

## Preface

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Although frequently mentioned in tech magazines and sometimes in the press, artificial intelligence (AI) was not a common phrase – or at least not one that was frequently used in conversations. November 2022 changed all that with the release of the first user-friendly large language model, or LLM. Since then, it has dominated the investing world and has become both the bane and boon of traditional academia. Ultimately, the AI revolution is redefining decision-making, and LLMs, for all of their capabilities, are innovative because they bring tools to the common man that were previously inaccessible to make more intelligent decisions. Therefore, it should not be any surprise that the common theme across these six papers in this issue is ‘The integration of technology and data analysis in various sectors for enhanced performance and decision-making’. These studies collectively explore how different domains, including sports sponsorships, public policy, organisation behaviour, information systems, and others, are leveraging advanced technological tools and data analytics to improve outcomes and strategic decisions.

Whether it is stock prices in developing markets using AI models or assessing the impact of technological advances in governmental operations, the underlying thread is the transformative role of technology and data analytics in augmenting traditional practices. This reflects a broader trend of digital transformation where sectors are increasingly adopting data-driven approaches to optimise performance, enhance strategic planning, and deliver value through informed decision-making processes.

The first paper, entitled ‘The leverage puzzle – a new perspective’, introduces the ‘tax spread’ as a novel measure for non-debt tax shields (NDTS), positing it as the difference between the tax expense reported on a firm’s income statement and the actual cash taxes paid, as detailed in accounting statement footnotes. This measure aims to provide a more accurate proxy for assessing the substitution effect between debt and NDTS in a firm’s capital structure. The study analyses approximately 89,000 firm-years, revealing a robust negative relationship between the use of NDTS and debt financing. The paper argues that higher tax spread levels, indicative of greater use of NDTS, correspond with lower leverage levels within firms.

A significant strength of this paper is its comprehensive dataset and the introduction of the tax spread metric, which offers a nuanced approach to understanding NDTS and their impact on capital structure decisions. The analysis is robust, employing sensitivity tests including firm fixed-effect regressions and instrumental variable 2SLS regressions to address potential endogeneity concerns. By demonstrating the predictive power of the tax spread in explaining variations in firm leverage, the paper contributes valuable

insights to the capital structure literature, particularly in the context of tax planning and corporate finance strategies.

The second paper, entitled 'Sport sponsorships announcements and stock returns: the case of social sponsorships', explores the impact of sports sponsorship announcements on stock returns, focusing on whether social sponsorships (such as sponsoring the Special Olympics) yield higher stock returns compared to commercial sponsorships. Using event study methodology and examining 223 sports sponsorship announcements, the research finds a positive stock market response to such announcements, estimating a 0.81% uplift in stock price for the announcing firm. The study reveals that social sponsorships indeed generate more positive stock returns than commercial ones, emphasising the significance of social sponsorship in enhancing firm value.

A distinguishing strength of the paper is its comprehensive approach to analysing the effects of sports sponsorships on stock returns, addressing a gap in existing literature which has provided mixed results regarding the value derived from such investments. By distinguishing between social and commercial sponsorships and considering firm-specific factors such as organisational slack and marketing intensity, the study offers nuanced insights into how various types of sponsorship and internal company dynamics influence investor responses and stock performance. The findings suggest that social sponsorships not only yield higher returns but also highlight the importance of aligning sponsorship activities with strategic business objectives to maximise stock returns.

The third paper, entitled 'Comparative analysis of conventional and artificial intelligence forecasting models for international tourist arrivals in three metropolitan hubs', examines the effectiveness of various forecasting models in predicting tourist arrivals in New York, Singapore, and Dubai. Using data from January 2001 to December 2017, the study evaluates four models: exponential smoothing, SARIMA, Prophet with Fourier transformation, and LSTM neural networks. The findings indicate that the LSTM model significantly outperforms the other three, reducing error rates by 20% to 60%. While SARIMA also shows strong performance in some instances, the advanced non-linear models, especially LSTM, prove superior in accuracy and generalisability. This improved forecasting capability is crucial for policymakers and decision-makers in planning infrastructure and managing resources effectively.

