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## Editorial

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### Alun Grant Epps\* and Ajit Karnik

School of Business,  
Middlesex University Dubai,  
Knowledge Village, Block 17,  
P.O. Box 500697, Dubai, UAE  
Email: a.epps@mdx.ac  
Email: a.karnik@mdx.ac  
\*Corresponding author

### Cody Morris Paris

School of Law,  
Middlesex University Dubai,  
Knowledge Village, Block 16  
P.O. Box 500697, Dubai, UAE  
Email: c.paris@mdx.ac

**Biographical notes:** Alun Grant Epps is an Associate Professor in Marketing and the Programme Coordinator for the MBA at Middlesex Dubai, Dubai. His research interests include; marketing communications, consumer behaviour in computer mediated environments, marketing education, community entrepreneurship, SME and family business marketing. He has a PhD from the University of Wales. Before working at Middlesex he did three years at UoWD and six years at Dubai University College. In the UK he worked for Highbury College and the University of Portsmouth for six years. Prior to joining academia he worked in media and entertainment industry including spells at the BBC, Virgin and Rank.

Ajit Karnik is a Professor of Economics at Middlesex University Dubai and is a Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge. He was Reserve Bank of India Professor of Political Economy and Director, Department of Economics, University of Mumbai; he was also Professor of Economics at the UoWD. Visiting assignments have included: Indo-American Fellow, University of Texas at Austin; Visiting Scholar, St. John's College, Cambridge; British Council Higher Education Link Visitor, University of Ulster (Belfast); Fulbright Fellow, University of California at Berkeley; and Smuts Fellow, Faculty of Economics and Politics, Cambridge. His research specialisations comprise political economy, fiscal economics, economic growth and econometrics.

Cody Morris Paris is an Associate Professor, Acting Deputy Director, Programme Coordinator for Social Science programmes, and Chair of the Research Committee at Middlesex University Dubai. He is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at University of Johannesburg in South Africa. He completed his PhD in Community Resource Development, a MS in Tourism Studies and a Bachelors of Interdisciplinary Studies in International Geography and Political Science with minors in Cultural Anthropology and Tourism at Arizona State University. His primary research interests include: geopolitics and tourism, technology and tourism, sustainable development, tourism mobilities, and experiential learning.

The papers for this special issue have been selected from the business management track of the Second International Conference on Emerging Research Paradigms in Business and Social Sciences (ERPBS). The event was hosted by Middlesex University Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) from November 26th to 28th, 2013. Building upon the success of the First ERPBS Conference in 2011, this unique multi-disciplinary event provided a platform for 180 academics from over 100 institutions around the world representing a range of different fields to discuss new concepts, progressive methods, and innovative practice. In addition to the business management track, the ERPBS 2013 conference included tracks on education, training and development, tourism and hospitality, economics, contemporary psychology, global social science, information and communication technology, as well as media, journalism and communication. Two prominent academics were invited to keynote the conference. Mark Saunders (Professor in Business Research Methods, University of Surrey, UK) presented 'The (re)emergence of mixed methods research: researching sensitively without sensitising'. Louise Morley (Professor of Education, University of Sussex, UK) presented 'Researching the future: towards an inclusive global knowledge economy'.

The business management track of ERPBS 2013 focused on emerging issues in the areas of management and marketing as well as the changing dynamics of accounting, auditing and reporting. The recent financial crisis and its subsequent 'recovery' forced firms to revisit accepted models as well as practices and has created an upsurge of new research areas within and across disciplines. At the interface of practice and academia, the business management track sought to investigate how organisations and governments managed their resources post-crisis. Leaders have had to challenge conventional ways of operating and this in turn has led to new avenues for research in the management of human resources, projects, logistics, operations, quality and marketing. In the world of finance and accounting too, new challenges face practitioners, policy makers and regulatory authorities. The constant evolution of financial products and services and the emergence of a more susceptible financial system are all-encompassing, hence, the need to keep exploring issues and strategies related to such developments.

All papers included in this special issue of the *International Journal of Business and Globalisation (IJBG)* were originally submitted and presented at the ERPBS conference, and were accepted after undergoing peer review. Following the event, authors were encouraged to revise and develop their papers based upon comments and feedback received during the conference. All papers submitted to the special issue were then subjected to further academic blind peer review aligned with the journal's formal processes.

This issue provides a mixture of conceptually and empirically informed papers on a range of emerging topics related to foreign direct investment (FDI), cloud computing in banks, marketing higher education, culture, influence and workplace behaviour as well as financial performance in banks. The papers chronicle studies in the UAE as well the wider Middle East region. In total, this special issue includes five papers.

