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THE ROLE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES) IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR, THEIR COMPETITIVENESS AND CHALLENGES IN GHANA

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Abstract

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) form the foundation of the Ghanaian economy, and in this regard, manufacturing SMEs are vital in structural change, generation of employment, and value addition. This study investigates how manufacturing SMEs contribute to diversification and economic growth, and also elaborates on the competitive and structural forces which define the performance and future competitiveness of manufacturing SMEs. The analysis directly relates to how manufacturing SMEs contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment and industrial upgrading, working in the conditions of stiff competition and structural limitations. This study relies on secondary sources related to Ghana Statistical Service, government reports, publications from the financial sector, previous research and academic findings of Ghanaian SMEs. The SWOT analysis and Porter's 5 forces framework were employed with descriptive statistical analysis to evaluate the roles of SMEs, industry trend and competition within their operational environment. The study concludes that, manufacturing SMEs are the critical drivers of shared economic prosperity, creation of jobs and diversification in the manufacturing sector in Ghana, but their potential are under exploited. To enhance their competitiveness, there should be consistent policy actions that increase access to finance, modernize infrastructures, assist standards and quality systems, and promote innovation and strategic capability that will empower manufacturing SMEs to promote sustainable and resilient economic transformation.

Keywords: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises; Ghana Enterprise Agency; Gross Domestic Product; Manufacturing Value Added; Competition; Diversification.

A COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF USER-DEFINED FUNCTION CATEGORIES IN C PROGRAMMING

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Abstract

User-defined functions are fundamental to modular programming in C, enabling code reuse, maintainability, and structured program development. These functions are commonly classified based on the presence or absence of parameters and return values, resulting in four primary categories: functions without parameters and without return values, functions with parameters and without return values, functions without parameters but with return values, and functions with both parameters and return values. Understanding the performance implications of these categories across compilation and execution is essential for developing efficient software. This study presents a comparative performance analysis of user-defined function categories in C. A set of ten representative programs with varying computational characteristics was implemented and evaluated in all four function categories. Performance assessment focused on three aspects: compile-time duration, runtime execution in milliseconds, and combined time reflecting overall program efficiency. Additional metadata, including the number of parameters, return type, and code length, were also recorded to provide context. The results indicate that functions incorporating both parameters and return values generally exhibit slightly higher runtime and combined times due to additional stack operations and data handling, while functions without parameters or return values tend to be more efficient. Compile-time differences were smaller but noticeable for programs with more complex function structures. These findings highlight the influence of function design on both compile-time and runtime performance and provide guidance for programmers seeking to balance modularity and efficiency in C programming.

Keywords: C Programming Languages, Modular Programming, User-defined Functions, Compile time, Run time, Performance Analyses.

ADDRESSING THE SKILLS GAP IN TOURISM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

Tourism drives employment and development in Albania, but vocational education and training (VET) struggle to meet industry workforce needs. This study evaluates how well tourism education aligns with industry requirements using a management and benchmarking approach. We employ a mixed-method approach, combining a qualitative focus group with 12 students enrolled in vocational tourism programs and quantitative surveys completed by 18 educators and 25 tourism business representatives. We select participants to reflect diverse institutional and enterprise contexts and review relevant literature to support the analysis. The findings reveal that, despite recent improvements, significant gaps persist between the competencies students acquire and those required by employers, particularly in practical skills, service quality, and professional attitudes. From a benchmarking perspective, the study highlights the need for systematic comparison with best practices to enhance curriculum relevance and training effectiveness. The study recommends strengthening structured partnerships between educational institutions and tourism businesses, developing continuous feedback mechanisms to improve the curriculum, and applying benchmarking tools to monitor progress. These findings have important implications for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders, underscoring the need for a more flexible, market-oriented approach to human resource development to support sustainable tourism in Albania.

Keywords: tourism education, vocational training, labor market alignment, benchmarking, Albania

AI-SUPPORTED DOUBLE MATERIALITY ASSESSMENT FOR VOLUNTARY SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING IN SMES: ENABLING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

Due to recently modified EU regulations, the vast majority of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are not legally obliged to produce sustainability reports. However, an increasing number of SMEs voluntarily engage in sustainability reporting to demonstrate their commitment to social and economic sustainability, improve transparency, and strengthen stakeholder trust. Many perceive voluntary sustainability reporting as a strategic asset to showcase responsible business practices and enhance competitive advantage. Within the project DiNaOpt4KMU, the digital prototype WILMA has been developed, combining user-centered design with artificial intelligence to support voluntary sustainability reporting by SMEs, focusing on the double materiality assessment. WILMA guides users through the process of identifying and articulating relevant social and economic impacts, risks, and opportunities. A generative AI component assists this process, while semantic tools help explore and map complex reporting frameworks such as the European Sustainability Reporting Standard (ESRS) and the Voluntary Sustainability Reporting Standard for SMEs (VSME). Tailored to the diverse experience levels of SMEs, WILMA's design ensures usability and accessibility, thereby lowering barriers to digital sustainability reporting. By enabling SMEs to transparently report on their sustainability

performance, the tool contributes to fostering more socially responsible and economically resilient business practices. This has been validated through comprehensive end-user evaluations involving a double-digit number of SMEs from various sectors. Ongoing research aims to further integrate social and economic sustainability aspects into SME business strategies through enhanced voluntary sustainability reporting.

Keywords: Double Materiality Assessment, Voluntary Sustainability Reporting, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Artificial Intelligence, User-Centered Design, Social Sustainability, Economic Sustainability, Business Informatics

ALBANIAN MUSICAL FOLKLORE HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES

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Abstract

The preservation and promotion of musical folklore represent universal and enduring themes within cultural heritage studies. Albanian musical folklore is distinguished by a rich diversity of traditional instruments and genres that reflect the country's historical, cultural, and identity-based values. In recent years, the growing demand for authentic tourist experiences has increased the importance of preserving and promoting these traditions, positioning them as valuable assets for attracting visitors interested in experiencing Albania's cultural authenticity. This paper aims to analyze the role of Albanian musical folklore in the development of sustainable cultural tourism. It examines the current state of traditional stringed instruments, the challenges faced by instrumentalists in the context of globalization, and the impact of technological developments on the evolution and preservation of these instruments. The study also seeks to provide recommendations for improving the preservation and promotion of musical folklore in support of sustainable tourism development in Albania. The research methodology combines the analysis of secondary sources with qualitative data collected through interviews with instrumentalists, primarily from northern Albania. The study contributes to the existing literature by conceptualizing musical folklore as a strategic resource for sustainable cultural tourism. It highlights the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage and emphasizes the role of community and institutional involvement. From a practical perspective, the findings offer strategic recommendations for integrating musical folklore into tourism products and destination branding, thereby enhancing cultural identity, competitiveness, and long-term socio-economic development.

Keywords: Sustainable Cultural Tourism, cultural heritage management, Albanian Musical Folklore

AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES FOR SALTY SNACKS

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Abstract

The consumption of salty snacks has a long tradition in Hungary; however, the technological development of this product category has lagged behind that of other segments of the food industry in recent decades, as the ratio of tangible fixed asset investment to value added is lower than in, for example, the dairy, meat, or beverage industries. The aim of this study is to examine consumer preferences for salty snacks, with particular emphasis on cheese wafers, and to identify the internal and external factors that influence purchasing decisions. A further objective is to determine which development directions may contribute to increasing manufacturers' market share. The research was conducted through a questionnaire survey involving 1,010 respondents. The analysis examined purchase intention, consumption habits, and attitudes toward newly introduced salty wafer products across three age groups. The use of short and easily understandable questions made it possible to collect data more accurately and to interpret the results more reliably. The findings show that the majority of respondents are familiar with and have a positive attitude toward salty wafers. Although purchase intention is lower among younger consumers, their openness to innovation is considerable. Estimation of a single population proportion revealed that 91.5% of respondents would be willing to try new product developments. At the same time, the study also highlights that manufacturers' advertising activity in this segment remains limited, which may restrain the market growth of the product category. The results suggest that technological modernization, product innovation, and more conscious marketing communication may all play a key role in strengthening the market position of salty snacks.

Keywords: purchase intention, food-consumption, sociodemographic factors

AN OVERVIEW OF THE THIRD MISSION ACTIVITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SZEKESFEHERVAR

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Abstract

The subject of the study provides an overview and comparative examination of the third mission activities of higher education institutes (HEIs) operating in Szekesfehervar while outlining the possible effects. The study presents the results of the latest literature on the subject of the third mission of HEIs. Our most important task was create an insight into the development of the examined topic through a review of the literature produced between 2021 and 2025 and to identify recognisable trends. In our short study we touched on the challenges facing the higher education. We proposed suggestions for the HEIs on the opportunities for developing their third mission activities. With this development, they can contribute not only to overcoming their own challenges, but also to the sustainable development of the city providing them with a home.

Keywords: third mission, higher education institution, regional services, sustainable cities

APPLICATION OF INNOVATIVE METHODS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM – ON THE EXAMPLE OF AZERBAIJAN

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Abstract

In the 21st century, global socio-economic challenges, technological transformations, and dynamically changing demands of the labor market have made a radical renewal of educational paradigms and the application of innovative approaches a strategic necessity. In modern times, quality indicators of education are measured not only by the transfer of knowledge but also by the formation of a flexible, adaptive, and effective learning ecosystem. In this context, the concept of innovation encompasses not only pedagogical methodology but also a complex transformation of the educational environment, teaching technologies, assessment mechanisms, and professional development models of educators. The application of innovative educational methods is an object of topical scientific and practical discussion at both the national and international levels. Many countries, including Azerbaijan, are implementing fundamental reforms to modernize their education systems in order to form globally competitive human capital. However, when integrating international experience, the socio-economic realities, cultural values, and historical educational traditions of each country should be taken into account, and adapted approaches should be applied. Analysis of international experience shows that innovative models implemented by countries such as Finland, Estonia, Singapore, and South Korea have achieved high efficiency indicators across all levels of education, especially in secondary and higher education. The successful integration of advanced international practices into the educational landscape of Azerbaijan can significantly improve the quality of education in our country and develop the professional potential of our personnel to meet global challenges.

Keywords: Innovative educational methods, Educational technologies, Azerbaijani education system, Modernization of education

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: AN EXTENDED MODEL OF TASK AUTOMATION, DECISION AUGMENTATION, SKILL RENEWAL AND EMPLOYMENT RESILIENCE

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Abstract

The study valued how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the accounting profession in the Western Balkans, with a specific focus on the Albanian labour-market and regulatory context. Moving beyond substitution-based narratives, the paper conceptualizes AI as a transformative force that simultaneously automates routine tasks, augments decision-making processes, and redefines the skill architecture of accounting professionals. The study develops an extended conceptual model by integrating highly cited accounting-AI literature on AI-based decision systems with the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework, enabling a multi-level explanation of AI adoption dynamics. The model is informed by a structured review of 20 Western Balkans-focused studies and policy reports, complemented by official labour-market statistics for Albania. The framework links AI adoption intensity to task automation, decision augmentation, professional role reconfiguration, and employment resilience, while incorporating skill renewal and digital-analytical capability as mediating mechanisms, and organisational and regulatory readiness as moderating factors. The results reveal that in transitional economies, AI drives professional upgrading rather than pure job displacement, shifting accounting toward advisory and analytical roles. The study provides a theoretically integrated and regionally grounded framework for future empirical validation and policy design.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence; accounting profession; Western Balkans; task automation; decision augmentation; skill renewal; employment resilience; digital transformation; Albania

ASSESSING GREEN MINDSET INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN AZERBAIJAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FROM UI GREENMETRIC AND THE IMPACT RANKINGS

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the institutionalization of the green mindset in Azerbaijan's higher education by analyzing long-term sustainability performance trends using UI GreenMetric World University Rankings and the Times Higher Education Impact University Rankings (THE Impact Rankings) data from 2021 to 2025. The study focused on selected universities in Baku, Azerbaijan. Data collected for this study were quantitatively examined using a longitudinal comparative approach that utilized an unbalanced panel dataset and applied descriptive trend analysis and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. The results of the article showed modest increases in UI GreenMetric rankings over the past five years, variability in the rankings in THE Impact Rankings, and weak or no statistically significant correlations between universities' internal sustainability practices and their external SDG performance. The findings show that increases in internal sustainable practices do not translate into greater international awareness of universities' SDG impacts. Further, the study presents preliminary evidence of a developing yet incomplete sustainability institutionalization process in Azerbaijan's higher education system. The study contributes to exploratory evidence for the institutionalization of sustainability in higher education in Azerbaijan, indicating both progress, and persistent issues in aligning campus-based environmental management to broader sustainable development goals. Given the small sample size and methodological limitations, results are interpreted cautiously as emerging patterns rather than definitive conclusions.

Keywords: Sustainability, sustainable development goals (SDGs), The impact rankings, UI (Universitas of Indonesia) Green metric, higher education, Azerbaijani universities

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ON THE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF COMPANIES IN SERBIA

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Abstract

The modern digital transformation is a key factor in the competitiveness of businesses in the global business environment, significantly contributing to the efficiency and sustainability of business processes. Although awareness of its importance is growing, systematic analyses of the impact of digitalization on the business performance of companies in Serbia are still rare. The aim of the paper is to assess the impact of digital transformation on the business performance of small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Serbia, with a special focus on the factors that influence the efficiency of the transformation process. The study applies a quantitative methodology based on the statistical analysis of data from the Statistical Office of Serbia (RZS), the World Bank, Eurostat, and the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) for the period 2014–2024. The analysis focuses on SMEs, where business performance is measured by indicators of revenue growth, profitability, labor productivity, and market share, while the level of digitalization is tracked through internet penetration, cloud service usage, and the digitalization of business processes. Descriptive statistics, time series analysis, correlation, and regression analysis were used. The results show a statistically significant positive impact of digital transformation on operational efficiency and revenue growth, especially

in the finance, trade, and IT sectors. Key barriers have been identified: a lack of qualified personnel, high implementation costs, limited institutional support, and low awareness of the potentials of digitalization. The paper highlights the need for comprehensive policies that encourage investments in digital infrastructure, employee training, and access to financing for SMEs. The findings contribute to the academic discussion on digital transformation in transition countries and offer practical recommendations for corporate management and the Government of Serbia for building a sustainable digital ecosystem.

Keywords: digital transformation, small and medium enterprises, business performances, business environment

AUTOMATIC DAMAGE DETECTION OF GLASS FIBER REINFORCED PLASTIC (GFRP) PANELS USING CLASSICAL MACHINE LEARNING METHODS

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Abstract

Glass Fiber reinforced plates (gfrp) have seen widespread use in various Industrial applications. Examples range from drones to large scale applications in wind turbines. While they excel at these task because of their leightweigt properties, they exhibit non-linear, ansitropic characteristics, which makes detecting damage difficult compared to metallic materials. Damage types like delamination or fiber breakage have wide ranging consequences on the durability while being difficult to detect. Conventionally the detection of damaged has relied on scheduled maintenance and manual inspections, which requires significant resources. Structural Health Monitoring(SHM) tries to mitigate these disadvantages by introducing realtime automatic damage detection through employing algorithms data evaluation. This study presents a new vibration based experimental measured dataset from approximately 100 GFRP. The Plates are measured in 4 different damage and two aging states. To evaluate the measured vibration data a systematic evaluation pipeline based on classical machine learning methods, while comparing different feature domains and models, is used. For a fair comparison repeated nested crossvalidation in tandem with Stratified Group K-fold is implemented. This approach ensures data leakage free results, while Bayesian hyperoptimization automatically picks the best working model- and feature combinations for the damage classification. By using classical machine learning methods the pipeline provides explainable predictions of the damage state. Glass fiber reinforced plastics (GFRP) have seen widespread adoption across various industries, ranging from small-scale applications like drones to large-scale structural engineering such as wind turbines, owing to their superior lightweight properties. They exhibit non-linear, anisotropic characteristics and are susceptible to distinct surface and internal damages—such as delamination, fiber breakage, and matrix cracking—that are not typically observed

in traditional metallic materials. Historically, the inspection of these structural damages has relied on scheduled manual interventions, which demand significant personnel resources, lack real-time monitoring capabilities, and often require long out-of-service durations for the system. This paper presents the development of a vibration-based damage monitoring approach, a subcategory of Structural Health Monitoring (SHM). In this method, modal parameters—specifically eigenfrequencies, mode shapes, and damping ratios—are continuously monitored and analyzed via cost-efficient, compact sensors integrated directly into the structure. Due to the inherent complexity of GFRP material properties compared to metals, classical machine learning (ML) methods are employed to evaluate the resulting vibration data. By leveraging these algorithms, the system can identify the most reliable features for structural failures, providing a scalable solution for the automated health assessment of composite structures.

