
Editorial

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Simona Mihai-Yiannaki is the Deputy Dean of the School of Business Administration and Associate Professor in Finance at European University Cyprus. She has initiated the EUC-PEAK Innovation Center, being the Director. She has coordinated and performed research in projects in the area of entrepreneurship, such as 4Artpreneur, DIMAS, SHADOWS, GETUP, FA-ST, SCIENT, ICT Entrepreneur, ANGEL and others. She was involved as a guest speaker and trainer in conferences in Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, France, Portugal, Lithuania, Norway, the UK and Romania on topics about finance, banking, entrepreneurship, risk management, public finance, CSR, creativity and innovation and change management.

While companies, and society in general, go through periods characterised by volatility and instability, it is difficult to estimate their long-term economic, behavioural, or societal impacts, which calls for more research into that direction (e.g., Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). Previous attempts to propose and review how organisations embrace, make sense of, adapt and respond to volatile environments have focused on micro, meso or macro-levels of analysis or a combination of them (Meyer, 1982; Stieglitz et al., 2016; Dagnino et al., 2021). There is now general consensus that established routines and practices may only partly, if not at all, help individuals and organisations navigate periods of uncertainty (e.g., Kraatz, 1998; Chakrabarti, 2015). Dynamic competitive environments, therefore, require novel approaches to solve complex challenges that involve several areas of interest for management scholars, such as entrepreneurship, marketing, innovation and sustainability. Building on the relevance and the timeliness of this topic, the guest editorial team has collected contributions from scholars from a variety of countries, including Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Russia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates (UAE), the UK and the USA.

In this special issue, we have invited scholars that had presented their work in progress at the 12th Annual Conference of the EUROMED in Thessaloniki, Greece, which took place on 18–20 September 2019. The theme of the conference was ‘Business management theories and practices in a dynamic competitive environment’, and delegates were engaged and informed by a range of presentations on topics of great relevance to those concerned about the management of organisations, their effectiveness, and the role of managers and key stakeholders, as well as their importance and complexity.

When this special issue was conceived, the business world had already witnessed a variety of disruptions, shocks, and new equilibria. Yet, it was hard to imagine nor to foresee that the COVID-19 pandemic that shook the world at the beginning of 2020 would have produced such a large impact, creating the urgency for novel and less conventional solutions while calling for acceleration on emerging themes such as Industry 4.0 and the circular economy. While the goal of this special issue is not to offer novel theories or approaches to address such disruptions, its contributions address important topics that we believe can drive economic resilience. These include data analytics, education, entrepreneurship, healthcare and sustainability, among others. Each of the selected articles in this special issue addresses, albeit from a different perspective, the key theme of the special issue titled ‘Innovative business and management approaches to meet the challenges of a volatile global environment’.

One of the most critical sectors of the economy is the healthcare sector. In many countries, the public sector is currently characterised by the need to improve its performance. In healthcare practice, clinical indicators are part of a performance

measurement system and assess the quality of healthcare by investigating the frequency of specific results. The first contribution, titled 'Indicators and criteria for efficiency and quality in public hospitals: a performance evaluation model' by Salvatore and Fanelli, provides insights for public health organisations by developing and implementing effective performance measurement systems to improve care quality. The aim of the study is to define the criteria and key performance indicators for minimally invasive endovascular surgical treatment through a clinical audit process. A model of criteria and indicators used in a large public Italian hospital was constructed to assess the level of performance achieved with this service. The authors opted to investigate minimally invasive endovascular surgical procedures because they illustrate how complex the performance process is for healthcare entities regarding economic burden and quality of results.

The second paper titled 'The contribution of a supplier of the food and beverage industry to the sustainability of the overall supply chain' by Giacomarra, Crescimanno, Sakka and Galati, explores through a case study approach how a supplier working in a business-to-business environment could ensure a greener supply chain by making leverage on its internal resources and sustainable strategies adopted. The paper enriches the literature on sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) by providing new insights regarding the strategic factors that players of a supply chain should satisfy to guarantee diffused sustainability along the entire chain. Results show the role that a significant supplier can play in promoting sub-suppliers compliance towards sustainable principles. Reputation and legitimacy and the concerns about the future positioning in the market, also considered in terms of the company's survival, represent critical factors able to impact a supplier's strategies also towards its sub-supplier. Implications for focal firms' managers suggest investing more in relationships with those suppliers to demonstrate reliable, sustainable management systems, with proven commitments to product stewardship and greener technologies.

