9th Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers (ICMR 2024)

"Synergy in Management Research: Bridging AI and Human Intelligence"

ABSTRACT PROCEEDINGS

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
SABARAGAMUWA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

9th Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers (ICMR 2024)

Synergy in Management Research:

Bridging AI & Human Intelligence

ABSTRACTS

Faculty of Management Studies

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

Belihuloya, Sri Lanka

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PREFACE

Recognizing the importance of synergy in management research: bridging AI and human intelligence, the 9th Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers (ICMR 2024) was organized by the Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Two eminent Professors in Management related fields namely, Prof. Ujjwal K. Chowdhury and Prof. T.C. Gamage attended the conference as keynote speakers to share their insights under the theme of "Synergy in Management Research: Bridging AI and Human Intelligence". More than forty-one peer-reviewed research papers were presented under eleven different sessions namely, Finance I, Finance II, Human Resources Management, General Management I, General Management II, Entrepreneurship I, Entrepreneurship II, Marketing Management I, Marketing Management II, Tourism Management, and Technology Management. This conference provided a great opportunity for the researchers, professionals, policymakers, and undergraduates to discuss and share their research findings relating to key global issues in the field of management while providing them with a platform to develop a global network in their disciplines.

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MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

It is my great pleasure to warmly welcome all participants to the 9th Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers (ICMR), held from November 27th to 28th, 2024, at the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. This year's conference theme, "Synergy in Management Research: Bridging AI and Human Intelligence," reflects the faculty's commitment to exploring the dynamic intersection of artificial intelligence and human insight in the field of management.

As an emerging research-oriented institution, Sabaragamuwa University is dedicated to fostering a vibrant research culture among our faculty and students. Since its inception by the Faculty of Management Studies in 2016, the ICMR has been instrumental in advancing our research mission, establishing a valuable platform for interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all delegates, the Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies, and the organizing committee for their tireless efforts and dedication in bringing this important event to fulfillment. Their hard work and commitment are truly commendable, and I congratulate them on their successful coordination of this conference.

I would also like to express my gratitude to our sponsors for their generous support, which has been instrumental in encouraging and promoting academic research through their valuable sponsorships. I wish all participants an inspiring and enriching conference experience, leading to meaningful discussions and collaborations.

Prof. M. Sunil Shantha
Vice-Chancellor
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

I am pleased to extend my warmest regards on the occasion of the 9th Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers (ICMR), organized by the Research and Publication Unit, Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) at Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. This year's conference, themed "Synergy in Management Research: Bridging AI and Human Intelligence," highlights a pivotal area in management studies. As AI continues to evolve, its potential to revolutionize management research becomes increasingly apparent. Synergizing AI and human intelligence offer promising avenues to enhance research efficiency, accuracy, and innovation. By leveraging AI's data-processing and pattern-recognition capabilities alongside human expertise and intuition, management researchers can unlock new insights and solutions to complex problems.

In management, AI can streamline data analysis, uncover trends in consumer behavior, predict market shifts, and identify operational inefficiencies with remarkable precision. Meanwhile, human intelligence remains crucial in interpreting nuanced findings, understanding cultural contexts, and shaping ethical considerations. This collaborative approach allows AI to handle vast data sets while human experts bring context and strategic perspective.

As we explore ways to bridge AI and human intelligence, management research can move toward more adaptive, insightful, and human-centered outcomes. Integrating these strengths could not only refine research methodologies but also provide a balanced framework for addressing emerging business challenges in an increasingly data-driven world. I am confident that this conference will foster meaningful collaborations and drive forward-thinking discussions on the future of management research.

This conference offers an outstanding forum for researchers, academics, industry professionals, and policymakers to exchange ideas, collaborate, and build partnerships across the fields of Management and Social Sciences. The Faculty of Management Studies is proud to hold an "A" grade accreditation from the Quality Assurance Council of the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka for all our degree programs.

As a public institution, we are dedicated to achieving academic excellence, embodied in our motto, "Nurturing the Paragon of Virtues." Our faculty is committed to fostering an environment of outstanding teaching and research and delivering high-quality education in a peaceful and inspiring setting. In line with our academic vision, the 9th ICMR serves as a global platform for diverse researchers to address pressing issues, generate insights, and share innovative solutions to current challenges.

I extend a warm welcome and sincere appreciation to our keynote speakers, distinguished guests, and academics participating virtually. Your expertise and contributions enrich this conference immensely. My heartfelt thanks also go out to the researchers who are presenting their valuable studies and findings on this platform, which contribute meaningfully to the body of knowledge.

Finally, I would like to recognize and thank the conference chair, secretary, co-chairs, and all organizing committee members for their dedication and hard work in making this conference a success.

Wishing everyone a productive and inspiring conference!

Prof. (Dr.) Athula Gnanapala
Dean- Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIR: ICMR 2024

In a world where artificial intelligence has become the buzzword in every industry and field, academics and researchers must acknowledge their responsibility and commitment to bridging the knowledge gap in navigating this fast-paced technological change. Considering this timely need in contemporary research, the Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers (ICMR)-2024 is organized under the theme of "Synergy in Management Research: Bridging AI and Human Intelligence". The Faculty of Management Studies of Sabaragamuwa University has consecutively organised this international conference for the last 8 years, and as the Conference Chair of its 9th edition, it was my privilege and honour to organise its 9th edition and be part of this inspiring journey. ICMR 2024 is an exciting opportunity for vibrant intellectual discussions and innovative collaboration in Management Studies, especially in emerging areas.

This year's theme invites us to investigate how AI can enhance decision-making, foster innovation, and create value in management practices while also emphasizing the irreplaceable role of human intelligence in navigating ethical considerations and emotional nuances. Upon our invitation, we received scholarly work from researchers around the world, addressing various concerns bridging AI and Human Intelligence across several fields, which include Finance, Banking and Insurance, Business Management, Creativity and Innovation Management, Crisis and Disaster Management, Eco-business Management, Economics, Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management, Human Resource and Change Management, International Business and Global Sustainable Practices, Marketing Management, Supply Chain Management; and Tourism and Hospitality Management.

During the two days of the conference (27th and 28th of November 2024), we have an exciting line-up of keynote speakers, panel discussions, and research presentations designed to inspire and provoke thoughtful dialogue. I encourage you to engage fully with your peers and fellow researchers, share your insights, and embrace the spirit of collaboration that this conference embodies. Thank you for being part of this important dialogue. Together, let us explore how we can leverage the strengths of both AI and human intelligence to drive impactful management research.

Dr. U. Chathurika Edirisinghe
Conference Chair - 9th ICMR
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE SECRETARY: ICMR 2024

As the Conference Secretary, it is my pleasure to warmly welcome you to the 9th International Conference on Management Research (ICMR) 2024, hosted by the Faculty of Management Studies. This distinguished event has brought together scholars, researchers, and industry leaders for eight consecutive years. This year, as we commemorate our ninth gathering, we are excited to facilitate meaningful discussions that have the potential to influence a wide range of economic sectors and drive forward new management paradigms.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all participants, contributors, and authors for their commitment and insightful work, which enriches this conference. Special thanks to the review committee for meticulous review work. I am looking forward to the insights of our esteemed keynote speakers, Professor Ujjwal K Chowdhury from Washington University of Science and Technology, USA, and Professor T.C. Gamage, Professor of Marketing at Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. I also wish to extend my appreciation to all invited session chairs, the advisory committee, and the organizing team members for their exceptional contributions to the success of this event.

Once again, I am delighted to welcome you, along with your colleagues and friends, to the 9th ICMR. May this be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for all.

Dr. Ganga Karunathilaka
Conference Secretary - 9th ICMR
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

KEYNOTE SPEECH OF PROFESSOR UJJWAL K. CHOWDHURY

It is a true honor to join you today at the 9th Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers (ICMR) hosted by Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. This esteemed event provides an invaluable platform for sharing insights that shape the future of management research. Against this dynamic backdrop, I am excited to delve into a theme that stands at the intersection of technology and human insight: the synergy between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Human Creativity in transforming marketing practices.

In our rapidly evolving world, AI and Machine Learning (ML) are not just tools; they are catalysts redefining the core of marketing strategies. My keynote will explore how AI, when integrated thoughtfully, serves as a powerful partner to human creativity, enhancing rather than replacing it. This collaboration enables the development of campaigns that are both innovative and deeply resonant with audiences.

I will draw on examples from industry pioneers, such as Spotify's personalized music recommendations, Netflix's curated content, Sephora's interactive beauty experiences, and Myntra's tailored fashion suggestions. These cases illustrate a new paradigm where AI amplifies human ingenuity, allowing brands to achieve unprecedented impact.

Through these illustrations, I aim to show how leading organizations are blending AI-driven insights with human intuition to craft campaigns that are more engaging, effective, and impactful. This approach not only signifies a shift in how we think about marketing but also points to a future where technology and human intelligence seamlessly work together, fostering richer, more meaningful connections with consumers. Together, we stand at the forefront of a transformative era in marketing—one where AI and human insight drive innovation hand in hand.

Prof. Ujjwal K Chowdhury
Vice President: Global Marketing, Media-Design & International Relations
Washington University Science and Technology
USA

KEYNOTE SPEECH OF PROFESSOR THILINI C. GAMAGE

I am honored to deliver the keynote speech at the 9th Interdisciplinary Conference of Management Researchers (ICMR) at the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, which is centered around the theme "Synergy in Management Research: Bridging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Human Intelligence."

The rapid growth of AI in recent years has profoundly impacted many industries and aspects of human life. In a world increasingly shaped by algorithms and networks, AI is transforming how companies operate, sparking widespread speculation about the future of work and the workforce. This raises a crucial question: Will AI augment human ingenuity, or will it ultimately replace the need for human workers? Against this backdrop, I invite you to join me in a critical discussion on a topic that resonates with the conference's theme: "Exploring the Synergies in Human-AI Symbiosis: A Blessing or a Curse?"

When we look at the history of work — mainly since the industrial revolution — we see that people started to outsource their labor to machines. What began with simple, repetitive physical tasks, like weaving, has evolved into machines capable of performing complex cognitive tasks such as solving mathematical equations, understanding language, and even writing. Today, AI is advancing rapidly, not only capable of replicating physical labor but also of mimicking mental capabilities.

