations employ a strategy where they utilize all their resources in a cohesive manner. Their foreign subsidiaries and divisions are closely intertwined in both operations and strategy. This approach focuses on integrating productions to create standardized products in a cost-effective manner, resulting in efficient global integration. The focus and consolidation of manufacturing and research and development operations linked to worldwide tactics restrict adaptability and expose companies employing this approach to political and currency uncertainties. It also hinders their capacity to gain insights from international markets. Thus, while in a multi-country strategy the managers in each nation respond to rivalry without taking into account developments in other countries, in a global strategy, competitive actions are coordinated globally. The identical actions are carried out in various nations simultaneously or in an organized manner (Albrecht 2001).

In brief, the key features are as follows:

- Centralized and expanded on a global level.
- Execution of strategies established by the parent company.
- Knowledge is cultivated and maintained at the core.
- Keep local responsiveness in mind while exerting restraint on pressure.
- Intense demand to lower costs.  
Examples: Samsung, Intel.

### Benefits:

- Combining production or other operations across multiple countries allows a company to maximize the advantages gained from economies of scale.
- If a company is able to shift its production between various countries, it can lower expenses by strengthening its negotiating leverage with suppliers, employees, and host governments.
- By establishing production facilities in cost-effective countries and producing standardized goods, a company can reduce expenses.
- Global availability, serviceability, and recognition can enhance effectiveness by providing reinforcement.
- The company gains more opportunities to compete and respond to rivals by having multiple strategic points.

**Drawbacks:**

While this strategy has certain benefits, it also comes with drawbacks that need to be considered.

- Additional reporting requirements and the hiring of more staff can lead to significant management costs.
- Centralizing operations too much can have a negative impact on local motivation and morale, ultimately decreasing the effectiveness of the firm.
- Standardizing products may result in a final product that does not fully meet the needs of any customer.
- Managing costs and revenues across multiple countries can elevate risk.
- This approach also hinders the opportunity to gain insights from foreign markets.

**Cross-border Business Plan**

In order to stay competitive, this strategy aims to fulfil all strategic goals simultaneously. The translation strategy aims for global coordination similar to the global strategy, while also allowing for local autonomy like the multidomestic strategy. It is a fusion of both global and multidomestic strategies. The transnational strategy addresses conflicting demands by establishing an interconnected network of units, each with its own specific role. It addresses the demands for local responsiveness, flexibility, and global efficiency.

This strategy relies on both location-specific and non-location-specific advantages of the firm. Essentially, the key features of this approach are as follows:

- Significant need for local adaptation.
- Strong emphasis on reducing costs.
- Knowledge is created and distributed globally.
- Core competences are transferred.

An instance of such a strategy can be seen in the company Caterpillar.

**Benefits:**

- Leveraging the advantages of experience curve effects and location economies.
- Tailoring product offerings and marketing strategies to meet local needs.
- Harnessing the advantages of global knowledge sharing.

**Drawbacks:**

This approach is under scrutiny for the following reasons.

- It can be challenging for the organization to balance conflicting demands.
- The complexity makes it hard to carry out.
- Losing out on cost savings from economies of scale.
- Individual units may have the ability to hinder initiatives and maintain their independence.

**VI. Structure of Product Division**

This design is specifically designed for multinational corporations with a diverse range of products. Under this structure, separate divisions are established for each product or product group. These divisions operate with a high degree of independence and autonomy, managing their own activities such as production, research and development, and marketing.

**Benefits:**

- Efficiency is enhanced as a result of coordination and streamlining within the product group.
- There is a strong level of integration and cost efficiencies from economies of scale.
- Core competencies and knowledge are being transferred between teams.

**Drawbacks:**

- Not as adaptable to specific local factors and variations.
- The corporate level strategy might not be strong in this organizational framework.

## Matrix Structure on a Global Scale

When a company reaches a point where international sales and variety of products are significant, the best organizational structure is the global matrix. The global matrix structure combines the benefits of both geographic and product-based structures, allowing for both local responsiveness and global efficiency. In this structure, the responsibility for a specific product is jointly held by product and geographic managers (Harzing and Ruysseveldt, 2005).

### Benefits:

- This arrangement assists a company in managing product and location demands effectively by achieving a balance between efficiency and responsiveness.
- Sharing of expertise and information.

### Drawbacks:

- Decision-making procedures are delayed and bureaucracy is heightened.
- There is a shortage of accountability and adaptability.

## Latest advancements in the field

In the present day, there have been advancements in various approaches that are more modern and complex. In this discussion, we will explore the new structures outlined by (Bartlett and Ghoshal 2000), which include multinational, international, global, and transnational entities.

