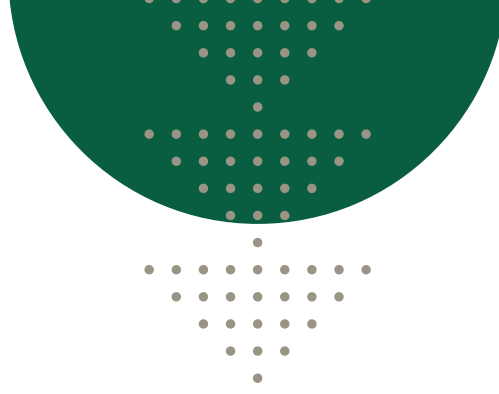




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Techno-complexity, Techno-uncertainty, and Counterproductive Work Behaviour among Generation Y Employees in a South African State-Owned Enterprise. The Role of Gender

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Keywords

Techno-complexity;
Techno-uncertainty;
Generation Y;
Counterproductive work-behaviour.

Abstract

Despite the increasing quantum technology adoption, technostress studies, and employment of Generation Y employees by organisations, no known study has considered how the technostress dimensions, individually, influence employee behaviour. The objective of this study is to determine the influence of two dimensions of technostress, that is, techno-complexity, techno-uncertainty, on counterproductive work behaviour towards the organisation (CWBO) among Generation Y employees in a State-Owned Enterprise in South Africa, with gender as a moderating variable. Preliminary data collected conveniently using a structured questionnaire from 230 Generation Y employees indicate significant relationships between techno-complexity, uncertainty, and counterproductive work behaviour. Gender indicates a moderating role between techno-uncertainty and counterproductive work behaviour.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in South Africa play a critical role in economic growth and service delivery (Cheteni & Khamfula, 2018). Many of them have and continue transforming through adopting 4IR technologies to remain viable and sustainable in the ever-changing business environment (Serongoane, 2021). As part of transforming, SOEs, like many other organisations in South Africa, are employing Generation Y employees - those born between 1980 and 2000 and who are techno-savvy (Weerarathne, et al., 2023). While these efforts are commented, gender disparities (Statistics South Africa, 2017) and counterproductive work behaviours (Nzimakwe, 2023) still haunt SOEs - evidenced by daily reports of underrepresentation of women among employees and corruption by executives and other lower ranking employees, respectively. In addition, machine-human interaction literature (Cranny-Francis, 2013) laments the effect of technology on employees, young or old. The young Generation Y employees were born in the era of technology, however, the extent to which exposure to technology engenders technostress and results in some undesirable behaviour among them is something that is still to be established, within the context of SOEs in South Africa.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite positive and negative advancements among South African SOEs in terms adopting digital technologies in the workplace, employing different cohorts of employees, and corruption cases reported, respectively, it is still not clear and not empirically established whether these issues have resulted in techno-complexity and uncertainty stress among Generation Y employees. A further gap is the dearth of evidence on whether the techno-complexity and uncertainty may lead to counterproductive work behaviour among this demographic group.

1.3. Research objectives.

1. To examine the relationship between techno-complexity and counterproductive work behaviour.
2. To examine the relationship between techno-uncertainty and counterproductive work behaviour.
3. Gender moderates the relationship between techno-complexity and counterproductive work behaviour.
4. Gender moderates the relationship between techno-uncertainty and counterproductive work behaviour.

2. Literature Review

With no evidence of how techno-complexity is related to counterproductive work behaviour within SOEs in South Africa, studies in other contexts have reported techno-complexity as causing job performance difficulties but not increasing employees' tendencies to engage in bad behaviour within the workplace. Previous studies (Xu, et al., 2023) have also specifically found techno-uncertainty associated with employee innovation and not counterproductive work behaviour, while Shadbad and Biro (2022) found techno-uncertainty positively correlated to violating ICT compliance behaviour. There is also evidence of gender differences in dealing with emotion associated with technological challenges (Sinha & Latha, 2018) in previous studies.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The design is quantitative, specifically correlational, following the deductive approach. All Generation Y employees in the identified SOE constitute(d) the population, with a preliminary sample of 230, conveniently selected. Data collection was through adopted and adapted questionnaire items and analysis used was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

4. Preliminary Findings

Females dominated the sample (57%) and majority of sample (30.9%) had worked in the organisation for 5-10 years. Reliability (alpha), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were within acceptable thresholds (Hair, et al., 2012). Cronenroll-Larcker and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) discriminant validity results were confirmed. The absence of variance inflation factors exceeding 3.3 (Pallant, 2017) showed no concern with multicollinearity among the constructs. The Q and R squared acceptable values for each construct confirmed measurement model fit (Hair, et al., 2019). For the structural model, results showed support for the two exogenous variables and counterproductive work behaviour, and only for moderation of gender between techno-uncertainty and counterproductive work behaviour.

5. Managerial Implications

For results to question 1, continuous exposure of Generation Y to modern technology might prevent them from engaging in counterproductive work behaviour. For question 2 results, continuous monitoring of Generation Y employees' vulnerability to technostress is critical, despite them being born during the digital technology era. Human resource strategies that deal with more technostress among males than women need to be proffered to prevent deviant behaviour.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Firstly, from the preliminary results, it can be concluded that Generation Y males have a propensity to become more uncertain than females with continuous introduction of technology in the workplace. In addition, Generation Y employees' techno-savvy prevents them from becoming deviant in the workplace. Finally, this demographic group is vulnerable to techno-uncertainty. Future research might have to include other demographic variables, other dimensions of deviant behaviour and take a longitudinal design and maybe include other demographic groups such as Generation X.

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Exploring the Economic Benefits of a Blockchain-based Land Registration System for South Africa

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Keywords

Blockchain Technology;
Land Registration;
Systematic Literature Review;
General Systems Theory

Abstract

Despite the rigorous verification procedures at the Deeds Office in South Africa, land disputes and errors still occur owing to inherent limitations in manual registration processes. To rectify these discrepancies can prove to be costly and time-consuming for both the customer and government. Following a PRISMA methodology for systematic literature review (SLR), the results of this study indicate that there are seven related economic benefits of using blockchain technology as a platform for land registration, including: (1) promoting economic stability; (2) boosting investor confidence; (3) increasing tax revenue; (4) reducing litigation costs; (5) reducing in transaction costs; and (6) eliminating double spend. Implementing a blockchain-based land registration system in South Africa can be cost-effective compared to traditional land registry systems, thus, reducing the financial burden on government and taxpayers, which can free up resources for other economic development projects. Additionally, the knowledge gained through the application of a SLR will contribute towards methodological development.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The South African economy has not performed well over the last few years and COVID-19 compounded existing vulnerabilities, thus enhancing underperformance relative to its peers (Gumede, 2023:34). Additionally, load-shedding, social unrests, riots due to service delivery protests and taxi strikes on businesses and the economy at large creates further negative impacts on the economy. Despite these challenges, in the second quarter of 2022, the Real Estate sector displayed a growth of 1.9% making it the second largest positive economic contributor (Statistics SA, 2022).

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Definitely, any change in real estate markets as a result of changes in land administration system may have an impact whether positive or negative on overall economic indicators such as GDP, employment, and consumer spending. Blockchain technology has a potential to reduce time and costs associated with land registration transactions, streamlining the property transfer process and making it more accessible to all those who reside in South Africa, thus, contributing to the overall economic growth (Mendi et al., 2020:703). However, there is insufficient information in the published research that seeks to clarify the economic benefits of using blockchain technology as a platform for land registration specifically in the South African context.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite the rigorous verification procedures at the Deeds Office in South Africa, land disputes and errors still occur owing to inherent limitations in manual registration processes. To rectify these discrepancies can prove to be costly and time-consuming for both the customer and government impacting negatively on the economy.

1.3. Research objectives

- To investigate the potential economic benefits of adopting blockchain-based land registration system in South Africa;
- To study the relationship between various aspects of blockchain-based land registration system and the country's economic indicators; and
- To explore conceptual application of blockchain technology into land registration into an integrated system.

2. Literature Review

Literature reports on a limited number of studies that adopt a theoretical framework and their tendency to approach blockchain-based land registries in a fragmented manner, rather than a holistic body. For example, in 2004, Zevenbergen explored the application of the systems approach to land registration and the cadastre. Another example includes Shange (2010) who conducted a case study in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa using a systems based approach to land registration analysis and improvements.

On the other hand, some of the notable scholars who approached blockchain-based registries in a jointed manner include Ansah et al. (2023) who adopted a three pillar institutional framework as an analytical lens to recruit and analyse the institutional factors necessary to adopt blockchain-based land administration. In addition, Miscione, et al., (2020) discuss different theoretical lenses that can be used if and how blockchain-based land registries in Africa will be affecting organisations and society. Since

the primary focus of the study lies in understanding the impact of a blockchain-based land registration system on the economy, the GST is adopted within the context of this study. This is because South Africa is an open and adaptive social system, consisting of interacting individuals or groups, with such interactions leading to the development of attitudes (Sharma, 1990:95).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

Using a PRISMA approach to systematic literature review (SLR), the study adopts the General System Theory (GST) as a theoretical lens to explore the potential economic benefits of using blockchain technology as a platform for land registry systems in the South African context.

4. Preliminary Findings

Table 1 reveals that the literature primarily comes from journal articles, conference proceedings and other sources between 2018 and 2023.

Table 1: Publication Type

Publication Year	Conference Paper	Journal Article	Review Article	Grand Total
2018	1			1
2019		2		2
2020	2	8		10
2021	5	10		15
2022	4	9	1	14
2023	1	9		10
Grand Total	13	38	1	52

Source: Own compilation

The results indicate that there are seven related economic benefits associated with blockchain-based land registration, including: (1) promoting economic stability; (2) boosting investor confidence; (3) increasing tax revenue; (4) reducing litigation costs; (5) reducing in transaction costs; and (6) eliminating double spend (Figure 1).

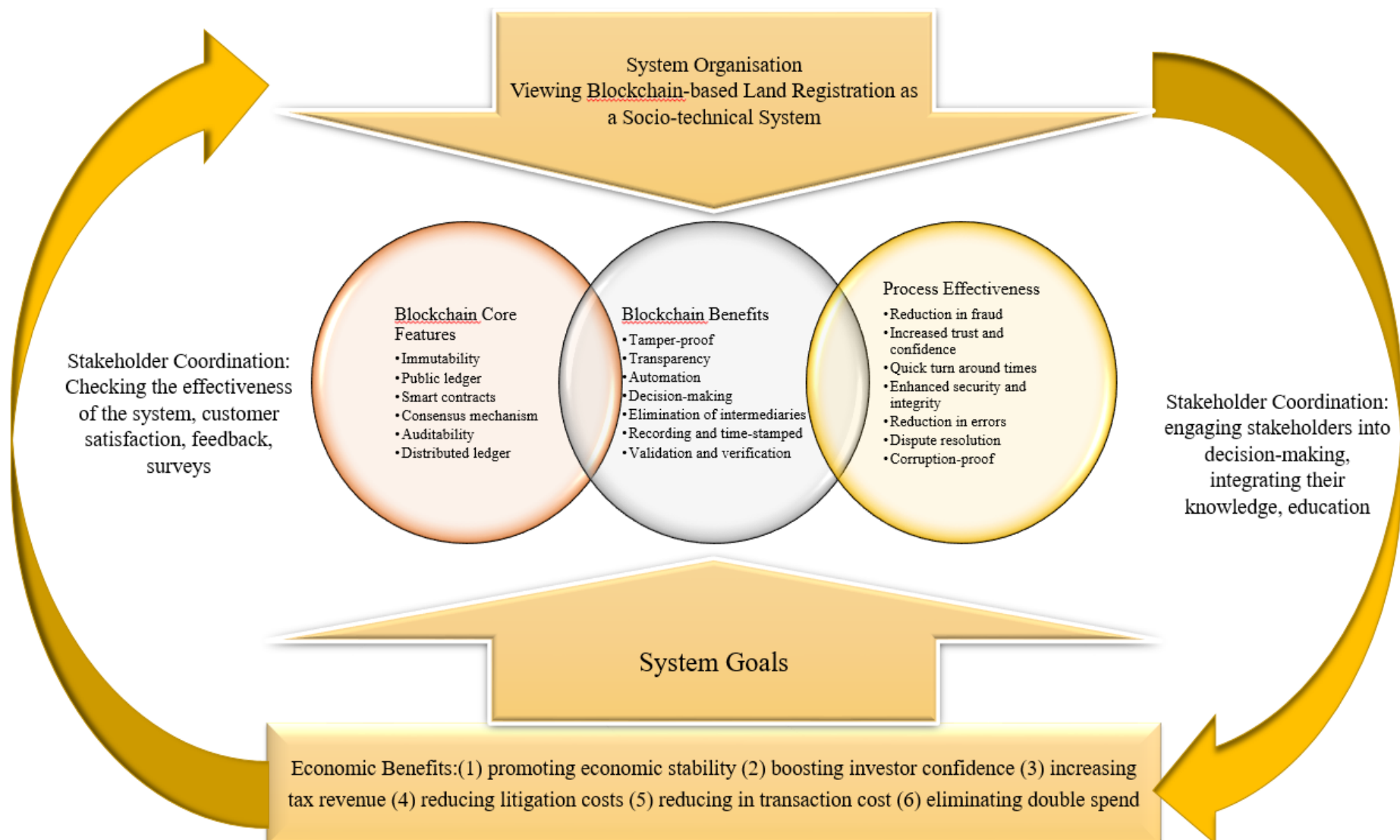


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Own Creation)

5. Managerial Implications

The identified economic benefits of blockchain-based land registration system could serve as guiding framework for the South African government and other relevant stakeholders to devise a solution that will not only yield a return on investment but will make a substantial contribution towards the real estate sector and extend to the overall economic growth.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Implementing a blockchain-based land registration system in South Africa can be cost-effective compared to traditional land registry systems, thus, reducing the financial burden on government and taxpayers. Moreover, a digitised land registry can potentially decrease costs associated with court cases by minimising land disputes and litigation resulting from fraudulent activities and in some instances erroneous deeds. The freed-up resources can then be allocated to other economic development projects. However, adopting blockchain-based land registration in South Africa necessitates careful consideration of several crucial factors, despite its undeniable benefits, including immutability, high level of security, transparency. Future research should focus on the legal implications of integrating blockchain technology into land registration system, particularly in the context of the Electronic Deeds Registration Act 19 of 2019 (e-DRSA). Furthermore, future studies should examine blockchain's compatibility with existing infrastructure to ensure that both legal and sociotechnical challenges are addressed thereby enabling the realization of economic benefits.

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The Role of The Human Resource Practitioner in a Metropolitan Municipality

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Keywords

Human Resource Management;
Diversity;
Inclusion;
Talent Management.

Abstract

In a metropolitan municipality, the human resource practitioner plays an important role in managing a diversified workforce and maintaining smooth organisational operations. This research investigates the multifaceted obligations that HR practitioners confront in such metropolitan environments. First, it looks at recruiting and selection methods that are customised to the specific needs of a metropolitan environment, as well as techniques for attracting outstanding personnel in the face of tough competition. Second, it focuses on developing and implementing policies and processes that are comply with local rules and reflect the municipality's various demographics. Third, it highlights HR's critical role in establishing a culture of inclusivity and equity, increasing employee engagement, and resolving workplace problems in a diverse workforce. Finally, it examines HR's role in talent retention tactics, such as professional development initiatives and performance monitoring systems designed for the fast-paced, dynamic character of metropolitan workplaces. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of how HR practitioners may function as strategic partners in achieving organisational success.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Human resource (HR) practitioners have become strategic pillars of organisational performance in the dynamic environment of a metropolitan municipality (Varandas, Fernandes & Veiga, 2024). HR specialists negotiate intricate socioeconomic variables, using creative strategies to draw in top talent and match hiring practices to the objectives of urban professionals (Iskandar, Pahrijal, & Kurniawan, 2023). They encourage fairness and inclusivity, helping diverse teams feel like they belong (Umeh, Cornelius & Wallace, 2023). HR experts direct talent management initiatives, fostering worker growth and optimising potential in dynamic urban environments (Sandeepanie, Gamage, Perera & Sajeewani, 2023). Furthermore, employing people with good moral character, a strong work ethic, and talent is given priority by HR practitioners in the public sector (Chourasia, Bahuguna & Raju, 2023). This study looks at how strategically important HR professionals are to metropolitan municipalities' efforts to foster sustainable growth and organisational resilience.

1.2. Problem Statement

The problems faced by HR professionals in metropolitan areas are unique and include attracting and retaining top employees, encouraging fairness and inclusivity, managing complex regulations, and adapting talent strategies to the ever-changing urban landscape. The study aims to identify those roles of HR practitioners.

1.3. Research objectives

The primary research objective is to examine the role of human resource practitioner in a Metropolitan Municipality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Challenges faced by HR practitioners

HR practitioners in metropolitan areas deal with issues including finding and keeping excellent employees, managing diverse workforces, figuring out complicated legal requirements, and fostering talent development in quickly evolving contexts. Living expenses and intense competition are the main causes of recruitment and retention problems (Agustian, Pohan, Zen, Wiwin & Malik, 2023). In order to manage diversity and promote a pleasant work environment, inclusive policies and programmes are necessary (Darwish, Khassawneh, Melhem & Singh, 2024). To maintain compliance, HR professionals must also negotiate complicated legal frameworks (Ciuk, Śliwa & Harzing, 2023).

2.2. Strategies employed by HR practitioners

According to Susanto, Sawitri, Suroso, & Rony, (2023), developing strategic alliances for workforce development (Varandas et al., 2024), and putting agile talent management techniques like performance systems and continuous feedback into practice (Agustian, et al., 2023) are some strategies for attracting talent. HR professionals can more easily navigate the demands of urban areas with the aid of these tactics.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The study used a qualitative research approach, involving in-depth interviews with 13 HR personnel and other relevant stakeholders at the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Thematic analysis was used.

4. Preliminary Findings

Table 1: Role of HR practitioners

Theme	Sub-theme
1. Organisational politics	➤ Political instability
	➤ Political inconsistency
	➤ Political interference
	➤ Political interest
2. Finance	➤ Budgets
	➤ Lack of finance
3. Rewards and resources	➤ Lack of rewards
	➤ Lack of resources
4. Lack of career management	➤ Lack of staff development
	➤ Lack of career growth

Based on preliminary findings, HR practitioners encounter difficulties in four main domains: finance, which includes budget constraints; rewards and resources, which include a lack of incentives and resources; career management, which includes inadequate staff development and career growth opportunities; and organizational politics, which includes instability and interference.

5. Managerial Implications

Managerial implications include the necessity for strategic planning to deal with political instability and resource allocation. Practical recommendations include improving budget management, introducing competitive incentives, and investing in professional development programmes. Transparent communication can also reduce political influence and help employees advance their careers.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

HR practitioners in metropolitan municipalities face specific challenges related to politics, finance, rewards, and career management. Future study should look at successful solutions for addressing these issues and improving HR practices in urban settings, with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion activities.

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Investigating Prospective Distress Sensemaking: Focusing on Disruptor Response-ability

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Keywords

Future Distress;
Anticipation;
Disruption response;
Turnaround.

Abstract

Turnaround in distressed ventures has become an insufficient solution and while we can't predict the future, it is possible to use futuristic thinking techniques to 'pre-act' on disruptor effects. Various techniques, all with advantages and limitations, do exist. Sensemaker is a research approach that may assist in pre-emptive future distress identification and thereby allowing for anticipation and preparation. This study explores the application of the process to facilitate such investigation. A process framework that combines distress venture signifiers and decision maker judgements is proposed for testing individual cases.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Turnarounds often fail as a result of decision makers responding too late or inappropriately to the type and origin of distress. Disruptors of various kinds increasingly contribute distress. The fast changing and complex environment influence decision making to become dependent on opaque signals, data and information conditions associated with invisible effects at the point in time when it happens. Causal ambiguity escalates the problem and future prediction almost impossible (Futureworld website, 2024).

1.2. Problem Statement

Disruptors originate from contestants operating in industries barely associated with that a venture traditionally operates in. Their effects, therefore, are initially invincible and only plausible at the time. Reacting to these effects became insufficient and the focus is moving to distress anticipation to prepare for future distress.

1.3. Research objectives

The main aim of the research is to develop an instrument and process applying the Cognitive Edge Sensemaker® (Van der Merwe *et al.*, 2019) research tool for pre-emptive distress recognition and interpretation that can lead to resilience by anticipative preparation.

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2. Literature Review

A *Disruptor* generally refers to any factor, trend, technology, circumstance, innovation, or reaction that currently or is anticipated (or not) in future that creates dramatic shifts, binding constraints or wicked effects (inflection points as described by McGraw, 2019). Disruptor effects lead to distress (Abebe, *et al.*, 2021). Distress may hamper or destruct future going concern parameters.

Disruptors lead to shifts in the future business' value model (job to be done (JTBD)) mostly leading to the associated distress as seen in especially lost demand but also failing appropriation capacity, profit erosion, liquidity problems, and other liabilities (both strategic and operational) with potentially fatal effects and risks. Disruptors take many forms (Sama *et al.*, 2022). Well known practice examples may include but are not limited to: digital technology, online systems, artificial intelligence, meatless meat, additive manufacturing, platforms, drone technology applications, electric devices, internet of things, autonomous vehicles and many more (Washida, & Yahata, 2021). Disruptors are said to create 'paradigm busting turbulence' effects leading to the associated effects.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

Based on the widely used Sensemaker research methodology, we developed a distress focused application thereof to evaluate distress on case by case basis. Process verification was sought through expert opinions.

4. Preliminary Findings

Findings suggest useful application of Sensemaker principles to obtain decision makers' judgements of the distress that may arise from specific disruptors.

5. Managerial Implications

Decision makers can (and should) apply the process in order to anticipate and prepare for relevant actions. 'Pre-spond' rather than respond becomes a relevant view.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The proposed components of the framework required several and continuous iterations and continuous refinements while participants had to be well briefed on the judgements required from them to optimise understanding. While the process is generic, the outcomes appear to be very case specific, making it

difficult to apply without facilitator guidance. This may create resistance which should be addressed by future research.

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Unlocking Potential: How Hope Fuels Attendance of Training, Education, Mentoring, and Coaching Initiatives

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Keywords

Hope;
Optimism;
Training;
Coaching.

Abstract

This research underlines the multifaceted impact of hope on course attendance and sustained engagement in developmental programs. By harnessing the power of hope, stakeholders can unlock the latent potential within individuals and communities, paving the way for a more equitable, resilient, and prosperous future. Also, a deeper understanding is needed for student future orientation amidst challenges if we are to improve success rates. We intend to investigate how hope underlies the intentions to attend training or mentoring of a sample of students and professionals. Preliminary literature reviewed proved that geographic context, gender, agency, trust, and relationships are factors impact self-directed learning and the hope placed in efforts to attend training and mentoring.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Individuals imbued with hope exhibit remarkable perseverance, adaptability, and receptivity to feedback, which can maximize the benefits derived from educational and developmental initiatives (Bozatto, 2020). Hope influences behavior through its interplay with factors like self-efficacy, goal-setting, and support networks (Flemming & Grace, 2016). Interventions designed to bolster hope can dismantle barriers to participation, especially among marginalized or disadvantaged populations,

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thereby fostering more inclusive learning environments (Conradie, 2013). As such, hope can be a lever for driving individual empowerment, organizational innovation, and societal progress (Goodwin & Hein, 2016). This suggests a paradigm shift may be needed in workplace interventions to include the cultivation of hope as a fundamental enabler of engagement and achievement (Parker & Roessger, 2020).

Among university students and young professionals, the relationship between education and aspiration significantly shapes their early life choices (Grant, 2017). However, without strong goal-directedness, these aspirations may not translate into concrete actions, particularly at the cusp of their careers, where perceived barriers may inhibit participation in development opportunities.

We studied as part of this work in progress several recent articles related to the topic of interest. We searched articles on Google Scholar, Sabinet and Ebscohost, three of the most widely used research engines at our disposal. We found that in South Africa, no study has yet been conducted that investigates training, development and mentoring from the perspectives of participants, with the particular emphasis on their hopes, aspirations, future orientation, and perceived benefits. Considering this gap in our knowledge, we set out to develop a problem statement and research objectives.

1.2. Problem Statement

While numerous studies have explored organizational motives behind human capital development, few have focused on hope as a driving force behind knowledge accumulation and career progression. This study aims to investigate the role of hope in motivating individuals to engage in on-the-job training, mentoring, and coaching initiatives. Subsequently the problem stated for this research is:

There is a gap in our knowledge on whether hope may be the driving force behind people's intentions to attend training, mentoring and coaching initiatives.

1.3. Research objectives

The primary objective of this research is to explore the pivotal role of hope in driving participation and engagement in developmental initiatives like training, education, mentoring, and coaching. By drawing upon interdisciplinary research, this study will elucidate how hope acts as a potent catalyst, propelling individuals toward proactive pursuit of personal and professional growth opportunities, even in the face of challenges and uncertainties. Therefore, the primary objective of this research may be stated as follows:

To understand whether hope fuels individuals' need for attending training, mentoring and coaching initiatives.

2. Literature Review

Hope, when accompanied by external opportunities such as funding and organizational support, can significantly enhance an individual's capabilities (Conradie, 2013). However, a low expectation of one's capabilities can undermine both hopes and aspirations (Lewin, 1980). Distinguishing between hope and optimism, hope is associated with a lower likelihood of expected outcomes, whereas optimism involves a higher expectation of positive outcomes. This distinction underlines the need for a hopeful mindset to foster resilience and a sense of agency, which are crucial for navigating complex learning journeys. Frequent enrollment in higher education and corporate programs often does not lead to completion, suggesting a need to better understand and support the role of hope in educational persistence (Ichikawa, 2022).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This study will use an interpretivist design, engaging with 20 South African post-graduate students and 20 professionals employed at the same university. A self-developed research instrument will be used to gather data on participants' hopes, aspirations, and future orientation.

4. Preliminary Findings

Our findings thus far are captured in Table 1 below. We found only one article written in South Africa, that of Conradie (2013), which refers to hope. In the interest of brevity we have included only one topic in Table 1, but we would also like to add self-directed learning and other topics in our full paper. Suffice to say that few articles on hope as the inspiration behind students' intention to study have been written in South Africa.

Table 1: Recent research on hope, aspirations and future orientation

Topic	Perspectives studied	Country context	Author(s)
Hope/aspiration	1. Working class young people, who have not attended university but to whom the opportunity is presented.	1. Leicester, UK.	1. Grant, (2015)
	2. Hope is ambiguous in nature, an emotion, with cognitive elements.	2. Los Angeles, USA	2. Bozatto, (2020)
	3. Quantitative investigation of 333 US citizens aged 19–74, surveyed before the elections, tested for hope.	3. Washington DC, USA	3. Bury et al, (2018)
	4. Hope and optimism are conceptually different.	4. USA	4. TenHouten, (2022)
	5. Hope in critical pedagogy can be conceptually divided into critical hope the transformative hope. Critical hope inspires criticism of oppressive situations and sounds formative hope is the experience of the world as open to collective human design.	5. Japan	5. Ichikawa, (2022)

Source: Own compilation

5. Managerial Implications

Understanding the role of hope can enhance leadership by building better relationships characterized by mutual trust and a shared vision. This approach can motivate self-directed learning and make the most of development and mentoring opportunities.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

In future a study distinguishing between women and men, and whether their aspirations, motivation and hopes diverge, may be considered. Also, the distinction between female and male mentors may also shed light on whether such a distinction has any bearing on the educational attainment, personal and professional growth of employees at various career stages.

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The Impact of Cognitive Cultural Intelligence of Service Staff on the Service Delivery Experience of Customers at Casual Dining Restaurants in Bloemfontein City, South Africa

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Keywords

Cognitive cultural intelligence;
Service delivery;
Casual dining.

Abstract

The service-intensive and people-oriented nature of the hospitality industry engenders staff to be culturally sensitive and deliver excellent customer service. The association between cognitive cultural intelligence and delivery of excellent customer service in the tourism and hospitality sector has, however, not received much attention despite changes in the world of work and customer needs. The objective of this study was, therefore, to explore the impact of the cognitive cultural intelligence of service staff on the service delivery experiences of customers in casual dining restaurants in the Bloemfontein City, South Africa. Informed by the Social Learning Theory, a quantitative research approach and a survey research design, data was collected conveniently online, using a structured questionnaire, from 408 customers. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse data. The results showed a negative significant relationship between cognitive cultural intelligence and service delivery experiences of customers.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The hospitality industry plays a significant role in both developed and developing economies (source). Apart from being one of the largest employers globally, the hospitality industry is extremely labour intensive, and employees interact with individuals from a variety of cultural groups. The inclusion of diverse workforce has recently emerged as a crucial advantage for the tourism and hospitality industry, where attracting and retaining talent is a top priority. Workforce diversity refers to the presence of employees who possess characteristics that notably differ regarding gender, age, nationality, cultural background, disability, etc. (Bedi, Lakra and Gupta et al., 2014). Thus, within the industry, understanding workforce diversity and customer diversity are critical to excellent service delivery and satisfaction. For the workforce, research has shown that in today's interconnected world, cultural intelligence, or "capacity to function effectively in a range of cultural contexts influences customer perception of service delivery, hence, the importance of cognitive cultural intelligence among employees in the industry (Jiony et al., 2021), especially when they interact with customers. In South Africa, the hospitality industry is so diverse, from both customer and workforce point of view. Therefore, understanding how culturally sensitive the employees in the industry are from the customers' perspective is important to avoid the everyday reported incidences of conflict between customers and employees, especially in casual dining restaurants.

1.2. Problem statement

The tourism and hospitality industry in South Africa is diverse, in terms of both employees and customers. Employees need to possess appropriate cultural intelligence to ensure they deliver good customer service, especially in casual dining restaurants that are visited by large numbers of customers in the country daily. With reports of conflicts in these restaurants between customers and employees, understanding the cultural intelligence of employees becomes imperative. However, there is dearth of research focusing on cultural intelligence and its impact on service delivery satisfaction, from a customer perspective point of view within South Africa.

1.3. Research objectives

1. To determine the cognitive cultural intelligence of service staff in casual dining restaurants in Bloemfontein from a customer perspective.
2. To determine the service satisfaction levels of customers in the casual dining restaurants.
3. To examine the relationship between cognitive cultural intelligence of employees and service satisfaction by customers.

2. Literature Review

In today's globalised hospitality landscape, catering for diverse cultural preferences and expectations has become paramount for ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty. As a result, understanding the role of cognitive cultural intelligence (CQ) in shaping service delivery processes is of critical importance for hospitality industry. Cognitive CQ is defined as individuals' ability to understand diverse cultural elements, encompassing of norms, values, religious beliefs, artistic values and language rules (Ang et al., 2007). In essence, the cognitive component involves an individual's ability to process information. In a cultural context, this involves the complete knowledge and experience individuals have gained about cultural situations and their interactions within those situations. In addition, it entails how an individual has thought or processed this information that is stored in their memory. One's ability to retrieve this stored information is defined as cognitive ability. Cognitive CQ allows individuals to comprehend and adapt to cultural nuances, while holding a potential to significantly influence service encounters and customer experiences within multicultural hospitality environments (Puyod & Charoensukmongkol, 2019).

Casual dining restaurants occupy a unique space in the hospitality industry, offering a relaxed dining experience that strikes a balance between affordability and quality. For this reason, service delivery in casual dining establishments plays a pivotal role in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty. Cognitive (CQ) plays a crucial role in shaping the performance and interactions of service staff within the hospitality industry. By equipping service personnel with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to navigate cultural diversity effectively, cognitive CQ contributes to improved customer satisfaction, enhanced communication, and a more inclusive and culturally competent service environment. (Pidduck et al., 2022),

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design, specifically, correlational. Preliminary data was collected from 403 customers using already established questionnaires which were adapted to suit the study. Data analysis was done using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

4. Preliminary Findings

Preliminary findings revealed a statistically significant negative inverse correlation between the cognitive component and assurance, as well as between the cognitive component and reliability and responsiveness. No statistically significant relationships were recorded between the cognitive

component and tangibles. Finally, no relationships were recorded between cognitive cultural intelligence and empathy and between cognitive cultural intelligence and the tangibles of service delivery.

5. Managerial Implications

Based on the results and considering the inherent characteristics of the hospitality sector, the role of cultural intelligence training will be paramount in the development of service staff's cross-cultural competence. This, in turn, will improve their ability to engage effectively with customers of diverse backgrounds. In addition, service staff serving the hospitality industry encounter various situations while engaging with diverse customers. Consequently, the enhancement of their soft skills will yield advantageous outcomes for both employees and the organisation.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Further research might focus on employing alternative methods of data gathering, such as conducting interviews, to allow direct interaction with service employees in the hospitality industry for a better understanding of the factors that contribute to their cultural intelligence.

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Work Engagement Amidst and Post the COVID-19 Pandemic in a South African Debt Collection Organisation

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Keywords

Engagement;
Debt collection organisation;
During and post-COVID-19 pandemic;
South Africa;
Work.

Abstract

In the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, there is increasing interest in the implementation of flexible work arrangements such as remote work. Previous research revealed that remote work environments may affect the engagement levels of employees positively or negatively. This paper reports on the results of three studies conducted amidst and post-the COVID-19 pandemic, measuring the engagement levels of employees in a debt collection organisation in South Africa.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic have been far-reaching and posed several challenges to organisations, employers, managers and employees. It also “disrupted the dynamics of the workplace on a global level” (Chitnis, 2022). The pandemic challenged the physical construct of a work environment as during the pandemic most of the global labour force were required to work remotely from home. The pandemic and associated lockdowns introduced worldwide has fundamentally shifted the way in which people work and changed the concepts work, workplace and workforce (Vidya, 2022). While some find it difficult, over the last years most adapted to the new norm, and the remote or hybrid model of working has been normalised (Chitnis, 2022). In the post-pandemic era, there is increasing discussion and implementation of hybrid work, i.e., a workplace model in which employees are allowed to work few days from office and the remaining days remotely, for example from home (Varma, et al., 2022). At an organisation level, this requires specific systems and processes to manage work and relationships. At an individual level, leaders and managers need to assist employees in

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maintaining their organisational identity, enhancing their well-being, and maintaining a balance between their work and family life (Varma, et al., 2022).

Previous research revealed that remote work environments may affect employee's engagement levels positively or negatively (Ariani, 2013:48; Bartik et al., 2020:3; Galanti et al., 2021:426; Lee, 2018). Kahn (1990:694) explains engagement as the "harnessing of organization members" selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances". According to Reese and Smith (2017:303) it entails "engaging the heart and soul of the employee when they are at work". Engaged employees is desirable for organisations (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Werner, 2021) and results in positive employee outcomes such as increased motivation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, lowered intention to quit (Wilton, 2016), less absence, increased productivity (Rothman & Baumann, 2014) and improved profitability (Adhitama & Riyanto, 2020). According to Robinson et al. (2004, cited in Wilton, 2016:37), to create an engaged workforce is problematic, therefore, organisations must "work" to engage their employees.