At its core, AI is a technology designed to replicate human intelligence by learning from experience through iterative processing and algorithmic training. It acts and makes decisions in ways that seem intelligent, drawing on patterns and data to mimic human-like reasoning and behavior. This capability is particularly valuable in organizational settings, as AI can identify informational patterns that optimize trends relevant to specific tasks. Unlike humans, AI does not experience fatigue and can operate continuously as long as it can access data. However, while AI systems excel in speed, accuracy, and rationality, they lack intuition, emotional depth, and cultural sensitivity that genuinely make humans effective in their roles.

Human abilities are far more expansive and multifaceted than AI, which relies on a constant stream of data. Humans embody a distinct form of intelligence known as authentic intelligence, which is essential in organizational settings. Authentic intelligence enables humans to imagine, anticipate, feel, and assess

dynamic situations, allowing businesses to adapt, innovate, and navigate complexity in ways that AI simply cannot replicate. In the contemporary business world characterized by high market dynamism, effectively navigating sudden and unpredictable transformations requires businesses to rely more on authentic intelligence than AI.

Will AI complement or compete with human intelligence? Although AI may contrast with authentic intelligence, they are, in fact, complementary. Both types of intelligence in organizational settings should work in tandem, creating a synergistic effect by merging their distinct strengths and capabilities. This synergy will give rise to a collaborative, integrated form of intelligence—augmented intelligence—that enhances organizational efficiency and accuracy while fostering creativity and proactive problem-solving. Augmented intelligence holds immense potential for businesses to unlock new frontiers by fostering human-AI symbiosis. By harnessing AI as a complementary partner, human workers can contribute their creativity and intuition, guiding AI with the correct ethical values—respecting individual privacy, intellectual property, and human authenticity in the final outcomes.

Despite human-AI symbiosis being primarily seen as a blessing today, I remain cautiously optimistic about its long-term implications, as there are concerns about the paradoxical tensions it may create. It is too early to label it as either a blessing or a curse definitively. Much like an iceberg, we only see the tip of what is possible and still do not fully understand its complexities or interrelationships. As such, we must remain vigilant—actively exploring the potential of human-AI collaboration to navigate the challenges of the modern world while also being mindful of the risks and unintended consequences that may arise.

In closing, I would like to congratulate all the paper presenters and the conference team for their tireless efforts in fostering research on how AI can be effectively integrated with human intelligence to create better business environments. I am confident that your outstanding accomplishments will leave a lasting impact, and you will carry fond memories of this enriching and successful event.

Prof. Thilini C. Gamage
Professor in Marketing
Department of Marketing Management
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP I

EXPLORING THE PUSH AND PULL FACTORS INFLUENCING INTRAPRENEURSHIP IN SRI LANKAN SMES: FACTORS, FRAMEWORK, AND IMPLICATIONS

Thanushan, T.

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Corporate entrepreneurs work towards solutions to social and environmental problems, while intrapreneurs are individuals within the company creating innovative start-up initiatives. Large companies tend to focus on corporate entrepreneurship, whereas small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often prioritize intrapreneurship. Previous studies have primarily focused on the factors influencing the development of corporate entrepreneurship in large-scale firms and SMEs and revealed that SMEEs in Sri Lanka struggle with incorporating intrapreneurship due to financial strain, risk aversion, change resistance culture, and structural issues. This research aims to investigate the push and pull factors influencing the implementation of intrapreneurship in SMEs in Sri Lanka. Specific objectives are to explore these factors and develop a framework for intrapreneurship that facilitates the development and use of intrapreneurship for firm growth. This qualitative study was conducted in Sri Lanka to examine the push and pull factors influencing intrapreneurship in SMEs From January to May 2024. Fifteen SME owners from different provinces across Sri Lanka were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the appropriateness of the participants to the research questions. This research examines the critical factors that foster intrapreneurship among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka. The study explored several push and pull factors, including internal consistency, innovative approaches, customization, resource constraints, emerging new markets, new funding support, competitive advantages, technological advances, and fostering learning environments. Through thematic analysis, the research developed themes and frameworks for intrapreneurship. Theoretically, this study identifies key push and pull factors such as internal consistency, innovative approaches, customization, resource constraints, emerging new markets, new funding support, competitive advantages, technological advances, and fostering a learning environment to promote intrapreneurship culture within SMEs.

Keywords: Intrapreneurship, Push and pull factors, Qualitative study, SME sector, Sri Lanka, Thematic analysis

ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF SMALL AND MEDIUM- SIZED TOURIST HOTELS IN SRI LANKA

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The tourism industry of Sri Lanka is inevitably dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises. Notwithstanding the poor development of economic health, accommodation and food service activities have historically shown a positive sectoral distribution. Moreover, small and medium-sized tourist hotels (SMTHs) are currently recognized as one of the fastest growing segments. Hence, an argument can be made that such hotels have a substantial impact on the sociocultural and socioeconomic development of Sri Lanka. As a distinct cultural typology, entrepreneurial culture has not been commonly exposed to academic research. Moreover, few scholars have previously investigated the correlation between entrepreneurial culture (EC) and business performance (BP) and the effect of EC on BP and yielded positive results. Thus, the purpose of this study is to uncover the impact of EC on the BP of the SMTHs in Sri Lanka and the relationship between the two variables. This study is a survey-based, cross-sectional quantitative study, and the SPSS Statistics 20.0 software package was relied upon for data analysis. Of the 159 classified tourist hotels listed with the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 68 and 59 one-and two-star hotels have been identified as the sampling frame and sample, respectively. Simple random sampling was employed for data collection. A positive and moderate correlation has been recorded, indicating a statistically significant linear relationship between EC and BP. Moreover, 33.3% of the variation in BP is explained by the movements in EC. Perusing the findings, a conducive entrepreneurial culture improves the business performance of SMTHs by anticipating new market trends and favorable opportunities.

Keywords: Business performance, Entrepreneurial culture, Small and medium-sized tourist hotels, Tourism

DOES THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM INFLUENCE THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SOFTWARE AND INFORMATION SERVICES FIRMS IN BANGLADESH? A MEDIATED MODERATION APPROACH

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The software and information technology (IT) sector of Bangladesh has been rapidly growing in recent years, and the government has declared it as a thrust subsector of its economy, targeting USD 5.00 billion in export earnings by 2025, where the entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) plays a pivotal role. However, there is a lack of explanatory studies on the relationship between the entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) and the internationalization of software and information technology/services firms in Bangladesh. Based on this fact, this paper investigates how the entrepreneurial ecosystem influences the internationalization of software and information services firms in Bangladesh with a mediated moderation approach. The study was explanatory, where the data was collected through a structured interview schedule. All the constructs were developed following well-established and standard literature, and a 5-point Likert scale was used. A total of 239 small and medium-sized software and information services firms were interviewed, adapting the convenience sampling technique. The structural equation modelling (SEM) technique based on the partial least square (PLS) method was used to capture the influence of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) on firms' internationalization (INT), incorporating the mediating variables like environmental munificence (EM) and dynamic capabilities (DC) and the moderating variables like trade policy (TP) and resource orchestration (RO) using the SMART PLS 4.1.0.0 software. After checking and satisfying all sorts of validity and reliability criteria of the measurement model, the structural model of the study revealed that the entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) has a statistically significant positive direct effect on firms' internationalization (EE->INT). Besides, it was also found that there are statistically significant positive indirect effects of entrepreneurial ecosystem on internationalization via environmental munificence (EM) and dynamic capabilities (DC) (EE->EM->DC->INT; EE->EM->INT; and EE->DC->INT), meaning that environmental munificence and dynamic capabilities play a partial mediating role between entrepreneurial ecosystem and internationalization. However, the moderating role of the trade policy (TP) between the entrepreneurial ecosystem and internationalization (TPxEE->INT)

and resource orchestration (RO) between dynamic capabilities (DC) and internationalization (ROxDC->INT) was found to be insignificant. Therefore, the study concludes that the entrepreneurial ecosystem influences the firms' internationalization directly and indirectly through mediators like environmental munificence and dynamic capabilities without any moderation effects. Thus, the findings provide valuable insights specific to the internationalization of Bangladesh's software and information services firms and contribute to a broader understanding of how the entrepreneurial ecosystem influences the internationalization of firms in other industries nationally and globally. In addition, this study fulfils the need for an explanatory study on the entrepreneurial ecosystem and internationalization of small and medium firms.

Keywords: Dynamic capabilities, Entrepreneurial ecosystem, Internationalization, Software and information services firms, Trade policy

ENTREPRENEURSHIP II

THE MECHANICS OF FEAR OF FAILURE IN ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTION: A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS'CHOICE OF VENTURING AS AN INITIAL CAREER IN BANGLADESH

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Fear of failure is viewed as a barrier to entrepreneurship globally as it impacts career decisions. It originates from performance apprehension, with individuals more concerned about the consequences of failure than failure itself. University students are an essential group of prospective entrepreneurs who demonstrate the efficacy of choosing entrepreneurship over conventional career prospects. This study aims to explore the sources of fear among university students towards entrepreneurship as an initial career choice and investigate how entrepreneurial capital mediates the fear of failure. The research is quantitative, following a deductive approach using primary data for the analysis. The research was conducted on 711 graduate and undergraduate students of different fields from 20 universities in Bangladesh using multi-stage sampling. A structured questionnaire was developed using a 5-point Likert scale to gather the data and to assess and analyse the responses. A confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling using the statistical tool AMOS 23 version were performed for the research, thus ensuring the reliability and validity of the research. The findings show entrepreneurial capital reduces fear. Among the three sources of fear, societal pressure is not considered a source of fear for entrepreneurship after intervening with entrepreneurial capital. The mitigation of financial uncertainty and low self-competency by entrepreneurial capital was observed, but social pressure showed no effect, indicating it does not influence the choice of entrepreneurship as a career. This research would aid students in developing countries to view entrepreneurship as a career. The faculty, government, and policymakers should develop policies and resources to enhance students' entrepreneurial mindsets.

