International Conference on Business Management, Sustainability and Economics (ICBMSE-2026)

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Virtual Conference,

26-29 October 2026

Global Institute on Innovative Research (GIIR)

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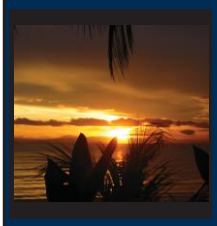
Welcome to the International Conference on Business Management, Sustainability and Economy (ICBMSE-2026)!

Have a productive event and fun!

Letter from the GIIR Chairperson

Welcome to the International Conference

Welcome



On behalf of the Global Institute on Innovative Research (GIIR), I take this opportunity to welcome you to the **International Conference on Business Management, Sustainability and Economics**. We hope you have a productive conference.

We all know that academia must balance their teaching, research, and service obligations. Finding the right forum to share and obtain feedback on our research and new teaching techniques can be challenging. GIIR was created to facilitate your work by providing an environment conducive to knowledge and experience sharing. We encourage the academic community to come and share their work at our conferences. We welcome articles which are of interest to scholars and practitioners in all fields of business, economics and related fields.

GIIR represents a long-term commitment to bring individuals from around the world together to share their ideas and promote research on business and innovation. However, the response to this conference was good but below expectations. We wish to thank you for selecting GIIR as your research outlet. We also wish to thank the many people that have contributed to making the conference a success. As we expand our representation and network to the Southern region of Africa, we are delighted to report that our conferences are truly global. It brings participants together from all corners of the globe. These individuals come from a variety of high-quality institutions and present work on a broad mix of academic issues.

We are proud to announce four upcoming conferences. Our upcoming international conference on Innovation, Management, Robotics and Applied Technology will be held virtually in January 2027. This will be followed by three international conferences. These include the events in April 2027 and July 2027. Our 4th international conference will be held virtually November 2027. We hope that you can join us at these events.

Warmest regards,

Dr Arthur Bilborough
GIIR Chairperson

- **CONFERENCE ETIQUETTE**

GIIR encourages positive exchange of ideas. Spirited debate related to issues presented in conference sessions is welcomed and encouraged. However, participants must frame all comments in a positive tone. Under no circumstances should participants make personally demeaning or insulting comments or make degrading comments about a presenter's work.

Global Institute on Innovative Research

The GIIR seeks to promote the study of business, innovation and related practices. The institute also seeks to make accessible this wealth of information to the global higher-education and business communities. We work under the principle of providing positive support toward getting your work published.

- **THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, SUSTTAINABILITY AND ECONOMICS**

The institute sponsors the International Conference on Business Management, Sustainability and Economics (ICBMSE). The conference provides the academic community with an opportunity to share their research and ideas. It also offers a great opportunity for networking. Conference participants can:

- Network with other professionals
- Present research at an international conference
- Receive feedback on research
- Publish a short version of the paper in the refereed proceedings

Our international conference proceedings are peer reviewed. Short versions or full papers presented at the GIIR can be published in the refereed proceedings. The conference proceedings are indexed by Google scholar.

- **FUTURE CONFERENCES FOR 2027**

We hope that you can join us at these upcoming online events

January 2027

International Conference on Innovation, Robotics and Applied Technology (ICIRT-2027 **Rio de Janeiro in Brazil**) will be held (virtually) on the 26-29 January 2027

April 2027

The International Conference on Business Management, Sustainability and Economy (IBMSE-2027 **Paris in France**) will be held (virtually) on the 19-22 April 2027

July 2027

The International Conference on Social Science, Education and Learning (ETL-2027 **Rome in Italy**) will be held (virtually) on the 27-30 July 2027

November 2027

The International Conference on Business Management, Sustainability and Economics (IBMSE-2027 **Copenhagen in Denmark**) will be held (virtually) on the 8-11 November 2027

- **BIOGRAPHY FOR THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER (DR FELIX CHARI)**



Dr. Felix Chari (MCIPS) is a highly respected academic and supply chain expert renowned for bridging the gap between professional practice and academic theory. Currently a Senior Lecturer at Bindura University of Science Education in Zimbabwe, he holds a PhD in Management Sciences, Master of Business Administration, a Graduate Diploma in Procurement and supply, and an MSc in Development Economics. As a corporate member of the UK's Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply, he brings a rigorous, globally recognized professional lens to his work. He is a leading voice in understanding how emerging economies can build robust, sustainable local systems. His extensive publication record, featuring over 50 journal articles and four textbooks, focuses heavily on agricultural value chains, humanitarian logistics, and climate resilience. Whether evaluating supply chain disruptions during Cyclone Idai or exploring the integration of blockchain technology in small-scale farming, his research provides vital, actionable insights into how local supply chains can be reimagined to drive sustainable global development.

- **BIOGRAPGY FOR THE <u>GUEST SPEAKER</u> (DR NONYE CHUKWUMA)**



Dr Nonye Emmanuella Chukwuma is a passionate researcher, a purposeful lifestyle coach, seasoned speaker, author and an expert in the field of Transformational leadership for effective organisational management. To this end, she has published several articles in accredited journals and credible book chapters as well as presented findings of these studies at several national and international conferences held in South Africa and Overseas.

Dr Chukwuma hosts a line of community engagement programs for self-development and empowerment on social media platforms for educative purposes. She was a post-doctoral research fellow at the Faculty of Management Science, Durban University of Technology. This provided a great opportunity for expanding her research expertise in the field of Leadership and Business Management. Dr Chukwuma's vast knowledge and experience in her field of expertise has greatly contributed to the Educational, Manufacturing, Business and Health sector by providing practically recommendable solutions towards effective leadership management of organisations in the afore-mentioned sectors.

