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International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues

# Book of Abstracts

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## Preface

It is with great pleasure to welcome you to the 12<sup>th</sup> “**International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues**” (ICCFI 2024) co-organized by the Department of Business Administration and Tourism, School of Management and Economics Sciences, Hellenic Mediterranean University (HMU), Greece and the School of Organisations, Economy & Society, University of Westminster, UK. The 12<sup>th</sup> ICCFI is hosted by the HMU in Heraklion Crete, Greece from July 10 to July 12, 2024.

The *International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues* (ICCFI) 2024 brings together leading academics and researchers from around the world to explore the dynamic and ever-evolving landscape of marketing in the 21st century. As globalization and technological advancements continue to reshape consumer behavior and business practices, it is imperative to foster dialogue and collaboration to address these changes and harness new opportunities.

The abstracts contained in this book represent the cutting edge of marketing research and practice. They cover a wide array of topics, including digital marketing strategies, consumer behavior analysis, branding, sustainability, social media marketing, culture, and tourism/hospitality. Each abstract provides a glimpse into the innovative and thought-provoking work being conducted by our distinguished participants, offering valuable insights and fresh perspectives. As we navigate through an era marked by rapid technological change and increasing calls for sustainable practices, it is crucial to develop marketing strategies that not only drive business success but also contribute positively to society and the environment.

This book of abstracts serves as a testament to the collaborative spirit and intellectual rigor that define the ICCFI. The diverse range of contributions reflects the global nature of the conference, bringing together voices from different cultural and academic backgrounds. It is our hope that the ideas and discussions sparked by these abstracts will inspire further research, dialogue, and action within the marketing community and beyond.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all the authors who submitted their work, the reviewers for their meticulous evaluation, and the organizing committee for their tireless efforts in making this conference a reality. Special thanks also go to our sponsors and partners, whose support has been invaluable.

This year we are honoured to have with us, as a keynote speaker, Professor Savvas Papagiannidis. Prof. Papagiannidis is the David Goldman Professor of Innovation & Enterprise and the Head of Information Systems and Operations Group at Newcastle University. We warmly thank him for his great contribution to the success of the conference.

We also extend our sincere gratitude and thanks to the two universities co-organizing this year’s conference, namely the Hellenic Mediterranean University (HMU) and the University of Westminster, to the international advisory scientific board and to the international scientific committee members who ensured the quality of the papers. In addition we thank the collaborating journals’ editors for their willingness to contribute to the success of the conference, the papers’ authors for their papers submitted and all the conference delegates who came to Heraklion to participate in the event.

Our thanks are extended to the Hellenic Mediterranean University for hosting the event and the Region of Crete who kindly supported the conference. Finally, our deepest appreciation to msquare, the company behind the technical organization of the conference.

We are confident that ICCFI 2024 will be a catalyst for innovative thinking and meaningful exchange, driving the field of marketing forward. We look forward to the engaging discussions and new connections that will emerge from this gathering of brilliant minds.

As the conference co-Chairs we would like to welcome you and assure you that it is a great honor for us to welcome all of you here.

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# Advertising

## Mitigating the reactance to personalized email marketing in e-tourism using predictive modeling

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### **Abstract:**

Email marketing remains nowadays an attractive technique in all business sectors, since it offers high effectiveness with low cost. It also allows the precise targeting of customers and the delivery of personalized content to individual customers, improving their experience and the effectiveness of the marketing actions. As reported by Kumar (2021), users pay more attention to the messages they receive through email than during their browsing in web pages and social media. Not surprisingly, e-commerce platforms in the tourism sector make intensive use of e-mail marketing. In this way, they approach their audience and guide potential customers in locating the information they search for during trip planning and attract them in proceeding to reservations (Sigala, 2015). Using advanced data-driven technologies, e-tourism platforms segment their users according to their profile, behavior and transaction history, and keep sending frequent personalized messages for promotion, retargeting or cross-selling (Gupta, 2019).

On the other hand, according to multiple studies, excessive posting of advertising messages may result not only in saturation and annoyance but also in negative reactions and stances opposite to the desirable ones (Bright & Daugherty, 2012; Rejón-Guardia & Martínez-López, 2014). The boomerang effect, already defined since the '50s by Hovland & Kelley (1953), explains the tendency of people to characterize an advertisement as intrusive and to react negatively when they feel that their freedom to choose is threatened (Morimoto & Chang, 2006). This is closely related to the Theory of Psychological Reactance (Brehm, 1972), according to which people are motivated to regain the freedom which they perceive as threatened, by acting in the opposite direction from what they are told to do. Personalized email advertisements may raise concerns regarding manipulation and privacy. Therefore, heavily personalized messages are less likely to be accepted by their targeted audience when these people feel that they lose control of their actions and that their behavior is monitored without their consent (Tucker, 2014).

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors contributing to the boomerang effect in e-tourism platforms and to find the importance and role of each factor to different types of customers. The targeted result was a prediction model that is able to estimate the reactions of different market segments of various acceptance levels. In this way, it will be possible to balance the characteristics of email marketing actions so that the benefits of personalization are retained and at the same time, the reactance caused by intrusiveness is mitigated.

The methodology used was based on predictive modeling techniques, more specifically on decision tree classifiers and k-means clustering, which are widely used technologies in the area of data mining (Berry & Linoff, 2009). The methods were selected for their ability to learn from existing data in order to predict future behavior and in parallel to provide a highly interpretable result. Input data were collected through a primary questionnaire-based survey on the stances of e-tourism platform users against the promotional emails which they receive from such platforms. The dataset included information about the users and their habits regarding the use of e-tourism platforms, their perceptions related to the major factors associated to the boomerang effect, their stances against promotional emails for touristic products and the way they respond to messages. The data analysis was twofold. Firstly, a classification model based on decision trees was trained to predict reactance, using as independent variables the users' characteristics and their stances. This analysis provided insights in an illustrative way on the effect of various factors to customers' reactions. Secondly, a cluster analysis was performed to identify distinct customer segments with different levels of acceptance of promotional messages.

In order to construct the data model and develop the related questionnaire, the important factors contributing to the boomerang effect, were found in the extensive related literature (Chen et al., 2019, Gironda & Korgaonkar,

2016; Chen et al., 2022; White et al., 2008). The identified factors were: concerns about Privacy - the higher the concerns about losing control and the potential misuse of personal data, the higher the negative reaction; Intrusiveness - the degree in which a promotional message is distracting the customer from his/her actions at the moment when it appears; Reliability of the source - strengthens the perceived usefulness of the message and alleviates reservations; Information - useful information content increases the value of the message and improves its acceptance; Relevance - the accurate matching of the message to the personalized needs of the recipient increases its perceived value; Frequency - many repetitions of a promotional message create the feeling of intrusiveness, cause negative reaction and reduce the intention to buy; Usefulness - the degree in which a message is perceived as useful depends on its successful adaptation to the profile of the recipient. The level and nature of the reactance caused to a customer by the promotional emails which he/she receives from an e-tourism platform consist of multiple dimensions. In this study, as elements of the boomerang effect we adopted the concepts of Prevention (excessive promotional messages finally prevent the customer from purchasing the promoted product), Depreciation (excessive promotional messages create the image of low value), and Doubtfulness (excessive promotional messages make the customer doubt about the trustworthiness of the platform).

The survey was conducted in October 2023 using an electronic questionnaire, which was distributed by the researchers through social media in public form. The final sample, after quality control, was 212 respondents (45% men and 55% women), aged from 18 to 67 years old. Most of the respondents (57%) were holders of a university degree or postgraduate title, while 22% were graduates of secondary education. All of the respondents were frequent users of the internet and email, 37% of them use the internet more than 5 hours per day and 44% check always or almost always all their email folders, including spam and social media & promotional messages. 53% of the respondents use their email both for work/studies and personal communication. As regards the use of e-tourism platforms, 90% declared that they use such platforms every time they plan for a trip and 74% that they always or almost always proceed in price comparisons in multiple platforms.

The general stances of e-tourism platform users in relation to the seven factors, which, according to the literature, are important to the boomerang effect, were evaluated using multi-item questions in the form of 5-level Likert scales. The responses related to concerns about their privacy, showed that the respondents are aware that the platforms make use of their personal data but tend to consider this acceptable. The promotional email messages were characterized as distracting in general, however, in average, respondents were neutral regarding intrusiveness and a large percentage (43%) did not think that the messages distract them from their work. As regards the perceived reliability of e-tourism platforms, the users characterized them as honest, knowledgeable of the market and as providers of services of good quality. A large percentage (more than 70%) of the respondents were positive regarding the informational value of the emails they receive. They think that the messages are a good source of useful and updated information. As regards the relevance to their needs, most of the users understand that the platforms track their activity in order to provide personalized services, however most of them don't agree that this practice makes them feel unique. The responses regarding the frequency of promotional emails showed that the frequent repetitions of promotional messages, according to most of the respondents, do not have important impact on their decisions and do function in favor of the promoted touristic product. Finally, 54% of the sample agree or totally agree that the messages are useful in finding information and performing reservations faster and more easily. The reactions against the received promotional messages were found to vary. 40% of the sample stated that they totally ignore the messages, while 58% that they pass them by, without much attention. The most negative stance, i.e. to unsubscribe from platforms and totally block the messages, was expressed by a relatively small percentage (31%).

In order to relate the factors which lead to the boomerang effect with the users' reactions, three classification tree models were trained to predict each of the three dimensions of reactance: Prevention, Depreciation, and Doubtfulness. The results showed that the most decisive factor for preventing customers from proceeding to a reservation is intrusiveness, i.e. whether the messages distract them from their activity. Small distraction, high service quality by the platform and high effectiveness in how reservations are performed, predict small prevention. On the other hand, high distraction and sense that the messages aim at changing his/her stance, lead to high prevention. The level of distraction is the strongest predictor also of depreciation. When the feeling of distraction is low and the platform has the image of high honesty, it is predicted that there is no depreciation. On the contrary, when the user feels distracted and that the message intends to change his stance, the predicted effect is to see the product as low value. Similar results were produced at the prediction of doubtfulness.

At the next phase, cluster analysis was applied in order to segment the sample into groups of different character and stances. As input variables we used the responses of the survey participants regarding the factors of the boomerang effect and their reactance. The analysis revealed 5 clusters with the following characteristics and

size: Group 1 (20% of the sample) was the most negative towards email marketing, expressing strong concerns about privacy, high distraction and low usefulness of the messages as source of information. This group did not consider the platforms as honest and showed minimal acceptance to promotions. Group 2 (15%) included people who agree that promotional messages contain useful information and help them in making easier and better reservations. They do not feel disturbed or concerned, neither that the messages are changing their stances but at the same time they do not trust very much the platforms as honest. Their reaction is to read most of the messages but they also stated that excessive advertisements makes them doubt about the quality of the promoted products. This group seemed to accept promotions but was sensitive to potential boomerang effect. Group 3 (17,4%) included people who expressed maximum disturbance and, although they find promotional messages as a useful source of information, they don't believe that they help them in making reservations. Their reaction is to pass the messages without reading them. Group 4 (22%) seemed to be the less sensitive to the boomerang effect, since people in this group consider promotional messages very useful and informative, and they are not distracted at all. Although they know that e-tourism platforms track their behavior, they trust them and are not likely to express negative reactions to repetitive messages. Group 5 (25%) can be characterized as the most sensitive to the boomerang effect. People in this group are positive to email marketing, they find promotions useful and trust the platforms for being honest. However, they can easily react negatively when messages are repetitive and intrusive, by deleting the messages without reading them and by adopting negative image about the value of the offers and the quality of the platforms.

In conclusion, intrusiveness/distraction seemed to be the most crucial factor related to all three dimensions of the boomerang effect (prevention, depreciation and doubtfulness). As regards prevention from proceeding in a purchase, other important factors were the reliability of the e-tourism platforms, the usefulness of the promotional messages and their frequency. The cluster analysis identified segments with different stances and levels of reactance. E-tourism platforms that wish to perform email marketing may target primarily Group 4, avoid Group 1, and apply intelligent personalization techniques to balance their actions towards Groups 2, 3 and 5. It is suggested, for example, that messages to Group 2 can be frequent but should be informative, to Group 3 carefully selected and relevant, while it should be avoided to send repetitive and intrusive messages to Group 5. A limitation of this study was the small convenience sample. Plans for future work include the extension of this study to include additional factors that affect the respondents' behavior, such as their socio-cultural characteristics.

