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THE ORIGINS OF THE BOOK

The root of the book *Technological Solutions for Sustainable Business Practice in Asia* lies in the *International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management*. This journal has been published since 2010.

The mission of the journal is to establish an effective channel of communication between academic and research institutions, policy makers, government agencies, and individuals concerned with the complexities of Asian business, information technologies, sustained development, and globalization. The International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management promotes and coordinates developments in the field of Asian studies, as well as presents strategic roles of IT and management towards sustainable development.

Last year the *International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management* published four regular issues, with a total of 23 academic articles.

One of the goals of the journal is to increase the submissions of papers from Central Asia, the Himalayan region and South East Asia. Readers of our journal will find interesting insights on these countries in coming issues. Central Asian countries, such as Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, play a geostrategic role in world economy and politics, and academic articles about these countries do not abound.

Another goal is to publish special issues about the impact of tourism on economies and sustainable development in specific Asian countries, like Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos or Myanmar (Karma Ura & Ordóñez de Pablos, 2012, 2014; Ordóñez de Pablos, 2013).

Myanmar, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has a population of over 60 million. The major racial groups are Bamar, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. The country offers diverse tourist products; one of them is associated with the cultural and religious festivals that take place every month of the year.

As the Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism in Myanmar (2013) document states “the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is currently becoming an emerging and fast-growing tourism destination in Southeast Asia. For the first time in its history, Myanmar received over 1 million international visitors in 2012. The number of international visitors increased by over 30% compared to 2011. The total income from tourism activity was $534 million in 2012 compared to $319 million in 2011” (p. 9).

According to the *Ministry of Hotels and Tourism of Myanmar*, some of the main festivals held there are: Ananda Pagoda Festival, Kachin Manaw Festival, Naga New Year Festival, Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda Festival, Kyaik Khawk Pagoda Festival, Maha Muni Pagoda Festival, Glutinous Rice Festival, Ko Gyi
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For example, “the Great Ananda Pagoda Festival is said to have been going on continuously since the Bagan period”; in the Kachin Manaw Festival “Manaw dance is performed which originated as part of the Nat or spirit worship of the past” Naga New Year Festival is “one of the rarest ceremonies in Myanmar. There are more than 49 different clans with their own distinctive dresses and dialects”. In the Mann Shwe Settaw Pagoda Festival “there are two pagodas which enshrine footprints of the Buddha. The site is on the bank of Mann Creek, where bamboo cabins are erected every year for local travelers to enjoy cool swims during the heat of summer; “Maha Muni Buddha image is highly venerated as it is said to be made in front of Buddha Himself, and thus its face is most revered. The image is completely covered with 15 cm-thick gold. February is the coldest month in Myanmar and at the Maha Muni Pagoda Festival Devotees light bonfires and cook huge pans of sticky rice with ginger, coconut and sesame to offer to monks”; Htamane (Glutinous Rice Festival) “is a competition between teams of men for donation of Glutinous Rice to the Great Lord Buddha in early morning on Full Moon Day. There are lots of people enjoy watching the demonstrations and competition of cooking glutinous rice and after finished. Glutinous rice is distributed as donation to people and followed by the prize giving ceremony for the winners” (www.myanmartourism.org; Myanmar Tourism Master Plan, 2014)

TOPICS OF THE BOOK

The book Technological Solutions for Sustainable Business Practice in Asia presents a collection of 13 chapters on Asian business, economy and technology. Manuscripts address key topics in these fields of research and experts offer insights on how to develop business strategies in this region of the world. Asia is one of the key economic players in the globalised economy and tourism will play a crucial role in the economic and social development, like in Myanmar.