Having attained a decade's lecturing experience in Management studies, this has further facilitated and provided means for her future career development. Dr Chukwuma has obtained a degree in Accounting, master's in business administration and a PhD in Business Administration. She recently wrapped up her post-doctoral studies which was awarded by the National Research Fund. She achieved the award for the most productive post-doctoral research fellow during the course of her post-doctoral program.

- **SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAMME**

Date: 26 October 2026

Location: Online via MS Teams

Time	Session Title	Speaker	Description
9:00 - 9:20	Welcome and Opening Remarks	**Prof Dumisani Zondo**, *GIIR Conference Chair (SADC Region)*	Welcome message and overview of the conference objectives and highlights.
9:20 - 10:00	Keynote Speaker	**Dr. Felix Chari**	Reimagining Local Supply Chains as Catalysts for Sustainable Global Development
10:00 - 10:40	Guest Speaker	**Dr. Nonye Chukwuma**	Leadership and Communication Strategies for Managing Organizational Change
10:40 - 11:00	Innovation	**Dr. Helper Zhou**	The Impact of Edge-Optimized Computer Vision on Enabling POS-Free Smartphone Trading for Informal Traders in South Africa
11:00 - 11:30	**COMFORT & NETWORK BREAK**	-	Virtual networking session to connect with peers and industry leaders.
11:30 - 11:50	Digital Technology	**Ms Everlane Reddy**	Influence of Digital Technology on Business Operations Among Manufacturing Organisations in the iLembe Municipal District in South Africa
11:50 - 12:10	Marketing	**Ms. Ntokozo Dlamini**	The Role of social media in Marketing Strategies for SMEs: A Case of The Retail Sector in KwaZulu- Natal (South Africa)
12:10 - 12:30	Entrepreneurship	**Dr Francis Yao Gray-Deh**	The impact of Entrepreneurship Characteristics on the Entrepreneurial Orientation for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises in Rural Areas of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
12:30 - 13:00	Closing Remarks	**Prof Dumisani Zondo**, *GIIR Conference Chair (SADC Region)*	Summary of key takeaways and a look ahead to future initiatives.

Date: 27 October 2026

Location: Online via MS Teams

Time	Session Title	Speaker	Description
9:00 - 9:20	Welcome and opening	**Prof Dumisani Zondo,** *GIIR Conference Chair (SADC Region)*	Welcome and overview of the conference to-date & any possible highlights.
9:20 - 9:40	Innovation	**Dr. Siphamandla Mlobeli**	A Critical Analysis of the Impact of Social Media Usage on the Mental Health and Well-being of Young People in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal
9:40 - 10:00	Artificial Intelligence	**Dr. Meshel Muzuva**	AI-Enabled Academic Support for Sustainable and Inclusive Higher Education: A Capability and Human Capital Perspective
10:00 - 10:20	Artificial Intelligence	**Ms Kehinde Olufunbi Oni**	Artificial Intelligence and Customer Satisfaction: Evidence from Customers of Small Businesses in South Africa
10:20 - 10:40	Social Responsibility	**Ms. Nonophela Mvakwendlu**	Corporate Social Responsibility practices: evidence from the automotive manufacturing SMEs in the eThekwini Metropolitan area
10:40 – 11:00	Marketing	**Nontokozo Shezi**	The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) on the Performance in the Consumer Goods Sector of Nkandla Municipality
11:00 - 11:30	**COMFORT & NETWORK BREAK**	-	Virtual networking session to connect with peers and industry leaders.
11:30 - 11:50	Governance	**Ms. Nelisiwe Mchunu**	Sustainability Integration in Public Sector Governance: A Systematic Review of Strategies, Frameworks, and Institutional Outcomes
11:50 - 12:10	Entrepreneurship Education	**Mr Bongumusa Ngcobo**	Factors influencing the Entrepreneurial Intentions of the third-year Business Administration Students in the Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management at Durban University of Technology (DUT)
12:10 - 12:30	Entrepreneurship	**Dr Gugu Buthelezi**	Evaluating the Entrepreneurial Development Ecosystem Supporting TVET and University Graduates in Durban, South Africa
12:30 - 13:00	Closing Remarks	**Prof Dumisani Zondo,** *GIIR Conference Chair (SADC Region)*	Summary of key takeaways and a look ahead to future initiatives.

Date: 28 October 2026

Location: Online via MS Teams

Time	Session Title	Speaker	Description
9:00 - 9:10	Welcome and Opening Remarks	**Prof Dumisani Zondo,** *GIIR Conference Chair (SADC Region)*	Welcome message and overview of the conference objectives and highlights.
9:10 - 9:30	Entrepreneurship	**Dr. Lucy Chamba**	Leading Human Capital in the Age of AI: Strengthening Intrapreneurship for Resilient and Competitive Organisations
9:30 - 9:50	Digitalisation	**Mr. Mluleki Dladla**	The Influence of Digital Transformation on Traditional Businesses in the eThekwini District
9:50 - 10:10	Sustainability	**Ms. Asanda Mtukushe**	Greenwashing or Genuine Sustainability?
10:10 – 10:30	Entrepreneurship	**Mr. Lungisa Phakathi**	Entrepreneurship and Innovation Amongst Undergraduate Students at a selected University of Technology in the eThekwini Metropolitan area
10:30 – 10:50	Entrepreneurship	**Dr. Gugu Buthelezi**	Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions among Students in TVET Colleges and Public Universities in Durban, South Africa
10:50 - 11:20	**COMFORT & NETWORK BREAK**	-	Virtual networking session to connect with peers and industry leaders.
11:20 - 11:40	Education	**Dr Kyungu Lubaba Lubadi**	Analysis on High School Graduates Skills and the Lobour Market
11:40 – 12:00	Business Management	**Ms. Nomthandazo Dlamini**	Reverse Innovation in African Start-ups: Disrupting Traditional Business Models in a VUCA Environment in eThekwini Municipality
12:00 – 12:20	Motivation	**Dr. Nonye Chukwuma**	Inspirational Motivation for Students' Academic Success: A review of transformational leadership studies in South African Higher Education
12:20 – 13:00	Closing Remarks	**Prof Dumisani Zondo** *GIIR Conference Chair (SADC Region)*	Summary of key takeaways and a look ahead to future initiatives.