1.2. Problem Statement

Although, after the global pandemic some organisations implemented a hybrid work-model, some organisations required from their employees to fully return to their offices. For many employees, the requirement to return to the office, "feels like a loss of their flexibility and well-being" (Osibanjo, 2022). After the pandemic, employees tend to place more emphasis on purposeful work (McKinsey, cited by Osibanjo, 2022), related to the new "worth it" equation (Microsoft, 2022:3).

The need for this research is embedded in the fact that the global Covid-19 pandemic has changed the world we live in and, more specifically, the world of work. The worldwide effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced most organisations to change and adapt. This was also true for the organisation in which this research was conducted. The organisation has quite a large portion of staff working in a call centre environment. In anticipation of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation commenced with testing of the work-from home (WFH) model in February 2020, with specific reference to technological requirements and employees' needs. Despite numerous challenges, all staff were successfully working from home by the end of March 2020. The WFH model was kept in place, with very few exceptions, until January 2022, when employees were required to return to the office as per the arrangement pre the global pandemic. Given the changes that took place worldwide regarding workplace arrangements and practices, leadership of the organisation under investigation needed to review the operational model (in-office work) as well as the relationship with employee engagement to inform business decisions to keep the organisation moving forward.

1.3. Research objectives

The study's main objective was to report on the results of three studies that were conducted amidst and post-the COVID-19 pandemic measuring the engagement levels of employees in a debt collection organisation in South Africa.

2. Literature Review

Although there is no single definition of employee engagement, two main approaches are used to understand the concept. The first approach argues that employee engagement is the opposite of burnout. The second approach sees it as a positive, fulfilling state of mind, unrelated to burnout (Bagraim, 2016). In regard to the second approach, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:4) define engagement as a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that captures feelings of vigour, dedication and absorption rather than monetary value in the workplace”. Vigour denotes the utilisation of high levels of energy during work, the willingness to put effort into work, and the mental strength to persevere through challenges (Schaufeli et al., 2002:74). Dedication signifies a deep engagement with work due to its perceived importance, providing ‘enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge’ (Schaufeli et al., 2002:74). Absorption entails being fully engrossed and content in one's work, leading to a loss of track of time and difficulty in disengaging from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002:74).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The study was conducted within a post-positivistic research paradigm. The ontological approach of objectivism and the epistemology of empiricism informed the study. A quantitative research design was used. The research setting was limited to one organisation in the financial services sector that focuses on outsourced debt collections. Total population sampling was used. Data was collected through a web-based survey (Google forms), using a coded standardised questionnaire. The first section comprised five biographical questions on gender, age, department employed, years working in the organisation and highest qualification. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) was used to measure employees' level of engagement in the organisation; a five-point Likert scale was used. Data was collected in November 2020, February 2022 and March 2023 using the questionnaire. Confirmatory factor analyses, descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests and Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient were used to analyse and interpret the data.

4. Preliminary Findings

The research results revealed that across all three phases, the mean scores for Vigour, Dedication and Absorption were above 3 on a five-point Likert scale, thus on the positive side of the scale, however the highest mean scores were reported during November 2020, when the employees worked fully remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that the employees who worked in the call centre were less engaged in their work than the respondents who worked in other departments. The results further revealed that gender, age and educational levels may affect the engagement levels of employment.

5. Managerial Implications

The findings suggests that remote work can positively influence the engagement levels of employees, therefore managers should consider maintaining or offering flexible work arrangements such as remote work to support employee engagement.

The findings revealed lower levels of engagement among employees working in the call centre, therefore management need to develop specific interventions (e.g., workload, job design, and support mechanisms) to encourage their engagement levels.

The engagement levels of employees should be continuously monitored, and any disparities should be addressed proactively.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The findings underscore the significance of understanding the factors influencing employee engagement. Future research should further explore engagement levels in flexible work environments as it is regarded as a viable work arrangement in both contemporary and future workplaces.

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Ascertain Academic Personnels' Perspectives on Leadership Styles During WFH Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Keywords:

COVID-19 pandemic;
Higher education;
Leadership styles;
Work-from-home (WFH).

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the nature of work, with the implementation of the Work from Home (WFH) arrangement. This change has implied a series of considerations for business operations, including leadership. Whilst there are studies that assess the leadership styles during the WFH period, no study could be located that assesses this phenomenon within private higher education in South Africa.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reshaped the nature of business and transformed the way work is carried out, globally. Organisations, including higher education institutions, around the world had to rapidly adjust their work policies and procedures to ensure the health and safety of employees, as well as business continuity (Tautz *et al.*, 2022). The predominant change was the urgent shift to remote work, commonly called "work-from-home" (WFH). WFH refers to employees continuing their duties remotely from the convenience of their homes (Pérez-Nebra *et al.*, 2021).

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What was previously an office setting, has now been moved to the vicinity of employees' residences, where employees were required to transit to a new manner of working utilising information technology from their homes (Kiziloglu, 2022; Pérez-Nebra *et al.*, 2021). The pace and scale of which it was adopted, creating unprecedented challenges for workers and businesses across the globe (Kiziloglu, 2022). Subsequently, organizations were exposed to dynamic challenges that they were not adequately prepared for, such as remote leadership or leading teams in a remote environment (Zhang & Tian, 2022).

1.2 Problem Statement

Leadership faced unique challenges in navigating the shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic; higher education was no exception. Higher education institutions had to rapidly move their teaching and learning to online arrangements for the continuation of the academic year (Karakose, 2021). Supporting staff in remote settings required higher education to deliberate on innovative and inclusive leadership strategies for the continuation of teaching and learning, as well as for maintaining personnel's well-being (Karakose, 2021). Leaders were urged to find new methods of ensuring well-being (Lai *et al.*, 2020; McFarland *et al.*, 2020), engagement (Karakose, 2021; Nguyen & Tsang, 2023; Zhang & Tian, 2022), connectedness (Ahern & Loh, 2021; Karakose, 2021; Peters *et al.*, 2020, Tautz *et al.*, 2022) and productivity (Collings *et al.*, 2021; Meiryani *et al.*, 2022; Peters *et al.*, 2020) of staff, amongst other things.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to ascertain personnel perceptions of leadership styles adopted during the WFH period amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic within private higher education in South Africa.

2. Literature Review

Leadership is regarded as a complex and multi-faceted organisational term studied for many years. The concept has been defined in several ways allowing various perspectives of what it means and how one should approach its definition (Northouse, 2018). At the root level, leadership is an individual's ability to influence other employees toward a shared or common objective or goal (Yukl, 2013). This, however, can be attained in several different ways, such as utilising one's authority, the charisma of a leader, subject knowledge and skillset, which gives rise to the types of leadership that organisations experience (Goleman *et al.*, 2013; Yukl, 2013). The objective of leadership regards the development of a journey (i.e., task/ project), influencing and motivating others to embark on that journey, and ensuring that

employees work together harmoniously towards a common organisational objective (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This approach assumes that leaders possess specific innate characteristics and attributes needed to succeed (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

3. Envisaged Research design and Methodology

The study was conducted within a post-positivist research paradigm utilising a quantitative research methodology and a cross-sectional design. The research setting was limited to one private higher education institution in South Africa. Total population sampling was utilised, and data was collected through an online administered survey utilising the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), comprising of 46 items.

4. Preliminary Findings

The findings of this study suggested that academic personnel held a general positive sentiment of the leadership approaches used by seniors during the WFH period. Transformational leadership was found to be the dominant approach utilised, as was found, through the correlation with literature, to be the suitable approach used during WFH. In addition, the study found a general level of comfort amongst staff regarding the achievement of the outcomes of leadership.

5. Managerial Implications

The study, particularly the primary results, contribute positively to the knowledge surrounding leadership styles used during WFH within the context of South African private higher education. Private higher education in South Africa could utilise the findings of this study to understand the leadership needs during remote work arrangements such as WFH.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Considering that WFH has been identified as a viable solution for the foreseeable future, private higher education in South Africa should give due consideration to the leadership suggestions recommended in this study, to ensure that leadership approaches are conducive to WFH. Future research could focus on investigating the effectiveness of remote leadership in higher education institutions, including private higher education institutions, in South Africa and abroad.

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Mergers in Private Higher Education in South Africa: A Phenomenographic Focus on Staff Experiences

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Keywords

Merger(s);
Private higher education;
Staff experiences;
Phenomenography.

Abstract

Mergers in South African higher education have been both legislated (i.e., public institutions) and voluntary (i.e., private institutions) and aimed at transforming the landscape and widening access. Although extensive research has been conducted on mergers in general, there is little on private higher education mergers that focus specifically on staff experiences of this process. Research suggests that most mergers fail because of a lack of focus on human resources. Phenomenography is a methodology that can describe the variety of ways staff in a merged entity relate to a phenomenon. This subjective, non-realist perspective uses in-depth interviews and the hermeneutic circle to explore the experiences of purposively selected research participants. Scholarly research indicates that staff experiences need to be considered by change leaders to provide better explanations of how to succeed in achieving future change strategies.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Mergers in private higher education in South Africa have been voluntarily implemented to transform the higher education landscape, widen access, combine central services, material and human resources, and enhance reputation in the industry (Cai, Pinheiro, Geschwind, & Aarrevaara, 2016; Rocha, Teixeira, & Biscaia, 2019; Sulkowski, Fijalkowaska, & Dziminska, 2019; & Aula & Siltaoja, 2020). Mergers of institutions are a form of change that requires buy-in and adaptation by staff, and therefore, a focus on people at a micro-level is required if these mergers are to succeed (Setswe, 2013; Mikko, 2021; &

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Wollscheid & Røsdal, 2021). Mergers in higher education and other industries have never been without challenges, with many not resulting in the anticipated success.

1.2. Problem Statement

Although extensive research has been conducted on mergers in general, there is little on private higher education mergers in South Africa and the resulting staff experiences. Mergers impact staff identities, emotions, perceptions, culture, and integration, while most mergers fail because of the lack of focus on the human resources, staff experiences and responses to the change (Arnolds, Stofile, & Lillah, 2013; Karodia, Shaikh, & Soni, 2015, Boling, Mayo, & Helms, 2017; & Hartig, 2021). To break the cycle of this limited success, change leaders must understand staff perceptions and manage these successfully.

1.3. Research objectives

This study aims to explore and understand the experiences of staff who were part of a merger of a private higher education institution in South Africa. The study uses Phenomenography to understand the social reality through the eyes of those being studied. It facilitates the description of the collective, variation of experiences of the phenomenon to enable change leaders to reflect on these learnings and to provide better explanations of what they ought to do to better succeed in achieving future changes initiatives.

2. Literature Review

The literature review followed a deductive approach and commenced with an investigation into mergers of private higher education institutions in South Africa and abroad and, because of the dearth of information, extended to research on mergers in other industries. The review focused on the impact of mergers on human resources and the changes in their experiences over time. The literature review further focused on using Phenomenography to explore, describe, and understand the experiences of the collective, who all experienced the same phenomenon. Additional key literature themes included:

- The history of mergers in South African higher education,
- Types of mergers in higher education,
- Reasons for mergers in higher education,
- The institutional merger as a construct of change,
- The impact of change in staff, and
- Staff experiences of change.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

Phenomenography provides a qualitative, interpretivist research opportunity that allows for understanding the different ways stakeholders experience the phenomenon of mergers in private higher education in South Africa. The uniqueness of Phenomenography enables the researcher to focus on the purposively selected participants and their experiences of the phenomenon as a point of departure. It is this subjective, non-dualistic, second-order approach that facilitates the collection of data through in-depth interviews. It seeks to explore and understand the different meanings people bring to a specific phenomenon of interest being studied collectively (Marton, 1981 & Go & Pang, 2021).

4. Preliminary Findings

Phenomenographic research requires the researcher to develop categories of description whereby the participants' conceptions are grouped and hierarchically arranged as a collective (Hajar, 2021). These description categories focus on how participants experience the phenomenon and the conceptions that result (see Figure 1). These preliminary categories of description include:

- Leadership must be stable and consistent,
- Communication from the start of the merger has changed,
- Staff want to be heard,
- Culture takes time to establish,
- Perceptions of the merger have changed over time,
- Individuals should be considered in a merger,
- Mergers impact staff at an individual level,
- Concerns about job security are ongoing,
- Staff are key to merger success, and
- Mergers increase workload.

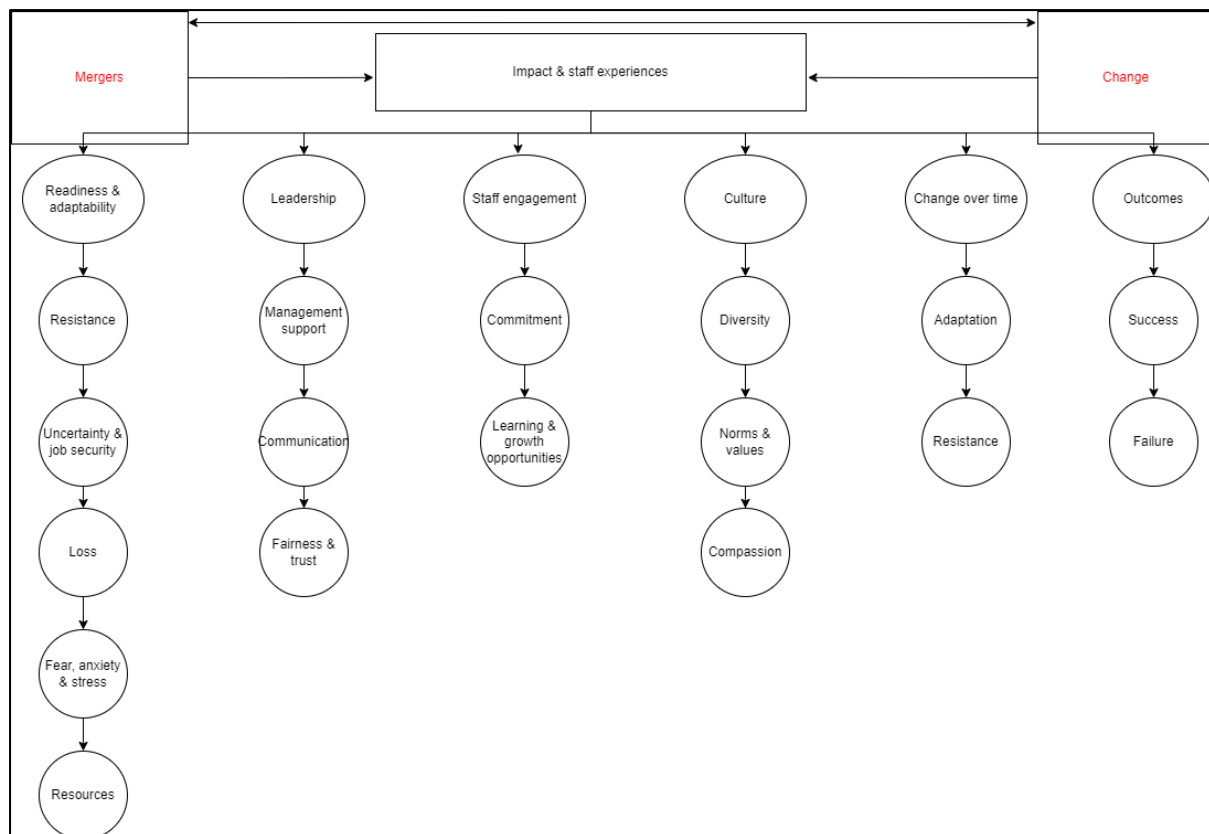


Figure 1: Preliminary findings: Categories of description (Source: Authors' own construction)

5. Managerial Implications

Staff and leaders in an educational institution collectively drive a merger and the attainment of strategies. Merger initiatives are deemed more successful if change processes include the understanding and management of staff experiences as part of achieving positive outcomes. As a collective, stakeholders need guidance to improve practices and policies continually in situations of substantial change. This study focuses on guiding educational leaders and researchers on how best to learn from past merger experiences and use these practically and strategically to guide the planning of future mergers.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

This study will continue with data analysis and member checking as an innovative use of Phenomenography, which is a requirement of the Hermeneutic circle. As the research continues, the researcher will focus on the traditional use of Phenomenology and how this can be uniquely used in merger and change management in education. The research will enable change leaders to focus on and manage staff experiences and perceptions of a merger, resulting in a higher success rate.

Future research should include a longitudinal study of staff experiences of mergers in private higher education, how these perceptions have continued to change over time and the impact that these had on

the achievement of strategic initiatives. Additional Phenomenographic research should be conducted in public higher education institutions that have merged to understand staff worldviews.

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Exploring the Security Features Embedded in Electronic Signatures in Conveyancing in South Africa: A Handwritten Equivalent

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Keywords

Electronic Signature;
Conveyancing;
Fraud Mitigation;
Authentication.

Abstract

The process of transferring land ownership in South Africa has long been characterised as complex, time-consuming, and inefficient. Central to these inefficiencies are manual methods of signature authentication and authorisation coupled by the lack of digitisation across various role players. These issues have been further exacerbated by concerns related to fraud and security risks. Utilising the PRISMA methodology for a systematic literature review, results identify that electronic signatures offer several benefits as a digital means of signing a document which are legally recognised as equivalent to a handwritten signature. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of electronic signatures, making them increasingly prevalent in many countries. This research explores the challenges and opportunities related to electronic signature technology, its adoption, the legal and regulatory frameworks governing it and the role of electronic signatures in driving digital transformation in conveyancing to enhance efficiency and mitigate fraud risk.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The development of the internet and technological innovation have introduced new digital technology that are transforming economies and changing how businesses operate (Gaglio, Kraemer-Mbula and Lorenz, 2022). Advances in electronic signature and digital contracts have changed how documents are signed and processed. In South Africa, the conveyancing process is synonymous with long protracted timelines, complexity, and numerous document exchanges.

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The process can take up to three months and can extend further with complications (Tilbury 2020). The Investec (2019) report highlighted that sources of funds and compliance checks have complexities that compromise client service, further exacerbated by increasing compliance burdens and fraud risks, creating a cumbersome journey from offer to completion in the transfer of land in South Africa.

1.2. Problem Statement

The process of transferring land from one owner to another in South Africa is characterised by paper-based documentation, lengthy timelines and significant fraud risk. Manual methods of signature authentication and authorisation exacerbate the complexity of the conveyancing process, posing significant challenges to efficiency and security. The reliance on outdated methods impacts efficiency but also increases vulnerability to fraudulent activities. Given these challenges, there is an urgent need to explore alternative solutions that can streamline the conveyancing process, enhance security, and reduce the risk of fraud. Electronic signatures offer the potential to expedite document processing, reduce errors, address inefficiencies and mitigate fraud risks, advancing digital transformation and safeguarding the integrity of land transactions in South Africa.

1.3. Research objectives

1. To investigate the potential benefits and drawbacks of adopting electronic signature technology within the conveyancing process in South Africa.
2. To evaluate the security features of electronic signatures compared to handwritten signatures in mitigating fraud in conveyancing.
3. To assess the legal and regulatory framework governing electronic signatures in South Africa.

2. Literature Review

An electronic signature (ES) is a digital way of signing documents, replacing handwritten signatures by leveraging technology. It can authenticate the signatory and certify document integrity (Davis, 2021). In South Africa, the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (ECTA) governs ES, recognizing two categories: standard and advanced electronic signature. Standard electronic signature does not require authentication and can include digital or scanned signatures. Advanced electronic signatures use cryptographic software, allowing only signatories to view a document, enabling secure communications (Bellare and Rogaway, 2005). The implementation of electronic signatures within conveyancing offers a secure and efficient alternative to pen-and-paper signatures. It streamlines processes and reduces reliance on paper, enhancing security and mitigating risks (DC Lawyers, n.d.). Electronic signatures facilitate quick and easy processes, allowing parties to affix signatures without physically meeting (Mason, 2016).

2.1 Legal Context and Jurisdictions

The legal acceptance of electronic signatures in South Africa is well-established under ECTA, which affirms that electronic signatures and information in digital format or data is legally valid and enforceable, (De Rebus, 2020) which aligns with international standards. However, practical implementation requires overcoming technological challenges such as system integration and ensuring accessibility for all stakeholders involved. Many jurisdictions have demonstrated the successful implementations of electronic signatures, highlighting reduced processing times and increased security (Cavus and Sancar, 2023).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This study follows the PRISMA methodology for systematically literature review on electronic signature technology, embedded security features and their equivalence to handwritten signatures in South Africa. The selection criteria, screening, assessment, synthesis, and reporting will adhere to PRISMA guidelines.

4. Preliminary Findings

In the conveying industry, adopting electronic signatures can mitigate risks and streamline operation by increasing turnaround times in the signing process and enhancing security features such as audit trails and encryption technology. The rapid development of cloud storage renders paper documents obsolete. Electronic signatures hold unique advantages over their handwritten equivalent, business can leverage electronic signatures for the below advantages as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Advantages of Electronic signature implementations

Productivity Advantages	Security Advantages
Time and Cost Efficiency	Authentication of signatures
Scalability	Safety and Security
Better Client experience	Virtual Audit Trail of documents
Scalability of operations	Encryption

Source: Reference or Own compilation

5. Managerial Implications

Electronic signatures can streamline operations and add to the strategic capabilities of an organisation by removing the need for manual signing of documents. This decreases human resources needed for document processing and increases efficiency.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Ensuring these risks are mitigated requires robust security measures that increase operational efficiency, streamline operations, and mitigate fraudulent activity. Implementing a reliable digital solution like electronic signatures is essential for this transformation. Future research into the infrastructure needed to scale the use of electronic signature technologies and their integration into broader digital frameworks to ensure sustained security and efficiency in the conveyancing process.

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The Intention to Adopt Cashless Payment Systems in Gauteng

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Keywords

Cashless payment systems;

Informal economy;
Technology adoption;
Cashless economy.

Abstract

The rapid advancement of technology has spurred the global expansion of cashless payment systems. However, developing countries like South Africa still predominantly rely on cash transactions. This study aims to explore the factors influencing the reluctance to adopt cashless payment systems in South Africa, despite the benefits such as financial inclusion, transparency, and safety. Preliminary research suggests that barriers include limited access to digital payment technologies, distrust in financial institutions, cultural preferences for cash, and concerns over transaction costs and complex interfaces. Using a mixed-method approach, the qualitative phase will employ grounded theory through semi-structured interviews, while the quantitative phase will utilise surveys analysed via Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). This research will inform policymakers, financial institutions, and stakeholders, facilitating the integration of informal sectors into the digital financial landscape and promoting inclusive economic growth.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The rapid growth of technology has influenced the global expansion of cashless payment systems (Nwani, Nwaimo, Kanu & Chinonso, 2020). While developed nations have experienced high cashless payment system adoption rates, developing countries like South Africa still heavily rely on cash transactions (Serrao & van Vuuren, 2019). Integrating the digital economy through cashless payment adoption can bring benefits like financial inclusion, transparency and safety. However, factors like lack of technological access and skills, complex interfaces, pricing concerns and inherent distrust of banking systems contribute to the resistance of cashless payment methods (Kaur, Dhir, Singh, Sahu & Almotairi, 2020).

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1.2. Problem Statement

Despite the benefits that come with going cashless, there exists a research gap concerning the factors influencing the resistance of cashless payment systems in Gauteng. Previous researchers such as Yusof, Hariri, Taheer and Omar (2018) and Nwani et al. (2020) have considered cashless payment systems adoption but they do not consider it in Gauteng. This study seeks to address this gap by delving into the reasons behind the reluctance to adopt cashless payment systems and aims to identify strategies that can facilitate their acceptance and utilisation thereof.

1.3. Research objectives

1.3.1 Primary objective

To identify the intention to adopt cashless payment systems in Gauteng

1.3.2 Secondary objectives

- To assess the perceived usefulness of cashless payment systems in Gauteng
- To identify the key factors that contribute to the resistance towards adopting cashless payment systems in Gauteng
- To understand the perceptions and attitudes of Gauteng consumers towards cashless payments.
- To examine how cultural preferences for cash transactions impact the adoption of cashless payment methods

2. Preliminary literature review

The concept of a cashless economy does not imply the complete elimination of cash transactions but rather aims to minimise their occurrence. It represents an economic system where transactions are primarily conducted without the exchange of physical cash (Nwani et al., 2020). Although while cashless payment systems, offer convenience and efficiency, they are also associated with several risks. These risks can be mitigated once the consumers know how to avoid the risks.

Interventions that help to improve the adoption of cashless payment systems include a variety of strategies aimed at increasing general user engagement, enhancing the perceived benefits of electronic payments, and reducing barriers to adoption.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This research will employ a mixed-method approach to uncover the determinants influencing cashless payment adoption intentions. The qualitative phase will be guided by grounded theory and semi-

structured interviews will be utilised. Thematic analysis techniques will be applied to identify emerging themes from the rich qualitative data.

The quantitative phase will complement the qualitative findings by gathering data through surveys. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) will test the hypotheses derived from the theoretical frameworks.

4. Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings from secondary research indicate that restricted access to digital payment technologies and infrastructure, entrenched distrust in financial institutions, cultural preference for cash transactions due to familiarity and perceived control, concerns regarding costs and transaction fees linked to digital payments, and the necessity for more user-friendly interfaces catering to those with limited technological proficiency are key factors deterring individuals from embracing cashless payment systems (Serrao & van Vuuren, 2019).

5. Managerial Implications

Significantly, this research has implications for policymakers, financial institutions, and stakeholders involved in promoting financial inclusion and economic empowerment. The research can inform the design of targeted policies, financial products, and technological solutions that facilitate the integration of the informal sector into the digital financial landscape, fostering transparency, efficiency, and inclusive economic growth.

6. Conclusions

The adoption of cashless payment systems in South Africa's informal economy represents a significant opportunity to promote financial inclusion, transparency, and economic empowerment. By investigating the intention to adopt cashless payment systems, this study addresses a crucial gap in the existing literature and will offer practical solutions to overcome barriers to adoption.

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The Impact of Corruption on SMEs Trade Credit Management Effectiveness

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Keywords

Small and medium-sized enterprises;
Corruption;
Trade credit management effectiveness.

Abstract

Corruption forms part of a challenging entrepreneurial ecosystem in which SMEs operate exposing them to problems associated with trade credit management. The study aims to determine the impact of corruption on SMEs trade credit management effectiveness. The study contributes to existing literature on entrepreneurial finance. The findings prove to be contradicting, adding to the value of understanding how corruption affects SMEs trade credit management effectiveness. Using a quantitative research approach, collecting primary data by administering an online questionnaire, and performing descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Future research could investigate the reasons concerning SMEs willingness to partake in corruption.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

South Africa's economic growth, measured by real GDP change, decreased from 2% in 2022 to 0.4% in 2023 (Hill et al., 2024). This low growth environment is aggravated by corruption (Bowmaker-Falconer et al., 2023). South Africa's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), decreased to its lowest score ever, 43/100 (2022) to 41/100 (2023), ranking the country 83/180 in 2023 (Transparency International, 2023). SME corruption-related activities namely, irregular payments and bribes, have increased rising from 53/91 to 137/138 countries (Herrington & Kew, 2018). Therefore, SMEs ability to sustainably contribute to economic growth is portrayed as pessimistic due to corruption, leaving SMEs financially fragile and exposed to problems associated with trade credit management resulting in business exits (Van Vu, 2018; Bowmaker-Falconer & Meyer, 2022).

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1.2. Problem Statement

The need exists to determine the impact of corruption on SMEs trade credit management effectiveness for SMEs to understand and become more observant of corruption impacting their trade credit management.

1.3. Research objectives

To determine the impact of corruption on SMEs trade credit management effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

Several studies support the view that corruption has become a predominant challenge that constrains SMEs' ability to develop into successful enterprises (Xavier et al., 2012; Sitharam & Hoque, 2016; Herrington & Kew, 2018). The literature distinguishes between two perspectives on corruption. Firstly, the 'grease-in-the-wheels' viewpoint incorporates a positive implication placing businesses in a better position to receive external funding, by overcoming complex regulations (Kaufmann & Wei, 1999; Khwaja & Mian, 2005). Secondly, the 'sand-in-the-wheels' viewpoint incorporates a negative implication that resembles the devastation caused by corruption, as it affects the operational capacity of business (Reinikka & Svensson 2005).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The study applied a quantitative research design employing survey research to collect primary data, and an online questionnaire as a measuring instrument using purposive sampling.

4. Preliminary Findings

The findings report and discuss the regression analysis results between corruption factors and SMEs trade credit management effectiveness factors. The independent variables included DCUL: *SME and debtor corruption through approving unviable loans*, CDPP: *corrupt debtor payment practices through forcefully delaying payments due to the SME*, and CCPP: *corrupt SME payment practices through forcefully delaying payments due to creditors of the SME*. The dependent variables included MTC1: *SMEs' effectiveness in providing trade credit management activities*, MTC2: *mechanism and insurance to assist with the collection of or protection against the risk of outstanding debt*, MTC3: *SMEs' effectiveness in managing trade credit management principles*, MTC4: *SMEs' effectiveness in managing trade credit management aspects* and MTC5: *SMEs' effectiveness in applying credit policy components when granting credit*.

The regression results between the independent variable, DCUL, and MTC3, MTC4 and MTC5 were excluded, due to lack of correlation with the dependent variables mentioned.

Table 1: Regression analysis results between corruption and SMEs trade credit management effectiveness

Dependent variables	MTC1	MTC2	MTC3	MTC4	MTC5
Independent variables	Std. Beta	Std. Beta	Std. Beta	Std. Beta	Std. Beta
DCUL ¹	-0.100**	0.144***			
CDPP	0.025	-0.020	0.022	0.039	0.044
CCPP	0.142***	-0.001	0.016	0.013	0.021
R ²	0.507	0.265	0.294	0.362	0.274
Adjusted R squared	0.493	0.244	0.278	0.348	0.258
F	35.964**	12.786**	18.320**	24.868**	16.478**
N	397	403	405	404	402

Source: SPSS calculations

***, **, *Indicates significance on a 99%, 95% and 90% confidence level respectively.

Model one reveals that *DCUL* obtained a significant negative relationship ($\beta = -0.100$; $p < 0.05$) with *MTC1*. This is in line with expectations as supported by the ‘sand in the wheels approach’ (Reinikka & Svensson 2005; Qi & Ongena, 2019), given that a corruption-related SME business environmental factor is expected to be detrimental to *MTC1*. However, two unexpected results occurred: *CCPP* obtained a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.142$; $p < 0.01$) with *MTC1*, and *DCUL* obtained a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.144$; $p < 0.05$) with *MTC2*. Both outcomes are somewhat surprising, given the expectation that corruption should impair SMEs’ effectiveness in managing trade credit. However, these findings align with the ‘grease in the wheels approach’ (Kaufmann & Wei, 1999). When considering the reality of corruption being prevalent and affecting entrepreneurship, the trend in results becomes less unexpected from a South African perspective.

5. Managerial Implications

Although the initial result aligns with expectations around corruption being detrimental to SMEs trade credit management effectiveness, the results also indicate twofold SMEs’ willingness to partake in corruption, given that SMEs benefit from increased effectiveness in managing trade credit. This observation shows that the roots of corruption are prevalent among SMEs, as confirmed by numerous other studies.

The regression results between the independent variable, DCUL, and MTC3, MTC4 and MTC5 were excluded, due to lack of correlation with the dependent variables mentioned.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Despite the study's results contradicting, implementing successful anti-corruption programmes to produce a more equitable business environment for SMEs must be maintained and expanded. It is recommended that all anti-corruption organisations uphold their mandate to eradicate public and private sector corruption, by broadening existing policies to specifically include the investigation of SME and SME debtor corruption relating to improving their trade credit management effectiveness. In support of this, future research could investigate the reasons concerning SMEs willingness to partake in corruption.

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Advancing Smart Mobility in South Africa: A Systematic Literature Review of Transportation Performance from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0

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Keywords

Industry 4.0;
Industry 5.0;
Smart Mobility;
Transportation Performance.

Abstract

This work-in-progress paper aims to provide a comprehensive systematic literature review on the evolution of smart mobility in South Africa, focusing on the improvements in transportation performance from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0. Utilising the PRISMA framework for systematic review and thematic analysis through Atlas-ti, the paper identifies key technological innovations, challenges, and future directions in the context of a human-centric technological paradigm shift. The study will analyse how improvements in artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, and other Industry 4.0 and 5.0 technologies contribute to improving transportation systems regarding efficiency, sustainability, and inclusivity.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In South Africa, some many different transportation-related opportunities and challenges are linked to different facets of society and technology. South Africa confronts significant developmental challenges, including elevated poverty levels, unemployment, and inequality (Meyer, 2021). These difficulties have a significant impact on the transport sector by affecting the accessibility, affordability, and efficiency of transport systems. The utilisation of digital infrastructure in South Africa remains low despite efforts to offer connection (Duca, 2024).

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The predicted growth of the country's mobile penetration rate suggests significant chances for utilising mobile technology in the transportation sector (Axcell & Ellis, 2023).

However, the implementation of intelligent transportation systems are able to provide remedies for issues such as traffic congestion, transportation administration, emergency response, and road safety (Alanazi, 2023). Investing in maritime transport infrastructure is advised as a means to improve exports and encourage economic growth (Matekenya & Ncwadi, 2022). The smart city projects in South Africa, aligned with the National Development Plan 2030, aims to establish sustainable environments with sufficient infrastructure and optimised energy usage (Oke *et al.*, 2020). These activities are in line with the requirement for effective public transport and sophisticated ICT systems to improve local accessibility and establish an intelligent and sustainable transport system (Das, 2020). It is advisable to implement Internet of Things (IoT) services to improve primary healthcare facilities in rural areas and tackle healthcare delivery difficulties (Gambo & Musonda, 2022a, 2022b). The emergence of affordable energy supply technologies, such as solar thermal energy converters, offers prospects for decreasing electricity expenses for consumers in South Africa (Mutizhongo *et al.*, 2021; Snyman, 2023).

1.2. Problem Statement

The transport sector in South Africa encounters significant challenges in attaining optimal performance, efficiency, and sustainability. Given the challenges of urbanisation, congestion, and environmental issues, it is key to investigate the significant impact that smart mobility technology can have. This study will comprehensively review the current body of literature on transportation performance in the context of Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0. The primary focus is examining how improvements in artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, and human-centric technologies can improve transportation systems. The study aims to ascertain the primary factors, advantages, and challenges associated with the adoption of these technologies to gain a thorough comprehension of how South Africa can exploit Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 improvements to improve its transport infrastructure and attain sustainable mobility solutions.

