Preface

Pierre Mostert

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences,
Department of Marketing Management,
University of Pretoria,
Private bag X20, Hatfield, 0028, South Africa
Email: pierre.mostert@up.ac.za

Biographical notes: Pierre Mostert is a Professor of Marketing at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Before joining the University of Pretoria he was the Director of the School of Business Management at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), and prior to this he held numerous marketing and product management positions in the South African telecommunications industry. His research interests focus on firm-customer relationships, and include relationship intention, relationship proneness, and brand avoidance. His research has been published in the *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *Services Marketing Quarterly*, *European Business Review*, *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, and *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, among others.

The six papers in this special issue have explored a number of research issues that are globally relevant and applicable. Most of the authors (and studies) are from emerging countries, thereby offering a unique perspective on the issues researched in these studies. The insights gained from the six papers, together with the practical managerial implications and recommendations offered by the authors, provide us with a greater understanding on the variety of topics covered in this special issue. The themes included cover interesting research topics such as customers' relationship intentions, new product development and performance, worker happiness, the circular economy, early internationalisation through a firm's strategic orientation, and non-performing loans amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The first paper entitled 'Relationship intention, customer-firm association length and customer satisfaction: a multi-country exploration', by Mostert et al. offers insights into consumers' relationship intentions towards their cellphone network providers. The study showed that, for the first time, the relationship intention measure was valid and reliable in both emerging economies (South Africa and the Philippines) and a developed country (USA). The other unique contribution offered by these researchers is that firms (in developed as well as developing countries) should, instead of focusing on the length of customer support, rather focus on those customers displaying relationship intentions when trying to build long-term, profitable customer relationships.

The second paper, entitled 'Examining market orientation, new product development and performance', by Julian et al. describes group discriminant analysis to establish the influence of different dimensions of market orientation and the different stages of new product development on new product performance within a Thai export venture context. The study established that market intelligence generation, dissemination and responsiveness, new product idea development, opportunity analysis, technical development, product pre-test and commercialisation were able to significantly discriminate between high and low new product performance. The study advances our understanding on this topic showing that not only does market orientation comprise three separate dimensions, namely, market intelligence generation, market intelligence dissemination, and market intelligence responsiveness, but also that each dimension uniquely impacts new product performance differently. Finally, the paper provides evidence that factors influencing new product performance success in a developed economy are also applicable within a developing context, namely South East Asia.

The third paper, entitled 'System solutions for the circular economy on the regional level: the case of Green Lungs of Poland', by Drejerska et al. sets out to develop an analytical framework for the creation and improvement of systems applying circular economy assumptions in the waste management sector at the regional level in areas with special environmental value. The authors, therefore, deliberately selected the Podlaskie region in the north-eastern part of Poland due to its special natural values. In their paper, the authors successfully show how the Podlaskie region illustrates how the circular economy works in the field of waste management. The study further highlights local monopolies and restricted freedom of business activities as shortages in this system.

The fourth paper, entitled 'Sustaining corporate performance through the happy worker influence', by Kabene and Baadel explores the reasons why it would be beneficial for managers to understand which factors tend to predict happiness to assess where the most potentially productive worker pools are located around the world. To do so, they correlated life expectancy, health spending per capita, unemployment, GDP per capita, carbon footprint, the Peace Index, the Happiness Index (HPI), and the Hofstede factors (uncertainty avoidance, individualism, power distance, and masculinity) with the HPI and the happiness index without the carbon footprint factor (HPI-CF). The researchers randomly selected 12 countries on the happiness index, namely Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Columbia (top tier); Haiti, Hong Kong, Jordan, and New Zealand (middle tier); and Zimbabwe, Congo, Russia, and Ukraine (bottom tier). One of the main findings from the study was that happiness without the carbon footprint factor is a more accurate measure of personal happiness. The study contributes by showing the importance of understanding happiness since it affords human resource managers the opportunity to better identify happiness, and thus cultural differences, between different nations. This is especially significant since happy workers are more productive workers.

The fifth paper, entitled 'Effects of strategic orientations on early internationalising SMEs from an emerging market', by Falahat et al. explores how strategic orientation influences Malaysian firms' new market entry and early internationalisation. The authors use a case study approach by specifically making use of semi-structured interviews to discover how firms' early internationalisation is influenced by their strategic orientation. The main theoretical contribution made by the study was therefore to provide us with greater insights, through qualitative research, into SMEs early internationalisation based on their strategic orientation. The main findings by the study include the authors suggesting an emergent model showing how four critical orientations, namely the

entrepreneur, market, learning, and networking orientation, are key drivers to both new market entry as well as the speed of internationalisation through market knowledge and selection, firm competency and management's commitment.

The purpose of the sixth paper, entitled 'Spillover effects of Covid-19 uncertainty on non-performing loans of the Turkish agricultural sector on bank performance', by Olorogun is to establish the effect of spillover of uncertainty resulting from COVID-19 on the Turkish banking sector through the agricultural sector's non-performing loans. Data analyses were based on a monthly time series dataset stretching from December 2004 to April 2020. The study found that the agricultural sector's non-performing loans had a significant effect on the banking sector's aggregate non-performing loans. Results furthermore uncovered that there is a greater correlation between non-performing loans and agriculture, fishing and timber, as well as moderate average correlations between non-performing loans and hunting. This study contributes to academia by providing evidence of spillover and the influence thereof on the Turkish banking sector by specifically considering the contribution by the agricultural sector.

These six papers highlight mostly regional issues that are globally relevant. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, firms found it increasingly difficult to compete on the global stage where not only is competition intensifying, but also the nature of competition is changing due to technological advances. This rapid change in technology necessitates identifying the factors that will give birth to the next generation of entrepreneurs to compete globally. A recruitment strategy that will greatly influence the success of current and future multinational corporations is to identify and recruit the happiest workers in the various countries where they operate, while simultaneously considering the differences – or lack thereof – between consumers in different countries and regions.

Future research could consider expanding the insights gained from any of these six studies to establish the generalisability of the findings in more, and especially more diverse, contexts. Since the world is currently still in the grip of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it would be interesting (and valuable) to see the effect of this pandemic on the findings of all these studies, should they be replicated during, and then post, COVID-19 pandemic. Future studies can also consider following longitudinal designs, conducting experiments, or performing qualitative research to gain greater in-depth insights into the research questions posed in these studies. In addition, replicating the studies in regional settings, for example Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, Central America or the Middle-East, could prove valuable by ensuring the validity and reliability of measures used, and the applicability of the findings in regional contexts.