Some contributors are authors of best papers published in International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management in 2013 while other chapters are written by leading academics and experts in the field of technology and sustainable business in Asian countries as China, India, Malaysia and Thailand.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The book “Technological Solutions for Sustainable Business Practice in Asia” provides timely and in-depth analysis on Asian economy, business and management with a clear international and interdisciplinary approach. It is a comprehensive resource for academics, PhD students, experts, policy makers and government officials, as it contains a wealth of valuable research on theories and practices which underpin successful business and management in Asia.
ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into 13 chapters. A brief description of each of the chapters follows

Chapter 1 (“Role of technology options for financial inclusion. Case study in India”) by Shalu Chopra, Arun Mohan Sherry and Rajeev Dwivedi states that “financial services have a ubiquitous need however the urban rich have easy and universal access with wider options, compared to the low-income group who are forced to accept informal, expensive and riskier means to fulfill their financial needs. The demand and supply of financial services for the poor is imbalanced, with supply being acutely constrained by lack of viability and sustainability of current business models. Technology and IT has a pivotal role in making financial inclusion a viable reality. Technology, including information technology can enable lowering costs by increasing automation, enhancing efficiency, enabling scaling up through uniformity, consistency and security. Multiple technology choices are available to financial service providers but few have been proven yet. This chapter examines technology options at the front end and back-end in detail with a critique of alternatives available for financial inclusion in Indian context”.

Chapter 2 (“New chinese entrepreneurs. perspectives of confucian attributes and social settings”) by Connie Zheng, Deakin University, Bai Xuan Wang and Mei-Chih Hu “uses a qualitative approach to explore the characteristics of newly-bred Chinese entrepreneurs among 14 technology-based companies in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Internal and external perspectives on studying entrepreneurship were adapted to examine personality attributes and the impacts of social settings on shaping the characteristics of modern Chinese entrepreneurs. The findings show that Chinese entrepreneurs were strongly influenced by the Confucianism, in which learning was upheld as a key to develop internal innovative capabilities for sustaining enterprise growth in the dynamic environment. Chinese entrepreneurs leading technologically innovative companies were also found to be visionary, but with less risk taking; they had exceptional networking capability and political dexterity to build strong relationships with government, industry and community. The tie between the Confucian entrepreneurial attributes and strong government support appears to enable the ‘innovation in Chinese way’. Implications of these results are discussed”.

Chapter 3 (“Role of entrepreneurship in networked indian economy) by Neeta Baporikar states that “historically, all societies may have a constant supply of entrepreneurial activity, but that activity is distributed unevenly. Urban areas are favourable for innovative entrepreneurship, as a result of economies of density and the opportunities created by the city as a nucleus of a broader network. Thus, a modern entrepreneur tends to become increasingly a network operator and manager. The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to our understanding on entrepreneurship in networked economy of India; thereto the literature is summarized from the perspective of geographical seedbed conditions and network constellations. It focuses on the role played by small firms and entrepreneurship. The constraints are identified, and the areas that need action are highlighted. It is also suggested that in the age of liberalization and globalization, any attempt at creation of a competitive environment in the country would need to explicitly note the emerging global production and knowledge networks”.

Chapter 4 (“Strengthening sustainability through the lenses of corporate social responsibility concept. A conceptual study”) by Sabyasachi Dasgupta indicates that “the term “Corporate Social Responsibility” has gained lot of momentum in the last few decades. Carroll’s pyramidal model has made significant contribution to the debate by categorizing corporate social responsibility into four broad dimensions: Economic, Legal, Ethical and Philanthropic. This paper looks into different dimensions of corporate social responsibility and tries to deconstruct its primary motive. Through the scanning of literatures
on the definitions of corporate social responsibility concept, this paper tries to understand the focus of such an attempt. It then takes the help of qualitative in-depth interview methodology to understand what the corporate managers in India across sectors feel about corporate social responsibility. This leads to convergence of literature review and in-depth interview findings benefiting both academic and corporate world. The findings suggest that although companies seem to accomplish such responsibility for societal purposes, the ultimate objective is an economically viable model which leads to the sustainability of a corporate organization”.

Chapter 5 (“Manifestation of ethical consumption behaviour through five precepts of Buddhism”) by Nilanthi Ratnayake and Dushan Chaminda develops a study that “conceptualises the importance of religious beliefs in ethical consumer behaviour and through researcher introspection methodology, the study empirically explore whether and how ethical consumerism is reflected through Five Precepts of Buddhism [i.e. (1) abstain from taking life, (2) abstain from stealing, (3) abstain from sexual misconduct, (4) abstain from false speech, and (5) abstain from intoxicants that cloud the mind]. The study contributes to the theory and teaching in the marketing discipline by linking how religious beliefs enhance ethical consumerism that remains largely unexplored”.

