Foreword

Migration and the emergence of global diasporas have been one of the definitive features of modern history. Indeed, the global diaspora population continues to swell compelling researchers from various disciplines to take a more focused and at the same time more nuanced view of this phenomenon. The variety of lens now on this topic has seen discourse on migration and diasporas moving from mainly the preoccupation of researchers such as sociologists to gaining increased attention among development, business and management scholars.

One of the most interesting and promising lines of research is that which has linked international business and entrepreneurship with diaspora studies. Such a focus allows for a more empowering view of the group, one which helps to diversify the discourse away from the pessimism and hopelessness which sometimes prevail in other accounts of the migrant experience. The focus on entrepreneurship gives diasporas more integrity, a pride of place in their adopted societies, demonstrating that they do have economic value and they do help to grow economies in their adopted societies. In this way, the diversity they bring is not only in terms of multiplying the different hues/shade of skin or lilt of the tongue. Rather, they also bring opportunities for expanded and diversified markets internally and externally; helping to create new opportunities for exports and transnational business which contribute to bi- and multi-directional flow of economic activities in their countries of origin, residence and even third countries. I have already argued this to be the case in a number of areas, including the food industry, financial services and telecommunications. The growth of the international calling card business is a specific example here. Diasporas create employment opportunities, while also presenting to businesses a wealth of knowledge, education and experiences as employees. They present new businesses opportunities in some cases with an entire ecosystem of innovative diaspora-related products and services in which micro, small, medium and large businesses are able to thrive.

Dr. Sanya Ojo has sought to situate this book in this still emerging body of work. Indeed, the practical and managerial implications from many of the chapters in this collection are that businesses in such heterogeneous markets also need to devise marketing strategies that acknowledge the reality of increased diversity. Entrepreneurship, not only among the diaspora but beyond will thrive where they embrace the value proposition of multi-ethnic and multiracial societies. As such, the collection brings a much-welcomed view to diasporas and migrants at a time where the rhetoric in many traditional migrants' receiving settings, such as the US, UK and Europe seems skewed towards an unwelcoming view of the migrant as an economic and social drain on receiving societies. The collection, for the most part, challenges these views, presenting the opportunities for value-creation through diaspora and transnational entrepreneurship as a realm of new possibilities for many countries.
Together, the authors in this collection, some of whom have themselves, lived the diaspora and transnational experience, also demonstrate the multiple sides and issues in diaspora and transnational entrepreneurship. As such, one of the contributions of this volume can be considered as its approach to going beyond a consideration of the ‘diaspora entrepreneur’ as a monolith. The chapters, therefore feature diaspora entrepreneurs in multiple settings at home and in adopted countries or countries of residence. It features the socio-cultural aspects and well-being of diaspora entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs as well as the networks and non-economic effects and activities of this group. Some areas in diaspora entrepreneurship and diaspora business research that deserve more attention, are, therefore, captured in this book. Among these is the role of returnee diaspora entrepreneurs and their experiences, as well as the need for more concrete studies that assess the impact of diaspora entrepreneurship on poverty alleviation in countries of origin. In this depiction, transnational entrepreneurship not only means a focus on the diaspora in the country of residence and its associations at home but also the process of return and reintegration back into the homeland.

Notwithstanding, a presentation of diaspora and transnational entrepreneurship and the migrant experience would still not be complete without the acknowledgement of the complexities inherent in the process of movement and the alienation and sense of otherness that this brings to some groups and even some members of the same group. In effect these emotional and psychological states of being do impact the economic space and outcomes of diaspora and transnational entrepreneurs. As such the book also captures these in compelling stories that will attract a variety of readers. The inclusion of such works is in keeping with the intent to demonstrate all aspects of the experiences of diaspora entrepreneurs, including the various forms of capital and networks (formal and informal) that affect their activities. To be sure, though, the leaning is still very much towards an empowering account and necessarily so.

Dr Ojo brings the dedication, commitment and years of experience in entrepreneurship and international business to bear in pulling together a skilled group of scholars towards the production of this commendable collection of papers. The book should make a good companion for scholars, policy makers, students and the general reader across a range of interests. The book helps to shed more light on diaspora and transnational entrepreneurship, contributing to the breadth of understandings, theoretical development and interpretations of these concepts.

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