Keywords: Structural health monitoring, predictive maintenance, Machine Learning, Dataset, Glass Fiber reinforced plates

BEYOND THE CHECKOUT: DRIVING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH STRATEGIC HRM AT CARREFOUR, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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Abstract

This study offers a detailed analysis of the implementation of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) at Carrefour UAE, a major retail company under Majid Al Futtaim. In a fast-moving, labor-driven sector, it highlights the importance of SHRM for sustaining operational efficiency and customer service standards. The research focuses on three key areas: work system design, adherence to UAE labor laws, and the success of HR best practices. It uses a mixed-methodology approach, combining employee surveys and interviews, supported by theoretical models such as the Job Characteristics Model, Atkinson's Flexible Firm, and the AMO (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity) Model. Several important insights are uncovered. The report concludes with a strategic action plan to enhance training structures and reward systems. By aligning these HR functions more closely with organizational objectives, Carrefour, UAE, can transition from an administrative HR approach to a people-focused strategy that improves employee capabilities, motivation, and long-term retention. Keywords: Job design, Employment law, Strategic HRM practices.

Keywords: Job design, Employment law, Strategic HRM practices.

BUSINESS THEORIES DEDICATED TO SMES IN THE EU: AN INTEGRATED THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute the backbone of the European Union economy, representing the vast majority of firms and a substantial share of employment and value creation. Despite their economic relevance, the theoretical foundations guiding SME growth and strategic decision-making remain fragmented across multiple streams of management research. This paper examines the principal business theories applied to SMEs within the European context, with particular emphasis on the Resource-Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Big Data Analytics Capability (BDAC). Through a structured conceptual analysis, the study evaluates how these theoretical perspectives have been used to explain firm competitiveness, technological adoption, and organisational adaptability. While each framework contributes valuable insights, the analysis demonstrates that most were originally developed for large organisations and later adapted to SMEs, often without sufficient consideration of structural constraints such as limited resources, managerial capacity, and data infrastructure. As a result, the existing literature provides partial explanations but lacks an integrated theoretical approach specifically designed for SMEs operating under conditions of uncertainty and operational disruption. By systematically mapping the theoretical landscape and identifying its limitations, this paper highlights a critical gap in SME-oriented strategic theory and establishes the foundation for future models capable of explaining how SMEs can achieve sustainable growth through the effective adoption of predictive analytics and dynamic capabilities.

Keywords: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), Resource-Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Big Data Analytics Capability (BDAC), Predictive Analytics, Strategic Management

CHANGES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY AND APPLIED MARKETING APPROACHES

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Abstract

Abstract The era of digital transformation has led to fundamental changes in consumer behavior, just as in many other fields. The widespread use of social media and social networks, e-commerce, and e-marketing has significantly altered consumers' decision-making mechanisms, purchasing habits, and forms of interaction with brands, making them more dynamic, interactive, and information-driven. These changes necessitate a reconsideration of traditional marketing approaches and highlight the role of digital transformation in applied marketing strategies. The article analyzes the main directions of consumer behavior transformation in the context of the digital economy. In particular, it explores the impact of personalized marketing, big data analytics, AI-based recommendation systems, and social media marketing on consumer behavior. It also emphasizes the increasing use of digital channels by consumers for information gathering, product comparison, and purchasing decisions. The research results show that, under the conditions of the digital economy, marketing approaches are evolving towards data-driven decision-making, real-time interaction, and optimization of customer experience. This plays a crucial role in shaping competitive advantage for enterprises. In conclusion, the digital economy not only transforms consumer behavior but also requires marketing strategies to be more flexible, innovative, and technology-oriented.

Keywords: Digital economy Consumer behavior Digital transformation E-commerce Social media

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC AND ENCRYPTED GENESIS BLOCKS IN BLOCKCHAIN SYSTEMS

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Abstract

In the accelerating digital economy, business communication increasingly depends on the fast, secure, and reliable exchange of information between organizations. Traditional communication systems often struggle with limited transparency, fragmented data management, poor traceability, and dependence on centralized intermediaries. Blockchain technology offers a novel approach to these challenges by providing a decentralized, tamper-proof, and auditable communication infrastructure. Trust, transparency, and security are key factors in blockchains, as blockchain acceptance continues to divide people to this day. The aim of the research is therefore to create two blockchains with different properties that can convey trust to users. The first of these is a public blockchain, in which the data is accessible and readable by everyone, but cannot be modified without authorization. The second blockchain is a private blockchain that uses complex data encryption solutions to protect user data, and access to it is strongly restricted. The research compares the genesis blocks of the two blockchains created due to their different specificities. It can be stated that both blockchains enable secure decentralized data storage, and it is advisable to select them according to usage needs in order to ensure effective business communication.

Keywords: public blockchain, private blockchain, communication, smart contract

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND PROFITABILITY OF HUNGARIAN AND POLISH AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

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Abstract

The factors influencing the financial situation of agricultural enterprises in the new Member States have fundamentally changed since the EU enlargement in 2004. In order to quantify the changes in the financial situation and financial performance, this research scientifically analyzes the main financial indicators of the period 2016-2023. The study is based on a significant amount of data on the financial situation of Hungarian and Polish agricultural enterprises. The research is based on company data of Hungarian and Polish agricultural enterprises selected from the Crefoport Company Information Database, and in addition, it evaluates and synthesizes relevant domestic and international literature and statistics. Descriptive statistical calculations and regression analysis were performed based on data from 1,000 Hungarian and 1,000 Polish enterprises spanning eight years. The analysis of the data shows that the financial situation of the enterprises in the two countries differs, and based on the trends, the research draws further conclusions and formulates recommendations. Based on the examined data, it is established that the growth of indicators expressing the financial situation of Hungarian agricultural enterprises lagged behind that of Polish agricultural enterprises during the examined period.

Keywords: financial performance, financial indicators, Liquidity, ROE, ROA, ROS

COMPETITIVE SUSTAINABILITY OR SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVENESS: THE NONTRIVIAL TRIVIALITY WE ARE ALL SEARCHING FOR

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Abstract

Almost as a triviality, all the scientific community used to handle sustainability as a key factor in near future's competitiveness. This stems from the benign expectation that the picture which lives in the minds of microeconomic actors about their short-term (or middle-term) goals and the short-term goals of our communities and our society are tightly parallel, or at least not contrary to each other. And indeed, sustainability is the key for our society in coping with the challenges of our age. But is this picture in researchers' minds about the picture in people's minds valid at all? Everything in our recent research, from consumers, through SME's, up to policymaking and global politics, points to the conclusion that the answer is not that clear. Sustainability and competitiveness are generally contradictory in practice. Not being conscious about this contributes to the effective scholarly support of an ongoing double-voiced discourse on sustainability. We should be aware of this contradiction, and we should search for patterns, practices, methodologies and initiatives which can promote sustainability and competitiveness at once. One of these can come from SME's of organic agriculture, but we have to keep an eye on many socioeconomic subsystems and gather all the patterns connecting sustainability and competitiveness that finally come together as the overall systematic solution.

Keywords: competitiveness, sustainability, SME's, tragedy of commons, collective optimum

CONSCIOUS BRAND BUILDING IN HUNGARIAN BASKETBALL? CASE STUDY THE BRAND IDENTITY OF FALCO-VULCANO ENERGIA KC SZOMBATHELY

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Abstract

The digital revolution has increased consumers' purchasing power and influence, which is particularly true in the entertainment industry's main arena, the passive sports consumption market. From 2020 onwards, consumers will have many more opportunities to relax or enjoy higher-quality sporting events, as everything will be available online (after subscribing). The market leaders have been working for decades to build and maintain an emotional connection with their customers in order to achieve consumer loyalty. This process, although it started later, can also be observed in sports clubs. Why is this important? Today, people have thousands of opportunities, but the number of hours they spend awake and the amount of disposable income they have have not increased in direct proportion to the number of opportunities. In our research, we examined whether a Hungarian first division, multiple championship basketball team is also capable of building a brand through conscious communication. We used Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism for the measurement. A total of 173 fans participated in the research (54.1% women and 45.9% men). Based on their responses, it became clear that a significant proportion of fans had developed brand loyalty and commitment to the team (93% of respondents). The result is insightful because such a relationship makes the match tickets more valuable, and merchandise products also represent greater value in the eyes of committed fans. In addition, players in the sponsorship market are looking for deep connections between teams and fans, in addition to quantitative reach.

Keywords: sportmarketing; brand; marketing communication

CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF AI INFLUENCERS

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Abstract

The paper reviews how consumers perceive the AI-powered influencers on social media. AI influencers represent a relatively new form of communication between brands and consumers. The topic has gained increasing attention because a growing number of brands started using human-like avatars in marketing communication while consumer opinion has not yet been fully determined. As a result, they raise new questions about authenticity and credibility in influencer marketing. This paper seeks to offer insight into consumer perceptions of AI influencers, particularly the role of authenticity, credibility, trust, humanness, and uniqueness. The study is based on a review and synthesis of existing academic literature. Previous studies show that human-like AI-generated influencers may increase the uncertainty about brand and have a strong influence on the formation of attitudes and engagement. At the same time, some studies suggest that novelty and uniqueness may increase consumer interest and engagement among younger and digitally active audiences.

Keywords: AI influencers, consumer perceptions, authenticity, trust, social media marketing

CYBERCRIME AND CYBER DEFENCE: THREATS, PROTECTION, AND PUBLIC PREPAREDNESS

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Abstract

This paper examines how the given group of people are capable of protecting themselves against cyber threats by highlighting the relationship between cybersecurity knowledge, daily security practices and selected individual characteristics. The study starts with the observation of rapid growth of cybercrime while digital technology becomes an inseparable part of an individual's daily life. This makes user behaviour a crucial part of cyber defence and important for personal and even organizational data security. Prior literature suggests a 'knowledge–practice gap' which means that people often know what they should do online but fail to follow recommended security measures consistently. To investigate the gap, 250 anonymous users were surveyed online. A cross-sectional quantitative survey sample is considered to be convenience sampling. Questionnaire collected basic demographic information and self-rated technical expertise, tested understanding of key cybersecurity concepts (such as phishing, ransomware, strong passwords, two-factor authentication, software updates and supply-chain attacks), and asked how frequent users implement cybersecurity practices in their daily life. It also measures concern about cybercrime and past experience with cyber incidents. According to gathered responses, a Knowledge Index and a Practice Index is calculated. The first research question is how prepared respondents are in terms of knowledge and behaviour, and whether a gap exists between the two. The results show an average Knowledge Index of about 74% and a Practice Index of about 60%, which clearly confirms a knowledge–practice gap. The majority of respondents have a basic understanding of cybersecurity overall, however understanding of supply-chain attacks was noticeably weaker. The second research question focuses on the role of psychological factors. Users who were more concerned about cybercrime, or who had personal or indirect experience with incidents, reported slightly better security habits. However, the differences

are modest and do not close the knowledge–practice gap. The third research question examines self-rated technical expertise. Literature suggests that higher self-rated expertise is associated with better practices on average. However, according to the survey, some respondents who saw themselves as advanced still reported weak behaviour. Overall, the study concludes that knowledge, concern, experience and perceived expertise help in having better and consistent safety behavior, but they are not sufficient on their own. Improving public cyber preparedness therefore requires not just awareness, but also easier secure defaults, more user-friendly tools and clear, practical guidance that makes safe behaviour simpler in everyday life.

Keywords: cyber defence, cybercrime, protection, public preparedness

CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION IN HUNGARY IN 2026

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Abstract

Establishing cybersecurity and conscious online data protection, as well as continuously updating them, is not only an organizational responsibility, but also a social one. The involvement of families and educational institutions is essential for the safety-conscious socialization of children from the earliest stages of life. One important tool for this could be the structured, practice-oriented teaching of cybersecurity in the National Core Curriculum. Cybersecurity cannot be covered in a few sentences during 12 years of public education. Cyberattacks are multifaceted and constantly changing, cybercriminals are infinitely creative, and the knowledge acquired today will be obsolete in a year's time. This dynamic change alone would be reason enough to devote several hours each school year to teaching cybersecurity. In contrast, the reality is that cybersecurity education does not receive adequate attention in any grade. It is crucial to teach members of Generation Alpha and Generation Z, i.e., the younger generation, how to use devices responsibly, as they are the ones who were born into a world of daily online activity. In the following, striving for completeness, I will present how the National Core Curriculum breaks down by grade level the awareness of safe presence in cyberspace (or rather, its absence), education on responsible online life, the use of secure online platforms, and cyber security education in any form during the 12 years spent in Hungarian public education.

Keywords: cybersecurity, Alpha generation, Generation Z, education, digital presence

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A PERSONALIZED DATA VISUALIZATION SYSTEM FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper presents the development of a data visualization system designed for higher education institutions. It handles complex data in a customizable and interactive way, ensuring that visual representations remain clear regardless of data complexity. Pedagogues, administrators, and students can use the system to support more informed decision-making. The system maintains relevance by incorporating user feedback and allowing visualization methods to adapt to different tasks, such as academic and administrative functions. This is important for ensuring long-term usability. Key components include dynamic dashboards that update in real time, predictive analytics for identifying trends, and advanced data processing techniques. All features are tailored to individual user preferences to address specific needs. The system aims to enhance data-driven decision-making, improve institutional efficiency, and foster a more engaging learning environment.

Keywords: Data Visualization, Higher Education, Decision Making

DEVELOPMENT OF A SELF-ASSESSMENT-BASED FERTILITY ESTIMATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Infertility is an increasingly significant global health issue, affecting approximately 15% of couples of reproductive age worldwide. Beyond its medical dimension, it is a complex condition shaped by the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors, often resulting in substantial emotional burden and reduced quality of life. This research presents the development of an accessible, self-assessment-based fertility prediction system that estimates fertility probability without relying on laboratory hormone testing. Instead, the system utilizes menstrual cycle characteristics, reported symptoms, and lifestyle-related (exogenous) factors to provide an individualized assessment. The growing demand for scientifically grounded, non-invasive, and privacy-conscious digital tools in reproductive health highlights the relevance of this approach. The methodology is based on a structured questionnaire integrated into a rule-based and probabilistic evaluation framework, implemented as a web application in a Python environment with modular JSON-based logic layers. The backend processes user responses to compute key indicators, as well as overall and domain level scores, and presents results as transparent, interpretable scores with scientific articles attached as explanation for every result. The expected outcome is a scientifically grounded, scalable screening system that enhances fertility awareness, supports early professional consultation, and establishes a foundation for future integration of machine learning models and clinically validated datasets.