One of the major strengths of the article is its comprehensive comparative analysis of both traditional and advanced forecasting models, providing a clear picture of their respective accuracies and limitations. Secondly, the study's use of real-world data from three diverse and significant global cities enhances the robustness and relevance of the findings. Lastly, the application of advanced AI techniques like LSTM demonstrates the potential for these methods to revolutionise forecasting practices in the tourism industry, offering substantial improvements over traditional models. This forward-looking approach not only contributes to academic literature but also offers practical insights for industry stakeholders aiming to enhance their strategic planning and resource allocation.

The fourth paper, entitled 'The role of mediating effects of ethical behaviours in the public procurement regulatory compliance model', investigates the various factors influencing public procurement regulatory compliance in Vietnam, particularly focusing on the mediating role of ethical behaviours. Using a quantitative research methodology, the authors collected data from 171 public officials in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam). The study explores the relationships between procurement knowledge, enforcement, political resistance, and perceived rule ambiguity with procurement regulatory compliance. The findings highlight that while procurement knowledge directly influences compliance,

enforcement does not significantly impact compliance or ethical behaviours. However, ethical behaviours play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between political resistance and compliance, as well as between perceived ambiguity of rules and compliance. The study emphasises the importance of fostering ethical behaviours to enhance compliance in the public procurement sector.

Three outshining major strengths of this article are its comprehensive research framework, robust methodology, and practical implications. The research framework is well-developed, incorporating multiple variables and their interrelationships, providing a holistic view of the factors affecting procurement regulatory compliance. This allows for a nuanced understanding of how ethical behaviours mediate these relationships, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of public procurement compliance. Secondly, the methodology is rigorously executed, involving a large sample size and employing PLS-SEM for data analysis, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. The use of a pilot test to refine the questionnaire for the Vietnamese context further strengthens study's methodological rigour. Lastly, the practical implications are significant, offering actionable recommendations for policymakers and public sector managers. By identifying the critical role of ethical behaviours and providing strategies to enhance them, the study contributes to improving public procurement practices, ensuring better compliance and transparency in the sector.

The fifth paper, entitled 'Strengthening investors' stock returns through the moderating role of management discussion and analysis disclosure: an Indonesian perspective', probes the impact of management discussion and analysis (MD&A) disclosure on stock returns in Indonesia, focusing on its moderating effect between earnings quality and stock returns. Using data from 427 panel observations across 61 companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange from 2014 to 2020, the research employs multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The findings indicate that MD&A disclosure positively influences stock returns and significantly moderates the relationship between earnings quality and stock returns. Earnings quality alone shows a positive impact on stock returns, which is further strengthened by MD&A disclosure.

An outstanding strength of this paper is its comprehensive analysis of the moderating role of MD&A disclosure within the context of the Indonesian capital market, an area previously less explored. The study's methodology, including the use of panel data and multiple regression analysis, provides a robust framework for understanding the dynamics between MD&A disclosure, earnings quality, and stock returns. Additionally, the research contributes to the theoretical understanding of decision usefulness and signalling theory by demonstrating the practical relevance of MD&A disclosures in enhancing the effect of earnings quality on stock returns, offering valuable insights for policymakers, regulators, and corporate managers in Indonesia and potentially in similar emerging markets.

The sixth and final paper, entitled 'Critical success factors of effective implementation of balanced scorecard and organisational performance: case of UAE private hospitals', investigates the effective implementation of the balanced scorecard (BSC) in UAE's private hospitals and its impact on organisational performance. By surveying 73 private hospitals and gathering data from 93 senior managers, the authors identify 13 critical success factors (CSFs) grouped into three constructs: corporate, integration, and supporting purposes. These CSFs include top management commitment, the BSC team, training, and regular reporting, among others. The research employs a

structural model tested with partial least squares analysis to demonstrate that these CSFs are predictive of successful BSC implementation, which in turn, significantly enhances organisational performance.

A key strength of the paper is its pioneering exploration of BSC within the UAE healthcare context, contributing novel insights to a relatively under-researched area. The study's rigorous methodological approach, involving a well-structured survey and advanced statistical analysis, ensures the reliability and validity of its findings. By providing a nuanced understanding of how specific CSFs influence BSC implementation and organisational performance, the study offers valuable guidance for healthcare managers and policymakers aiming to enhance operational efficiency and service quality in the sector. Furthermore, its findings have broader applicability, potentially benefiting other sectors interested in implementing BSC as a strategic management tool.