Keywords: Career choice, Entrepreneurial capital, Entrepreneurship, Fear of failure, University students

SUSTAINABILITY-DRIVEN ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AMONG FINAL-YEAR ENTREPRENEURSHIP UNDERGRADUATES IN SRI LANKA

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The role of entrepreneurship has expanded to encompass issues beyond mere economic growth, prompting an increased focus on the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions across various types of entrepreneurships, particularly sustainable entrepreneurship. Despite growing interest, there is limited evidence regarding sustainability-driven entrepreneurial intentions, particularly within the Sri Lankan context. The current study aims to address this gap by investigating how attitudes towards sustainable entrepreneurship, subjective norms, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy affect the formation of students' intentions to engage in sustainability-driven entrepreneurship. The study used a quantitative research design, and data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed to 140 final-year undergraduates enrolled in entrepreneurship degree programs at five state universities in Sri Lanka, utilizing a convenience sampling technique. Correlation analysis, descriptive statistics, and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings reveal that attitudes towards sustainable entrepreneurship, subjective norms, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively influence the formation of sustainability-driven entrepreneurial intentions, with students showing a clear preference for ventures that prioritize environmental and social impact. This highlights that students' entrepreneurial intentions are decisively sustainability-driven, suggesting that their future ventures will likely integrate sustainable practices and contribute to broader environmental and social goals. This study enriches the literature on sustainable entrepreneurship, enhancing the understanding of university students' intentions toward sustainable ventures. The outcomes of this research provide valuable insights for university mentors and environmental academicians to guide students in launching sustainable ventures.

Keywords: Attitude towards sustainable entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, Subjective norms, Sustainability driven entrepreneurial intention

CATALYSTS FOR GROWTH: THE ROLE OF MICROFINANCE SERVICES IN EMPOWERING SMES IN WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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This study investigates the impact of microfinance services on the development of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Recognized as a crucial sector for economic growth, regional development, employment generation, and poverty reduction, SMEs in Sri Lanka benefit significantly from the tailored financial and non-financial services provided by Microfinance Institutions (MFIs). Despite the recognized importance of SMEs, many in Sri Lanka face significant challenges in accessing traditional financial services, hindering their growth potential. This study addresses the gap in understanding how microfinance services specifically impact SME development in the Western Province, a key economic region. By examining this relationship, the research aims to provide insights for enhancing microfinance programs and policies to better support SME growth and economic development in the area. This study aims to explore the specific contributions of microfinance services, including microcredit, micro-savings, and training programs, to the growth and sustainability of SMEs in the region. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a random sample of 162 SME owners in the Western Province. The analysis employed descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analyses to examine the relationships between microfinance services and SME development. The findings reveal a positive and significant relationship between microfinance services and the growth of SMEs. Microcredit and micro-savings were found to have a substantial impact on SME development, while training programs, although beneficial, did not show a statistically significant effect. The study also revealed that the entrepreneur's experience level partially mediates the relationship between microfinance services and SME development. Furthermore, demographic factors such as gender, age, and education level of the entrepreneurs were found to moderate the effectiveness of microfinance services on SME growth. These findings have important implications for policymakers and MFIs to enhance the effectiveness of microfinance programs, suggesting the need for improved infrastructure, favourable tax policies, and more accessible training programs to empower SMEs and promote long-term economic sustainability in the region.

Keywords: Economic growth, Microfinance, Micro-credit, SME development, Sri Lanka

THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SMALL-SCALE ENTREPRENEURS IN TOURISM: A CASE STUDY IN ELLA, SRI LANKA

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Small-scale entrepreneurs (SSE) in tourism represent around 80 percent worldwide and face several challenges, including lack of learning and knowledge, low quality of human resources, inadequate infrastructure, variable numbers of customers, and financial challenges. The tourism industry in Sri Lanka, including Ella, experienced a significant setback between 1983 and 2023 due to the civil war, pandemic, and economic crisis, which led to a decrease in the number of tourists, and caused severe disruptions in the daily income of SSE. The main objective of this study was to identify the key challenges faced by SSE. Primary data were gathered from 25 purposively selected small-scale entrepreneurs through interview guides. Results show that 92% of the respondents identified a lack of financial resources as a significant hurdle. Apart from that, the most prominent challenge mentioned is high competition, reflecting the intense challenge among businesses for tourists' attention and support. Seasonal fluctuations in tourism demand, cited by 50% of the respondents, are a recognized challenge. Limited access to infrastructure resources also underscores the importance of improving the transportation and utilities to enhance the overall tourist experience in Ella and to meet the needs of the tourism industry. Fraudulent bookings and delaying essential permits were a major challenge for more than 80%. Government regulations or policies, although more frequently mentioned, are still seen as potential matters. Supportive policies and incentives are essential to address the above-mentioned challenges ensuring. Moreover, ensuring the sustainability of the tourism industry in Ella.

Keywords: Challenges, Ella, Small-scale entrepreneurs, Tourism

FINANCE I

DOES FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT ENHANCE THE IMPACT OF REMITTANCES ON ECONOMIC GROWTH? EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM SRI LANKA

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An efficient financial development facilitates better credit access for businesses and individuals as well as effectively channeled into productive investments of remittances which in turn promote the economic expansion of the nation. Sri Lanka depends on remittances, for its economic growth since it is independent like many developing countries. Despite a substantial body of empirical literature on the subject, there remains a need for a more profound understanding of how remittance inflows affect Sri Lanka's economic growth by financial development. Investigating the relationship between financial development, remittances, and economic growth in Sri Lanka, this study utilizes annual data from 1980 to 2022 by considering economic growth as the dependent variable and financial development, remittances, gross capital formation and trade openness as independent variables. The EViews ARDL findings suggest that financial development has a strong negative impact on economic development in the long term, while remittance has a significant positive relationship with economic growth. This empirical evidence highlights the composite relationship between financial development, remittances and economic growth. While financial development is usually regarded as a catalyst for economic growth, this study shows a notable significant impact, potentially due to inefficiencies and financial instability within the financial sector. Conversely, remittances reliably boost economic growth by offering salient financial aid to households and small enterprises. The findings of this study elaborate that inefficiency and instability can lead to a negative correlation between financial development and economic growth. This study emphasizes the importance of customized policy interventions in leveraging the benefits of remittances and addressing the drawbacks of a flawed financial sector. Further, these findings indicate the necessity for nuances policy measures that tackle financial sector inefficiencies and optimize the positive impact of remittances on development.

Keywords: ARDL approach, Error correction term, Financial development, Economic growth, Remittances

SUSTAINABLE INTENTION OF FINTECH SERVICES FOR BANKING SERVICES: AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION USING EXTENDED TECHNOLOGY CONTINUOUS THEORY

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The integration of new technologies has been driven by the global financial crisis of 2008. A recent innovation in the financial sector is Fintech. Fintech is a movement that has changed the way the financial sector functions. Less research has examined what influences people's sustainable intention of Fintech services. The aim of this study is to conduct an empirical examination of customers' sustainable intention to use Fintech services for banking services. To examine, this research presents a model that incorporates the technology continuous theory (TCT), which integrates Confirmation (CON), Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Perceived Usefulness (PU), and two contextual variables—Trust (T) and User Experience (UEX). The research participants were selected using a non-probability sampling technique. Based on the 404 Fintech users of the bank, the research was empirically tested. Version 4.0 of Smart PLS and Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used. The results show that Satisfaction (SA) is highly influenced by UEX, PEU, and CON. On the other hand, PU does not significantly influence satisfaction because the majority of research participants were younger users, who are often thought of as IT-savvy and to the present online systems' user-friendly interface design and proximity to the websites of the banks that they have visited. Due to their greater importance, IPMA, CON, PEU, PU, and SA require special management attention to enhance the banking industry's sustainable use of Fintech. This study offers a body of knowledge on the sustainable use of Fintech services by offering a more thorough analysis of the factors impacting customers' opinions. This study contributes to the body of literature on the sustainable aim of Fintech services by merging TCT with users' trust in those services. Overall literature and empirical findings confirmed that this study provides valuable insights into the sustainable intentions behind FinTech services within the banking sector in Bangladesh by leveraging an extended TCT framework. This research underscores the importance of integrating sustainability considerations into FinTech strategies to foster long-term adoption and success.

Keywords: Banking services, FinTech, Performance, Technology continuance theory, Sustainable intention

DETERMINANTS OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE QUALITY IN THE BANKING INDUSTRY: EVIDENCE FROM BANGLADESH

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Corporate governance has been a major focus of interest for scholars, policy officials, and politicians due to occurrences of financial scandals and crises in many areas of the business world. Consequently, BSEC has issued the Corporate Governance Code 2018 to ensure the quality of corporate governance (CGQ) in Bangladesh. The study aims to identify the factors that determine the corporate governance quality of the banking industry in Bangladesh. The qualitative perception of CGQ was measured using 20 dichotomous items aligned with the BSEC code. A convenient sample of 33 scheduled commercial banks' annual reports provided 2018–2022 panel data. Outliers were removed using case-wise diagnostic, boxplot, and Cook's distance test. Durbin-Watson test analyzed serial autocorrelation, while the Pearson correlation matrix and variance inflation factor examined multicollinearity. Fixed Effect Regression Model was used for the best estimation. The results demonstrate that the average CGQ score of banks was 72.82 while the model's coefficient of determination was 60.1%. Company size, board independence, and audit committee size positively affected CGQ, while leverage, age, and ownership type affected CGQ negatively and statistically. Nevertheless, banks' profitability and board size did not relate to CGQ. The trend analysis showed a sudden decline in CGQ score in 2020, suggesting further study to examine the impact of COVID-19 on CGQ. The study helps in identifying CGQ value, which will help the banking industry evaluate the board formation and capital structure decisions more adequately and prudently than earlier. The study provides valuable insights into CGQ in the banking sector of Bangladesh, which is helpful for policymakers.