**Keywords:** *e-tourism, email marketing, boomerang effect, reactance to advertising, predictive modeling*

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# Branding

## **Personal brand: the role of work locus of control in personal branding and the association of personal brand equity with perceived employability**

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### **Abstract:**

Personal branding has become a focal point across various scientific disciplines, including Psychology, Marketing, Communication, and Sociology (Gorbatov et al., 2018), reflecting its multifaceted nature. According to Scheidt et al., (2020) the benefits individuals derive from developing their personal brand can be at a professional level (e.g., recognition, higher salaries) or at a personal level (self-realization). However, research in personal branding literature has overlooked the relationship between work locus of control and the development of individuals' personal brands, representing a gap in understanding. This study aims to bridge this gap by constructing a predictive model transitioning from "Work Locus of Control" to "Perceived Employability," identifying key dimensions influencing these variables. Specifically, we examine the relationship between Work Locus of Control (Luck, Effort, Merit, Acquaintances) and personal branding activities' dimensions (Strategy, Differentiated, Tech Savviness, Online and Offline Networking). Subsequently, we test the hypothesis of a relationship between personal branding activities and personal brand equity dimensions (Appeal, Differentiation, and Recognition). Finally, we explore the relationship between personal brand equity dimensions and perceived employability dimensions (Internal and External Employability). Additionally, differences in demographic factors (gender, age, employment department, hierarchical level, and academic business background) concerning personal branding and equity dimensions are examined. Utilizing survey data and a mixed-method sampling approach (snowball and convenience), 186 responses from employed individuals meeting the criteria of having work experience and maintaining profiles on the LinkedIn professional network were collected. Measurement scales from the literature were used for research purposes. Results included predicting Strategy ( $R^2=.107$ ) from Effort ( $\beta=-.327$ ), Differentiated ( $R^2=.108$ ) from Effort ( $\beta=-.291$ ) and Acquaintances ( $\beta=.222$ ), Tech Savviness ( $R^2=.061$ ) from Effort ( $\beta=-.224$ ) and Acquaintances ( $\beta=.159$ ), Online Networking ( $R^2=.091$ ) from Effort ( $\beta=-.301$ ), and Offline Networking ( $R^2=.080$ ) from Effort ( $\beta=-.178$ ) and Merit ( $\beta=-.163$ ). Regarding personal brand equity, it was found that Appeal ( $R^2=.157$ ) was interpreted by Strategy ( $\beta=.276$ ) and Offline Networking ( $\beta=.178$ ), Differentiation ( $R^2=.201$ ) by Strategy ( $\beta=.249$ ) and Differentiated ( $\beta=.264$ ), and Recognition ( $R^2=.137$ ) by Differentiated ( $\beta=.370$ ). Finally, internal ( $R^2=.235$ ) and external ( $R^2=.117$ ) employability were interpreted by Differentiation of personal brand equity ( $\beta=.485$  and  $\beta=.342$ ). Concerning demographic characteristics, differences in mean scores were observed in personal branding activities between Generation Z and Millennials, Top Hierarchical Level and Basic, and graduates of business schools and graduates of other schools. Regarding personal brand equity, similar differences were observed between Generation X and other generations and Top Leadership Hierarchical level and other levels. Targeted HR practices enhance dimensions significantly affecting personal branding activities initially. Since Effort interpreted all activities, HR departments should include feedback provision during evaluation (London & Smither, 2002), problem-solving skills training (Galvin et al., 2018), and mentoring (Lease, 2004). Subsequently, emphasis should be placed on Differentiation for personal brand equity as it interprets both employability dimensions. Practices such as providing networking opportunities within and outside the organization and identifying differentiation points from the competition (Halm, 2022) will contribute to creating individuals' unique selling points. Research limitations include non-probabilistic sampling, sample size, and self-reported responses. Future research should focus on developing personal branding on social networks beyond LinkedIn, involve recruiters in determining participants' employability, and examine the correlation between personal branding and variables related to employability (Rossier et al., 2017).

**Keywords:** *work locus of control, personal brand, personal brand equity, perceived employability*

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## Reconceptualising Storytelling in/for Marketing Ethics: The Art of Crafting Brand Tragedies

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The paper draws from the philosophy of tragedy to introduce dramaturgy in marketing communications.

Storytelling has been a popular discursive device employed by marketing practitioners forcefully in the last decades with the aim to shape meanings and manage associations for brands (Kaufman 2003; Avery 2019). Although marketing researchers and practitioners have recently taken a narrative turn, increasingly exploring the method of storytelling as a *strategic marketing technique* (Escalas and Stern 2003; Escalas 2004; 2007; Papadatos 2006; Fog et al. 2010; Brown and Patterson 2010; Herskovitz and Crystal 2010; Chiu et al. 2012; Lundqvist et al. 2013; Pera and Viglia 2016; Dessart 2018; Solja et al. 2018; Youssef et al. 2019; Hamelin et al. 2020; Mills and John 2021; Aimé 2021; Campbell et al. 2021; Houghton 2021; Key et al. 2021; McDougal et al. 2021; Dias and Cavalheiro 2022; Kühn and Boshoff 2023), *consumption practice* (Stern 1995; Stern et al. 1998; Adaval and Wyer 1998; Shankar et al. 2001; Moisio and Arnould 2005; Woodside et al. 2008; Woodside 2010; Schembri et al. 2010; Phillips and McQuarrie 2010; Kim et al. 2016; Júnior et al. 2023), and *marketplace performance* (Deighton 1992; Stern 1994; Giesler 2008), the use and examination of dramaturgy in branding has been ignored or purposefully avoided. As a consequence, the storytelling tradition of tragedy has been the only structural plot that has not been employed or studied yet in marketing communications.

In fact, historically, marketing practitioners have used a specific storytelling orientation. I refer to the conventional brand storytelling paradigm as *aesthetic-technological* in the sense that its overall focus is to offer entertaining stories that create awareness and positive associations in consumers' minds about brands. The associations created through brand stories tend to maintain order and regularities between ways of thought and general societal conditions to influence and persuade consumers to acquire, consume, retain, and dispose goods.

In this paper, I argue that although the *aesthetic-technological brand storytelling paradigm* is effective for some brand management purposes, it is less effective in generating critique and reflection on issues relevant to business and marketing ethics. In other words, the ethical value of stories in marketing remains largely untheorized (Koehn 2023). However, based on prior literature (Sierra et al. 2012; Singh et al. 2018; Conick 2018; Moorman 2020; Bhargava and Bedi 2022), we know that previously highly valued brands but also emerging brands, which operate in today's troubled and unstable marketplace, are now intensively criticized, and attacked for being environmentally, socially, and politically irresponsible, or even, harmful. Thus, in the current times of uncertainty and upheaval, brands carry the cultural responsibility to reconsider their ethical foundations but also act as ethical triggers urging us to reflect on pressing social issues.

The purpose of the paper is to propose an alternative form of storytelling based on a critical orientation. I theorize a new *ethical-critical storytelling paradigm* in marketing with applications to branding to encourage diverse stakeholders through the process of critique and dialogue to engage with pressing ethical issues and imagine new alternative ways of social organization. To achieve this, I explore how tragic stories have been historically used as the cultural stimulus that brings fundamental ethical quandaries at the front stage and I analyse core drama making theories, principles, and procedures as well as foundational features, components and techniques applied for the composition of tragic stories.

The paper explores ethical-critical brand storytelling addressing the following questions: *What is the conventional understanding and practice of brand storytelling? Why is an alternative ethical-critical storytelling needed in marketing? How can the storytelling tradition of tragedy support marketing ethics? How can marketers craft impactful brand tragic stories?*

To articulate the ethical-critical storytelling paradigm in marketing, I draw from the philosophy and storytelling tradition of tragedy following Aristotle's *Poetics* (340 BC/2006) along with Kierkegaard's notion of *tragic ambiguity* found in *Either/Or* (1843/1992). I, then, extend these ideas with Castoriadis' (1997) political

reading of tragedy to contribute to the story-dominant logic of marketing strategy (Brown 2007) and discuss how tragic stories can be valuable to marketing ethics and brand management. Further, I develop a process-based dramaturgical model to provide insights about how marketing professionals can leverage the power of the ancient art of tragedy and experiment with theatre-based techniques to transform marketing communications in the modern day.

The paper contributes to existing brand storytelling and marketing ethics literature and practice by: a) introducing what a brand tragedy is; b) discussing how brand tragedies function; and by c) providing insights about how brand strategists can craft tragic brand stories. Suggestions for further research on the brand tragedy craftsmanship are also provided.

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# Does a brand's association with a sports team influence fans' perception of actual product quality and purchase intentions? A field experiment in France

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## **Abstract:**

A field experiment was conducted to examine if a product's (snack) association with a sports team would influence participants' perceptions of quality and purchase intentions after actually tasting the snack. The experiment took place in Strasbourg, France using the local football club, Racing Club Strasbourg Alsace (RCSA), as the focal club for the study. Participants tasted the snack provided either in a container that included the club's logo or in a plain container. Measures on fan identification were also collected to allow comparison of responses between high-identification and low-identification fans. Although there was no difference in how highly identified fans responded to the product with or without the association to the club, there was a significant difference between high-identification and low-identification fans regarding purchase intentions for the product after tasting it.

**Keywords:** *fan identification, sponsorship, sports*

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Previous studies have shown that fan identification with sports teams creates positive responses towards the brands that are sponsoring the fans' favorite team (Dalakas & Levin, 2005; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003) and negative responses to sponsors of rival teams (Angell, Gorton, Bottomley, & White, 2016; Bee & Dalakas, 2015; Bergkvist, 2012; Grohs, Reisinger, & Woisetschlager, 2015). Research by Bee and Dalakas also found that fan identification influences fans' perceptions to sponsors of their favorite team or of the rival team even when there is information about product quality communicated to them (2015). Our study builds and expands on this work by analyzing the perceived quality of products after having a direct experience with the product (in this case tasting the product). This furthers the existing sports marketing and sponsorship literature by introducing the element of direct experience with a product before assessing product quality perceptions and purchase intentions.

The fact that sports fans respond positively to sponsors of their teams and negatively to sponsors of rivals is tied to balance theory (Heider, 1958). Fans' identification with the team makes the potential impact of balance theory more pronounced in that the stronger a fan's identification with a team the more the fan would have favorable responses toward their team's sponsors and unfavorable responses toward their rival team's sponsors. With that in mind, we would expect that highly identified fans perceive a brand's quality more positively when it is associated with their team than when it is not, when they actually have a direct experience with consuming the brand.

To examine this, we conducted a field experiment with a taste test, inspired by the work of Lee, Frederick, and Ariely (2006). The first author set up a table at different public places and streets of the French city of Strasbourg. We ensured that none of the locations were near the official store of the local football club, Racing Club Strasbourg Alsace (RCSA), as it was the focal club for our experiment and we did not want any potential confounding effects. People were asked if they wanted to taste a snack product, and, if they said yes, they would be offered the snack to try and then asked to assess the snack's quality and their likelihood to purchase it after tasting it. There were two conditions regarding how the snack was offered to participants: in a plain container or in a container that had the logo of RCSA.

After tasting their respective products, all respondents in both groups scanned a QR code to connect to a short questionnaire. The questionnaire was in French as only French people participated in the experiment. The first question was a seven-point Likert scale going from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7) regarding perceived quality (adapted from Baker, Grewal, & Parasuraman, 1994) followed by another question on



purchase intentions, also with a seven-point scale where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree. Then, all respondents of the two groups were asked to indicate their identification to the club through four items from the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann and Branscombe, 1993) including items like “I see myself as a fan of the RCSA” as well as “other people see me as a fan of the RCSA” and “it is very important to me that the team wins.” Lastly, there was a question for manipulation check (asking the participants if they had the snack from a container with a club logo or without) as well as questions about age and gender.