The third paper titled 'Academic propaganda in international education: detection, remedy and conceptualisation' by Shams, Thrassou, Vrontis, Christofi and Trichina, offers a critical discussion of higher education institutions (HEIs) and their role as drivers of social change. Contrary to the understanding of universities as a public good, these authors considered in their study academic propaganda as a 'darker' form of institutional brand communication strategy which has been, diachronically, in social businesses and other diverse contexts, misleading target audiences for political, social and/or business purposes. These authors' literature review particularly highlights the limited knowledge and ability in detecting academic propaganda and in developing the right antidote to it. Their multidisciplinary research, thus, follows an inductive approach to develop a historical framework of HEIs' role as social business enterprises. The authors identify, interrelate, and superimpose the critical aspects of divergent but related fields of social enterprises, cognitive-communication studies, including propaganda, strategic management, marketing communication and branding. The aim is to develop theoretical insights and propositions with regards to the social enterprises and detection of academic propaganda and to construct a mechanism to be utilised for its monitoring and control. Their synthesis illustrates that the target audiences' perception and interpretation of a brand message at the pre and post-internationalisation continuums of international education within the social entrepreneurship context can be analysed in between the

extremes of entirely positive to completely negative perceived experience in order to detect the prospective propagandistic brand message.

The fourth paper, titled 'Transfer of training: an effective tool of knowledge application', written by Wahba, Kyriakidou and Astley, discusses the role of transfer of training as a key element of training effectiveness. Using the UAE higher education sector as an empirical context, the authors explore how expatriate faculty members perceive the supervisor's support behaviour for the effective transfer of training before, during, and after training. Based on the findings of interviews conducted with 21 expatriate faculty members in three HEIs in the UAE, the authors present a theoretical framework identifying the types of supervisors' supportive behaviour that foster transfer of training among faculty members in each phase of training.

The fifth contribution in this special issue titled 'The relationship between social capital, knowledge sharing and trust: a study between baby boomers, X and Y generations' was written by Özek. In this paper, the author explores the relationship between social capital, knowledge sharing and trust in the workplace. Through a quantitative study involving 327 participants, all actively working in the private sector in Turkey, the paper finds that social capital has a positive effect on knowledge sharing, that trust has a positive effect on both knowledge sharing and social capital, and that differences exist between x and y generations in the level of social capital, knowledge sharing, and trust.

The sixth paper 'Humour use in the workplace: a key to achievements or a Trojan horse of harassment?', written by Patsala, Lampreli and Priporas, is a literature review study that has critically analysed the key literature, emphasising integrated diverse and sometimes contradicting perspectives, on the use of humour in the workplace. The study also identifies certain major issues in the existing literature, further highlighting several areas of humour use at work that need more attention. Key findings reveal that both female and male employees use humour in the workplace in an equal manner. Regarding managerial positions, both genders employ the affiliative type of humour, namely a positive and beneficial style of humour. Furthermore, another point strongly suggested is that appropriate boundaries in the use of humour in the work environment should exist as it can become sexist, and thus, be regarded as or lead to sexual harassment. In terms of its theoretical contribution, these authors' review paper advances our knowledge on humour use in the workplace, as it adds a new layer to the understanding of humour use in a professional setting in relation to gender and its links to sexual harassment.

The seventh paper titled 'Networked business incubators: a systematic literature review' by Iscaro, Castaldi and Buccino reviews the literature and main findings on networked business incubators, a type of incubator offering an extensive network of powerful connections to its tenants. The review identifies five literature clusters, namely 'entrepreneurship', 'start-up', 'social capital', 'innovation networks and knowledge transfer' and 'specialisation'. For each of the clusters, the authors identify key scholarly contributions and offer insights into the evolution of this research field.

The eighth paper titled 'Big data firms and information privacy' by Mihai-Yiannaki, Gibilaro and Mattarocci, combines theories and information from both finance and law disciplines in an original way in terms of business-related and geographical interconnections in the world of data protection. The increasing privacy needs of the last decade generated challenges for big data firms, while at the same time, opportunities to grow came from emerging technology-linked products and services. The authors draw on a sample of 1,040 listed big data firms from the domain of IT services, active in the

market from 2010 until 2018, and use abnormal returns analysis of firm performance when each regulation came into effect. Their analysis shows that the respective regulations in place have a strong impact on big data firms.

The ninth paper titled ‘Impact investment effects on sustainable development in BRICS countries’ by Belyaeva, examines the concepts of social and impact investments in BRICS emerging economies. Impact investments underlie a wide ‘continuum of influence’ that comes from philanthropy to sustainable investments that are being pursued by corporations looking to achieve integrative financial and social impact effects. The qualitative approach to impact investments is expanding every year, and the BRICS countries are also increasing their share in the total impact investments market. The dataset is collected from listed BRICS companies’ annual reports within five years. Econometric analysis conducted in the paper allowed estimating sustainable development effects and its positive correlation with the prosperity of BRICS countries. The novel outline provided prospects for regulating impact investments in the BRICS countries.

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