## VII. The Multinational Organization Model (MOM)

During the pre-war period, companies often followed a traditional organizational structure. Various economic, political, and social factors prompted multinational corporations to decentralize their resources and capabilities overseas in order to cater to the unique characteristics of different national markets. As a result, foreign operations had a significant degree of autonomy from the main headquarters. Control and coordination were mainly maintained through personal interactions between top corporate management and subsidiary leaders. Products were tailored to suit the specific needs of local markets, highlighting the emphasis on local responsiveness. The decentralized federation structure was a key characteristic of this organizational pattern. An example of an industry that typically employs this approach is the branded packaged products sector, such as food and laundry detergents.

### Benefits:

This structure's primary benefit is its focus on local adaptability, which ultimately leads to improved global performance.

### Drawbacks:

The primary drawbacks of this arrangement include the incapacity to achieve location advantages and the inability to take advantage of the experience curve effect.

## VIII. Global Organizational Structure

During the early post-war years, this particular organizational structure emerged. Back then, the primary goal for companies was to share knowledge and skills with overseas locations that were not as advanced in technology or market growth. Despite having some autonomy to introduce new products or tactics, local branches had less decision-making authority compared to the multidomestic model. In the international framework, certain functions are centralized while others are decentralized, with activities such as knowledge exchange and research and development typically occurring at the headquarters before being passed on to subsidiaries. An illustrative case of an international sector is telecommunications switching.

**Benefits:**

The primary benefits of this framework include the sharing of global innovations and the exchange of knowledge from headquarters to branch offices.

**Drawbacks:**

The primary drawbacks include the absence of adaptability to local conditions and the incapability to achieve location-based cost advantages.

## IX. Global Corporate Model

The emphasis on efficiency, centralization, and control is a defining characteristic of this specific organizational structure. Within the global industry, the standardization of consumer needs and the efficiencies gained through scaling create a profitable environment for centralization and integration. In such industries, a firm's competitive position is greatly influenced by its presence in multiple countries, with competitors engaging in worldwide competition. In this structure, offshore subsidiaries have a limited role, primarily focused on the assembly and sale of products, as well as the implementation of plans and policies developed at the headquarters. When compared to the multidomestic and international organizational models, the subsidiaries in this model have significantly less autonomy in their decision-making. This organizational configuration is commonly referred to as a central hub. An example of a global industry that exemplifies this structure is consumer electronics (Jain, 1989).

**Benefits:**

By establishing production facilities in countries with low labour costs and implementing standardized products, a company effectively reduces its expenses.

**Drawbacks:**

The current framework hinders the opportunity to gain insights from international markets, while excessive centralization undermines motivation, ultimately diminishing the company's overall performance.

## X. Model of Transnational Organization

In order to maintain competitiveness, this model successfully integrates efficiency, flexibility, and local responsiveness all at once. During the 1980s, numerous industries worldwide embraced the transnational form. This structure entails a sophisticated arrangement of assets and capabilities, with some functions and resources centralized while others decentralized, resulting in an autonomous network of specialized units. Expertise is dispersed across the organization, and subsidiaries can function as strategic hubs for specific product-market combinations. This approach contrasts with the traditional model of a single headquarters and multiple dependent subsidiaries. Instead, the company operates as a network with distinct centres for various activities, each playing a strategic role in a specific area. An example of such a structure is Caterpillar.

**Benefits:**

This structure offers a key benefit through the utilization of the experience curve effect and location economies.

**Drawbacks:**

The implementation of this structure is arduous due to its intricate complexity.



## **XI. The impact of various organizational strategies and structures on global human resource management.**

In order to function proficiently in an international environment, a human resource department must actively engage in a range of activities such as human resource planning, staffing, training and development, compensation, performance management, and industrial relations. This section of the literature review will examine the significance of International Human Resource Management (IHRM) and its implications within various types of strategies and organizational structures.

### **Workforce Planning**

In a broad sense, the term "HR policy" encompasses various policies, procedures, and processes aimed at effectively managing, disciplining, motivating, and rewarding employees within an organization. Within the realm of International Human Resource Management (IHRM), HR policy is intricately linked to the company's values and strategies, indicating that HR is deeply integrated into the organizational culture. It highlights that HR policy not only focuses on educating and training employees, but also on managing the employer-employee relationship and fostering a reflective workforce (Kettunen, 1998). Additionally, it suggests that the success of HR policy is closely intertwined with organizational and competency development. The challenge lies in establishing an agenda that inspires employees to actively engage with and commit to the company's strategies. The primary role of IHRM is to develop and implement HR programs that enable the firm to achieve global success.