A reliability analysis indicated that the items from the fan identification scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93 confirming excellent reliability. Therefore, the four items were computed into one summary variable for fan identification and we proceeded with a median split to identify the fans above the median (4.13) as high-identification fans and the ones below the median as low-identification fans. Subsequently, an ANOVA test was conducted to compare the participants from the four conditions: Low-identification fans who tasted product without logo, low-identification fans who tasted product with logo, high-identification fans who tasted product without logo, and high-identification fans who tasted product with logo. The results of this analysis for both dependent variables (perceived quality and purchase intentions) are presented below.

**Table 1**

*Means on Perceptions of Product Quality*

Groups	Low identified fans without logo M = 5.04	Low identified fans with logo M = 5.62	Highly identified fans without logo M = 5.83	Highly identified fans with logo M = 6.00
Low identified fans without logo M = 5.04		p = .111 Not significant	p = .009 Significant	p < .001 Significant
Low identified fans with logo M = 5.62	p = .111 Not significant		p = 1.000 Not significant	p = .746 Not significant
Highly identified fans without logo M = 5.83	p = .009 Significant	p = 1.000 Not significant		p = 1.000 Not significant
Highly identified fans with logo M = 6.00	p < .001 Significant	p = .746 Not significant	p = 1.000 Not significant	

**Table 2**

*Means on Purchase Intentions*

Groups	Low identified fans without logo M = 5.23	Low identified fans with logo M = 5.43	Highly identified fans without logo M = 5.75	Highly identified fans with logo M = 6.21
Low identified fans without logo M = 5.23		p = 1.000 Not significant	p = .236 Not significant	p < .001 Significant
Low identified fans with logo M = 5.43	p = 1.000 Not significant		p = 1.000 Not significant	p = .013 Significant
Highly identified fans without logo M = 5.75	p = .236 Not significant	p = 1.000 Not significant		p = .408 Not significant
Highly identified fans with logo M = 6.21	p < .001 Significant	p = .013 Significant	p = .408 Not significant	

The results did not provide strong support for the expectation that the association with the sports club would influence people's perception of the actual quality of the product after tasting it. For example, highly identified fans did not perceive the quality higher or had higher purchase intentions when the logo of their team was on the product than when it was not. However, there is a noteworthy finding in that highly identified fans who tasted the product from a container with a logo of their team reported higher purchase intentions than low-identification fans who had also tasted the product with a logo of their team. This confirms the significant role that identification plays when it comes to responses to partnerships between brands and sports teams. This field experiment provides some interesting insight regarding this topic through the novelty of the methodology used. Future research is encouraged for further examination of this issue, especially using different product categories, participants from other countries, and teams from other sports.

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## **From Clicks to Connections: Understanding Social Media Influencer Credibility's Impact on Brand Affinity and Purchase Behavior**

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**Abstract:** Social media influencer (SMI) marketing is a contemporary addition to the arsenal of digital advertising tools. Influencers use various social media platforms to alter consumer perceptions of a brand or its products through visual, audio, and other content updates. The commitment of this study is to look at the impact of social media influencer credibility aspects (expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness) on purchase intention and brand intimacy through mediating impression of consumer engagement. The study surveyed 250 participants through an online Google Forms questionnaire. According to the findings, SMI credibility dimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness) have a beneficial guidance on purchase intention. Additionally, trustworthiness is the only credibility component among social media influencers that has a direct and meaningful influence on brand intimacy. Furthermore, consumer engagement acts as a bridge linking the legitimacy of social media influencers, purchase intention, and brand intimacy. Corresponding to the findings, CE has an indirect impact on influencers credibility (trustworthiness, attractiveness), purchase intention, and brand intimacy. Expertise, on the other hand, has no impact on either brand intimacy or PI (purchase intention). The study outcomes offer valuable insights for marketing managers, suggesting the importance of influencers with the high level of trust within their respective marketing niches.

**Keywords:** Influencers Credibility, Consumer Engagement, Purchase Intention, Brand Intimacy

## **The influence of the employees personal Brand on the organization's employer brand**

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The competition in the modern business environment is undoubtedly fierce and extends to the labour market. Organizations are primarily concerned with finding the right and best qualified employees in terms of hard and soft skills, as well as to retaining current employees. Lately, Human Resource Managers have turned their interest to the concept of Employer Brand as well as its management strategy. Previous research has shown that a positive employer brand and a working environment that is considered healthy, are desirable traits for job seekers. The importance of branding extends to an individual level. Personal branding is a conscious effort to position oneself in the labour market and create a unique value proposition. Drawing on Resource Based View Theory, we propose that the sum of distinct employees' personal brands can affect employer brand overall, thus being a source of competitive advantage for the organization.

In the business world, the employer brand, the employer name or employer brand, respectively defines the identity of the company as an employer. "It encompasses the firm's values, systems, policies and behaviours designed to attract, motivate and retain the organization's current and potential prospective employees" (Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010). An organization through its branding, which is part of its employer branding also known as brand associations (Walker, 2010) evokes emotions and ideas and becomes attractive in the eyes of potential prospective employees.

For an organization to be successful, having the right human resources as argued by Melo & Machado, (2013) is vital. Based on the Resource based view theory according to which an organization is composed of unique resources and capabilities, in order for organizations to achieve competitive advantage and higher performance they are required to utilize their available resources especially their human resources (Barney, 2001). Exactly the same is the case with Personal Brand, which refers to the reputation that an individual creates for himself or herself and based on the above can be a unique resource for an organization and a source of increasing its comparative advantage in the labor market since it includes skills, expertise, values and the overall image of the individual in the professional sector. It is essentially the value that others associate with an individual's personal brand.

According to Ottovordemgentschefelde's (2017) definition, a personal brand embodies the characteristics of an individual, i.e. the values and beliefs that distinguish them and create an image, a perception and a reputation to a specific target audience with the ultimate goal of achieving a competitive advantage (Szanto & Radacsi, 2023). The management of an individual's personal brand begins with his or her identity. A well-structured personal brand is one that answers the questions: "what makes a person different from others? How can a person pique the interest of others, how should a person position his or her personality, unique value and strengths" (Vitberg, 2010). The process of personal brand management appears in the literature as personal branding (Shepherd, 2005) or self-branding (Gandini, 2016), and according to Parmentier, Fischer & Reuber (2013) it is about how a person positions themselves in order to be successful.

Using a survey design we explored the relationship between the personal brand of employees and the employer's brand as well as their joint influence on the attractiveness of the organization and retention of existing employees. Employer Attractiveness is defined as "an attitude or general expressed positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the organization as a desirable entity with which to begin a relationship" (Aiman Smith, 2011). It refers to all the benefits that potential candidates believe they will get if they work in a particular firm (Berthon, Ewing & Hah, 2005). The concept of workforce 'retention' relates to the decision of the workforce firstly whether to work and secondly to remain in the same organization (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). A usable sample of 218 responses was used. The results supported both hypotheses. A strong relationship was found between employees' personal brands and the employer's brand. Moreover, it was found that the

attractiveness of an organization, job pursuit intention and retention are linked and influenced by employees' personal branding and employer branding combined. It is worth noting that in each case of influence, the influence of specific sub-factors was found to play a role. The results that emerged from this research create fertile ground for further investigation and utilization of these to gain competitive advantage.

Integrating employees who have a strong and recognizable personal brand creates an emotional connection between employees and potential candidates (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015), due to the trust it exudes by causing attraction. In business terms, this helps to strengthen the functions of attracting and retaining human resources. Firms that are able by leveraging their brand to attract the best talent according to Harari (1998) achieve an edge and become competitive. High visibility and recognition of the personal brand extends from the individual to the organization, contributing positively to improving the image projected by the organization, making it more attractive in most cases, which is, according to Lemmink et al., (2003), one of the factors of employer branding that influence job seekers' intention to apply and work in a particular organization. In addition, the concept of personal branding has been studied mainly in high-level executives, business owners, politicians, public figures, athletes, (Gorbatov et al., 2018) but not so much in employees of multinational, large or medium-sized companies, which would be very interesting in order to examine the influence of the size of the organization.

**Keywords :** *resource based view, personal branding, employer branding, employees, organization*

## Finding sustainable growth factors for global luxury brands post-pandemic: a qualitative study

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### Abstract:

The nature of the luxury fashion sector nowadays contrasts with what it used to be decades prior. Although luxury fashion dates back to the 1800s, it was not until the 1980s that it started to take a similar approach to what it is known for today (Manlow, 2018). The 1980s were described as the most eclectic decade in the history of fashion due to its bold silhouettes, colourful styles and dramatic shoulder pads (Samaha, 2021). It was a decade of reinvention that gave credit back to the designer through a slow shift where luxury fashion houses that once depended on leather good sales to sustain their brand value, start to present ready-to-wear collections that appeal to the dream of owning a luxury piece (Kapferer, and Bastien, 2013). The 1990s then saw luxury grow into a global commodity. The once privatised and exclusive industry was now dominated by mostly public-held companies and powerful international luxury goods conglomerates (Thomas, 2013), such as the LVMH (Moët-Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE) Group and the Gucci Group. The growing tendency for luxury brands to join multi-brand conglomerates led to a concise understanding of customer reaction and interaction within the luxury sector and a great surge in luxury goods sales (Donzé, and Fujioka, 2017).

However, as luxury fashion brands rose in popularity across developed and emerging markets at the start of the new century, there was an apparent necessity of relying on brand values. This, coupled with the recent increase in brand awareness, yielded higher levels of preference that not only generated stronger purchase intentions with current and new customers but allowed the brand to maintain and propel its dream value (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Simultaneously, the luxury fashion sector faced another dilemma that occurred during the late 2000s and toppled over the early 2010s: the advanced development of new digital technologies and communications. Even though these advances were beneficial for market growth, the luxury sector did not adapt so smoothly. By the mid-2010s, it took the online participation of some high-performance luxury brands in the sector to direct and therefore impact how to communicate and market luxury on digital platforms (Escobar, 2016). Yet, many luxury brands continue to resist the fact that relying on the social online space will allow for immersive interactions with clients from anywhere across the globe (Kapferer and Bastien, 2013 and Hoang, 2020). These challenges, from acquisitions and takeovers, the world economic crisis and the rise of counterfeit products to the constant development of the digital online space, illustrate how the luxury fashion sector has continuously adapted through many difficult circumstances during the last few decades. Nevertheless, nothing would have prepared it for the devastation of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The industry that once swore to remain offline was forced to accommodate the needs of its customer base without delivering a face-to-face service in its flagship and multi-brand locations due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus. While the global pandemic inflicted many losses, the luxury market suffered a twenty-three per cent decline in 2020, with its second quarter being the worst on record (D'Arpizio et al, 2021). Yet, the most affected area of the industry was consumer behaviour. The consumer was sheltered under intense lockdown guidelines, restricted from travelling, and with the closure of brick and mortar locations around the globe, the luxury sector was left fighting the dilemma of how to rapidly succeed online when it is not driven by sales targets or an increase in customer base but instead, by speaking directly to a subset of its clients (UNIT9, 2013).

This qualitative, exploratory paper aims to study the critical factors for brand growth during and post-pandemic, reflecting on successful cases and how those influence the recovery period within the luxury fashion sector. We aim to also analyse the performance of luxury fashion brands further during and post-pandemic following in-depth interviews with ten senior luxury brand managers based in London. Although the legacy of Covid-19 continues to have a lasting impact on the luxury sector, findings from this research provided a first glimpse into this under-researched topic, identifying key critical growth factors that will be useful tools for luxury brand managers not only for this specific pandemic but other crises to come. We come to conclusion that three growth factors in the luxury sector post-pandemic are:

- *prioritising the consumer experience both in-store and online,*
- *developing better and more engaging digital platforms and*
- *finding the correct omnichannel balance suitable for the brand or company.*

Luxury brand managers must be able to deliberately identify who is the consumer shopping through the digital commerce platforms versus the one that continues to come in-store and why. This deeper knowledge will allow for the consumer experience to be tailored individually to their needs while the company remains different from other general non-luxury brands. Another key component for growth in the years to come is to develop a steady high-performance digital website and to take part in social media platforms. A great example of how luxury brands can infiltrate social media platforms while remaining true to their principles and heritage is Hermès. The ultra-luxury brand puts its focus on creative content that is being pushed out across Facebook and Instagram while regularly, and always quietly, releasing content — from quirky illustrated videos to pop-up e-stores — that are associated with the brand's centennial value of storytelling therefore never diluting the brand's value (Arthur, 2020). Furthermore, luxury brands should be able to balance their in-store sales with e-commerce sales, while keeping the customer informed and satisfied on both ends: As the example provided by DB elaborates how his brand F. achieves this balance by allowing the customers to browse and research the product online, but to purchase, they are immediately linked with an in-store personal advisor.

