
Guest editorial: Innovation, entrepreneurship and knowledge

Guest editorial

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This special issue focuses on research that examines a diverse set of determinants that can influence innovation and business performance while optimising social welfare and utility. The research in this special issue covers a range of topics, including individual and learning factors such as interpersonal competencies and employee behaviour, business factors such as brand attractiveness and organisational excellence, as well as regional factors and their effect on the global business environment.

In the future, innovation gaps will be evident and pronounced in various sectors and economies (Sharma *et al.*, 2022). Market trends are influencing the behaviours of organisations and individuals. Moreover, Nyagadza (2022) highlights the dynamic and intense nature of the changes happening in technology globally and the specific market environment in which business organisations operate. The development of business models that focus on innovative progress remains an unresolved issue due to the need to define the functions and responsibilities of participants in the ecosystem (Krasnyuk *et al.*, 2021). In that sense, organisational effectiveness and innovation have become global priorities (Naveed *et al.*, 2022).

In order to achieve success in the global market, it is necessary for a firm to align and manage its resources effectively in response to dynamic market conditions (Bashir *et al.*, 2022). In particular, authors such as Porter and Kramer (2006) propose new relationships and considerations between business and society that make it possible to identify the social consequences of their actions and to determine the opportunities in the environment. In turn, others such as Rico and Cabrer-Borrás (2019) highlight the relationship between the level of knowledge and innovation and regional economic growth. Accordingly, companies attempt to effectively navigate the competitive landscape by crafting an appropriate strategy (Garrido-Vega *et al.*, 2021). As a result, in order to maximise the benefits and minimise the negative impact, many business strategies are being modified.

Society has been involved in various changes over the last few years, generating vulnerabilities and risks for organisations. Vulnerability has various meanings ranging from direct damage from disasters to indirect factors (Kim *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to analyse the variables derived from the constant changes in today's world and to consider other elements such as innovation and business management for the success and

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As Guest Editors, we would like to thank the Editor-in-Chief, Enrique Bigné, for his support of this special edition and for his invaluable guidance throughout the process. We are also grateful to the reviewers for their thorough and insightful feedback, which has greatly enhanced the quality of the articles. Finally, we express our appreciation to the authors of the scientific articles for their hard work and dedication in researching and composing their contributions.



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sustainability of companies. Sustainability has become one of the primary objectives of a plethora of companies, due to the growing concern for environmental preservation and social responsibility (Zavadskas *et al.*, 2016). However, achieving objectives in line with society's needs is no easy task. Therefore, a combination of skills, experience and knowledge is required. Thus, the knowledge generated in this regard is essential for innovation and business management, as it enables companies to keep abreast of the latest trends and developments. This can generate a competitive advantage that will allow organisations to act proactively to market changes, thus avoiding risks.

Social change is evident and so is the concern of modern society to maximise profit and care for the environment. Business sustainability is accompanied by economic, natural and social management (Pongrácz, 2009) that considers the optimisation of resources and allows for innovation in structures. In this way, the board of directors' audit committee supervises financial reporting and guarantees accurate financial statements and high-quality reporting (Ferris and Liao, 2019). However, in modern society, it has become essential to take care of the environment and manage resources optimally. Thus, these changes also have the capacity to have an impact on the way companies are created, the value of the brand and the perceived usefulness to society. Along these lines, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their contribution to society should be highlighted due to the impact they generate. In this sense, NGOs help the community to empower itself and can influence sustainable development because of the different programmes and functions they provide (Nikkhah and Redzuan, 2010).

At the individual level, there have also been several trend changes. Soft skills are interpersonal qualities that are currently highlighted for their relevance in the organisation (Robles, 2012). Being outstanding attributes, the different skills are enhanced as innovative models of growth and impetus for personal and professional development. In this sense, techniques such as mindfulness have been considered linked with learning and educational topics (Langer and Moldoveanu, 2000) and in the business field (Jamieson and Tuckey, 2017) since it allows a conscious development and treatment of the challenges in which society is immersed. Thus, there are different business trends focused on innovation and the provision of differential value, as leaders must consider developing a portfolio of competences at both the individual and team level in the organisation which enable business innovation (Liedtka *et al.*, 2022).

Taking into account the contribution made by Bigné Alcañiz (2016), who points out that over time different approaches have been presented in research and recent changes in access to data pose challenges to current research, this special issue presents some of the outstanding contributions in the field of innovation and social change, covering different management approaches, data analysis and processing. The authors have provided essential knowledge for innovation and business management, and their work is of great importance for the advancement of these fields.

Synopsis of the articles

In the first article, Mao, H. and Ostaszewski, K. focus on the optimal design of reinsurance contracts. A substantial body of research literature exists concerning the optimal design of an insurance contract, in general, but most of this research seeks optimisation from the perspective of the purchaser of insurance (which for a reinsurance contract would be the original insurer, i.e. the ceding company). In this work, instead, mutual benefit of both the ceding company and the reinsurer are considered in an integrated model. The paper presents an optimal contract design and pricing of the contract, obtained via numerical optimisation. The model is also applicable to optimal design of a regular insurance contract, as a consumer seeking insurance also retains some risk, in a manner similar to an insurance company

seeking reinsurance. The complexity of the model prevents obtaining a closed form solution, and only numerical optimisation results are obtained. However, the procedure presented may be applicable in real world applications, and further research on simplified solutions is possible and suggested. They note that in view of governments resolving recent financial crises in a manner analogous to acting as a reinsurer of last resort, the model may be applicable to optimal design for public policy aimed at the best possible approach to resolving financial crises.