Keywords: Bangladesh, board characteristics; Commercial banks, Corporate governance code, Corporate governance quality

IMPACT OF DIGITAL ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS' QUALITY ON THE DECISION-MAKING QUALITY OF THE BANKING INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA

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The digital accounting system (DAS) has evolved as a result of digital technology advancements and uses by corporate management to make economic decisions. Recently, the DASs' development has raised their impact on the decision-making quality (DMQ), and it can be identified that there is a need to evaluate the effect of the digital accounting system quality (DASQ) on the DMQ of the banking industry in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, initially, assessed the level of the DASQ in the Sri Lankan banking industry; secondly, investigated the difference between the DASQ in private and public banks in Sri Lanka; and thirdly, evaluated the impact of DASQ on DMQ of the Sri Lankan banking industry. The primary data were collected by a self-administered questionnaire given to 155 executive-level employees, including 78 public and 77 private banks employees with knowledge and experience in DASQ, followed a quantitative approach and employed one-sample t-test, independent-sample t-test, correlation and multiple regression analysis. One-sample t-tests show that the DASQ is perceived to be at a satisfactory level on an overall basis in terms of data quality, information quality and system quality. Further, it revealed a significant difference between DASQ in private and public banks. Finally, the results suggested that DASQ significantly impacts the DMQ. Accordingly, banks may strengthen DMQ by maintaining high-quality DASs. Thus, it recommends bankers to enhance DASQ with advanced digital technologies. Further, policymakers may introduce national policies to adopt DASs, whereas regulators may revise banking regulations to improve DASQ and to ensure the DASs' security.

Keywords: Accounting systems' quality, Data quality, Decision-making quality, Digital, Information quality, System quality

FINANCE II

NAVIGATING ECONOMIC CRISIS: THE CHANGES IN VALUATION PRACTICES AMIDST THE POST-COVID ECONOMIC CRISIS OF SRI LANKA

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From 2022 onwards, Sri Lanka underwent the worst economic crisis in its history, the origins of which can be traced back several years. The country's economy has been affected negatively due to the COVID-19 pandemic, improper tax and agricultural policies, and political instability, leading to currency devaluation, escalating inflation, and inadequate foreign exchange reserves. The atypical behaviour of economic attributes led all the economic sectors into trouble. The increased uncertainty in the market severely affected property valuation, which is an essential profession within the real estate sector of Sri Lanka. The objective of this study is to investigate how professional valuers adjusted their professional behaviour to incorporate the impact of the crisis into the process of property valuation. In this investigation, data was gathered via semi-structured interviews with a purposefully selected group of 12 valuers and analyzed using thematic analysis methods, employing the 'Prospect Theory' as a theoretical lens. Results revealed substantial controversy among valuers regarding the professional practices they adopted, particularly concerning the reference time periods used for obtaining market data and the extent to which uncertainty was disclosed in reporting, leading to inconsistencies within the profession. Therefore, it is recommended to establish a framework to guide valuers in valuing properties in circumstances with a higher level of uncertainty. Although the study focused on all types of valuation in general, future studies could delve into specific categories of property valuations, as well as concentrate on global economic crises.

Keywords: Economic crisis, Property valuation, Thematic analysis, Uncertainty

THE IMPACT OF FOREIGN INVESTOR TRADING ACTIVITY ON THE COLOMBO STOCK MARKET

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The main objective of this paper is to investigate the Impact of Foreign Investor Trading Activity on the Colombo Stock Market by utilizing the monthly time series data for the share price index (ASPI) and data for the foreign trading activity of the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) over thirty years from January 01 1993 to September 31, 2023. In Sri Lanka, after experiencing three decades of war, the Sri Lankan stock market showed significant growth in 2011, achieving a 7.2 percent growth rate attributed to a stable business environment, increased investor confidence, and favorable macroeconomic conditions. However, this growth was disrupted by a series of unexpected shocks, including the Easter Attack, the COVID-19 Pandemic, subsequent lockdowns, and political and economic crises. Given this context, it is crucial to investigate the impact of foreign trading activity on the overall performance of the Sri Lankan stock market. Understanding the role of foreign investors in this volatile environment can provide insights into the mechanisms that drive market stability and growth and inform strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of future shocks. The ARCH model was used to run the regression. The descriptive statistics reveal that the Sri Lankan stock market is not interested in foreign investors diversifying their portfolio choices. Market volatility induces foreign investors to sell more than purchase the shares in the share market, suggesting positive trading feedback from foreign investors. Secondly, the ARCH model Results show that All share price indices (ASPI) and foreign net purchases are influenced by the magnitude of past errors in predicting returns of foreign trading activity. The findings of this study provide relevant insight into the market participants and government regulators.

Keywords: All Share Price Index (ASPI), Foreign net purchases, Volatility

DETERMINANTS OF YOUTH LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: EVIDENCE FROM BUTTALA DS DIVISION IN SRI LANKA

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United Nations defines "Youth" as a period of transition from childhood dependence to adulthood's independence and awareness of interdependence as members of a community. Youth participation in agriculture is very important to make a sustainable contribution to national development as well as the living standard of the rural community. This study aims to examine factors affecting the youth labor force participation in the agricultural sector in the Buttala DS division, Sri Lanka. A field survey was conducted from February to March 2023 to collect the relevant data from 150 youth farmers selected randomly who belong to the age group between 15 – 29 in the study area. Descriptive statistics and frequency analysis were applied in the study to explore the socio – economic and farming characteristics of the youth labor participation in agriculture sector. Among the total respondents, the involvement of males and females in the agriculture sector is 64.7% and 35.3% respectively. Tobit regression model and its marginal effects were used to identify the factors influencing youth involvement in the agriculture sector, and its results revealed that education level, access to off-farm income, access to credit, a distance of the nearest market, land ownership and land size have significantly influenced the youth labor participation in the agriculture sector in the study. Among these factors, access of off-farm income, land ownership and size of land were significant influenced the youth involvement at 1% level while the level of education, access to credit, and distance to the nearest market influenced the youth involvement at 5% significant level. As revealed by the findings, several recommendations have been made to attract youth to farming, such as providing the chances to earn off – farm income, improving the credit access facilities, and ensuring their land ownership. Thus, these types of strategies motivate the young generation to participate in the agriculture sector in the future actively.

Keywords: Agricultural sector, Socio economic and farming characteristics, Tobit regression model, Youth labour force participation

GENERAL MANAGEMENT I

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THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON INTERNAL BRAND EQUITY IN INSURANCE INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA

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Employees are the most valuable asset in the insurance sector, and employee satisfaction is a crucial driver to achieving the performance of an organization. High employee engagement leads to increased job satisfaction, performance, and employee retention and reflects positive overall employee engagement. Scholarly findings have been made in other industries in other countries but are limited to the insurance industry of Sri Lanka. The main empirical gap leads to the study of the impact of employee engagement and internal brand equity. The study focuses on understanding how internal branding is important to the service sector as it directly affects competitiveness. The researcher has taken four employee engagement independent variables of internal communication, training, brand knowledge and leadership and internal brand equity as dependent variables. The 385 samples were selected through the Morgan table out of a total employee of 11,677 in the insurance industry. The reliability and validity tests proved the balance of responses, and Descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and normality tests were performed to analyze the data through SPSS software. A structured questionnaire was used to get responses from employees. Findings reveal that internal communication, brand knowledge, training and leadership have a significant impact on internal brand equity in the Sri Lankan insurance industry. Out of four variables, leadership plays a pivotal role in impacting the internal brand equity of insurance firms in Sri Lanka. The findings proved that employee engagement is key for the improvement of brand equity of insurance firms where guidance is given for management to critically focus on the above aspect. The enhancements of communication strategies, training methods, and good leadership skills can lead to positive organizational performance.

Keywords: Brand knowledge, Employee engagement, Internal brand equity, Internal communication, Leadership

TO BE SILENT OR SPEAK UP?
IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING ON EMPLOYEE SILENCE: MEDIATING ROLE OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM AND MODERATING ROLE OF POSITIVE FRAMING

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Being silent in the workplace is detrimental to academic furtherance. However, keeping quiet may be caused by various factors in organizations. Still, there is a perplexity of the reasons for employee silence behaviors. No evidence found that studies have incorporated positive framing into workplace bullying. Therefore, this study investigated the impact of workplace bullying on employee silence while considering the mediating role of workplace ostracism. The study also tests the moderating role of positive framing in these impacts among employees from higher education institutions by emphasizing social identity theory. The study collected data through structured questionnaires from conveniently chosen 391 participants from higher education sectors in Sri Lanka. The study adopted a structured equation modeling technique for data analysis with Smart PLS 4.0. Results revealed that workplace bullying positively impacts employee silence, and workplace ostracism mediates the bullying and silence impact. The positive effect of workplace bullying on employee silence through positive framing is lessened for employees who remain silent. As a result, developing social ties with everyone without bullying in institutions is a top strategic goal for workers in the higher education sector. The results indicated that if bullied employees adopt silent behavior, ostracism aids them in keeping silent compared to those who raise their voices. The current study advances research on workplace bullying by empirically examining the effects of workplace bullying, workplace ostracism, and employee silence, in addition to expanding the nascent knowledge on these topics in higher education. Workplace bullying and employee silence are best understood by employing ostracism as a mediator. Scholars can better comprehend individual viewpoints on workplace bullying and employee silence by incorporating positive framing as a moderator. The findings highlight the importance of positive framing in the workplace in reducing the damaging outcomes of bullying in organizational settings.

Keywords: Employee silence and Positive framing, Workplace bullying, Workplace ostracism

TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY AND ITS DETERMINANTS AMONG VEGETABLE FARMERS IN JAFFNA DISTRICT: AN APPLICATION OF DATA ENVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

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Among the vegetables, brinjal and tomato are the most important staple food for the people , and the majority of the farmers depend on its cultivation for their livelihood. Thus, increasing the production of these two vegetables through improving technical efficiency is an important goal of the agricultural sector. In this background, this study aims to estimate the technical efficiency in vegetable production and its determinants among the sample of vegetable farmers in Jaffna district. For this, the farmers cultivating brinjal and tomato were selected from two divisional secretaries, namely, Valikamam North and Valikamam South in the district. From each vegetable, forty farmers were selected randomly, and the data related to the amount of production and its inputs, such as size of land, costs of seed, fertilizer cost and costs of labor were collected through the questionnaire during the season 2022-2023. The non-parametric approach based on input-oriented data envelopment analysis was used to estimate the technical efficiency, while the Tobit regression model was used to analyze the determinants of technical efficiency in vegetable farming in the study. The estimated results of technical efficiency for brinjal and tomato were 37.6% and 48.2%, respectively, which revealed that average technical efficiency estimates were not at the potential level, and there is ample room for increased productivity through improving technical efficiency for both vegetables by 62.4% and 51.8% in the study. Results of the Tobit regression model revealed that family size, farming experience, type of land, whether tenant land or own and the availability of off–farm income significantly increased the technical efficiency of both brinjal and tomato production. To increase the brinjal and tomato yields, farmers should be encouraged to engage in off–farm income generating activities, which motivates them to increase their production effectively in the future.