These results conclude that the growth factors impact all aspects of the business having a heavier weight on the decision-making process of luxury brand managers that must consider these along with current economic activity and any worldwide and national crises.

**Keywords:** *luxury market, luxury brand management, global fashion marketing*

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## Sporting Memorabilia, Place Branding and Dark Sports Tourism

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### Abstract

People travel to other countries, nations or locations that are not their home for life is one of the many facets of tourism, which is a social phenomenon that includes those who travel for business or for pleasure on top of various other purposes (World Tourism Organization 2024). Over the years different forms of alternative tourism have been created, one of which is dark tourism. This particular type of tourism describes tourism activity to areas where historical events have occurred, which are intertwined with tragic events, sadness and death (Panayidou et al., 2024).

Corresponding events, in several cases, appear in the field of sports, throughout the history of various sports clubs and organizations. There are a number of high profile such cases/teams in the football industry, whose current identity and brand name have been also “sculptured” through this kind of dramatic events. A typical example is the Cypriot football club of “Nea Salamina” which was based in the city of Famagusta until 1974 and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. This historical event significantly affected the team, which continued to operate from the city of Larnaca (Nea Salamina, 2019),

In such cases, football and other sports organisations (teams) choose to “utilise” these tragic events for a number of different motives. Some focus on honouring and commemorating certain individuals associated with these (tragic) events, whereas some others utilise these events to highlight their progress and evolution throughout the years as a sporting organisation.

Lately the literature has also highlighted another linkage between sporting organisations and dark or tragic events. More specifically, (Dimanche 2003 and Šuligoj & Kennell, 2022) indicate that sporting organisations utilise these tragic/dark events as a tool for place and destination branding. In this case, sporting organisations aim to create a strong tie with the place and /or the destination (Anorthosisfc, 2021). Essentially, the objective is for the sporting organisation to operationalise these tragic events as a visitation mechanism/motivation. In order to achieve this, they create themed sports products and memorabilia, mainly football jerseys, which carry elements, information and symbolism from the tragic, historical events they aim to be associated with. Furthermore, memorabilia have a major impact on the travel and tourism sector (Li, 2023), providing a ‘common ground’ between the sports and football industries and travel in general, as well as dark tourism, which is one of the primary components of this case.

The current paper will examine such an example. Through the case study, the paper will aim to examine the effect a commemorating sporting jersey from a local football organisation had on the local community and to the club itself. In addition, we will examine and present the effects of similar initiatives from the football industry.

**Keywords:** sporting memorabilia, dark tourism, Crete, place branding



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# **Branding and Destination Image**

## Revealing E-Tourists' Intentions and Destination Image Based on Search Query Data

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### **Abstract:**

**Introduction:** This paper observes the role of search query data in tourism destinations image analysis and destination benchmarking from the perspective of public relations. The author is focusing on e-tourist search query data with the intention to detect their preferences and web search habits regarding tourism destinations and to reveal the outlines of destination image. The concept of e-tourist is in this paper explained through interrelation with the concepts of user and e-consumer. From the set perspective the e-tourist can be defined as “the type of tourist who makes effective use of ICTs in the process of purchasing decision and while purchasing tourism products, during tourism experiences and in the evaluation process of tourism experiences” (Ödemiş, 2022).

**Purpose:** Search predictions as an internet browsing tools are used to make web searching and getting information easier. Search engine predictions make use of the various factors such as popularity and similarity. They provide information and results that summarize big data especially in terms of volume (vast number of users searching the web) and velocity (new queries and trends are transforming search predictions). The aim of this research paper is to examine the potential of web search data and keyword research for implementation in the tourism destination image creation. Truong (2020) emphasizes that keyword research can enable linking users to specific sites by revealing relevant keywords therefore this type of analysis can provide insight into tourists' opinions to explain how the image of a place/destination is formed. Vanamala et al. (2016) had in mind an intelligent tourist web search engine and created an emotion-based search technique which takes whole queries typed by users and then filters the unwanted keywords.

**Method:** Strong (2015) recognizes the important role of big data in longitudinal studies. For the purposes of this longitudinal study, the results from the most popular internet browser Google were selected with the help of independent Keyword Tool software. The research is based on keyword analysis and after pretesting two terms were selected as referent and these are “travel to” and “visit”. The sample covered 34 countries with a population of over 40 million people according to the Central Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Bureau world population statistics. User statistics was gathered from Internet Worlds Stats and the countries with the highest number of internet users were included in the sample. Data included in this research dated from pre-pandemic July 2018 to June 2019 and from post-pandemic July 2023 to June 2024.

**Result:** The results show that search terms “travel to” and “visit” can be used for getting insights into tourism destinations which arouse interest among e-tourists from different locations worldwide. They indicate that the keywords can reveal certain outlines of popular destinations' image. The findings also contribute to better understanding on how certain search term is used by e-tourists. For example, “travel to” gives broader results on destinations – a greater number of countries and continents as places which arouse interest, while ‘visit’ provides more specific results with more interest in cities, towns and villages. The results show that users primarily tend to search for destinations which are closer to their location. The results of this longitudinal study also show how the preferences of e-tourists changed in the five-year period.

### **Conclusion:**

The possibilities of analysing big data for the purposes of destination image creation are immense. The insights provided can be used as a starting point for tourism forecasting research associated with tourist expectation, needs and intentions. Furthermore, they can also be used for the purposes of tourism destinations benchmarking. The use of search query data can provide time-efficient decision-making and help in creating more effective communication strategies and programs. This paper emphasizes the importance of operations (Li et al., 2018) that users undertake while they are online and while using their devices, which can provide valuable information for communication experts.

**Keywords::** *search query data, keyword research, big data, e-tourist, destination image*

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# Consumer Behaviour

## Are we ready to use ChatGPT? A user's perspective

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### **Abstract:**

The ChatGPT Artificial Intelligence program has attracted the attention of academics, companies and governments. The study investigates users' perspectives on using ChatGPT. The research examines factors affecting users' intention to use ChatGPT to understand whether Italian users are ready to use this new artificial intelligence.

The study adopted a quantitative approach based on 589 questionnaires to achieve the research aim.

The results highlighted that ChatGPT is perceived as an easy-to-use but not very engaging tool. Respondents do not fully trust the information's reliability, accuracy and precision. Furthermore, it is not considered a tool that exposes users to fraud or risks. However, regulation is necessary to protect user privacy and guarantee the reliability of the information provided and training on this tool's potential and possible risks.

Findings provide insights for companies and governments to optimize the use and diffusion of this new tool.

**Keywords:** *ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence, consumer behaviour, consumer perceptions, innovation*

### **1. Introduction and Background**

Chat Generative Pretrained Transformer (ChatGPT), a natural language model developed by OpenAI, has attracted the interest of academics and governments (Hu, 2023).

Released to the public in November 2022, ChatGPT is a chatbot prototype based on Artificial Intelligence (AI), capable of generating human-like conversations by understanding the context of a conversation and generating appropriate responses (Kumar, 2023; Shen et al., 2023). Because it was trained on a sizable text collection, the model can comprehend and produce content on various themes. Applications for ChatGPT include customer support, content production, and language translation (Li et al., 2024).

The data used by ChatGPT comes from a wide range of texts, including various unspecified websites, book collections, and Wikipedia, that allow it to respond and interact conversationally. The model is effective due to its ability to learn and respond quickly (Jiao et al., 2023; Patel and Lam, 2023).

Several aspects of our daily lives continue to undergo radical changes thanks to artificial intelligence's ability to automate jobs, process massive amounts of data, and offer predicted insights (Deng and Lin, 2022).

These AI tools are crucial for the continued digitalization of society. The use of Chat GPT in daily life has various implications, from education to work to fake news (Li et al., 2024; Choi et al., 2021).

This tool serves as a support in different contexts. For instance, ChatGPT can provide healthcare information. However, it is crucial to verify the reliability of the answers and integrate the information with other resources to ensure accurate results (Pasca and Arcese, 2024; Biswas, 2023).

Additionally, ChatGPT can support academics by generating summaries or writing assistance. This saves researchers time and effort. It can also provide suggestions on grammar and style. The literature analysis highlights how this tool is effective for teaching and learning as it can also support students in understanding complex texts but does not replace human intelligence and creativity. It is a tool that must be used as a support in activities rather than as a replacement, considering that the information provided must be verified as it is unreliable (Aljanabi et al., 2023; Hill-Yardin et al., 2023).

ChatGPT accepts its mistakes. If users point out errors in their answers, the model optimizes the answer based on user feedback. Additionally, ChatGPT is good at rejecting unsafe questions or generating safe answers while considering ethical and political factors. ChatGPT excels in creative writing tasks (Zhou et al., 2023; Aljanabi, 2023).

The literature highlights the need to analyse user behaviour on ChatGPT (Pasca and Arcese, 2024). Only some empirical studies that analyse the users' point of view emerge. In light of this, our study examines factors affecting users' intention to use ChatGPT. Moreover, empirical research was developed in Italy. Our study aims to understand whether Italian users are ready to use this new AI tool to provide insights to companies and governments to optimize its use.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 1 describes the diffusion phenomenon of ChatGPT by identifying research gaps that guide our empirical research. Section 2 presents the methodology used in the study. Results are shown in section 3. Finally, section 4 concludes the work by discussing the results and future research.

## 2. Methodology

The present study is grounded on empirical research developed in Italy. A quantitative survey was conducted to investigate users' perceptions on ChatGPT usage.

The questionnaire structure inserted validated measurement scales inspired by the existing literature (Nikolopoulou et al., 2021; Nikou and Economides, 2017; Alalwan et al., 2016; Venkatesh et al., 2012)

It comprised 19 questions on a Likert 1–5 scale (1 = completely disagree; 5 = completely agree) (Likert, 1974) and four profiling questions. The survey was divided into six sections: reasons for use, easy to use, hedonic use, trust, risk, future intentions of use, and some profiling questions.

The questionnaire was uploaded to the Google Docs platform and shared through the forum and social networks. The questionnaire was tested through a pilot survey on a sample of 30 respondents in January 2024, after which the

formulations of some questions were adapted to guarantee the clearness and consistency of the questionnaire structure. The final version of the questionnaire was administered from January to February 2024 using the self-administration mode on several web pages, social networks and forums as a convenience sample. Data collection returned 568 fully completed questionnaires. The convenience sample used in this study was appropriate for addressing the research aim (Grewal et al., 2000; O'Cass, 2000).

The data resulting from the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS IBM 17.0 software and descriptive statistical techniques to determine the sample and the service's habits of use.

## 3. Results

Table 1 provides a synthesis of the demographic profile of the sample in terms of gender, age, type of household and educational background.

Of the 568 respondents, 55% are male and 45% are female. The highest number of participants is found in the age groups 26-45 (46%) and 55 and 18-25 (38%).

High school was the most recorded level of education at 65%. Users participating in the survey consisted of private sector workers (34%), civil servant (33%), students (30%) and unemployed (3%).

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the sample

	Frequency	Frequency %
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	312	55%
Female	256	45%
<b>Age</b>		
26-45	264	46%
18-25	214	38%
46-60	81	14%
>60	9	2%
<b>Educational background</b>		
High school	369	65%
Bachelor's degree	134	24%
Master's degree	45	8%
PhD	12	2%
Master	8	1%
<b>Job</b>		
Private-sector employee	193	34%
Civil servant	188	33%
Student	169	30%
Unemployed	18	3%

The data were analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistical measures were calculated for all the variables of the questionnaire.

