
Editorial

Salem M. Al-Ghamdi and M. Sadiq Sohail

College of Industrial Management,
King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals,
P.O. Box 667, Dhahran 31261, Saudi Arabia
E-mail: sghamdi@kfupm.edu.sa E-mail: ssohail@kfupm.edu.sa

Biographical notes: Salem Al-Ghamdi graduated from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1994 with a PhD in Strategic Management. Currently he is working as an Assistant Dean for Graduate Programmes at the College of Industrial Management, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals and is an Associate Professor of Management in the Department of Management and Marketing. He has published over 25 articles in refereed journals, conferences and specialist magazines. Many organisations in the Saudi economy have benefited from his consulting services, primarily in banking, petrochemical, transportation, hospitals and paint industries. He has been nominated for many prestigious awards and invited as a speaker at conferences. He is a Board Member of several Saudi organisations, one of which is the Saudi Society of Technology Transfer and Development.

Sadiq Sohail is an Associate Professor of Marketing at the College of Industrial Management, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals. He obtained a BS in Commerce and Law, a Masters in Commerce and a PhD. He is the Managing Editor of the *Journal of International Business and Entrepreneurship Development* and a Regional Editor of the *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*. He is also a member of the Editorial Board of a number of journals. He has authored or co-authored 50 papers published in refereed journals. His current research interests are in the area of international marketing, services research, private sector development, sustainable development and electronic business.

Welcome to this special issue of the *Journal of International Business and Entrepreneurship Development* (JIBED) with a focus on Contemporary Issues in Entrepreneurship Studies, which is devoted to modern research in the field of entrepreneurship across the world.

Keeping the spirit of entrepreneurship alive, papers appearing in this special issue integrate diverse issues such as competitiveness to marketable innovations that address central problems in entrepreneurship. These papers provide perspectives from diverse countries with different economic and social structures. It is hoped that readers will benefit from a collection of papers ranging from conceptualisations to empirical investigations into the nature of entrepreneurship and its role in economic development across the world.

The belief in market-driven ideology and the assumption that new business ventures create jobs and foster innovation has embedded entrepreneurship into a much wider spectrum of social sciences. With the increasing prominence of entrepreneurial firms in the global economy, entrepreneurship has become a topic of interest to researchers,

academics, entrepreneurs, business professionals and governments around the world. With the domain of entrepreneurship increasingly being broadened, it is considered timely and relevant to publish this Special Issue of this journal.

The first paper, set in the backdrop of the global petrochemical industry, outlines the competitive advantages enjoyed by Saudi Arabia in this industry. The rationale for this study is that Saudi Arabia, a leading producer of oil as well as of a few petrochemical products in the world, is yet to succeed on the global stage. Using Porter's model, the authors undertake an analysis of the global petrochemical industry and provide strategic alternatives for Saudi Arabia to sustain a competitive advantage in the global arena. This paper makes a timely contribution, as Saudi Arabia, after having accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), ought to enhance its competitiveness and strengthen its international market position, in order to improve its access to European and Japanese markets.

The second authors to take advantage of this opportunity are Nur Anisah Abdullah and Rafikul Islam who propose a management decision making function by the analytical hierarchy process for large scale problem solving. Reviewing the extant literature, the paper elaborates on the drawback of the traditional analytical hierarchy process which has been regarded as the most successful technique to solve decision-making problems. The authors propose a nominal group technique that can be applied by decision-makers to solve large-scale enterprise multi-criteria decision-making problems. Using the 'Expert Choice' software, the authors confirm their findings.

The third paper by Nor Khomar Ishak, Dilip Mutum, Ezlika Ghazali and Cheong Khai Fan is set amidst the backdrop of deregulation in the Malaysian automobile industry. The authors have undertaken an exploratory study of a relatively new concept amongst the Malaysian automobile distributors, i.e. customer relationship management (CRM). The study compares various CRM programmes implemented by the distribution arm of two national and ten non-national car companies and concludes that this programme has indeed proven to be useful to Malaysian automobile marketers, especially in identifying customer needs, targeting customers and reaching specific customer segments.

The focus of the fourth paper is on drawing some insights into entrepreneurial personality and making demographic comparisons between the graduate and non-graduate entrepreneurs in urban Malaysia. This exploratory study conducted by Nor Othman, Ezlika Ghazali and Yeoh Sung Sung with examples drawn from urban Malaysia, found significant differences in the demographic variables between graduate and non-graduate entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Three demographic variables and one business characteristics variable were found to be significantly different between graduate and non-graduate entrepreneurs. In terms of entrepreneurial personality characteristics both graduate and non-graduate entrepreneurs scored highly with respect to the dimension of pursuit of excellence.

Our fifth paper examines sales-forecasting strategies for small businesses across Lebanon. Based on a review of the literature, Imad Zbib compares the accuracy of different quantitative and qualitative forecasting techniques and recommends a forecasting strategy for small businesses. Based on a case study, the author concludes that combining qualitative and quantitative methods results in better and improved forecasts for small businesses.

The sixth paper elaborates on how new exporting opportunities may arise frequently through interpersonal contacts and networks. Building on this perspective, Steve Bakalis and Therese Joiner argue that such exporters can be encouraged if sufficient networking opportunities are developed. The paper elaborates on how business associations, local governments and community organisations, which multiply networking activities, can promote capabilities abroad and leverage export opportunities. The paper also explores the nature of some ethnic chambers of commerce and their role in promoting exports.

The seventh paper by Shawn Carraher, revisits Jaques' theory, generally overlooked since its formulation over 40 years ago. However, given the usefulness of the concept in the examination of the antecedents of satisfaction with pay, Carraher presents an exploratory study to test the Jaques' theory on a sample comprising small to medium-sized business owners in Switzerland.

The eighth paper, authored by Adel Al-Wugayan, C.P. Rao and Hamad Al-Duajj, investigates the linkages between business practices and performance. This empirical study makes a timely contribution as such linkages are sparse, especially in the small business sector in the Arab region. Reviewing the extensive body of literature on small business management, the authors develop a conceptual model to test the relationship between the extent of systematic managerial practices, the level of satisfaction with managerial problem-solving, and past and present business performance. Their findings reveal that the use of systematic business practices and satisfaction with solving business problems are positively related to past performance of business enterprises but not to the expectations of future business performance.

On a similar theme the penultimate paper, authored by Ven Sriram and Tigineh Mersha, is concerned with entrepreneurship development across Sub-Saharan Africa. Reviewing the literature and analysing the prevailing internal and external conditions in Africa, this paper identifies the factors that impact entrepreneurship in the continent. Based on these, the authors propose a set of specific interventions that African governments may initiate to stimulate entrepreneurship in the region. The proposed policy interventions include creating a more business-friendly climate, building entrepreneurial and institutional capacity, minimising bureaucratic barriers, elevating the stature of entrepreneurship and facilitating the creation of national and global linkages and networks for African entrepreneurs.

In the final paper Demetris Vrontis, Alkis Thrassou and Chia-Hung Wei undertake an evaluation of strategic market entry theories and practices. Emphasising the choice of entry as being crucial for success, this paper explores entry strategies options and related theories and evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of each of these options. Using a case study approach, the paper compares the entry methods followed by a company in two contrasting nations. The paper makes a valuable contribution through identification of key internationalisation issues within the context of the environmental framework.

Overall, this collection of ten papers provides valuable insights into a range of issues concerning entrepreneurship across a broad range of countries, a range of industries, and a range of contexts. This Special Issue is an attempt to systematise knowledge about global entrepreneurship.