- **ABSTRACTS** *(drafts)*

The following are 'unedited' ABSTRACTS as received from the participants

The Impact of Entrepreneurial Characteristics on the Entrepreneurial Orientation for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises in Rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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Robert Walter Dumisani Zondo2 Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology, 4001, Dumisaniz@dut.ac.za

Abstract:
This study examines how entrepreneurial characteristics impact the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and the success of rural Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa (SA). SMEs are widely recognized as significant employment, drivers of national income, and the cornerstone of prosperous rural firms. The implications of entrepreneurial characteristics on EO—a strategy method that explains how businesses function, innovate, and construct strategies in an enterprising manner—may be significant when SMEs in rural areas decide to focus on purposeful growth. EO refers to the processes, strategies, and methods of decision-making used by companies that act in a way that encourages entrepreneurship. Authorities and other relevant actors generally lack knowledge about the obstacles that could impede EO as a vehicle for SME viability and expansion, especially in rural KZN areas.
A Likert-scale questionnaire was used to gather data from 309 rural SMEs using a quantitative methodology. The owners-managers were chosen by quota sampling. Reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$) and significance at $p < .001$ were verified by statistical analysis (SPSS v27). Results show that EO has a positive effect on success, and that this effect is reinforced by positive entrepreneurial traits like personal drive, zeal to achieve goals, motivation, willingness to invest money in the business, positive response to contingencies, growth orientation, and adaptability. The findings demonstrate that enhancing entrepreneurial characteristics increases EO efficiency benefits and emphasize the difficulties faced by rural SMEs. By promoting a contingency approach and providing practical consequences for SME owners-managers and lawmakers, the study adds to the literature on entrepreneurship and EO. Cross-sectional design and spatial specificity are limitations; longitudinal and mixed methods techniques, as well as an analysis of the function of networking and institutional backing, should be included in future research.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurship orientation, motivation, national income.

A Critical Analysis of the Impact of Social Media Usage on the Mental Health and Well-being of Young People in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract:
The universal use of social media among young people has become a significant aspect of modern society, influencing various dimensions of their daily lives, including mental health and overall well-being. Consequently, this study provides a critical analysis of the impact of social media usage on the mental health and well-being of young people in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. It examines how social media platforms contribute to both positive and negative psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and social connectedness. The study further explores the patterns of social media usage and the extent to which these patterns shape behavioural and emotional responses among youth.
A qualitative research approach was adopted to achieve the objectives of this study. The target population comprised young people aged between 18 and 35 years residing in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. An open ended questionnaire was used to collect data from a selected sample, ensuring that the findings are representative of the broader youth population. This research has two primary objectives: firstly, to analyse the relationship between social media usage and mental health outcomes among young people; and secondly, to evaluate both the positive and negative effects of social media on their overall well-being.
The findings of this study reveal that while social media serves as a platform for social interaction, information sharing, and emotional support, excessive and unregulated usage is associated with increased levels of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem among young people. The study highlights the dual nature of social media as both a beneficial and potentially harmful tool, depending on usage patterns. The results provide valuable insights into the role of social media in shaping the psychological well-being of youth and emphasise the need for awareness, regulation, and responsible usage.

Keywords: Social media, Usage.

Leading Human Capital in the Age of AI: Strengthening Intrapreneurship for Resilient and Competitive Organisations

Dr Lucy Tambudzai Chamba Durban University of Technology

Abstract:
With artificial intelligence reshaping work design, decision-making, and capability development, human capital leadership has re-emerged as a critical driver of adaptive performance. This is further compounded by multi- crises, digital disruption, and accelerated technological change which pose as a survival threat, making organisational resilience and competitiveness. AI-enabled intrapreneurship provides a behavioural pathway through which opportunity-oriented employees within existing organisations leverage digital insights, automation, and augmented intelligence to recognise opportunities, innovate, and solve problems from within the organisation, in order to initiate and help implement new or improved services, processes, and work processes. Notably mechanisms

through which human capital leadership activates AI -enabled intrapreneurial behavior and consequently strengthens organisational resilience and competitiveness, remain underexplored. Guided by the Dynamic Capabilities View and Organisational Resilience principles (ISO 22316), this study examines how leadership practices that integrate human capability development with AI adoption shape intrapreneurship and adaptive advantage mechanisms that drive organisational resilience and competitiveness through the strategic cultivation, empowerment, and orchestration of employee competencies in tandem with intelligent systems. A mixed-methods research design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected through a survey administered to middle- managers across multiple industries. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to test the relationships between human capital leadership, intrapreneurship, organisational resilience, and competitiveness. Complementary qualitative insights were gathered through interviews. Findings reveal that leadership practices-centred on capability development, empowerment, digital literacy, and psychological safety significantly predict intrapreneurial behaviour. Furthermore, intrapreneurship augmented by AI tools and data, exerts a strong positive mediating effect on organisational resilience and competitiveness. The study concludes that human capital leadership is a critical antecedent of organisational resilience and competitiveness through fostering AI- driven intrapreneurship. Organisations that promote intelligent human capital development and empower employees to innovate are better positioned to withstand disruptions and sustain competitive impetus. The study progresses the notion of the strategic importance of the human capital function in driving the resilience and competitiveness in organisations through fostering AI- intrapreneur- friendly organisations. The study recommends that the human capital function should strengthen policies that encourage intrapreneurial thinking uch as innovation labs, flexible structures, and reward systems for intrapreneurial employees.The study contributes an integrated framework illustrating how leader-enabled human and AI capital combine to strengthen intrapreneurial capacity and adaptive advantage. It offers actionable recommendations for leadership development, AI governance, innovation systems, and human capital strategies.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Intrapreneurship, dynamic capabilities, , ISO 22316: Organisational Resilience