Keywords: Input-oriented, Off–farm income, Potential level, Tobit regression model, Tomato yields

GENERAL MANAGEMENT II

ASSESSING WHETHER NET EARNINGS OF SRI LANKAN PADDY FARMERS SUFFICIENT FOR THEIR HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE

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The major debate in paddy cultivation is whether the net earnings from paddy cultivation were inadequate to sustain household expenditure throughout the season. The net earning of a farmer varies based on production costs, paddy prices, and the increase in the price of consumer goods. Therefore, the study aims to assess whether the farmers' net earnings are adequate to sustain their household expenditure. The average production, unit cost, price of produce, guaranteed price, and average monthly household expenditure were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and linear regression models. Five major paddy-producing districts were selected and considered for the project for 2024 and 2025 based on the situation from 2019 to 2023. The study revealed that the price of produce and the guaranteed price during the study period were higher than the cost of production, confirming that cultivation was profitable. In addition, the study showed that if a farmer has 3 ac paddy land and sells his paddy at Rs. 120 in 2024 and Rs. 130 in 2025, the net earnings in the Maha seasons will be adequate for around two months and in the Yala season for around one to one and a half months household expenditure which confirmed that net earning was not adequated. Since the cost of production varies mainly with land holding and either rainfed or irrigated, further study is needed to generalize the results. This study analyzed the average condition of the five major paddy-producing districts that have not yet been studied. Therefore, policymakers need to consider how to enhance the livelihood of paddy farmers.

Keywords: Guaranteed price, Net earnings, Price of produce, Paddy price, Sri Lankan paddy farmers

CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION THAT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS INCAPABLE OF EASILY REPLICATING; FROM ACADEMICS' PERSPECTIVE

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The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT has caused blunt creativity and innovativeness among undergraduate students. Although the early 1990s are evident as the dawn of AI exploration in Sri Lanka, with the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022, even school children began to benefit from AI. Due to the ability of ChatGPT to comprehend and generate human-like texts, undergraduate students are still assisted by AI in their assignments. The problem persists since not all higher education institutes can access AI detectors. In light of this, giving students unique and creative assessments that are difficult for artificial intelligence to replicate is one-way educators may foster student creativity while preventing them from using AI technologies to complete the assessments. The primary goal of this study is to investigate AI limitations and consider AI limitations, suggesting creative and innovative assessment strategies in higher education that artificial intelligence is incapable of easily reproducing. The current study used a qualitative study design that followed the interpretivism philosophy and inductive approach. Eight structured interviews were conducted physically with academics representing higher education and reached saturation. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Socratic Seminars, Oral Exams, Reflective Essays, Fieldwork, Polls and Quizzes, and Live Discussions were the outcomes of the research. The study highlights the importance of designing assessments go beyond conventional structures to enhance the undergraduate's creativity.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Creative & Innovative assessment strategies, Higher education

EFFECT OF EXTRINSIC AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION ON EMPLOYEES' WORK ENGAGEMENT (SPECIAL REFERENCE WITH THE LUXORA TILES PLC)

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Researchers and practitioners have recently focused more on employee work engagement in this fast-paced business environment. According to empirical research studies, positive work outcomes directly result from high levels of work engagement. Through a pilot study and in-person interviews with the employees of Luxora Tiles PLC, research has identified a problem with employee work engagement. Researchers have identified many factors, such as leadership, working culture, and workers' resilience, that affects an employee's level of work engagement in a business based on global research projects. Employee motivation, one of the key predictors of employee work engagement, can be divided into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic. The study examined the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on employees' work engagement at Luxora Tiles PLC, which was supported by the Social Exchange Theory (SET). Using a simple random sample, data was gathered from 270 employees by using a questionnaire at Luxora Tiles PLC. Using SPSS, the quantitative analytical technique was used in this investigation. The study applied regression analysis to assess its hypotheses. The study's regression analysis revealed that employees' work engagement is significantly affected by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with intrinsic motivation having a greater impact than extrinsic drive. The findings from the research can be used to raise Luxora Tiles PLC employees' levels of work engagement. In addition, the study contributes to the body of knowledge with SET theory by expanding the theoretical understanding of the effect of two types of motivation such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, on employees' work engagement.

Keywords: Extrinsic motivation, Intrinsic motivation, Work engagement

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

IMPACT OF AUDIT TRAINEES' INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP LEVEL STRESSORS ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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Stress is a major phenomenon that exists in the organization. If stress is not managed, there will be different consequences, such as a decrease in organisational commitment, job satisfaction, job performance, employee motivation and avoidance behaviour. The main purpose of this study is to see the impact of individual and group-level stressors on the organizational commitment of audit trainees. In addition to that, it examined the current level of stress and organizational commitment of audit trainees and their prominent consequences of stress. The quantitative approach under the positivistic research paradigm was used to develop the study. The population of the study was audit trainees in the Colombo district, and data for the study was based on 110 samples of audit trainees in Colombo district. The simple random sampling technique was used for sampling. In the descriptive data analysis, it found a 3.3136 value mean for organizational commitment and a 2.7632 value mean for the current stress level and under inferential data analysis, hypothesis testing was done using multiple regression analysis. Work overload, lack of group cohesiveness, and lack of social support can be considered the key stressors that created a significant impact on organizational commitment, as their p-value is greater than 0.05 at the significant level. Respondents faced negative consequences such as sleeplessness, dissatisfaction, depression, forgetfulness, and blood pressure. Based on the findings, it concluded that audit trainees in the Colombo district are able to manage their stress in their job roles and are more committed to their work. Accordingly, it indicates that there is a negative relationship between stressors and organizational commitment.

Keywords: Audit trainees, Group level stress, Individual level stress, Organizational commitment

THE ANTECEDENTS OF ABUSIVE SUPERVISION: EVIDENCE FROM GARMENT FACTORIES IN SRI LANKA

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Within organizations, leaders often exercise significant power and influence over many aspects of their employees' work lives. While many leaders successfully provide substantial support to their employees, others fail to meet this standard for various reasons. The corrupt nature of power can lead some leaders to exploit and mistreat their followers, with increasing evidence of destructive leadership. Despite numerous studies on the negative consequences of leadership, the reasons behind abusive supervision remain poorly understood. This raises the question: why do supervisors abuse their subordinates? The nature of garment factories and hierarchical structures enable supervisors to exert dominance over vulnerable workers, often women or marginalized groups, who fear job loss and have limited employment alternatives. Hence, this study aimed to examine the antecedents of abusive supervision. Supervisor-related antecedents, including downward envy and psychological entitlement, and subordinate-related antecedents, such as organizational deviance and employee performance, were considered independent variables, with abusive supervision as the dependent variable. Additionally, the study examined the moderating effect of the supervisor's self-control on the relationship between supervisor-related antecedents and abusive supervision. The research primarily targeted employees working in garment factories across Sri Lanka, focusing on a population of 40,000 workers. The garments industry plays a significant role in the country's economy and employs a substantial portion of the workforce. Using convenience sampling, the study selected 224 respondents from this population. Primary data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed between December 2023 and March 2024. By incorporating the dyad method, this research delved into the interpersonal aspects of abusive supervision, focusing on the dynamics between supervisors and their subordinates. The findings of the study reveal a significant, weak positive relationship between variables such as downward envy, psychological entitlement, organizational deviance, employee performance, and abusive supervision. Regression analysis indicates that downward envy, psychological entitlement, and organizational deviance significantly affect abusive supervision. Additionally, employee performance positively affects abusive supervision. Moreover, the results show that the supervisor's self-control does not

significantly moderate the relationship between supervisor-related antecedents and abusive supervision. Furthermore, the investigation into the moderating role of supervisor self-control adds a unique understanding of how individual differences among supervisors can influence the expression of the corrupt nature of power. Organizations should consider implementing training programs for supervisors that focus on emotional intelligence and self-regulation to mitigate the effects of downward jealousy and psychological entitlement associated with abusive supervision.

Keywords: Abusive supervision, Downward envy, Employee performance, Organizational deviance, Psychological entitlement, Supervisor's self-control

IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES ON THE MINDSET OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS DURING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRISIS: EVIDENCE FROM SRI LANKA

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The socioeconomic crisis in Sri Lanka has intensified challenges within organizations, placing unprecedented stress on individuals and influencing their mindsets. In such a crisis environment, employees' attitudes toward work, ability to adapt to change, and overall engagement are being researched. The problem that needs investigation is how the socioeconomic crisis impacts individuals' mindsets, particularly in an organizational context, and how this subsequently affects their professional behavior, adaptability, and success. Are growth mindsets more resilient to external pressures and more likely to result in better job performance, engagement, and well-being? Do fixed mindsets become more entrenched under crisis conditions, leading to stagnation or disengagement? This study, therefore, examines the relationship between psychosocial factors such as perceived risk, workload management, psychological support, physical safety, and the mindset of healthcare professionals. The healthcare sector in Sri Lanka has been severely impacted by the ongoing socio-economic crisis, which has placed an immense burden on healthcare professionals. This crisis has not only intensified stress and burnout but has also heightened disparities in how individuals cope with challenges, revealing the crucial role that mindset plays in professional resilience and adaptability. This study employs a quantitative deductive method to focus on healthcare professionals in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's health sector employs over 155,000 workers, with women making up a significant majority of the workforce, accounting for 64%, compared to 36% of men. The sector is predominantly composed of individuals in the 25–34-year age group. The sample includes doctors, nurses, medical assistants, and support staff, with a final sample size of 110. Data were collected using systematic random sampling techniques. Responses were 41% medical assistants, 35% nurses, and 24% doctors. This geographical diversity ensures that the study captures a wide range of experiences and challenges faced by healthcare professionals across different environments in Sri Lanka. Correlation and regression analysis of the data revealed that workload management and psychological support significantly impact mindset. In contrast, psychological factors such as perceived risk and protection of physical safety showed an insignificant relationship with the mindset of healthcare professionals during a socio-economic crisis. The study

also further revealed differences between fixed and growth mindsets among the participants, highlighting how these mindsets affect their responses to challenges and support structures. The findings of this study suggest that these have practical implications for managing health professionals, particularly in times of socio-economic crisis. Since workload management and psychological support are important factors affecting mindset, healthcare organizations should prioritize these areas to foster a positive work environment. Implementing effective workload management strategies and providing strong psychological support can help foster a growth mindset among employees, leading to greater resilience and engagement. Additionally, understanding perceived risk and the limited impact of physical security protection can help managers focus resources more effectively. Adapting interventions to address the specific needs of those with fixed and growth mindsets may further improve health professionals' overall well-being and performance.