The first section of the questionnaire investigates the reasons that drive users to use ChatGPT. In particular, for 33.6% of respondents, this new tool increases knowledge (mean 2.908); for 33.6%, it is a very effective tool that supports them in everyday life (mean 2.870). However, 38.9% of respondents think differently; instead, 27.5% assigned a neutral score (3). ChatGPT is considered a tool that saves time (mean 3.518) by the majority of respondents (55.3%) but only supports them a little in achieving their goals (mean 2.896). 37.6% of respondents assigned a value between 1 and 2, and 30.3% assigned a neutral value of 3.

The second section of the questionnaire investigates users' perceptions of the ease of use of this tool. In particular, 63.1% of respondents stated that it is easy to learn to use (mean 3.803). Interacting with ChatGPT is clear and straightforward (53.5% of respondents) (mean 3.581). Most respondents (61.3%) consider this AI tool easy to use (mean 3.782).

42.8% of respondents consider ChatGPT fun (mean 3.275); 34.9% gave a neutral score. 42.4% find it a pleasant tool (mean 3.280). Instead, 42.8% of respondents declared that using ChatGPT is not very engaging (mean 2.722).

The fourth section analyses users' opinions on the accuracy of the information provided by ChatGPT. 34.4% of respondents declare that the information obtained is correct (mean 3.153); however, 23% are incorrect. For 32.6% of users, the information is accurate (mean 3.056) and reliable (32.9%) (mean 3.055). High percentages are recorded regarding the accuracy (39.8%) and reliability of the information (38.9%) on the neutral value 3.

The majority of respondents (45.4%) consider that using ChatGPT does not expose them to potential fraud. Instead, according to 23.4%, this tool is dangerous (mean 2.671). ChatGPT does not expose users to numerous risks (44.1%) (mean 2.701). 31.9% of respondents gave an average value. 28.1% of respondents think using ChatGPT risks their privacy (mean 2.852).

The questionnaire analysis highlights that ChatGPT is not considered a tool that exposes users to fraud or risks. Only 28.1% of respondents think using ChatGPT puts their privacy at risk.

The last section of the questionnaire investigates the future intentions of the respondents. In detail, 34.7% of respondents intend to use ChatGPT (mean 3.005), and only 20.5% will always try to use ChatGPT in their daily life (mean 2.415) (however, 53.7% do not always want to introduce it more in their daily life). The majority of respondents (50.7%) declare that they have no intention of continuing to use ChatGPT frequently (mean 2.526).

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The study focused on user behaviour regarding ChatGPT usage. Through a quantitative survey, the research examines the factors affecting users' intention to use ChatGPT. The analysis highlighted that ChatGPT is considered a time-saving tool, but only a few interviewees consider it an effective tool that increases knowledge and allows you to achieve your goals.

ChatGPT is considered an easy-to-use tool through which you can interact clearly and easily, but it could be regarded as more engaging. Respondents seek empathy, involvement and personalization of the service that can be found in the relationship between human beings (Pasca et al., 2024).

Regarding the accuracy of the information provided by ChatGPT, the respondents do not totally agree on its reliability, accuracy, and precision; in fact, high percentages emerge on the neutral value 3.

The questionnaire analysis highlights that ChatGPT is not considered a tool that exposes users to fraud or risks. Only 28.1% of respondents think using ChatGPT puts their privacy at risk. In fact, regulation is necessary to protect user privacy and, above all, to guarantee the reliability of the information provided.

However, only some respondents say they intend to continue using ChatGPT.

There needs to be more propensity among the analyzed sample to continue using this tool, which speeds up and optimizes various activities but is not considered entirely reliable. This lack of propensity can be traced back to the need for more knowledge of this tool. In particular, there needs to be more regulation and education on this tool's correct, just and sustainable use. In particular, companies that begin to implement these tools must be able to educate their employees on the strategic and supportive use that this tool can have. The strengths and weaknesses of this tool must be presented through training courses to understand its potential fully.

Furthermore, further research and involvement in discussions with policymakers, stakeholders and practitioners are needed. The results of this preliminary study can be an in-depth resource for practitioners who wish to integrate ChatGPT in different contexts and stimulate further research in the field.

As with all empirical research, the present study has certain limitations. First, the research involves only one country. However, this study provided preliminary insights, and future research should extend the study to a larger sample and across different geographic areas to highlight differences. The research conducted is a preliminary step of a larger study that will test a behavioural model to delve deeper into users' perceptions of the use of ChatGPT. The results of this study will be used to prepare a new questionnaire to collect more data and compare them between different cultural contexts.



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## **Reasons, Purposes, and Motivations to Volunteer Over Time: Evidence from the Island of Chios, Greece**

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### **Abstract**

We study the reasons, purposes, and motivations that drive individual decisions to become a volunteer and continuing to volunteer. Thus, the drivers of volunteer behaviour over time. We recognize that there is a high degree of heterogeneity when it comes to reasons, purposes, and motivations of individuals to volunteer. We conducted an exploratory qualitative study with 82 volunteers, who are registered members of volunteer societies established and operating in the island of Chios, Greece. By means of in-depth interviews and the use of a semi-structured questionnaire, we have identified a mix of personal, psychological and social reasons, purposes, and motivations that drive a volunteer's engagement over time. To address the influence of heterogeneity on these reasons, purposes, and motivations, we codified our qualitative records and we performed a correlation analysis between personal characteristics, psychological and social motivations. Our results reveal that an individual's motivation to volunteer, as well as continuing to volunteer, is highly and positively correlated with age, occupation, income status, educational level and political views. However, altruistic and social motives differ between ages, occupation, educational level and political views. We discuss the implications for volunteer management within these associations.

*Key-words:* volunteer; motivations, over time, heterogeneity, Greece

# Digital Marketing

## The use of digital media to promote agricultural products in Europe: an overview on PDO and PGI products

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### **Abstract:**

This research evaluates the digital promotion strategies of PDO and PGI agricultural products in Italy, Spain, France, Greece, and Portugal, which together represent 75% of Europe's GI scheme products. By analyzing the GI View portal and conducting a desk-research to assess the presence of producer groups and product promotion on digital platforms, the study offers insights into how these products are marketed online. The evaluation focuses on the digital presence of products on various platforms (websites, social media, e-commerce), and the use of product names versus producer group names for promotion in digital environment. The study illustrates a preference for using product names in digital promotion, indicating a strategy that prioritizes direct brand recognition and consumer association with geographical and quality attributes. This approach is notably effective on e-commerce platforms and social media, facilitating immediate product recognition. Moreover, the analysis of digital presence across different platforms shows a strong emphasis on website use, with France achieving a 100% presence. However, e-commerce presence is generally low, suggesting varied strategies in utilizing online sales channels for GI products. The study concludes that enhancing the digital promotion of PDO and PGI products is crucial for increasing visibility and consumer engagement. It recommends a balanced approach that includes expanding digital presence, utilizing social media to engage broader audiences, and exploring e-commerce as a direct sales channel. The findings highlight the significant opportunities for improving brand visibility and consumer appreciation through strategic digital marketing and better information accessibility, underscoring the evolving nature of digital platforms and the need for adaptive promotion strategies.

**Keywords:** *geographical indication, agricultural products, marketing, digital marketing, food marketing*

### **Introduction**

The GI (Geographical Indication) system was established by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2081/92 of 14 July 1992 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs. The Regulation aimed to provide a community approach that would allow the development of geographical indications and designations of origin through a more uniform perspective across the EU (European Union). In addition to standardization, the Regulation sought to protect agricultural products and foodstuffs identifiable in terms of their geographical origin and to offer consumers high quality products (Council of the European Union, 1992). The GI recognition is perceived as tools for differentiation within the market in a context of global competition protecting against misuse of the product name, bringing marketing regulations, rural development and preserving patrimony (European Commission, 2021). GIs establish intellectual property rights for specific products, whose qualities are specifically linked to the area of production. The geographical indications for agricultural comprise two labels: PDO - protected designation of origin - and PGI - protected geographical indication. The differences between PDO and PGI are linked primarily to how much of the product's raw materials must come from the area, or how much of the production process must take place within the specific region (European Commission, n.d.).

In the GI system, prior the registration, a group of producers must unite to create a GI organization (producer group) around the recognition of a specific product. This collective organization formed by the GI producers of a specific region will support the GI system at all stages, setting up rules, controlling processes, product commercialization, marketing, communication and conflict resolution). On the marketing level, the GI organization is responsible for the promotion of the GI product aiming to increase its brand awareness, the recognition of the collective brand (GI product name) through the elaborating of collective marketing strategies and develop collective promotion initiatives (FAO, 2010).

EU is strengthening the GI system aiming to preserve high quality, reinforce protection and highlighting the importance of promoting GI products through digital channels. The new proposed framework will increase the

protection of GIs on the internet, namely regarding sales via online platforms and the protection against bad faith registration and use of GIs in the domain name system (European Commission, 2022). Digital presence of GI products has been used to confirm if the product is still being produced, if it has relevance in the market or if it is a production that has already been abandoned and that could be a candidate for certification cancellation (Zappalaglio et al., 2022).

In this scenario, GI organizations need to evaluate their marketing strategies considering the importance of a consistent online presence for agricultural products with PDO or PGI quality label, with the aim of promoting not only the certification itself, but also the name of the product and its region, as well as its differentials within consumers.

### Research Methodology

This study aims to assess if agricultural products that belong to a GI scheme are promoted on digital platforms. The products that will be part of the investigation are registered as PDO or PGI under the EU basis of protection, belong to the Product Type Food - Category - Class 1.6 (Fruits, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed). The countries that will be part of the evaluation are Italy, Spain, France, Greece and Portugal; together these countries hold for 75% of all the agricultural products that belong to some GI scheme in Europe.

The primary data source used in this study is GI View portal, the official GI database managed by European Union Intellectual Property Office. This public EU data base presents all the detailed information for each product register as some GI scheme under the EU basis of protection. Among these data are the official name of the product, country of origin and the name of the producer group responsible for the GI. A desk-research was conducted where every product was assessed by (1) the existence of producer group name on GI View Portal, (2) presence on digital platforms (websites, blogs, social media channels and e-commerce) and (3) the name used in promoting the platform (product name vs producer group name).

To evaluate the presence on digital platforms, a quantitative study first considered Producer Groups data available on the GI View website. When the information wasn't available on GI View website page, extra research was conducted through the publications of Official Journal of the European Union available on PDF format. Furthermore, producer group names and the official product name were subjected to an additional desk research on Google, aimed at gathering more information on the existence of an active association of producers or other related websites. An additional qualitative analysis was conducted on the existent digital platforms to evaluate the name used in promoting the platform (product name vs producer group name).

### Results and Analysis

The evaluation of agricultural products registered under the EU's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) schemes provides crucial insights into the promotion of these products on digital platforms. The analysis focused on Italy, Spain, France, Greece, and Portugal—countries that collectively account for 75% of all agricultural products under GI schemes in Europe (n=355). Italy leads with a total of 125 products, followed by Spain (67), France (62), Greece (48), and Portugal (29).

The desk research showed that the information about Producer Group isn't accurate on GI View portal. Among the 5 countries evaluated, Portugal stands out for having 85% (n=28) of its registered agricultural products with updated information on the portal. Producer group information is not available for any of the products registered by Italy, Spain and France, requiring further analysis of PDF files and web searches to find the missing information. In total, the Producer Group responsible for 21 products couldn't be found, most of them under the Greek registration, where 19% (n=9) of the products were available without the producer group name.

The study of the digital footprint of PDO and PGI products was carried out for those products for which a producer group was available (n=314) and reveals a varied landscape of online promotion in the selected countries. In total, 16% (n=49) of the products evaluated don't have any kind of digital presence; Greek products are the ones with the least digital presence, representing 64% of their products, and Spain is the country with the best online presence, representing 92% of its products. (Table 01)

Table 01: Evaluating the digital presence: is it made using the Producer Group name or the name of the PDO or PGI product?