1.3. Research objectives

To systematically review and analyse the evolution of smart mobility in South Africa, focusing on the improvements in transportation performance from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0, and to identify key technological innovations, challenges, and future directions that can improve the efficiency, sustainability, and inclusivity of the transportation sector in the context of a human-centric technological paradigm shift.

2. Literature Review

Provide a condensed literature review, citing references in the reference list. Ensure you provide a literature background for the study.

2.1 Overview of existing literature: Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 in transportation

The progress of intelligent transportation systems in the transportation sector, moving from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0, is a critical field of research that aims to improve efficiency, sustainability, and inclusivity in the industry. Multiple studies provide useful insights into the correlation between technical improvements and transportation efficiency, specifically regarding environmental consequences and industrial development. Chen *et al.* (2022) suggests the nonlinear influence of digital technology innovation on carbon emissions in transport. They highlight the significance of digital innovation in diminishing carbon emissions and the necessity of leveraging technological improvements to tackle environmental challenges in the sector.

Drozdova and Ignatushko (2023) explore the impact of Industry 4.0 technologies on intelligent transport systems. They highlight how these advanced technologies can significantly improve the efficiency and innovation of transport ecosystems. Yuan *et al.* (2023) provide insights into the present adoption and improvement of eco-friendly energy sources in China's highway transportation sector. They emphasise the significance of sustainable practices in the industry and the transition towards environmentally conscious solutions to minimise the environmental impact of transportation activities. Yuan *et al.* (2023) investigate the influence of technical innovation on reducing carbon emissions in the transportation sector, emphasising the variations in carbon emission patterns across different locations within the industry. Comprehending these little differences in space can direct focused actions to improve sustainability in transportation systems.

2.2 Smart Mobility in South Africa

The adoption of smart mobility in South Africa has gained significant attention, especially in the shift from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0, which aims to improve transportation efficiency. Multiple studies provide insights into technical achievements, difficulties, and future prospects aimed at improving the efficiency, sustainability, and inclusivity of the transport sector in South Africa. Snyman (2023) This study highlights the capacity of affordable energy supply systems to benefit households in developing countries such as South Africa. Integrating sustainable energy sources and converting thermal energy into electrical power can significantly reduce household electricity costs, which is key to improving the long-term viability of intelligent transportation solutions.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2022) emphasises that South Africa has the requisite technology and infrastructure to be prepared for smart city implementation. This fundamental skill establishes the framework for adopting intelligent mobility solutions to improve transport performance and contribute to improving intelligent cities in the country. Gambo *et al.* (2022a) assesses the influence of the Internet of Things (IoT) on improving primary healthcare in South Africa. This research emphasises the importance of utilising IoT services to improve healthcare delivery. This approach can also be used to smart mobility efforts, which aim to improve citizens' well-being by improving transit systems. Wright (2022) highlights that although Internet connectivity is not widespread in South Africa, mobile technology presents a promising opportunity due to its enormous coverage, ease of use, and cost-effectiveness.

This highlights the capacity of mobile technology to drive efficient and innovative transport solutions that serve a wider range of people and improve transport systems in the country. Upon synthesising this research, it becomes evident that South Africa has the necessary basic infrastructure and technology capabilities to adopt smart mobility solutions readily. By utilising renewable energy, the Internet of Things (IoT), and mobile technologies, the transportation sector may greatly improve its performance, support sustainability, and encourage inclusion as the country moves from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

3.1. Research Design and Methodology

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) technique, organized according to the research onion strategy proposed by Saunders *et al.* (2019). This multifaceted approach guarantees thorough coverage of research design and methods. The research employs a pragmatist philosophy, combining interpretivism and positivism. This methodology enables incorporating many information sources, merging qualitative observations with quantitative data to thoroughly examine and analyse the development of intelligent transport systems in South Africa.

3.2. Methodology

The study will utilise a deductive methodology, beginning with a comprehensive examination of current literature and gradually focusing on specific topics concerning breakthroughs in transportation performance from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0. The objective is to evaluate established ideas and frameworks of intelligent transportation systems and pinpoint any deficiencies or areas for further research. The study approach entails performing a methodical examination of existing literature utilising the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. This technique guarantees a clear review process, can be reproduced, and covers all aspects.

The data collection process will mostly involve gathering pertinent material from academic databases and other reputable sources. Some examples of academic databases are Google Scholar, JSTOR, IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink. Publications from renowned organisations like the World Economic Forum, International Transport Forum, and local South African transport bodies.

Government Publications: This collection includes policies, white papers, and reports issued by the South African Department of Transport and other relevant government entities. Publications starting from the year 2010 and forward. Research conducted on intelligent transport systems, the fourth industrial revolution, and the fifth industrial revolution within the framework of South Africa. Sources include scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and reputable industry reports. Publications written in languages other than English. Studies that are not related to transportation performance or do not have a clear focus on technology breakthroughs in mobility. The extraction process will involve using a predetermined extraction form to gather important information, including publication details, study aims, techniques, major findings, and recognised difficulties and innovations. The collected data will be analysed thematically to uncover recurring themes, progress, difficulties, and future prospects in smart mobility.

A purposive sample strategy will identify sources that offer the most pertinent and enlightening information on the issue. The ultimate sample size will be defined by the saturation point, at which no novel themes or insights arise from further sources. Approximately 50-70 sources are expected to be included in the final review. The data retrieved from the identified sources will be analysed using thematic analysis. This entails the process of categorising the data into overarching themes and sub-themes that are relevant to the research question. Initial codes will be created using the essential information taken from the sources. Axial coding involves the categorisation of codes to establish connections and interactions between them. Selective coding involves the identification of core themes, which will serve as the foundation for the study and subsequent debate. The ethical considerations in this research encompass the imperative to guarantee the precision and integrity of data representation, the appropriate acknowledgement of sources, and the strict adherence to the PRISMA standards for systematic reviews to uphold transparency and reproducibility.

4. Preliminary Findings

4.1. Evolution of Smart Mobility in South Africa

The shift from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0 represents a notable improvement in intelligent transport systems in South Africa. Industry 4.0 has brought about technology innovations such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, and autonomous systems. These improvements have significantly improved the efficiency and connectedness of transportation

networks. As we progress towards Industry 5.0, there is a clear transition towards inventions that prioritise the needs and well-being of humans. The current phase places significant emphasis on the synergy between cutting-edge robotics and human intellect, with the goal of developing transportation solutions that are both sustainable and inclusive, while also maximising efficiency.

4.2. Technological Innovations

The transport sector has been transformed by the Internet of Things (IoT), which allows for the real-time tracking and monitoring of assets. This technology has raised the efficiency of route optimisation, decreased operating expenses, and improved the dependability of public transportation systems by providing real-time updates and implementing predictive maintenance. However, big data analytics has emerged as an indispensable tool for improving decision-making by providing valuable insights into traffic patterns, passenger behaviour, and maintenance needs. Predictive analytics is instrumental in forecasting and minimising future disruptions, assuring more streamlined operations. Autonomous vehicles signify notable technological progress. Pilot projects in urban areas have tested autonomous buses and shuttles, revealing their capacity to decrease human error and improve safety. Nevertheless, to achieve broader acceptability, it is imperative to tackle challenges such as legislative frameworks, infrastructure preparedness, and public approval. Blockchain technology is being investigated for its potential to improve transparency and security in transportation logistics and supply chains. It can create secure transaction records, reduce fraud, and provide traceability.

4.3. Key Challenges

Notwithstanding these progressions, numerous significant challenges persist. The lack of adequate infrastructure in South Africa poses a significant challenge to the widespread use of sophisticated transport technology. Substantial funding is required to develop intelligent infrastructure, including interconnected traffic signals and advanced road systems. Furthermore, it is imperative to revise legal and policy frameworks to include emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles and blockchain effectively. This revision should aim to strike a harmonious equilibrium between encouraging innovation and addressing concerns related to safety, security, and ethics. Public acceptability and inclusivity pose additional significant challenges. Establishing confidence and showcasing the reliability and advantages of emerging technology, particularly self-driving vehicles, are key measures. It is key to prioritise the accessibility and benefits of smart transportation solutions for all, particularly marginalised and underserved populations, to achieve equitable development. Any technological improvement in the transport sector must prioritise inclusivity as a fundamental element.

4.4. Future Direction

The future of smart mobility in South Africa depends on embracing a technology-focused approach that prioritises the needs and experiences of individuals. This entails the creation of technologies that augment human capabilities and improve user experience by including user-friendly interfaces and adaptable systems. Effective collaboration among technology developers, policymakers, and end-users is essential for creating realistic and advantageous solutions. Sustainability is a key area of emphasis, where smart mobility solutions must prioritise the reduction of carbon emissions and promoting environmentally friendly transportation choices. Electric automobiles, transportation systems driven by renewable energy, and environmentally friendly materials will be key in attaining environmental objectives. However, incorporating and compatibility with different transportation modes and technology are key for establishing an effective and unified transportation environment. Implementing interoperability standards and collaboration platforms would facilitate the seamless integration of various systems, improving overall transportation performance and user experience.

5. Managerial Implications

The progression of intelligent transportation from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0 carries significant ramifications for managers in the transportation industry. Managers must first acknowledge the key importance of advanced technologies like IoT, big data analytics, autonomous cars, and blockchain in improving operational efficiency and service delivery. Adopting these technologies can substantially improve route optimisation, asset tracking, predictive maintenance, and overall system dependability. The transition towards a human-centric approach in Industry 5.0 highlights the significance of creating transport solutions that are both user-friendly and inclusive. Managers are required to give priority to customer experience by adopting technology that improves safety, convenience, and accessibility for all customers, especially marginalised and underserved communities. This strategy promotes fairness in society and improves customer satisfaction and loyalty. The necessity for modernised regulatory frameworks and policies necessitates that managers remain informed about legislative modifications and actively engage in crafting laws that promote technology progress while guaranteeing safety and security. Engaging with policymakers and other stakeholders is key to establishing a favourable atmosphere for innovation.

5.1. Pragmatic Recommendations

Managers should actively support and allocate resources towards the improvement of intelligent infrastructure, including interconnected traffic signals, intelligent road systems, and electric vehicle charging stations. This infrastructure is essential for facilitating the implementation and functioning of sophisticated transportation technologies.

Harness the power of Big Data and the Internet of Things (IoT) by employing IoT devices and advanced data analytics to collect up-to-the-minute information on traffic patterns, passenger behaviour, and the state of assets. This data can provide valuable insights for decision-making, optimise routes more effectively, and strengthen predictive maintenance techniques, resulting in lower operational expenses and increased service reliability.

Advocate for the implementation of autonomous vehicle pilot programmes in regulated urban settings to collect data, evaluate efficacy, and tackle issues related to public acceptance. These experiments can offer useful insights into autonomous mobility's advantages and possible challenges, hence facilitating broader acceptance.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The progression of intelligent transportation from Industry 4.0 to Industry 5.0 carries significant ramifications for managers in the transportation industry. Managers must first acknowledge the crucial importance of advanced technologies like IoT, big data analytics, autonomous cars, and blockchain in improving operational efficiency and service delivery. Adopting these technologies can substantially improve route optimisation, asset tracking, predictive maintenance, and overall system dependability. The transition towards a human-centric approach in Industry 5.0 highlights the significance of creating transport solutions that are both user-friendly and inclusive. Managers must give priority to customer experience by adopting technology that improve safety, convenience, and accessibility for all customers, especially marginalised and underserved communities. This strategy promotes fairness in society and improves customer happiness and loyalty.

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Comparative Analysis of Direct Endorsement and Strategic Product Placement in Influencer Marketing

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Keywords

Product placement;
Direct endorsement;
Influencer marketing;
Purchase intention.

Abstract

Influencer marketing has become an effective strategy to engage consumers and advertise products. This study provides a comparative analysis of two prevalent influencer marketing strategies: direct endorsement and strategic product endorsement. An experimental design will be used where participants will be exposed to either direct endorsement or product placement. ANOVA and PROCESS model will be used to analyse data. This study will offer valuable insights for brands to refine their influencer marketing strategies, helping them allocate resources more effectively and optimize their approach to influencer collaborations

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Marketers and practitioners are looking for creative ways to get their message across to the target audience (Vashisht, 2023). One of the main strategies used by businesses to gain traction from consumers is influencer marketing. Leung, Gu and Palmatie (2022) defines influencer marketing as a strategy used by firms to leverage on existing influencers' followers to create awareness of their products and encourage purchase behavior. Influencer marketing has been proven to be an incredibly powerful tool, leading to a significant increase in advertising budget (Ye, Hudders, De Jans & De Veirman, 2021). Some influencers openly endorse products, actively discussing and promoting them, while others employ a subtler approach, seamlessly integrating products into their content while discussing unrelated topics (Raluca, 2012). Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks (2019) found that product focus diminishes video engagement, consequently the persuasive nature of product placement has the potential to trigger the audience's reactance. Additionally providing excessive product

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information can overload and irritate viewers, undermining the perceived authenticity of influencers (Chen, Yan, & Smith, 2023; Cocker, Mardon, & Daunt, 2021). Marketers using influencers must also optimize endorsement effectiveness strategically.

Although prior research has been conducted regarding product placement and product endorsement as stand-alone concepts, limited research delves into a comparison of the strategies in terms of effectiveness (Russel & Rasolofoarison, 2017). Marketers are keen to determine the optimal strategy between these two approaches to maximize benefits and influence followers to purchase the promoted brand or product. Hence, this study aims to compare the effectiveness of these two distinct influencer marketing strategies on consumers' intention to purchase the advertised product. By examining the differences between direct endorsement and strategic product placement, this research seeks to provide insights into the nuances of influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behavior. To effectively monitor and guide influencers' content creation process, marketers must understand which content strategy works (Leung *et al.*, 2022). Despite the increased prevalence of influencer marketing, the examination of direct endorsement and strategic product placement on attitude towards the advertised product, attitude towards the influencer and purchased intentions remains limited.

This study will offer valuable insights for brands to refine their influencer marketing strategies, helping them allocate resources more effectively and optimize their approach to influencer collaborations. By understanding which strategy resonates better with consumers in terms of attitudes towards influencer, the advertised product, and purchase intentions, brands can drive sales. Additionally, the findings of this study can empower influencers to negotiate partnerships more strategically, ensuring that their content and endorsement strategy aligns with the target audience.

1.2. Research objectives

The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of various influencer marketing strategies, specifically direct endorsement and strategic product placement, on consumers' attitudes towards the advertised product and the influencer, as well as the subsequent influence on their intention to purchase the advertised products.

2. Literature Review

Based on the preliminary literature review, the subsequent research model presents the proposed relationships (see Figure 1).

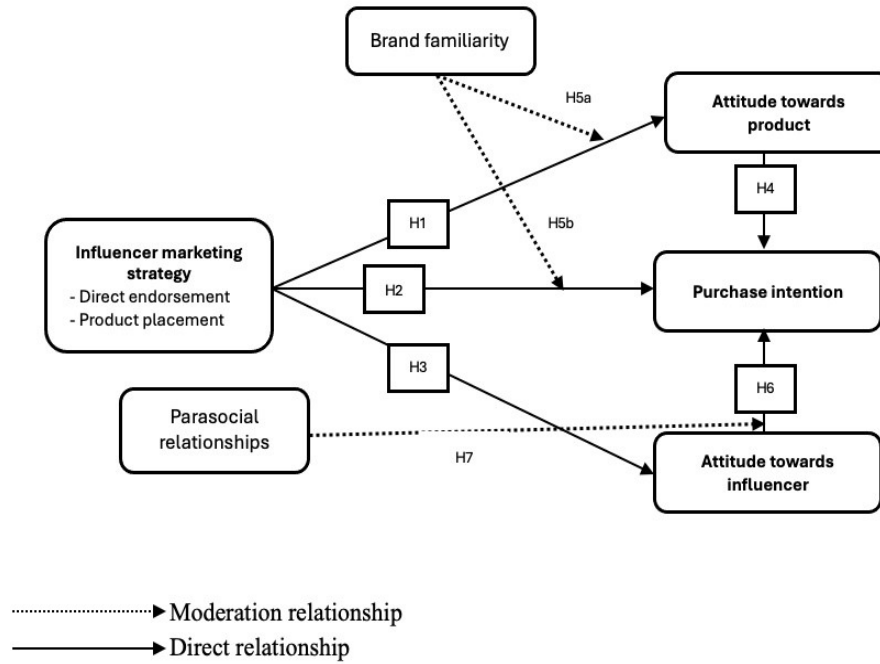


Figure 1: Research model

Source: Authors' own construction.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

3.1 Experimental procedure and manipulation stimuli

The participants will be exposed to simulated influencer content featuring either direct endorsement or strategic product placement. In the direct endorsement condition, the influencer will explicitly promote and discuss the advertised product. However, in the product placement condition, the product will be subtly integrated into the influencer's content while the focus remains on unrelated topics. After stimulus exposure, participants will answer a manipulation check questionnaire to ensure that they perceived the intended manipulation accurately. Following stimulus exposure and manipulation check, participants will complete a survey assessing their attitudes towards the endorsed product, attitude towards the influencer, intention to purchase, brand familiarity and para-social relationships.

3.2 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics will be computed to examine the distribution of responses across key variables in the study. Furthermore, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) will be used to compare the means between groups (product placement vs. strategic endorsement). Lastly, PROCESS Model 4 will be used to examine the moderation role of brand familiarity and para-social relationships.

4. Managerial implications

Several managerial implications could emerge from this study. Firstly, understanding the most effective marketing strategy will help brands allocate their marketing budgets to the strategy that will help them achieve their marketing goals such as enhance purchase intentions. Secondly, marketers might use the study's findings to provide influencers with guidance on content creation. For example, if subtle product integration is found to enhance consumer attitudes, marketers could encourage influencers to focus on creating more authentic and seamlessly integrated content. Lastly, influencers could leverage the insights from this study to negotiate better terms with brands. For example, if product placement is shown to be more effective, influencers might justify higher fees for this approach by demonstrating its positive impact on consumer behaviour.

5. Conclusions and Future Research

The effectiveness of influencer marketing has been a subject of recent scholarly interest. Scholars like Leung *et al.*, (2022) advocate for exploring how marketing strategies impact marketing success. They argue that the effectiveness depends on the content strategy adopted by the influencers. The manner in which promotional messages are crafted significantly influences consumers' attitudes towards and acceptance of the messages. Two prevalent influencer marketing strategies are direct endorsement and strategic product endorsement. Marketers are often confused as to whether they should be opting for product placement over strategic product placement. It is argued that product placement can be a powerful strategy as it does not explicitly link the product in a scene to a brand or company. In addition, the persuasive message is often secondary to the main communication of the scene. On the other hand, providing excessive product information can irritate influencer followers, undermining the perceived authenticity of influencers. Using experiments, this study examines the impact of these strategies on consumers' attitudes towards the advertised product and the influencer, as well as the subsequent influence on their intention to purchase the advertised products.

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Lessons Learnt from Working from Home: A Case Study of Managers in a Public Sector Organisation in Polokwane, Limpopo Province

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Keywords

COVID-19;

Work from home (WFH);

Information and communications technology (ICT).

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic came with several challenges that included the need for individuals to distance themselves from one another. Notwithstanding the need for social distancing, the economy of the country needed continuous productivity from organisations. Therefore, organisations had to implement the phenomenon of working from home. Even though working from home is a well-known phenomenon this organisation in the study, like many others in the country, was experiencing it for the first time. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the benefits and challenges of working from home in this public sector organisation in Limpopo Province. A qualitative study was conducted where in-depth interviews were used for data collection. The acquired data was processed using thematic analysis. The results highlighted challenges of infrastructure and technology while benefits include higher productivity due to lack of disturbances. The implications for this study are in terms of mechanisms that can be put in place to support effective working from home to leverage on the benefits.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) “has challenged society in many ways and was considered unimaginable, forcing organisations to reconsider a wide variety of practices” (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2020:59). Businesses had to implement alternative ways to operate and for employees to fulfil their contractual obligations while adhering to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) regulations. To adhere to government directives, the introduction and implementation of work-from-home (WFH) or remote work was an alternative. This likelihood of continuing with working from home needs to be investigated to find out the advantages and disadvantages to have better managerial systems and processes to monitor it. In addition, WFH may come with challenges of employee engagement or monitoring employee productivity (Chaudhary, Mohanty, Malik, Mary, Maroon & Nomani, 2021).

Therefore, the study explored the possible benefits and challenges experienced by employees working from home during the adjusted lockdown restrictions comparing them with those employees who have opted to continue working from the office. This study was centered on the experiences of employees working in a government department, in Limpopo Province.

1.2. Problem Statement

Prior to COVID-19, very few organisations and their employees had proper knowledge and/or experience of working remotely. ICT developments have empowered and accelerated alternative working arrangements, such as WFH and remote working.

Due to the peculiar conditions in which organisations find themselves; remote work is necessary. However, some organisations, including the one selected for purposes of the study do not know the challenges and benefits their employees face when working from home. As a result, research was conducted to discover how to deal with the challenges and maximise the benefits of remote work.

1.3. Research objectives:

- Determine what the employees of the client services department in the chosen organisation believe are the advantages of working from home.
- Investigate the challenges that the employees face when they are working from home.
- Analyse the kind of skills and knowledge that the employees in the study think they require for them to work effectively from home.
- Examine the kind of support the employees need for them to operate effectively from home

2. Literature Review

Work From Home (WFH), also known as telework, is a concept where the employee can their job from home. This work approach is enabled through the internet and mobility wherein irrespective of the physical location of an individual work can be done. The COVID-19 pandemic around the world demanded the need to work from home (Delwer and Boethe, 2020). Throughout the years researchers have documented the benefits of working from home to include better work-life balance, enjoying the benefits of greater responsibility, job satisfaction and reduced psychological strain, greater flexibility, more time to spend with children, higher productivity, and commuter cost savings. The documented challenges include breakdown of relationships between management and employees as well as between co-workers resulting in poor communication; lack of dedicated space or privacy, work area comfort, health and safety challenges; as well as technology infrastructural, support and usage challenges. Employees need to be able to work independently and to be able to navigate technological challenges for them to work effectively from home (Chetty & Motala, 2021; Green, Tappin & Bently, 2020; Flores, 2019).

3. Research methodology

The research study used a qualitative research design. Individual interviews were conducted using virtual platforms i.e., Microsoft Teams. Where the candidate could not use a virtual platform, they were interviewed in person. Thematic qualitative data analysis was used.

4. Preliminary Findings

Table 1: Summary of results

Themes	Advantages of working from home	Challenges of working from home	Required skills to work effectively at home	Support structures needed to work effectively at home
Sub-themes	Reduced Costs	Load Shedding	Independence	Availability of line Managers
	Time Effective	Household Distractions	Computer Literacy	Moral and mental support
	Flexibility	Shortage of tools of trade	Time Management	Tools of trade
	Spending time with Family members	Performance	Self-Discipline	
		Work-Life Balance	Knowledge of policies and procedures	

5. Managerial Implications

Before implementing the recommended hybrid working arrangement model, a policy or standard operating procedure needs to be crafted and communicated to all involved stakeholders for their understanding and buy in. Recommendations include the need to mount training programmes, mentoring, and coaching support of employees and crafting policies for the hybrid way of working proposed going forward.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

To capitalise on the numerous benefits of working from home as outlined by the participants, the employer can implement a hybrid working arrangements or working model. It is a work arrangement that combines remote working and being physical in the office. This model entails a combination of weekly or daily work schedules which alternate between working remotely and in person. The implementation of the hybrid model will also assist employees who are unable to work from home due to challenges that some of the participants mentioned in this study and perhaps more that are not mentioned here.

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Effects of Work-life-conflict: Insights from Experiences of Managers in the Public Sector of Limpopo Province

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Keywords

Work-life conflict;
Coping strategies;
Public sector;
Women managers;
Work-life balance

Abstract

This study addresses work-life conflict, a topical phenomenon for the career progression and wellbeing of women. Notwithstanding a lot of interest in the topic, as well as various endeavours to support women in the workplace it continues to be a subject of research interest since work-life balance has not been achieved yet. The current study intended to explore what the women managers in the public sector of Limpopo Province understand by work-life conflict, as well as their experiences. The preliminary findings indicate that most of the women managers in the study understand work-life conflict to mean work-to-life interference interpreting life-to-work interference as a norm. The women managers in the study also appear to experience physical and psychological health problems due to not coping with work-life conflict. The current findings add to the knowledge on addressing the work-life conflict of women managers by delivering context-specific recommendations of what organisations can do to attain work-life balance.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Empowerment of women is a topic that is on the development agenda of most countries. Globally, more and more women have entered the workplace and with this, changes in the dynamics of their work and non-work experiences have been noted (French, Dumani, Allen & Shockley, 2018; Van Egdom, 2020). South Africa has entered into treaties, as well as promulgating labour legislation that is meant for supporting women's entry into the workplace and while there to progress to management positions (Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development, OECD, 2019). However, not enough progress has been made in terms of empowering women (OECD, 2019; Ajayi, Olawande, Jegede, Amoo, & Olawole-Isaac, 2020).

In South Africa research on work-life conflict and balance has also been ongoing in various sectors and regions of the country. However, no research could be found that has been undertaken in the public sector of Limpopo Province. It can be surmised that more work-life conflict studies need to be devoted to different sectors, like the public sector, as well as various other regions of the country. The issue of work-life conflict and balance is crucial for employees in all sectors as contentment at work is important for overall organisational performance (Wolor, Siti, Zahra & Martono 2020).

1.2. Problem Statement

Although WLC may have a negative effect on anyone, the problem is that research studies indicate that it affects women more than men (Jackson & Fransman, 2020). This higher negative effect on women is due to unrelenting societal expectations of the roles and responsibilities of women especially in the non-work domain (Muthala & Pillay, 2023). The problem of WLC and its effects has been researched mostly in western societies and researchers have advocated for more research in other cultures (Akanji, 2012; Lewis and Beauregard, 2018; Rodrigo, 2021), hence the focus of the current study on the work-life conflict experiences of different cultures.

1.3. Research objectives

- To examine what the women managers in the public sector of Limpopo Province understand by work-life conflict.
- To establish whether the women managers in the study experience work-life conflict.
- To investigate the kind of experiences the women managers have as a result of work-life conflict.

2. Literature Review

The concepts of work-life-conflict (WLC), work-family conflict or work/non-work conflict have been widely researched and defined in several contexts and frameworks. These terms are often used interchangeably, “representing the interface of employees’ professional and personal lives” (Karkoulou & Halawi, 2007: 117). Central to the WLC concept is the notion that meeting the demands in one domain (work) makes it difficult to meet obligations in the other domain (non-work). WLC has also been defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Madsen & Hammond, 2005: 151). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985: 77) defined work-life conflict as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in such a way that participation in the work (or family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (or work) role”.

Although some strides have been achieved in empowering women and the demography of the workplace is changing as a result; conventional views on the expected roles of men and women in society have been slower to change (Morgenroth, Ryan, Rink & Begeny, 2020; Akinnusi, Oyewunmi & Sonubi, 2018). According to Jackson and Fransman (2020), for organisations to be able to make better progress in achieving gender parity, more effort needs to be exerted through supportive human resource policies among other things. More flexibility is required in the workplace to assist women to balance their careers with their family roles and personal goals, i.e., attain work-life balance, especially for women needs to be earnestly considered and attended to (Wong, Chan & Teh, 2020). Research has shown that globally WLC is among some of the significant factors that make it difficult for women to make substantive progress into especially positions of leadership in organisations (Ajayi et al. 2020). South African women’s progress into decision-making positions is also affected (Fitong Ketchiwou, Naong, Van Der Walt, & Dzansi, 2022; Khosa-Nkatini, Buqa, & Machimana, 2023).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional mixed-method research design. For the qualitative part individual interviews were conducted with a total of 16 women in different levels of management in the public sector. Thematic qualitative data analysis was utilised in the study.

In the quantitative part of the study questionnaires were sent to the participants. (Analysis still in progress).

4. Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings of the study indicate that most of the women managers in the study understand work-life conflict to mean work-to-life interference. The women managers conceptualise life-to-work

interference as a normal phenomenon, which serves as a function of maintaining homeostasis in their social structure. The results further suggested that only the workplace has to be changed for them to attain work-life balance.

The study highlights that numerous working women are still inundated with non-work responsibilities, which results in conflict with the expected responsibilities in the work environment. The resultant work-life conflict continues to have career-limiting effects on women.

The women managers in the study also appear to experience physical and psychological health problems due to not coping with work-life conflict.

5. Managerial Implications

The implications for this study require a paradigm shift in the structures, in both the work and non-work domains, which can be employed to support women as they progress within the organisational hierarchies. Women also need to realise and acknowledge when they need help to cope better both physically and psychologically.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Women managers have an understanding of what WLC entails, mostly as work interfering with the non-work domain. They tend to normalise the roles and responsibilities expected of them from the non-work environment; they work hard to counter the negative stereotypes that still exist, which undermine women's capabilities and they are not coping both psychologically and physically. Policies and standard operating procedures still need to be employed to assist them both at work and at home.

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Examine the Relationship Between Board Diversity and Financial Performance of Firms in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange

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Keywords

Board diversity;
Financial performance;
Firms;
Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between board diversity and financial performance in companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). The conventional belief is that diverse leadership enhances business success. The research uses a quantitative, correlational design, focusing on five banking firms listed between 2018 and 2022. Diversity was measured by gender, race, and professional background, while financial performance was assessed using net profit. The findings indicate no significant correlation between board diversity and financial success. Several factors might explain this, including the specific characteristics of the banking sector, the limited sample size, and the period studied. The results suggest that simply having a diverse board does not guarantee improved financial outcomes. Future research should consider a broader sample, longer study periods, and alternative performance metrics. This study highlights the complexity of the relationship between diversity and business success, suggesting the need for a more refinement understanding of how diversity influences corporate performance.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Recent discussions emphasize the importance of increasing diversity in companies by employing people from different backgrounds (Hassan, 2018; Khatib, Abdullah, Elamer & Abueid, 2021). Diversity within management, particularly in boards of directors (BoDs), significantly influences both short-term and long-term company success (Khatib et al., 2021). Authors such as Gomez and Bernet (2019) and Agyemang-Mintah and Schadewitz (2019) argue that diversity enhances autonomy and decision-making quality. This study explores the correlation between board diversity (in terms of gender, race, occupation, and skills) and financial performance. The research aims to determine how diversity might influence a company's financial success on the stock exchange.

1.2. Problem Statement

The absence of diversity in governing bodies can lead to adverse financial effects for organizations (Institute of Directors of Southern Africa, 2017). The King IV Report advises that a balanced mix of skills, knowledge, independence, and diversity is essential for effective corporate governance (Institute of Directors of Southern Africa, 2017). Cases like Tongaat Hulett and Steinhoff illustrate the negative impact of lacking diversity, with Steinhoff's financial scandal partly attributed to its predominantly white and male board (Song, Yoon & Kang, 2020; Du Toit, 2019). The lack of diverse perspectives in Steinhoff's governance likely contributed to biased decision-making and financial misconduct (van Vuuren, 2020). This study aims to highlight the necessity of diversity in corporate governance to sustain organizational integrity and financial performance on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

1.3. Research objectives

- To analyse the correlation between diversity of gender among board of directors and net profit.
- To assess the association between racial diversity on the board of directors and net profit.
- To examine the link between professional diversity on the board and net profit.

2. Literature Review

Diversity within the board of directors (BoDs) in South African financial institutions significantly impacts business performance (García, Orozco, Pineda & Villalba, 2023; Freeman, Dmytriiev & Phillips, 2021). Agency Theory posits that BoDs act as agents for shareholders, focusing on company interests, while Stakeholder Theory emphasizes balancing stakeholder needs for sustainable growth (Chen, Wang & Wang, 2023; Hahn, Figge, Pinkse & Preuss, 2018). Studies show that gender diversity

in BoDs enhances financial performance through better risk management and innovative decision-making (Valls Martínez & Soriano Román, 2022; Fraser, Quail & Simkins, 2021). Similarly, racial diversity can introduce varied perspectives, although its impact on performance is mixed, with some studies suggesting potential conflicts (Smulowitz, Becerra & Mayo, 2019; Sharma, Moses, Borah & Adhikary, 2020). Professional diversity among board members contributes positively by leveraging diverse expertise for informed decision-making (Donnelly, Ó Coimín, O'Donnell, Ní Shé, Davies, Christophers, Mc Donald & Kroll, 2021; Birindelli, Dell'Atti, Iannuzzi & Savioli, 2018). Financial performance is often measured using profitability ratios, reflecting a firm's success in achieving its objectives (Azizah, Manik & Ilham, 2023; Sihombing, Maffett & Ilham, 2022). Overall, integrating diverse perspectives within BoDs fosters enhanced business performance and sustainable growth (Hillman, 2015; Douglas, Williams & Walsh, 2017).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This study employs a correlational research design to examine the relationship between board diversity and financial performance in companies listed on the JSE, specifically focusing on five major banks. Utilizing a quantitative research method, the study analyses secondary data obtained from public sources like company websites and the JSE for the period 2018-2022. The population includes all 126 companies in the JSE's financial sector, but a purposive sample of the top five banks—Absa, Capitec, First National, Nedbank, and Standard Bank—was selected for detailed analysis. Data collection focuses on board diversity variables (gender, racial, and professional diversity) and financial performance metrics (Net profit). The Multiple Linear Regression Model is employed to analyse the data, ensuring reliability and validity through the use of audited and publicly accessible financial statements.

4. Preliminary Findings

The study shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between board diversity (gender, racial, and professional) and the financial performance (net profit) of the banking companies listed on the JSE from 2018 to 2022. This aligns with some literature findings while contradicting others, indicating that the impact of board diversity on financial performance may vary across different contexts and industries.

5. Managerial Implications

Managers should recognize the importance of diversity in boardrooms, as it leads to better decision-making and innovation. To foster diversity, companies should implement proactive recruitment

strategies and create inclusive environments where diverse voices are valued. Tracking diversity metrics and setting clear diversity goals can help organizations measure progress and hold themselves accountable. Embracing diversity and inclusion is not only ethically essential but also strategically advantageous for companies seeking long-term success and competitiveness.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

This study concludes that while no significant correlation was identified between board diversity factors and net profit in the banking sector, promoting diversity remains crucial for effective corporate governance. Future research endeavours should explore additional variables beyond gender, race, and professional diversity to comprehensively understand board dynamics and organizational outcomes. Examining diverse industries and regions could provide broader insights into the implications of board diversity. Ultimately, fostering inclusive boardrooms is imperative for promoting sustainable corporate practices and long-term success.

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Responsible Leadership Practices: A Role and Dimensions Perspective

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Keywords

Management innovation;
Workplace spirituality.

Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to explore how leaders use the roles and dimensions associated with responsible leaders in practice. A qualitative case study-based research approach is followed to provide evidence from organisations in Africa.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Leadership theory has past the tipping point where leadership is mainly described and explained from a “great man” perspective who function in organisations with a hierarchical structural context where the focus is mainly on profit and shareholder maximisation (Maak and Pless, 2006). Anne Tsui (2021) indicates that that normative-based leadership models such as servant leadership, authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, self-sacrificial leadership and ethical leadership are examples of leadership theories that are currently proposed by scholars as relevant for the 21st century context.

1.2. Problem Statement

To date, most scholarly research on the topic of responsible leadership (RL) are still mainly conceptual, which open opportunities for more empirical studies related to the antecedents, consequences and contextual boundaries of this construct (Javed et al., 2021; Tsui, 2021). Responsible leadership is a complex phenomenon and challenging to study, but Tsui (2021: 168) encourage researchers as follows: “Responsible leadership in the twenty-first century may be one of those wicked problems that responsible researchers want to tackle.”

1.3. Research objectives

The theoretical foundation for this article is largely based on the work of Maak & Pless, (2006), Maak (2007) and Argarwal and Bhal (2020) who identified roles and dimensions of RL. These constructs are

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used in the primary research phase of this study where it is viewed as antecedents for RL practices to investigate how roles and dimensions related to RL create conducive conditions for mutually beneficial multi stakeholder relationships and outcomes.

2. Literature Review

Maak (2007: 334) describes responsible leadership as “the art and ability involved in building, cultivating and sustaining trustful relationships to different stakeholders, both inside and outside the organizations, and in coordinating responsible action to achieve a meaningful, commonly shared business vision.”

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

An exploratory research design was utilised to gain insight into RL practices in selected organisations in Africa. Exploratory research provides the understanding of specific concepts (Zikmund 2003). Primary qualitative data was gathered to identify and describe the fulfilment of roles and dimensions related to RL in an African context.

4. Preliminary Findings

Based on the theoretical role and dimension descriptions of RL, the following conceptual framework depicts the roles and dimensions related to RL as antecedents of RL practices aimed at fostering positive relationships and outcomes for multiple-stakeholders, including virtuous leader-follower interactions.

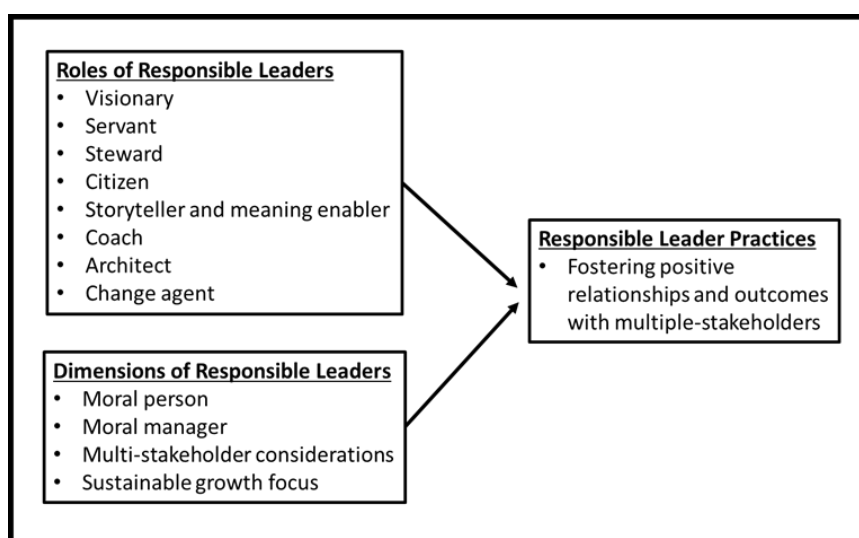


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for RL antecedents for virtuous stakeholder relationships and outcomes

The qualitative result from the study is reported based on the constructs in Figure 1 above.

5. Managerial Implications

The question may be asked whether there is a new prioritisation of stakeholders, given the historical preference for the needs of investors and shareholders. More and more voices are saying yes, there is (Minnaar & De Morree, 2021; Minnaar, 2020) and this research confirms this change. The new logic is that employees come first because without the motivation, engagement and contributions of the people in the organisation value creation for other stakeholders cannot happen. The second prioritised stakeholder group is customers because they are the main target group that the business aims to serve through the dedicated efforts of employees. Shareholders are third as financial support for sustainable business growth is essential through, again, the contributions of staff to create financial health for the business.

Responsible leaders raise the trust bar and reduce fear through various processes. These include community-building initiatives, collaborative practices aimed at beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders, and inclusive decision-making practices.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Research indicates that the new work entrants (millennials, generation z) do not want bosses; they are looking for coaches. New generation workers need team leaders who can coach them, who value and appreciate their individuality, and who can assist them to discover their real strengths (Ungerer, Herholdt, & Schlechter, 2021). The RL role of the leaders as a coach is well-suited for the new generations entering workplaces of today.

Future research on the roles and dimensions of RL could focus on developing a specific measurement instrument to guide the development of responsible leaders. Future research on the reflective practices of responsible leaders may contribute to encouraging more leaders to embrace this self-empowering personal practice.

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Talent and Tech: Driving Entrepreneurial Growth in South Africa

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Keywords

Entrepreneurship;
Labour talent;
South Africa;
Technology.

Abstract

Entrepreneurs are important catalysts of economic growth and development and have the potential to contribute to the economy. With the advent of the 4IR and rapid changes in innovation and technology, entrepreneurs are increasingly dependent on and affected by technology. The research objective was to assess the impact of the availability of human resource talent in technology and innovation on entrepreneurship development. A quantitative methodology was utilised to achieve the objective, using time series data from 2000 to 2022. Several variables were included: entrepreneurial success as the dependent variable, and predicting variables, the availability of labour talent with digital skills, the availability of technology and economic growth as a control variable. An econometric model was developed, including an ARDL regression and Granger Causality techniques. The results from the estimations indicated a long-run relationship between all the variables. This means that the availability of technology influences entrepreneurship in terms of labour talent and technology in product development. From a policy point of view, the study's results place the focus of entrepreneurship development on technology. All efforts should be made to have skilled talent available in the digital environment and technology for products and services available for entrepreneurs to succeed.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

According to Sagar, Anand, Varalaxmi and Raj (2023), entrepreneurs are the catalysts of economic development and has the potential and ability to create new jobs and contribute significantly to the

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economy (Hussain, Bhuiyan, & Bakar, 2014). With the advent of the 4IR and rapid changes in innovation and technology, entrepreneurs are increasingly dependent on technology (Oyebanjo & Tengeh, 2021). To what extent are entrepreneurs dependent and influenced by technology and innovation? The research aims to answer this research question within the South African environment.

1.2. Problem Statement

The availability of talented human resources and the level of technology and innovation in developing countries such as South Africa is limited if compared to more developed countries due to brain drain. This study aspires to close the gap in the research regarding the availability of technology and innovation for entrepreneurship development in South Africa.

1.3. Research objectives

This research project aimed to assess the impact of the availability of human resource talent in technology and opportunities to export hi-tech products on entrepreneurship development.

2. Literature Review

The study by Low, Henderson, and Weiler (2005), in which the entrepreneurship potential of a region was determined, forms the foundation of this study. They found that the level of workforce skills, access to capital, economic growth and innovation are drivers of entrepreneurship.

According to Zeidmane and Vintere (2021), new digital technologies are changing entrepreneurship in accessing and adding clients, designing new products, generating new revenue streams, and finding new partners. Entrepreneurs require staff with digital skills. According to the study, the most important digital skills needed for the labour market are the management and evaluation of information.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

A quantitative methodology was utilised to achieve the study's primary objective, using time series data from 2000 to 2022. Several variables were included in the analysis: the “Established Business Ownership” (EBO) data from GEM representing entrepreneurial success, and the level of available labour talent with digital skills from IMD data; technology available as the level of high-tech exports from IMD data. In addition, economic growth was included as a control variable. An econometric model was developed, and an ARDL regression and Granger Causality techniques were used to determine the relationships between the variables.

4. Preliminary Findings

From a general point of view, the results from the estimations indicated a long-run relationship between all the variables included in the model. The availability of technology labour skills and skills for developing hi-tech products positively impacts entrepreneurship development. This means that the availability of technology influences entrepreneurship in terms of labour talent and technology in product development. Regarding causality, a bi-directional relationship was found between entrepreneurship and technology and entrepreneurship and economic growth.

5. Managerial Implications

The managerial implications of the research are that technology is changing how business is conducted. Entrepreneurs should be technology-oriented and skilled in these processes. This will allow them to understand technology better and utilise it. From a policy point of view, the study's results place the focus of entrepreneurship development on technology.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Technology can have a positive impact on entrepreneurship development. The research used innovative variables to predict the outcomes of technology on research. Future research will include more country comparisons. All efforts should be made to have skilled talent available in the digital environment and technology for products and services available for entrepreneurs to succeed.

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Exploring Various Risk Factors on the Resilience of the Tourism Sector in South Africa

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Keywords

Country risk;
Crime;
Exchange rate;
Load-shedding;
South Africa;
Tourism.

Abstract

Tourism has been recognised as a significant economic driver in developed and developing countries. Therefore, the sector must be protected from negative external and internal impacts. These negative factors could include a lack of capacity for essential services such as electricity, a depreciating currency and high crime levels. South Africa has been selected as the study area because the tourism sector has not recovered since the Covid-19 pandemic, but the industry has the potential to assist in economic development. Therefore, the research aimed to assess the impact of risk factors on the tourism sector, such as electricity supply problems, a depreciating currency, high crime levels and country risk factors. A quantitative research methodology was used to test the hypothesis that a lack of electricity, increasing country risk, exchange rate volatility, and higher crime levels negatively impact tourism development. An ARDL regression econometric model assessed short- and long-run impacts from 2000 to 2023. The results indicated that improved levels of country risk support tourism growth, while increased electricity supply has the same effect, and “load shedding” has the opposite impact. Higher crime levels have a significant adverse effect on tourism growth, while a depreciating currency has a positive impact on tourism. The study results have implications for all developing tourism regions worldwide. Internal risk factors must be managed to allow a stable tourism market to attract international tourists and support the domestic tourism sector.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Tourism has been recognised as a significant economic driver in developed and developing countries and regions (Telfer & Sharpley, 2015). Tourism contributes close to 10% of economic output and employment on a global scale (Meyer & Meyer, 2015). Therefore, the sector must be protected from negative external and internal impacts. These negative factors could include a lack of capacity for essential services such as electricity, a depreciating currency and high crime levels. South Africa has been selected as the study area because the tourism sector has not recovered since the Covid-19 pandemic, but the industry has the potential to assist in economic development. Therefore, the research aimed to assess the impact of risk factors on the tourism sector, such as electricity supply problems, a depreciating currency, high crime levels and country risk factors.

1.2. Problem Statement

Provide a background to the research problem. Tourism plays an important role in both developed and developing countries and regions. This is also the case in South Africa. The sector has huge potential to contribute to the country's economic recovery, but various internal and external factors affect the growth and development of the sector. For example, the lack of infrastructure capacity for electricity significantly impacts the tourism sector. The country's high serious crime rates also negatively impact the country's tourism sector and push international travellers to other safer destinations. Other risk factors are the volatile exchange rate and the country risk ratings as published by PRS. This research assesses the impact of these risk factors on the tourism sector and determines the sector's resilience to grow despite these challenges.

1.3. Research objectives

The primary objective of the research is to assess the impact of risk factors on the tourism sector, such as electricity supply problems, a depreciating currency, high crime levels and country risk factors.

2. Literature Review

Yahya (2023) notes that the tourism industry is becoming more susceptible to external and internal risks, which can disrupt operations, tarnish destination reputations, and threaten the sector's sustainability. A comprehensive and cooperative approach is necessary to tackle and reduce these risks. This should include risk and vulnerability assessments, developing adaptive and innovative capabilities, collaboration among multiple stakeholders, proactive strategy planning and execution, and ongoing

monitoring and learning. The study emphasises the need for a more proactive, collaborative, and long-term approach to managing tourism risks to build resilience and ensure the sector's sustainability amid increasingly complex crises and challenges (Yahya, 2023).

Lee and Chen (2021) examined how political, financial, and economic stability impacts tourism development, analysing panel data from 106 countries between 2006 and 2017. Their results show that greater country stability typically promotes tourism development. These findings suggest that policymakers should consider tourism conditions when formulating strategies to enhance country stability.

Irani, Athari, and Hadood (2022) explored the effects of different risk factors, including political and economic risks, global economic policy uncertainty, and macroeconomic factors, on tourism in Turkey from 2000 to 2017. Their findings indicate that increases in political and economic risks, global economic policy uncertainty, and the real exchange rate are associated with a decline in tourism development.

3. Research design and methodology

A quantitative research methodology was used to test the hypothesis that a lack of electricity, increasing country risk, exchange rate volatility, and higher crime levels negatively impact tourism development. Total Income from tourism was used as the dependent variable with data from the WTO, while electricity produced with data from STATS SA, the country risk from PRS and the exchange rate from the SARB data were used as independent variables in the regression model. An ARDL regression econometric model assessed short- and long-run impacts from 2000 to 2023. A Granger causality model was also estimated to determine the direction of shocks between the selected variables.

4. Preliminary Findings

The results indicated that improved levels of country risk support tourism growth, while increased electricity supply has the same effect, and “load shedding” has the opposite impact. Higher crime levels have a significant adverse effect on tourism growth, while a depreciating currency has a positive impact on tourism.

5. Managerial Implications

The study results have implications for all developing tourism regions worldwide. Internal risk factors must be managed to allow a stable tourism market to attract international tourists and support the domestic tourism sector. Also, the perceptions of international travellers towards the country do affect

the attractiveness of the tourism sector. International country risk factors must be addressed via positive policy implementation.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Provide conclusions and specify the future research to be conducted. In South Africa, the tourism sector could play a major role in the road to economic recovery. The sector needs to be supported by improving internal and external risk factors. For example, the improvement of infrastructure, addressing high crime levels and the overall improvement of the country's risk levels as determined by international agencies. To achieve this, all role-players will have to work together. The increased inflow of international tourists is critical for the growth of the sector and results in higher economic growth.

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Incorporation of Business Analytics in Business Education Curriculum

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Keywords

Business Analytics;
Business Education;
Curriculum.

Abstract

The datafication of the contemporary business environment has necessitated skills in analytics to improve decision-making and create value. Including business analytics in the curriculum has been largely accepted by business schools globally, to ensure graduates are properly prepared. However, approaches to the development of business analytics curricula are inconsistent. Consequently, this study aims to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the current research trends on the implementation of business analytics in the business education curriculum. A scoping review was conducted with database searches and identified 26 papers for full review and analysis. Preliminary findings identify the importance of using experiential learning to teach business analytics. This study also recommends the use of the Analytics Body of Knowledge (ABoK) to design future curricula. Further findings are expected to yield insights into how pedagogical research is conducted and will potentially inform the future design and implementation of business analytics research and curriculum.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

As vast amounts of data are generated in the business environment, the need exists for actionable insight to support data-driven decision-making (Lu, 2022:1). Business analytics are used by business leaders to strategically lead organisations by utilising statistical analysis, prediction models, and information technologies (Cegielski & Jones-Farmer, 2016:96). In accordance with a 2016 report from the McKinsey Global Institute that identified a call for professionals with analytical skills, business schools have attempted a prompt response by offering business analytics courses to satisfy the needs of industry (Ammar *et al.*, 2022:53).

1.2. Problem Statement

Business analytics is a broadly defined concept that originates from various academic disciplines, such as mathematics, statistics, machine learning, artificial intelligence and database management, underpinned by a strong foundation in business and management (Carillo, 2017:599). Although researchers have encouraged business educators to expose business students to the scope of business analytics applications, standardised guidelines for designing business analytics curricula have been difficult to attain (Ammar *et al.*, 2022:53). Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical implementation of business analytics in business education is required. This study seeks to identify trends in current research to potentially inform future design and implementation of business analytics research and curriculum.

1.3. Research objectives

The primary objective of the study is to identify how research is conducted on the implementation of business analytics in business education curriculum.

Secondary objectives that aim to fulfil the primary objective are:

- To identify trends in current research based on the country of origin.
- To identify the recurrent use of theoretical frameworks.
- To identify patterns in research design used to research business analytics.
- To identify typical computer-assisted tools used in the teaching of business analytics.
- To identify predominant themes in teaching approaches used to implement business analytics curriculum.

2. Literature Review

Business analytics was first popularised by the 2007 book, *Competing on Analytics: The New Science of Winning*, by Davenport and Harris (Cegielski & Jones-Farmer, 2016:96). Gorman and Klimberg (2014:329-330) extensively discuss the increased interest in business analytics and the growing need of business analytics skills. While Schwieger and Ladwig (2016:45) explore the demand for graduates with data skills in all industries, Gupta *et al.* (2015:2) find business schools optimally poised to equip professionals with these skills.

To assist in the development of an analytics curriculum, the Institute of Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS) introduced a comprehensive Analytics Body of Knowledge (ABoK) (Cochran, 2021:1-384). Despite attempts by researchers to provide a roadmap for teaching business analytics (Paul & MacDonald, 2020:27-36; Stanton & Stanton, 2020:146-156), achieving standardised guidelines for curriculum design remains challenging (Ammar *et al.*, 2022:53).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

A scoping review was conducted to answer the following question: How is research conducted on the implementation of business analytics in business education curriculum? This search strategy was selected to identify the scope of research on this topic (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005:20; Pham *et al.*, 2014:371). To ensure rigour it followed the methodological framework as posed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005:22). These stages include:

Stage 1: identifying the research question

Stage 2: identifying relevant studies

Stage 3: study selection

Stage 4: charting the data

Stage 5: collating, summarising and reporting the results.

4. Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings of the study indicate that business analytics research is gaining traction with nearly all studies being published in the last 10 years (n=25). Most studies originated from the United States of America (n=21), with only two studies from the Global South (China and India). Reflective teaching briefs dominated research designs (n=12). Only one study utilised the ABoK framework. Excel proved to be the most prominent tool used (n=10). The most predominant theme in teaching approaches was the use of experiential learning (n=9).

5. Managerial Implications

To equip graduates with the practical experience required for entry-level analytics roles (Cegielski & Jones-Farmer, 2016:109), the use of experiential learning to teach business analytics is recommended to be included in the curriculum. It is also recommended that the ABoK framework by INFORMS be used as a foundation for designing a comparable and standardised curriculum.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Considering the demand for data-centred graduates, business schools have acted swiftly to incorporate business analytics into their business curriculum. The business analytics body of knowledge could benefit from voices in the Global South, which are underrepresented in the findings of this study. Future research is also suggested to examine business analytics curriculum further by conducting a comprehensive systematic literature review.

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Assessing the Impact of Big Data Analytics on Supply Chain Management Processes in South African Universities

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Keywords

Big data analytics
SCM processes
higher education
South Africa.

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of big data analytics (BDA) on Supply Chain Management (SCM) processes in South African universities. Through a quantitative research method, the study will assess BDA utilisation in procurement, inventory management, and supplier relationship management. Key performance indicators such as cost reduction and service quality improvement will be evaluated for procurement management. Whereas for inventory management, indicators will include inventory turnover rate and stockout frequency and supplier lead time and supplier defect rate for supplier relationship management. The research will include nine representative universities from the 26 South African public universities. The findings of the study are hoped assist both academic institutions and industry stakeholders in making informed decisions and drive operational efficiencies. Furthermore, the study is expected to contribute to knowledge sharing, while informing global discussions on big data in SCM.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The rapidly evolving sector of higher education, requires effective Supply Chain Management (SCM) which is becoming increasingly critical for institutions to optimise costs, utilise resources efficiently, and ensure high service quality. South African universities, like many other global educational institutions, face significant challenges in managing their supply chains due to the complexities and

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scales of their operations. These challenges are compounded by the continuous demand for improved performance and accountability. Big Data Analytics (BDA) has emerged as a transformative tool with the potential to revolutionise SCM practices by leveraging large volumes of data to derive actionable insights. Despite the acknowledged potential of BDA in improving SCM processes, there is a notable lack of empirical research investigating its impact within the specific context of higher education institutions in South Africa. This research gap underscores the need to comprehensively evaluate the influence of BDA on key SCM domains such as procurement, inventory management, and supplier relationship management within South African universities.

1.2. Problem statement

Effective Supply Chain Management (SCM) is indispensable for optimising costs, utilising resources efficiently, and ensuring service quality in higher education. However, despite the acknowledged potential of big data analytics (BDA) to revolutionize SCM practices, there is a lack of empirical research on its impact in specific contexts. This study addresses this gap by evaluating BDA's influence on procurement, inventory management, and supplier relationship management in nine South African universities. The goal is to provide actionable insights for strategic decision-making and operational efficiency in the higher education sector.

1.3. Research objectives

Primary research objective

1.3.1 To assess the utilisation of big data analytics in SCM processes within South African universities.

Secondary research objectives

1.3.2 To examine the impact of big data analytics on procurement practices in South African university SCM systems.

1.3.3 To evaluate the effects of big data analytics on inventory management efficiency in South African university SCM operations.

1.3.4 To investigate the influence of big data analytics on supplier relationship management strategies in South African university SCM frameworks.

2. Literature Review

Big data analytics (BDA) is increasingly shaping the way organisations manage their decision-making processes, create new services and products, and gain competitive advantage (Radovilsky, Hedge,

Acharya, and Uma, 2018). According to Riahi and Riahi (2019:525), big data analytics is “a set of technologies and techniques that necessitate new forms of integration to uncover substantial hidden values within large datasets that are distinct from typical ones, being more complex and of a significantly larger scale”. In addition, Prasad and Venkatesham (2021:35) define BDA as “a form of advanced analytics, which involves complex applications with elements such as predictive models, statistical algorithms, and what-if analysis powered by analytics systems.” BDA enhances business effectiveness and efficiency due to its significant strategic and operational potential. Balachandran and Prasad (2017), the main aim of BDA is to extract useful information from a large data set and convert it into comprehensive structures for further use.

Pathak (2021) notes that there are mainly four types of analytics (predictive, prescriptive, diagnostic, and descriptive) which are often used for different types of data. Several studies have provided empirical evidence that there is a link between BDA and firm performance. For instance, Shabbir and Gardezi (2020) assert that Big Data (BA) is positively related to organisational performance. Descriptive analytics is the entry-level in analytics taxonomy. According to Ajah and Nweke (2019:7), this analytics is “a simple statistical technique (graph) that describes what is contained in a data set or database”. Descriptive statistics often include frequency and probability distribution and measures of dispersion (standard deviation), and measures of central tendency (mode, mean, median). Descriptive analytics generally determine what is happening by analysing the root cause of an event (Lepenroti, Bousdekis, Apostolou, and Mentzas, 2020). In addition, it provides future trends and probabilities and gives a scenario of what might happen next.

Diagnostic analytics generally uses past data analysis to determine the root cause of certain events (Mia, 2020). This method evaluates the data to respond to the question “why did it happen?”. Predictive analytics apply forecasting to past information to predict the future. According to Pattnaik and Behera (2016:212), “predictive analytics is a process of developing data mining techniques that use analytical models to discover hidden patterns and apply them to predict future trends and behaviours”. It helps to identify patterns and trends that provide decision makers with the necessary information for decision-making (Pathak, 2021). Prescriptive analytics on the other hand is often used to identify an issue before it happens using modelling and statistics (Lakshmanan, Sorman, and Flores, 2020). It is dedicated to finding the right course of action to be taken (Riahi and Riahi, 2018).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

3.1 Research design

The study will adopt a quantitative research design. This approach is chosen to allow for the statistical analysis of numerical data, in order to provide objective insights into the relationships between BDA implementation and SCM performance metrics.

3.2 Data collection techniques

Primary data will be collected through structured surveys that will be distributed to the key personnel involved in SCM processes at the selected universities. The survey will include both closed-ended and Likert scale questions designed to gather detailed information on BDA usage, perceived benefits, challenges, and specific performance metrics. Secondary data will be sourced from existing records and databases within the universities. These may include procurement reports, inventory records, and supplier performance evaluations. This data will help triangulate the findings from the surveys and provide a comprehensive view of SCM performance.

3.3 Sample

The study will target nine representative universities from the 26 public universities in South Africa. The selection will be based on stratified sampling approach to ensure that the sample is representative of the diversity in South African higher education institutions. The primary respondents of the study will be SCM managers, procurement officers, inventory managers, and other relevant personnel directly involved in SCM processes. Approximately 3-5 respondents will be surveyed from each selected university to ensure adequate data for analysis.

3.4 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics will be used to summarise the data. Inferential statistical techniques, such as regression analysis will be employed to examine the relationships between BDA implementation and key performance indicators (KPIs) in procurement, inventory management, and supplier relationship management. Specific KPIs to be analysed include cost reduction, service quality improvement, inventory turnover rate, stockout frequency, supplier lead time, and supplier defect rate. To ensure the reliability and validity of the study findings, data triangulation will be conducted by comparing and integrating results from the surveys and secondary data sources.

4. Preliminary findings

Although the research is still ongoing, preliminary findings have been derived from the initial analysis of the existing literature on the subject.

4.1 Utilisation of big data analytics

Adoption rate: Existing data indicates that approximately 60% of public institutions of higher learning in South Africa have begun integrating BDA into their SCM processes (Upadhyay and Kumar, 2020). The extent of adoption varies, with some institutions using advanced analytics tools, while others are still in the early stages of implementation (Upadhyay and Kumar, 2020; Basile et al., 2021). **BDA tools and technologies:** As reported by (Vrontis et al., 2021; Tseng et al., 2022) the most used BDA tools include data visualisation software, predictive analytics platforms, and machine learning algorithms. The above-mentioned authors continued to express that businesses with more advanced BDA implementations tend to use a combination of these tools to enhance their SCM capabilities.

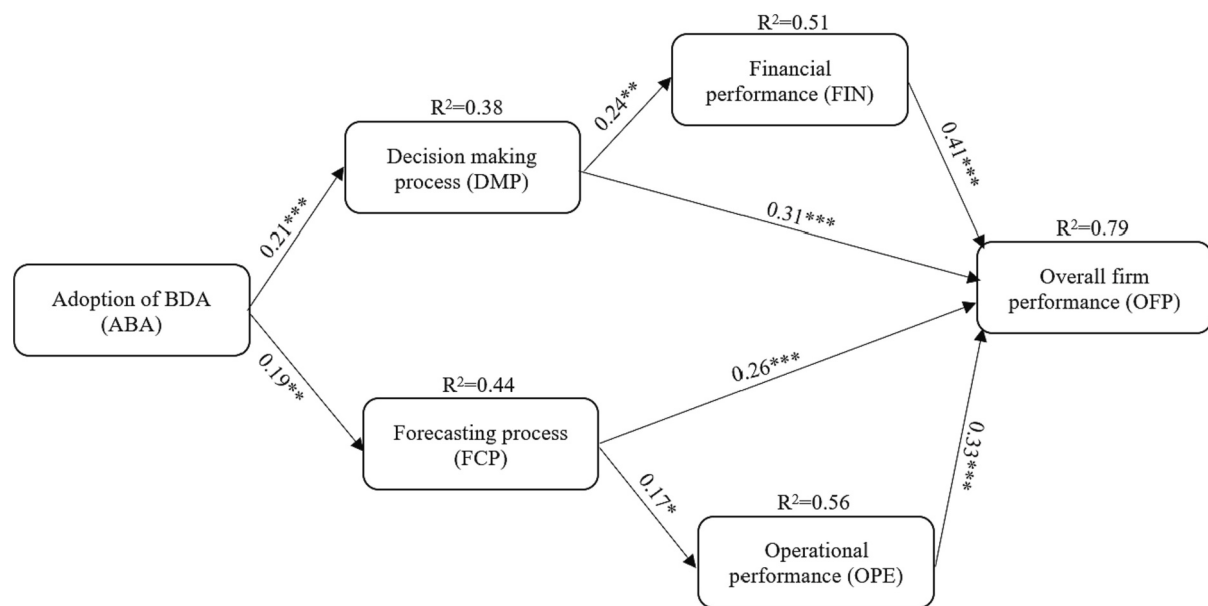


Figure 1: BDA on firm performance model

Source: Chatterjee, Chaudhuri, Gupta, Sivarajah, Bag (2023)

4.2 Key constructs and their relationships in the context of the current study

The current study adopts the BDA on firm performance model by Chatterjee (2023) to validate the relationships between its various constructs within the context of Supply Chain Management (SCM) processes in South African universities. The adoption of Big Data Analytics (BDA) is the initial step to signifying the implementation of advanced data analysis techniques in the universities under study. This adoption is hypothesized to positively impact the decision-making process, thereby enhancing financial performance. Additionally, the study hypothesizes that the adoption of BDA improves the forecasting process, leading to better operational performance. Financial performance, strengthened by improved decision-making, and operational performance, enhanced by more accurate forecasting, both significantly contribute to the overall performance of the universities' supply chain management.

Moreover, the adoption of BDA is posited to directly influence overall performance which underscores its pivotal role. This model highlights the critical importance of BDA in improving decision-making and forecasting processes, driving financial and operational efficiencies, which collectively elevate the overall performance of supply chain management in South African universities. This integrated approach demonstrates how advanced analytics can be leveraged to achieve substantial improvements in supply chain outcomes.

4.3 Impact on SCM metrics

Cost reduction: Nguyen (2021) suggest that firms utilising BDA have observed a reduction in procurement costs by an average of 10-15%. This cost savings is attributed to improved demand forecasting and more efficient supplier negotiations facilitated by data-driven insights. **Service quality improvement:** In a different study conducted by (Sheshadri, 2015; Gati & Kulcsar, 2021) respondents have reported enhanced service quality in procurement processes, including faster processing times and improved accuracy in order fulfilment. BDA has enabled better supplier evaluation and selection, contributing to these improvements. **Supplier lead time:** An earlier data extracted from a study by Schilke (2014) indicates that business organisations utilising BDA have managed to reduce supplier lead times by an average of 12%. This reduction is primarily due to better planning and more accurate demand predictions enabled by advanced analytics (Schilke, 2014). **Supplier defect rate:** Akter, Gunasekaran, Wamba, Babu and Hani (2020) have reported a decrease in supplier defect rates, with an average reduction of 8%. The authors of the study reported that BDA tools help in monitoring supplier performance more effectively by allowing for timely interventions and improvements in supplier quality.

4.4 Challenges in BDA implementation

The table below organizes the challenges in Big Data Analytics (BDA) implementation as identified by the cited authors.

Table 1: Sample Table

Challenge	Description	Author
Stakeholder collaboration	Challenges in ensuring effective cooperation and data sharing among stakeholders.	Khan et al. (2019)
Data security	Protecting sensitive data from breaches and ensuring privacy compliance.	Kache & Seuring (2017)
Technical skills	Lack of sufficient technical expertise among staff for managing and analysing big data.	Khan et al. (2019)

Data processing and integration	Difficulties in efficiently processing and integrating various data sources.	Gunasekaran et al. (2017)
Ethical and cultural challenges	Addressing concerns related to data collection methods, data usage, and data ownership.	Lai (2017)

Source: Researchers' compilation (2024)

5. Managerial implications

The preliminary findings of the present study highlight several key implications for SCM managers at South African universities and in industry. Integrating (BDA) into SCM processes offers both promising benefits and challenges which require strategic attention. BDA enables informed, data-driven decisions by providing deeper insights into procurement, inventory, and supplier performance. By predicting trends and identifying issues early, BDA facilitates proactive management, risk mitigation, and opportunity capitalisation. In addition, BDA implementation can yield significant cost savings through better demand forecasting, optimised inventory, and efficient procurement.

6. Conclusions and future research

6.1 Conclusions

This study investigates the impact of big data analytics (BDA) on Supply Chain Management (SCM) processes in South African universities. Preliminary findings show that BDA significantly enhances procurement, inventory management, and supplier relationships, leading to better decision-making, efficiency, and service quality. Despite challenges like data quality, integration, and skill shortages, universities using BDA report reduced procurement costs, improved inventory turnover, and shorter supplier lead times. These improvements highlight the value of BDA in optimizing SCM and driving cost savings and quality improvements.

6.2 Future research

While this study provides valuable insights, there are several areas for future research to further explore the impact of BDA on SCM processes in higher education. For instance, conducting comparative studies between higher education and other sectors like manufacturing or healthcare could identify best practices and transferable strategies. Additionally, investigating the integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain with BDA could enhance SCM efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, examining ethical considerations and potential risks, including data privacy and security, is essential to ensure responsible and sustainable BDA adoption. By addressing

these areas, scholars can build on this study's findings and deepen understanding of BDA's role in improving SCM in higher education.

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A Strategic Analysis of the Role of Business Associations in Fostering a Conducive Business Environment in South Africa

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Keywords

Strategic analysis;
Macro environment;
Business associations;
Collaboration.

Abstract

In line with Clem Sunter's active futures scenario, increasingly, it has become imperative for businesses to collectively take an active role in creating a conducive business environment at the macro level. This is significant, as this role primarily lies in the arms of government given the turbulent business environment they have been placed in, especially in South Africa, where businesses have had to step in actively. While it is the primary role of government at the national, provincial, and even local government levels to create a conducive environment, particularly concerning political and economic factors, this has not been the case. As a result, the macro climate businesses find themselves in has increasingly become uncertain and unsustainable for doing business. While the macro environment is generally out of the control of business, rather than sit back and lament, businesses through their collective associations such as the chambers of commerce in various municipalities and cities, have taken much-needed active roles in shaping the future, essentially stepping in where government efforts have failed or have been inadequate. These associations do this through lobbying, negotiating, networking, advocacy, and collaboration. This presentation seeks to examine and analyse the role of business in society, especially business associations' role in creating an enabling macro environment when the government as a critical driver of these political-legal factors has not been adequate.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Organisations do not operate in a vacuum. They operate in an open system that includes both the internal and the external environment which symbiotically interact with each other. According to Hellriegel, Solum, Jackson, Louw, Staude, Amos, Klopper, Louw, Oosthuizen, Perks and Zindiye (2022: 125) postulate that both the external environment and the internal environment have a significant impact on an organisation's strategies. They go further to argue that it is thus important that business organisations know and fully understand both the external and internal environment so that they can respond, in the best possible way, to threats and opportunities presented by the external environment. This will ensure they respond proactively to capitalise on opportunities, and reactively to defend against threats.

In recent times, South Africa's businesses have faced challenging political and economic environment driven mostly by uncertain government policy and sometimes incapacity at local authorities and municipalities that have made the provision of public services inadequate or non-existent. This presentation will particularly focus on the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan area and the Port Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce.

1.2. Problem Statement

The external environment comprising the macro environment has increasingly become dynamic and turbulent. Given this scenario, the role of business associations as a collective mechanism in negotiating and representing businesses has become even increasingly important. That is, can business association such as the business chamber play an important role in stabilizing and cushioning the macro environment for businesses in South Africa?

