
Preface

Demetris Vrontis

Department of Management,
University of Nicosia,
School of Business,
46 Makedonitissas Avenue, 1700, Nicosia, Cyprus
Email: vrontis.d@unic.ac.cy

Evangelia Siachou

Department of Economics,
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens,
Sofokleous 1, 10559, Athens, Greece
Email: esiachou@econ.uoa.gr

Biographical notes: Demetris Vrontis is the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research and a Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Nicosia, Cyprus. He is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of the *EuroMed Journal of Business*, an Associate Editor of the *International Marketing Review*, an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Business Research* and a Consulting Editor of the *Journal of International Management*. He has wide editorial experience and has successfully edited over 60 guest editions in top tier journals. He is the President of the EuroMed Academy of Business, which serves as an important and influential regional academy in the area of business and management, and the Managing Director of Gnosis: Mediterranean Institute for Management Science. He has widely published in about 300 refereed journal papers, 45 books and 60 chapters in books, and has presented papers to over 80 conferences around the globe.

Evangelia Siachou is an Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She holds a PhD in the field of knowledge management from Athens University of Economics and Business. She has several years of teaching experience. In 2016, she joined the Open University of Cyprus as Tutor and currently serves as Coordinator of the Managing Organisation Module in the MBA Program. As of Fall 2019, she teaches in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) as well as in the Executive Programs of the Department of Economics of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She also teaches at Hellenic Open University. She has been awarded twice with the Emerald Literati Award.

This special issue accommodates both empirical research and conceptual perspectives of the challenges faced by a variety of organisations operating in different industries, sectors and geographical locations. These studies are relevant to leadership effectiveness in the digital era, digital transformation and strategising in relatively under explored sectors as well as geographical areas. Additionally, the studies provide evidence of the importance of environmental accounting, the necessity to consider enculturation and acculturation

processes in various managerial functions and businesses as well as to explore employee engagement in the health sector in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Alexia Mary Tzortzaki authored the first paper, 'Developing compassionate self-leadership: a conceptual framework for leadership effectiveness in the digital age', which looks at the new ways of leading in the meta COVID-19 digital era. The author effectively combined the most influential and topical models of emotional intelligence and self-leadership to advance our understanding of the self-compassion as an antecedent to leadership effectiveness in the new ways of leading the pandemic shaped/enforced. The proposed framework builds on the principles of management education governing leadership as a taught ability and spreads the HEART-led framework as a response to digital challenges faced by employees. In this vein, the qualities of mindfulness, integrity, resilience and compassionate human connection are considered as apparent antecedents to self-leadership, which shapes employees' ability to be responsive to new needs and demands either within their workplace or beyond.

The second paper, 'The management of digital transformation in German companies: an empirical analysis', is co-authored by Bernd Britzelmaier, Friederike Kurz, Patrick Kraus and Sina Holder. The study tackles the challenges faced by organisations in their attempts to be digitally transformed. Based on the perceptions of eight experts of digital transformation as well as comparing and contrasting existing digital transformation models, KPIs and tools, the study strongly supports that one model does not fit all the cases of digital transformation. It calls, therefore, for customised approaches and frameworks able to accommodate the unique needs and demands of each attempt separately. It also promotes the implementation of new digitally relevant KPIs, that of BSC, thus, allowing operationalisation of the digitalisation strategy. The study findings are also topical, yet meaningful and useful, for the digital transformation attempts made by almost all organisations of all sizes and sectors in the meta COVID-19 era.

The third paper, 'Football industry strategic contextualisation and developmental choices: the case of Cyprus, EU', is co-authored by George Yiapanas, Alkis Thrassou and Demetris Vrontis. The authors' interest in the football industry is summarised in a qualitative study, which investigates the industry's critical parameters for growth and sustainability and recommends choices for its strategic development by also considering the effects of the pandemic COVID-19. The study findings reveal that the football industry in Cyprus (in all its business, sporting and social contexts) faces uncertainty and insecurity with longevity, which both put the sector's sustainability at risk. Strong political and ideological beliefs as well as localism are amongst the parameters that are explored as antecedents to such negative phenomena. The authors support, amongst others, a reformation to management style able to diminish unaccountability and maladministration, development of the appropriate mechanism for a club's financial growth and development as well as the formulation of strong relationships and partnership with commercial partners and other stakeholders. Such research creates new domains in ensuring sustainability and growth in unique sectors as important sources of income and calls for research in geographical areas and domains, which currently are relatively under explored.

The fourth paper, 'The contribution of environmental accounting in corporations: evidence from Greece', is co-authored by Lois Petros, Drogalas George, Tabouratzi Efthalia and Papanauom Spiros. Drawing on the current literature as well as the empirical research, the scholars offered an interesting view on the importance of environmental accounting in the Greek entrepreneurial ecosystem. Data from 126 experts reveal the role

of environmental accounting as an advisory agent as well as a determinant to financial decision-making. Yet, the relevant legislation as well as the main deterrent to its adoption prevents organisations from estimating the environmental costs. This study aligns with the attempts made by Greek companies to adjust to the new environmental conditions. Yet, it advances our understanding for the new trends and organisational tenets of financial statements.

The fifth paper, 'Antecedents to enculturation and acculturation for diffusion of knowledge using internet applications: an empirical investigation', is co-authored by Ranjan Chaudhuri, Sheshadri Chatterjee, Evangelia Siachou and Demetris Vrontis. The study tackles an interesting topic of enculturation and acculturation in an attempt to ascertain the cultural differences among people living and interacting together that are diffused through the internet of things. The study provides important implications for country citizens wishing to become urban citizens to 'uplife'/upgrade their livelihoods and explains how such cultural reorientation occurs. The internet of things and the use of social media act as a bicultural broker as well as an intermediate entity, which accelerates self-representation of minorities. The proposed framework will help those who migrate to easily enter into host communities, as well as the latter to easily understand the needs of immigrants bearing their heritage culture, thus, strategising effectively.

Alissar Yassine Haddad, Sam El Nemar, Demetris Vrontis and Hani El-Charani co-authored the sixth and the last paper of this issue, 'Determinants of employee engagement in the healthcare sector'. Drawing on data from 160 employees working in the healthcare sector, the authors provide a multidimensional approach to employee engagement, including governance practices, transformational leadership, organisational values and accountability. The study outcomes may effectively build a grounded theory of the effect of stewardship governance practices, felt accountability and organisational learning as predictors of employee engagement. The authors treat corporate governance as a novel antecedent to employee engagement in times of turbulent and unexpected changes, such that spreading practices from the top down effectively enables organisations to sustain their quality in their offerings.

Instead of a conclusion, we hope that this special issue advances our understanding of the challenges faced by organisations in managing, leading, performing and strategising, which have emerged either from adverse and hostile external conditions, or have contributed to the emerging line of research during as well as in the aftermath of the pandemic. Future scholars may be alerted to such consequences and test the applicability of conceptual frameworks and empirical investigations of managing, governing, performing and strategising so they can meet the meta-pandemic requirements.