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES: HOW RESILIENT LEADERSHIP FOSTERS EMPOWERMENT IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

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This study investigates the impact of resilient leadership (RL) on employee empowerment (EE) in the private sector higher education (HE) context in Sri Lanka (SL). Despite its recognized importance, there is a notable research gap regarding the effects of RL on EE within Sri Lanka's higher education sector (HES). This gap is critical given the sector's increasing demands for quality education, competitive pressures, and the need for adaptive leadership. The study aims to bridge this gap by examining how contingency planning, improvisation, adaptive instructing, contingency control, emergency care, adjustment recovery, and mutual growth influence EE. This research employed purposive sampling to gather data from 136 non-academic employees holding positions above the executive level within private higher education institutions (HEI) in the Western Province (WP) of SL. Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire, and statistical analyses, including correlation and regression, were conducted to assess the relationship and impact of RL on EE. The results indicate a statistically significant relationship between RL practices and EE, highlighting the critical role of RL in fostering a conducive work environment. The findings suggest that RL positively impacts EE within private HEIs in the WP of SL. The results contribute to the limited body of knowledge on leadership resilience in HE and provide practical insights for educational leaders aiming to enhance EE. By fostering RL practices, institutions can support their employees, leading to a more motivated and effective workforce. This research offers valuable insights for driving positive organizational outcomes such as enhanced job satisfaction, increased productivity, and improved institutional effectiveness, which fosters a supportive work environment in the evolving private HES in SL.

Keywords: Employee empowerment, Higher education, Leadership, Non-academic, Resilient leadership

MARKETING MANAGEMENT I

TRANSITION OF SRI LANKAN WEDDINGS: MODERNIZATION OF SRI LANKAN WEDDINGS AS A MARKET EVENT IN LINE WITH THE FALLACIOUS OF POSTMODERNISM

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The postmodern movement has had a significant impact on cultural practices and traditions around the world, including Sri Lankan weddings. Postmodernism emphasizes the importance of plurality, hybridity, imitation, achieving utopia, subjectivity, and self-reflexivity and challenges traditional notions of identity, power, and representation. Even though there were no big wedding ceremonies in the ancient period, the Sri Lankan wedding industry currently consists of bridal designers, beauticians, jewellery designers, photographers, cake designers, catering services and flower decorations. Moreover, there are unpopular organizational actors such as travel agents, luxury hotels, dancing choreographers, banks and money providers as well as wedding planners. Such a wide market concerning weddings appeared in the Sri Lankan context until the 19th century. In Sri Lanka, this has led to a complex and often contradictory transition of wedding customs and practices as individuals and communities negotiate the tension between preserving cultural heritage and embracing new and diverse influences. Thus, this study attempts to examine how wedding ceremonies have evolved as a market event aligned with the fallacies of postmodernism in contemporary Sri Lankan society. To explore the aforementioned purpose, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation techniques under the anti-positivistic research paradigm. Under the purposive sampling, two sets of samples were used. Namely, Sinhala Buddhist married couples who belong to three historical periods namely, early modernity, late modernity and postmodernity are used as the data sources for data generation. Further, data were generated from organizational actors who perform in the wedding industry. By adopting a postmodernism theory, this study fills the gap in the existing knowledge. The findings indicated that the socio-cultural event—wedding—has entered to a wider market today, especially with the influence of postmodern conditions. Customary practices associated with weddings have been intermingled with other cultures, and plurality and contextually are acknowledged. This evolution of the Sri Lankan wedding trend toward consumerism and individualism undermines the communal and social aspects of the wedding ceremony, which have traditionally been central to Sri Lankan weddings. In conclusion, the evolution of Sri Lankan weddings in the

context of postmodernism reflects a complex and often contradictory negotiation between tradition and innovation, identity and plurality, and globalization and cultural heritage. As such, it remains a site of ongoing debate and contestation within Sri Lankan society. This study paves the way for people to see how such a social event has become a market event and a lucrative platform to earn profit with the social transition.

FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER USAGE OF ELECTRONIC BANKING SERVICES IN RATNAPURA DISTRICT

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As digital banking continues to reshape the financial landscape, understanding the factors influencing customer usage of Electronic Banking (e-banking) becomes paramount. This study, conducted in the Ratnapura district, meticulously examines the intricate dynamics shaping customer usage of e-banking. A comprehensive investigation spanning individual, innovative, organizational, and environmental levels identify critical variables such as Knowledge, Attitude, Language, Relative Advantage, Risk, Fast processing, Integration, Technical Services, ICT Infrastructure, Legal Framework, and Government Support. A descriptive survey method was used to collect primary data from 385 customers using self-administered questionnaires across public, private, and development banks, employing a convenience sampling method. Pearson correlation analysis reveals significant positive relationships between each individual factor and customer usage. Further, multiple regression analysis substantiates the collective impact of these variables, emphasizing the robustness of the model. The findings underscore the pivotal role of knowledge, positive attitudes, perceived advantages, and organizational and environmental support in driving E-banking usage. However, the study acknowledges certain limitations, notably the exclusive focus on selected banks in the Ratnapura district, restricting the generalizability of results to other banks. Recommendations for future research include comparative studies between government and private banks and exploring additional variables to enrich the understanding of customer usage dynamics. This research contributes to the evolving discourse on E-banking usage, offering actionable insights for stakeholders and paving the way for more nuanced investigations into the multifaceted realm of digital banking.

Keywords: Customer usage, Electronic banking, Innovative characteristics

KEY DETERMINANTS OF FASHION PREFERENCES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS: A CASE OF COLOMBO DISTRICT IN SRI LANKA

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This study explores fashion preferences among young adults in Sri Lanka, filling a research gap by analyzing how socio-economic, cultural, and psychological factors collectively influence fashion trends in developing South Asian contexts. A concurrent mixed-methods approach was employed, combining a quantitative survey of 105 young adults aged 18-30 and qualitative interviews with 24 participants. The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression. The narrative data gathered through interviews were analyzed employing thematic analysis. The findings reveal significant positive correlations between socio-economic factors, cultural factors, and psychological factors with fashion preferences. Specifically, multiple regression analysis indicated that psychological factors have the strongest correlation with fashion preferences ($\beta = 0.315$, $p = 0.000$), followed by cultural factors ($\beta = 0.263$, $p = 0.003$) and socio-economic factors ($\beta = 0.271$, $p = 0.005$). The qualitative findings highlighted the complex interplay of various factors shaping fashion preferences. Furthermore, brand loyalty and trend-following behavior were identified as key drivers of fashion choices, with many participants expressing a strong attachment to specific brands and a desire to keep up with the latest trends. Psychological factors such as mood and self-expression were also emphasized, with many young adults using fashion as a means to reflect their inner feelings and identity. Fashion marketers should address socio-economic, cultural, and psychological factors in their strategies, creating targeted products and campaigns to build emotional connections. Policymakers should advocate for sustainable fashion and educational programs to foster responsible consumption among youth.

Keywords: Cultural factors, Fashion preferences, Psychological factors, Socio-economic factors, Young adults

REVOLUTIONIZING CRM: HOW AI PERSONALIZATION IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF E-COMMERCE FROM THE CUSTOMER'S PERSPECTIVE

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Artificial Intelligence revolutionizes customer relationship management by enhancing engagement and loyalty. The research explores the use of AI in CRM strategies, focusing on personalized approaches. By using AI algorithms and machine learning techniques, organizations can analyze vast amounts of customer data to tailor products, services, and interactions to individual preferences and behaviors. The shift in customer engagement strategies emphasizes understanding and empathizing with customers, with AI-driven content personalization enhancing satisfaction, loyalty, and business growth and making it indispensable in the digital market. This qualitative study investigates how, from the standpoint of the consumer, AI-driven personalization is reshaping e-commerce. With a focus on how individualized experiences affect customer behavior and satisfaction, the study chooses 25 people with noteworthy e-commerce experiences using purposive sampling. Data was gathered through focus groups and in-depth interviews to obtain thorough insights into client opinions and expectations. According to the research, AI personalization significantly improves user engagement, creates a feeling of individualized attention, and makes customized product recommendations, all of which improve the customer experience. In addition to highlighting the convenience and happiness gains of personalized purchasing, participants voiced worries about data security and privacy. The findings of the study offer insightful information about the changing nature of AI-driven e-commerce and suggest ways for companies to improve their CRM programs and respond to client complaints. These results advance our knowledge of consumer perceptions of AI personalization and its potential effects on e-commerce in the future.