Keywords: infertility, self-assessment, literature based scoring

DIGITAL SKILLS AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: THE ROLES OF CSR PERCEPTION AND PERCEIVED GREENWASHING

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Abstract

Although corporate social responsibility (CSR) and green marketing have been widely studied, limited attention has been given to the role of consumer digital capabilities in interpreting sustainability information. While prior research has extensively examined corporate communication strategies, limited attention has been paid to the role of consumer capabilities in interpreting CSR-related information. This study investigates how digital skills influence purchase intention through CSR perception and perceived greenwashing. This study investigates how digital skills influence purchase intention through CSR perception and perceived greenwashing. Survey data were collected from 392 valid respondents in Taiwan. The proposed hypotheses were tested using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and multiple regression analysis. The results indicate that digital skills positively influence CSR perception and negatively affect perceived greenwashing. CSR perception significantly enhances purchase intention, whereas perceived greenwashing reduces purchase intention. Furthermore, the findings support the mediating effects of CSR perception and perceived greenwashing in the relationship between digital skills and purchase intention. By shifting the analytical focus from firm-centered communication strategies to consumer digital capabilities, this study contributes to the literature on sustainable marketing and consumer behavior. The findings suggest that improving digital literacy and enhancing transparency in CSR communication are critical for fostering sustainable consumption in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital Skills; Corporate Social Responsibility; Greenwashing; Purchase Intention; Sustainable Marketing

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES FOR AZERBAIJANI SMES TO STRENGTHEN INTEGRATION INTO GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS

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Abstract

Azerbaijani small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) confront persistent hurdles in global value chain (GVC) integration, exacerbated by outdated digital infrastructure and reliance on traditional oil-dependent sectors. This study examines digital transformation strategies as a vital mechanism for enhancing SME competitiveness, particularly relevant amid Azerbaijan's economic diversification post-oil boom and the worldwide Industry 4.0 shift, where digital tools enable resilient supply chain participation. The research adopts a mixed-methods framework, featuring in-depth qualitative case studies of SMEs across manufacturing and services, complemented by quantitative analysis of statistical data from local databases (e.g., State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan) and worldwide indicators (e.g., World Bank, UNCTAD; 2020-2025). This dual lens evaluates strategy implementation, barriers, and outcomes. Key findings demonstrate that government-led policies and initiatives—including digital upskilling subsidies, blockchain traceability programs, and SME-GVC matchmaking platforms—drive 10% average improvements in export integration metrics and operational efficiency for participating firms. High performers integrating cloud-based ERP systems show even greater gains. The study recommends expanded public-private partnerships to scale these interventions, fostering sustainable GVC embedding for Azerbaijani SMEs.

Keywords: SME, small and medium-sized enterprises, global value chain, GVC, digital transformation,

DIGITALIZATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF INDUSTRIAL WORK SYSTEMS IN THE ERA OF INDUSTRY 5.0

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Abstract

In the modern conditions of accelerated technological development, digitalization is one of the main drivers of the development of the industrial work system. In this sense, the concept of Industry 5.0 represents a new paradigmatic scheme of development that emphasizes the synergy between man and advanced technology in order to create more sustainable work systems. In this sense, not only does digitalization affect technological processes, but it also

significantly changes the structure of work, the organizational environment and the competencies required of employees. Accordingly, this research examines the impact of digitization within Industry 5.0, on employees and the transformation of the modern way of working with special emphasis on employee motivation, development of digital skills, organizational support and balance between business and private life, whereby empirical research was conducted using the survey method, on a sample of employees in various industrial sectors, after which they were analyzed using descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis. The research results indicate the existence of five key dimensions, which describe employees' perception of digital transformation: motivation and readiness of employees for digital changes, technological aspects of digitization, balance between work and private life, organizational support and quality of the digital work environment. The obtained findings confirm that the successful implementation of Industry 5.0 requires an integrated approach that implies the simultaneous development of technological infrastructure, digital competencies of employees and adaptation of the organizational environment to new work models.

Keywords: Industry 5.0, digitization, digital transformation, transformation of work in industry, digital skills

DISTANCE LEARNING AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

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Abstract

Distance learning and financial inclusion are two key drivers of inclusive development in the digital age. Distance learning expands access to education by removing geographic and time barriers, while financial inclusion ensures that individuals and businesses have access to affordable and appropriate financial services. Although often discussed separately, these two areas are closely interconnected. Access to financial services enables individuals to afford educational opportunities, while distance learning enhances digital and financial literacy, supporting broader participation in formal financial systems. This paper examines the relationship between distance learning and financial inclusion, highlighting their mutual benefits, challenges, and policy implications. It argues that integrated strategies combining digital education and financial access can reduce inequality, promote entrepreneurship, and foster sustainable economic growth, particularly in developing economies. Distance learning and financial inclusion are two powerful forces shaping modern society. Both aim to remove barriers. Distance learning removes geographic and time barriers to education. Financial inclusion removes economic barriers to financial services. When combined, they create opportunities for individuals and communities that were previously excluded from both education and economic participation. This paper explores the relationship between distance learning and financial inclusion, their benefits, challenges, and how they can support each other in promoting sustainable development.

Keywords: Distance learning; Financial inclusion; Digital education; Digital financial services; Financial literacy; Digital literacy; Online learning; Economic development

DOCUMENTATION-ORIENTED SECURITY COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT IN ENTERPRISE CLOUD ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

Security compliance assessments and audits in enterprise environments are heavily relying on manual review of documentation, such as architecture descriptions, process documents, policies, configuration records, and operational evidence. This makes the assessment process slow, resource-dependent, difficult to scale, and hard to reproduce consistently across systems. This paper introduces a formal problem view of documentation-oriented security compliance assessment in enterprise cloud environments. The study defines the main elements of the assessment process, including controls, documents, document segments, evidences, decision states, and uncertainty, and describes how they interact in a structured reasoning workflow. Instead of treating compliance assessments or audits as simple text classification problems, the paper reviews it as evidence-based inference problem in which relevant information must be identified, analysed, weighted, interpreted, and transformed into a control-level compliance decision. The main goal is a formal and structured foundation for taxonomy design, architecture development, metric definition, and experimental validation of enterprise-ready LLM-supported compliance systems.

Keywords: security, assessment, control, LLM, automation,

DYNAMIC STRATEGIC ASSET ALLOCATION FOR SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUNDS: A BAYESIAN EVT AND COPULA-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR LONG-TERM GROWTH SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

We propose a dynamic Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA) framework for sovereign wealth funds that integrates Bayesian updating, extreme value theory (EVT), and copula-based tail dependence modeling to address the challenges of long-term growth sustainability under volatile market conditions. The proposed method replaces static risk-return assumptions with real-time adaptive modules: a Bayesian EVT component estimates tail risk through generalized Pareto distributions and MCMC sampling, while a copula module captures nonlinear cross-asset dependencies during extreme events. These outputs feed into a dynamic optimization engine that solves a mean-CVaR problem with time-varying inputs, ensuring portfolio weights adjust to evolving market regimes. The framework is computationally tractable, employing Stan for Bayesian inference, TensorFlow Probability for high-dimensional copula modeling, and a quantum-inspired solver for non-convex optimization. Moreover, the closed-loop design enforces risk limits through feedback mechanisms, aligning short-term adjustments with long-term objectives. Our contributions include a novel synthesis of semi-parametric EVT and copula tails within a Bayesian framework, as well as a practical implementation for large-scale portfolios. The results demonstrate robust performance under stress scenarios, offering sovereign wealth funds a systematic approach to balance growth and risk in uncertain environments. This work bridges the gap between theoretical risk modeling and real-world asset allocation, providing a scalable solution for institutional investors facing complex market dynamics.

Keywords: resource-dependent economies, long-term growth sustainability, Bayesian-EVT model ,

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON GLOBAL ECONOMIC STABILITY AND TRADE DYNAMICS

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Abstract

In recent decades, economic sanctions have emerged as a prominent instrument of international economic policy, significantly shaping global economic interactions. This study explores the multifaceted impact of sanctions on the world economy, with particular emphasis on international trade flows, financial stability, and macroeconomic performance. The primary objective is to assess both the direct effects on targeted countries and the broader spillover effects on sanctioning states and third-party economies. The research adopts a qualitative-analytical approach, drawing on data and reports from international organizations alongside existing academic literature. Special attention is paid to recent sanction regimes and their implications for global supply chains, energy markets, and cross-border capital movements. The findings indicate that while sanctions may achieve short-term political and economic objectives, they often generate unintended consequences such as trade diversion, increased transaction costs, and financial market volatility. Furthermore, the study reveals that sanctions contribute to the gradual fragmentation of the global economy, encouraging the development of alternative financial systems and regional economic blocs. In the long run, targeted countries tend to adapt through structural adjustments, including diversification of trade partnerships and import substitution strategies. Overall, the effectiveness of sanctions remains context-dependent and subject to significant economic trade-offs.

Keywords: economic sanctions, global economy, trade dynamics, financial stability, economic fragmentation

EMPIRICAL ASPECTS OF PREDICTIVE MAINTENANCE APPLIED TO COMPLEX MANUFACTURING SYSTEMS

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Abstract

The paper develops an integrated theoretical and applied framework for modeling, optimizing and implementing predictive maintenance (PdM) in modern industrial architectures. Starting from the foundations of reliability theory and degradation modeling, the research formulates the evolution of wear as a Wiener-type stochastic process, allowing the probabilistic estimation of the remaining lifetime. The intervention decision is formalized by a Markov Decision Process (MDP), and the problem is extended to a risk-constrained dynamic optimization, integrated in a distributed state space model. The paper proposes a hierarchical control architecture that integrates the predictive maintenance function with Model Predictive Control (MPC), so that degradation becomes a state variable in the operational optimization. The implementation is carried out within a cyber-physical architecture compliant with the RAMI 4.0 model. The main contribution of the paper consists in the coherent integration of the four fundamental pillars of PdM — reliability theory, stochastic processes, dynamic optimization and Industry 4.0 architectures — into a unified, empirically validated model applicable to complex manufacturing systems with structural and dynamic interdependencies. The paper presents a complete mathematical formalization of predictive maintenance (PdM) for complex manufacturing systems, integrated into an Industry 4.0 architecture compliant with RAMI 4.0. The following are developed: (i) the distributed state space model, (ii) the stochastic degradation model with analytical demonstration, (iii) the Markov Decision Process (MDP) formulation with the derivation of the Bellman equation, (iv) stochastic economic optimization, (v) integration into an MPC control structure. The empirical case study, carried out on a multi-station robotic line, includes the identification of degradation parameters, comparative analysis between preventive and predictive strategies. The results confirm the superiority of the predictive approach over traditional maintenance.

Keywords: complex manufacturing system, predictive maintenance, Industry 4.0

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION IN HUNGARY: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Abstract

This study conducts a scoping review of entrepreneurial leadership (EL) in the context of Hungarian Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), complemented by a web based review of global entrepreneurial firms. The topic focuses on how EL enables innovation, dynamic capability development, and effective collaboration between SMEs, universities. The study aims to build a conceptual foundation for forthcoming empirical research examining how Hungarian SMEs sense and seize value within collaborative innovation ecosystems. Key learnings show that EL mediates the relationship between human capital and innovation, founder characteristics shape open innovation pathways, and managerial discretion affects entrepreneurial outcomes. Additional insights reveal that Hungary's innovation performance and SME structure make EL particularly crucial for strengthening university–industry partnerships.

Keywords: entrepreneurial leadership; SMEs; Hungary; innovation capability; dynamic capabilities; university–industry collaboration.

ETHICAL PRICING

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Abstract

Consumers often criticize businesses, claiming that the prices charged for their products or services are unjustified, that the business overprices its products relative to the costs incurred, and that the pricing practices are therefore unfair to consumers. This criticism can also be observed in business relationships between companies. Thomas Aquinas already addressed ethical pricing in the form of just pricing, but others in the literature also discuss the concept of fair pricing. The issue of ethical pricing can manifest in many forms; for example, it also touches on the topic of social responsibility. In my research, which encompasses several consecutive studies, I will review the literature on ethical economics and then examine pricing methods. I will then turn to the various forms of ethical pricing from the perspective of the relevant literature. In my primary research, I will examine, from both the consumer and corporate perspectives, what ideas, expectations, and demands are expressed regarding ethical pricing.

Keywords: Ethical pricing, fair pricing, ethical economy, pricing methods

ETHICS AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL: WHY INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY MATTERS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Ethics and integrity have become central themes in debates on public governance, accountability, and institutional performance. While literature recognizes organizational integrity as a prerequisite for trust, risk reduction, and sustainable performance, contributions remain largely conceptual and offer limited guidance for public managers seeking to operationalize integrity within administrative structures. Moreover, although studies argue that integrity is a condition for organizational performance, this relationship is rarely examined in a systematic, management-oriented manner within public institutions. This paper reframes institutional integrity as a management tool rather than merely a normative or cultural attribute. Drawing on governance and public management literature, the study develops an analytical framework that links integrity-based governance mechanisms, such as transparency, accountability structures, and internal control systems, to organizational performance in public institutions. Using a conceptual–analytical approach supported by document analysis of governance frameworks, the paper demonstrates how integrity is embedded in administrative processes and how this affects organizational effectiveness, risk management, and institutional credibility. Findings suggest that public institutions which integrate integrity into their managerial and governance structures demonstrate greater organizational resilience, improved procedural efficiency, and enhanced public trust. Integrity emerges not only as a moral requirement but also as a functional asset that supports performance and institutional sustainability. The paper contributes to literature by moving beyond abstract discussions of ethics and offering a performance-oriented perspective on integrity in public administration. From a societal perspective, strengthening integrity as a managerial tool in public institutions can improve

service delivery, reinforce democratic accountability, and enhance citizens' trust in public governance.

Keywords: public integrity, ethics, governance, organizational performance, public administration

EVALUATION OF AI-BASED DIGITAL BUSINESS CONTINUITY STRATEGIES IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA: A BENCHMARKING STUDY OF SMES

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Abstract

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) experienced an urgent requirement to develop resilient technology-based business continuity plans because the COVID-19 pandemic created an urgent need for digital transformation. Uncertain business environments now depend on Artificial Intelligence (AI) as their main solution for maintaining operational flexibility and making predictions and managing emergencies. The absence of structured assessment tools obstructs small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from measuring the success of their AI-powered business continuity solutions. The paper presents a framework that enables organizations to evaluate their AI-based digital business continuity operations through benchmarking assessments for their post-pandemic digital business operations. The study discovers four strategic dimensions which include operational efficiency, customer engagement, risk management and strategic flexibility. The study presents a Business Continuity Benchmarking Index (BCBI) which enables SMEs to conduct maturity evaluations based on three established dimensions. The pilot application shows how the framework enables businesses to be classified into three AI adoption levels while identifying their strategic development areas and vital development needs. The proposed model provides a systematic evaluation method which organizations can use to assess their SME resilience according to management and benchmarking standards. The framework needs validation from in-field research which should use empirical data collected from various sectors and countries to validate its effectiveness for SME assessment.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, business continuity, SMEs, digital transformation, benchmarking, resilience, post-pandemic economy

FACTORS INFLUENCING BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO USE MOBILE BANKING: A PLS-SEM APPROACH

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of mobile banking has redefined modern financial ecosystems, enabling users to perform banking activities anytime and anywhere through digital platforms. Despite its widespread adoption, the mechanisms that shape users' trust, motivation, and behavioral intention remain insufficiently clarified in the literature. Hence, the aim of this study is to examine how perceived security and perceived privacy influence user trust in mobile banking, and how trust further affects motivation and behavioral intention. The study seeks to better understand how users' perceptions shape their intention to continue using mobile banking services. The proposed structural model was empirically examined using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) based on survey data collected from a sample of mobile banking users in Serbia. The findings provide practical implications for financial institutions and enhance understanding of mobile banking usage behavior.