### **STAFFING (Recruitment, Selection and Placement)**

The success or failure of organizations hinges on their ability to effectively choose, train, and oversee their employees. (Perlmutter's 1969) classic study on international staffing outlines three distinct approaches: ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric. Companies utilizing an ethnocentric staffing approach typically appoint individuals from the parent company to key positions, resulting in a dominance of parent company nationals both domestically and internationally. Conversely, companies employing a polycentric approach tend to hire host country nationals, while those following a geocentric approach prioritize selecting the most qualified individuals regardless of nationality.

Linking these staffing approaches to (Bartlett and Ghoshal's 2000) organizational models, we see that global and, to some extent, international models align with the ethnocentric approach, while multidomestic models lean towards polycentric and transnational models favour geocentric approaches. International Human Resource Management (IHRM) places a significant emphasis on ethnocentric staffing policies, as recruitment and selection are typically centralized at headquarters, limiting subsidiaries' autonomy. Therefore, in global and international models, the selection, training, preparation, and placement of expatriates for international roles, as well as the management of human resources in diverse host country populations, are critical functions of IHRM. Throughout these processes, IHRM must navigate challenges such as cultural differences, communication barriers, relocation issues, and compensation concerns.

### **Education and Skill Enhancement**

In today's highly competitive global business environment, multinational companies understand the significance of human resources in establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage (Brewster, 2000). The training and development of these human resources serve various purposes, such as acquiring and transferring knowledge, managing foreign subsidiaries, and ensuring effective communication, coordination, and control between subsidiaries and headquarters. In global and to some extent international organizational models, training is initiated at the headquarters, with corporate trainers traveling to subsidiaries. To remain competitive on a global scale, the International Human Resource Management (IHRM) must identify employees with global potential and provide them with diverse training and development opportunities. However, in multidomestic and transnational organizational models, training and development activities are carried out at the local level.

## Remuneration and Benefits

After hiring, training, and developing employees, another important consideration for International Human Resource Management (IHRM) is how to effectively reward and compensate employees in multinational corporations. International compensation refers to the provision of both monetary and non-monetary rewards, such as base salary, benefits, and various incentives, which are valued by employees based on their contributions to the overall performance of the multinational company. The overarching goal of international compensation is to attract, retain, and motivate employees both in the current and future operations of the multinational corporation (Harzing & Ruysseveldt, 2005).

In multinational corporations, IHRM focuses largely on the compensation and reward systems for employees in global and international organizational structures. In these structures, the compensation and reward systems are typically designed and overseen at the corporate headquarters. On the other hand, in multidomestic and transnational structures, the compensation and reward systems are developed and managed independently in different units, under the supervision of local Human Resource Management (HRM) teams. The compensation and reward system for international expatriates presents a more intricate challenge for IHRM. When determining compensation for international expatriates, the IHRM takes into account various factors such as foreign service premiums, hardship allowances, relocation assistance, education benefits, and home leave policies. These considerations make the compensation and reward system for international expatriates significantly more complex and require careful planning and management from the IHRM team.

## Performance Management

Monitoring performance in various strategies and organizational set-ups is another consideration for International Human Resource Management. Evaluating employee performance systematically is a key aspect of performance management within a company. The responsibility of managing performance in multinational companies is divided based on the organizational model.

In multidomestic and transnational models, local HRM is tasked with this duty, while in global and partially in international models, IHRM implements various practices informed by theories such as expectancy theory and goal setting theory. Performance management in MNCs is particularly challenging due to its occurrence across different national and cultural contexts.

## Employment Relationship

Industrial relations play a crucial role in defining the responsibilities of both management and workers within a workplace. The management of these relations is an essential task for International Human Resource Management (IHRM). When it comes to global and international models, IHRM takes into consideration governmental regulations and the influence of trade unions in various countries while managing industrial relations.

Furthermore, IHRM also faces significant implications such as international taxation, international relocations, and language barriers. These factors add to the complexity of managing human resources on an international scale.

## XII. Conclusion

(Bartlett and Ghoshal 2000) proposed four distinct strategic approaches focusing on varying combinations of competitive advantage sources and strategic objectives. Multinational companies adopt diverse strategies and structures to effectively compete, achieve global advantages, and maintain global competitiveness. This review defines MNCs, critically evaluates their strategies and structures, and compares the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. The literature also suggests that international HRM has advanced beyond its early stages, highlighting how strategic IHRM can provide a multinational corporation with a competitive edge. The role of IHRM is seen to differ across various organizational structures, with implications for international HRM varying accordingly. The review concludes with a discussion on the general implications of a company's strategies and structures for IHRM, exploring how IHRM navigates these challenges and effectively manages global human resources.

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