Chapter 6 (“Corporate social responsibility, stakeholder perception and firm performance: Walmart”) by Siva Prasad Ravi states that “in the present-day business landscape characterised by global competition, demanding customers and depleting natural resources, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an important strategy for corporations for creating competitive advantage. CSR involves a corporation’s commitment to align performance (revenue growth and profit) motives with fulfillment of social, ethical, community and environmental obligations. Researchers have found a positive correlation between stakeholder perceptions of firm’s CSR performance and financial performance, assuming other factors as constant. This paper, based on analysis of Wal-Mart’s performance from 2001 to 2011, found, seemingly significant negative perceptions of CSR activities of corporations result in lower performance. Once formed, changing negative perceptions is often difficult and the effort involves considerable amount of resources with questionable outcomes. This study has come to the conclusion that being a good ‘Corporate Citizen’ and creating positive stakeholder perceptions is a better strategic approach for firm’s continuing success”.

Chapter 7 (“Sustainable community enterprises in Thailand. How new technology enhances implementation” by Prapeeporn Sawasduang describes “a method developed working with local village communities in Thailand to create sustainable community enterprises principally based on local knowledge and resources. Characteristics of local communities in Thailand are described, before research methodology and the approach used is discussed. The importance of incorporating local intellectual capital is noted. A community enterprise learning model developed and validated using case study work carried out in the Central Region of Thailand is described. The community learning process has been evaluated and refined. The work may be more generically applicable, and can form the basis for a broader co-operation with similar groups conducting studies in other countries. The success of this work relies on personal contact, however new technologies can be employed to support and upgrade the entire activity”.

Chapter 8 (“Effect of necessary factors for deploying e-business models on business performance and supply chain performance in auto industry”) by Mohsen Shafiei Nikabadi and Ahmad Jafarian analyzes the “effects of necessary factors for deploying e-business models on business performance and supply chain performance in automotive industry. Recognition of different aspects in the field of study is based on confirmatory factor analysis and then type of each determined aspects with business and supply chain performance is surveyed using correlation analysis. Findings of this study shows positive relationship
between necessary aspects of implementing e-business on both aspects of operational and general indexes of business performance evaluation. Also, we will study the relation of every identified aspect with the performance of the supply chain in the auto industry. Also findings show that the necessary factors for implementing the e-business shall have the highest degree of correlation with the operational aspects of supply chain performance evaluation criteria”.

Chapter 9 (“Does institutional diversity affect firms’ innovative activities in Asian economies? An institutional approach to innovation”) by Hironori Tohyama and Yuji Harada contributes to the “recent literature on institutional comparative analyses of Asian economies; it makes three distinct contributions. First, we investigate the institutional diversity of Asian economies by using multivariate methods, and show five different groups within Asian economies that can be distinguished from advanced economies. Second, based on firm-level data, we determine whether institutional environments have a favorable effect on the innovation activities of firms; concurrently, we discuss whether or not joining a global supply chain induces firms to engage in innovation activities. Our analytical results show that institutional characteristics have a positive effect on firms’ decisions to engage in those activities, and that institutional configurations provide the foundation for a global supply chain built in East Asian economies. Third, we emphasize that the current institutional diversity can persist, given the positive interaction between the institutional diversity of Asian economies and the innovation activities of Asian firms”.

Chapter 10 (“Technology and Innovation: The Connection of Social and Technological Networks in China”) by Ron Berger states that “the advances in information technology have popularized the use of technology both as a tool in the business world and as a topic for academic research. Technological innovation enables firms to match technologies with market opportunities and so to promote firm growth. Establishing and nurturing a firm’s network legitimacy is important because it sensitizes managers to the relationship between an organization’s survival and the network environment beyond mere social networks or guanxi in China. Speed to market is one of the most important competitive advantages in nowadays’ market. In order to augment the responsiveness of the whole supply chain, time supervision and the use of technology become central topics in the trade. Responsiveness requires information sharing among all members across the supply chain and thus how to facilitate channel coordination is a major problem to address. Enterprise resource planning (ERP) system solution has been employed to deal with this issue by re-engineering the supply chain within and beyond an organization. Against the environment of emerging planned industries in China, knowledge formation and indigenous innovation are noteworthy while knowledge sharing remains an necessary forerunner to knowledge formation. In China, the effect of guanxi exerts a great influence on individual behaviour. This chapter addresses the issue of guanxi creation that is inherently based on an individual’s knowledge and social networks to the technological implementation in the Chinese firm. An ERP system, that is based on access to technological networks based on Western business culture leading to potential conflict if implemented without cultural sensitivity as China is based on social business networks. There is a need to balance these two networks if harmony and business success is to be achieved”.