Keywords: mobile banking, behavioral intention, PLS-SEM approach

FROM BURNOUT TO BETTER OUTCOMES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF WORK ENVIRONMENT FACTORS AND NURSE WELL-BEING ACROSS HEALTH SYSTEMS

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Abstract

Background: Nurse burnout is a global issue affecting safety, care quality, and workforce stability. In resource-limited settings such as Albania, these pressures are intensified by structural constraints and limited institutional support. **Objective:** This systematic review aims to critically synthesize evidence on how work environment factors such as staffing, leadership, autonomy, and organizational support affect nurse burnout and well-being across health systems, with particular attention to Albania. **Design and Data Sources:** This systematic review followed PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Searches were conducted in PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Elsevier, SAGE, and Google Scholar for studies published between 2015 and 2025. Eligible studies were primary empirical research on nurse burnout in relation to work environment factors, published in English, peer reviewed, and using validated tools such as the MBI, CBI, or HCAHPS. Two reviewers independently screened all records and extracted data. **Results:** A total of 50 studies were included. Heavy workloads, inadequate staffing, limited autonomy, poor leadership, moral distress, and alarm fatigue were the main drivers of burnout. Supportive leadership, shared decision-making, recognition, resilience strategies, and adequate staffing served as protective factors. Burnout was consistently linked to lower patient satisfaction and reduced safety perceptions. Albania and other low-resource settings showed structural and leadership gaps, while high-income countries more often reported administrative burden and ICU overcrowding. **Conclusion:** Burnout is a multifaceted yet preventable phenomenon that necessitates systemic interventions. Enhancing leadership, staffing, autonomy, collaboration, and psychological support in resource-limited contexts such as Albania can positively impact nurse well-being and the overall quality of healthcare.

Keywords: Healthcare systems, Leadership support, Nurse burnout, Resilience strategies, Staffing levels

FROM EQUILIBRIUM TO PHASE: THE FIVE PHASE FRAMEWORK AS A PRACTICAL TOOL FOR THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL ECONOMY

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Abstract

The post-2020 global economy is characterized by nonlinear transitions, systemic shocks, technological acceleration, and overlapping structural transformations. Traditional equilibrium-centered and linear economic models remain analytically valuable but face limitations in capturing feedback-driven and phase-dependent dynamics. This paper proposes an interdisciplinary framework that reconstructs the classical Chinese Five Phases (五行, Wu Xing) as a formal heuristic model of systemic transformation rather than a metaphysical doctrine. Interpreted in analytically neutral terms, the Five Phases describe recurrent functional states of complex systems: emergence, amplification, stabilization, rationalization, and consolidation. Positioned as a second-order phase model, the framework complements contemporary complexity economics, nonlinear dynamics, and innovation theory by offering a structured way to interpret interacting cycles and policy-dependent transitions. The model is applied to artificial intelligence development, global supply chain restructuring, and macroeconomic volatility. The objective is not to replace quantitative economics, but to expand its conceptual architecture through a phase-sensitive diagnostic perspective capable of organizing systemic transformation in an AI-driven global economy.

Keywords: Five Phases (五行 Wu Xing), Complexity Economics, Economic Cycles, Innovation Management, Phase-Sensitive Framework, Artificial Intelligence, Systemic Transformation, Nonlinear Dynamics

FROM FRAGMENTATION TO SYSTEMS: A CONFIGURATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON HRM AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Research in the field of human resource management (HRM) highlights a significant relationship between human resource management practices and organizational performance; however, it also emphasizes the persistent fragmentation of knowledge and the insufficient explanation of the mechanisms through which these relationships operate. Existing studies often focus on isolated practices or partial models, leading to ambiguous results. The aim of the paper is to conceptualize and empirically substantiate a comprehensive model of relationships between human resource management practices, mediating variables, and organizational performance based on the analysis of their configurations and mutual relationships, with implications for its further modeling. The model is developed based on a theoretical literature review and verified using a combined research approach. A sample of 450 respondents from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland is used, where fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) is first applied to identify configurations of human resource management practices and mediating variables that lead to higher organizational performance. Subsequently, Spearman correlation analysis in the form of correlation heatmaps is conducted to verify the strength and direction of relationships among individual constructs of the model. The results indicate the existence of multiple configurations of human resource management practices and mediating variables associated with higher organizational performance. At the same time, statistically significant relationships were identified between human resource management practices, mediating variables, and organizational performance, confirming their mutual interconnections. These findings suggest the theoretical and empirical coherence of the model and provide a basis for its further testing using advanced analytical approaches, particularly PLS-SEM. The paper emphasizes the importance of systematic model

verification prior to its application in complex analyses and contributes to a better understanding of HRM as an integrated system.

Keywords: HRM systems, organizational performance, organization strategy, work engagement, open innovation

FROM MOTORSPORT TO ENTERTAINMENT BRAND - HOW DRIVE TO SURVIVE CONTRIBUTED TO FORMULA 1'S GROWING POPULARITY

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Abstract

In recent years, Formula 1 has experienced significant global growth, primarily due to the expansion of digital media platforms and streaming services. One of the best examples of this is Netflix's Drive to Survive series, which has demonstrated how documentary filmmaking and storytelling can function as effective sports marketing tools and reshape the audience's relationship with sport. This study examines the role of Drive to Survive in shaping the consumption habits of Formula 1 fans. The research applies a mixed-methods approach, combining the analysis of a questionnaire survey involving 272 respondents with 14 semi-structured expert interviews. In our study, we therefore examine how the Drive to Survive series influences sport consumption habits, fan attitudes, and digital engagement with Formula 1-related content. The findings suggest that narrative-driven, character-focused storytelling plays a significant role in attracting new audiences, particularly among younger generations. Furthermore, the results also indicate that digital and streaming-based content contributes to deeper fan engagement and supports the transformation of Formula 1 into an "always-on" entertainment media product. In our study, we highlight the growing importance of sports documentary series as strategic tools in contemporary sports marketing and digital fan engagement.

Keywords: Formula 1, sports marketing, documentary series, digital media, sport consumption

FROM OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY TO FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR MITIGATING ECONOMIC DENIAL OF SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

The adoption of Serverless Computing and Function-as-a-Service (FaaS) is primarily driven by the promise of operational efficiency and reduced infrastructure costs. However, the event-driven billing model, which charges based on execution duration and memory consumption, introduces a unique vulnerability known as Economic Denial of Sustainability (EDDoS). Unlike traditional Denial of Service attacks that aim to disrupt availability, EDDoS attacks exploit the auto-scaling capabilities of the cloud to inflict catastrophic financial damage upon the victim without triggering standard downtime alerts. This paper examines the theoretical limitations of current signature-based intrusion detection systems in identifying these algorithmic resource exhaustion attacks. It is argued that traditional threshold-based monitoring is insufficient for serverless environments; consequently, legitimate traffic spikes are often conflated with malicious invocation floods. A conceptual framework is proposed for utilising machine learning—specifically lightweight unsupervised models—to decouple monitoring from function execution. By analysing the intersection of software architecture and financial security, this study highlights the necessity of cost-aware defence mechanisms. The proposed approach aims to secure enterprise cloud environments against financial exhaustion while maintaining the agility of the DevOps lifecycle.

Keywords: Serverless Computing, Economic Denial of Sustainability (EDDoS), Cloud Financial Management, Anomaly Detection, Enterprise Security

FROM SUSTAINABILITY METRICS TO DECISION INTELLIGENCE: A FRAMEWORK TO INTEGRATE GREEN IT INTO ENTERPRISE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

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Abstract

Now a days there is pressure on IT businesses to be sustainable. There are already many technical solutions for energy efficient computing but businesses make decisions without using them. Sustainability indicators are seen as performance outcomes. Indicators should be regarded as explicit decision variable during infrastructure and investment planning. This conference paper presents a decision-oriented framework. The framework will integrate sustainability into business decision-making and will also determine cost exposure and performance reliability. This research is based on informatics and management decision theory. Sustainability should be seen as a quantifiable element in strategic planning rather than a retrospective assessment criterion. During my research I found out there is a gap between Green IT researched solutions and actual decisions taken in organisations. So in my paper, I am using fuzzy logic based decision model. The model can be used even in uncertainty and even at times when there is not sufficient information available in IT management. Simulation based decision models can assess stability and comparative performance in different infrastructure scenarios. These can help businesses turn sustainability issues into strategic opportunities for responsible IT infrastructure design.

Keywords: Green IT, Decision Support Systems, Sustainable Infrastructure, Enterprise Decision-Making, Fuzzy Logic, IT Investment Planning

FROM WAR TO COOPERATION: CRISIS-DRIVEN INNOVATION AND THE ROMANIA MODERNIZATION MODEL

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Abstract

This paper examines European integration as a historically grounded response to systemic crises, with a particular focus on the transformative impact of war and economic disruption. Rather than interpreting integration as a linear or inevitable process, the study emphasizes the role of crisis as a catalyst for institutional innovation, political learning, and fundamental shifts in governance paradigms. Drawing on macro-historical analysis, the research explores how the trauma of the two World Wars reshaped European political thinking, leading to the creation of supranational institutions designed to prevent conflict. The transformation of traditional sources of rivalry, such as coal and steel, into mechanisms of shared governance illustrates a definitive mindset shift from competition to interdependence. In addition, the paper incorporates a focused case study of Romania (1989–2026), highlighting how post-communist transition and subsequent systemic shocks were managed through a strategic orientation toward the European Union. Romania's experience demonstrates how the "External Anchor" of EU integration can successfully convert structural vulnerabilities into opportunities for modernization. This is empirically evidenced by the country's remarkable economic leap from 26% to over 80% of the EU average GDP per capita in just two and a half decades. By combining a macro-historical perspective with a national case study, the paper argues that European integration represents not only a response to past trauma but also a viable model of institutional adaptation applicable to contemporary challenges. The findings contribute to interdisciplinary debates on crisis management, the role of collective memory, and the sustainable evolution of political and economic cooperation.

Keywords: European integration; systemic crisis; institutional innovation; Romania; institutional adaptation

GENDER EQUALITY AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY: A STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL FUTURES

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Abstract

The structural transformation of the global economy toward knowledge-intensive production has elevated human capital, innovation, and digital capabilities as primary drivers of competitiveness. Within this transformation, gender equality is increasingly recognized not only as a social justice imperative but also as a macroeconomic determinant influencing productivity, innovation capacity, and institutional resilience. This paper investigates the structural relationship between gender equality and knowledge economy performance across 35 countries using comparative quantitative analysis. Drawing upon data from the World Economic Forum (2023), OECD (2022), and UNESCO (2022), the study applies correlation and multivariate regression techniques to evaluate the predictive impact of gender parity indicators on innovation outputs and digital competitiveness. The findings reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between gender equality and innovation performance ($r \approx 0.70$, $p < 0.01$). Regression results suggest that gender equality explains approximately 58% of the variance in innovation outcomes. Countries with higher female participation in STEM and leadership roles demonstrate stronger digital transformation performance and greater economic resilience. The study concludes that gender-inclusive policies are essential structural components of sustainable knowledge economies and offers policy recommendations for benchmarking frameworks and enterprise development strategies.

Keywords: gender equality, knowledge economy, human capital, innovation, digital competitiveness, inclusive growth, benchmarking

GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

In the last few years, digitalization has experienced a rapid growth with the help of artificial intelligence. Many fields such as healthcare, education, customer service, data analysis and many others benefited of the use of AI. Huge promises have been made about what humanity can achieve with the help of AI. For example, it is often considered to improve efficiency, associated with faster decision making and expected to provide more convenient services. Nevertheless, there are voices warning us about the unknown societal consequences of AI, which may negatively affect everyday people. Such as data privacy, reduced human control, job transformation, ethical uncertainty and lack of transparency. This paper aims to broaden our view of general attitudes toward artificial intelligence based on a secondary analysis and synthesis. The reviewed studies showed that the general attitudes towards AI are not simply positive or negative, reflecting a tension between its innovative potential and ethical concerns.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), societal impact, ethical concerns, public attitudes, digitalization

GENERATIVE AI AS AN ENABLER OF SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION IN HOSPITALITY ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF A RESORT HOTEL IN TÜRKİYE

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Abstract

The growing pressure on tourism organizations to combine economic performance with environmental responsibility has increased interest in innovation driven solutions. Among emerging technologies, Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is gaining attention for its potential to support sustainable innovation in service oriented industries. This study explores the role of Generative AI in enabling sustainability related innovation in hospitality organizations, drawing on a case study of a resort hotel in Türkiye. Using a mixed method approach that combines secondary research with an employee survey, the study examines how sustainability initiatives and AI supported practices are perceived and implemented at the organizational level. The findings suggest that Generative AI contributes to sustainable innovation by supporting more efficient resource use, improving operational coordination, and enhancing data driven decision making. Employees demonstrate strong awareness of sustainability goals and generally view AI as a supportive and complementary innovation rather than a disruptive technology, although differences in usage and skill levels remain. The study highlights that the innovation potential of Generative AI depends not only on technological availability but also on organizational readiness, employee learning, and managerial commitment. By linking Generative AI with sustainability and innovation outcomes, this research contributes to the growing literature on digital innovation in hospitality and offers practical insights for organizations seeking to integrate AI into long term sustainability and innovation strategies.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence; Sustainable Innovation; Hospitality Innovation; Smart Tourism

GENERATIVE AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ADOPTION AND IMPACT OF CUSTOM GPT CHATBOTS FOR LEARNING SUPPORT IN MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

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Abstract

The use of generative AI has become an integral part of everyday learning for students. 97% of participants in our survey use generative AI as a learning aid. Against this backdrop, Horus and FinPro were created, two newly developed Custom GPT Chatbots for teaching support in the subjects of Management Accounting and Finance at Hochschule Ruhr West (Germany). They are designed to direct students to quality-assured bots that have been specially trained in the respective topics. Initial findings show that the bots are well received – two-thirds of students now use them more or less regularly even though they are already very accustomed to using commercially available chatbots. Beyond that, Horus and FinPro are used in very different ways for learning, with classic functions such as answering a question being used even more frequently than options such as creating an exercise. In our study, the use of generative AI has surpassed classic internet research and the use of YouTube videos. However, students are also aware that the chatbot's answers cannot be trusted 100 percent due to hallucinations and incorrect source references. Critical thinking in dealing with generative AI, the essential skill to be taught by us as teachers, is therefore already evident, at least to some extent.

Keywords: Custom GPT Chatbots, AI-assisted learning, Student Learning Behavior, Critical Thinking, Management Accounting, Finance

GOVERNING THE DIGITAL MONETARY FRONTIER: LEGAL AND REGULATORY FOUNDATIONS OF STABLECOINS

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Abstract

This paper examines how legal and regulatory frameworks shape systemic relevance in stablecoin markets by reallocating market capitalization rather than determining the mere existence of stablecoins. Moving beyond binary regulatory debates, the study conceptualizes market capitalization as the central transmission channel through which governance credibility, regulatory compatibility, and trust are translated into economic dominance. The analysis integrates comparative legal–regulatory assessment with an empirical framework that treats scale as an endogenous, path-dependent outcome driven by network effects and institutional integration. Using monthly data for major stablecoins over the 2019 and 2025 periods, the study employs a dynamic panel design to examine market capitalization persistence alongside price stability, de-pegging behavior, and tail risk. The results show that stablecoin markets are highly asymmetric and non-convergent: a small subset of issuer-based stablecoins accumulates persistent market capitalization, while others stagnate or contract despite similar organizational forms. Centralized governance and regulatory compatibility facilitate enforceable accountability and reserve credibility, which markets reward with scale. Importantly, systemic risk is shown to be concentrated rather than diffuse, with dominant stablecoins exhibiting lower volatility and significantly reduced tail risk in later periods. The findings demonstrate that regulation functions as a market selection mechanism by filtering governance structures and credibility signals that can sustain scale under institutional constraints. Rather than suppressing innovation, regulatory design reallocates dominance toward stablecoins capable of maintaining trust and stability under stress. The paper contributes to the literature by reframing stablecoin regulation as a scale-dependent sorting process and by linking legal design directly to observable market.