The Impact of Edge-Optimized Computer Vision on Enabling POS-Free Smartphone Trading for Informal Traders in South Africa

Dr Helper ZHou
Durban University of Technology, South Africa

Abstract:
Informal retail economies serve billions globally yet remain underserved by conventional point-of-sale (POS) systems, which presuppose stable internet connectivity, literacy, barcode infrastructure, and fixed product catalogs—constraints rarely met in street markets. We introduce EdgeVision POS, a novel vision-based transaction system that transforms the ubiquitous smartphone camera into a zero-infrastructure POS interface for informal vendors. The system enables vendors to photograph incoming stock and outgoing sales; an on-device vision model recognizes items offline without predefined SKUs, automatically generating inventory and sales records. To address the critical challenge of deploying accurate yet lightweight models on commodity hardware under real-world conditions (variable lighting, occlusion, clutter), we implement dendritic optimization using PerforatedAI's library atop a MobileNetV3-Small backbone. In controlled experiments on a fruit and vegetable recognition benchmark, the dendritically enhanced model (four gradient-driven dendrites) achieved 97.44% validation accuracy versus 95.16% for the baseline, reducing remaining error by 47.1% without architectural expansion or increased parameter count. This demonstrates that dendritic modulation extracts greater representational capacity from compact networks, directly enhancing feasibility for edge deployment where latency, battery life, and

computational constraints are paramount. EdgeVision POS lowers barriers to digital recordkeeping for informal traders by eliminating dependency on barcodes, scanners, or connectivity, while dendritic optimization proves instrumental in achieving the accuracy–efficiency tradeoff required for real-world adoption. This study bridges computer vision innovation with inclusive fintech design, offering a scalable pathway to formalize micro-enterprise operations in resource-constrained settings.

AI-Enabled Academic Support for Sustainable and Inclusive Higher Education: A Capability and Human Capital Perspective

Meshel Muzuva*; Helper Zhou*; Robert Walter Dumisani Zondo*
*Durban University of Technology

Abstract:
Higher education institutions face mounting pressure to improve student success, broaden access, and advance sustainability agendas, often under significant resource constraints. Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being adopted to support teaching and learning; however, its capacity to simultaneously advance educational equity, institutional efficiency, and sustainability outcomes remains insufficiently theorised and empirically examined. This study addresses that gap by investigating how AI-enabled academic support systems contribute to sustainable education outcomes and inclusive economic value creation within higher education. Specifically, the study examines how AI-enabled academic support advances SDG 4 (Quality Education) through improving student success and inclusive access, and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by enhancing institutional efficiency and strengthening the human capital pipeline. The study is theoretically grounded in two complementary frameworks: the Capability Approach, which foregrounds the expansion of students' real opportunities to achieve valued educational outcomes, and Human Capital Theory, which connects educational attainment to long-term productivity and economic growth. Together, these frameworks provide a multidimensional evaluating lens for assessing both the social equity and economic implications of AI integration in higher education. Adopting a mixed-methods design, the study draws on quantitative data from approximately 120 undergraduate business management students, including academic performance, retention rates, and engagement with AI-supported tools. Quantitative data are analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to assess patterns of engagement and success. Complementary qualitative data are generated through semi-structured interviews with 10 purposively selected academic staff members and analysed thematically to explore user experiences, institutional enablers, and ethical considerations surrounding AI deployment. Preliminary insights suggest that AI-enabled academic support has the potential to enhance student engagement and academic performance, with implications for both educational quality and institutional efficiency. However, emerging concerns related to digital inequality, ethical use, and governance highlight the need for careful and context-sensitive and equity-conscious implementation strategies. This study contributes to the intersecting discourses of sustainability, higher education management, and economics by theorising AI as a strategic enabler of both educational equity and economic efficiency. It offers evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, and technology practitioners seeking to align AI-driven digital transformation with global sustainability goals, while ensuring responsible, inclusive, and ethically grounded implementation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; SDG 4; SDG 8; Sustainable Higher Education; Capability Approach; Student Success

Artificial Intelligence and Customer Satisfaction: Evidence from Customers of Small Businesses in South Africa

Kehinde Olufunbi Oni
Durban University of Technology, South Africa

Abstract:
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming customer service delivery, particularly among small businesses seeking to remain competitive in dynamic markets. In South Africa, small businesses are increasingly adopting AI-driven tools such as chatbots, automated customer support systems, and personalised marketing platforms to enhance customer experience and satisfaction. Despite this growing adoption, there had been limited empirical evidence on how these technologies influenced customer satisfaction from the customers' perspective.
This study aimed to examine the impact of Artificial Intelligence on customer satisfaction among customers of small businesses in South Africa. A quantitative research approach was employed, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 200 customers of small businesses that utilized AI technologies. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis, to determine the relationship between AI usage and customer satisfaction.
The study's findings provided valuable insights into how small businesses can effectively leverage AI to improve customer satisfaction and overall business performance. The study contributed to the growing body of knowledge on AI adoption in emerging economies, with specific relevance to the South African small business sector.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Customer Satisfaction, Small Businesses, South Africa, Customer Experience

The Influence of Digital Transformation on Traditional Businesses in the eThekwini District.