1.3. Research objectives

Considering the above problem, this study seeks to study the following:

- To investigate the role of business associations in providing a collective voice in stabilizing a dynamic business environment
- To examine the role of collaboration between business and local government
- To examine the role of business associations as a collective voice for business
- To broadly understand the role of business in society particularly in creating a stable macro environment for doing business in South Africa

2. Literature Review

The external business environment comprises of dynamic factors that cannot be handled by a business organization individually. Hence, the need for collective bodies like business associations to lobby on behalf of businesses have become important. According to the International Trade Council (2024), the role of business associations which serve as the voice of their members, representing their interests before government bodies and regulatory authorities has become imperative, and further, they engage in policy advocacy to promote an environment conducive to business growth. Carroll and Bucholtz (2015: 355) highlight that lobbying and political spending are major approaches to corporate political activity.

The Eastern Cape is home to South Africa's automotive industry, hosting at least four global OEM (original equipment manufacturers) along with their component suppliers as well as other manufacturing enterprises in the pharmaceutical or agriculture. It therefore goes that this province and the local authorities in it would be at the forefront of service delivery and infrastructure maintenance. However, the truth is far from the reality.

In the process, businesses, like the automotive industry players in the province have had to investment more in their own alternative infrastructure to keep their businesses going. This not only increases the cost of doing business in South Africa but puts South Africa at a disadvantage in attracting additional potential global investment. Invariably, the local chamber of commerce has emerged as the reliable arbiter in galvanising businesses together and collectively lobbying as well as supporting the local authorities in the provision of these public services. This paper seeks to analyse the increasing role of business associations in creating a conducive environment for business in South Africa.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

Qualitative research design. This is a conceptual paper based on desktop research.

4. Preliminary Findings

This research underscores the growing importance of the role of business in society, particularly the collective role of business associations in South Africa. Primarily, the paper highlights the importance of business collaboration with local government and to stabilize the turbulent factors in the macro environment thus providing a conducive environment for doing business.

5. Managerial Implications

Indicate the managerial implications and provide some practical implications and recommendations.

Business leaders in South Africa ought to be aware of the responsibility they carry in society as a collective, and the important role they play in collaboration with government.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The role of business in society has become increasingly important especially as the government grapples with providing public services and creating an economically stable business environment at a macro level. Businesses have a big role to play in creating a stable environment when they collaborate, and sometimes step in to assist government.

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Investigating Customer Lifetime Value and its Impact on Brand Equity in the South African Health Insurance Industry

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Keywords

Customer Lifetime Value (CLV);
Brand Equity; Customer Equity;
Customer Risk;
Health Insurance; South Africa;
Marketing Metrics.

Abstract

This research paper investigates the application of Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) in the South African health insurance sector, emphasising the role of customer risk management in enhancing CLV model adoption. The study aims to identify factors hindering CLV model integration and propose solutions to increase the sector's accessibility to a broader customer base. Employing a quantitative research design, the study will gather and analyse data from 80 South African health insurers using surveys. The research aspires to provide actionable insights for optimizing marketing strategies and resource allocation, thereby strengthening the link between CLV and brand equity in the health insurance industry.

1. Introduction

Customer lifetime value (CLV) is a marketing metric with substantial implications for brand valuation, customer profitability, and the justification of marketing expenditures (Rust, Lemon & Zeithami, 2004:10; Kumar, 2007:5; Donkers, Verhoef & De Jong, 2007:164; Bick, 2009:2). This study aims to explore CLV within the South African health insurance sector, focusing on identifying potential factors impeding the adoption of CLV models in this industry. The study posits that effective customer risk management could amplify the usage of CLV models, thereby broadening the industry's accessibility to a more extensive customer base.

This research is part of a doctoral thesis. The thesis is currently at the research design milestone in preparation for ethical clearance.

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2. Literature Review

The literature review reveals a consistent call for more elaborate CLV modelling and the creation of industry-specific frameworks (Donkers, Verhoef & De Jong, 2007:163-190; Abdoveland, Albadvi & Koosha, 2021:40). Current research underscores the necessity for bespoke approaches to CLV that address the distinct challenges encountered by various sectors (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Bathaei & Poursalimi, 2019:303-322; Berger & Naser, 1998:17; Fader, 2011). This investigation centres on the South African health insurance industry, exploring customer risk as a potential missing element in existing CLV models.

3. Research Design

Employing a quantitative research design, the study will utilise surveys to collect data from approximately 80 South African health insurers, which collectively serve around 7.5 million South Africans (Jacobs, 2022). The surveys will gather information on customer acquisition costs, retention rates, average customer lifespan, profitability, and risk factors, such as health status and claims history. Data analysis will incorporate both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including regression analysis and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The scale instrument will be derived from existing literature.

4. Conclusions, Managerial Implications and Recommendations

At this stage, the research aims to contribute meaningfully to both academic theory and practical applications within the health insurance industry. By highlighting the importance of incorporating customer risk into CLV models, the research should provide valuable insights for health insurers to optimise their marketing strategies and resource allocation. The adoption of a clearer focus on customer risk management to enhance the predictive power of CLV promises to lead to more effective customer relationship management and improved competitive advantage. Additionally, the research aims to establish the genre and strength of the ever-elusive link between CLV and brand equity.

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Dialogic Theory as a Catalyst for Enhanced Strategy Implementation

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Keywords

Dialogic theory;
Dialogue;
Strategy;
strategy implementation.

Abstract

It is critical that organisation be able to implement their strategy successfully, yet 70 percent of strategies fail at attempted implementation. This research proposes that applying the five tenets of dialogic communication to the strategy implementation process, could enhance the chances of success.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The ability of an organisation to implement a well-constructed strategy is critical to its success (Rani, 2019, p. 205). Yet, it has become evident that strategy implementation is a complex subject (Okumus, 2003, p. 871). A considerable amount of literature on strategy management focuses on formulation rather than implementation (Greer, Lusch & Hitt, 2017, p. 138, Safi & Mahmood, 2022, p.1118). While the former is essential, even the most perfectly formulated strategy may fail if not properly implemented. To ensure successful strategy implementation, is necessary that the strategy be communicated to all stakeholders involved in the implementation thereof (hereafter referred to as strategy-implementors) and for all these individuals to understand it.

1.2. Problem Statement

Research indicates that up to 70 percent of all strategies fail upon attempted implementation (Miller, 2001, p. 360). Peter Drucker said: “Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work” (Drucker, 2020), so while strategy formulation is an important part of the process required to realise and maintain a competitive advantage, even the best formulated strategies may fail if not properly implemented. Investigating strategy implementation in isolation is insufficient – a more holistic view is required (Hrebiniak, 2006, p. 12), consequently, it is necessary to consider strategy

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implementation not only in terms of formulation but also in terms of communication to the strategy-implementers. Serfontein-Jordaan and Bornman (2022, pp.67-68), postulate that organisations should engage in dialogue with their investors to ensure the co-creation of meaning and thus better understanding. Based on the aforementioned, the researcher suggests that perhaps engaging in dialogue with the strategy-implementers about the strategy could increase the chances of successful strategy implementation.

1.3. Research objectives

To determine whether organisations engage in dialogue (within the premise of dialogic communication management theory) with their strategy-implementers (internal stakeholders - responsible for strategy implementation), about the strategy. Further, to determine whether organisations engaging in dialogue with their strategy-implementers about the strategy have a better chance at successful strategy implementation.

2. Literature Review

The main differentiating factor of the dialogic theory of communication management is that dialogic engagement places the communicative emphasis on the needs of stakeholders, thus attempting to build genuine relationships with stakeholders, rather than using communication primarily to serve organisational goals (Kent, 2017, p. 2). Dialogue is a specific two-way conversation between an organisation and its stakeholders, whereby the two interacting parties adhere to the following tenets; (i) mutuality, (ii) empathy, (iii) propinquity, (iv) risk, and (v) commitment (Heath, 2013, p. 257).

Dialogue is not merely a communication activity, but instead a communication orientation that recognises stakeholders and which values co-creation of meaning and joint decision-making efforts, which in turn nurtures the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders (Chen *et al.*, 2020, pp. 1-2; Kent & Taylor, 2002).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This study can be classified as an interpretive, multiple-case-study qualitative inquiry into the phenomenon of dialogue in strategy implementation. The research will take place in three phases, consisting of both an empirical and non-empirical component. Although the aim of case study research is not generalisation, the researcher wants the case organisations to be as representative as possible.

4. Preliminary Findings

It is suggested that applying the five tenets of dialogic communication; (i) mutuality, (ii) empathy, (iii) propinquity, (iv) risk, and (v) commitment, to the strategy implementation process, could enhance the chances of success.

5. Managerial Implications

Management should engage in dialogue with strategy-implementers to enhance the co-creation of meaning and joint decision-making efforts, which in turn nurtures the relationship between the parties.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

In the opinion of the research, the dialogic theory of communication management is an insightful, yet underutilised theory in management research. The potential role of dialogic engagement in all aspects of management, not just limited to strategy formulation and implementation, can be considered in future research.

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A Meta-synthesis of Completed Qualitative Research on Employee Wellbeing in the Evolving Workplace

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Keywords

Employee wellbeing;
Evolving workplace;
Consequences considerations;
Qualitative meta-synthesis.

Abstract

In a fast-paced and fast-changing global world of work, employees' expectations and perceptions of wellbeing also evolved. Employee wellbeing can be costly if not addressed and managed effectively. Unaddressed employee wellbeing can lead to multiple challenges affecting organisations' bottom line. The study is a qualitative meta-synthesis on research conducted between 2014 and 2024. The study aims to explore and interpret literature, capture the qualitative perspectives, and logically review and synthesise these perspectives to enhance knowledge and provide deeper and broader insight into the phenomenon and concept of employee wellbeing in the evolving workplace. Key concepts are extracted, and central themes are generated through the findings from the purposively sampled research articles within an organisational context. This paper explores how qualitative meta-synthesis can be applied as an effective research approach to inquiry in HR and business to broaden the understanding of employee expectations and wellbeing in the evolving workplace and organisational consideration of employee expectations and wellbeing.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Workplace and employee wellbeing studies have increased significantly in academia and organisations in the last two decades. (Kun & Gadanecz, 2019). Unaddressed employee wellbeing can lead to unhappiness, unproductivity, absenteeism, burnout, and employee turnover, affecting organisations' bottom line (Senthil, 2021). Similarly, employees could experience increased stress levels and frustration that negatively impact individuals' interpersonal relationships that contribute to a negatively experienced and unhappy work environment. The study aims to examine and interpret purposively

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sampled literature, capture the qualitative perspectives, and logically synthesise these perspectives to enhance knowledge and broader insight into the phenomenon and concept of employee wellbeing in the evolving workplace and deep understanding of individuals' experiences and expectations.

1.2. Problem Statement

Globalisation, digitisation, and a broader generational mix in the workforce changed the face of the workplace over the last years. Although the generational workforce mix contributes positively to multiple views, creative ideas, and solutions, it also brings different workplace expectations in a changing workplace. Consequently, organisations and organisational leaders must critically understand their workforce and rethink office environments, benefits, and employee wellbeing. (<https://www.marshmma.com>). Therefore, although qualitative inquiry is applied widely within human and social sciences, business and HRM studies often rely on quantitative studies to measure human behaviour in the workplace. Human behaviour is more complex, and meta-synthesis applied in these study fields may contribute to a deeper and broader understanding of the employee wellbeing phenomena through common themes that develop from the findings of the purposively sampled research.

1.3. Research objectives

The objectives of the meta-synthesis are threefold, namely to meta-synthesize purposively sampled research studies on the phenomenon of employees' wellbeing in the evolving workplace, identify and interpret recurring and common aspects of employees' wellbeing in the evolving workplace in the conducted studies and evaluate and interpret the potential consequences and consideration for the organisation and individuals of this phenomenon in the evolving workplace.

2. Literature Review

Employee wellbeing is also not a new concept or workplace phenomenon. Employee wellbeing in the workplace contributes significantly to personal wellbeing, further contributing to thriving societies (<https://www.nuffieldhealth.com/downloads/wellbeing-at-work-a-review-of-the-literature> & Steel et al., 2018). Research on workplace wellness and wellbeing is widespread, and in the last two decades, studies on workplace and employee wellbeing have increased significantly in academia and organisations. (Kun and Gadanez, 2019) The importance of common wellbeing manifests in the United Nations Sustainable Goals, goal 3, "Good health and wellbeing" (<https://www.un.org/en/exhibits/page/sdgs-17-goals-transform-world>). From a historical perspective, the understanding of employee wellbeing was often associated with mental disease and mental

disorders, and thus, the absence of which was considered a sign of wellness (Richard A. Burns dissertation, 2007). This perception of wellbeing evolved over the years and researchers proposed that wellbeing is a broader concept and phenomenon with a multidimensional construct (Parent-Lamarche and Marchand, 2019; Kun and Gadanecz, 2019). Employee perception of wellbeing has evolved over the years, and individuals want a more work-life balance and contented live-work environments (Senthil, 2021).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

A qualitative meta-synthesis design is applied due to its careful and logical approach to analyse data across qualitative studies and its acknowledged efficacy in reviewing and combining qualitative literature findings. (Smith, Fox, and Trayner, 2015). The qualitative meta-synthesis approach purposely and coherently examines data from qualitative studies (Erwin, Brotherson, and Summers, 2011). This approach implements an interpretive process to integrate and compare findings from existing qualitative studies to create significant meaning (Lachal, Revah-Levy, Orri, and Moro1, 2021). The outcome of meta-synthesis contributes to a shared understanding of specific phenomena, and phenomena must be understood in context and association. The phenomenon of employee wellbeing in the workplace is reviewed and synthesized globally and in various career fields. Ten to twelve purposively chosen articles included in a meta-synthesis are sufficient to create adequate deep meaning and validity (Chrastina, 2018). The selection criteria included peer-reviewed and purposively sampled published articles, industry reports, and phenomenon-specific industry journal articles. These articles were searched based on specific terms: (1) qualitative research, (2) employee wellbeing, (3) Impact of employee wellbeing, (4) new ways of work expectations, (5) consequences of new ways of work; and (6) HR practices in changing workplace. The sampled articles' minimum inclusion criteria are to have a clearly defined qualitative methodology, address employee wellbeing in the workplace, be written and published in English to be incorporated in the synthesis, and be published between 2014 and 2024. Articles are examined for quality to consider their contribution to this meta-synthesis and uphold scientific rigour. Data extraction and analysis include critical findings of employee wellbeing in the workplace that draw each study's central concepts and evaluate them to key themes in the findings. Data findings of themes and concepts will be co-coded by an independent coder.

4. Preliminary Findings

Although the study is in the early stages of work in progress, this meta-synthesis may highlight essential knowledge and possible employee expectations and considerations associated with employee wellness in the evolving workplace. A brief overview of selected research posits available resources, flexibility, value, and purpose as contributors to employee wellbeing in the evolving world of work.

5. Managerial Implications

The findings could potentially contribute to guidelines that management and HRM could consider in reevaluating the evolving workplace and the evolving workplace mix, employee expectations, and ways of work.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The debate and research on employee wellbeing in the workplace and, lately, the evolving workplace encouraged this meta-synthesis to discover a broader understanding of this phenomenon's reality and the problem. Despite much research on this phenomenon, it is reasonable to wonder how the contribution of all the assimilated knowledge benefits real life. Companies must truly understand their work environments, workforce mix, and employee expectations from the evolving workplace before implementing a wellness programme that includes employee wellbeing.

The meta-synthesis produces an inclusive and global perspective on employee wellbeing in the evolving workplace. Still, due to time constraints, only a selection of available literature and resources was accessed to search for evidence. Future research should include various resources and consider continental and specific career fields. An in-depth understanding of the phenomenon may significantly contribute to business and HRM practices, policies, and labour law. A qualitative model to facilitate the constructive management of employee wellbeing in the workplace may contribute, and qualitative meta-synthesis contributions may further inform questionnaires and models for quantifiable studies of this phenomenon.

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Perceptions of Valuing Diversity and Inclusion in South African Retail Stores

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Keywords

Valuing Diversity;
Inclusion;
Retail Stores.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of employees in retail stores on valuing diversity and inclusion. The research will be conducted in the Eden District Municipality of the Western Cape. Online and hand delivered questionnaires will be used for the data collection. It is envisaged that that this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on diversity management in South Africa. The concepts of valuing diversity and inclusion provide a practical approach for implementing diversity management initiatives. The study therefore has a potential to promote social cohesion in the workplace.

1. Introduction

Valuing diversity is a widespread phenomenon that plays a massive role in the success of a business (Wong, 2023). Furthermore, Febrian, & Solihin, (2024) concluded that having a diversified culture in the workplace is paramount to cross team collaboration and achievement.

1.1. Background

The history of diversity in South African retail stores is closely intertwined with the country's complex socio-political landscape. Prior to the dismantling of apartheid in the early 1990s, South Africa was characterised by a system of racial segregation and discrimination, which had a significant impact on all aspects of society, including the retail sector. With the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, there has been a gradual shift towards diversity in retail stores.

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1.2. Problem Statement

While progress has been made in creating diverse workplaces, it is important to acknowledge that challenges of unfairness and inequalities still exist within the South African companies. Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion are ongoing, with a focus on addressing systemic barriers and creating equal opportunities for all individuals (Swartz, Palermo, Masur, & Aberg, 2019).

1.3. Research objectives.

- To examine the extent of understanding the concept of valuing diversity and inclusion among employees in South African retail stores.
- To examine the challenges faced by employees regarding valuing diversity and inclusion in South African retail Stores.
- To investigate a model of valuing diversity in South African retail stores.

2. Literature Review

Valuing diversity in South African retail stores is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic business decision. To effectively value diversity, retail stores can implement various strategies. By embracing and celebrating diversity, retail stores can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for both employees and customers, ultimately contributing to their long-term success (Cundiff, Nadler and Swan, 2009). The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of valuing diversity and inclusion in South African retail stores and how this impact contributes to a stable business environment.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

Quantitative research design.

4. Preliminary Findings

None

5. Managerial Implications

This research contributes to the body of knowledge on diversity management, creating social cohesion for business to thrive.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The study will be conducted in retail stores.

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“Greenwashing”: Unpacking the Legal Framework in South Africa

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Keywords

Corporate responsibility;
Compliance;
Greenwashing;
Legal Remedies.

Abstract

Greenwashing, the practice of misleading stakeholders about a company’s environmental practices, has become prevalent as socio-environmental issues gain prominence. Companies often claim eco-friendly operations, practices and/or products to appeal to investors and consumers, but these claims are often exaggerated or false. The paper explores greenwashing, its forms, and the associated risks such as reputational damage and legal consequences. It examines the South African legal framework comprising current legislation, common law and compliance standards, including, consumer law, advertising standards, competition law and the law of delict to combat greenwashing. A review of the current regulatory framework in South Africa, reveals that despite the lack of explicit anti-greenwashing laws, existing laws offer mechanisms for litigation and regulation against greenwashing practices.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Socio-environmental issues, particularly the climate crisis, are at the forefront of public consciousness (Pears *et al*, 2023). Investors, consumers, governments, corporate customers and civil society are therefore paying closer attention and are increasingly putting pressure on companies to disclose sufficient and accurate information about their environmental and sustainability credentials, activities, practices and products (Chen *et al*, 2020). To this end, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Economic, Social and Governance (ESG) obligations duties and reporting (Krantz & Jonker, 2024; Rapson & Novotny, 2022; Gatti *et al*, 2019) is gaining importance among business leaders. Companies are expected to integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their

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interaction with their stakeholders, as is underscored by the National Environmental Management Acts and, which regulate *inter alia* emissions and waste management. As part of their environmental management many businesses have responded by aligning their business objectives and strategies, operations and products and/or services to becoming more eco-friendly by reducing waste, cutting emissions, using renewable energy, and recycling among other efforts (Volschenk *et al*, 2022).

This growing demand among different stakeholders and the possibility of capitalising on their environmental management efforts and on the green markets, has driven companies to develop ‘green marketing’ strategies to showcase their good corporate brand and social responsibility. In simple terms, ‘green marketing’ refers to the practice of developing and advertising products and services based on their real or perceived environmental sustainability (Volschenk *et al*, 2022). Examples may include advertising the reduced emissions associated with a product’s manufacturing process, or the use of post-consumer recycled materials for a product’s packaging. Another form of green marketing is by marketing a company as being environmentally-conscious by donating a portion of their sales process to environmental initiatives.

1.2. Problem Statement

The flipside of green marketing is a phenomenon called ‘greenwashing.’ Greenwashing is not a novel idea or practice. This phenomenon is present and has been discussed by researchers from several areas, including business, communication, economy, production engineering, social sciences, law and environmental management.

Broadly speaking, greenwashing is about misrepresentation, misstatement, and false or misleading practices in relation to a company’s ESG credentials. Precisely what constitutes greenwashing will vary according to the type of product and service, the different sectors, regulators and jurisdictions. While greenwashing is an ill-defined concept, it is increasingly a source of litigation (United Nations COP26 and COP27 Summit) and regulatory scrutiny. This unethical practice carries a range of overlapping risks for companies, such as reputational, regulatory and litigations risks (Kennedy *et al*, 2022; Pears *et al*, 2023). Greenwashing may lead South African companies to face civil liability claims before the courts or face a wide range of other regulatory complaints if the greenwashing amounts to a breach of reporting standards, constitutes false advertising, violates consumer protection laws, or amounts to unfair competition to name but a few.

1.3. Research objectives

- To provide an overview of the concept of ‘green washing’, highlighting the usual identifiers.
- To highlight the risks associated with green washing.

- To unpack different legal avenues and remedies against greenwashing, specifically in terms of (a) the Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008; (b) the South African National Standards as developed by the SABS; (c) advertising standards (d) competition law; and (e) the common law of delict.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The concept of greenwashing

The term, ‘green washing’ arguably originates back to the 1980’s where it was first coined by an environmental researcher and activist, Jay Westerveld to describe a practice in the hospitality industry claiming that the voluntary reuse of towels by guests as requested by the hotel in question, was part of the industries’ water conservation strategy. However, evidently, this claim by the hotel in question was made without disclosing that it was in the middle of an expansion project located near and impacting on a sensitive island ecosystem.

Greenwashing has different definitions (Lyon & Montgomery), and forms (De Freitas Netto *et al*, 2019) depending on the product, service, regulator and jurisdiction (Pears *et al*). However, at its core, greenwashing involves two main behaviours simultaneously:

Firstly, making an unsubstantiated claim to deceive consumers into believing that a company’s products are environmentally friendly or that they have a greater positive environmental impact than they do. Secondly, greenwashing also entails an element of selective disclosure. In other words, companies are also selective in the information they disclose thereby misdirecting stakeholders (Tateishi, 2017; Lyon & Maxwell, 2011; Marquis *et al*, 2016).

For example, greenwashing also involves a practice where companies emphasise or disproportionately reveal the sustainable or environmentally friendly aspects of a practice or product (positive information regarding the company or product’s environmental performance) to overshadow, obscure or retain the disclosure of negative information about the company’s environmental performance such as, the company’s involvement in environmentally damaging practices. (Marquis *et al*, 2016). Some common advertising examples include (TerraChoice, 2010) using nature-based imagery or branding on product packaging and in advertisements which implies sustainability, but which in facts harms the environment; using eco-conscious buzzwords or intentionally vague language that has no legal weight, such as ‘natural’, ‘biodegradable’, ‘ozone- or eco-friendly’ which does not disclose the company’s specific sustainability practices; the use of official-looking labels, such as features a recycling symbol, by a company without actually reducing its waster in the supply chain or companies touting their latest sustainability initiatives to misdirect stakeholders from their harmful activities or making ambitious climate pledges.

Broadly, greenwashing is therefore about misrepresentation, misstatement, and false or misleading practices in relation to ESG credentials. This unethical practice carries a range of overlapping risks for companies, such as reputational, regulatory and litigations risks. (Pears *et al*, 2023).

2.2. Legal recourse against greenwashing

In comparison to other jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United States of America, Singapore, Hong Kong and Brazil, and apart from the voluntary Sustainability and Disclosure Guidance, released by the JSE in 2002, there is no explicit legislative framework, laws or policies in force in the South African context against greenwashing *per se*. However, greenwashing may lead South African companies to face civil liability claims before the courts or face a wide range of other regulatory complaints if the greenwashing amounts to a breach of reporting standards, constitutes false advertising, violates consumer protection laws, or amounts to unfair competition to name but a few. To this end, it is possible that directors of companies will face personal consequences for failing to act in good faith or in the best interest of the company. Moreover, in the age of social media, allegations of greenwashing will likely be broadcasted locally and internationally, potentially creating reputational damages for the organizations involved.

To this end, this paper aims to unpack the several legal avenues for recourse against greenwashing. While there is no explicit anti-greenwashing legislation, there are a number of key pieces of legislation that may be used to regulate or litigate against cases of greenwashing in South Africa namely: (a) The Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008 (CPA) (Msimang & Tucker, 2023) falling under the responsibility of the National Consumer Commission (NCC); (b) South African National Standards as developed by the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS); (c) the Code of Advertising Practice under the auspices of the South African Advertising Regulatory Board (Rapson & Versfeld, 2022); (d) Competition law (comprising the common law and the Competition Act 89 of 1998) and (e) the law of delict (common law).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This research will employ a qualitative approach using desk-based research to explore the different legal avenues under current South African legislation to combat greenwashing practices. This involves a review of existing legislative measures such as the CPA and the Competition Act, and other compliance standards such as the South African National Standards and Code of Advertising Practice under different governmental agencies. It also considers the common law of delict as a possible legal avenue.

4. Managerial implications

For managers, the paper underscores the importance of substantiating environmental claims with accurate and verifiable data, which in turn requires rigorous internal and external audits, to avoid legal and reputational risks associated with greenwashing. Managers must stay informed about evolving regulations, engage actively with stakeholders and integrate genuine sustainability into business operations. By fostering open communication and demonstrating authentic and realistic goals to sustainability, companies may build trust and gain a competitive edge in the market.

5. Conclusions

Greenwashing presents a significant challenge in the corporate world as companies strive to meet the growing demand for sustainability from stakeholders. While green marketing offers opportunities for enhancing corporate image and capitalising on eco-friendly trends, it also carries the risk of legal, reputational, and regulatory consequences if claims are misleading or false. This paper highlights the critical need for transparency and accuracy in environmental claims. Depending on the nature or form of greenwashing, there are already a range of legal recourses and remedies available in the South African context to combat this unethical practice. Accordingly, the paper provides an overview of the various legal avenues found in legislation, the common law and compliance standards to combat greenwashing. Despite the lack of explicit anti-greenwashing laws, the existing regulatory framework in South Africa arguably offers suitable and sufficient mechanisms for litigation and regulation against greenwashing practices.

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National Environmental Management Act: Air Quality Act 39 of 2004.

Nomological Validity of Moral Elevation

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Keywords

Moral Elevation;
Prosocial;
Donation.

Abstract

This research reports findings on measurement aspects of moral elevation. The purpose of this study is to test the nomological validity of the ME construct. Specifically, we study the extent to which ME mediates the impact of other emotions on pro-social behavior.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Moral elevation (ME) is (Haidt 2000; Haidt, Algoe, Meijer, Tam, and Chandler 2000) “...a warm, uplifting feeling that people experience when they see unexpected acts of human goodness, kindness, and compassion. It makes a person want to help others and to become a better person himself or herself.” ME has had limited success across multiple disciplines (cf. Ellithorpe et al. (2015); Romani, Grappi, and Bagozzi 2016) as the measurement issues have not been fully vetted. Singh et al. (2023) have developed a pure measure of ME and demonstrated its internal consistency and reliability.

1.2. Problem Statement

While reliability and internal consistency of the ME measure has been shown, research has yet to demonstrate the nomological validity of the construct. Our goal in this research is to build on the work of Singh et al. (2023) and to test the antecedents and consequences of the ME.

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1.3. Research objectives

The purpose of this study is to test the nomological validity of the ME construct. Specifically, we study the extent to which ME mediates the impact of other emotions on pro-social behavior.

2. Literature Review

ME—conceived as a discrete positive emotion, distinct from happiness—is, like other emotions, engendered by appraisal of a situation (a triggering event), and is phenomenologically experienced by the individual, inducing physiological changes, and leading to action tendencies as desire to become a better person, emulate the moral exemplar and want to help the needy.

Singh et al. (2023) have developed a pure measure of ME and demonstrated its internal consistency and reliability. However, the issue of nomological validity of ME has not been investigated. Understanding this aspect is critical to better understand the ME construct and how best to encourage prosocial behavior.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

In one Study—with 275 Mturkers (132 female, age: range=19-76, M=36)—participants were presented with the Amish story and their responses to the items were recorded on a seven-point scale as in Singh et al. (2023). A structural model is developed and tested. Several alternatives are considered to develop a richer understanding of the nomological validity of ME.

4. Preliminary Findings

Based on Singh et al. (2023), the following measures and constructs were used to determine the nomological validity of the ME. The constructs and items (and descriptive statistics) retained for further analysis are:

- *Affect*: cheerful; happy; joyful; upbeat; pleased; gloomy; down; depressed
- *Positive feelings* (5): “happy,” “cheerful,” “pleased,” “joyful,” “upbeat,”
- *Negative feelings* (4): “gloomy,” “down,” “depressed,” “sad,”
- *Compassion* (8): compassion for others; concerned for others' suffering; sympathy for others; soft-hearted; tender feeling for others; kindness towards others, affection towards others, goodwill towards others
- *Awe* (4): awe; wonder; amazement; astonishment
- *Moral Elevation* (6): deeply moved; touched; warm; uplifted; elevated; exhilarated

- *Inspired* (3): Inspired; motivated; prompted
- *Admiration* (4): admiration; compliment; praise; respect
- *Faith in Humanity* (5): “There is still some good in the world; People are really good; The world is full of kindness and generosity; The actions of most people are admirable; Most people are nice.

A CFA was conducted, and the average variance extracted (AVE > .50) and alpha estimates (>.70) for the constructs were acceptable and adequately reproduced the data: (loading ts > 2.58). Discriminant validity of the scales was assessed by testing the construct correlations for unity (Bagozzi and Phillips 1982). Following the confirmation of the measure psychometrics, several structural models were developed and tested. Results for these models will be presented.

5. Managerial Implications

There are nearly 2 million non-profit organizations in the U.S. alone raising trillions of dollars, of which nearly three-quarter comes from individuals. An effective and efficient fund-raising process is critical to the growth of these activities. ME appears to be a critical factor in this process and a better understanding of the duration and inter-linkages with other constructs will deliver success.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The current research has confirmed a valid scale for measuring ME and tested the nomological validity of the construct. ME is a widely studied construct across multiple disciplines. Plans are to extend ME to include non-western cultures and better understand the antecedents of ME.

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The B2B Sharing Economy Ecosystem: Co-creating Shared Value for Business And Society

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Keywords

B2B sharing economy;
Sharing economy;
Ecosystem;
Co-creation;
Creating shared value.

Abstract

The sharing economy (SE) has received significant attention from both the public and academics; however, there is still a lack of research on the SE in the business-to-business (B2B) context and particularly from an ecosystem perspective. The objective of this study was to examine a B2B SE ecosystem from a multi-stakeholder perspective. This study followed a case study design focusing on a case in Bergen, Norway that facilitates resource sharing for businesses operating in the ocean industries. A combination of observation, interviews, and document review was used to gather data. 21 interviews were conducted. The research findings provide insight into the dynamics and complexities of the B2B SE from an ecosystem perspective, and how social, financial and environmental value is co-created for both business participants and society more broadly. Considering the limited research in this field, these research findings form a basis for discussion, critique and/or support of future research.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The sharing economy (SE) has significantly impacted the modern economy and society over the past decade (Laamanen, Pfeffer, Rong & Van de Ven, 2018; Mont, Palgan, Bradley & Zvolkska, 2020). Due to its rapid growth and impact on existing industries, the SE has attracted a great deal of attention, becoming a topic of interest amongst academics, business and regulators (Grifoni *et al.*, 2018; Mont *et al.* 2020). However, existing research has predominantly focused on the peer-to-peer (P2P) context (Gesing, 2017).

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1.2. Problem Statement

While there's extensive literature from a consumer perspective, studies on the business-to-business (B2B) SE remain scarce. Moreover, existing research on the SE has primarily focused on the triadic relationship among platforms, users, and providers, which does not adequately reflect the complex interactions and diverse stakeholders involved. Recognising these limitations, there is a growing demand for research that adopts a broader ecosystem and multi-stakeholder perspective to understand the full range of interactions and value creation in the SE (Halvorsen *et al.*, 2021; Tsvetkova, 2020; Laamanen *et al.*, 2018), especially in underexplored contexts such as in the case of the B2B SE.

1.3. Research objectives

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the SE from a multi-stakeholder and ecosystem perspective to identify the key actors, activities, and resources of an ecosystem, to understand the distribution of value within the B2B SE ecosystem.

2. Literature Review

Several researchers have noted that a systems perspective would offer a valuable addition to the SE literature (Tsvetkova, 2020; Laamanen, Pfeffer, Rong & Van de Ven, 2018). For instance, Halvorsen *et al.* (2021), state that investigating the SE from a multi-stakeholder and ecosystem perspective that considers the role of providers, consumers, platforms, regulators, and third parties would enhance our knowledge of the phenomenon. Business ecosystems, composed of interconnected organizations and stakeholders, are primarily focused on collaboratively generating value (Götz, 2021). Value creation and co-creation are central themes in business ecosystem research and are incorporated in the current study to explain value creation in the B2B SE ecosystem context.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This study followed a case study design (Yin's, 2018). The analysis in this study is based on a case in Bergen, Norway that facilitates resource sharing for businesses operating in the ocean industries. A combination of observation, interviews, and document review was used to gather data. 21 interviews were conducted. The interview recordings were transcribed, and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted using MAXQDA 24. The Ecosystem Pie Model (EPM) is used as a tool to map the key actors, activities, and resources in the ecosystem for understanding the distribution of value within an ecosystem (Talmar *et al.*, 2020).

4. Preliminary Findings

This research uncovered several interesting findings regarding the complexities and interactions between the actors associated with the B2B SE ecosystem. The research findings demonstrate how B2B SE facilitators act as orchestrators bringing different actors together, promoting collaboration and resource sharing. Facilitating the collaboration between these actors has the potential to enable value cocreation amongst the stakeholders within the B2B SE ecosystem network. In terms of the value proposition, we find that the B2B SE ecosystem has the potential to create not only economic and social value for the actors included in the ecosystem, but also value for society more broadly through ecological benefits. Thus, we argue that the B2B SE can be related to the CSV concept (Porter & Kramer, 2011) as it involves creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society.