Keywords: stablecoins; market capitalization; financial regulation; governance structures; systemic risk; monetary sovereignty; regulatory selection; digital money

GREEN BUT TRUSTED? PERCEPTIONS OF GENERATION Z AND MILLENNIALS TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY CLAIMS IN AN EMERGING MARKET: EVIDENCE FROM ALBANIA

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Abstract

Sustainability has been an important component of contemporary marketing strategies in recent decades. Companies increasingly integrate environmental claims and sustainability messages into their brand communication. At the same time, generational differences in sustainability and green attitudes and consumer behaviour have attracted growing academic interest. The existing literature 3portrays Generation Z as highly environmentally conscious, while Millennials are frequently described as early adopters of sustainable consumption practices. However, the extent to which these two generations perceive and respond differently to green marketing communication remains underexplored in the context of emerging markets. This study addresses how Generation Z and Millennial consumers in Albania perceive green marketing communications from local brands. In the Albanian market, Generation Z and Millennial consumers have become central audiences for brand-led sustainability communications. Trust in brands' sustainability claims and their influence on purchasing decisions for environmentally responsible products are central to this study, with consumer perceptions examined as the foundation of that trust. The study has adopted a mixed-methods design combining a quantitative survey and semi-structured interviews to address the research objectives. On the quantitative side, survey data were collected from 348 consumers aged 18–45 in Albania to examine their attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural intentions toward green marketing messages. The qualitative data are based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with representatives from 15 Albanian brands engaged in green marketing and sustainability-oriented practices, offering organisational perspectives that contextualise the consumer data. The conceptual framework investigates the relationships between environmental concern, perceptions of green marketing, perceived greenwashing, trust in sustainability claims, and purchase intention. The study also considers selected demographic variables, including place of upbringing and household income, in order to better understand differences in environmental awareness and purchasing behaviour. By comparing two generational

cohorts, the research aims to identify differences in attitudes toward corporate sustainability communication and the credibility of environmental claims. The findings aim to contribute to scholarly research on sustainable marketing and consumer behaviour by advancing understanding of empirical evidence from emerging markets. They also provide practical insights for companies which seek to design transparent and credible green marketing strategies tailored to different generational segments.

Keywords: green marketing, greenwashing; consumer behavior; consumer trust; emerging markets

GREEN GROWTH TRANSFORMATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN POST- CONFLICT KARABAKH: DRIVERS, MECHANISMS, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

The reconstruction of post-conflict territories requires development models that integrate economic recovery, environmental sustainability, and social stabilization. The Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, recently liberated and undergoing large-scale rebuilding, provides a unique case for examining how green growth principles can be embedded in post-war planning. Despite increasing attention to “green zones” and sustainable recovery strategies, limited research has explored the role of entrepreneurship in driving green transformation in post-conflict contexts. This study aims to assess how public investment, institutional incentives, and private entrepreneurial initiatives collectively foster a low-carbon, resource-efficient regional economy. It examines the mechanisms through which green entrepreneurs contribute to employment generation, technology adoption, innovation diffusion, and the creation of sustainable value chains. Using qualitative policy analysis, regional development data, and case-based evidence from renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, and green construction sectors, the paper evaluates the interaction between state-led reconstruction efforts and entrepreneurial activity. Findings indicate that entrepreneurs serve as key agents of transformation, accelerating structural diversification and aligning local economic activity with national decarbonization goals. Public infrastructure provision, targeted economic incentives, and the designation of Karabakh as a renewable energy and smart city zone enhance the emergence of a green entrepreneurial ecosystem. By linking reconstruction, sustainability, and entrepreneurship, this study contributes a practical framework for post-conflict green growth, demonstrating the relevance of integrating environmental and economic objectives from the outset.

Keywords: Green growth, Post-conflict reconstruction, Entrepreneurship, Sustainable development, Renewable energy, Economic diversification, Karabakh

HAS COVID-19 TRANSFORMED CRISIS INTO DIGITAL ACCELERATION? A DECADE-LONG ANALYSIS OF ERP ADOPTION ACROSS COUNTRIES

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Abstract

COVID-19 had a profound and far-reaching impact on digital transformation across various sectors and countries. However, it remains unclear whether it reduced structural differences in technology adoption or reinforced existing digital divides. This study examines ERP adoption dynamics across countries, including the effect of COVID-19. Using secondary data from the Eurostat database for the period 2015-2025, the study applies K-means clustering to examine cross-country differences in the share of enterprises adopting ERP systems for functional information exchange. Cluster analysis identified three statistically distinct groups: digital leaders, followers, and late adopters. Digital leaders maintain consistently high ERP adoption levels throughout the observed period. Digital followers start at a lower level than digital leaders but show the most dynamic growth. Late adopters display the lowest ERP adoption levels throughout the decade. Descriptive trends indicate a post-pandemic acceleration, suggesting COVID-19 as a potential catalyst for intensified ERP adoption. Based on the study's outcomes, policy implications are suggested and future research directions are proposed.

Keywords: ERP systems, COVID-19, cluster analysis.

HOW TO GROW DURING A RECESSION: A MULTI-SECTOR QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED GLOBAL BRANDS

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Abstract

While business growth during periods of economic prosperity is well-documented, the ability of firms to expand during market contractions remains a compelling area of strategic inquiry. Conventional wisdom suggests that favorable market conditions facilitate growth; however, certain organizations demonstrate remarkable resilience by thriving during recessions. This success necessitates a robust corporate mindset and the pre-emptive implementation of contingency strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a critical stress test for such strategic resilience. This study employs Thematic Analysis (TA) on a qualitative dataset of 75 global brands, curated from premier financial media outlets including The Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, and Yahoo Finance. A primary finding of this research indicates that economic downturns, despite their inherent risks, can create unique opportunities for business development and expansion. By mapping sector-specific case studies, this paper illustrates how rapid growth was achieved amidst global volatility. These findings provide significant insights for business practitioners and scholars analyzing the evolution of contemporary firm-level growth models.

Keywords: sustainable business growth, resource based view, thematic analysis, global brands, COVID-19, recession

HUMAN CAPITAL RESILIENCE IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS: THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE AND DIGITAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

This study examines the transformation of human resource management within the framework of globalization, digitalization, and sustainability, and evaluates human capital resilience as a fundamental strategic element that strengthens organizational competitiveness. The aim of the research is to reveal how sustainable and digital human resource practices protect and develop employees' knowledge and skills, organizational commitment, well-being levels, and learning capacities, and how these contribute to organizational continuity. This approach positions human capital not merely as an input contributing to the production process, but as a strategic value that must be protected and continuously developed under today's conditions of increasing uncertainty. The study is based on a qualitative research approach grounded in theoretical analysis and an extensive literature review. Globalization theories, sustainable and digital human resource management approaches, and human capital theory are addressed together to establish a holistic framework. The findings indicate that sustainable and digital human resource management is not merely a supportive function but has evolved into a strategic domain that directly affects organizational competitiveness. In particular, practices such as skill development, enhancing employee engagement, talent retention, data-driven decision-making, and the adoption of ethical digitalization principles have been found to strengthen human capital resilience and increase organizations' ability to adapt to changing conditions.

Keywords: Human Capital Resilience, Sustainable Human Resource Management, Digital Human Resources, Organizational Competitiveness, Global Transformation.

HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP AND MACHINE-IN-THE-LOOP DECISION OVERSIGHT IN LLM-SUPPORTED SECURITY COMPLIANCE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

AI-supported security compliance analysis is helpful to process large volumes of security evidence, including enterprise documentation, cloud security posture management findings, configuration outputs, and control-related artifacts. However, while large language models and related AI techniques can improve speed and analytical coverage, they also introduce risks related to unsupported conclusions, unstable reasoning, weak traceability, and limited operational control. This paper reviews decision oversight model for LLM-supported security compliance analysis based on the combined roles of Human-in-the-loop and Machine-in-the-loop components. Human-in-the-loop oversight is treated as an explicit expert review. Machine-in-the-Loop oversight is treated as a structured set of automated control functions, including rule-based validation, source verification, confidence checks, contradiction detection, and escalation triggers. The paper reviews reliable enterprise adoption of LLM reasoning with deterministic controls and the need of accountable expert intervention. The proposed model is intended to support security compliance workflows where evidence sources are diverse and decision quality must remain auditable and reproducible.

Keywords: human-in-the-loop, machine-in-the-loop, LLM, assessment, compliance

INFORMATION ASYMMETRY IN THE AGRI-FOOD MARKET AND ITS IMPACT ON PRICE FORMATION

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Abstract

The article analyzes the economic nature of information asymmetry in Azerbaijan's agri-food market, its underlying causes, and its impact on the price formation mechanism through a systematic scientific approach. The study demonstrates that the unequal distribution of information among market participants particularly weakens the market position of small and medium-sized farmers, limits their bargaining power, and strengthens the informational advantage of intermediaries. As a result, prices deviate from the real balance of supply and demand, price volatility increases, and income distribution becomes more unequal. Regional disparities in information access, uneven development of digital infrastructure, limited internet connectivity, and insufficient market literacy among farmers further deepen existing information gaps. Based on the concept of information rent, the article develops a simple analytical model to explain the structural and institutional causes of the gap between farm-gate and retail prices. Although digital platforms such as EKTIS and AgroCIS create significant potential for improving market transparency, their effectiveness depends on human capital development, timely data updating, and stronger coordination among market participants. The study proposes evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at enhancing information transparency, strengthening cooperatives institutionally, expanding electronic market mechanisms, and improving digital literacy.

Keywords: Information asymmetry; agri-food market; price formation; intermediaries; digitalization; market transparency; agriculture; cooperatives.

INTEGRATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INTO AGRICULTURE IN THE EU

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) helps agriculture by automating routine tasks, optimizing decision-making, and making farming more efficient. Robots can perform physical work, drones can monitor crops and drought damage, and AI-based systems can assist with data analysis and farming decisions. Integrating artificial intelligence increases efficiency and reduces costs, but the digital transition and technology adoption also present challenges. Artificial intelligence is already embedded in many everyday devices used by businesses and consumers, often unnoticed. In recent years, the use of generative AI (GenAI) has spread rapidly across all sectors. For Europe, integrating artificial intelligence into agriculture is essential for competitiveness, while also enabling innovative solutions to be brought to market. This study analyzes the opportunities, barriers, and regulatory implications of AI adoption in European Union (EU) agriculture based on a qualitative assessment of a multi-stakeholder expert workshop organized by the European Commission. Using thematic content analysis, the research identifies key AI application domains, economic and environmental impacts, governance challenges, and adoption constraints—particularly for small and medium-sized farms. The findings indicate that although AI technologies such as robotics, decision support systems, and autonomous machinery demonstrate measurable potential in reducing inputs and improving efficiency, structural barriers including fragmented data ecosystems, regulatory uncertainty under the AI Act, limited digital skills, and trust deficits significantly slow adoption. The study concludes that coordinated data governance, sector-specific liability clarification, targeted

capacity building, and scalable business models are essential to unlocking AI's full competitiveness-enhancing potential in EU agriculture.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, smart agriculture, precision farming, EU AI Act, agricultural competitiveness, digital transformation, robotics, data governance

INTRADAY VALUE-AT-RISK ESTIMATION USING HIGH-FREQUENCY REALIZED VOLATILITY AND THE HAR-RV MODEL: EVIDENCE FROM TAIWAN INDEX AND FUTURES MARKETS

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Abstract

This study employs 15-minute high-frequency daytime data of the Taiwan Weighted Stock Index (TAIEX) and Taiwan Index Futures (TX) from 2007 to 2024 to construct realized volatility and applies Corsi (2009)'s Heterogeneous Autoregressive Realized Volatility (HAR-RV) model for daily volatility forecasting, thereby deriving intraday 15-minute VaR at 95% and 99% confidence levels. After data alignment and cleaning, daily realized variance is constructed from 15-minute log-return squared sums. Log-transformed RV undergoes HAR-RV estimation, followed by lognormal bias correction to obtain conditional volatility. Out-of-sample intraday VaR is derived using empirical quantiles of standardized interval returns based on forecasted volatility. A rolling window of 1000 trading days (parameters updated every 10 days) is employed for 1-step-ahead out-of-sample forecasting and backtesting. Empirical results indicate that the HAR-RV model effectively captures volatility clustering and long-memory features. Backtesting over 3367 out-of-sample observations shows exception rates close to theoretical values, with most tests failing to reject the null hypotheses of Kupiec (1995) unconditional coverage and Christoffersen (1998) conditional coverage tests, placing the model in the Basel green zone, demonstrating robust coverage and independence. Visualization confirms VaR escalation during high-volatility periods (e.g., GFC, COVID-19), with violations concentrated in market stress episodes. This research validates that high-frequency realized volatility integrated with HAR-RV enhances the accuracy and practicality of intraday VaR estimation for the Taiwan stock index. The findings contribute to the literature on high-frequency risk measurement and provide practical implications for intraday risk management in financial markets.

Keywords: Intraday VaR, High-frequency data, Realized volatility, HAR-RV model, Risk backtesting

INVESTIGATING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE INTENTION TO USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

In the context of the educational application of artificial intelligence, an increasingly important question is what factors determine the acceptance and actual use of the technology among students. As an instructor, I was driven by personal curiosity to understand what attitudes my own students have towards AI and what factors encourage or inhibit its use for academic purposes. The research was based on an online questionnaire survey, in which students evaluated statements regarding the use of AI tools, their perceived usefulness, usability, and possible ethical concerns. The database provided the opportunity to examine attitudinal variables and behavioral indicators together. During the analysis, I used correlation analysis and multiple linear regression after a reliability test (Cronbach's alpha) to explore predictors of intention to use. The independent variables in the model were indicators of perceived usefulness, ease of use, and digital self-efficacy. The results showed that students' AI use is mostly influenced by their perception of the academic utility of the technology, while ethical uncertainties have a moderating effect on the willingness to use. The significant explanatory power of the model suggests that technology acceptance models are also relevant in the context of AI use in higher education. The study could be further developed by applying structural equation modeling, which would allow for the exploration of deeper causal relationships. In addition, it is recommended to include the faculty perspective, which can provide a comparative picture of technology acceptance. The results of the research can contribute to the development of institutional AI strategies and the formulation of educational guidelines that support responsible and conscious student use.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence, student

LABOR MARKET COMPETENCE EXPECTATIONS IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN 2000 AND 2025 -- AN ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP A MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

This study examines the evolution of competency requirements in the labor market between 2000 and 2025, with a particular focus on the rise of soft skills and the structural transformation of these requirements. The empirical basis of the research is a corpus analysis that reveals how the focus has shifted from basic, well-defined skills toward increasingly complex, layered, and context-sensitive competencies. Building on a synthesis of several theoretical frameworks, the study proposes a new measurement model. The model clearly distinguishes between hard competencies, simple and complex soft skills, and highlights the key role of metacognitive awareness in the adaptive application of competencies. The author intends for the results obtained through the application of this model to contribute to a more accurate interpretation and measurement of employee skills.

Keywords: labor market competencies; soft skills evolution; competency measurement framework; metacognitive awareness; skill transformation

LEARNING ATTITUDES AND VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT AMONG MOTHERS RECENTLY RETURNING TO THE LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract

While the employment rate of Hungarian mothers is increasing, they still face several difficulties and forms of maternity bias during the reboarding period. Maternity leave is frequently perceived primarily as a career break. This study is part of a broader, multi-phase research project that uses a mixed-methods approach to examine the human, social, and psychological capital of first-time returner mothers, focusing on the development during maternity leave. This exploratory study investigates learning attitudes, self-development activities, and voluntary engagement during maternity leave among mothers who have recently returned to the labour market. The findings reveal that most of the mothers engaged in some form of learning or self-development, ranging from formal courses to informal activities. Additionally, using three survey questions and K-means clustering, two distinct attitudinal profiles related to learning were identified, following the methodology of Bencsik and Juhász (2014). While causality cannot be inferred, the analysis indicates that a positive attitude towards learning is associated with higher levels of voluntary and development-oriented activity. The results provide preliminary evidence that maternity leave can be a period of development across a wide range of areas, with learning and voluntary activities representing an underutilised resource for mothers returning to the workforce.

Keywords: maternity leave, reboarding, learning attitude, development, human resource management, human capital

LIFE-CYCLE COST ANALYSIS AND HEALTH TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT OF DIAGNOSTIC MEDICAL EQUIPMENT IN UGANDAN PUBLIC HOSPITALS: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT.