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Abstract:
Digital transformation (DT) has become an important driver of business competitiveness and sustainability, particularly for small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in developing economies. In South Africa, traditional businesses play a key role in local economic development, however, their transition towards digital technologies remains uneven. This study examines the influence of digital transformation on traditional businesses in the eThekwini District, with a focus on SMME adoption and adaptation.
A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews conducted with SMME owners and managers. The findings show that while awareness of digital tools is relatively high, adoption remains limited due to challenges such as financial constraints, lack of digital skills, unreliable infrastructure, and concerns about cybersecurity and return on investment. At the same time, enabling factors such as peer learning, access to affordable training, and support from municipal initiatives contribute positively to digital uptake.
The study further reveals differences in adoption levels between formal and informal businesses, highlighting structural inequalities that affect participation in the digital economy. Drawing on frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Diffusion of Innovations (DOI), and the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study explains the varying patterns of digital adoption across SMMEs.

The study contributes to understanding digital transformation in a local South African context and provides recommendations to support more inclusive and effective digital adoption among traditional businesses.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, SMMEs, eThekwini District, Traditional Businesses, Adoption and Adaptation.

The Role of social media in Marketing Strategies for SMEs: A Case of The Retail Sector in KwaZulu- Natal (South Africa)

Ntokozo Joyful Dlamini1, Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology 4000, 21310021@dut4life.ac.za

Abstract:
The growing use of digital technologies has transformed marketing practices among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly through social media platforms in developing economies such as South Africa. In KwaZulu-Natal, retail SMEs are increasingly adopting social media to enhance their competitiveness and customer reach. However, despite this adoption, many SMEs struggle to utilise social media effectively due to limited financial resources, inadequate digital skills, and infrastructural constraints.
This study aims to explore how retail SMEs in KwaZulu-Natal use social media as a marketing tool. It identifies the challenges affecting its effective implementation.
Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the study adopts an interpretivist research philosophy and a qualitative multiple case study approach. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and social media content analysis involving SME owners and managers.
The findings reveal that while social media enhances brand visibility, customer engagement, and business resilience, its use remains largely informal and lacks strategic planning and performance measurement.
The study concludes by proposing a practical framework to support SMEs in adopting more structured and effective social media marketing strategies, thereby improving their competitiveness and long-term sustainability in the digital economy.

Keywords: digital marketing, KwaZulu-Natal, SMEs, social media, strategic marketing, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Corporate Social Responsibility practices: evidence from the automotive manufacturing SMEs in the eThekwini Metropolitan area

Nonophela Buhle Mvakwendlu
Durban University of Technology, South Africa

Abstract:
Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are considered a crucial sector in the South African economy. They enhance employment, reduce poverty, and enhance the total economic growth of any country. It is therefore, imperative for SMEs to evolve. To ensure survival and growth, SMEs are required to demonstrate flexibility and agility to business trends. Thus, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) serves as a strategic tool for business sustainability and growth. CSR is when organisations act responsibly and ethically towards society, the environment and other stakeholders, to maximise positive impact not just for profit. The use of CSR is believed to improve the performance of SMEs. However, SMEs in the automotive manufacturing sector encounter difficulties

in implementing CSR initiatives, hence impacting their business performance. Hence, the study evaluates the CSR activities implemented by SMEs in the eThekwini Metropolitan Area. The research was quantitative in nature, focusing on 120 SME owners in the automotive manufacturing sector within the eThekwini Metropolitan Area. Data gathered was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. The findings show that the business performance improves when SMEs engage in community support, especially with employee participation in these initiatives. Therefore, this study's original value is to reveal how SMEs in the automotive manufacturing sector in eThekwini Metropolitan Area perceive and participate in their CSR activities.

Keywords: business performance, corporate social responsibility, eThekwini Metropolitan Area, public good, small and medium sized enterprises

Greenwashing or Genuine Sustainability?

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Abstract:
Study Objectives To evaluate the alignment of adopted sustainability practices with the principles of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), focusing on environmental stewardship, economic viability and social responsibility. Given the objectives, this paper aims to critically evaluate the alignment of adopted sustainability practices in the hotel industry with the principles of the TBL, discerning between genuine sustainability efforts and instances of greenwashing. Method This study used a systematic review of 18 peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2025 to determine whether hotel sustainability practices reflect genuine alignment with the TBL dimensions. TBL was evaluated against measurable outcomes, such as resource efficiency, community engagement, employee welfare, financial sustainability and third-party verification. Results The hotel initiatives demonstrate partial alignment with the TBL encompassing environmental stewardship, economic viability and social responsibility. Genuine sustainability is marked by third-party certification, clear reporting with measurable key performance indicators, embedding sustainable practices in long-term strategy and integration of TBL pillars. Greenwashing has been evidenced by selectively showcasing eco-friendly practices, superficial labels and overemphasis on marketing the establishment. Implications Authentic integration can enhance efficiency, competitiveness and community trust. In contrast, superficial practices risk reputational damage and erode consumer confidence. There is a need for transparent reporting, credible certification and stronger regulations to ensure hotels contribute meaningfully and avoid green washing. Integrating sustainability criteria for hotels into existing mainstream systems such as the Tourism Grading Counsel South Africa (TGCSA) grading and the National Minimum Standards for Responsible Tourism (SANS 1162).