Chapter 11 (“The effects of organizational socialization and leadership behavior on burnout. Evidence from manufacturing workers in China”) by Jennifer H. Gao, states that “the relationship between organizational socialization (Training, Understanding, Coworker Support, and Future Prospects) and leadership behavior (Monitor, Producer, Consideration for Others, and Trust in Others) and burnout (Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment) were explored and discussed. Data were collected from 341 Chinese manufacturing workers in Southern China. Results revealed that organizational socialization was highly and negatively correlated with Emotional Exhaustion, but highly and positively
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with Personal Accomplishment. Monitor, Consideration, and Trust were highly and negatively correlated with Emotional Exhaustion, but all the four leadership behaviors were highly and positively correlated with Personal Accomplishment. Regression revealed Training and Monitor to be significant predictors of Emotional Exhaustion, and Understanding, Coworker Support, and Trust explained significant variance of Personal Accomplishment. Management implications are discussed, and future research is indicated”.

Chapter 12 (“Postgraduate students’ perceived e-learning acceptance: model validation using SEM method”) by M.R.K.N. Yatigammana, Md Gapar Md Johor and Chandra Gunawardhana states that “E-learning is a method of delivering knowledge using information technology and electronic media for the remote users. The advantages of e-learning method can be fully achieved with the postgraduate studies as majority of the postgraduate students are engaged in learning while they are working and also geographically dispersed due to the family and work life thus physically appearing for the lecture sessions are difficult to them. This chapter attempts to develop a framework to measure the postgraduate students’ perceived technology acceptance by developing a modified version of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which replaces perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in the original model of TAM with relative advantage and complexity and incorporate other variables of trialability, observability, compatibility, psychological wellbeing and social influence of the students. The developed model is validated using 200 postgraduate students from Sri Lanka and thus this model can be used in future researchers to measure the perceived e-learning acceptance of postgraduate students”.

Chapter 13 (“Business sustainability and the law: The retrenchment laws in the context of Malaysian human resource management”) by Balakrishnan Muniapan describes “the legal right to retrench employees from a human resource management context in Malaysia. The chapter is based on the analysis of the relevant statutes on retrenchment such as the Employment Act 1955, The Industrial Relations Act 1967, the Employment (Termination and Lay-Off Benefits) Regulations 1980 and the Code of Conduct for Industry Harmony 1975. The author has also used criterion based sampling of the Industrial Court and Superior Court awards to analyze retrenchment cases and to provide recommendations to human resource management practitioners. Findings from these cases analyses reveal that many of the retrenchment awards were made against the employers due to poor selection of workforce for retrenchment, and the handling of the retrenchment exercise itself which violated the relevant statutes and the established procedures. The author suggests that retrenchment should not be viewed as a reactive but a proactive exercise, which begins with effective human resource planning aligned with the organizational strategic plan. The retrenchment exercise should also need be seen as a last resort when limiting recruitment, reduction in working hours, helping the employees (workmen) to find alternative employment, encouraging early retirement, offer of voluntary separation scheme (VSS) and other measures have been exhausted. The author hopes with many proactive measures, taken by employers in the management of retrenchment, the number of unfair retrenchment claims made to the Industrial Relations Department will be reduced. This will eventually improve or maintain the harmonious employment relations”.

In sum this collection of chapters will definitely help readers to understand current challenges of the Asian market and define strategies and actions to be taken in this market. The book will be a valuable source of updated information and knowledge for students, academics, policy makers and general readers interested in getting new insights on the Asian markets, to how develop effective strategies for economic and social growth, for sustainable development, for preserving cultural heritage, etc.

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REFERENCES