Country	n	Digital Presence through Producers Associations	Digital Presence through Product Name	No Digital Presence
Italy	117	15%	75%	10%
Spain	65	12%	80%	8%
France	61	15%	70%	15%
Greece	39	64%	0%	36%
Portugal	32	66%	6%	28%
Total	314	25%	59%	16%

The promotional strategies, as evidenced by the use of Product Names versus Producer Association's names, might reveal insightful trends. The preference for using product names in digital promotion for agricultural products (Spain, Italy and France) suggests a direct approach to brand recognition, enabling consumers to associate products directly with their geographical and quality attributes (Gázquez-Abad et al., 2012; Tselempis et al., 2019). This direct naming convention is particularly effective on e-commerce platforms and on search engines, as it is more common for a consumer to search for the name of an agricultural product rather than the name of the cooperative or association that produces it. Conversely, the use of producers' group names in promotion (Portugal and Greece), though less prevalent, highlights a stronger market position in the community and can help farm businesses to reduce the buying uncertainty surrounding their products, as well as to strengthen their products' position in the market (Grashuis, 2019).

The Producer Group with some digital presence (n=265) were also evaluated across various social media and digital platforms, including Website, e-commerce platform, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube. From this sample, 27% have, at least, digital presence in one platform and only 10% have digital presence in more than 5 channels. All countries showed a strong presence on websites, with France achieving a 100% rate, indicating that official or dedicated websites are a primary digital tool for promoting GI products. Portugal presented the lowest usage of websites, however, showed the highest rate on Facebook usage (87%) along with France and Spain. It is important to mention that 30 GI products are only represented on Facebook. In general, the use of social media platforms varies significantly between countries and platforms. For instance, Spain showed the highest rates for usage of Twitter (51%) and YouTube (26%), and Tik Tok only represents 1% of the digital presence, being used only for producers in France and Spain. E-commerce presence is also relatively low, with France and Greece showing the lowest (2%) and highest percentages (12%), respectively, indicating varying strategies in leveraging online sales channels for GI products. By closely matching the needs of agricultural producers, the intention to use social media channels for marketing and sales is increased, facilitating their adoption and use (Han et al., 2021). Much more effort is driven to social media marketing, especially Facebook, as a faster low-cost path to enter in the digital world (Borrero et al., 2021; Petril'ak et al., 2020).

### Conclusions and implications

The findings suggest that continuing to leverage the product names in digital promotion is advisable, given its effectiveness in communicating product uniqueness and origin. However, storytelling around producers' associations could also be beneficial in building brand loyalty and emphasizing the community and tradition behind the products. As digital platforms continue to evolve, the strategies for promoting GI products must adapt to balance immediate consumer recognition with deeper brand engagement. Enhancing the digital footprint of PDO and PGI products requires a balanced approach that includes expanding the digital presence, increasing the use of social media platforms to engage with a broader audience, and exploring e-commerce as a direct sales channel tapping into the growing trend of online shopping.

In conclusion, the promotion of PDO and PGI products on digital platforms is a critical component of the overall strategy to enhance the visibility and market reach of these high-quality agricultural products. The promotion of PDO and PGI products in the digital sphere presents significant opportunities for enhancing brand visibility and consumer engagement. By strategically diversifying digital marketing approaches, and improving information accessibility, countries can better highlight the unique qualities and origins of their agricultural products, fostering greater appreciation and demand among consumers.

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# **International Business**



## The role of eco-innovation in internationalized firm's performance

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### Extended Abstract

Eco-innovation, defined as “the production, assimilation or exploitation of a product, production process, service or management or business method that is new to the organization (developing or adopting) and which results, throughout its life cycle, in a reduction of environmental risk, pollution and other negative impacts of resources use (including energy use) compared to relevant alternatives” (Kemp & Pearson, 2020) has acquired a greater importance due to the current condition of the environment, leading to people's concern to purchase more environmentally sustainable products (Govindan, Diabat & Shankar, 2015; Hojnik et al., 2018).

Recent academic literature has revealed a growing interest in understanding the current condition of the environment that is causing concerns in business and economies about future sustainability. In addition, the scarcity of resources and the increase in population are becoming increasing importance issues and, therefore, the conservation of environmental quality is essential (Govindan, Diabat & Shankar, 2015). As such, there is growing consumers demand for environmentally friendly products and services and the adoption of eco-innovations by consumers and firms is on the rise (Hojnik et al., 2018).

Eco-innovation brings numerous benefits that are not limited to improving environmental performance but also that firms obtain many monetary and economic advantages (Juniati et al., 2019). Although eco-innovation generates significant benefits for the firm economic performance, there are different factors that lead to the decision to adopt it. They can result from the desire to improve the firm's reputation, reduce costs, respond to market demand, enter new markets, fight competition, do the “right” thing or comply with regulations (Hojnik et al., 2018).

Internationalization is thus recognized as the new driver of eco-innovation. Therefore, firms enter foreign markets to obtain opportunities and increase competitiveness. Internationalization drives firms to implement eco-innovation practices through two channels of influence. To begin with, there is a worldwide demand for environmentally sustainable technologies, products and production services (Doranova, Veen & Hinojosa, 2013). The other channel of influence is attributed to international regulations. For example, the so-called “green barriers” prevent firms from operating in certain foreign markets unless they meet all the ecological needs of consumers (Zhu, et al., 2007).

Internationalization provides numerous learning opportunities for firms to develop the knowledge and skills needed to introduce product, process and system eco-innovations (Boermans & Roelfsema, 2015; Williams & Shaw, 2011). This can be defined as the expansion of firms in terms of research and development (R&D), production, sales and other business activities for foreign markets (Hollensen, 2011).

The presence of internationalization combined with eco-innovation allows firms to achieve greater performance and greater competitiveness. They help firms to expand into new markets and achieve efficiency and effectiveness. However, it is crucial that firms cooperate with their consumers, suppliers in order to result in a further development of eco-innovation, since it makes a more efficient use of external sources obtained from acquired knowledge (Scandeliuss & Cohen, 2016; Ghisetti et al., 2015). Cooperation is therefore important for successful implementation of eco-innovation practices (León-Bravo et al., 2017).

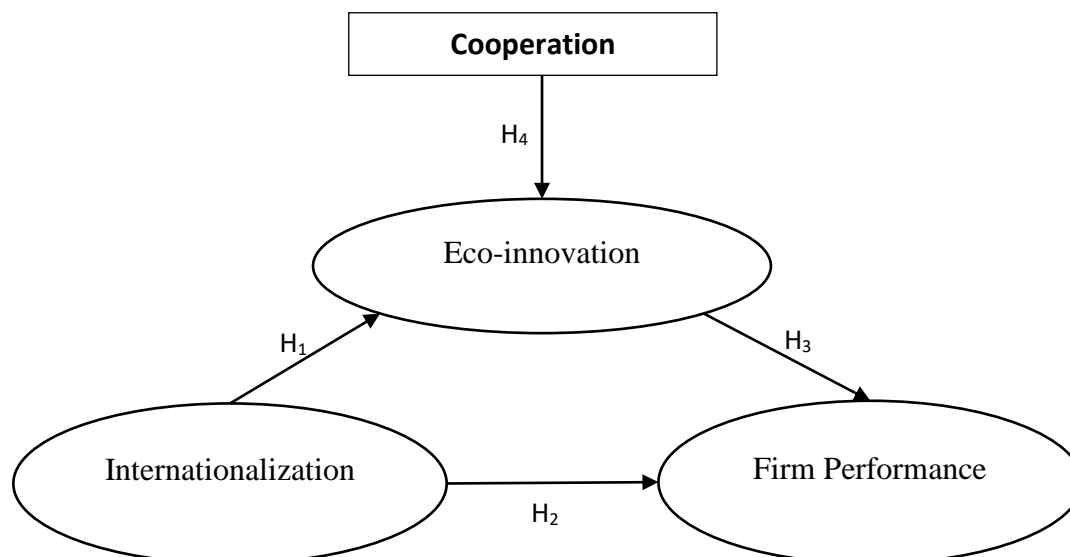
To explain the relationship between internationalization and eco-innovation, the present study uses the organizational perspective learning, as it was used in the study of Hojnik, Ruzzier & Manolova (2018). This theory suggests that firms learn after realizing the need to integrate schedules, frameworks and strategies integration as a result of people's actions, demands and experiences (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) and that firms learn from past experiences (Levitt & March, 1988).

It is possible to recognize the importance of internationalization and eco-innovations to achieve the firm's performance, however there are few studies relating eco-innovation and internationalization (Suárez-Perales et al., 2017). Thus, the main objective of our study is to explore the influence of internationalization and eco-innovation on the firm's performance, as well as the influence of cooperation on eco-innovation.

For the purpose of this study, we based on primary data from 102 internationalized firms in Portugal belonging to the footwear, furniture, metalworking and textile sectors. Data were collected using an online questionnaire

adapted from Hojnik et al. (2018) and CIS (2016). The conceptual model was tested using the software SmartPLS by PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) method.

**Error! Reference source not found.** shows the conceptual model of this study, where eco-innovation has a mediating role between cooperation and firm performance (H4 and H3) and between internationalization and firm performance (H1 and H3). The model also includes direct effect of the internationalization in firm performance (H2), as suggested in literature.



**Figure 1- Conceptual model proposed (adapted from Hojnik et al., (2018)).**

The results of this study reveal that internationalization has a direct effect on the firm's performance. This means that internationalization helps firms to obtain the necessary knowledge so that they can improve their performance and consequently obtain a higher profit.

On the other hand, although the literature states that internationalization has an influence on eco-innovation, in this study, it was not possible to present statistical evidence to show this relationship. This means that, in the case of this sample, due to the concern that firms have in increasing profits tend to invest on internationalization instead ecological issues.

In addition, the analysis suggests that eco-innovation is important for improving firm performance, i.e., a firm that adopts eco-innovation practices is more likely to improve its performance than those that do not use any eco-innovation.

It was not possible to present statistical evidence to show that cooperation has a direct effect on eco-innovation, despite the literature revealing this relationship. This can be explained because in this study, the cooperation variable is a dummy variable and does not capture all its dimensions. In addition, it was not possible to present empirical evidence of a mediating effect of eco-innovation.

This study presents several contributions, both from a theoretical and practical perspective. In theoretical terms, as mentioned by Suárez-Perales et al. (2017), there are few studies that relate internationalization and eco-innovation, besides that this study responds to a gap in the literature because there is no study using the four variables (eco-innovation, cooperation, internationalization and firm performance) simultaneously.

In practical terms, as regulatory issues are greater due to the growing concern for the environment, this study aims to help firms realize the advantages they gain by acquiring more sustainable practices and thus increasing their competitive advantage when entering new markets.

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# Management-Marketing

## Looking beyond the hype: opportunities and challenges of generative artificial intelligence in B2C marketing

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**Keywords:** *Generative AI, AI adoption in marketing, marketing innovation, AI technology challenges*

Generative AI, of which OpenAI's ChatGPT is probably the most famous example, is fueling discussions in the media and academia about its broad applications in all areas of business (Susarla et al., 2023), including marketing (Dwivedi et al., 2023). It offers potential to improve business functions from operations to marketing by empowering non-technical users to create images, text content, or code (Chui et al., 2022). In marketing, generative AI tools can be used for data analysis, market research, campaign development, and various types of content creation, demonstrating a significant impact beyond existing digital technologies (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kshetri et al., 2023).

The technological leap in generative AI has generated much excitement in the marketing industry, fueling a narrative that presents generative AI as a cure-all for various marketing challenges. This hype is driven by the promise of the effectiveness and efficiency of AI tools that seem to be able to automate tasks including complex data analysis, content creation, and personalization of customer experiences. Amid this enthusiasm, however, critical questions arise: What is the reality beyond the hype? How is generative AI being used in marketing, and what are the implications and challenges for marketers and organizations?

A survey of chief data officers found that over 30% of organizations are prioritizing generative AI for marketing and sales applications (Davenport et al., 2023). Unlike other studies, which focus on the organizational implementation and use of generative AI tools in marketing, this study aims to shed light on individual marketing professionals' use and perception of generative AI tools in their individual work practices. The focus is on evaluating the acceptance and use of generative AI both in general and for specific marketing activities, as well as the effectiveness of generative AI from the user's perspective. Data was collected from 600 B2C marketers using computer-assisted telephone interviews supplemented by web screen sharing in three major markets: Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Small (100-249 employees), medium (250-499 employees), and large (500+ employees) companies were represented in roughly equal proportions. The sample of marketing professionals includes a wide range of roles, varying levels of experience, and all age cohorts. The data collection period spanned from late October to mid-December 2023.

