
Preface

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Biographical notes: Ali Salman Saleh is a Professor of Economics at Qatar University. He completed his Honours Masters in Commerce and a PhD in Economics at the University of Wollongong (Australia). He has made significant contributions to research in the areas of applied economics, efficiency performance of SMEs, and tourism economics. He has published in reputable journals, such as *Current Issues in Tourism*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Analysis*, *Journal of Policy Modeling*, *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *Pacific-Basin Finance Journal*, *International Journal of Finance and Economics*, *Singapore Economic Review*, *Australian Economic Papers*, *Applied Economics Letters*, *Studies in Economics and Finance*, amongst others. Additionally, he is currently working on a number of external projects in the areas of SMEs and tourism economics.

Osama Sam Al-Kwafi is an Associate Professor of Management at Qatar University. He received his PhD in Management of Technology from the University of Waterloo (Canada) and MSc in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Alberta (Canada). Before returning to university to complete his PhD, he worked at the University of Toronto developing medical applications, and at several medical companies designing and evaluating new products for global markets. He was a Visiting Scholar at Richard Ivey School of Business, Western University. His research spans a wide range of areas, including consumer neuroscience, entrepreneurship, technology marketing, and innovation. His research has been published in various refereed journals and conference proceedings, including *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Service Marketing*, *Journal for Global Business Advancement*, *Journal for International Business and Entrepreneurship Development*, *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, *International Journal of Technology Marketing*, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, *Journal of Management History*, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *Journal of Technology Management in China*, and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*.

This special issue of the *Journal for Global Business Advancement* focuses on expanding our knowledge of how businesses can enhance their practices and strategies across different cultures to improve their business performance. This has become a challenging issue, as all businesses are operating within a highly competitive environment and global markets are imposing more pressure on local firms.

The first paper, entitled 'Breaking down the export barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises: focus group study across Vietnam', examines the motivations of and barriers faced by Vietnamese businesses in undertaking export activities. This is considered to be critical to enhancing the economic activities of the country, especially in current global markets that are characterised by high competition. Saleh et al. applied the thematic analysis method and categorisations developed from extant literature to examine six focus groups from SMEs chosen from the three major regions of Vietnam. Each focus group consisted of 15 SMEs, and trained facilitators led the discussion to collect relevant information. The findings suggest that Vietnamese SMEs experience significant difficulties in coping with regulatory barriers, accessing information about overseas markets, and recruiting and maintaining the skilled workforce necessary for penetrating international markets. From a practical side, the study's research findings help in understanding some of the key drivers of SME export activities in Vietnam and assist policymakers in developing the current SME ecosystem.

In the second paper, entitled 'Entrepreneurial characteristics and internationalisation of new ventures: a study of cognitive factors', Abrar Ali Saiyed and Antonin Ricard explore the influence of decision maker's cognitive factors on speed of internationalisation. The area of entrepreneur's cognition in internationalisation of new ventures has been under researched, therefore, this study came to fill this gap in our knowledge. This study focus on investigating the impact of various cognitive factors; attitude, tolerance for ambiguity, proactivity, intuition and international orientation, on speed of internationalisation activities of new firms. By collecting data from 149 French and 98 Indian SMEs, authors found that decision makers with attitude towards internationalisation affect firms early internationalisation, this effect was found positive in Indian firms while negative in French. In addition, it was found that decision makers with high intuition were found first concentrate on local markets and later enter into global markets. Interestingly, international orientation is very vital for early internationalisation in new firms in France.

In the third paper, entitled 'Understanding consumerism within western and Muslim based societies: Twitter usage of Saudi and American consumers', Althawadi et al. investigate the consumerism concept across different cultures. Initially, they define consumerism based on previous research studies and then explore it as active participation in negative business issues that directly affect the consumer. They developed the consumerism model based on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) using widely used social media (i.e., Twitter) to verify any significant variations between two divergent cultures and economies: Saudi Arabia and the USA. Their findings suggest several outcomes. First, consumers with negative perceptions of government regulatory practices have a more positive attitude toward consumerism. Second, there is a positive relationship among attitude, intention, and behaviour and consumerism; both countries showed a positive subjective norm, intention, and behaviour for consumerism. Third, there is a positive relationship between perceived behavioural control and consumerist behaviours. Surprisingly, the data from Saudi consumers demonstrated a higher level of intent to engage in consumerism behaviours via Twitter than that of the US consumers.

In the fourth paper, entitled ‘Sustainable values and willingness to pay: an analysis of an analytical technique’, Beldona et al. explore how consumers have started to embrace the importance of taking a supportive view and caring for the world around them. They found that more consumers are shifting toward sustainable products in the US market, expecting this market segment to reach over USD 150 billion by the end of 2021. Their study investigates the factors that influence consumers’ willingness to pay for sustainable products in the grocery industry. Interestingly, they found that conventional analysis techniques, such as regression analysis, cannot produce useful correlations; therefore, they used a cross-validation procedure based on a machine learning approach. They found that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for sustainable products while acknowledging that they are inferior in quality. For managers, it is important to start shifting their business strategies toward meeting consumer expectations.

In the fifth paper, entitled ‘Review and replication three existing measurement scales of consumer cosmopolitanism: an empirical study in Vietnamese young segment’, by Nguyen and Pham reviews the three existing measurement scales of consumer cosmopolitanism and then replicates the study on the youth segment in Vietnam based on 340 surveys. The study results highlight the necessity for a new measurement scale of consumer cosmopolitanism to be applied to the Vietnamese youth market and provide a theoretical distinction among the related constructs of cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan, and consumer cosmopolitanism. This outcome represents a call for further research to explore this measurement scale in different regions to increase its validity.

Finally, in ‘Enabling and disabling boundary conditions of export marketing assistance: an interdisciplinary framework’, Faroque et al. focus on exploring the boundary conditions of government-sponsored export marketing assistance programs to determine firms’ export performance. This topic has significant implications for controlling the internationalisation activities of firms, especially in emerging economies. The paper develops an interdisciplinary framework for export marketing assistance for early internationalising small- and medium-sized enterprises by linking these pretermitted ideas. They found that entrepreneurs’ prior international experience controls the use of an export marketing assistance program, while psychic distance positively moderates this relationship. In addition, export market orientation increases the strength of the relationship between export marketing assistance and export performance. In contrast, international entrepreneurial orientation worsens this relationship. Based on these findings, decision makers and practitioners could adopt this framework to optimise the use of export marketing assistance programs.