Keywords: AI personalization, E-commerce, CRM strategies, Customer experience, Qualitative study

MARKETING MANAGEMENT II

PROMOTING UNDERUTILIZED FRUIT AND VEGETABLE MARKET IN SRI LANKA AS A NEW AGRIBUSINESS VENTURE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Underutilized crops possess many nutritional, medicinal and botanical values. The problem is most of the underutilized crops are grown in local and wild areas and remain unknown to the people. Furthermore, popularizing the growing and selling of underutilized fruit and vegetable varieties among Sri Lankan farmers can be a good solution to enhance farm income. This research was conducted to identify the limitations and potentials of the underutilized crops. Though there is prior research on underutilized crops, the field is fragmented. Hence this literature review aims to synthesize the existing knowledge of the importance, potential, and limitations of the underutilized fruit and vegetable market in Sri Lanka. Twenty articles were selected for the study using the PRISMA method. Many of the researchers found that there are many advantages of popularizing and growing underutilized fruits and vegetables among consumers, such as poverty alleviation, as a solution for hidden hunger, as a source of micro/ macro nutrients, and as a source of additional farm income. Though there are some limitations to promoting underutilized fruit crops, some research articles revealed that there are potentials to promote the underutilized crops. Furthermore, some of the researchers had discussed the topic of value addition and demand for underutilized crops in their research articles. Hence this research identifies the potentials and limitations of the underutilized crops. Further research should be conducted in the future to popularize the underutilized crops among Sri Lankans.

Keywords: Agribusiness venture, Crop market, PRISMA, Promotion, Underutilized crops

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF HEDONIC FACTORS ON ONLINE IMPULSE BUYING IN THE FASHION RETAIL SECTOR

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An exploratory study was conducted to understand the influences of different marketing stimuli in fashion retail websites on impulse buying, reflecting customer eye movements. Both previous research and existing theoretical applications, such as TAM (Technology Acceptance Model), have no significant reflections on the respective study. This led to identifying empirical and theoretical gaps in understanding the research problem as "there is no a scientific study conducted to analyse web-based customer eye movement on impulse decisions in the Sri Lankan fashion retail sector". The research methodology was guided by the interpretivist paradigm. Twenty (20) structured interviews were conducted to collect data displaying three (03) sample websites under the application of an eye-tracking tool. The duration of an eye-tracking session was 30 seconds per website, which is more than 3 times of modern customer attention span. The respective websites are categorised as high, medium & low graded based on features, appearance, and navigational quality. The thematic analysis revealed that eye movement indicated hedonic features, such as colours used in websites, quality of pictures and graphics, simplicity of websites and promoting influence to emerge impulse customer decision making in fashion retail sector. The study is significant as the scientific understanding of the eye movements of web surfers is required to realise how hedonic influences of web stimuli emerge in impulse buying. The study proposed to develop a conceptual model leading to project impulse buying in a web-based shopping environment referring to eye-tracking observations.

Keywords: Customer eye-movement, Eye-tracking, Fashion-retail, Hedonic, Impulse buying

OPTIMIZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDINGS (MOUs) THROUGH OMNI-CHANNEL MARKETING: INSIGHTS FROM SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITIES AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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This study addresses significant gaps in understanding Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between Sri Lankan universities and professional organizations, focusing on the effect of omni-channel marketing strategies. The current literature lacks detailed insights into how these strategies optimize MOUs in Sri Lanka. The research aims to uncover how omni-channel marketing strategies are integrated into MOUs and their effect on higher education partnerships. Utilizing qualitative content analysis, the study examines a sample of 10 MOUs by analyzing web content, social media, and marketing materials. Data are collected and coded into themes like collaboration goals, marketing networks, target audiences, and benefits. These omni-channel marketing strategies enhance engagement with prospective students through personalized communication and interactive content. Joint marketing initiatives, such as co-branded content and shared resources, are prevalent, leveraging the strengths of universities and professional organizations. This research provides new perspectives on the significant role of omni-channel marketing in promoting higher education partnerships in Sri Lanka, demonstrating how these strategies improve audience reach and engagement, thereby enhancing the visibility and appeal of MOUs. The study suggests that Sri Lankan universities and professional organizations can enhance their MOUs by adopting omni-channel marketing strategies across social media, email, websites, blogs, and in-person events, creating personalized and engaging content that attracts prospective students and strengthening institutional collaborations and support programs. Developing advanced career services and collaborative programs offers practical benefits to students, fostering more robust partnerships between institutions and organizations.

Keywords: Memorandums of understanding (MOUs), Omni-channel marketing, Professional organizations, Sri Lankan universities

EXPLORING KEY DRIVERS BEHIND GEN Z ADOPTION OF INSTAGRAM REELS

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Instagram (IG), a prominent photo and video sharing app, launched its "Instagram Reels" feature in 2020 and saw an immediate surge in popularity. Fashion firms are increasingly using Instagram Reels as a crucial advertising tool due to the increase in interaction. This study aims to examine the variables affecting IG Reels' acceptability and examine Gen Z users' usage trends. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was used as the framework for this study to evaluate how Gen Z perceives Reels' utility for a range of uses, including entertainment, data storage, and self-expression, as well as how user-friendly the platform is. Data was gathered using a convenience sampling technique using a Google Forms survey, and 118 valid answers were received. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and logistic regression were involved in the data analysis. According to the results, users browse Instagram Reels about eleven times a day, with the peak engagement between six o'clock and midnight. The study found that novelty, documentation, self-promotion, design, and escapism are the five main factors that influence Reels' adoption. Given the importance of IG Reels as a marketing channel and its strong appeal among Gen Z, fashion brands must craft comprehensive social media strategies that prioritize this platform. Recommendations include posting content during peak usage hours and leveraging user-generated content (UGC) to enhance customer engagement and foster a sense of community. By motivating users to create content, brands can create a more interactive experience, ensuring they resonate with their target audience effectively. This strategic approach will maximize the potential of IG Reels in brand promotion and customer connection.

Keywords: Instagram, Reels, Social media marketing, UGC, Usage behavior

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENTION: AMONG ELECTRONIC DEVICE CUSTOMERS IN SOUTHERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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This research offers a comprehensive analysis of the data obtained to examine how social media marketing affects customers' intentions toward purchasing electronic devices in the southern province of Sri Lanka. Most research on social media marketing and purchase intention focuses on general consumer goods or services. Studies on electronic devices as a product category remain limited. Given that the purchase of electronic devices often involves more significant research, higher involvement, and longer decision-making processes compared to other consumer goods. And similarly, there is relatively few research that has a specific focus on Sri Lanka's Southern Province. The target population of this research is people who live in the southern province of Sri Lanka and use social media. The sample size was 344 by using the convenience sampling method. This study used a quantitative approach, primary data was collected from the well-structured online questionnaire. This study used descriptive analysis, correlation, and multiple linear regression analysis to test the theoretical framework and establish hypotheses. According to the result of this study, there is a strong positive linear relationship between independent and dependent variables. The tested hypothesis that is, purchase intention, is highly influenced by consumer engagement and brand awareness in the context of social media marketing. Despite being positively correlated, trust is not statistically significant. In the demographics, data has shown that different age groups use social media. This gap could explore how younger versus older consumers engage with social media platforms and how that influences their decision-making process for high-involvement purchases like electronics. Measuring the direct impact of social media marketing on purchase intentions remains a challenge. These statistics make further analysis and interpretation possible. According to this extends theoretical models of brand salience and recall, suggesting that platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and others amplify brand visibility in ways that directly translate to purchase intention. This study suggests that brand awareness on social media should be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct, not just limited to exposure but also including active brand engagement and interaction. The finding that customer engagement significantly influences purchase intention adds depth to theories of customer

engagement, especially within the social media domain. It shows that social media platforms are more than just marketing tools; they facilitate deeper interactions between brands and consumers, which in turn leads to higher purchase intentions. The relationship between engagement and purchase intention demonstrated by the Beta coefficient of 0.622 emphasizes the central role of interaction intensity, suggesting that future models should account for the different layers of customer-brand interaction in a social media setting. The finding that trust did not reach statistical significance challenges conventional theories that place trust as a key determinant of purchase intention. Future research may need to investigate whether trust is context-dependent and how it varies across product categories or platforms.

TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT

EARLY SUICIDE PREDICTION USING NLP TECHNIQUES USING SOCIAL MEDIA DATA

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Suicide is a significant public health concern worldwide, necessitating early detection and intervention to prevent loss of life. With the proliferation of social media platforms, a vast repository of user-generated content could potentially reveal insights into individuals' mental health states. This research addresses the imperative to identify signs of suicidal ideation in social media content by harnessing advanced artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) techniques. The primary problem addressed is the development of algorithms capable of effectively analyzing textual and behavioral patterns exhibited by users on Facebook, particularly focusing on young Sri Lankan adults aged 19-34. The proposed solution involves the creation of an AI-driven system integrating machine learning, NLP, and convolutional neural networks to detect early indications of suicidal ideation within Facebook posts. The methodology comprises multiple stages, commencing with sentiment analysis to ascertain the emotional tone of social media posts. Utilizing the state-of-the-art Transformers BERT model, the system conducts suicide prediction by scrutinizing linguistic nuances and contextual cues within the text. Comparisons with existing approaches, such as those utilizing SMS data for suicide intention analysis, highlight the enhanced accuracy and depth of our model. Unlike previous methods that often rely on surface-level sentiment analysis, our approach leverages contextual understanding provided by the BERT model, allowing for more nuanced predictions. Subsequently, a novel multi-model concept is introduced to predict the severity level of suicidal ideation, leveraging advanced features extracted by the Transformers BERT model. The initial findings from the implementation of the AI-driven system demonstrate promising results, showcasing high accuracy in detecting early signs of suicidal ideation and predicting the severity level of suicidal comments. The evaluation metrics, including precision, recall, and confusion matrices, underscore the efficacy of the system, with predictive accuracy of 90.35%, precision of 90.27%, and recall of 90.44%. Compared to existing models, our approach offers a significant improvement in predictive performance, thereby highlighting the potential of AI and NLP technologies to enhance suicide prevention efforts and provide timely intervention for individuals in distress.

