

Editor's perspective

In its first five years, *SAJBS* has published research on a wide range of topics that are increasingly relevant in the South Asian context such as transformational leadership, organizational ethics, organizational justice, green buying behavior, and the impact of macroeconomic factors related to the behavior of both firms and markets. Table I provides a breakdown of the areas of focus of the 30 most cited papers published in *SAJBS* to date. It is evident that many sub areas of research that have been popular in the developed world are emerging as relevant and important in South Asia. Much of this research examined the extent to which South Asian countries are similar and different to the West. We summarize important ideas from the published research in *SAJBS* since its inception, outline the main themes of the papers in this current issue, and discuss prospects for the journal moving forward.

Important *SAJBS* research themes

Leadership has occupied a central role in management practice and hence, has interested researchers globally. There is a vast literature on leadership skills, traits, styles, behavior, and best practices. Concepts such as “authentic leadership” and “transformational leadership” have been studied in the context of South Asia. According to Khilji *et al.* (2015), South Asian economies have been transitioning from being hierarchical and ascription oriented to becoming more egalitarian and participative. Consequently, the meaning of authentic leadership has coalesced around Western ideas of being true to one's own values and being more follower centric. Along the same lines, an understanding of transformational leadership styles that emphasizes organizational development through the development of followers' competencies, awareness, and individuality has also gained prominence in the South Asian context (Jha, 2014).

Another emerging area of research is the complex role of ethics and organizational transparency as drivers of individual/organizational satisfaction and performance. Pathardikar *et al.*'s (2016) study demonstrates that ethical practices in the work environment have a positive effect on individuals' career satisfaction, and this eventually reduces organizational turnover. However, the focus on employee satisfaction and attracting investors by adopting ethical practices sometimes hurts customer expectations (Pathardikar *et al.*, 2016). Studies of how to resolve the conflict between customer and employee satisfaction may emerge as an interesting area of study in the future.

The marketing literature has focused on the changing profile of the South Asian consumer. From price and quality being the most important drivers of customer decision making, sustainability, and ethical practices, have now emerged as important drivers of product and market success. The concept of “green consumer” is becoming popular in South Asia where firms are focusing on developing and promoting eco-friendly products. Uddin and Khan (2017) have provided novel insights into the pro-environmental behavior of young consumers in leading South Asia and have highlighted the need to develop strategies to target these young consumers.

In finance and economics, research focused on the impact of macroeconomic factors such as stock market and currency volatility on firm-level and country-level outcomes. Billah Dar *et al.* (2014) found that South Asian countries were often victims of sudden capital

The author would like to thank Krupali Zaveri, the *SAJBS* Editorial Assistant for her help in putting together material for this issue.



Disciplinary area	No. of papers
<i>Management</i>	
Strategic management and entrepreneurship	10
Leadership and organization behavior	7
Human resource management	3
<i>Finance and economics</i>	
Stock market-based drivers of firm behavior	3
Macroeconomic factors of firm profitability	3
<i>Marketing</i>	
Consumer behavior	2
Market potential and opportunities	2

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Table I.
The 30 most cited
papers in last
five years

withdrawals and exchange rate volatility. These authors suggest that the significant effect of stock prices and exchange rates attributed to the slowdown of the economy. Research findings suggest that governments must consider stock market development while framing exchange rate policies to better manage the economic context. Another study on stock market volatility in SAARC nations found that SAARC markets mirrored the global markets due to presence of liberalized trade relations. However, the same authors also concluded that the regional stock markets were not as well integrated with each other (Singhania and Prakash, 2014).

Much of the *SAJBS* published research has made important contributions to the existing literature and provides conceptual frameworks for future research in many diverse areas of study. They also provide an understanding of the relationship of South Asian business practices to global practices. Besides the areas showcased above, other important areas of study published by *SAJBS* include human resource management practices, entrepreneurship, work – life balance, technology adaptation, and identification of market opportunities.

The current issue

The current issue of *SAJBS* has been curated with papers focusing on multiple disciplinary areas of business using different levels of analysis, diverse context variables and conducted across a variety of countries in the region. The purpose of these papers is to demonstrate various attributes of the South Asian economy and newly emerging business practices in the region. The findings of the studies are aimed to help businesses, as well as aspiring entrepreneurs/managers looking to be active in South Asian markets. Table II summarizes the main themes of these papers along four key dimensions –main research question, level of analysis, context variables, and the country of study.

About the current papers

The research of the papers in the current issue focus revolves around social and economic issues in South Asia. The authors find that individual-level factors like self-efficacy and employee commitment, firm-level issues such as social opportunity, organizational morality, and working capital management and country-level economic conditions create the context for businesses and affect outcomes such as emergence of entrepreneurship, reward and punishment behaviors, firm-level performance and macroeconomic development in the region.

Below, we offer a summary of the main concepts in the five papers published in this issue.