5. Managerial Implications

This study provides insight into the dynamics and complexities of the B2B SE from an ecosystem perspective. This study provides practical insight for companies either currently or seeking to participate in the B2B SE, as well as for SE facilitators, policymakers, and regulators.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Considering the limited research in this field, these research findings form a basis for discussion, critique and/or support of future research. To gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics within this ecosystem, further research employing different methodologies is necessary. Longitudinal or experimental research designs, for example, could provide a more comprehensive view of the dynamics at play in the B2B SE.

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Responding to the Changing World of Work: Career Crafting as a Graduate Attribute

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Keywords

Business Education;
Career crafting;
Curriculum;
Graduate attributes.

Abstract

Due to the continuous changes in the world of work, it is paramount to rethink the way we think about careers. Careers are no longer seen as static but as continuously developing and changing. Career crafting represents this proactive view of looking at careers. In order to prepare business school students for this dynamic work environment, career crafting should be incorporated as a graduate attribute in business school curriculums. This paper explores the attributes associated with career crafting and proposes ways to incorporate career crafting into business education curriculums.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The world of work is continuously changing with various sources listing the impact of 4IR and Covid as driving forces. The Fourth Industrial Revolution introduced changes related to automation and AI that placed emphasis on upskilling and reskilling. When Covid hit, it led to further changes related to remote working and flexible work arrangements (Keshishi, 2023).

These macro influences are driving forces that change how we work and the type of positions that are important to organisations. Long gone are the days when you trained for one career. The changing work environment requires a more dynamic view of careers. Careers are no longer the responsibility of the employer but are seen as a dual responsibility between the employee and employer (Balakhtar, Bondarchuk & Kazakova, 2024). These proactive behaviours are associated with career crafting.

Career crafting can be seen as an essential skill in the skillset of working adults. While various graduate attributes are developed and included in curriculums, information related to career development is seldom seen as a graduate attribute or incorporated into the curriculum in any other way. This information is of paramount importance to working adults furthering their studies at Business Schools.

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1.2. Problem Statement

The problem is that very little information is included in curriculums to prepare students for the changing world of work related to their careers. Without these skills to navigate the continuously changing world of work, students will struggle to be successful in their careers.

1.3. Research objectives

Primary objective:

- To explore career crafting as a graduate attribute in business education curriculums

Secondary objectives:

- To explore the attributes related to career crafting that support the development of career crafting behaviours
- To propose ways in which career crafting can be incorporated into business education curriculums

2. Literature Review

Career crafting

Career crafting is defined by Tims and Akkermans (2020) as the proactive behaviour that individuals perform to self-manage their career and that is aimed at attaining optimal person-career fit.

Various theoretical perspectives are used in career crafting, namely Conservation of resources theory and Career construction theory. Conservation of resources theory looks at career crafting through a resource lens while career construction focuses on the adaptive responses of individuals (Ge, Gao & Yu, 2023).

Antecedents of career crafting lie on various levels, including individual and contextual factors. Individual factors include career planning and decision-making demands that lead to reflection on careers, adaptability and career competencies. From a contextual perspective, the learning value was identified and from an organisational level, learning opportunities and supervisor support played a role. From a family perspective, support from family and spouse is important, as well as emotional and financial support. External factors like social, cultural and technological factors also influence career-crafting behaviours (Balakhtar et al. 2024).

Graduate attributes

Graduate attributes “include, amongst others, ensuring the inculcation of relevant skills, competencies, knowledge and attitudes essential for success in the workplace, regionally, nationally, continentally and

globally. This is particularly important, given that the current context demands that a graduate should be resilient and adaptable and able to navigate complex, uncertain environments and futures to be able to make an impactful contribution to societal and economic development” (UFS, 2024). The purpose of graduate attributes is to ensure that graduates are skilled and can manage the challenges of the modern work of the world. While the focus of graduate attributes is traditionally on undergraduate programmes (Fuller et al. 2023), Business Schools have a responsibility to prepare their students for this changing world of work, especially related to continuous career development and future career aspirations.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This is a theoretical paper consisting of a rapid literature review and application of the information to business education.

4. Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings are:

- Very little research is done on graduate attributes in postgraduate curriculums
- Career crafting should be considered an important graduate attribute for working adults in a business school environment
- Related attributes are amongst others networking, relationship building, adaptability and career competencies (Balakhtar et al. 2024)
- Ways to think about incorporating career crafting in a curriculum would be career workshops, mentoring, academic coaching and formal courses.

5. Managerial Implications

The inclusion of career crafting as a graduate attribute provides graduates with a competitive advantage to navigate the changing world of work in their own careers.

Career crafting ensures proactive behaviours so that employees are considering changes in the work environment and proactively determining the potential impact of these on their current career and proactively addressing it.

Career crafting expects continuous scanning of the work environment and continuous learning.

Career crafting behaviour has a positive impact, it leads to higher job satisfaction, employee engagement and well-being (Balakhtar et al., 2024).

Most research focuses on undergraduate graduate attributes (Faller et al. 2023), and more research is needed on the career needs of working adults at business schools.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The rapid review provides a foundation for further research on career crafting as a graduate attribute, and further research is needed to focus holistically on graduate attributes suited for a changing world of work for working adults.

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Financial Reporting During Business Rescue Proceedings: An Affected Party Perspective

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Keywords

Business rescue;
Decision-usefulness;
Financial reporting;
Stewardship.

Abstract

The research paper focuses on financial reporting during Business Rescue proceedings from the perspective of affected parties. It aims to address the information needs of stakeholders, including equity investors, lenders, and other creditors, during such proceedings. By examining decision-usefulness and stewardship roles in financial reporting, the study highlights the importance of providing both forward-looking and historical-oriented information to assess management's performance and the company's financial viability. The paper underscores the gap between current reporting practices and stakeholders' requirements, calling for a stakeholder-inclusive financial reporting model tailored specifically for Business Rescue situations.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The King IV report underscores the pivotal role of stakeholders in governance, emphasizing the need to consider their needs and interests (Deloitte 2016). Financial statements are a critical source of information for stakeholders, including investors, lenders, and creditors (IASB 2022). The Companies Act is silent on the continuous provision of comprehensive financial information to affected parties in a business rescue. Sections 132(3)(a) and (b) of the Companies Act require progress reports if business rescue proceedings have not been completed within three months (Republic of South 2008). However, these reports are not required to present comprehensive financial information.

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1.2. Problem Statement

Either the Act assumes that users do not need comprehensive financial information, or it is an administrative oversight by the legislature, contrary to the King IV recommendation. The problem is that we do not know the needs of affected parties in a business rescue.

1.3. Research objectives

The objective is to establish whether the users of the financial statements of a company under business rescue still prefer forward-looking financial information (i.e., decision-usefulness), historical-type financial information (i.e., stewardship), or a combination of both.

2. Literature Review

For a financially healthy company, equity investors, particularly those involved in discounted cash flow (DCF) valuations, seek forward-looking information to evaluate management performance (Cascino et al. 2013: 24). On the other hand, lenders, primarily banking institutions, focus on assessing credit risk and the likelihood of a company meeting its financial obligations (Cascino et al. 2013: 8). Armstrong, Guay and Weber (2010: 212-13) emphasize the importance of conservative accounting for lenders, highlighting the preference for historical cost measurements and the timely recognition of losses. Elsewhere the need to adapt financial reporting to accurately reflect changes in an entity's financial position in the context of companies undergoing restructuring was noted (AICPA 1990: 19,274-75). Understanding the distinct information requirements of equity investors, lenders, and trade creditors is crucial for effective financial reporting, especially in situations like business rescue, where stakeholders' needs may evolve.

3. Research design and methodology

The study uses a simplified Mixed Methods Research (MMR) design and a pragmatism paradigm (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2016: 169) to gather qualitative and quantitative data for a comprehensive understanding. Using a non-probability quota sampling approach (Bryman 2012: 201), quantitative categorical data was through survey questions, and non-numerical qualitative data was through open-ended questions from knowledgeable respondents (Hofstee 2006: 122). The two strands were subsequently integrated, with the qualitative findings strengthening the quantitative results (Creswell 2009: 4).

4. Findings

The survey aimed to determine if the information needs of user groups during business rescue align with decision-usefulness and stewardship. Figure 1 shows that both perspectives remain important during business rescue.

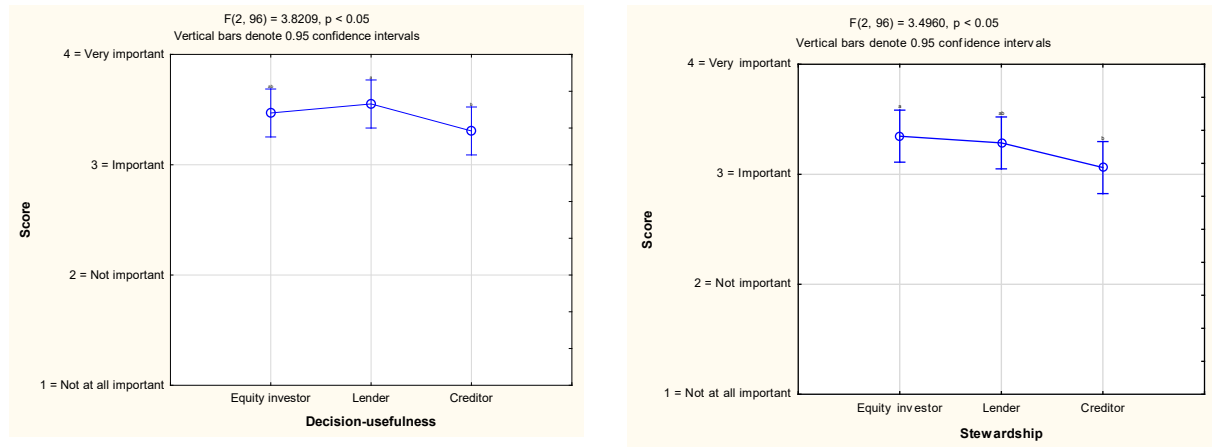


Figure 1: VEPAC on the decision-usefulness and Stewardship roles

Source: Authors' construction.

On the question of why the respondents regard the Decision usefulness and Stewardship roles of accounting information for a company under business rescue as important, the following themes came to light:

Table 1: Themes on the Decision-usefulness and Stewardship roles

Theme	Perspective	Example	Role: Decision-usefulness or Stewardship?
Decision-making	EI; L; C	To hold or sell shares, or invest more, including approving or rejecting the business rescue plan.	Both
Assess the company's future	EI; L; C	To determine the viability, sustainability, and restructuring needs of the company.	Both
Current financial information	EI; L; C	Causes of business rescue. Financial position and solvency. Is the company a going concern?	Both
Valuation purposes	EI	Determine the value drivers and the value of the investment.	Decision-usefulness
Duty and	EI; L; C	To assess how management executed its	Stewardship

Theme	Perspective	Example	Role: Decision-usefulness or Stewardship?
Decision-making	EI; L; C	To hold or sell shares, or invest more, including approving or rejecting the business rescue plan.	Both
Assess the company's future	EI; L; C	To determine the viability, sustainability, and restructuring needs of the company.	Both
Current financial information	EI; L; C	Causes of business rescue. Financial position and solvency. Is the company a going concern?	Both
Valuation purposes	EI	Determine the value drivers and the value of the investment.	Decision-usefulness
governance		fiduciary duties and governance responsibilities.	
Key: EI = Equity investor; L = Lender; C = Creditor			

Source: Own compilation

5. Managerial Implications

The research suggests that companies undergoing business rescue proceedings should consider stakeholders' continued information needs and provide forward-looking decision-usefulness information as well as historical-oriented financial information to judge management's use of the resources entrusted to them.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Stakeholders in business rescue scenarios have diverse and evolving information needs. The status reports post-filing for business rescue may not fully meet the distinct requirements of stakeholders, such as equity investors, lenders, and trade creditors. The continued information needed during business rescue proceedings calls for reconsidering business rescue status reporting practices to provide decision-useful information while also reflecting the company's historical performance and stewardship of resources. Future research should focus on developing a stakeholder-inclusive financial reporting model tailored explicitly to business rescue scenarios.

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A Network Analysis on Sustainable Trade: A South African Versus Global View

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Keywords

Sustainable trade;
South Africa;
Network analysis;
VOXviewer.

Abstract

The work-in-progress paper presents a network analysis of research on sustainable trade on Scopus, comparing the findings with a network analysis of research on sustainable trade in a South African context. VOXviewer software is used for this purpose. The paper aims to identify areas for further research within the field of sustainable trade in the South African context. Given the importance of research on sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals, the limited research on this topic in South Africa serves as justification for the study. The findings point to the need for human interpretation of VOXviewer results. In addition, while at first glance there seems to be commonality between the global literature and the South African literature on sustainable trade, if the VOXviewer results are examined more critically, different priorities and gaps in research on sustainable trade in South Africa versus the broader research field on this topic become apparent. These findings are converted into recommendations for environmental management and government policy making.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sustainability is a significant area of focus in the academic literature. The Scopus bibliography reveals more than 339 000 articles on this topic. The importance of sustainability is also encapsulated in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations 2015). Goal 17 specifically speaks of three targets, namely equitable trade, increasing exports of developing countries, and ensuring market access for least developed nations. This is a Work-in-Progress paper and the details of the findings will be presented in the presentation at the IBC conference.

1.2 Problem statement

Unpacking the research on sustainable trade, a search of academic bibliographies such as Scopus and Web of Science revealed only a limited number of articles – in the region of 200 in each instance – a far cry from the number of articles on sustainability in general, mentioned above. When narrowing the focus to South Africa, only eight articles were identified. This apparent lack of focus on sustainable trade in a South African context, serves as information gap and justification for this study.

1.3 Research objectives

The aim of the study was to identify areas for further research within the field of sustainable trade in the South African context, using a network analysis methodology.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

When it comes to defining 'sustainable trade', the Trade for Development Centre (TDC) in Belgium defines it as the commercial exchange of goods and services that is also committed to generating widespread economic value, reducing poverty and inequality, as well as preserving and reusing environmental resources (TDC 2020). This definition underscores the fact that sustainable trade has three distinct 'legs' namely, a 'social' leg, an 'economic' leg and an 'environmental' leg. Their definition does not directly speak to global trade, but other sources do (Hufbauer, Fickling, & Wong 2011:2; Birbeck, 2021:5-6). Leal-Arcas, Papdea and Richardson (2019:210-211) in a widely cited article on sustainable trade, have a specific heading entitled 'defining sustainable trade', but regrettably the authors do not actual provide

a specific definition of sustainable trade. Instead, they discuss the characteristics of trade that render it sustainable. To this end, they discuss the SDG that has the closest link to trade, namely the last goal, Goal 17 which is entitled "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development" (United Nations 2015:29).

Given the importance of the SDGs in guiding sustainable development across the globe, it is worth noting that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stresses the importance of international trade in bolstering global sustainability. The earlier work of Perkin (1997), however, raised concerns then already of the reality of focusing only on the economic contribution of trade to sustainability, without considering the ecological or social impact of trade. This myopic view only on the one leg of sustainability and not the others, she posits, is likely to be harmful to sustainability. With the research objective in mind, this study strives to distil the key research areas in the academic literature on sustainable trade using text-based network analysis. The method to achieve this objective is outlined in the next section.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method was thus threefold. Given the objective of the study, namely, to identify then key areas of current research in the field of *sustainable trade*, the first step was to explore the academic literature referred to above on sustainable trade in general. The Scopus and WoS bibliographies were used as the primary source. A text-based network analysis methodology was then used to achieve this objective, using VOSviewer as the analysis tool (Van Eck & Waltman 2023). VOSviewer is a widely used network analysis tool in academic research with over 6 482 articles mentioning this tool in the Scopus database. As a second step, the literature on sustainable trade within the South African context, was examined in a similar way using VOSviewer. This analysis also highlighted the different categories of research on sustainable trade, but in this instance, from a South African perspective. The third step was to compare these two results to see how they differed and where opportunities existed for further research in the South African context. Each of these steps are discussed in more detail below.

The process of extracting the data from Scopus and WoS searches, then cleaning the data for export into Excel, and from there to be analysed in VOSviewer, is a very a specific process. These steps include setting the study objectives, deciding on the bibliographies to be searched, compiling a search algorithm, selecting inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting research

results, undertaking the search, extracting the data, cleaning the data, combining the Scopus and WoS data, then importing the data into VOXviewer and undertaking a network analysis within certain parameters required within the VOXviewer environment.

Within respect to the few articles identified on Scopus and WoS about sustainable trade in South Africa, the review was done manually searching for the key issues address by each of the articles. These findings within the South African context were then compared to the key focus areas distilled from the academic literature using VOXviewer and the gaps discussed.

4. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

A graphic view of the VoXviewer network analysis is presented in figure 1 below:

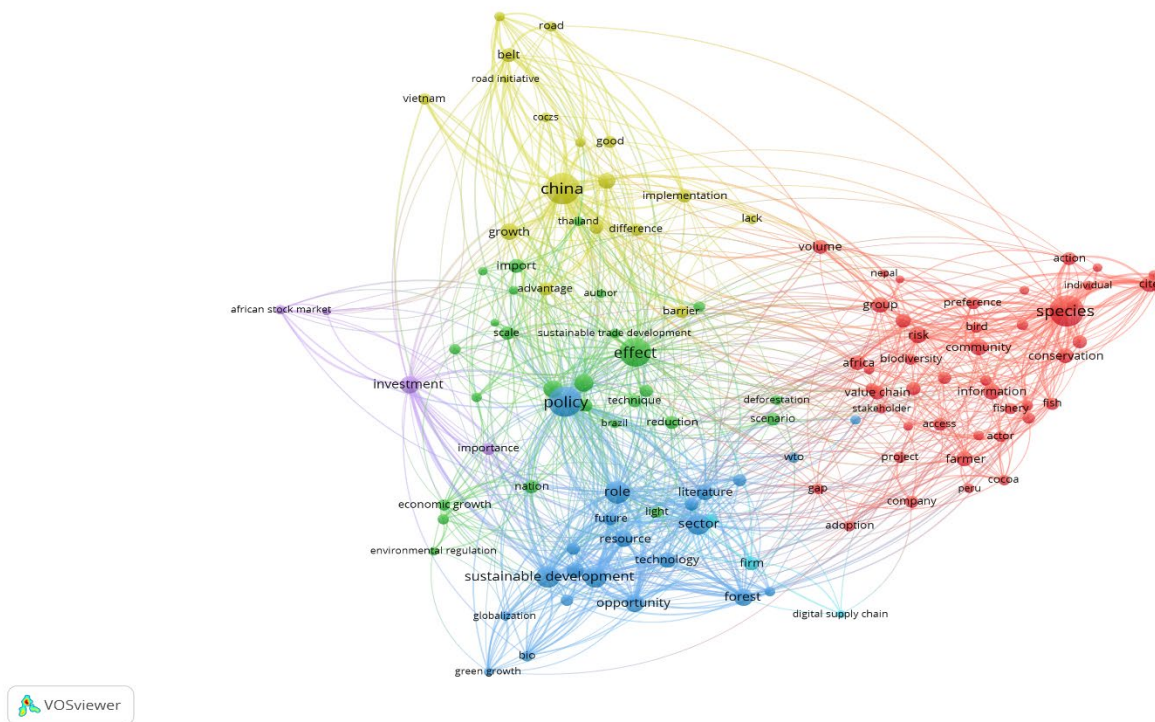


Figure 1: A text-based analysis of 'sustainable trade' using VOXviewer

The figure above suggests four main areas of focus, namely a **country/regional** focus, a **policy** focus, a **species** focus and an **effect** focus. A review of the nine unique articles with a South African perspective, reveals similarity in focus with these abovementioned areas identified from VoXviewer. Five of the articles are focused on a species, and three on policy issues. Only one article had a priori trade focus. All the South African articles obviously had a clear

country/regional focus, and several of the articles alluded to the effect of sustainable trade on sustainability.

While the findings clearly reveal common ground, the network analysis results generated by VOXviewer arguably do not adequately capture the priorities and gaps in the research literature on sustainable trade. For this, manual intervention is proposed. Such a manual process leads to more areas of focus which then highlights differing priorities and gaps in focus outlined in the such extended findings, when compared with the research in South Africa.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The implications or opportunities stemming from the research undertaken to address the gaps identified, have both environmental and business management, and policy implications for South Africa, and these will be expanded on in the full paper.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The contribution to knowledge is both at micro level, in terms of what export firms and importers could do to improve sustainable trade in the context of their international endeavours, as well as at macro level for government in policy making.

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Investigating the Impact of Vicarious Trauma Among Mental Health Practitioners: A Case Study of Namibia

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Keywords

Vicarious trauma;
Mental health
practitioners;
Coping strategies;
Namibia

Abstract

Vicarious trauma can be experienced by mental health practitioners due to exposure to their clients' who have gone through traumatic events. The purpose of this study was to explore how Namibian mental health practitioners responded to vicarious trauma. The study took on a qualitative approach and the focus was on the mental health practitioners that are registered with the Health Professional Council of Namibia (HPCNA). Purposive sampling technique was used and n=15 participants were interviewed. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Findings showed that mental health practitioners are exposed to vicarious trauma, especially when constantly dealing with trauma related cases. Exposure to vicarious trauma has influenced their mental health. There are, however, limited structured support services who specifically deal with vicarious trauma. Therefore, some mental health practitioners create their own coping mechanisms. The study recommends mental health institutions to create safe spaces and promote wellness programs.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Exposure to trauma in the workplace has significant negative implications to culture, productivity among others. Traumatic experiences need to be understood by leaders and HR professionals as organizations seek to create health workplaces. Among other professional's Mental health practitioners are such as psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist, counsellor, clinician, and clinical social worker, are regularly more exposed to traumatic events (Walfish, Barnett, & Zimmerman, 2017). Their work is demanding thus a support system for mental health professionals should be able to accommodate both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Filimonov (2017) stated that extrinsic motivation is the result of rewards such as increased salary and family vacations as a form of bonus "compensation.". If mental health practitioners are not mentally fit it will affect their physical body and it may eventually affect their work with clients. People who experience mental exhaustion tend to become more withdrawn from day-to-day activities. It can even reach the extent that the individual will not want to wake up or take a bath (Rothmann, 2003). Trauma is known to impact behaviour and performance. Effective and careful management of the workplace which provide such key services (mental health) in challenging environments like Namibia is key. Most public organisations are not only understaffed but under-resourced. Studies such as this are essential for effective human capital and policy as organisations seek to understand occupational trauma.

1.2. Problem Statement

Considering the above, Namibia has shortage of mental health professionals, which contributes to high staff burnout (Kamwanyah, Freeman, & Rose-Junius, 2021) as well as low resources and awareness (Bhugra, Moussaoui, & Craig, 2022). All these add to mental health practitioners' capacity to do their jobs. Subsequently, arguing that continued exposure to trauma survivors maintains this perspective and the emphasis is typically on the impact of trauma on the original victims, rather than those who care for and support them the secondary victims, i.e. the mental health practitioners and others (Martin, 2006).

1.3. Research objectives

1.3.1 Are mental health practitioners in Namibia exposed to traumatic experiences of patients?

1.3.2 What services are available to support mental health practitioners in the execution of their duties whilst assisting patients affected by trauma?

2. Literature Review

Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma is a critical occupational hazard (Postmus, 2013). It is defined as unfavourable changes in professionals' perspectives of themselves, others, and the world that occur as a result of graphic and/or traumatic content exposure (Baird & Kracen, 2006).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The study used a qualitative research approach, involving in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis was used in this study.

4. Preliminary Findings

Table 1: Practitioner experiences of vicarious trauma

Theme	subtheme
<i>Mental wellbeing</i>	Draining intrusive thoughts, sleeplessness, dissociation
<i>Coping Mechanisms</i>	Hobbies Meditation Sport Peer support
<i>Lack of financial support/ resources</i>	Poor budget allocation No funds for selfcare programs
<i>Statistics and information</i>	Lack of knowledge Not aware of vicarious trauma

Source: Own compilation

5. Managerial Implications

This study encourages both practitioners in the industry and academia, to look into publishing more researched materials in order to enhance knowledge on vicarious trauma.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

This study looks into bringing awareness of the importance of prioritizing the well-being of mental health practitioners in Namibia, especially those consistently working with trauma related cases. As vicarious trauma plays a big role in the practitioners' well-being, which in-turn affects the quality of service they render

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Working Paper: Exploring the Influence of Tourist Decision-Making Factors on Travel Intentions to Wildlife Destinations

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Keywords

Tourist decision-making;
Wildlife tourism;
Destination choice;
Qualitative data.

Abstract

Understanding tourist decision-making is vital for both academia and the tourism industry. The tourist decision-making process, influenced by personal and social factors, impacts the types of products and services offered at destinations. As tourist preferences evolve, stakeholders must adapt to remain competitive. Research indicates that integrating multiple variables provides a comprehensive understanding of tourist behaviour. This study explores factors influencing tourists' choices of wildlife destinations, focusing on behavioural components such as reverence for nature, biophilia, and anticipation of nature, alongside wildlife attraction features like iconic nature, vastness, and remoteness. These insights can help destination managers and policymakers understand tourist motivations and improve strategic planning and product development.

1. Introduction

According to the World Tourism Organization Report (2018), seven per cent of world tourism relates to wildlife tourism, growing annually by about three per cent. Wildlife represents biodiversity, essential for the earth's health and wellness (Siikamäki et al., 2015). Tourists' attitudes and behaviour towards wildlife are crucial for the sustainable development of wildlife tourism (Cong et al., 2021). Understanding how tourists decide to visit wildlife destinations benefits tourist marketing organisations and the future of wildlife tourism (Freire, 2016; Joubert, 2010; Kotler & Keller, 2015). Tourist marketing studies tourist behaviour and decision-making processes, aiming to meet their demands with tailored tourism offerings (Cunningham, 2018; Kotler & Keller, 2015; Wearing et al., 2016).

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1.1. Background

Tourist decision-making is influenced by psychological, social, and situational factors (Adongo et al., 2015; Elands and Lengkeek, 2012; Hanna et al., 2018; Liu, 2020; Yoo et al., 2018; Zgolli and Zaiem, 2017). This decision-making process involves evaluating options, considering various factors, and ultimately making a choice (Clemente-Ricolfe and Garcíá-Pinto, 2019; Huang et al., 2020). For example, a tourist might research different wildlife destinations, weigh the pros and cons of each, and decide on a specific destination. In this paper, the decision-making factors that could influence tourists' choices of wildlife destinations are explored, addressing the gap in understanding how tourists make decisions unique to specific settings (Alexandra, 2013; Ayazlar, 2014; Derbaix and Vanden Abeele, 1985).

1.2. Problem Statement

Understanding how tourists make wildlife destination choices and obtaining insights on behavioural components and wildlife attraction features of tourist choices offer valuable guidance for destination managers and policymakers, which could enhance their understanding of what motivates tourists to select specific wildlife destinations. The aim of this study is to explore the decision-making factors that could influence tourists' choices of wildlife destinations (Bird & Gísladóttir, 2020; Datta et al., 2018; Hassanli et al., 2013). Tourist decision-making and choice will be investigated to determine a wider range of behavioural components in tourist decision-making and understand tourist choices (Lee & Kim, 2020). Tourist choices to wildlife destinations are based on tourist decision-making antecedents and contribute to a better understanding of tourist choices in the future (Wu et al., 2011).

1.3. Research objectives

The main objective of the research is to explore the decision-making factors that could influence tourists' choices of wildlife destinations. Specifically, the interplay between behavioural components such as tourists' reverence for nature, biophilia, and the anticipation of nature as key tourist motivations, and wildlife attraction features like iconic and distinctive nature, vastness, and remoteness are explored.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourist Decision-making

Tourist decision-making involves multiple stages, including problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decisions, and post-purchase behaviour (Douglas et al., 2019; Lucrezi et al., 2020; Sharot & Sunstein, 2020). Analysing and understanding these processes helps tourism marketing organisations grasp the factors driving tourist choices (Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2012). Motivational factors influence whether a tourist decides to engage with a specific

offering, impacting destination choice (Lohmann and Netto, 2017). Tourist motivations and wildlife attractions shape tourists' interests and activities (Farmaki and Pappas, 2022; Notaro et al., 2019; Riestyaningrum et al., 2021; Somogyi and Csapó, 2018; Zhang et al., 2021).

2.2. Tourist motivations

Tourist motivations are the impetus behind decision-making and travel choices (Ahmad et al., 2020; Cohen et al., 2014; Gnoth and Deans, 2015; Kim, 2007; Lyu et al., 2021; Mair and Laing, 2013; Pearce and Packer, 2013; Ryan, 2010; Tussyadiah, 2014; Vu et al., 2019). Motivations can be subjective (desire for change, building relationships, spiritual connection) (Egger et al., 2020; Hindley and Font, 2018; Humagain and Singleton, 2021; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014), physical (body and mind rejuvenation, wellness) (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Latorre et al., 2021), or cultural (studying traditions and history) (Mieli and Zillinger, 2020; Neuts, 2016; Raffaelli et al., 2021; Williams and Baláž, 2015). Other motives include adventure, romance, religion (Bresciani et al., 2021; Han and Yoon, 2015; McCabe and Branco Illodo, 2019), or nostalgia (Josiam et al., 2015; Le-Klähn et al., 2015). Tourist motivations are dynamic and varied, necessitating awareness of destination offerings to satisfy needs (Mathieson and Wall, 1982).

2.3. Wildlife attractions and features

Destination features motivate tourists to travel (Plog, 2002; Yoo et al., 2018). Tourists' decisions are influenced by internal and external factors, including the physical landscape (Notaro et al., 2019; Riestyaningrum et al., 2021; Somogyi and Csapó, 2018; Zhang et al., 2021), wildlife (Andrade and Smith, 2019; McNicol and Rettie, 2018), climate (Boto-García et al., 2021), culture (Lee and Scott, 2017; McNicol and Rettie, 2018), and heritage value (Budeanu, 2007; Stankov et al., 2019). Attractions, encompassing natural landscapes, cultural sites, outdoor activities, culinary offerings, and local traditions, play a crucial role in shaping tourists' perceptions and preferences (Adel et al., 2020; Bresciani et al., 2021; Cho, 2000; Neto et al., 2020). Wildlife attraction features include accommodation, park branding, climate, and familiarity with the park (Van der Merwe and Saayman, 2008). These features distinguish locations and attract tourists seeking memorable experiences (Bimonte et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2021; Loureiro et al., 2021).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

In this study, key aspects of tourist decision-making, including tourist motivations and attraction features in selecting wildlife destinations, are examined. National parks and protected areas were identified as potent wildlife attractions (Kruger and Saayman, 2010). Focus groups, chosen for their

ability to provide insights into tourists' perspectives, were conducted online via MS Teams. Participants were tourists from the South African National Parks' database, consisting of 57 adults who had visited wildlife destinations in 2023. Focus groups allowed detailed exploration of tourists' perceptions, opinions, and attitudes (Humagain and Singleton, 2021). Purposive sampling was used to select participants with relevant experience and willingness to participate (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample included tourists from South Africa and the UK, with varied educational levels and visit frequencies.

4. Preliminary Findings

The research explored key tourist decision-making aspects, focusing on motivations and attraction features linked to wildlife destination choices. The study indicated a potential association between wildlife destination choice and decision-making antecedents identified by participants. Emerging themes of reverence for nature, biophilia, and anticipation of nature were significant motivations for visiting wildlife destinations. Participants expressed a deep emotional response to nature, fostering emotional connections and empathy for wildlife (Manowalulou & Sangchoey, 2023). Wildlife attractions highlighted iconic locations, distinctive fauna and flora, the large size of national parks, geographic spread, and remoteness, contributing to tourists' motivations and preferences (Line et al., 2018; Štefko et al., 2021). These findings suggest that wildlife attractions and tourists' motivations interplay to shape their travel experiences and destination choices.

5. Managerial Implications

Understanding the tourist decision-making process is crucial for wildlife tourism marketing strategies. By recognising the motivations and preferred attractions of tourists, marketers can tailor their offerings to meet these desires effectively. Promoting unique wildlife experiences and emphasising conservation efforts can attract eco-conscious travellers. Additionally, improving destination features based on tourist feedback can enhance visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. Managers should leverage digital marketing tools to reach a broader audience, emphasising the emotional and experiential aspects of wildlife tourism.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

This study highlighted the importance of tourist motivations and attraction features in choosing wildlife destinations. Key motivations included a deep emotional connection to nature and the desire for unique wildlife experiences. Attraction features such as iconic locations and diverse fauna and flora were significant in shaping tourist preferences. Understanding these factors can help tourism marketers develop targeted strategies to attract and retain tourists, ensuring the sustainable growth of wildlife tourism, such as deep emotional responses and wildlife attraction features that set wildlife destinations

apart, among others and in other settings, to better under tourist decision-making. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of tourist motivations and attraction features on wildlife tourism sustainability. Researching the role of digital media in shaping tourist perceptions and decision-making can provide insights into effective marketing strategies. By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to the sustainable development of wildlife tourism.

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Managing Business Performance for Private Business Schools in South Africa

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Keywords

Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs);

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Management Strategy;

Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Abstract

Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa, which are not subject to the budgetary constraints that hamper their state-funded counterparts, are ideally positioned to reduce educational disparities and promote socioeconomic growth. This study looks into the commercial success of PHEIs in South Africa to build a tailored management strategy. The exploratory factor analysis was suggested to be employed with the intent to reduce the proposed parameters to ten important components, which included regulatory compliance and strategic communication. The resultant model establishes a solid platform for enhancing management strategies in private higher education, which is crucial for long-term viability and growth. Furthermore, this study intends to provide a framework for future research efforts and validate performance measurement models in the dynamic context of private higher education.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Participation in higher education has increased significantly in African countries, and 2018, the highest growth rates in higher education were recorded, albeit growing from a low enrolment base (Ogunnaike

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et al., 2018). This surge in education presents a promising opportunity for private schools in Africa, particularly in South Africa, to expand their operations and contribute to the region's development. A global assessment of the number of global enrolments in higher education, as reported by Calderon (2018), showed that the 214.1 million students in 2015 (base year) will grow to 250.7 million (14.6%) by 2020, to 377.4 million by 2030 and to staggering 594.1 million by 2040. This is a conservative estimate because real figures in 2020 showed that 254.8 million students enrolled globally (signifying a growth of 19%) (UNESCO, 2020). Sub-Saharan African countries will be the new frontier for higher education. About 18 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa will feature in the top 50 populations aged 18 to 23. South Africa is a developing nation, and increased participation in higher education is a critical strategy for addressing the skills shortage, high unemployment rates (32.9% in March 2024) and poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2024). 25.8% of the country's population enters higher education (as per the latest statistics) (Cowling, 2021).

1.2 Problem Statement

South Africa's higher education system is well-developed to serve public universities. However, due to financial constraints and high demand, state-funded higher education struggles to meet the demand. This has created a market opportunity for private higher education. In this competitive landscape, manager-leaders of private higher education institutions must maintain high levels of business performance to remain competitive. This study addresses this challenge by proposing a management model that not only measures business performance antecedents but also guides the manager-leader on areas of improvement or where to maintain good performance. This model will be relevant towards the new draft policy of reclassifying SA higher education institutions because it will offer a strategic tool for private institutions to manage their performance amicably.