Keywords: Classification, Suicide early prediction, Suicidal ideation, Transformers

DETERMINANTS OF MODERN MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AMONG AYURVEDA DOCTORS IN THE NORTH CENTRAL PROVINCE IN SRI LANKA

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This study explores the determinants of modern medical technology acceptance among Ayurveda doctors in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, providing a comprehensive framework based on the Technology Acceptance Model 3 and integrating education levels and demographic factors. A quantitative approach was employed, using a survey distributed to a purposive sample of 108 Ayurveda doctors. The analysis utilized multiple regression models along with various statistical tools, including central tendency measures, measures of dispersion, correlation, chi-square tests, and hypothesis testing. The study identified four models with dependent and independent variables, revealing that External Pressure, Job Relevance, Clarity of the Results, Growing Prominence, and Excellent Output accounted for 31.2% of the variation in Perceived Usefulness. Acquiring Knowledge and Skills, Organizational Support, and Comparison explained 38.3% of the variation in Perceived Ease of Use. Additionally, Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use explained 13% of the variation in Behavioral Intention, while Behavioral Intention explained 16% of the variation in Use Behavior. Chi-square tests indicated a significant association between Behavioral Intention to adopt medical technology and the educational level of Ayurveda doctors, although age, sex, and experience were not significant. The study concludes with recommendations for the Department of Ayurveda to enhance operational processes, develop medical technology infrastructure, introduce high-quality services, acquire new technological skills, and coordinate with government, universities, and other entities. These strategies aim to improve the adaptation and integration of modern medical technology among Ayurveda doctors, ultimately achieving the study's objectives and providing actionable insights for policy and practice improvements.

Keywords: Ayurveda doctors, Modern medical technology, Technology adoption

IMPACT OF INDUSTRY 4.0 TECHNOLOGIES ON EXPORT PERFORMANCE IN SRI LANKAN APPAREL SECTOR: THE MEDIATION ROLE OF SUPPLY CHAIN AGILITY

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The apparel sector is important to Sri Lanka's economy since it highly contributes to export earnings and employment. Yet, there is a lack of research on the relationship between Industry 4.0 technologies and export performance in this sector. The main aim of this study is to find the relationship between Industry 4.0 technologies and the export performance of the Apparel sector while considering the impact of supply chain agility. A quantitative research design has been used for this study. The research formulates hypotheses from a comprehensive literature review. These hypotheses are tested using structural equation modeling (SQM), and the data was collected from 97 apparel organizations in the Sri Lankan sector. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 23 and Smart PLS. There is a positive and significant impact of Industry 4.0 technologies on Export performance. Internet of Things, Big data analytics, and Cloud computing have a positive and significant impact on Export performance. Supply chain agility mediates between Industry 4.0 technologies and Export performance. The study discusses the findings, advances limitations, and managerial implications related to the research area. The research paper also suggests future research avenues. It highlights some recommendations to support Sri Lankan apparel organizations in forming flexible supply chains and using the latest technology to increase export performance. The findings of this research have practical implications for both practitioners and researchers. Overall, this study contributes to the literature on strategic management, showing the reliability of the scales used and the affirmative of the factor structure. Further, the study shows that, orientation is critical in increasing export performance in strategic management technology. This study has used the resource-based view (RBV) and dynamic capabilities theories.

Keywords: Apparel sector, Export performance, Industry 4.0 technologies, Supply chain agility

CYBERSECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN GOVERNMENT

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Technological advancement combined with the need for government innovation, is driving fundamental change in the public sector. This paper explores the digital transformation environment as governments adopt cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), and Artificial Intelligence (AI). These technologies redefine how public services are delivered and how citizens interact with them. They can eliminate wasteful and ineffective processes, promote efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, and empower government employees. However, these technologies also introduce new risks and concerns, such as increased cybercrime and digital security issues, privacy concerns and the need to upskill personnel who may lack digital literacy. Governments face the critical task of protecting sensitive citizen data and securing digital infrastructure against external attacks and insider threats. Using case studies from selected governments and a review of relevant literature, this paper provides insights into the key drivers and obstacles of digital adoption. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select case studies from the United States, Germany, India, and the Philippines. This qualitative approach examines how governments are digitalizing public services and the challenges and opportunities that emerge. Ultimately, public sector institutions need to adapt to a digital world to realize the benefits of this transformation. In conclusion, the paper highlights the importance of digital transformation, urging governments to invest in emerging technologies while prioritizing cybersecurity, fostering digital responsibility, and involving stakeholders. These measures are crucial for creating a resilient, secure environment that protects public services and maintains citizen trust.

Keywords: Cybersecurity challenges, Digital transformation, E-governance

TOURISM

SERVICE QUALITY AND FOREIGN PATIENT SATISFACTION OF AYURVEDA MEDICAL TOURISM INSTITUTIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIRU AYURVEDA HEALTH RESORT

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Sri Lanka has gained recognition as a premier destination for authentic Ayurveda healing. However, Sri Lanka faces significant competition in this industry, making client satisfaction crucial for success. It is required to do time to time investigations about satisfaction and service quality in a dynamic environment. In the Sri Lankan context, the empirical evidence is a minority. This research investigates the service quality and foreign patient satisfaction of Ayurveda medical tourism institutions, specifically focusing on Hiru Ayurveda Resort. A positivist research philosophy and a case study strategy are utilized. In order to meet the research objectives, data for the. Data was collected from 80 respondents from two strata of wellness and medical tourists who visited the Resort over three months period, using a stratified sampling approach and a questionnaire survey. Service quality indicators were quantified using the HEALTHQUAL model, encompassing tangibility, empathy, safety, efficacy, and the degree of improvement of care services, which are specific to healthcare services. The principal program for PLS-SEM analysis was Smart PLS version 4.0.9.8, and it will fill the methodological gap with available literature. The study reveals that the service quality of Ayurveda medical tourism institutions significantly impacts patient satisfaction. Tangibility and improvement of care services dimensions positively affect patient satisfaction, while safety has a negative effect. Empathy and efficacy dimensions do not significantly influence patient satisfaction. The research suggests that management and policymakers should improve the overall service quality of Ayurveda medical tourism institutions to enhance patient satisfaction and provide investors with insights into meeting medical tourists' needs in the industry. For the theoretical understanding, tangibility items and improvement of care services items mostly depend on the service quality of Ayurveda medical tourism.

Keywords: Ayurveda Medical Tourism Institutions, Foreign patient satisfaction, Service quality, Sri Lankan medical tourism

A STUDY ON CORPORATE DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA IN SPONSORING SPORTS EVENT TOURISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SRI LANKA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Growing trends in sports events have led corporations to consider sports sponsorship as an effective marketing tool to capture a distinct customer segment. This study was conducted to understand the corporates' decision-making process regarding sponsorships in sports event tourism through the lens of social exchange theory. Prior research has identified that corporations engage in sponsoring sports event tourism to achieve market-oriented objectives; however, exploring corporate decision-making processes regarding sports tourism sponsorships needs further enquiry. Therefore, this research attempted to study the nature and process of corporate sponsorship decision-making in the context of sports events in Sri Lanka. A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. Data was collected from 15 managers of local and international corporations who are actively involved in decision-making regarding sponsoring sports events. The sample was chosen based on the convenience sampling method, and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used as the analytical tool. The findings of the study identified the reasons for corporations to support sports event tourism, the rational process of sports sponsorship decision-making in corporations, and environmental factors that affect the decision-making regarding sports sponsorships. The application of social exchange theory enabled us to understand the exchange versus rationality, fairness and marginal utility from the corporate decision maker's perspective. This research offers to understand the relevance and decision-making criteria regarding sponsoring sports events for commercial benefits.

Keywords: Corporate sponsorship, Decision-making, Event tourism, Social exchange theory, Sports events

CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING JAFFNA AS A SUSTAINABLE TOURIST DESTINATION

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In recent years, the importance of sustainable tourism development has risen to the forefront of global consciousness. Jaffna, previously an unexplored destination, has recently emerged on the tourism landscape following three decades of war. Initially, domestic tourists were primarily attracted to Jaffna for dark tourism experiences as following a civil war, various parties, including the state, forces, the host community, and other social elements, paid more attention to preserving wartime memories. However, Jaffna possesses unique resources and experiences that differentiate it from the southern region of Sri Lanka. The inadequate identification of these tourist spots and poor administration are to blame for the poor growth and development of the tourism industry in the Northern Province. It is imperative to develop Jaffna as a tourist destination, emphasizing sustainable tourism practices tailored to its specific context. Notably, studies on sustainable tourism development in Jaffna are scarce. Research on sustainable tourism in Jaffna is scarce despite its potential. The study highlights challenges to Jaffna's sustainable tourism, with three main objectives. Assessing current sustainable practices, identifying challenges to promoting sustainability, and offering recommendations to overcome these challenges. The study used a qualitative methodology, considering the subjective responses from various stakeholders. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 11 participants, including members of the Northern Province Tourism Bureau, Jaffna hoteliers, and visitors, selected via convenience sampling. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis In Jaffna, stakeholders and the local community have adopted sustainable tourism, but challenges such as cultural barriers and poor administration persist. The study suggests increasing community awareness and responsible resource management. By embracing sustainable practices, Jaffna has the potential to become a prosperous, well-balanced tourism destination with international appeal.

Keywords: Challenges, Destination promotion, Jaffna tourism, Stakeholders, Sustainability

SUSTAINABLE CHOICES IN HOSPITALITY: UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN HOTELS

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This conceptual paper outlines a future study based on the literature review related to Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) practices and consumer purchasing decisions. As the entire society increasingly emphasizes on sustainability, organizations strive to achieve sustainability not only within their internal organization but also throughout their entire Supply chain (SC). SSCM practices can be prominently evident in the hotel industry as it is not just a manufacturing industry but also a mix of manufacturing and service. "Even though hotels practice sustainability in all three pillars (environmental, social, and economic) in their SC, an unresolved question persists: Are the customers concerned about all those when making the purchasing decisions if they do not perceive them as economically beneficial? Many studies have explored SSCM, but addressing this question, there is a need to study the interrelationship between SSCM practices and consumer purchasing decisions. The study aims to create a common understanding of consumer perception towards SSCM practices and proposes a developmental framework to analyze their impact on consumers' purchasing decisions in the hotel industry. The framework is the result of synthesizing research, theory, and practice knowledge from a range of disciplines and approaches. The findings of the study can have some impressive results and provide actionable insights for the hotel industry regarding consumer behaviours towards SSCM. This may help companies enhance their SSCM practices and communication strategies, aligning more closely with consumer values and potentially increasing market share. Additionally, the study will contribute to extending existing theories in the field.

Keywords: Hotel industry, Purchasing decisions, Sustainable supply chain management