The study focuses primarily on assessing the adoption and use of generative AI tools, as well as the perceived value of implementing these tools across three dimensions (quality, speed, and cost savings) in ten specific marketing activities. Results indicate that generative AI has already become an essential tool across multiple marketing functions. To understand the tangible value that generative AI tools bring to marketing, our analyses focused on "heavy users" – those professionals who use generative AI most or even (almost) always for a specific task. Our findings underscore the growing recognition of AI's value, not only for analytical tasks but also as a contributor to the creative aspects of marketing – an area long considered one of the last bastions of exclusively human skill. Interestingly, for some activities, such as content creation, many marketers in the study reported that generative AI not only made them much faster but also improved quality and reduced costs. In addition, the study explored the organizational factors that differentiate companies that employ marketers with high and low levels of generative AI use, with implications for companies looking to foster greater adoption of generative AI technologies.

A qualitative approach using open-ended questions was used to explore the challenges marketers face in implementing generative AI in their work. The responses to the open-ended questions were used to derive a category system consisting of eight overarching categories and their respective sub-themes. The three most frequently mentioned categories were output quality, ethical and legal considerations, and workforce issues like lack of expertise. By synthesizing the qualitative responses regarding potential solutions to these challenges, one can extract valuable practical insights.

Through an analysis of adoption, utilization, and perceived value, this study highlights the significance of generative AI across diverse marketing functions, emphasizing its value in analytical tasks and fostering creativity. Furthermore, the research identifies organizational factors that influence the adoption of generative AI. Insights into obstacles and potential solutions offer practical implications for marketing professionals to effectively leverage generative AI usage.

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## **Exploring factors that determine team performance in public organizations**

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### **Abstract**

The primary aims of this paper are (i) to investigate team performance in numerous public organizations, including the Hellenic Navy as part of the Armed Forces, (ii) to explore and prioritize factors influencing team function and performance across these organizations and (iii) discuss the findings in the context of the high-performance teams.

Hellenic Navy, a crucial part of Armed Forces, is a representative of public organizations. Team performance in such organizations becomes even more critical during crisis situations and emergencies like natural disasters, economic crises, and geopolitical crises, as it directly impacts on mission success, operational effectiveness, and personnel safety.

A systematic review of the literature reveals that the most frequently applied criteria for measuring team-based performance are reaching target goals, satisfying quality requirements, achieving efficiency, assuring cohesion and morale and ensuring team members' satisfaction. The literature also indicates that factors such as vision and goal setting, leadership style, role clarity, team learning behaviors, the creation of a supportive psychological and collaborative environment within teams, and resource constraints significantly influence team performance. For the purpose of this investigation, qualitative and quantitative research was carried out in the Hellenic Navy Force (H.N.), one of the major branches of the Greek Armed Forces. Data was collected by interviewing six (6) leaders at the senior level (officers) who manage/ lead teams operating for different purposes. Each of the leaders was chosen to participate in the interview process. Moreover, to ensure data validity, two team members (junior officers) were randomly selected out of the aforementioned six teams (12 junior officers in total) to participate in a separate interview process. Respondents at the senior management level were asked to indicate the criteria they use to evaluate team performance and the factors determining the optimal levels of the later. Team members were also asked to firm up such criteria and factors.

A semi-structured questionnaire was used to guide and facilitate the interviewing process. This research aims to identify team performance-related parameters and parameters of interest within the target population. Moreover, it builds a model of significant factors affecting team performance in the navy organization.

The research identified (7) key variables that were associated with team function and performance in public organizations (i) leadership style, (ii) supportive team behavior, (iii) communication between senior leaders and team members, (iv) communication among team members, (v) performance feedback, (vi) skills and abilities and (vii) the dynamics of team function. Leaders wishing to improve team performance in public organizations should take into consideration the aforementioned factors within their team environment.

The results of this research, however, indicate that attitudes between senior team leaders and team members differed in some respects, and this is therefore worth investigating. It also sheds light on the imperative for senior leaders in the navy to motivate, inspire, create a clear vision, and communicate goals to those serving under their command.

To achieve high team performance and adapt to the demands of a changing environment, senior navy leaders will need to find a balance between various paradoxes, conflicts, and contradictions arising from both external and internal factors during crises. By effectively navigating these complexities, senior leaders can enhance team resilience, cohesion, and overall performance, ensuring their teams are well-prepared to meet the challenges they face.

**Key words:** *team performance, team function, team effectiveness, team psychology, leadership style, senior support, conflict, communication, feedback, skills and abilities, public organizations*

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## The Financial Performance of the Food and Beverage Sector during Covid-19. Evidence from Greece

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### Abstract

The food and beverage sector is one of the most important sectors of the economy, constituting the largest part of the secondary sector of production in Greece. In recent years, companies in the food and beverage sector have significantly benefited from technological developments and consumer preferences that favor a return to healthier eating habits and a wider variety of products. This has led to a general increase in productivity and substantial progress in the industry as a whole. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic was a major blow to most economic sectors on an international scale. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic on production and supply chains, the food and beverage sector in Greece managed to cope successfully. It was one of the few sectors that only experienced short-term adverse effects. In order to investigate the extent to which the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the financial performance of companies in this sector, a sample of 59 Greek firms was selected. The sample included both listed and non-listed firms, belonging to various business size categories and based in different regions of the country. The aim was to explore potential differences in their financial ratios during the period of 2018-2022. The findings of the research reveal that food production industries experienced significant fluctuations in financial ratios during the period of 2018-2022, whereas those of trade and retail sectors experienced significantly lower fluctuations. The results show that the size of the company does not play a significant role in the impact of the pandemic, while listed and non-listed firms experienced variations in different ratios. Finally, the results suggest that companies headquartered in the Greek islands had significantly smaller variations in their ratios over time compared to those based on the mainland. From the above, it can be concluded that the outbreak of the pandemic had a limited effect on the financial performance of companies in the food and beverage sector in Greece.

**Keywords:** Food industry, Covid-19 pandemic, financial performance, Greece

## **Modern technologies in the analysis and anticipation of student migrants' choices. Neuromarketing as a constructive engagement tool in academia.**

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As a term which was first heard in 1990s in Harvard University, Medical School, Therapies Department, 'neuromarketing' is regarded by extant scholarship as the 'child' of neuroscience and marketing, two sectors that decades ago could not be easily thought combined (Harrell, 2019). However, independently to any differentiations or disputes on elements that can arise in various sectors of its operation – perhaps by definition - no one can doubt that 'neuromarketing' puts human brain in the epicentre of modern business operation and standards of product and services delivery. Thus, progressively, despite the evolution that scholarship in the field of consumer behaviour has marked to date, it is neuromarketing which constitutes the most robust endeavour of science to substantially penetrate in the formerly uncharted paths of human mind, and fulfil a human desire that was predominant for centuries (Alsharif et al. 2021). Despite its emergence in early 70s in medical science, only in recent years has neuromarketing been exponentially and scientifically researched and presented in literature. Consequently, in parallel to the advancement of its research output, an advancement of various technical application tools and methods has been witnessed expanding from fMRI and EEG – functional magnetic resonance and electroencephalogram respectively as primary methods, to eye and pupil-tracking, biometrics and facial coding as less pervasive and secondary ones (NMSBA, 2023). Yet, academic literature still remains silent concerning the role of neuromarketing in the interpretation and anticipation of the elements which form prospective educational migrants' decisions. At the same time related research paths could prove to be promising for the managerial and recruitment decisions of the Higher Education Institutions, leading to successful promotional paths and profitability, the latter essential not only for the institutions' financial survival but also for their capacity to reinvest their profits in scientific and commercial performance (Cabrera et al., 2018). At the time that academia was not immune from the COVID-19 crisis, neuromarketing, through the scrutiny of investigation of the prospective students' cognitive and emotional reactions, could lead to impactful communication strategies, virtual and in-campus experiences leading to an attractive and engaging educational environment customised to student needs (Ochieng et al., 2023). As a result, 786 published research papers have been reviewed where neuromarketing is analysed in its constituents. Emotional and psychological aspects are presented, advantages, challenges, ethical aspects and decision-making dimensions are highlighted indicating related areas of scholarship. Finally, a conceptual framework is proposed showcasing the effect of neuromarketing methods on student migrants' perceptions about higher educational institutions, filtered by the perceived elements of marketing mix and personal characteristics, leading to a final decision which fuels the institutions' monitoring process. In this way the predominance of neuromarketing's bright side over the dark one is showcased (DK International Marketing, 2018).

**Keywords:** *neuromarketing, higher education institutions, student migrants*

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## **Internal Audit Performance through the eyes of the Balanced Scorecard**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines how the balanced scorecard method affects the efficiency of the internal audit function, focusing on Greek banks. We discuss how the use of the Balanced Scorecard is connected to the performance enhancement of financial organizations via the mediating role of internal audit. We use a quantitative analysis of primary data obtained from a questionnaire survey, supplemented with qualitative data from the perspectives of seasoned bank executives in 2017. The sample comprises the main financial institutions in Greece. The study found that the Balanced Scorecard is suitable for assessing the performance of the internal audit department in financial institutions. It also highlighted its role as a management tool in aligning with the overall business strategy and departmental goals of these entities.

Technological evolution and complexity of contemporary business environment attract research interest in the realm of internal audit. Organizations are always alert in identifying risks and applying strategies to mitigate them. Internal audit as a function has passed through the stage of infancy in Greek corporations entering an era of specialization based on the characteristics of domestic organizations and entrepreneurship. Fraud, corruption and infringement of classified inside information are phenomena that business world has always been concerned with, especially in banking sector.

The Balanced Scorecard (BSc), introduced by Kaplan and Norton (2002), has been widely used as a lighthouse in the effective management practice as a tool to provide valuable information pointing at the same time at areas that top management should focus on in order to improve overall business performance. Through the years, research studies have utilized BSc in various ways such as performance measurement or strategic analysis or even a tool to direct audit scope. At the same time, its appropriateness of its multifaceted nature was tested through real life case studies in various types of organizations and sectors.

Measuring business performance focusing solely on financial metrics published in financial statements emphasizes on past figures and provides a rather shortsighted view on strategy. Strategic decisions require the adoption of relevant tools to capture not only past performance, but also to indicate future opportunities open to an entity together with financial valuation of each of the alternatives. Through this prism, BSc evolves as an alternative tool to the internal audit function in fulfilling its consulting role within an organization signaling a transformation from a traditional to a contemporary management model.

Having the above in mind, the rationale for this research paper is to investigate the relationship between internal audit and BSc. Focusing on an under researched country in the field (Greece), we explore the value and benefits of utilizing the BSc when performing internal audits. We focus on the banking sector, which has suffered a lot of pressure not only as a result of the global financial crisis since 2008, but also due to sovereign debt crisis in

Greece. Starting from the analysis of importance of internal audit and the dimensions of BSC in contemporary business world, we explore the efficacy of BSC to the value added by the internal audit function in financial institutions. Hence, the paper is structured as follows: second part discusses existing literature on internal audit, BSC and banking justifying the aim and objectives for the study; the third part presents the methodology followed; the fourth part presents and discusses data and findings; and fifth part critically discusses major conclusions and proceeds to proposals.

**Keywords:** Balanced Scorecard, Internal Audit, Performance, Banking, Crisis.

## Group interventions targeting workplace intra-group conflict: A systematic review

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**Background:** Workplace conflict is a common and inevitable aspect of workplace interactions, with the potential for both positive and negative outcomes (Jehn et al., 2008). Various types of conflict, attitudes towards conflict, and conflict management styles are linked to different outcomes of workplace conflicts (Bradley et al., 2015; de Wit et al., 2012; Tafvelin et al., 2019). Numerous interventions have been developed and implemented to manage negative outcomes of workplace conflicts, benefiting organizations and their employees. However, there has not been a comprehensive review of their effectiveness.