Keywords: Greenwashing, Sustainable tourism, Triple Bottom Line, Guest Trust, Green Hotels

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) on the Performance in the Consumer Goods Sector of Nkandla Municipality

Nontokozo Noluthando Shezi1, Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology, 4001, 22122184@dut4life.ac.za

Abstract:
Today's time-efficient communication methods have evolved and transformed the day-to-day social media landscape, enabling business concepts to spread. This shift has significantly influenced businesses to recognise the need to connect and adopt social media strategies. Research reveals that the use of social media marketing by Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) to advertise their businesses is significantly lower compared to large organisations.
This study aimed to investigate the impact of social media marketing on SMMEs performance in the consumer goods sector at Nkandla Municipality. The paper has three objectives. That is to determine existing social media strategies employed by SMMEs in consumer goods sector, evaluate the influence of social media on the performance of SMMEs and identify obstacles faced by SMMEs in using social media marketing for high performance. A qualitative approach was employed, with interviews conducted to collect data from the managers and owners.
The key findings of the study showed that social media marketing significantly enhances SMME performance by improving market engagement and sales, but SMMEs face numerous challenges such as resource limitations and skills gaps. The study highlights the need for support, required resources and special training for SMMEs to obtain in order to reduce the challenges they encounter while using social media to advertise their businesses. The study contributes by revealing on how social media strategies can boost SMME competitiveness and drive sales in the consumer goods sector in the Nkandla Municipality.
Keywords: consumer goods, marketing, media, social, SMMEs

Influence of Digital Technology on Business Operations Among Manufacturing Organisations in the iLembe Municipal District in South Africa

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Abstract:
The scarcity of water and energy in South Africa affects key economic sectors, including agriculture, industry, and energy generation, leading to significant operational inefficiencies, reduced productivity, and environmental degradation. These challenges are driven by unsustainable resource consumption patterns associated with industrialisation and urbanisation. Addressing these challenges requires the integration of digital transformation and data-driven decision-making to enhance resource efficiency and organisational sustainability. This study examines the influence of digital transformation, supported by data science techniques, on water and energy consumption, as well as operational cost efficiency, among manufacturing organisations in the iLembe Municipal District in South Africa. A quantitative, data-driven research design was employed, using a structured survey administered to 262 organisations, of which 184 valid responses were analysed. The study applies descriptive statistics and correlation analysis as core data science methods to evaluate the relationship between digital technology adoption and resource efficiency. Findings indicate that manufacturing organisations in the iLembe Municipal District are generally slow in adopting digital and data-driven technologies for reducing water and

energy consumption. However, respondents reported notable cost savings associated with the implementation of cleaner production processes. The results further demonstrate that data-driven digital technologies have a positive and statistically meaningful influence on water and energy efficiency, cost reduction, and overall organisational performance. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital transformation in emerging economies by providing empirical, data-driven insights at a district level. It is recommended that manufacturing organisations strengthen investment in digital technologies and data analytics capabilities to support sustainable operations and long-term competitiveness.

Keywords: digital technology; data science; manufacturing enterprises; water consumption; environmental practices.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Amongst Undergraduate Students at a selected University of Technology in the eThekwini Metropolitan area

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Abstract:
Entrepreneurship and innovation play a pivotal role in addressing unemployment and promoting economic development, particularly amongst young people in South Africa. As a result, higher education institutions are increasingly expected to equip students with entrepreneurial knowledge, practices and innovative skills that can enhance their ability to create and sustain businesses.
Consequently, this study investigates entrepreneurship and innovation amongst undergraduate students at a selected University of Technology in the eThekwini Metropolitan Area. It explores students' perceptions, attitudes, factors influencing their entrepreneurial intentions, innovative capabilities and the impact of a university education to develop entrepreneurial skills. To achieve these objectives, undergraduate students from the faculty of management sciences were interviewed for this study with an academic staff in the field of entrepreneurship.
This study uncovers the growing importance of entrepreneurship education in developing innovative and business-minded graduates. The findings highlight that while students recognise the value of entrepreneurship and innovation, several challenges such as limited practical exposure, lack of resources, and insufficient institutional support hinder their full development. The results emphasise the need for stronger integration of practical entrepreneurial training and innovation support within higher education institutions. This study provides valuable insights into how universities can better prepare students to become innovative entrepreneurs and active contributors to economic growth.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, higher education institutions, innovation, opportunities, skills, students

Reverse Innovation in African Start-ups: Disrupting Traditional Business Models in a VUCA Environment in eThekwini Municipality

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Abstract:
This study examines the role of reverse innovation in reshaping business models among African start-ups operating within the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment of eThekwini Municipality. As innovation increasingly emerges from developing economies, start-ups in this region are leveraging locally driven solutions to address socio-economic challenges, while strategically positioning themselves within the global marketplace.
The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews with entrepreneurs and ecosystem stakeholders alongside quantitative surveys to assess the prevalence and effectiveness of reverse innovation strategies. This methodological design enables a comprehensive investigation into how start-ups adapt to dynamic conditions, exploit digital technologies, and challenge conventional business norms. Key areas of focus include the influence of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem, the role of digital transformation, and the strategies employed by start-ups to navigate uncertainty and achieve sustainable growth.
The study seeks to determine whether these enterprises are merely adapting imported models or pioneering novel frameworks that are more appropriate for African contexts. By generating empirical insights, the research aims to contribute to the limited academic literature on reverse innovation in emerging markets. The findings are intended to provide practical implications for policymakers, investors, and entrepreneurs seeking to foster resilient, inclusive, and innovation-driven growth within urban African settings.