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Abstract

Diagnostic medical equipment plays a crucial role in the modern healthcare system. They aid in accurate disease diagnosis and guide critical clinical decisions. However, many Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) face persistent challenges in maintaining their functionality and sustainability. The reason is because they are often designed for countries with efficient healthcare systems and adequate resources. This article examines the life-cycle costs and financial sustainability of diagnostic medical equipment in Ugandan public hospitals. A literature-based research approach was employed basing on secondary data from World Health Organization reports, Ministry of Health reports and peer-reviewed literature articles. These were complemented by expert insights from biomedical engineers in practice. A substantial proportion of diagnostic equipment in many public hospitals experience prolonged downtime due to reactive maintenance practices, fragmented procurement systems and insufficient funds allocations for operational costs. Infrastructural challenges such as unreliable electricity supply and poor facility design also negatively impact equipment performance. The article emphasizes the importance of integrating life-cycle cost analysis into the procurement and asset management frameworks. Strengthening healthcare Technology Management systems through preventive maintenance approach, digital equipment registries, workforce development and improved procurement coordination can significantly enhance the sustainability of medical equipment. Institutionalizing these strategies will be critical in improving the diagnostic capacity and ensuring long-term resilience of Uganda's public healthcare system.

Keywords: Life-Cycle Cost Analysis, Health Technology Management, Medical device, Diagnostic medical equipment, Public hospitals, Healthcare system,

MEGATRENDS, CIRCULAR-ECONOMY BUSINESS MODELS, AND SUSTAINABILITY REGULATION IN BUSINESS

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Abstract

The clock of the end of the world was moved forward again at the beginning of 2026. At the same time, updated megatrends and trends for 2026 were published, and consideration was given to how to continue anticipating adverse factors and strengthening sustainable development measures through corporate actions. If there is no healthy planet, there is no business. On the other hand, EU-level sustainability directives are being lightened, for example, through Omnibus I. Despite this, Finnish companies have incorporated sustainability factors into their strategies and remain ready to continue promoting sustainability through compliance with regulations and the utilization of circular-economy business models. To support this, the ImpAct project at Laurea University of Applied Sciences and Haaga Helia University of Applied Sciences has designed a tool to facilitate VSME reporting. From the perspective of foresight and circular economy business models, the Finnish SME Biovaaka Ltd, for example, aims to minimize food waste in practice, thereby strengthening the planetary dimension. The interaction between global megatrends and evolving sustainability regulations underscores the need for companies to adopt more systemic, anticipatory approaches that strengthen their strategic capacity for sustainable, circular-economy-based business transformation.

Keywords: Circular-economy business models, megatrends, sustainability regulation

MONITORING SUSTAINABILITY: CAN SOCIAL SECURITY FUND OWNERSHIP CURB ESG GREENWASHING?

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Abstract

In recent years, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices have become central to corporate strategy, driven by increasing stakeholder demand for sustainable and responsible business conduct. However, the rapid expansion of ESG reporting has also raised concerns about the credibility of corporate disclosures. Some firms in emerging markets may engage in “greenwashing,” overstating their sustainability performance to gain legitimacy while failing to implement substantive operational changes. This behavior undermines market transparency and makes it difficult for regulators and investors to distinguish genuine ESG efforts from symbolic compliance. As a major public institutional investor with substantial ownership stakes and long-term investment horizons, China’s national social security fund (NSSF) has strong incentives and capacity to monitor firms and curb managerial opportunism. Its governance role is further shaped by its alignment with state objectives, which may enhance its effectiveness in promoting credible corporate behavior. Using a panel of Chinese listed firms from 2011 to 2022, this study examines whether NSSF shareholdings reduce ESG greenwashing. We find that higher NSSF ownership significantly decreases future greenwashing. This effect operates through enhanced monitoring and stronger incentives for credible disclosure. It is further strengthened in firms with greater analyst attention, as external information intermediaries improve transparency and reinforce investor oversight. Moreover, the effect is more pronounced in state-owned enterprises, where institutional monitoring aligns more closely with state governance structures. These findings underscore the NSSF’s important

governance role in curbing ESG greenwashing and promoting more credible corporate sustainability practices.

Keywords: Social security fund, ESG greenwashing, Analyst attention, Governance

ONLINE PLATFORM DATA FOR TOURISM RESEARCH IN NORTHERN ALBANIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BOOKING.COM AND TRIPADVISOR

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Abstract

The increasing availability of data from online travel platforms has created new opportunities for tourism research, particularly in destinations where traditional statistics are limited. This study examines the potential of online platform data as a source of tourism insights through a comparative analysis of two datasets collected from Booking.com and TripAdvisor, focusing on accommodation listings in Northern Albania. The datasets include multiple indicators, such as rating scores, review volume, ranking positions, and descriptive information on accommodation characteristics. Data preprocessing and analysis were conducted using Python, enabling the cleaning, matching, and comparison of accommodation units across platforms. The study applies descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and cross-platform comparison to explore how tourism performance and visibility are represented. Preliminary findings suggest that while both platforms reflect similar overall trends, notable differences are observed in the distribution, structure, and interpretation of key indicators. These variations highlight the influence of platform-specific characteristics, including user behavior and evaluation systems. The study contributes by emphasizing the importance of critically assessing online platform data for tourism research in emerging destinations.

Keywords: Online platform data, Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Comparative analysis, Northern Albania

PARADIGM SHIFTS AND INNOVATION TRAJECTORIES IN E-COMMERCE: TECHNOLOGICAL AND CONSUMER TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE 2025–2026 PERIOD

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify and synthesize the key technological and consumer-driven innovation trajectories reshaping the global e-commerce sector during the 2025–2026 period, and to assess their strategic and structural implications for digital retail ecosystems. The study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design based on secondary data analysis. The analysis integrates findings from recent academic literature, industry and consultancy reports, and selected market case studies published between 2023 and 2026. A thematic analytical framework is applied to examine three interrelated dimensions of e-commerce innovation: generative artificial intelligence, immersive spatial commerce technologies, and sustainability-oriented business models. The findings indicate that generative artificial intelligence enables advanced hyper-personalization and predictive customer engagement, fundamentally transforming digital customer service and decision support processes. The integration of augmented and virtual reality technologies facilitates the emergence of spatial commerce, enhancing experiential value and blurring the boundaries between physical and digital retail environments. Furthermore, sustainability has evolved into a core strategic dimension of e-commerce, accelerating the diffusion of circular models such as re-commerce and resale platforms. Collectively, these innovations extend beyond incremental efficiency gains and contribute to a qualitative reconfiguration of customer journeys and brand–consumer relationships. The study highlights that long-term competitiveness in e-commerce increasingly depends on firms’ ability to align technological innovation with experiential differentiation and sustainability-driven value propositions. The findings offer strategic insights for managers and policymakers and provide a foundation for future empirical research on innovation-led transformation in digital commerce.

Keywords: e-commerce transformation; generative AI; spatial commerce; AR/VR; sustainability; re-commerce; digital innovation

POLICY INSTRUMENTS FOR PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE FOOD CONSUMPTION: RESULTS OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

The food sector has a significant impact on environmental sustainability and a healthy and prosperous society, but current food consumption patterns have created conditions for a decline in biodiversity, resource depletion, and threats to public health. The transition to a different consumption model and mindset has become a global policy issue, highlighted in both the UN Sustainable Development Goals and EU policy strategies. The response of governments has been to introduce various policy instruments to change consumer behaviour and regulate the activities of other participants in the food system. The aim of this study is to identify and analyze the policy instruments used to promote sustainable food consumption. To achieve this aim, a systematic literature review method was used, analyzing publications available in international databases from 2015 to 2025. The literature review concluded that informational instruments are politically easier to implement, but their impact on changing consumer behaviour is low. Economic, regulatory, and physical environment instruments, on the other hand, are less supported by consumers and producers, but are more effective. Achieving a shift in food consumption behaviour patterns, it is essential to combine various policy instruments and integrate a shared responsibility approach among all actors in the food system.

Keywords: sustainable food consumption, policy instruments, consumer behaviour

POLICY-ORIENTED CYCLICALITY AND STATE INTERVENTIONISM: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN TRANSITION ECONOMIES

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Abstract

Transition economies have undergone significant institutional transformations characterized by policy-oriented cyclicality and state interventionism, yet a systematic synthesis of the existing literature remains underexplored. This paper reviews the interplay between political-economic cycles, state capitalism, and institutional change in these economies, aiming to identify patterns, contradictions, and gaps in scholarly discourse. We adopt a systematic literature review approach, focusing on dimensions such as political business cycles, economic governance, industrial policies, and regional development trajectories. The analysis reveals that state interventionism often follows cyclical patterns driven by political incentives, with varying outcomes across regions and sectors. Fiscal and monetary policies exhibit pronounced cyclicality, while energy and environmental policies reflect the tension between developmental goals and sustainability. The welfare state and employment relations emerge as critical yet understudied domains, particularly in post-socialist contexts. By synthesizing these findings, we argue that institutional transformation in transition economies is neither linear nor uniform, but rather shaped by path dependencies and adaptive governance mechanisms. The review underscores the need for more comparative studies to disentangle the role of state intervention in fostering or hindering long-term development. Ultimately, this paper contributes a structured framework for understanding the complex dynamics of policy cyclicality and institutional evolution in transition economies.

Keywords: transition economies, policy-oriented cyclicality, state interventionism, market integration,

PREDICTING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION USING MACHINE LEARNING: EVIDENCE FROM A SYNTHETIC CUSTOMER FEEDBACK DATASET

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Abstract

Having a great impact on business performance and retaining long-term customer in competitive markets customer satisfaction is inevitably important. This study is aimed at analyzing and predicting customer satisfaction by utilizing a data-driven approach which is based on a major synthetic customer feedback dataset accounting for 38,444 observations. In order to recognize main determining factors of customer satisfaction the research relies on data analysis which is exploratory and regression-based machine learning techniques. According to correlation analysis, service quality ($r = 0.55$) and product quality ($r = 0.55$) indicate to have the strongest positive relationships with customer satisfaction, whereas income shows a moderate alteration ($r = 0.25$). Regarding other variable including age and purchase frequency, they demonstrate slightly weaker associations. Further analysis using regression modeling reveals that service quality ($\beta = 9.26$) and product quality ($\beta = 9.24$) are the most influential factors to forecast customer satisfaction, that are followed by income ($\beta = 4.11$) and age ($\beta = 2.71$). The model gains a strong explanatory power with an R^2 value of 0.70, which suggests that the selected variables comprise a considerably big proportion of variation in customer satisfaction. The findings emphasize that service and product quality must be considered to be the primary drivers behind customer satisfaction, meanwhile demographic factors have a secondary role. By highlighting how applicable machine learning is, and data analytics techniques for gaining actionable insights from synthetic datasets, the study contributes to the literature. The obtained results provide practical implications for businesses which are seeking to refine customer experience and make service quality optimal through data-driven decision-making.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, regression analysis, service quality, data analytics

PROSPECT THEORY IN PRACTICE. RESULTS OF A SURVEY

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Abstract

The Prospect Theory, developed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky in 1979, has become one of the most influential schools of thought in decision theory and behavioral economics. The theory's basic premise is that people make decisions not based on absolute outcomes, but on gains and losses relative to reference points. The psychological weight of losses is generally greater than that of gains of the same magnitude (loss aversion), and individuals tend to distort probabilities: they overestimate low probabilities and underestimate high ones. This current research was performed on the students of the Partium Christian University of Oradea. The aim was to examine how the decision-making patterns described by prospect theory manifest themselves in everyday economic and organizational decisions. The questionnaire included hypothetical decision-making scenarios that assessed risk-taking propensity, the framing effect, and the degree of loss aversion. The results confirmed several fundamental tenets of prospect theory. The majority of respondents exhibited risk-averse behavior in gain scenarios: they chose a certain but smaller gain over a larger but uncertain alternative. The survey results essentially validated the original ideas of prospect theory; however, the framing effect and, to a lesser extent, the Allais paradox were also observed. The presentation also includes a further breakdown of the results by gender and field of study, reflecting on the subtle differences.

Keywords: prospect theory, risk seeking over losses, framing effect, survey, hypothetical scenarios

QUANTUM COMPUTING AS AN EMERGING BUSINESS CAPABILITY: STRATEGIC APPLICATIONS, OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS, AND COMPETITIVE IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Quantum computing has emerged as one of the most promising technological frontiers of the twenty-first century, with the potential to reshape how businesses solve complex computational problems. While the technology remains in a relatively early stage of maturity, its anticipated impact on optimization, simulation, risk analysis, cryptography, and machine learning has already attracted the attention of firms across finance, logistics, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, and energy. This presentation examines the business-oriented applications of quantum computing from both a strategic and managerial perspective. The talk first clarifies the basic logic of quantum computing and highlights how it differs from classical computing in terms of problem-solving capabilities. It then explores the main areas in which quantum approaches may create business value, including portfolio optimization, supply chain design, route planning, molecular modeling, fraud detection, and advanced forecasting. Particular attention is given not only to expected efficiency gains, but also to the broader competitive implications of early technological adoption. At the same time, the presentation maintains a critical perspective by addressing the current limitations of quantum computing, such as hardware instability, scalability challenges, high implementation costs, talent shortages, and the risk of exaggerated expectations. Rather than treating quantum computing as an immediate universal solution, the analysis positions it as a developing strategic capability whose business relevance depends on timing, organizational preparedness, and ecosystem-level innovation. Overall, the presentation argues that quantum computing should be understood not merely as a technical breakthrough, but as a potentially transformative business resource that may redefine competitive advantage in data-intensive and complexity-driven industries.

Keywords: Quantum computing, Business informatics

REBUILDING SECURITY AFTER WAR: ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE KARABAKH REGION

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Abstract

Armed conflict generates deep and lasting disruptions to economic systems, infrastructure, and social cohesion, weakening regional stability and long-term development prospects. Following the Second Karabakh War, the liberated territories of Azerbaijan face the urgent task of rebuilding not only physical infrastructure but also the economic foundations necessary for sustainable peace. This study explores how post-war reconstruction can strengthen economic security and stimulate structural transformation in the Karabakh region. In particular, it asks: how and to what extent can infrastructure-led reconstruction policies translate into durable economic security and inclusive development in post-conflict territories? The main aim of the research is to examine the relationship between reconstruction policies, infrastructure recovery, and economic resilience. Particular attention is given to how transport connectivity, public investment, and state-led development strategies together with the promotion of entrepreneurship and active community engagement contribute to restoring production capacity, expanding market access, generating employment, and enhancing socio-economic stability. Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of regional economic and infrastructure indicators with spatial assessment, policy analysis, and scenario-based forecasting models to evaluate development trajectories for the period 2026–2035. Comparative evidence from other post-conflict regions is also used to identify effective practices and potential risks. The research contributes to the literature by proposing an integrated framework linking post-war reconstruction, economic security, and structural change. Its findings offer practical policy recommendations for governments and development partners, demonstrating that reconstruction is not merely physical rebuilding

but a strategic process of fostering resilient institutions, inclusive growth, and sustainable regional development.