Kumar analysed the banking performance of national commercial banks in UAE for a period of six years from 2008 to 2013 that included the crisis and post crisis periods, as the financial analysts are of the opinion that the crisis had not calmed down. This study is primarily based on financial ratios such as return on assets (ROA) and return on equity (ROE) to assess the financial performance; and quantitative factors that comprise the CAMEL model consisting of five parameters, namely, capital adequacy, asset quality, management capability, earnings ability and liquidity ratio. Altman's Z-score also was

used to test the financial stability of ten national commercial banks in UAE. The findings suggest that financial performance declined from the year 2008 to 2010 but has improved there onwards from 2011 to 2013; and that all the banks considered in the study are financially stable and have shown resilience to the global crisis.

Abdullahi and Hussain suggest that information and communication technology is advancing at an unprecedented pace, with new technologies becoming available for organisations to choose from, helping to maintain a competitive edge in the market. A recent development in computing technology is cloud computing. Globally, surveys such as Forrester (Bélissent, 2011) and Gartner (Smith et al., 2009) have indicated that CIOs are increasingly becoming interested in cloud computing due to the many benefits it brings to organisations, especially its cost savings on capital expenditure amongst other reasons. Hence, cloud vendors, organisations and researchers are collaborating to understand the concept of cloud computing and its application within their industries. In the UAE, recent interest has been seen through conferences and forums that are organised to discuss and explore adoption and provision of cloud services. Reports show that billions of the UAE currency, the dirham, have been allocated by organisations in the UAE for provision of IT services (cloud computing included), however, only a few studies were found which cover the adoption of cloud computing in the UAE, specifically in the government sector (Scott, 2012; Elbadawi, 2011). This paper explores the main reasons why organisations within the UAE decide to adopt cloud computing (particularly the government and banking sectors) and whether they are realising the benefits there from. For the private sector, the findings in this research may serve as a starting point for organisations within the UAE where awareness about cloud-based hosting is minimal.

Meraj, Ross, and Fernandes identify significant choice factors influencing consumer behaviour when selecting an MBA program of study, within the increasingly competitive UAE higher education sector. The implications that these factors have when HEI's develop marketing communication strategies are addressed. Study participants included MBA students and MBA graduates who completed their degree in the UAE. Constructs were tested for validity using Cronbach alpha test and ANOVA was also used in this study. The relative importance of these factors was assessed via analysis of the means of the constructs. The difference between the most important (people) and least important (promotion) factors were as much as 34%. Marketing implications for HEI's include; improving the quality of the factors identified and communicating the quality of these factors, especially intangible ones, to potential MBA candidates more effectively.

Bellingham and Gibson make a close examination of the relationship between Gulf Cooperation Council States' (GCC) culture and organisational behaviour. Previous research has already identified a current predominance of authoritarian and hierarchical organisational structures, centralised decision making and the influence of in-groups on team work. In essence, it seems that GCC organisations exhibit low adaptability to many organisational practices due to the Western cultural value orientations embedded in those practices. There is a great need for research from which we can develop GCC culturally specific management approaches. The originality of this paper includes the presentation of a research framework designed to provide an emic understanding of why members of GCC culture sometimes resist, and sometimes adopt or adapt, Western management practices.

Khordagui and Saleh state that although FDI is believed to promote economic growth and knowledge transfer, empirical evidence is mixed. Recent studies argue that the

question is not of whether FDI spillover effects exist, but rather of whether the prerequisites for such effects exist. This builds on the notion of absorptive capacity; a country's ability to absorb the benefits FDI offers. Their study examines the role of human capital as an absorptive capacity factor for emerging and Middle Eastern economies at the sector level. A sample of 30 countries is examined over the period 1990 to 2009 using panel data analysis. The study makes a contribution by focusing on sector data rather than aggregate FDI inflows to examine the individual sector's influence, allowing for inherent differences. The findings indicate that the results and implications vary according to sector.

Consequently, the papers in this special issue explore and contribute to a wide range of business management practice in the Middle East region. This special issue team is indebted to those that helped the special edition come to fruition including the ERPBSS 2013 organisers and participants, the editorial team of the *International Journal of Business and Globalisation* and indeed the authors themselves. The team is also very grateful to the reviewers both of the conference papers and journal submissions who committed the time to provide constructive and relevant feedback to the authors.

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