Keywords: Reverse innovation, VUCA environment, Emerging Markets, Digital Transformation, African start-ups

Sustainability Integration in Public Sector Governance: A Systematic Review of Strategies, Frameworks, and Institutional Outcomes

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Abstract:
This study systematically reviews scholarly literature on sustainability integration within public sector governance to identify dominant frameworks, implementation strategies, and documented institutional outcomes. The review seeks to synthesise current knowledge and reveal gaps in the operationalisation of sustainability within government systems. A systematic review methodology was applied using a structured search strategy across major academic databases. Peer-reviewed journal articles focusing on governance, sustainability, and public sector management were screened through predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Eligible studies were analysed using thematic synthesis to identify recurring governance models, policy instruments, performance indicators, and reform mechanisms associated with sustainability integration.
The review indicates that sustainability is most effectively embedded through integrated strategic planning, performance management systems, sustainable public financial management practices, and collaborative governance arrangements. However, persistent challenges include institutional resistance, limited capacity,

fragmented policy coordination, and weak monitoring frameworks. Evidence further suggests that adaptive governance, leadership commitment, and cross-sector partnerships significantly improve sustainability outcomes and institutional resilience. The findings provide policymakers and government leaders with consolidated insights into strengthening sustainability integration through coherent policy alignment, accountability mechanisms, and evidence-based decision-making. This study advances a comprehensive synthesis of sustainability institutionalisation in the public sector and identifies priority areas for future research and governance reform.

Keywords: Public Sector Governance; Sustainability Integration; Institutional Reform; Strategic Planning; Adaptive Governance; Policy Implementation; Sustainable Development

Inspirational Motivation for Students' Academic Success: A review of transformational leadership studies in South African Higher Education

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Abstract:
As the world navigates endearing challenges as a result of academic upheavals experienced, technological advancement, globalization, socio-economic imbalance with the list remaining endless, there is a major concern for the South African Higher Education to take cognizance of the crucial role of inspirational motivation in the improvement of students' academic success. Inspirational motivation as a core component of a transformational leadership translates into educational improvements for achieving students' success. As a dimension of transformational leadership style, it focuses on empowering, encouraging, inspiring, providing mentorship, enhances students' engagements, commitment and academic success. This is achieved by fostering a shared vision, enhancing the educator's autonomy and boosting morale, which in turn, results in innovative methods of enhancing students' learning outcomes preparing them for the future workforce. Inspirational motivation as a leadership aspect, if practice by educators transforms the curriculum from a rigid to a dynamic and practicable teaching method which empowers ownership, motivates the customization of adjusting students' curriculum making it more engaging and interactive, and finally, fosters a collaborative design of teaching.
The aim of the study is to identify the significant role of inspirational motivation in attaining academic success in South African Higher Education. This study will be undertaken by considering the application of the systematic review of existing studies of transformational leadership based on the concepts of behaviours, relational processes and students' outcome.
Based on reviewed studies, Inspirational leaders naturally create a supportive environment that encourages flexibility, creativity and active engagement. The practice of inspiration motivation in teaching curriculums generally improves student employability by directly aligning classroom experiences with future career needs. It serves as means through which the development of 21st century skills through innovative pedagogy could assist students in achieving critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills which are highly valued in today's workforce. More so, inspirational motivation serves as a stimulator which promotes knowledge sharing and entrepreneurial behavior among students. Conclusively, it serves as means of bridging theory and practice as educators are motivated to make their curriculums connect academic learning to industry-relevant practical experiences which enhances student readiness for the workforce.
For the purpose of the study, the search strategy includes a combination of key words such as "transformational leadership", "academic success" and "South African Higher Education" from several literature studies sourced from multidisciplinary databases such as Google scholar, Web of Science and Scopus. The number of literature

studies gathered for the study will be determined by the inclusion and exclusion criteria undertaken through PRISMA. This will be indicated based on studies carried out between 2020-2025. The essence of this study is to provide a recommendable designed teaching curriculum for South African Higher Education which will be relevant for sustainable employability. The designed curriculum proposes the implementation of self-efficacy, persistence and digital fluency to attain maximum academic success. Considering such transformative roles mitigate the challenges faced by academics, expands digital learning, improves teaching and learning and most importantly, foster a supportive learning environment for students.

Keywords: Inspirational Motivation, Transformational Leadership, Higher Education, Academic, South Africa Higher Education

Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions among Students in TVET Colleges and Public Universities in Durban, South Africa

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Abstract:
Entrepreneurship education has increasingly been recognised as a strategic intervention for addressing graduate unemployment and promoting self-employment in South Africa. However, concerns remain regarding the extent to which entrepreneurship programmes within post-school education institutions effectively influence entrepreneurial intentions among students. This study examined the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions among students enrolled in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and public universities in Durban, South Africa. The study was grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Human Capital Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, with quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires administered to students participating in entrepreneurship education programmes. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate how entrepreneurship education serves as a critical factor in strengthening entrepreneurial intentions, entrepreneurial confidence, opportunity recognition, and business readiness among students. The findings revealed that entrepreneurship education positively influenced entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intentions to establish businesses, although differences emerged between TVET and university students regarding access to resources, risk tolerance, and perceptions of business preparedness. The study further found that institutional and environmental barriers continue to limit students' transition into sustainable entrepreneurial activity. The paper concludes by proposing an integrated entrepreneurship education model as a key factor in improving entrepreneurship development within post-school institutions. The specific results are reflected in areas such as teamwork, innovation, skills development, adaptability to change, and entrepreneurial tolerance towards risk and uncertainty.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurial intentions, Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and Youth entrepreneurship.