Keywords: post-war reconstruction; economic security; post-conflict development; transport connectivity; infrastructure recovery; Karabakh region

REGIONAL COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA: SYSTEMATIZATION APPROACHES TO STRATEGIES EU, US, RUSSIA, TURKIYE AND CHINA

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Abstract

In this article, we argue that it is necessary to rethink the concept of regional integration and cooperation of Central Asia countries as a regional phenomenon expected to develop in a trans regional space. Established notions of regional economic integration are largely complemented by the role of trans regional projects, but remain rather incomplete in their understanding of the current nature of transformations occurring in countries of the Global South. Therefore, an analysis of the specific regional development processes characteristic of Central Asia poses a number of challenges that need understood in their own subjective context. The way forward lies in developing trans regional cooperation mechanisms that support structural transformations, the realities, and prospects of a regional configuration of interactions. To analyze trans regional cooperation in Central Asia and their impact on a multi-vector foreign policy we use the systemic method. The methodological approach combines interstate relations and trans regional strategies between the EU, US, Russia, Turkiye, Chine and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). Trans regional projects are considered primarily in the context of international transport corridors for regional and interregional connections. The strategies of the regional powers analyzed in light of their underlying principles and approaches, which is crucial for understanding the changing global order and regional stability. As regional boundaries become increasingly blurred and Central Asian countries are reluctant to unite within joint integration frameworks, the focus should be on transnational cooperation with global and regional powers willing and able to address specific issues.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, 'multi-vector' foreign policy, Central Asia (C5), EAEU, EU Global Gateway, Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, Organization of Turkic States (OTS)

RELIGIOSITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY INTENTIONS

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Abstract

Political participation represents a critical outcome not only for democratic functioning but also for political marketing, which relies on citizen engagement as a prerequisite for effective communication, voter mobilization, and relationship building between political actors and their constituencies. Among the various factors influencing participation, religiosity has been identified as an important source of social values, norms, and community integration. However, its relationship with political involvement and participatory intentions remains insufficiently explored within the political marketing framework, particularly in transitional democratic contexts. This study examines differences in political involvement and conventional political participation across levels of religiosity. Religiosity is conceptualized as a socio-cultural factor that may shape individuals' psychological engagement with politics and their responsiveness to political marketing efforts. More religious individuals may be more embedded in social networks, exposed to stronger normative expectations, and more receptive to mobilization messages, which can increase their likelihood of political engagement. Using survey data from a national sample of adult citizens, respondents were grouped according to their level of religiosity, and differences in political involvement and participatory intentions were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results indicate significant differences between groups, with more religious individuals reporting higher levels of political involvement and stronger intentions to participate in conventional political activities. These findings contribute to political marketing literature by identifying religiosity as an important segmentation variable that helps explain variation in political engagement. Understanding how religiosity relates to political involvement can assist political actors in designing more effective and socially relevant communication strategies. More broadly, the study highlights the importance of socio-cultural factors in shaping citizen engagement and the effectiveness of political marketing in transitional democratic environments.

Keywords: religiosity; political participation; political involvement; political marketing; market segmentation; voter behavior; political consumer behavior

REVALORIZING TRANSHUMANCE AS A MEDIATING MECHANISM IN EXPERIENTIAL AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SYSTEMS: EVIDENCE FROM NORTHERN ALBANIA AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

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Abstract

The study revalorizes transhumance as a strategic mechanism for integrating pastoral heritage into experiential and sustainable tourism systems in mountain regions, focusing on Northern Albania within a Western Balkans comparative context. It examines how seasonal livestock mobility generates cultural landscape value, enables place-based co-creation, and reinforces rural resilience in socio-economically restructuring peripheries. Building on Pine and Gilmore's experience economy and recent sustainable tourism system frameworks, the study proposes an extended conceptual model in which transhumance mediates the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and tourism-driven income diversification. Methodologically, the analysis employs secondary data from official national statistics and international datasets (FAO, World Bank) and combines them with cross-regional comparative analysis. The findings reveal that transhumance significantly enhances destination authenticity and supports experience-based differentiation, while demonstrating a robust positive association between pastoral activity intensity and diversification into tourism-related income streams. The study contributes theoretically by embedding transhumance within the experience-based tourism value chain, thereby extending both the experience economy and sustainable tourism literatures. It highlights its role in strengthening rural multifunctionality and systemic resilience, offering a transferable framework that aligns cultural heritage valorization, biodiversity conservation, and tourism innovation in mountain regions.

Keywords: Transhumance, Experiential tourism, Sustainable tourism, Rural resilience, Cultural heritage, Western Balkans

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN ROMANIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Social enterprises have re-emerged as a policy priority in Europe under the EU's Social Economy Action Plan (2021) and the 2023 Council Recommendation, which urges Member States to strengthen framework conditions, financing, skills, and market access. This article analyses Romania's ecosystem through the prism of this EU agenda, examining how Law no. 219/2015 and its secondary legislation shape the field and how the Single Registry (RUEIS), administered by ANOFM, puts certification and reporting into practice. Using the latest Social Economy Barometers (2024/2025), we show a rapid rise in registrations and new opportunity streams generated by ESF+/national calls, while highlighting persistent data gaps and comparability issues across sources. We distinguish four main opportunity areas: EU and national funding channels, socially responsible public procurement, and the green–circular and digital transitions. However, fundamental constraints persist—fragile financial sustainability, reliance on grants, and uneven impact measurement—especially among work integration social enterprises (WISEs), where certification practices and post-project survival remain particularly challenging. Macroeconomic pressures (inflation, fiscal and current-account imbalances) additionally limit scaling prospects and dampen investment interest. We advance a policy–practice agenda consistent with the Council Recommendation: a coherent national strategy (2025–2032), simplified certification and reporting, more strategic use of public procurement, and blended finance combined with skills development and impact-measurement support. The Romanian experience illustrates both the opportunities and constraints of a compliance-driven, project-based growth trajectory and outlines concrete steps to convert short-term opportunity cycles into long-term, outcome-focused social enterprise development.

Keywords: social enterprises, social economy, Romania

SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE AND DEVELOPMENT DYNAMICS OF BEEKEEPING FAMILIES IN NORTHERN ALBANIA

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Abstract

Beekeeping in the northern region of Albania is one of the most widespread traditional activities, passed down through generations and influenced by both environmental conditions and its role in the well-being of rural families. This study presents an analysis of the profile of beekeepers in this region, focusing on socio-demographic characteristics as factors influencing the sector's development. The data were collected through a combination of official sources, field observations, and structured questionnaires, covering variables such as age, beekeeping experience, family size, gender inclusion, basic occupation, and level of knowledge of beekeeping. The analysis was carried out through statistical methods assisted by computer programs. The results show that the typical beekeeper profile is characterized by male dominance, an average age, long experience, and involvement mainly through family heritage, while income is combined, and the role of formal training remains moderate. Furthermore, the activity exhibits geographical variation, influenced by differences in agro-ecological conditions and the degree of local development. Overall, the findings highlight a well-established beekeeping model grounded in tradition, yet offering significant potential for further development through closer integration with the rural economy and tourism sectors.

Keywords: Socio-demographic profile of the beekeepers, Northern region of Albania, Family structure of beekeepers, Rural development

TEACHING FUNCTIONS IN C PROGRAMMING USING A SINGLE EXAMPLE: AN EDUCATIONAL SURVEY OF INTRODUCTORY COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Functions represent a fundamental concept in the C programming language and play an essential role in the development of modular, structured, and reusable programs. For introductory computer science students, understanding how functions operate is a critical step in learning programming, as it supports the development of clear program structure and efficient problem-solving strategies. However, many beginners experience difficulties when first encountering concepts such as function declaration, function definition, parameters, return values, and function calls. This paper examines the teaching of functions in C programming using a simplified instructional approach based on a single illustrative example. Instead of presenting multiple unrelated examples, the proposed approach focuses on one coherent example designed to demonstrate the main concepts associated with functions, including the interaction between user-defined functions and the `main()` function. This method aims to reduce conceptual complexity and support students in understanding the logical structure of function-based programming. To evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, an educational survey was conducted with 200 first-year computer science students from the Faculty of Information Technology at the Polytechnic University of Tirana. The study combined a conceptual explanation of functions with intentionally simple programming examples and collected student feedback regarding their understanding of the topic. The results suggest that presenting function concepts through a clear and simple example can significantly support students' conceptual understanding and improve the learning experience in introductory programming courses.

Keywords: Functions, C Programming Languages, Modular Programming, User-defined Functions, Pre-defined Functions, Computer Science Education.

THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR HOUSING FIRST: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR HUNGARY

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Abstract

International research increasingly suggests that Housing First – a policy that offers unconditional access to permanent housing to homeless people – reduces the public costs associated with homelessness by lowering the use of shelters, emergency healthcare and criminal justice services, resulting in net fiscal savings that exceed the cost of the housing provided. Systematic reviews report substantial cost offsets and benefit to cost ratios above 1 in many North American and Western European programs, even when randomized trials show only modest net savings. At the same time, studies from Central and Eastern Europe remain scarce. In Hungary, existing studies document severe health problems, multimorbidity and limited healthcare access among homeless people, which indicates a high likelihood of crisis driven service use and significant costs, but they do not examine the economic effects of housing led interventions. This paper presents a literature review of international Housing First cost effectiveness research and of the Hungarian empirical literature on homelessness and health. By bringing these two bodies of work together, this study aims to identify where international findings may or may not be transferable to the Hungarian context. It also aims to highlight data and measurement gaps, and formulate a set of research propositions and policy suggestions, rather than new cost estimates. The aim is to bridge a clear gap between the international and the domestic literature and to contribute to debates on how to sustainably combat homelessness in Hungary and in sociologically and economically similar countries.

Keywords: Housing First, homelessness, cost-effectiveness, social and economic sustainability, fiscal savings,

THE IMPACT OF INCONSISTENT COMMUNICATION ON CUSTOMER PURCHASING DECISIONS IN AN OMNICHANNEL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

This study focuses on the impact of inconsistent communication on customer decision-making in an omnichannel marketing environment. As customers increasingly use multiple communication channels during a single purchase journey, the consistency of information across these channels becomes a key factor influencing their behavior. The research is based on a quantitative survey conducted among 265 respondents with experience in online shopping. A scenario-based approach was used for data collection, allowing the simulation of realistic purchasing situations involving both consistent and inconsistent communication. The results indicate that inconsistent communication increases customer uncertainty, reduces trust, and negatively affects brand perception. At the same time, inconsistency was found to significantly decrease customers' willingness to complete a purchase, leading to postponed or abandoned transactions. The findings suggest that inconsistent communication is not merely a marketing communication issue, but a significant factor affecting business performance. From a managerial perspective, it is therefore essential to ensure consistency of information across all customer touchpoints.

Keywords: omnichannel marketing communication; perceived consistency; integrated marketing communication; brand memorability; purchase intention

THE INTERACTION OF ETHICS AND LAW IN BUSINESS: CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of law in maintaining and strengthening ethics in business, emphasizing that the legal framework constitutes a fundamental pillar for ensuring corporate social responsibility. Business ethics underpin trust, transparency, and long-term sustainability, while the law establishes clear standards that transform ethical conduct from a purely moral value into a measurable and strategic obligation. In a global and digital environment, business models have evolved beyond traditional forms. Online businesses, the use of artificial intelligence, and interactions on virtual platforms have expanded the scope of corporate social responsibility. Today, businesses are accountable not only for the natural environment, human resources, clients, and state institutions, but also for the psychological, social, and virtual impacts their actions may have on individuals and communities. Law plays a crucial role in guiding organizations toward these expanded responsibilities. Legal standards in consumer protection, employee rights, workplace safety, environmental protection, and corruption prevention provide the basis for ethical decision-making. An important international instrument in this context is ISO 26000, which offers practical guidance for integrating social responsibility into organizational strategies and culture, addressing human rights, fair labor practices, environmental protection, and community engagement. The interaction between ethics, law, and ISO 26000 guidance helps companies create a sustainable and trustworthy business environment. This paper explores how law and international best practices guide modern businesses, integrating

social responsibility, highlighting that corporate social responsibility has become a strategic imperative for long-term success and societal development.

Keywords: Keywords: Business ethics, Law and business, Corporate social responsibility, Ethical decision-making, ISO 26000, Online businesses and AI, Business sustainability, psychological impacts-part of social responsibility

THE INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIGITALIZATION AND GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT IN AZERBAIJAN

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Abstract

In the modern era, digitalization is considered one of the main drivers of economic growth, exerting both direct and indirect effects on national economies. This study examines the relationship between digitalization and economic growth in Azerbaijan. For this purpose, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), value added generated in the ICT sector, and imports of ICT products were selected as key indicators. Initially, GDP was defined as the dependent variable, while value added in the ICT sector and ICT product imports were treated as independent variables. Considering that a significant share of Azerbaijan's GDP is derived from the oil and gas sector, and that the development of other sectors largely depends on revenues generated from oil and gas as well as overall GDP dynamics, reverse causality was also examined. To analyze the relationships among the variables, the econometric methods OLS, ARDLBT, FMOLS, DOLS, CCR, and VEC were employed. The empirical results indicate that, when analyzed individually, the variables exhibit a positive and predominantly statistically significant mutual impact. However, when assessing the joint

(interaction) effects of the two explanatory variables, the impact of IICT on GDP and LIICT on LGDP was found to be statistically insignificant and negative.

Keywords: digitalization, information and communication technologies (ICT), value added, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), ICT product imports

THE POSSIBILITIES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN PENSION SECURITY

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Abstract

One of the most defining socio-economic challenges of the 21st century is the aging population and the sustainability of pension systems resulting from it. Artificial intelligence (AI) offers exciting opportunities, but its introduction must be handled carefully and responsibly. The aim of this study is to comprehensively present the new opportunities that AI offers in different areas of pension security, the risks that the technology poses, and the conditions that are necessary for AI to create real social value in this strategically important area. To this end, the paper reviews the current challenges facing pension systems, presents the most important AI technologies and their specific uses, and analyzes the economic and social impacts of their introduction. The study aims to contribute to the understanding of the role of AI in shaping the future of pension security and to provide a professional basis for further research and decision-making processes.

Keywords: pension security, artificial intelligence (AI), pension planning tools, cyber security, pension system resilience

THE POWER OF COLOR: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MARKETING EFFECTS OF COLOR IN CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING

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Abstract

This literature review draws attention to the significance of color usage and demonstrates that color psychology is an indispensable component of the marketing communication toolkit. It examines the role of color in decision making through consumers' color associations and color symbolism. Color associations, color psychology, and color marketing are becoming increasingly relevant in the corporate sphere. Although the persuasive power of colors has been well documented, only a limited number of companies have incorporated these research findings into their practical operations to date. This paper was written to promote the conscious and strategic use of color. Its objective is to provide readers with a clear understanding of the psychological and physiological effects of colors, their significance, and the impact of their application in marketing communication. The findings of this research clearly indicate that linking color associations to products through packaging and corporate identity elements exerts a stimulating effect on purchase decisions. The emotional influence of colors is substantial, and as a result, consumer expectations and overall customer experience can be enhanced. Based on these conclusions, further research in the fields of color marketing and color psychology is recommended, particularly regarding the color associations of Generation Z. As digital natives, members of this cohort encounter visually saturated environments on a daily basis; their responses to and associations with colors differ from the generalizable patterns. As the consumers of the future, understanding this generation's reactions to colors is essential for developing effective branding and packaging strategies.

Keywords: Color psychology, Color marketing, Color associations, Color symbolism, Consumer decision making, Consumer behaviour

THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ENGINEER MANAGER

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Abstract

The traditional role of engineers, historically centered on technical expertise in design, manufacturing, and research and development, has expanded significantly. Today's engineer managers are expected to complement their technical skills with competencies in finance, accounting, contract law, and human relations. This shift reflects the growing complexity of organizational environments and raises the question of whether conventional engineering curricula adequately prepare graduates for such responsibilities. Engineers are increasingly required to act as leaders, decision-makers, and entrepreneurs. Their strength in analytical thinking and problem-solving positions them well for these roles, yet success depends on additional capabilities such as communication, strategic thinking, and business awareness. This evolution highlights the importance of identifying critical success factors, including adaptability, innovation, and the ability to manage risk and interdisciplinary collaboration. A central issue is the balance between education and training. While traditional education emphasizes theoretical foundations, there is a growing need for practice-oriented and managerial skill development. Higher education institutions must therefore adapt, integrating business and leadership components into engineering programs without abandoning their strong technical base. At the same time, digital transformation is reshaping both engineering practice and education. Online platforms and artificial intelligence are becoming integral tools, offering new opportunities for learning and innovation. However, their long-term impact remains uncertain, raising questions about sustainability and the possibility of technological hype cycles similar to the dot-com era. In conclusion, the engineer manager represents a hybrid professional profile that bridges engineering, management, and entrepreneurship. To remain relevant, engineering education must evolve to equip future professionals with a balanced mix of technical expertise, managerial competence, and digital literacy.