1.3 Research objectives

The primary objective of this study is to develop a model for measuring and managing business performance for private higher education institutions in South Africa. The following are the secondary objectives needed to achieve the primary objective:

- 1) Identifying the latent variables (factors) embedded within a theoretical model that measures the business performance of private business schools.
- 2) Measuring the business performance of private business schools in South Africa.
- 3) Guide managers-leaders to improve their business performance in private higher education.

2. Literature Review

The study starts by reviewing the literature on higher education and private higher education to establish a broad theoretical framework to guide this study. After statistically ensuring that the respective theoretical measuring criteria selected do measure the specific business performance antecedents, the study will present a model to measure business performance in private higher education in South Africa.

2.1 Theoretical framework:

Private higher education providers in Africa have increased throughout the continent, and typical examples of countries that rely heavily on private higher education institutions are Gabon (47%), Mozambique (32%) and Ethiopia (24%) (Garwe, 2016). These private institutions compete in a highly public regulated environment where institutions must function, survive, and compete with one another and public higher education institutions (Van Schalkwyk, Davis & Pellissier, 2013). This is especially relevant to the South African educational environment. In this environment, Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2014) note that private higher education institutions are business-orientated, entrepreneurial, and directly affected by market forces, whereas their significant competitors in the public sector are operating in a more secure environment where state subsidies secure a substantial part of their income (Gill et al. 2022). However, in this competitive environment, Pourisa and Inglesi-Lotz (2014) conclude that private higher education has moved to the centre stage of education business strategies to prosper and contribute to economic prosperity, fuller employment, and social cohesion. With governments' constraints regarding resource allocation to public universities, private higher education institutions are filling the educational gap.

PHEIs have eased the social demand for access to higher education and strategically segmented the education market, charging tuition fees that are market- and market-segment-related. In this case, some private education institutions service the elite market through high-priced programmes, while other institutions target lower-income markets with very affordable prices and payment options (Nunan and Di Domenico 2022) Both business models compete well in maximising shareholder wealth. The business models followed by private institutions also allow for disproportional faculty salaries; this is more difficult to address in the public sector because the salaries of academics are influenced by the government. As a major cost centre, salaries are an essential denominator of the profitability of any business, especially in a services environment such as education (Garwe, 2016).

In South Africa, according to the Department of Higher Education's Register of Private Higher Education Institutions records, 100 registered and another 28 provisionally registered PHEIs private higher education institutions (DHET, 2018). There are also 26 public universities. Even though PHEI functions within the same quality, regulatory and accreditation environment as the public institutions,

they do operate in a constrained environment. It is from the gathered source of DHET (2018), that it was premised that the typical constraints faced are:

- PHEIs cannot use the title “University”.
- PHEIs do not receive any government subsidies, tax rebates or facilities.
- PHE institutions' survival depends on achieving their business goals and financial well-being.
- Their performance must be measured and monitored like any other business because they are essentially private businesses offering education to the open market.
- Research outputs are encouraged, yet not rewarded, by the DHET.

3. Envisaged Research Design and Methodology

A sequential mixed-method research design will be used for this study. Firstly, qualitative interviews with eight executive managers substantiated the 18 antecedents identified from the literature review. Secondly, a meta-analysis workshop discussed and validated the antecedents. Board members will be invited to join the managers in the workshop. The measuring criteria for each antecedent will be discussed and validated. From this meeting, the final questionnaire would be developed. The model has a total of fifteen business performance antecedents. They are Sales, Growth, Profitability, Technology, Customer, Innovation, Service, Leadership, Return on investment, Stakeholders, Society, Quality, Marketing, Communication, Legality, and General measures of business performance. This study intends to distribute 250 copies of questionnaires, signifying an effective response rate of 98.8%. Using a five-point Likert scale, the questionnaires will be analysed. Cronbach alpha coefficients established the reliability of each antecedent (measured in total by 85 criteria).

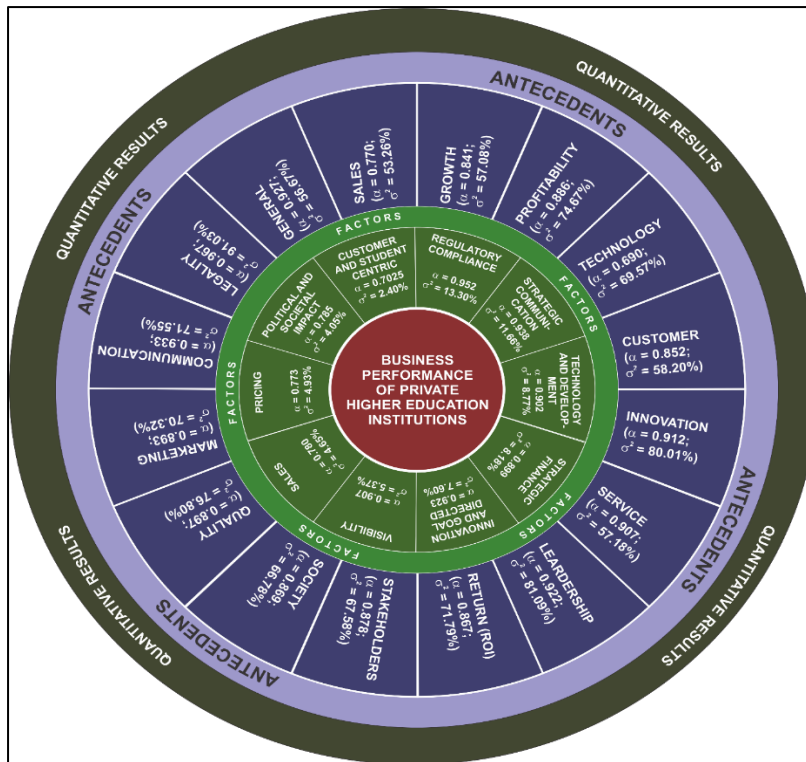


Figure 1: Proposed integrated model to manage business performance of private higher education institutions

4. Managerial Implications

The study's results will be valuable to business school directors, managers, and investors in private higher education to determine the business performance antecedents that lead to a successful private higher education institution. It will also be of value to researchers and scholars who intend to explore this avenue of business performance models further.

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Reenacting the Motivation in Informal Agriprenuership: A Panacea for South African Influx Unemployment Rate

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Keywords

Private Higher Education
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Analysis

Abstract

The issue of unemployment in South Africa is a challenge faced by both the public and private sectors. The increasing entry of frustrated individuals into the labour market reflects declining demand for unskilled labour and a rising preference for skilled labour. This trend particularly affects educated youth seeking their first jobs. Despite their qualifications, young South Africans encounter significant barriers to employment across educational levels. This study explores two main themes: first, the promotion of entrepreneurship to address unemployment sustainably, and second, leveraging the agriculture sector and its value chain for job creation. The informal agricultural market, while distinct from the formal sector, plays a crucial role in livelihoods, especially for small-scale farmers. Encouraging entrepreneurship in agriculture could alleviate unemployment by integrating new roles tailored to sector needs. Using a mixed-methods approach including surveys and interviews, this study aims to understand motivational dynamics in informal agribusiness and their potential impact on reducing unemployment. Implementing targeted policies to support informal entrepreneurship could foster economic stability and significant reductions in unemployment rates across South Africa.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The public and private sectors are equally perplexed by the problem of unemployment and the South Africa nation is not exempted (Cook, Satizábal, and Curnow 2021). Every year, more people enter the South African (SA) labour market because of their frustration with not being able to find employment in all economic sectors and, in particular, with the decline in the demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour and the increase in the demand for skilled labour (Mzungulu & Ndzendze, 2021). However, it has become more difficult recently for the educated and talented to find work in the South African economy. Similarly, it's becoming harder for young people every year to land that vital first job. According to Banerjee et al. (2008), most young South Africans have trouble finding work, regardless of their educational background—matric, upper, diploma, bachelor's, or postgraduate. This is explained by several economic trends and deficiencies in South Africa (Makaringe & Khobai, 2018). The quarterly labour force survey, or StatsSA (2022), reports that in the second quarter (Q2) of 2022, the unemployment rate decreased by 1.4%, from 34.5% in the first quarter (Q1) to 33.9% in the second quarter (Q2).

However, young people in South Africa continued to be more vulnerable than other demographic groups in the job market. It is the government's responsibility to create job opportunities and a conducive environment for businesses to flourish in order to ensure a greater demand for labour, as approximately 4.8 million (46.5%) youth between the ages of 15 and 34 were unemployed in the second quarter (Q2) of 2022 (StatsSA, 2022). Two overarching themes have arisen in the current setting of South Africa's robust economy and widespread unemployment. The first is how to sustainably encourage the growth of entrepreneurship in order to reverse the nation's widespread unemployment. Notably, the country's large jobless and underemployed population threatens widespread poverty and political instability rather than fostering national development (Ferguson & Li, 2018; UNICEF, 2017). Secondly, using the agriculture industry and its value chain as a practical means of generating employment in South Africa (Villalba, Venus, and Sauer 2023). An essential part of every nation's economic prosperity is these agricultural businesses. Many cash crops growing in different countries might be significant sources of income if managed well. This situation has been in many developing countries, such as South Africa.

1.2. Problem Statement

Aragie et al. (2023) posits that an economy can provide for the growing population's nutritional needs, create employment, earn foreign exchange, and meet the raw material demands of enterprises with the support of a strong and productive agriculture sector. Agriculture's multifaceted nature means that it affects the socioeconomic structure of every nation on several levels (Dobermann and Nelson, 2017). The foundation of many economies is agriculture, which is essential to a nation's socioeconomic

development and a vital component of that country's progress. The agro-food industry is vital in creating jobs and money in developing countries. By far, the largest segment of the agribusiness is the agriculturally driven processing sector, which includes a wide range of post-harvest activities, packaging of agricultural raw materials, industrial and technologically advanced intermediate processing of goods, and the manufacture of final products (UNDP, 2012). Agricultural marketing, which includes commercialising produce and inputs, is another value chain in agriculture. According to Olwande et al. (2015), it is crucial to the transformation of smallholder farming and the workforce's absorption.

However, the informal agricultural market often functions as a subsystem of the formal markets and provides low-cost agricultural products (Vorley, 2013). The two sub-systems' inherent designs often cater to distinct consumers. Large-scale agricultural and agrobusiness ventures are the primary targets of the formal market, while smallholder farmers are the primary users of the informal one. The future of smallholder farmers in the area will depend on how the formal and informal agricultural markets in Sub-Saharan Africa are oriented. Importantly, given the intense competition in the formal markets, small-scale farmers and the general jobless population turn to informal markets to survive (Vorley, 2013). In developing nations such as South Africa, a significant amount of agricultural commerce comprises the informal sector, which includes everything from the field to the market. However, the alarming figures for South Africa underscore the importance of fostering entrepreneurship as a means of addressing unemployment. According to Mbuya, Diniso, and Maphahlele (2016), South Africa has the lowest propensity for young entrepreneurship in Africa, with 23.3%, compared to Malawi and Uganda, which have the highest rates at 55.2% and 55.4%, respectively. The objective of this study is to examine the dynamics of informal agriculture as a means of creating large-scale jobs.

1.3. Research objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine how encouraging informal entrepreneurship might lower unemployment rates while investigating the possible agricultural contribution to socioeconomic development in labour absorption of agricultural value chain dynamics.

The following secondary objectives achieve the primary objective:

- Evaluating the Impact of Fostering Informal Entrepreneurship on Reducing Unemployment:
- Assess the Agricultural Sector's Strategies for Job Creation's Effectiveness.
- Analyze the contribution of agriculture on socioeconomic growth
- Determine the dynamics of labour absorption and agricultural value chains on the practice of informal agriprenuership

2. Literature Review

1.1. Theoretical Assumptions

This research draws on and is based on the theoretical claims made by Schumpeter in his 1934 theory of economic development, which postulates the evolution of the entrepreneur (Schumpeter 1934). In economics, entrepreneurship has the potential to be a vital instrument for solving problems and creating avenues for economic development (Becker & Knudsen, 2002). Through what Schumpeter called "creative destruction" inside the economy, entrepreneurship has historically been considered crucial in reviving economies (Lotriet, Bisschoff, and Kole 2017). These acts of creative destruction arise from the agents and actors identifying the chances for creative destruction inside an economy. Therefore, Schumpeter (1942) hinted that government- and organization-led initiatives to elevate entrepreneurship to the status of a developmental process might give rise to creative destruction in the future. The growth of entrepreneurs in the economy fosters a competitive and productive atmosphere that leads to economic ascent and increases the production capacity, according to Schumpeter (1987), quoted in Rothbard (1987), in his economic development theory. Furthermore, it might provide governments with the tools they need to stop the global spike in youth unemployment. There are concerns about a rise in the number of young people without jobs as the ILO (2022) projected that 73 million people will be jobless in 2022 due to global youth unemployment patterns. Schumpeter, therefore, claims that thinking about revitalising economies may provide economic progress the push it needs. Additionally, funding for entrepreneurship is supposed to result in a decrease in young unemployment.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

This study intends to administer 1000 copies of the questionnaire to small-scale farmers and conduct interviews with 20 entrepreneurs along the agricultural value chain business in SA. The quantitative approach would be based on causal research using the snow-balling method. Furthermore, a causal research design will be chosen because the study aimed to investigate the impact of motivation for informal agribusiness in response to South Africa's rising unemployment rate. The survey design will be used to describe the current trend in informal agribusiness from the motivation standpoint (Christofi et al. 2024). Acquiring respondents' subjective opinions and accurately evaluating the total population using the investigated sample necessitates using a descriptive survey research design (Lee et al., 2022). The positivist paradigm would be applied to achieve the research's ultimate purpose for the following reasons. To evaluate a conceptual framework, statistical techniques will be employed to define and test hypotheses and analyse data to provide a logical conclusion.

In keeping with the explanatory research approach, this study also plans to use a cross-sectional investigation (Margolies et al. 2023). Since many of the respondents are self-employed business owners, using a qualitative research approach, which is, conducting in-depth interviews is essential. Recognising phenomena and concentrating on subjective experiences while comprehending the structure of those

lived experiences was intended to supplement the quantitative study approach. Claus (2019) states that adopting such a research process is advised because it can combine human opinions derived from real-world experiences at work with scientific experimentation of perceived truth or reality in a single research process. These substantiate the outcomes of every compiled procedure and qualitative (deep interview) research design. Likewise, the interpretivist paradigm will be applied for the following reasons. This philosophy aims to understand and elucidate the concept of informal entrepreneurship in relation to agribusiness in South Africa. Furthermore, understanding the participants' reasoning process requires more than merely using positivist logic.

The qualitative responses from 1000 copies of questionnaires intended to be administered will be subjected to Cronbach's Alpha Reliability test to ascertain the questionnaire's reliability level. Respondents' demographic information will be supplied in tabular and graphical form, and a correlation test will be utilised to ascertain the strength of the relationship between the variables. A multivariate regression method will be utilised to determine the importance of the variables of interest. Also, open coding would be employed to create code while reading the documents, thus allowing for the emergence of new insights. Nodes were grouped into codes /categories under higher-order headings during the coding process. The thematic analysis focused on the intentions of the informal entrepreneurs involved in agriculture with desires to transit from the informal economy to the formal economy and the effects of social and economic motivations in the agriculture value chain in the informal market. Also, open coding would be used to write code as the transcripts are read, allowing for the development of fresh insights. Nodes would be coded and categorised under higher-level topics during the coding process.

4. Preliminary Findings

Based on the anticipated results, it is proposed that creating a workable model for labour generation in the agricultural sector necessitates a thematic examination of the social and economic drivers of entrepreneurs in the informal market because the voice of those involved will forge the intended course and produce a sustainable practice. This covers their goals of moving from unofficial to official agriculture value chain sectors. The potential for a considerable reduction in unemployment rates exists through integrating new agricultural positions into the supply chain, specifically designed to meet industry concerns. This strategy strongly emphasises the necessity of formalising and promoting entrepreneurial growth to promote stable economies and sustainable lives. Comprehending these dynamics is imperative in devising efficacious tactics that leverage the enterprising spirit in agriculture to counteract joblessness in South Africa.

5. Managerial Implications

Through intrinsic incentives, entrepreneurs in the informal sector are expected to exhibit more resilience and flexibility, qualities essential for navigating unpredictable economic conditions. The risk factor will

be weighted. This strategy is believed to boost people's sense of empowerment within the community and promote sustainable livelihoods. The results that are expected to be generated from this research are believed to highlight the necessity for customised rules that encourage and magnify the spirit of entrepreneurship displayed by unlicensed agribusinesses. In the end, implementing these recommendations can improve socioeconomic stability throughout South Africa and result in substantial drops in unemployment.

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Guidelines for an Emerging Market Business School's Internationalisation Strategy

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Keywords

Internationalisation;
Globalisation;
Business Schools;
Emerging countries.

Abstract

Developing internationally employable and globally responsible graduates is becoming increasingly important for business schools. This is fuelled by the globalisation of the world's economy, which is matched with a parallel growth of knowledge. Internationalisation is a prerequisite for business school accreditation and research and guidelines are available for business schools in developed countries. The context and complexities of business schools in emerging countries in terms of internationalisation strategies have not been adequately addressed and therefore guidelines for these business schools are lacking. The approach to this theoretical paper was to thoroughly review literature to identify factors, which should be considered for a framework for the internationalisation of business schools in emerging countries. These factors include business school strategy and implementation as well as inbound and outbound factors. The approach must be holistic and include all stakeholders and resources. The framework and factors will be empirically tested through a quantitative study, which will include business school stakeholders.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Global challenges need global solutions, which requires strong collaborations across not only borders, but also institutions and sectors (Perin-Halot & Mercado, 2024). This means that developing internationally employable and globally responsible graduates is increasingly central to wider business school activities. The globalisation of the world's economy has been matched with a parallel growth of knowledge (Moloi et al., 2009). Business School accreditation bodies all emphasise the importance of internationalisation and embracing diversity. Organisations expect their management to perform in a

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world of interdependence and cross border challenges (EFMD, 2021). Internationalisation and globalisation are intertwined and complex phenomena (Lee & Stensaker, 2021). Ota (2018) comments that internationalisation takes place at universities while globalisation takes place outside of them. The terms internationalisation and globalisation will be used interchangeably in this study. Internationalisation and globalisation work together to transform the self-image and organisational activities of research universities and adult education centres, like business schools (Strielkowski et al., 2021).

1.2. Problem Statement

Accreditation bodies have a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach in terms of their criteria regardless of the context of the school. A legacy of the unequally differentiated higher education system is that some of the historically disadvantaged institutions still have very low levels of international relations and are not yet, therefore, benefitting from internationalisation to the degree that they could. This results in the problem statement for this study: *Internationalisation guidelines for business schools in emerging economies are lacking.*

1.3. Research objectives

The main research objective is to identify factors that need to be considered when crafting an internationalisation strategy for a business school in an emerging economy. These factors will be presented in proposed framework.

2. Literature Review

Globalisation continues to have an impact on the organisation of work and on the work, people do, which demands a high level of skill, which is attained through education (Carnoy, 2002). Globalisation has deeply affected higher education (Finardi & Rojo, 2015), in that it has fostered social and economic interdependence through the strengthening of social networks and ultimately social capital. Integration into the world economy requires that people must not only acquire the knowledge and tools of traditional knowledge, but they must be capable of acquiring new skills demanded by a knowledge society in a globalised world (Bakhtiari & Shajar, 2006). Globalisation is understood as the social and economic interdependence among people and countries affects and affects and is affected by the development of social capital and education (Finardi & Rojo, 2015).

Internationalisation should be a transformative learning process that results in international awareness, competence and expertise, cultural immersion and involves all stakeholders, especially those students likely to become managers (Schworm et al., 2017). The DHET (2022) indicate the purpose of internationalisation of higher education as follows: *Internationalisation of higher education means an intentional or steered process to incorporate intercultural, international and/or global dimensions into*

higher education in order to advance its goals, functions and delivery so as to enhance its quality and research. Research must explore international challenges, education must incorporate an international curriculum and exposure that encourages international mobility and employment (EQUIS, 2024).

Business school strategy has become extremely complex, especially regarding internationalisation (Guillotin & Mangematin, 2015). All strategies must have a long-term view. The international accreditation of business schools allows for benchmarking against best practice through the improvement in the functioning of the business school in all areas like strategy, research and teaching and operational and financial processes (Wojtysiak-Kotlarski, 2021). This would include many factors that have to be considered.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The research design for this study is twofold. Firstly, a systematic literature review (SLR) will be conducted, which will include the Accreditation body requirements. The approach thereafter will be quantitative where the factors identified from the SLR will be empirically evaluated with various business school stakeholders, which will include students, alumni, graduate employees and the advisory board.

4. Preliminary Findings

The identified factors, which indicate the findings, are illustrated in Figure 1.

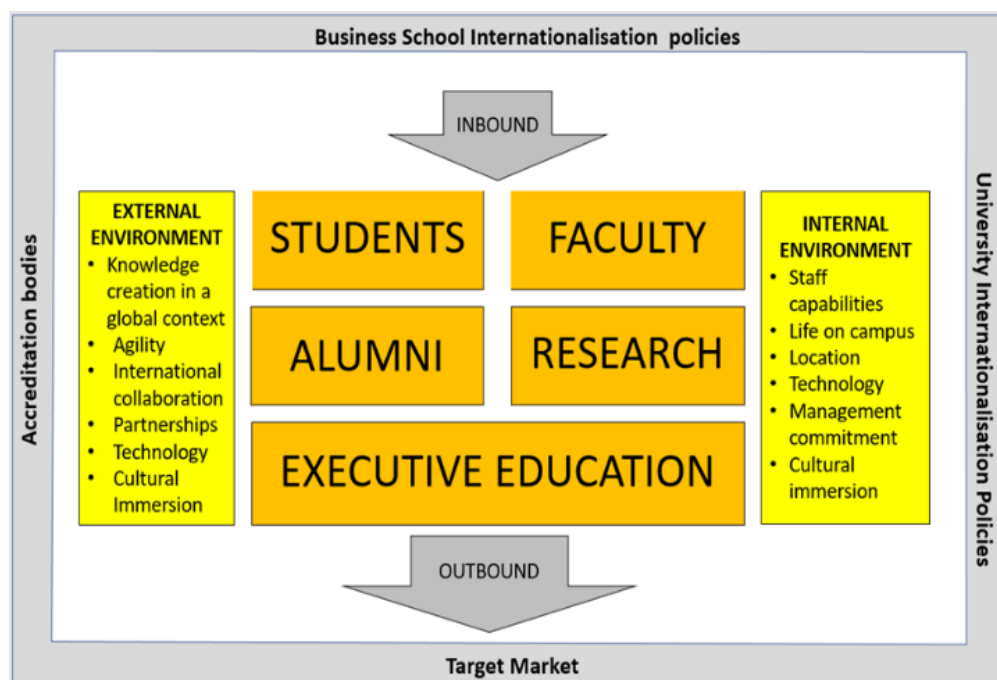


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Internationalisation Framework Source: Authors' own construction.

5. Managerial Implications

Issues faced by employers are increasingly global, which requires business schools to graduate competent graduates who are prepared for the global world of business. A school should first choose its strategy and then look for accreditations that are compatible with it and check if their standards on internationalisation are attainable and match the strategy. Internal and external factors must be considered. World class internationalised education for the students must cultivate a global mindset, embrace inclusiveness, increase multicultural awareness and exchange excellence (Ding, 2022).

6. Conclusions and Future Research

A lesson can be learnt from the AFBE accreditation (Asian Forum on Business Education), which was founded on the belief that, with the increasing globalisation of business schools and the very rapid growth of many emerging economies in Asia, it was becoming increasingly essential for those involved in business education to develop an international perspective (Perryer & Egan, 2015). A study in the emerging context of Brazil indicated that there is a connection between globalisation, internationalisation and education, which is social capital that can be materialised in the access to international markets (Finardi & Rojo, 2015). Business Schools in emerging economies must remain relevant to their context but pay specific attention to internationalisation by considering and incorporating the above-mentioned factors in their planning and more importantly implementation. Future research should empirically measure the implementation of internationalisation strategies in business schools. This would indicate the reality as opposed to the intention.

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A Conceptual Scorecard to Measure the Performance of Private Secondary Schools

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Keywords

Performance.
Scorecard.
Secondary schools.
Management.

Abstract

Using a systematic review of secondary private schools' performance, this study generates a scorecard (Nag et al., 2024) The systematic literature review identified four core performance measurement antecedents: 1) Student Perspective, 2) Internal Processes for Academic Excellence, 3) Learning and Growth Perspective, and 4) Resources Perspective, among others. These antecedents are then expanded into measuring criteria. The article develops a tool for measuring secondary school active performance. South African secondary private schools lack performance measuring instruments. Nag et al. (2024)'s original work could indeed be expanded into a detailed scorecard based on the results. This article proposes a closed-ended questionnaire to measure secondary school performance in private schools. Furthermore, future studies will need to be empirically validated.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The right to education is fundamental. Every child deserves a quality education. (UNESCO, 2019). Ondura-Oguno et al. (2018) argue that education is essential to social and individual development. African education and training must reorient to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, and creativity required to nurture Africa's core values as part of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa Vision 2016-2025.

1.2. Problem Statement

Over the past 15 years, 220 studies (Nag et al., 2024) examined teacher performance. Msosa (2020) was a prominent study on school performance. This study examined teacher absenteeism across South African provinces as contributing to student performance. In another study by Jonas (2011), a scorecard was developed to measure and evaluate special schools' governance. However, none of these studies specifically address private secondary schools' challenges. Schools have trouble managing their performance. It is problematic since there is no South African private school performance scorecard. The authors aim to develop such a scorecard for private schools in the country.

1.3. Research objectives

- To identify measuring criteria applicable to the identified antecedents.
- To develop a measuring instrument for the performance of private secondary schools in South Africa.

2. Literature Review

The theoretical basis for this study was Nag et al. (2024). The authors identified four antecedents based on a systematic review. These are: 1) Student Perspective, 2) Internal Processes for Academic Excellence, 3) Learning and Growth Perspective, and 4) Resources Perspective. Each antecedent (except Resource Perspective) contains subconstructs.

Student perspective has two sub-antecedents. The first one is Student Academic Excellence, which is measured by the National Examination (Grade 12/Matric), school completion rate, knowledge seeking skills, and integration abilities (Rompho, 2020; Maqbool et al., 2023; Sengendo & Eduan, 2024; Tan et al., 2024). Another sub-antecedent is students' good behavior, assessed by attendance, discipline, characteristics, value, and behavior, as well as school expulsion rates (Rompho, 2020; Fomba et al., 2023; Chuktu et al., 2024; Zulela et al., 2022).

There are two sub-antecedents to the antecedent Internal Perspective for Academic Excellence. Academic excellence and good student behavior are promoted by them. Saksono and Bernardus (2023) describe how a quantitative scorecard can serve as a strategic framework for holistic evaluation of schools in order to increase employee satisfaction (teachers and staff). The third antecedent is learning and growth. The antecedents include excellent teachers and adequate infrastructure. Innovation initiatives (measured by the number of innovation proposals) and teacher competencies (measured by the number of teachers who have completed professional development) subscribe to the Learning and Growth indicators. Furthermore, Ogunbayo and Mhalanga (2022) found a positive impact on academic excellence and job performance of teacher training (regarding the learning and growth antecedent). Finance, management, and leadership are fourth antecedents which are crucial. The financial perspective can be further broken down using sub-variables such as Financials, Sustainability, Enhancement (Revenue Realization, Cost/Student), Efficiency (Income Budget Allocation), Economic (Spending the funds received according to the budget) (Maqbool et al., 2023; Sengendo & Eduan, 2024; Tan et al., 2024; Uy et al., 2024; Enache et al., 2021). Leadership and management competencies include principal leadership styles (strategic/cultural), headmaster transformational leadership (idealized influence, motivation, and stimulation), principal supervision and its impact on teachers, among others (Maqbool et al., 2023; Sengendo & Eduan, 2024; Tan et al., 2024; Uy et al., 2024).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

An extended thematic review of literature led to this study. Nag et al. (2024) measured the performance of private secondary schools based on the traditional balanced scorecard developed by Kaplan and Norton (1992). It develops relevant measuring criteria to operationalize the scorecard by theoretically examining each antecedent and sub-antecedent. Besides the literature survey conducted so far, the authors developed a questionnaire to collect data from various stakeholders in a school setting (see annexure).

4. Preliminary Findings

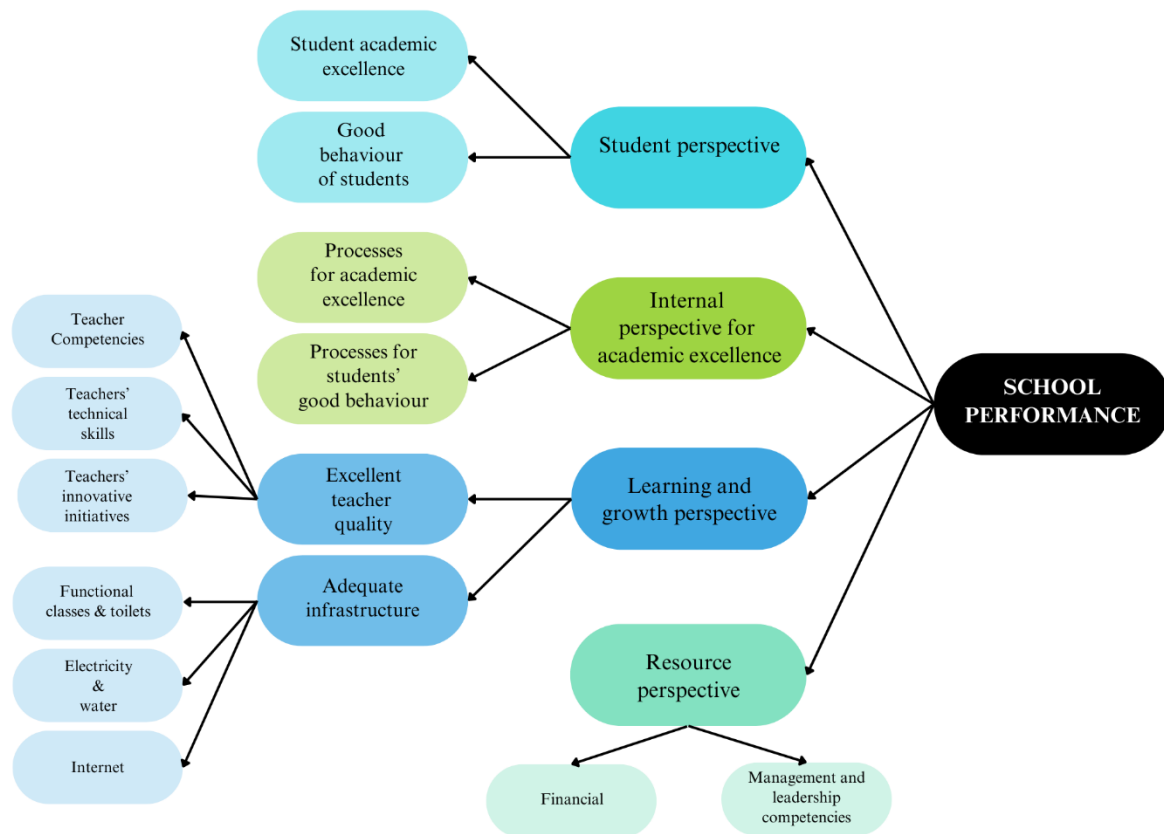


Figure 1: Antecedents of a theoretical performance scorecard

Source: Nag et al. (2024)

5. Managerial Implications

School Principals/SGB/Managers should note the following implications:

- Scorecards for private secondary schools are not available in South Africa.
- South African education differs greatly from international private schools.
- Use of international performance models is only part of the solution
- A generalized instrument will not accurately reflect the school's performance and therefore this "one size fits all" approach is not recommended.
- Schools need to validate this scorecard empirically, keeping validity in mind, and regression weights need to be calculated for antecedents and sub-antecedents, so school performance cannot be calculated

6. Conclusions and Future Research

In this article, we analyzed the literature and identified the antecedents and sub-antecedents to measuring performance in private secondary schools. Consequently, developing a theoretical

framework for school scorecards. In future research, antecedents, sub-antecedents, and their measuring criteria should be empirically validated. Moreover, antecedent-sub-antecedent relationships must be investigated for their interrelationships and strength. Only after data collection with the newly developed questionnaire can this be done empirically.

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Investigating Strategies to Improve Employee Job Satisfaction at a University's College of Health Sciences

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Keywords

Job Satisfaction;
Work-Life Balance;
Fair Compensation;
Development opportunities.

Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate several approaches that could be utilized to improve the level of job satisfaction experienced by employees. Data was obtained through the use of a questionnaire using an online survey method, and a quantitative research method was chosen as the study approach. Using descriptive statistics, SPSS was used to perform an analysis on the quantitative data. A convenience sample was selected and a sample size of 42 respondents were used. Preliminary findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between the tough nature of the College of Health Sciences division and academic sectors as well as certain administrative issues and the level of happiness that employees feel in their respective jobs.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Employee job satisfaction is an essential element in attaining organizational success and promoting the welfare of employees. Employment happiness as the degree to which employees like their work, therefore supporting this perspective (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2002). The primary objective of this paper is to identify solutions aimed at improving job satisfaction in the Health Sciences college.

Preliminary studies indicate that supportive leadership, opportunity for skill development, work-life balance, recognition, and meaningful participation are critical. The ultimate goal is to provide practical

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recommendations to the College for increasing job satisfaction, hence enhancing overall employee well-being and organizational success.

1.2 . Problem Statement

The organisation's focus on preserving performance and productivity by ensuring employee job satisfaction is likely motivated by a blend of internal and external factors that emphasise the significance of a positive and supportive work environment for both employees and the organisation as a whole. Several factors contribute to a high turnover rate due to employee dissatisfaction, Employee discontentment within the College of Health Sciences has the potential to affect the overall performance of the organization (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008).

1.3 . Research objectives

The research aims to investigate the level of employee contentment and its influence on overall business performance within higher education, focusing on the College of Health Sciences, the following research objectives are explored:

- To determine the level of employee satisfaction within the College of Health Sciences.
- To identify the stakeholders involved in the implementation of employee well-being policies.
- To analyse the processes employed by the College to ensure employee satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

The study examines the impact of employee satisfaction and its role in influencing organisational performance, as well as what the University's College of Health Sciences can do to improve it.