Evaluating the Entrepreneurial Development Ecosystem Supporting TVET and University Graduates in Durban, South Africa

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Abstract:
Entrepreneurship development ecosystems play a critical role in enabling graduates to transition from entrepreneurship education into sustainable business creation. Despite increasing investment in entrepreneurship education within South Africa's post-school education sector, many graduates continue to face barriers in establishing and sustaining entrepreneurial ventures. This study evaluated the effectiveness of the entrepreneurial development ecosystem supporting graduates from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and public universities in Durban, South Africa. The study was informed by the entrepreneurial ecosystem frameworks developed by Daniel Isenberg, Erik Stam, and Ben Spigel, as well as Social Capital Theory. A qualitative research approach was employed using semi-structured interviews with learners, facilitators, mentors, industry experts, and support agency representatives. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate how an integrated entrepreneurial development ecosystem serves as a key factor in supporting sustainable graduate entrepreneurship and improving business development outcomes. The findings revealed significant ecosystem challenges, including limited access to finance, inadequate mentorship, poor market access, weak institutional coordination, infrastructure constraints, and insufficient post-training support mechanisms. Participants highlighted that entrepreneurship education alone was insufficient without integrated ecosystem support capable of facilitating business growth and sustainability. The paper concludes by proposing a collaborative entrepreneurial ecosystem model as a major factor in improving entrepreneurship development and graduate business sustainability. The specific results are reflected in the areas of mentorship, institutional collaboration, innovation support, skills development, and improved entrepreneurial adaptability within South Africa's post-school education sector.

Keywords: Business support systems, Entrepreneurial ecosystem, Entrepreneurship development, Graduate entrepreneurship, Mentorship, and Youth entrepreneurship.

Factors influencing the Entrepreneurial Intentions of the third-year Business Administration Students in the Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management at Durban University of Technology (DUT)

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship has emerged as a significant catalyst for economic advancement, innovation, and job creation, especially among young graduates in developing countries. This research explores the factors that affect the entrepreneurial aspirations of third-year Business Administration students in the Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management at Durban University of Technology (DUT). The objective of this study is to pinpoint the personal, social, educational, and environmental elements that either encourage or dissuade students from considering entrepreneurship as a career path. A quantitative research methodology will be utilized, with questionnaires designed to gather data from third-year students in the department. The investigation will analyze factors such as entrepreneurial

education, family background, access to financial resources, self-efficacy, risk tolerance, and institutional support. Data gathered will be examined through statistical techniques to identify the connection between these variables and the entrepreneurial intentions of students. The study's results are anticipated to shed light on ways higher education institutions can enhance the promotion of entrepreneurship among their students. Moreover, the research may help policymakers and university administration in crafting strategies, programs, and support mechanisms that foster entrepreneurial engagement among graduates. In essence, this research aims to enhance the understanding of entrepreneurship development in the context of higher education in South Africa.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Education, Self-Efficacy, Risk Tolerance, Durban University of Technology

Analysis of High School Graduates' Skills and the Labour Market

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Abstract
This qualitative study explores the ethical and practical implications of reintegrating high school graduates into the labour market. It specifically assesses their employability, skill sets, and the relationship between secondary education, skill development programmes, and employment opportunities. The research examines whether obtaining a high school diploma enhances an individual's capacity to acquire vocational skills, gain relevant work experience, and secure employment, all within the framework of moral and professional standards. A purposive sample of 30 participants consisting of 15 females and 15 males were selected from high school students and surveyed using structured questionnaires and drawing prompt to ensure gender representation. The study highlights both the opportunities and challenges faced by recent graduates, emphasising their lived experiences and perspectives. Its aim is to evaluate the extent to which high school education prepares learners for the modern workforce, providing evidence-based insights into their moral and professional integration. Findings indicate that many graduates lack essential practical skills, work experience, and access to suitable employment environments, which hampers their transition into formal employment.

Keywords: High School Graduates, Skill Development, Life Orientation, Youth Employability, Moral and Professional Standards.

The Influence of Business Features on Entrepreneurial Orientation among Small and Medium Enterprises for Survival and Expansion in Rural Areas of KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa

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Abstract: The living standard of South Africa's rural population and rural area development play a major role in the country's economic growth. One of the most crucial components of a nation's economic development, as well as the rural communities within it, is small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Rural business owners-managers make the most use of limited resources, which boosts revenue and lowers expenses; however, the bulk of rural residents encounter a slow rate of economic growth and technological advancement, in terms of contemporary marketing tools, due to a lack of education. The primary issues facing rural entrepreneurs are a lack of funding and input supplies, with the majority rural SMEs also dealing with unusual issues such as illiteracy, risk aversion, inexperience and lack of training, as well as low purchasing power, and rivalry from metropolitan business owners. In addition, the development of rural areas depends on the encouragement of rural business. This study focuses on identifying distinct characteristics of rural enterprises in specific KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) rural locations and how these traits affect the entrepreneurial orientation (EO) of SMEs toward their growth and survival.
A closed-ended, structured questionnaire was employed in the study as a measuring tool to guarantee the results are reliable, valid, and consistent with the study content and predictability. To evaluate the factors among chosen rural KZN SMEs, a questionnaire was developed based on the literature review, which served as the primary information source, with data collected from 309 rural SME owners and managers. Reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$) and significance at $p < .001$ were verified by statistical analysis (SPSS v27). Results show EO has a beneficial influence on performance, with this effect reinforced by favorable rural enterprise attributes, such as investments, contemporary equipment, upskilling employees, and marketing facilities, as well as sufficient infrastructure. The findings show that better SME characteristics increase EO performance returns, highlighting unique challenges faced by rural SMEs.

Keywords: Economic growth, Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial orientation, SME, technological advancement.