Keywords: engineering management, skill development, educational reform, digital transformation

THE ROLE AND RELEVANCE OF FORENSIC ACCOUNTING IN DETECTING AND PREVENTING FINANCIAL FRAUD: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Financial fraud continues to be one of the most frequent, costly, and insidious threats to corporates, governments, and economies. Due to the complexity and advancement of current financial technology, conventional audit procedures for uncovering sophisticated fraud schemes are challenged to identify such frauds. Forensic accounting is a highly focused field that utilizes the principles, techniques and legal aspects of accounting/auditing tools, investigation techniques and legal aspects to detect, investigate and prevent fraud. This paper will cover the theoretical foundations that form the foundation of forensic accounting, to what kind of objective it is supposed, what role it plays, implications and influencing indicators of detection and prevention of financial fraud, and why it is significant for forensics for financial risk reduction. Adopting criminological, economic, sociological and behavioural theories (Fraud Triangle, Fraud Diamond, Agency Theory, Stewardship Theory, Rational Choice Theory, and Institutional Theory) in forensic accounting, we reflect on the significance of theory as a part of forensic accounting. The paper also examines the evolution of forensic accounting in the age of globalization, digitalisation and regulatory changes in corporate governance. In the end, it argues that forensic accounting based on strong theoretical foundations is essential if and when financial transparency and accountability, as well as trust in present day economic system, is to be strengthened.

Keywords: Forensic Accounting, Digitalisation, Financial Fraud, Shadow economy

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL SAFETY IN STUDENTS' WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine the role of emotional safety in relation to the workplace expectations and needs of higher education students. The empirical basis of the research is a sample of 123 participants, consisting of students from Óbuda University. Data were collected באמצעות a questionnaire, exploring students' preferences regarding the workplace and leadership, as well as the perceived importance of emotional safety. The aim of the analysis is to identify the relationships between the need for emotional safety and expectations regarding the workplace environment and leadership practices. The study is expected to highlight the role emotional safety plays in students' expectations toward their future workplaces and leaders, with particular emphasis on supportive, accepting, and feedback-oriented leadership attitudes. In addition, the analysis seeks to explore how workplace characteristics that foster open communication, allow for mistakes, and support the experience of psychological safety are related to students' preferences. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between workplace expectations and psychological safety, and offers practical implications for leaders and organizations in attracting and retaining young employees.

Keywords: emotional safety; psychological safety; workplace expectations; leadership attitudes; student preferences; Generation Z; organizational culture; work environment

THE ROLE OF GREEN FINANCE IN ALBANIA'S SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION

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Abstract

In an era where climate change, environmental degradation, and the pressure for sustainable development have become global challenges, green finance is taking an increasingly central role in policymaking, economics, and the financial sector. This study aims to examine the role of green finance in Albania's transition toward a sustainable economy, combining theoretical analysis with an empirical component to understand the country's institutional reality. Through a broad theoretical framework on international instruments, policies, and practices in sustainable finance, the study places special emphasis on regulations, the role of financial markets, the banking sector, and ESG criteria. For the empirical aspect, a survey was administered to financial institutions, businesses, and institutional actors in Albania to assess awareness, involvement, challenges, and readiness to develop sustainability-oriented products and strategies. The results indicate that awareness of the importance of green financing is increasing; however, practical implementation is obstructed by the absence of a clear legal framework, technical capacities, and fiscal incentives. Nevertheless, most institutions express a willingness to engage in green finance if these barriers are addressed. This suggests that Albania possesses real potential to build a financial system that not only benefits from economic development but also directs it toward long-term environmental and social goals. The study concludes with a series of recommendations for policymakers, financial institutions, and market actors, emphasizing the creation of a national taxonomy, the promotion of investments in strategic sectors—such as clean energy, agriculture, and construction, and market education to understand the value of sustainability as an economic and social advantage.

Keywords: Green finance; sustainable development; green economy; ESG; Albania; climate financing;

THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA) IN DRIVING EFFECTIVE TRADE POLICY TITLE HARMONIZATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is the world's largest free trade area, with 54 of the 55 African Union members as signatories and an engine of Africa's continental integration agenda. South Africa has a close association with Africa trade and its economic relationship with the continent is expanding amidst ongoing obstacles in fully using the AfCFTA's potential. This paper aims to examine the trade policy harmonization requirements prescribed by AfCFTA, their implications, assess the extent to which South Africa's current trade policy framework aligns with these obligations, recommend targeted policy interventions to overcome identified barriers and strengthen South Africa's AfCFTA harmonization. The study reveals that despite partial compliance with the AfCFTA substantial harmonization, shortfalls caused by institutional fragmentation, tensions between SACU and AfCFTA and constraints in GNU governance require the establishment of dedicated AfCFTA Harmonization Unit, a formal alignment protocol between the SACU and AfCFTA and a time sensitive roadmap for the elimination of non-tariff barriers. The paper subsequently reaches the conclusion that the AfCFTA imposes extensive harmonization obligations that have substantial implications for South Africa's trade governance framework. It also argues that the current framework in the country reflects partial but insufficient alignment which is driven by institutional fragmentation, SACU - AfCFTA tensions and GNU governance constraints. To address these barriers, a dedicated AfCFTA Harmonization Unit, a formal SACU- AfCFTA alignment protocol and a time

bound non-tariff barrier elimination roadmap are necessary in systematic policy gap analysis that is absent in the existing literature.

Keywords: African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); trade policy harmonization; Intra-African trade; regional economic integration; non-tariff barriers; South Africa; trade governance; Southern African Customs Union (SACU); Government of National Unity (GNU)

THE ROLE OF TRUST AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the level of trust that members of society, particularly high school students, have in higher education. On the one hand, I will examine, based on the literature, what factors influence this trust, and how students who have already been admitted and are currently enrolled in university view this issue. To what extent do they trust that they will acquire valuable, applicable knowledge at the university, and that this will help them secure employment? The picture is somewhat discouraging, as the employment prospects for currently enrolled students are worse than they were decades ago, and due to labor market transformations, it is not certain that a degree will be valuable in every field in the future.

Keywords: Trust, Future, degree, university, labor market

THEMATIC ROUTES AND GASTRONOMIC ITINERARIES A DESCRIPTIVE EXPLORATION OF A DEVELOPING GASTRONOMIC HOTSPOT NAMED “MRIZI I ZANAVE, FISHTË”

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Abstract

This study explores the development of thematic routes and gastronomic itineraries as strategic tools for positioning emerging food destinations, focusing on Mrizi i Zanave in Fishte. As a prominent example of Albania’s farm-to-table movement, Mrizi i Zanave has gained increasing attention for its role in promoting local identity, sustainable practices, and rural development. Adopting an exploratory research design, the study combines qualitative methods, including field observations, stakeholder interviews, and analysis of existing tourism and gastronomy literature. The research investigates how thematic routes and curated gastronomic itineraries can enhance visitor experiences, extend tourist stays, and strengthen linkages among local producers, cultural heritage, and tourism services. The findings indicate that integrating gastronomic assets into structured thematic routes significantly contributes to destination differentiation and competitiveness. In particular, Mrizi i Zanave acts as a driver of the development of a local food system, encouraging the inclusion of nearby farms, artisanal producers, and cultural landmarks within a cohesive tourism offering. Moreover, the study highlights the potential of such initiatives to foster sustainable rural development by increasing income opportunities and preserving traditional practices. The paper adds to the existing literature on gastronomic tourism by providing empirical insights from an emerging Balkan destination. It also offers practical implications for policymakers and destination managers aiming to design innovative, experience-based tourism products centered on local food systems.

Keywords: gastronomic tourism, thematic routes, rural destination, local food system

TO EXAMINE THE INFLUENCE OF CSR RESPONSIBILITY ON CONSUMER BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) perception on the behavioral intentions of consumers among customers of Safaricom PLC. Using a dataset of 172 participants from Thika Town, Kiambu County, the study deploys Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression to assess the hypothesis that CSR perception has a significant and positive effect on consumer behavioral intention. The theoretical framework is anchored on Carroll's pyramid (1991), the Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), and Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 2020). The results indicate a robust positive correlation between CSR perception and behavioral intention ($r=.766$, $p<.001$), with CSR perception identified as the most significant predictor of behavioral intention. These findings have critical implications for Safaricom's marketing strategies, corporate communications, and the regulatory environment of telecommunication in Kenya. It is also useful to policymakers, such as Kenya's Communication Authority, for them to understand the dynamics of CSR as they formulate laws pertaining to the telecommunications industry. This study examines the link between CSR activities and consumer perception using Safaricom PLC as a case study. Safaricom PLC is actively engaged in social sustainability efforts, which include education programs, health programs, and projects that are designed to empower the community economically. These activities exhibit social impact; there is also a gap of empirical evidence regarding the influence on consumers' loyalty, trust, and brand perception. The objective of this study is to establish to what extent the efforts of Safaricom PLC can influence the perception of consumers and contribute to a sustainable competitive edge. Using a quantitative approach, the study will evaluate consumers' feedback to determine the effects of economic and social sustainability activities on loyalty, trust, and brand image. The findings are intended to show

that CSR not only serves as community development but also catalyzes sustainability in the economy through enhanced relationships.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Social and Economic Sustainability, Consumer Trust, Consumer Loyalty, Brand Image

TURNING CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY: TOURISM-LED NATION BRANDING IN TÜRKIYE

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the case of Türkiye, more specifically from the perspective of tourism-focused national brand. Our aim is to analyse the way in which tourism is a national recovery instrument of the Republic of Türkiye, given the economic crisis the country has been facing. Our methodology is qualitative, more specifically interpretative and analytical. We shall analyse the national branding and rebranding of the Republic of Türkiye. Throughout this paper, we will also focus on specific concepts, such as: “Made in Türkiye” and “Go Türkiye” as a means to promote heritage and tourism to both national and international tourists and attempt to analyse the country’s position and the background supported by cultural and public diplomacy, concentrating on the specificities of the Turkish national branding.

Keywords: Türkiye, national branding, tourism, economic crisis

TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF DEFINITIONS OF CREDITLESS RECOVERY

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Abstract

For a long time, mainstream economics held that a durable post-crisis recovery was not feasible without meaningful credit expansion. However, a growing body of international empirical research has shown that creditless recovery is not an exceptional phenomenon, but rather a recurring pattern, typically associated with weaker growth dynamics than recoveries accompanied by vigorous lending. The phenomenon is particularly pronounced following credit booms and/or banking crises, that is, precisely in periods when the fragility of financial intermediation poses the greatest risk for economic policy. In the conventional interpretation, a recovery is considered creditless when the link between GDP and lending weakens and their dynamics diverge, that is, when improving economic performance is not accompanied by credit expansion of a comparable pace. The aim of this study is to systematize and synthesize the definitions of creditless recovery, thereby contributing to the conceptual clarification of the phenomenon. Through a systematic review of the international literature, we identify the dimensions along which these definitions converge and diverge, with particular attention to the identification of recovery periods, the measurement of credit dynamics, the choice of reference period, and the threshold linked to macroeconomic performance. We organize the definitions within a comparative framework and, along the key dimensions a new identification procedure that integrates the strengths of previous approaches. Our findings may contribute to greater consistency in the measurement of the concept, improve the comparability of empirical studies, and provide a sound basis for further research on the relationship between financial intermediation and growth dynamics.

Keywords: creditless recovery, credit dynamics, post-crisis recovery, financial intermediation, banking crisis

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS AND FOOD SECURITY: FROM UKRAINE TO MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract

Food security has attracted growing attention in academia, as food constitutes the most fundamental need for the global population of over 8 billion. To address the evolving challenges in food security governance, this research extends the author's PhD thesis, parts of which have been published in prior work. It builds on the original research by presenting updated findings pertaining to the research domain of food security risks. While the risks posed by geopolitical conflicts have received increasing attention, their analytical frameworks remain fragmented. In this study, a comparative descriptive analysis of two cases was conducted within a unified counterfactual framework, comparing the impacts of the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East on food security. This analysis focuses on the observed short-term transmission channels of such impacts, rather than their long-term ultimate effects. In conclusion, this research systematically integrates geopolitical conflicts into food security risk frameworks by distinguishing their direct and indirect impacts on food security. Direct impacts, exemplified by the Ukraine conflict, manifest in the disruption of agricultural production and food supply chains. Indirect impacts, as seen in Iran, operate through the perturbation of energy supplies, fertilizer availability, and global trade routes—all essential elements for agricultural production. Furthermore, both types of impacts pose significant adverse impacts on the stability of the global food market.

Keywords: Food security; Geopolitical conflicts; Counterfactual framework; Agricultural production; Energy; Supply chain

WHY DO STUDENTS CHOOSE CERTAIN MOBILITY DESTINATIONS? AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF DECISION FACTORS AND POST-MOBILITY SATISFACTION

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Abstract

International student mobility has become an increasingly important component of higher education, offering significant academic, cultural, and personal benefits. However, the decision-making process behind selecting a mobility destination is complex and influenced by multiple interrelated factors. This study aims to identify and analyze the key determinants that shape students' mobility choices and to examine how these factors relate to their post-mobility satisfaction. The research adopts a mixed approach, combining a structured literature review with a questionnaire-based exploratory study. The literature review synthesizes existing findings on student mobility decision-making, while the empirical component is based on survey responses collected from university students with and without prior mobility experience. The questionnaire focuses on the perceived importance of academic, economic, social, cultural, and geographic factors, as well as satisfaction levels among students who have already completed their mobility period. The findings indicate that, in addition to academic considerations such as course compatibility and institutional reputation, non-academic factors—including city attractiveness, lifestyle, and cost of living—play a significant role in shaping student decisions. Furthermore, preliminary results suggest that factors influencing initial choice are not always aligned with those contributing to post-mobility satisfaction. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of student mobility behavior and highlights the importance of integrating both academic and lifestyle-related factors in the design of decision-support tools for mobility planning.

Keywords: student mobility, decision-making, mobility determinants

HOUSEHOLD ADAPTATION TO CRISES IN HUNGARY: EVIDENCE FROM A SURVEY

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Abstract

This study examines how Hungarian households experienced and adjusted to three major crises: the 2008 financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2022 energy crisis. The analysis is based on an anonymous online survey of 220 respondents, focusing on perceived crisis impact, consumption changes, financial awareness, and demographic background. Descriptive statistics were calculated in IBM SPSS Statistics 33, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings show that the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 energy crisis were evaluated as similarly severe, although they affected households in different ways. COVID-19 was mainly connected to uncertainty and disruptions in daily routines, whereas the energy crisis was associated with higher household expenses and more cautious financial behavior. The 2008 crisis had a weaker reported effect, largely because many respondents were not yet financially independent at that time. Overall, the results indicate that household reactions to crises depend not only on the scale of external shocks but also on age, personal exposure, and previous crisis experience. The paper contributes to research on household-level crisis adaptation in Hungary and underlines the role of financial awareness and resilience during repeated periods of uncertainty.

Keywords: household resilience, crisis response, financial awareness, consumption change, COVID-19, energy crisis, financial crisis, Hungary

INDUSTRY 4.0 TECHNOLOGIES AND THE INDUSTRIALISATION OF BEAUTY INDUSTRY SERVICES

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Abstract

The study examines how digital technologies associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution may be integrated into beauty-industry small and medium-sized enterprises, and how industrialisation may be interpreted in a service sector that remains strongly dependent on human expertise, trust and aesthetic judgement. A research-based digital maturity and industrialisation model is developed, through which five dimensions are assessed: digital presence, customer journey management, operational standardisation, data-driven decision-making and technological innovation. It is argued that beauty-industry industrialisation should not be understood as mass production or the displacement of professionals. Rather, it should be understood as the systematic stabilisation, measurability and scalable development of service processes. References have been inserted according to the order of first occurrence, and no citation group contains more than three references.

Keywords: beauty industry; digitalisation; industrialisation; artificial intelligence; SMEs; service innovation; customer journey; data-driven management