Numerous researches suggest that loyal employees add significant value to a firm and demonstrate a higher level of dedication towards consistently improving service quality (Hart & Thompson, 2007); (Jun et al., 2006). Keeping employees satisfied takes more than just good pay and benefits. The contentment of employees in their jobs is a critical determinant of both organisational success and the well-being of individual employees (Abdullah et al., 2021).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The research was conducted in the College of Health Sciences. A convenience sample was selected and a sample size of 42 was randomly selected and convenience sampling was used. The data collection was conducted using online questionnaires employing a quantitative method approach.

4. Preliminary Findings

The presentation of preliminary findings is structured around descriptive statistics, which include graphical representations, cross-tabulations, and other figurative forms, all aimed at elucidating the quantitative data acquired.

Table 1: Respondents demographics

Department	Years' experience	Staff
SCM	1 year	7
SHS	5 years	2
SLMMS	6 years	6
SNPH	10 years	17
College office	15 years	10

5. Managerial Implications

The preliminary findings from this study offer valuable insights for managers and administrators at the College of Health Sciences. By understanding the key determinants of job satisfaction, managerial strategies can be developed to enhance the work environment, boost employee morale, and improve overall organizational performance.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The preliminary findings will not only provide a framework for further research but also offer useful insights into the elements that determine job satisfaction. Further research could investigate the long-term effects of the tactics that were suggested on the level of satisfaction experienced by employees and the overall success of the firm.

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The Size and Nature of Private Higher Education: Towards an Emergent Higher Education Model

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Keywords

Private Higher Education;
Higher Education Model;
Regulatory Frameworks.

Abstract

This paper deals with the size and nature of the Private Higher Education sector in South Africa and further afield. It provides the context for the emergence of a contemporary Higher Education model and management framework for a rapidly changing demographic, social and technological environment. It starts to trace the characteristics of Private Higher Education globally, with the intention to extract best practice towards a model for South Africa. From the review some preliminary findings indicate that the Private Higher Education sector has shown substantial growth, which has been marked by increasing diversity. In some regions Private Higher Education is growing faster than Public Higher Education. Furthermore, current regulatory frameworks in South Africa are out of step with global trends and developments.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published Draft Policies for the Recognition of South African Higher Education Institutional Types (April 2022, 2024), following a court case by a Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI) challenging the delay in finalizing regulations under the Higher Education Act (amended in 2016). These drafts disappointed PHEIs by reinforcing the public/private divide and failing to accommodate the evolution of a contemporary Higher Education (HE) system. The drafts did not address the growing demand for higher education in South Africa, prompting a study to develop an HE model that aligns with the needs of a rapidly changing world.

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1.2. Problem Statement

Qureshi and Khawaja (2021) note the global expansion of PHEIs, often outnumbering public institutions in some regions. However, South Africa continues to resist growth of the PHE sector as an equal partner in HE. The DHET's recent publication reflects this by keeping PHEIs on the periphery whilst many are positioning themselves to become universities. The study will address the misalignment between the Draft policy and a more responsive system.

1.3. Research objectives

The study aims to develop a model for a contemporary South African HE sector, focusing on:

- (i) Reviewing the emergence of the PHE sector globally and in SA.
- (ii) Comparing HE regulations globally and in South Africa to assess support/hindrances to the development of a PHE sector.
- (iii) Exploring how the PHE sector could embody a differentiated model in Learning and Teaching, Research, and Community Engagement in SA.
- (iv) Developing a management framework and HE model that draws on the strengths of public and private HE delivery.

This WIP paper focuses on objective (i).

2. Literature Review

The mini review starts to explore the size and nature of the PHE sector globally and in South Africa. The PHE sector has gained attention regarding its scale and characteristics. Recently, as elsewhere, the UK has recognized a knowledge gap concerning the size and composition of its private HE sector (Hunt and Boliver, 2023).

Globally, the HE sector consists of five institutional types: Comprehensive universities, Short-cycle institutions, University colleges, Specialized universities, and Hybrid institutions. Comprehensive universities are most common in the Global North, while University Colleges and Specialized Universities are more prevalent in the Global South. Hybrid institutions, combining elements of different types, are also present (Williams and Usher, 2022).

Different HE models have emerged based on the mix of institutional types. The Northern European model, which includes SA, is characterized by Comprehensive universities and Hybrids (Williams and Usher, 2022). However, these classifications do not align with SA nomenclature. In SA, Comprehensive universities are a blend of traditional and Technikon-type institutions, and Hybrid institutions are mostly found in the PHE sector. The Draft Policy on Institutional Types by DHET (2022) refers to Universities, University Colleges, and Higher Education Colleges, differing from both our own, and the global classifications.

The growth of the sector is evident in the narrowing gap between public and private institutions, especially in the Global South. In 2018, there were 48,370 private HEIs in the Global South, a 134% increase since 2006. In contrast, public HEIs grew by only 12% during the same period (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021). In regions where the demand for HE has surged, private institutions have stepped up to meet this demand.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The study will employ a grounded theory approach, suitable due to limited research on this topic and the need to develop new theories for the HE model and management framework. Grounded theory, (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), is based on empirical data gathered and analysed systematically. Theory development requires multiple rounds of data collection and analysis until saturation is reached (Corbin and Strauss, 2014).

For this paper, an analytical literature review is used to contextualize the study and identify gaps in existing research.

4. Preliminary Findings

- (i) The PHE sector has experienced exponential growth since the 1990s, driven by increased demand for HE, especially in developing countries.
- (ii) This growth has led to greater diversity in institutional types, with implications for future HE models.
- (iii) While public HE previously dominated, the PHE sector is now overtaking it, necessitating regulatory adjustments.
- (iv) The DHET's Draft Policy on Institutional Types is misaligned with current practices in South Africa and globally, making it unimplementable in its current form.

5. Managerial Implications

If the Draft Policy is implemented as is, it will impose a management structure disconnected from both current and potential future practices. The DHET appears to have an agenda of resisting a more contemporary system. This study seeks to leverage best practices from existing systems to propose a future-fit HE model for South Africa.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The PHE sector has often been criticized as profit-driven at the expense of educational outcomes. This view overlooks the sector's role in meeting the demand for HE. Further, in some systems, competitiveness between institutions has driven quality improvements. Therefore, the growth of the PHE sector should not be dismissed but rather integrated into a comprehensive HE model that draws on the strengths of public and private education. Future research should focus on developing such a model, challenging divisive policies, and fostering a more inclusive HE system.

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Local Economic Development as a tool by municipalities for enabling an environment of job creation

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Keywords

Local Economic Development;
Enabling environment.

Abstract

The Local Economic Development units were introduced to local government through municipalities. The LED offices are the responsible units which is in line according with the constitution chapter 7. The chapter introduces the local government space as responsible for creating an enabling environment for job creation. This has proven not to be effective as municipalities has declined in their performance for the past 2 decade. The poor performance of municipalities has hindered the economic activities within local government. For the economy to flourish the businesses needs infrastructure which should be built and maintained by local municipality furthermore all types of businesses should be registered and monitored in terms of compliance to all the relevant legislation. All the sector of the economy should work together on ensuring that there is improved economic activity which benefits not only the elite but all within the locality.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Silo planning of stakeholders in LED has a negative effect on economic growth as it slows down service delivery.

1.2. Problem Statement

Poor implementation practices which hinder the potential of municipalities to create an enabling environment as constituted.

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1.3. Research objective

To determine the nature and scope of the LED implementation strategy in the NW.

2. Literature Review

The study will be looking at the municipalities through public participation ensuring that there is economic growth through its LED strategies this is influenced by the community-led rural development theory by Murray and Dunn (1995) which focuses on strengthening the development capacity of local communities, Keane and Cinneide (1986) called this theory a bottom-up partnership approach. Where chapter 4 of the municipal systems act of 2000 has introduced way in which municipalities can have stakeholder engagements when developing any strategic document within its jurisdiction.

Rosli, & Sidek, 2013 stated that although there is a positive relationship between innovation adoption and the performance of firms, SMEs are still faced with challenges.

3. Research Methodology

This was desktop research where secondary data was used from the study conducted during the PhD thesis writing.

3.1. Hypotheses

H₁: Hypothesis 1

That the LED strategies will yield an enabling job creation environment

4. Results and Findings

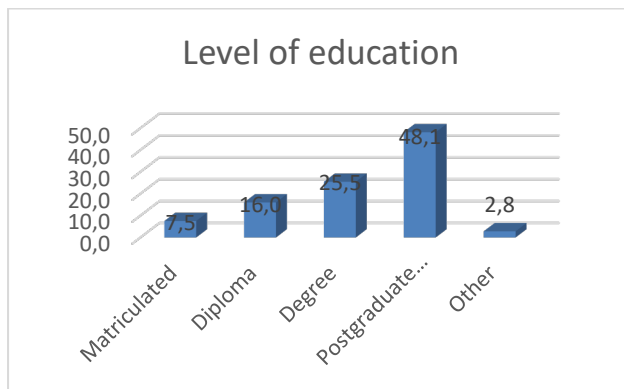


Figure 1 Level of Education

Source: derived from the authors PhD thesis

The Figure 1 above shows that the education levels of practitioners in North-West of LED practitioners is reasonably high.

Table 1: The nature and scope of the led implementation strategy in the NW

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
	1	2	3	4	
The NW Province has an approved current LED strategy	9(8.7%)	54(51.9%)	28(26.9%)	13(12.5%)	104(100%)
The LED strategy is clearly defined in the municipalities	8(7.6%)	48(45.7%)	38(36.2%)	11(10.5%)	105(100%)
The LED strategy has been formally introduced to all the stakeholders.	4(3.8%)	33(31.4%)	52(49.5%)	16(15.2%)	105(100%)
The process of developing the LED strategy was transparent within the organisation	5(4.8%)	40(38.5%)	43(41.3%)	16(15.4%)	104(100%)
The goals set in the LED strategy are achievable and implementable	5(4.8%)	33(31.7%)	43(41.3%)	23(22.1%)	104(100%)

The LED strategy has a well-defined implementation plan accompanying it	8(7.6%)	36(34.3%)	42(40.0%)	19(18.1%)	105(100%)
The communities were work shopped on the LED strategy and its contents	3(2.9%)	18(17.5%)	57(55.3%)	25(24.3%)	103(100%)
The targets in the LED strategy are well defined	4(3.8%)	36(34.6%)	49(47.1%)	15(14.4%)	104(100%)
The LED strategy, if well followed, will improve on service delivery	24(23.3%)	33(32.0%)	31(30.1%)	15(14.6%)	103(100%)
The LED strategy is aligned with the provincial planning document such as the SOPA	13(12.6%)	32(31.1%)	39(37.9%)	19(18.4%)	103(100%)
The LED strategy is aligned with the SONA and NDP	12(11.7%)	35(34.0%)	36(35.0%)	20(19.4%)	103(100%)
The LED strategy is linked to the other complementary sectors such as IDPs, EPWP and private sector	14(13.6%)	38(36.9%)	35(34.0%)	16(15.5%)	103(100%)
There are no policies and strategies to promote LED strategy	7(6.8%)	36(35.0%)	42(40.8%)	18(17.5%)	103(100%)

Source: derived from the authors PhD thesis

5. Managerial Implications

Practitioners of LED in the NW Province should be trained and workshopped on how to align the LED municipal strategies to the District, Provincial and National strategic Plans.

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

In conclusion it is found that the relationship and trust between the public and local government on creating an enabling environment for job creation is broken. However, there are those who still benefit from municipalities through the tender system who still have confidence on municipalities ability to create a conducive environment for job creation.

All who invest in a locality should first consider the available local skill first for employment. The Local Economic units should concentrate their efforts on support for the local entrepreneurs to build them to grow from SMMEs to big enterprises. This study has explored the current measures which are used by the local government on attracting business in a locality and have seen gaps on the LED strategies which leads to municipalities losing investors. This study has introduced a plan which will assist municipalities on ensuring that they continuously contribute to the economy of their area as government not only through government spending but also through ensuring that there is no silo planning between spheres of government. The hypothesis that the LED strategies will yield an enabling job creation environment is found that it will only be true when a funded implementation plan is included in the strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would love to acknowledge the late professor David Daw who passed on in 2024. He contributed a lot in my life as he was my supervisor when I was writing my thesis. He further supervised me on how to compile research papers. I wrote this paper in remembrance of his contributions to many scholars in the NWU.

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Municipal IDP and LED Strategies:

Bojanala Platinum District municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

City of Matlosana Local Municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

Kgetleng Local Municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

Lekwa Teemane Local Municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

Mamusa Local Municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

Moses Kotane Local Municipality reviewed IDP of 2014/15

Naledi Local Municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

Ngaka Modiri Molema reviewed IDP of 2014/15

Ratlou Local Municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

Taung Local Municipality fourth generation IDP 2017-2022

Bojanala Platinum District Municipality Growth Development Strategy 2005

Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality LED Strategy 2009

Kgetleng Local Municipality LED strategy 2011: Review and alignment of local municipality LEDs with Bojanala PDM Plans

Madibeng Local Municipality LED Strategy 2012: Review and alignment of local municipality LEDs with Bojanala PDM Plans

Maquassie Hills Local Municipality LED Strategy 2013

Moretele Local Municipality LED Strategy 2010

Moses Kotane LED Strategy 2011: Review and alignment of local municipality LEDs with Bojanala PDM Plans

North West Provincial Growth Development Strategy 2014

North West Provincial Strategy 2017

Rustenburg LED Strategy 2011: Review and alignment of local municipality LEDs with Bojanala PDM Plans

Considering The Claim That ICT or Traditional Pedagogy is Superior: Smart Board Management Effects on Student Academic Performance

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Keywords

Smartboards;

Academic performance;

Students;

ITC;

Word Processing.

Abstract

This study investigates how smartboard technology affects students' academic achievement. This came up from the notion that Nigeria has not kept up with the rest of the world when it comes to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education because of insufficient infrastructure and financial limitations. Despite this restriction, private universities, such as Landmark University, have embraced smartboards and other contemporary technologies, providing a distinct setting for this study. Students' opinions about the use of smartboards in their learning experiences are being gathered for the study using structured questionnaires and a survey design. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used for data analysis, and Cronbach's Alpha is used to gauge reliability. It is expected that smartboards will improve learning experiences while the preliminary evidence suggests that their impact on academic success in higher education may be limited. This underlines the importance of sponsoring teacher development programs in a balanced manner that includes both traditional and modern teaching practices.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Rapid advancements in information and communication technology have positively impacted education and all aspects of life, as they have fundamentally altered conventional learning contexts and pedagogical approaches (Erstad et al., 2023). Parallel to these developments, the introduction of mobile phones, camcorders, projectors, flash drives, computers, and tablet devices into the classroom affected several educational areas, from student projects to lecture delivery. The smart board has seen experienced recent developments in the past 20 years, including a computer, projector, and touchpad digital board (Akar, 2020; Akbaş & Pektaş, 2011).

For this study, a smart board is regarded as a large, sizable electronic screen that resembles a whiteboard and, in some cases, is often called an interactive board or an interactive whiteboard (IWB). Numerous studies have examined the use of smartboards in the classroom and how it affects student performance. The advantages of using new technologies in education, in addition to improving student achievement, are considered significant in terms of developing positive inclinations toward learning by helping in focussing attention, reducing anxiety when learning new material, reducing panic, and most importantly, developing observational and productive cognitive behaviours (Mun et al., 2019).

1.2. Problem Statement

In several studies, it has been determined how smartboards work for teaching maths, science, and language skills to students in elementary, basic, and secondary schools and Universities (Ariratana et al., 2015), as well as how the educational setting enhances the smartboard's advantages (Oktay & Hüseyin, 2011). Unfortunately, most of these studies were conducted outside of Nigeria, where ICT advancements such as smartboard technology are lacking in schools due to a persistent financing crisis and the absence of clear institutions and reasons for developing public education (Abdelhak et al., 2015). However, some private investors have stepped in to bridge the gaps of government inefficiencies by establishing educational institutions (Nja et al., 2022). With this, they have invested in diverse learning gadgets, state-of-the-art facilities and modern technologies such as smartboard technologies in the educational sector (Mahmoudi & Bagheri Majd, 2021). One institution in a developing society that qualifies for empirical investigation is Landmark University, located in Omu-Aran Kwara State, the northern central region of Nigeria. It intends to advance the understanding of research, particularly in Nigeria. With the availability of this, it is believed that existing supporting amenities do not make such an apparatus to learning thrive to knowledge attainment (Fan & Beh, 2024) Therefore, this study hypothesizes that the use of smart boards has a tremendous influence on student academic performance.

1.3. Research objectives

Due to the dearth of research in Nigeria, this study intends to examine how well smartboard technology can support students' academic success. It intends to advance the understanding of research, particularly in Nigeria. Hence, this study hypothesises in alternate that:

H₁: the utilisation of smart boards has a tremendous influence on students' academic performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Assumptions

An electronic whiteboard with ease of use is called a Smart Board (Guerreiro & Loureiro, 2023). This board is connected to a projector that displays an image of a PC screen and a personal computer. Via a bit of programming, the smart board allows its users to use it for various tasks (Ameen et al. 2022). In the late 1990s, it was first applied in training. Nonetheless, it has gone by several names, such as Smart Board, Electronic White Board, and Interactive White Board. Smart boards are now widely used by schools. A touch-sensitive screen is a "smart board" with a PC and projector (Yusof et al., 2015). The effectiveness of schooling is expected to be significantly affected by all of these features of the smart board. This viewpoint is supported by research in the literature.

When findings and research are examined, it becomes evident that employing smart boards in teaching produces a classroom experience rich in audio and visual characteristics and makes teaching activities more realistic (Ifeakor et al., 2020). Though stated to be a positive item in the knowledge disbursement, it is, therefore, proven to have a side effect, which is discussed below.

2.2 Theoretical Adoption

In this study, the blended learning approach is suggested to project the reality of the study's achievement. The projection of the blended theory, as stipulated by Donovan et al. (2023) in his study reflected that the basis of the theory was determined to make a model that enables the integration of newly enacted ICT tools and existing pedagogical techniques in already established claims. It must be stated that the findings of Liu et al. (2024) prove to be quite positively correlated with the traditional method of learning, but the introduction of online simulations, virtual labs, and interactive multimedia in the age of an ever-growing Artificial Intelligence calls for a redress into the theory with traditional face-to-face instruction. This approach caters to different learning styles and fosters participation through varied learning experiences. On this note, the study relies on the theory to establish its practicability and adaptability to possibilities.

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The survey will be designed to collect data from Landmark University students on their perceptions of the effects of smartboard implementation on their educational and learning experiences. The fact that this type of research employs questionnaire surveys will justify the acceptance of the research results (Dauda & Akingbade, 2011). A structured questionnaire will be employed by adopting Google Forms and distributed via university mail. The completed surveys will be retrieved from a back-end repository. This method guarantees that respondent data are accurately and precisely captured while making it easy for responders to complete the forms (Adebanji et al., 2018). Yamane's method will be used to determine the sample size. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) will be utilised for data analysis in this study. Demographic data from the surveys will be presented in tabular and graphic form, and a correlation test will be performed to see how strongly the variables are related to each other. In the research, Cronbach's Alpha will be used to assess the reliability of the research instrument. Research has shown that an Alpha value of more than 0.7 indicates good reliability. As a result, the reliability test result of 0.744 exceeds the preferable margin of 0.70 (Field, 2017). suggests that 74% reliable.

4. Preliminary Findings

Overall, the Smart Board is expected to be found to be a less effective teaching tool in higher education. According to the study, smart boards are expected to impact Landmark University students' academic performance negatively. The study is also expected to demonstrate that the use of smart boards will have no appreciable effect on students' academic performance, nor will their presence influence the learning culture of the student body.

5 Managerial Implications

To stay up with Smart Board technology, schools must invest in teacher training and professional development while balancing the price of new technology with its academic advantages as financial planning is essential. Managers must also anticipate the pushback of traditionalists and ensure that technology supports successful instruction. Furthermore, equity concerns must be addressed so that all kids, regardless of background, may benefit from these achievements. Careful preparation is essential because new solutions add new problems.

6 Conclusions and future research

Smart boards can make learning more fun, but teachers must promote their usage and intended benefits with their possible capabilities being fully utilised. Traditional methods remain useful because of its

simplicity and affordability. Therefore, combining technology, traditional learning techniques, and creative teaching tools is best.

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Re-evaluating Stakeholder Management: Lessons from the SANRAL E-Tolling Project

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Keywords

Stakeholder Management;
SANRAL E-Tolling
Project;
Project Failure;
Communication.

Abstract

This work in progress (WIP) paper explores the stakeholder management failures in the SANRAL e-tolling project in Gauteng, South Africa. The study aims to draw lessons from the project's shortcomings, particularly in communication and stakeholder engagement, by analysing both qualitative and quantitative data. Preliminary findings suggest that poor communication strategies significantly contributed to the project's failure, offering valuable insights for future projects.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The SANRAL e-tolling project in Gauteng, South Africa, is a well-documented case of project failure, primarily due to stakeholder management issues. The project, which aimed to implement electronic tolling on Gauteng highways, faced significant public resistance and eventually led to its collapse. This study examines the project's stakeholder management strategies and their shortcomings to derive lessons for future projects.

1.2. Problem Statement

The failure of the SANRAL e-tolling project highlights the critical role of effective stakeholder management and communication in large-scale infrastructure projects. However, the specific factors that led to the breakdown in stakeholder relations in this case remain underexplored.

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1.3. Research objectives

The research objectives are identified below:

- To evaluate the stakeholder management strategies used in the SANRAL e-tolling project.
- To identify the key communication failures that contributed to the project's downfall.
- To offer recommendations for improving stakeholder engagement in similar future projects.

2. Literature Review

The literature on project management emphasises the importance of stakeholder engagement, particularly in controversial projects. Stakeholder management is increasingly recognised as a pivotal element in the success of large-scale infrastructure projects. The SANRAL e-tolling project in Gauteng, South Africa, serves as a significant case study that highlights the complexities of managing stakeholder relationships in politically sensitive environments. 's stakeholder theory underscores the necessity of identifying stakeholders and understanding their needs to achieve project success (Freeman, 2022). However, the SANRAL project exemplifies the difficulties encountered in reconciling conflicting stakeholder interests, particularly when public sentiment is involved.

Research indicates that effective stakeholder management must be proactive and adaptable to the shifting landscape of stakeholder expectations (Yang et al., 2018). In the SANRAL case, inadequate communication and engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders—including the general public and governmental bodies—led to substantial public opposition and ultimately contributed to the project's challenges (Amin, Scheepers & Malik, 2022). This observation aligns with Bourne and Walker's assertion that prioritising stakeholder communication is essential for strategic project management (Yan, Jayasuriya, Gunarathna, 2018).

The literature further emphasizes the importance of stakeholder power dynamics in influencing project outcomes. Mitchell, Agle, and Wood's model categorizes stakeholders based on their power, legitimacy, and urgency (Freeman, 2022). Applying this framework to the SANRAL project reveals that influential stakeholders, such as government officials and activist groups, were not effectively managed, resulting in a breakdown of trust and collaboration (Amin et al., 2022). This highlights the critical need for project managers to recognise and engage with powerful stakeholders to mitigate potential conflicts.

In the SANRAL case, qualitative data indicated that a significant portion of stakeholders expressed distrust in the project's leadership, underscoring a substantial gap in stakeholder management practices that could have been addressed through improved communication and engagement strategies (Amin et al., 2022).

3. Envisaged research design and methodology

The research employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the SANRAL e-tolling project. Data collection included semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and a survey to assess public perceptions. Thematic analysis will be used to interpret qualitative data, while statistical analysis will be applied to the quantitative data.

4. Preliminary Findings

Preliminary findings indicate that the project's communication strategies were inadequate, resulting in a lack of transparency and stakeholder mistrust. Findings indicated that the surveyed stakeholders reported dissatisfaction with the communication strategies employed, correlating strongly with the high levels of public opposition documented in the qualitative analysis. The thematic analysis suggests that key stakeholders, including the public and interest groups, were not sufficiently engaged, leading to significant opposition in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Key Stakeholder Issues

Issue	Frequency	Impact
Lack of Transparency	High	Major
Public Opposition	High	Major
Poor Communication	High	Major

Source: Authors' own compilation.

These findings underscore the importance of effective communication and engagement strategies in managing stakeholder relationships in large-scale infrastructure projects.

5. Managerial Implications

The findings underscore the importance of robust communication strategies in stakeholder management. Project managers should prioritise transparency and engage stakeholders early in the process to build trust and avoid opposition. Recommendations include developing a comprehensive communication plan and regularly updating stakeholders on project progress.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

The failure of the SANRAL e-tolling project offers valuable lessons for future infrastructure projects. Effective stakeholder management, particularly in terms of communication, is essential for project

success. Future research will focus on developing a framework for stakeholder engagement that can be applied to similar projects.

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Exploring the Influence of Brand Extension Strategy and Brand Trust on Customer Loyalty: A Mediation- Moderation Approach

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Keywords

Brand Trust;
Brand Extension Strategy;
Customer Loyalty;
Financial Services
Companies.

Abstract

The financial services industry faces continuous operations and fierce competition from other finance-related firms of a similar nature that frequently expand their product lines to bolster their brand and cater to customer preferences. The study focuses on determining how brand extension strategies affect customer loyalty. Furthermore, it investigates whether brand trust mediates and moderates the relationship between brand extension strategy and customer loyalty. The researchers, using convenience sampling, would collect data from customers of 400 fintech companies, commercial banks, and microfinance bank customers domiciled in Lagos State, Nigeria. The researchers would use both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to analyze the data using SPSS and SMARTPLS software, as well as test hypotheses using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results will demonstrate the role of brand trust in ensuring customer loyalty in the Nigerian financial services industry, as determined by brand extension strategies.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Establishing dominant brands that grant companies the opportunity to increase their marketing expenses is the way for businesses to differentiate themselves from competitors in today's highly competitive global markets. Hence, this is necessary for survival and taking advantage of growth opportunities (Aribaba et al., 2019; Bahram, Saeed, & Marjan, 2013; Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023). Meanwhile, Oliveira et al. (2023), Nguyen, Le, and Kotaskova (2023) asserted that assessing a brand's value to a company involves evaluating its advantages in current markets and considering the potential opportunities it may present in future, unexplored markets. Hence, brand extension strategies stand out among the many components that go into building brand equity (kimRajavi et al., 2023).

According to Mosavi and Ghaedi (2012), consumers' trust in a retailer's communication, strategy, and decisions is influenced by their confidence in the retailer. This, in turn, affects their propensity to buy that brand. Trust is a crucial element in any successful business-to-business interaction, contributing to the brand's credibility and acceptability (Keller, 2012; Betty, 2013).

Several studies recently explained the importance of trust in preserving relationships with brands, and there is a wealth of prior studies on the present concept (Miao et al., 2022; Olaleye et al., 2021a; 2021b). Consumers' perceptions of a company's credibility are strongly correlated with their likeability and trust in its brand. Many studies have focused on brand extension methods because of how long they have been around, Zhang et al. (2021), and Ibrahim and Aljarah (2023) have used similar methodologies to examine mediating impacts of trust on the nexus between brand extension and customer loyalty.

1.2 Problem Statement

For intangible services, brand extension strategies are more appealing because they reduce risk and improve the success rate of the introduction of new products. On the other hand, past studies have focused more exclusively on the brand extension of consumer goods. Numerous studies have revealed consumer opinions about brand extensions. Given the significance and benefits of brand extension strategies, we can infer the need for exploratory research in the service sector, particularly in the financial services sector.

Despite the increasing attention to brand extensions in financial services, there has been comparatively little research in this area, which is quite astonishing as the financial services industry occupies a vital place in the growth of the economy. In addition, though studies have established and extensively covered the connection between brand extension strategy and customer loyalty, the novel idea that remains unexplored

is having brand trust double as a moderating and mediating role, particularly focusing on service industries like financial institutions within metropolitan areas in developing nations like Nigeria.

1.3 Research Aim and Questions

Due to the dearth of research on the present study in a Nigerian context, this study establishes the relationship between brand extension strategy and loyalty. In addition to its overarching goal, this study aims to answer the following questions;

- Does the brand extension strategy influence customer loyalty and brand trust for the selected financial institutions?
- Does brand trust correlate with customer loyalty?
- Does brand trust mediate the nexus between the brand extension strategy and customer loyalty?
- Does brand trust moderate the nexus between the brand extension strategy and customer loyalty?

2. Literature Review

To understand the connection between brand extension strategy, customer loyalty and brand trust, various theories have been proposed in the existing literature, but present research, however, relies on the social exchange theory.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

According to SET, behaviors that rely on the benefits offered by others constitute social exchange (Cortez & Johnston, 2020; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to Bahadır et al. (2024) and Hopkins (2002), SET is a tool for assessing the degree of reciprocity in groups or interactions. This notion suggests that employees and the organization, or subordinates and their superiors, exchange "gestures of goodwill" when certain behaviors demand a response (Hopkins, 2002). Second, according to previous research (Bahadır et al., 2024), this study's results would lend credence to SET, which in turn, would suggest that a strong work connection, which is essential for providing the support that organizations and managers need, can enhance organizational or management results and the expectations of both employees and customers.

To sum up, after delving into a wealth of theoretical insights and empirical findings the hypothesis development is depicted in figure 1 revealing the relationship between variables.

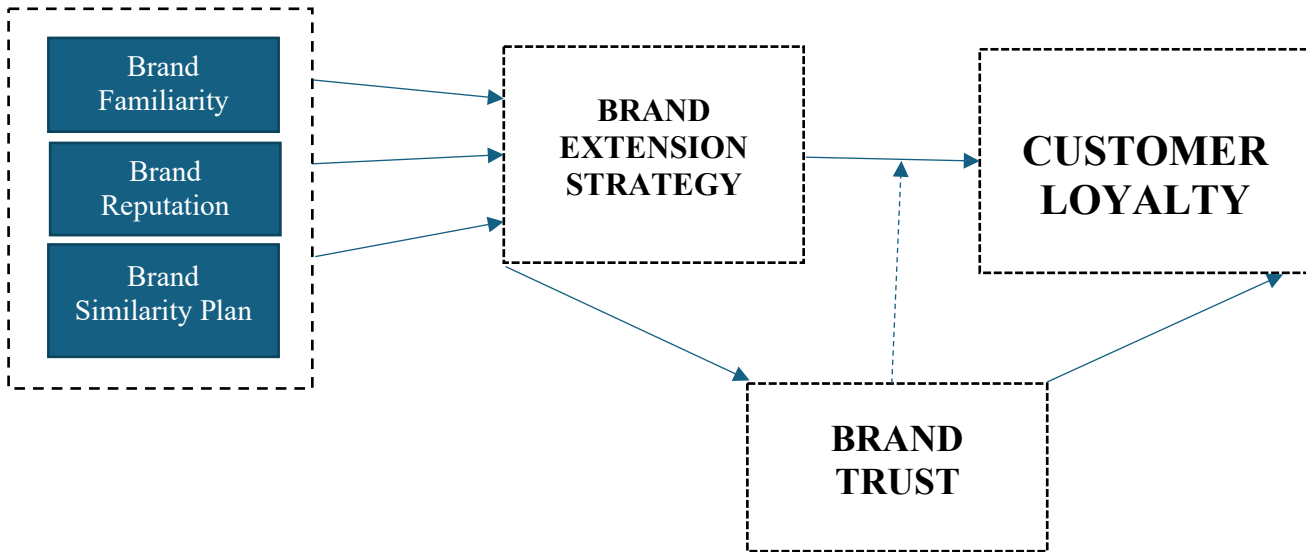


Figure 1: research model

3. Envisaged Research Design and Methodology

This study would employ a quantitative-descriptive empirical approach to investigate the relationship between brand extension strategy, customer loyalty, and brand trust. The researcher chose this research approach because it integrates measured factors without altering them and concentrates on gaining a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

The researchers will obtain information from financial institution customers in Lagos State, Nigeria, using survey data. Meanwhile, this region in Nigeria was chosen due to service economy expansion; the financial service industry, encompassing fintech companies, commercial banks, agency banking networks, and microfinance banks, holds significant value in terms of its potential to propel Nigeria's growth. The researchers plan to purposefully survey four hundred (400) customers using a validated survey, facilitated by a Google Form questionnaire, to represent a reasonable population. This survey will consider the number of financial services companies based in Lagos State, Nigeria, which is a business and commercial metropolis.

A well-developed questionnaire was drawn from prior research to assess the constructs to be examined in this study. Five statements from earlier research (Narayandas, 1996; Ibrahim & Yesiltas, 2021) were used to measure consumer loyalty. Nine statements, covering three dimensions: brand familiarity, reputation, and similarity, were used to measure the brand extension strategy (Matarid et al., 2014; Poerwadi et al., 2020). Furthermore, brand trust would be evaluated employing a 4-question statement,

which was a modified iteration of the extensively utilized scale developed by Ball et al. (2004, 2006) and Olaleye et al. (2021). Hence, the researchers would use a "5-point Likert-type scale spanning from 1 (indicating strong disagreement) to 5 (indicating strong agreement)" to assess all items. Finally, the study would use SPSS software to do a descriptive analysis of the sample population frame by giving details on frequencies and percentages. It would then use SmartPLS software to test and confirm the proposed structural model using partial least squares structural equation modeling.

4. Preliminary Findings

The study aims to determine the impact of the brand expansion strategy dimension on customer loyalty. Furthermore, the study will establish a connection between brand trust, customer loyalty, and brand expansion strategies. The study is also expected to demonstrate the dual role of brand trust in mediating and moderating brand expansion strategies and customer loyalty connections among financial services firms.

5. Managerial Implications

Brand expansion techniques in the consumer sector have helped Lagos' financial services business succeed. Financial services firm managers must focus on brand influence, trust, and image. Therefore, customer satisfaction improves the possibility that a customer will buy and endorse a brand. Financial services marketers and brand managers can also use the study's findings to flourish in today's competitive corporate climate. Brand managers can utilize the current findings to monitor important metrics during brand extensions, but they should avoid this if the new offering doesn't match the parent brand's reputation. Companies should emphasize that customers' reactions to brand-extension tactics are trust-dependent and attempt to improve customers' actions by boosting brand-extension dimensions. Finally, marketing managers should use customer loyalty programs and complaint mechanisms to build customer relationships.

6. Conclusions and Future Research

Despite this study's contribution, many disagreements persist. Firstly, considering the sample size casts doubt on the study's generalizability; the present study could have surveyed more customers, and future research could gain insights from diverse industries and regions, both within and beyond the geographical context. Secondly, this study operationalized the brand expansion dimension as a second-order construct;

future studies could also examine its relationship based on different dimensions. In conclusion, this study found that brand trust significantly moderated and mediated the connection between brand expansion strategy and consumer loyalty. If trust is not well controlled, a negative effect on the relationship between BES and customer loyalty could occur, as shown in the entire mediation model. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge by focusing on the importance of brand trust in the BES-customer loyalty relationship.

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