Table II.
Areas of focus in the
current issue

Title	Context variables			Country of study		
	Main research question	Level of analysis	Independent		Dependent	Sample of study
Predictors of social entrepreneurial intention: an empirical study	What are the factors that influence the emergence of social entrepreneurship?	Individual	Cognitive styles and self-efficacy	Attitude toward becoming a social entrepreneur	Students in a technical university	India
Power, moral clarity and punishment severity: a mediated-moderation model	How are power, moral clarity, and punishment related?	Firm	Moral standard of people	Power, hypocrisy and severity of punishment	Public sector organizations	Pakistan
Enhancing organizational commitment and employee performance through employee engagement: an empirical check	Does employee engagement result in better organizational commitment and employee performance?	Individual	Employee engagement	Organizational commitment and performance	Employees in higher educational institutions	India
Working capital management and firms' profitability: evidence from emerging Asian countries	What is the role of working capital in enhancing a firm's profitability?	Firm	Working capital management	Firm profitability	Non-financial companies listed on major indices	Multi-country study that includes India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and other countries in the region
Factors Influencing FDI in South Asian economies: a comparative analysis	What are the economic factors that promote FDI in leading South Asian economies?	Country	Macroeconomic factors such as market size, infrastructure, human capital, exchange rates, inflation, and financial stability	FDI promotion or deterrent	South Asian economies	Multi-country study that includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal

A recent study discussing encouragement of entrepreneurship in the Indian context stated that – “The latest Make in India promotion policy, coupled with the Government’s endeavor to make starting of businesses easier, may prove to be a boon for entrepreneurial activities.” The primary aim of such strategy is to attract new business activity and FDI to convert India into a manufacturing hub of the world (Waraich and Chaturvedi, 2016). Such government moves are evidence that South Asian countries are heading toward becoming more developed. Supporting this view, our first paper, “Predictors of social entrepreneurial intention: an empirical study” has explained the influence of cognitive styles and self-efficacy that encourage entrepreneurial intention.

Because of the recent economic crisis and global recession, there is a social need to create value by utilizing resources in more innovative ways, naturally making way for emergence of new businesses (Tiwari *et al.*, 2017). In order to start new businesses to jumpstart the economies, there is a need for both domestic and foreign resources. Our next paper by Adhikary (2017) is a comparative study of macroeconomic determinants of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the top five South Asian economies, namely, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. The findings are aimed to help policy making institutions design suitable country-specific FDI policies. If new business is funded and serves social needs, the next goal is to ensure profitability and then to exploit its benefits for the national economy. Firms need to manage their working capital to optimize the profitability. Every firm needs to understand market dynamics of different countries that they operate within. Thus, our third paper – “Working capital management and firms’ profitability: evidence from emerging Asian countries” is aimed toward entrepreneurs or companies planning to get into South Asian markets. This paper helps firms manage the cash conversion cycle, leverage, and size in accordance with the prevailing statistics of the markets they want to enter into in order to maximize the return on assets (Singhania and Mehta, 2017).

The last two papers have shifted the focus from new businesses to analyzing issues and behaviors of existing firms in the region. In our earlier section, we discussed the emergence of ethics and transparency as a driver of individual and firm behavior. The fourth paper in this issue continues in that vein to examine the role of moral standards and the use of power. Asadullah *et al.* (2017) have argued that unethical practices like misuse of power and corrupt practices stand in the way of an under-developed country becoming a truly developed country with more transparent standards. Our final paper, “Enhancing organizational commitment and employee performance through employee engagement: an empirical check” examines the threat of employee turnover for organizations in the hypercompetitive environment. To address this issue, the authors investigate and empirically validate the relationship of employee engagement with constructs such as effective organizational commitment, employee performance, and perceived organizational support (Owais and Islam, 2017).

Conclusion

We have started the current year with a new name – *South Asian Journal of Business Studies* but our focus remains the same. We continue to publish research across disciplinary areas such as accounting, economics, finance, management, marketing, and technology that enhance our understanding of business in South Asia. The mission of SAJBS is to advance theoretical and empirical knowledge of business issues faced by both multinational and local organizations of South Asia and by South Asian diaspora. We see many emerging trends that mirror Western values and some that have a uniquely South Asian identity. For example, the need to balance socio-economic growth with sustainable business practices, a greater desire for transparency from organizations and the emergence of a more egalitarian culture in the work force are moving South Asia closer to

the global values and practices. A practice that is unique to that region is the growing role of non-governmental organizations and the role that they play in advancing socially relevant issues.

With these prospects in mind, we would like to provide an opportunity for scholars interested in themes relevant to the region to present their work in our journal. The journal continues to be interested in comparative empirical work that looks at management ideas in South Asia and how they differ across countries in the region. We also see value in understanding the underlying reasons for similarities and differences between Western thought and practice and those in South Asia.

Shanthi Gopalakrishnan

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About the editor

Dr Shanthi Gopalakrishnan (PhD) is a Professor of Management at the Martin Tuchman School of Management at New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark, NJ. Her research interests are in the area of innovation management, strategic alliances, and outsourcing. She has published extensively on these topics in journals such as *Journal of Management Studies*, *IEEE Transactions in*

Engineering Management, Journal of Engineering and Technology Management, and Academy of Management Executive. She has lectured internationally on topics such as innovation management and strategic alliances. Dr Shanthi Gopalakrishnan was the Past President and current Fellow of Eastern Academy of Management. She is currently serves on the Editorial and Advisory Boards of *Group and Organization Management, Organization Management Journal* and is the current Editor-in-Chief of *South Asian Journal of Business Studies*. Dr Shanthi Gopalakrishnan can be contacted at: sgopalak@njit.edu