In the second scientific contribution, Samagaio, A. and Felício, T. identify internal audit as a key element of corporate governance, which allows an accurate picture of organisations to be assessed and to take actions to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. The quality of internal audits is influenced by characteristics of the organisation itself, but also by internal auditors' individual factors, as how they perceive the support of the organisation or their risk profile, among others. This paper focuses on some of these characteristics to analyse their impact on internal audit quality, measured by reduced audit quality practices (RAQP). This study found some relations between some of these variables on internal audit quality. Therefore, theoretically this paper contributes to the stream of research regarding the determinants of internal audit quality, a topic with few studies, to evidence the factors that shape the effectiveness of the internal audit function, focus on the internal auditor perspective, a current of research that has been little observed in the literature and emphasise the relevance of researchers also focussing on internal auditors' ethical skills. Methodologically, the authors developed a literature-based scale to measure RAQP. By showing that the auditors recognise RAQP, this study contributes to practice by highlighting the importance of quality assurance in these departments, showing which variables affects RAQP and to evidence the relevance of the Audit Committee to the improvement of internal audit quality.

In the third paper, Hebles, M., Yániz-Álvarez-de-Eulate, C. and Villardón-Gallego, L. analyse best practices in the actual implementation of debriefing in organisations, using the guidelines set out in the procedure as criteria. The aim of the method is to improve performance and learning through feedback and consists of three phases: (1) reflection; (2) data review and information exchange; and (3) goal setting and action planning. To develop the research, a debriefing session was observed in different organisations and four categories related to debriefing were identified and characterised: self-analysis, debriefing, planning and team development orientation. This research has different implications for business leaders, and the authors recommend the appropriate use of debriefing in organisational settings, as it can have a positive impact on both team effectiveness and team members' ability to work as a team.

In the fourth paper, Rios Romero, M.J. *et al.* present an innovative model for assessing the brand equity of NGOs based on the donors' perspective. The objective is to propose a novel donor-based brand equity model that takes into consideration the special characteristics that donors confer to NGOs that demand higher moral capital. The proposed model includes three dimensions: familiarity (recall, brand strength, brand identification), associations (authenticity, reputation, differentiation) and commitment (attitudinal, emotional) which differ from those used in previous models of brand equity for NGOs and consumers. For the research, they developed a questionnaire distributed online with 131 valid responses. The analysis is carried out using the partial least square (PLS) method. As a result, these academics highlight that due to the increased competition for donations, it is essential for NGOs to have a strong brand to improve the attractiveness of NGOs to donors and to promote increased donations and donor engagement. This model can be useful for NGOs when planning marketing strategies to strengthen their NGO's brand equity.

In the fifth research article, Lucero-Romero, G. and Arias-Bolzmann, L.G. position mindfulness as a key element for decision-making in today's uncertain environments.

This study experimentally determines the degree of influence that mindfulness training has on the learning ability of graduate students from a university. The research was carried out in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, so it was also possible to evaluate the behaviour of alternative teaching-learning systems, online and hybrid, and contrast them with face-to-face mechanisms. The main contributions are the following. First, since previous research has been mostly observational or relational in nature, a quasi-experimental methodology was applied here to establish possible causal relationships between the application of mindfulness and the effect studied. Second, various practical consequences were identified within postgraduate university environments that guided students, teachers and administrative staff to optimise their performance within training programmes and academic interactions. Thirdly, the involvement of the participants in reflection, learning and understanding of the importance of perfecting soft skills to facilitate the teaching-learning processes and face the uncertain living conditions of this century is promoted. Fourthly, it was verified that the application of an unconventional mechanism such as mindfulness to promote the teaching-learning processes generates important benefits not only for the students involved in the study but for the entire university community. Finally, the need for companies to have collaborators with solid technical and human skills is met, which benefits society as a whole.

The sixth paper, by Beccarello, M. and Di Foggia, G., frames the relevance of the scale and scope of the business models used in municipal solid waste (MSW) management. The authors compare the efficiency of different MSW management models in Italy. Data from the municipal waste cadastre of the Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection (ISPRA), as well as data available from the public balance sheets of the city of Milan, were used for the analysis. The aim of the study is to examine the factors affecting the efficiency of MSW management, either through a single contractor or through multiple suppliers. As a main result, they conclude that the allocation of MSW management to a single contractor may be more cost-efficient due to organisational issues and transaction costs. The scale of service and operational issues were found to be important factors in the optimisation of MSW management service costs. As a novelty, these authors have analysed and tested the same hypothesis under different conditions, often neglected in previous studies on efficiency MSW management.

In this framework, these contributions provide new ideas and solutions essential for organisational and societal progress and management. These results offer valuable insights to researchers, practitioners and policy makers who seek to understand and improve organisational performance, support the conscious use of resources and mitigate negative impacts on society.

Conclusions

From a global perspective, the articles in this special issue illustrate the role of knowledge management and innovation in various geographical and organisational contexts. In conclusion, the special issue highlights the relevance of adapting organisations to the trends and demands of today's society, taking into account the changing needs in terms of technology and training. Thus, this research provides a better understanding of some of the major issues in today's world by providing detailed and rigorous information. Moreover, the results provided by the authors allow the information provided to be used for decision-making in changing environments. In short, it will be essential to take these approaches into account in order to promote conscious management of organisations.

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