**Objective:** This study aims to systematically review intervention studies for intra- and inter-group workplace conflict and report on their effectiveness. The primary goal is to identify key characteristics of these interventions (e.g., timing, duration, techniques, type, setting) and investigate their correlation with the interventions' effectiveness in managing workplace conflict and in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of organizations and their employees.

**Methods:** This literature review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The Cochrane Library, ProQuest, Scopus, ERIC, and PsycINFO databases were searched to create the dataset that was screened first by title and abstract, and then by full-text against a priori eligibility criteria: primary studies written in English, employing quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods designs; targeting active personnel and aiming to manage their intra- and/or inter-group conflict. All studies were required to provide a sufficient description of their methodology and results and to report on at least one type of conflict or conflict-related outcome. There were no setting or time restrictions for the interventions and no publication date restrictions for the studies. Quality assessments using standardized tools were conducted on both qualitative and quantitative eligible studies, using the Qualitative Research Checklist (QRC) and the Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies (QATQS), respectively. The review was pre-registered on PROSPERO (registration number CRD42024517797).

**Results:** Of the 15,239 retrieved articles, 25 met the inclusion criteria. The majority of eligible studies was of moderate quality and was published between 1989 and 2022. Articles varied significantly in terms of intervention and sample characteristics, measures, and outcomes of interest (Çinar & Baykal, 2021; Kay & Skarlicki, 2020b; Middour-Oxler et al., 2022; Olson & Hopkins, 2021; Van De Vliert, 1995). Certain intervention factors, such as the duration of the intervention, the inclusion of interactive hands-on training, multidisciplinary participation, and managerial involvement, were associated with higher intervention effectiveness.

**Conclusions:** This systematic review is the first comprehensive analysis of all workplace conflict interventions, shedding light on effective practices and overall effectiveness. However, the variation in the choice of outcomes of interest, measures, and the lack of detailed descriptions of methods and findings in existing studies highlights the need for greater cohesion and a more regulated approach. Nonetheless, workplace conflict interventions were consistently associated with improved personal, interpersonal, and organizational outcomes.

**Keywords:** *workplace conflict, workplace conflict intervention, effectiveness, systematic review*

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## Determinants of intra-group conflict in healthcare

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**Background:** Intra-group workplace conflict is a common phenomenon that can have severe work-related consequences (Gavin et al., 2020; Jehn et al., 2008; Salas-Vallina et al., 2023). High levels of conflict within a team can lead to long-term discontent, reduced job satisfaction, decreased productivity, higher rates of absenteeism, higher turnover rates, poor collaboration, and an overall impaired sense of well-being among employees, contributing to a toxic work environment (Magnotta & Johnson, 2020; Salas-Vallina et al., 2023; Tafvelin et al., 2019; Torrington et al., 2019). The consequences of intra-group conflict are particularly significant in high-pressure and demanding work teams, such as acute care nursing, where performance outcomes are critical (Shi et al., 2020; Tosanloo et al., 2019).

**Objectives:** This study aimed to explore intra-group conflict among acute care nurses and identify potential determinants.

**Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted from late 2019 to early 2020, involving 464 Registered Nurses (holding a 4-year university degree) and 195 Nursing Assistants (with 2 years of education) working in five public Greek hospitals, selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires, covering participants' sociodemographic and work-related characteristics, as well as their perceptions of intra-group conflict and leadership style within their work teams. Intra-group conflict scores were categorized as low, average, and high. All statistical analyses, including multivariate logistic regression, were performed using SPSS version 25.0.

**Results:** Univariate analyses showed no significant relationship between intra-group conflicts and factors such as sex, age, educational level, profession, years working in healthcare, years working in the specific department, or shifts (night, evening, and weekend) during the past month. However, multivariate regression models revealed that higher perceived supervisor narcissism was significantly associated with higher intra-group conflict.

**Conclusions:** The findings indicate that higher levels of perceived supervisor narcissism are linked to increased intra-group conflict, highlighting the critical influence of leadership style on team dynamics. Addressing and mitigating supervisor narcissism could be a strategic approach to reducing intra-group conflict in high-pressure healthcare environments.

**Keywords:** *intra-group conflict; acute care nurses; moderators; perceived supervisor narcissism*

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## **Measuring and evaluating sustainability: A 'Benefit of the Doubt' composite indicator approach**

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### **Abstract**

In an era where global competitiveness hinges not only on economic prowess but also on sustainable practices, businesses are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability. Yet, accurately measuring and comparing sustainability performance across diverse industries and companies remains a formidable challenge. Traditional frameworks often lack the depth and breadth needed to capture the intricate interplay between social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

The primary goal of this paper is to introduce a methodology for evaluating sustainability performance across industries and companies using composite measures. We aim to provide a comprehensive framework for sustainability assessment and to identify areas for improvement across various aspects of sustainability.

We propose a mathematical programming approach to benchmark individual companies using a composite index. We adopt the 'benefit of the doubt' (BoD) method for aggregating the sub-indicators of sustainability. This method is associated with data envelopment analysis (DEA), a linear programming technique used to assess the relative efficiency performance of comparable production units. The 'benefit of the doubt' method allows for meaningful comparisons and inferences among the assessed companies. Additionally, it identifies potential improvements for each indicator to enhance overall performance and reduces the impact of measurement errors, accounting for heterogeneous background characteristics. We illustrate this approach using a particularly rich dataset of 6,000 companies from 39 countries.

**Keywords:** *Sustainability assessment, Benchmarking, Data envelopment analysis, Conditional efficiency.*

## **Glorifying marijuana**

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Marketers for decades have been able to change our perception to suite their commercial needs. This is accomplished with the collaboration of psychologist who assist marketers in identifying the underlying motives that drive consumer behavior.

Marketers utilize this knowledge to alter behaviors that were once taboos in society, to acceptable and conventional conducts, that are often supported by states.

Tobacco companies, waking up to the enormous profits they were foregoing due to the negative attitudes towards female smokers, hired Edward Bernays to help them in transfiguring this taboo (Curtis, 2002). To sell their instant cake mix, Betty Crocker had to change the attitude of housewives in the 50s towards instant foods.

This issue doesn't only concern women. The "modern" man not using make-up or a host of skincare products represent huge potential profits that the beauty industry is foregoing. Marketers are reversing this behavior and very quickly.

This research project aims to demonstrate the power of marketing, through examples of how our perceptions of various behaviors have been modified through time, from proudly purchasing and using cake mixes to using marijuana overtly.

*Keywords: Marketing, taboo, perception, attitudes, marijuana*

## Chatbot use in B2B commerce

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### **Abstract:**

Chatbots are increasingly used by companies of all sizes and are incorporated in their marketing strategy, reinforcing both B2C and B2B transactions and converting traditional e-commerce to conversational e-commerce. According to the literature, chatbots can be used in many areas, such as sales, appointments-reservations, customer service, after sales - customer support, education-training etc. In health sector, there are several examples of chatbot use, both for patient treatment and for commercial purposes. The aim of this paper is to develop, implement and evaluate the use of a chatbot in a Greek company that provides medical equipment to hospitals and doctors. The development of the chatbot followed the thirteen steps proposed by the chatbot development cycle of Hyun et al. (2020). As far as the implementation is concerned, several design frameworks and development platforms were examined, and the platform that was selected was Tidio. A clone-demo of the official website of the company was created and the chatbot was implemented in this website for the needs of the present research effort. After the design, implementation, customization, testing and launch of the chatbot, we proceeded in the evaluation of its use, by performing an online survey among a selected sample of 50 doctors - customers of the company. The factors that were examined through this survey were based on previous studies (Barbosa et al. 2022; Cameron et al. 2019; Johannsen et al. 2018; Kuligowska 2015; Peras, 2018) and consisted of perceived usefulness of the chatbot, perceived ease of use, quality of communication between chatbot and user, ease of learning how to use the chatbot, attitude of user towards chatbots and intention to use chatbots, both in the official company's website and in other websites. The findings of our research showed that respondents showed overall satisfaction and a significant percent of agreement for its usefulness, ease of use and ease of learning. From their answers, doctors seem to have a positive attitude to innovate and use a chatbot in their everyday transactions with the company that provides them with medical equipment, although they would prefer more customization and use of natural language for improved overall user experience. The outcomes of our study can have practical implications for companies that consider implementing a chatbot in their websites for B2B transactions. Future efforts in this area may include the implementation of a chatbot in another platform, with more customization capabilities and/or the integration of further functions, such as integration of natural language processing (NLP) to enrich the operating scope of the chatbot and the management of its interactions.

**Keywords:** *Chatbots, E-commerce, B2B*

# Marketing Communications

## **Museum's audience engagement activities during the pandemic**

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### **Abstract:**

The pandemic was a challenge for the global community in many aspects. During the confinement, cultural institutions -especially museums- were forced to extensive use of digital media, in an attempt to keep contact with their audiences as well as survive in the post-covid environment and continue to exercise their mission and social role. They accelerated their digital practices and processes and made sharp modifications to their programming, using a wide variety of activities to engage with the public. They drew on existing resources, including digitized collections and social media, and created new digital content, such as virtual exhibitions, curatorial talks, and virtual tours of galleries.

The proposed poster aims to present the main findings of a research conducted within the framework of the "InterArt" Research Program of the Department of Language and Intercultural Studies of the University of Thessaly. "InterArt" aims to highlight the social role of museums -and art in general- during the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing mainly on the enhancement of participation and empathy and the transformation of lived experience. Our work team has mapped, categorized, and analyzed a large number of museum digital activities, which took place in Greece and in other countries during the pandemic. Drawing upon empirical research and case studies, we present the outcomes of the comprehensive analysis conducted within "InterArt", illuminating innovative strategies and emerging trends in audience engagement. By examining the intersection of art, technology, and community outreach, we aim to shed light on the transformative potential of digital platforms in enhancing accessibility, inclusivity, and participation in cultural experiences.

Our research work underscores the importance of collaboration and knowledge-sharing among museums in navigating the challenges of the pandemic and beyond. Through collective action and exchange of best practices, museums can harness the power of creativity and resilience to forge new pathways for engaging with diverse audiences in a rapidly changing world.

**Keywords:** *audience engagement, digital activities, Museums, cultural communication*

# Marketing SMEs



## Digital transformation and digital maturity in Greece: Challenges and opportunities for small and medium-sized Enterprises

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### Abstract:

This research examines the digital transformation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Greece, focusing on their digital maturity and strategy clarity. The study looks at how digital maturity relates to various factors such as strategy, culture, leadership, technology, obstacles, and external influences, including government support. As digital platforms develop, they change how industries operate and drive new strategic efforts in SMEs. Using a quantitative approach, the research surveyed owners, executives, and managers of SMEs to collect data on their views about digital transformation and their stage of digital maturity.

The main research aim to determine the digital maturity levels of Greek SMEs and explore their digital transactions, the experience of participants, the use of digital technologies, and the history of digital adoption in these businesses. Preliminary results suggest that digital maturity in these firms is affected by the use of digital transformation strategies, which are linked to their roles and experience within the organization.

The study highlights how digital innovations can be smoothly integrated into SMEs' operations and how the views of organizational members can influence digital adoption. This research provides a framework to understand the stage of digital maturity, identify challenges and opportunities in digital transformation, and identify the goals of SMEs on this journey.

**Keywords::** *Digital Transformation, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Digital Maturity, Organizational Change, Digital Technologies*

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## **Branding strategies for family wineries: bringing theory into practice**

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### **Abstract:**

Knowledge exchange between larger corporations and marketing scholars has led to great advances in the theory and practice of branding strategies. Brand architecture and brand heritage in specific has often been the subject of scholarly research, especially with regard to larger firms. However, none of the above aspects and their applications have been thoroughly explored in terms of their role and contribution for smaller businesses. Given the importance of small, family wineries in various place contexts, this paper focuses on Cretan wineries. Findings reveal, despite their small size and consequent limited budget for communication and merchandizing, most wineries do not opt for house of brands. Wineries do not always clearly align their sub-brands with an umbrella, corporate brand but prefer a variation of mixed strategies instead. In addition, wineries often refer to place brand heritage, yet family heritage seems to be the cornerstone of their branding efforts. The findings also confirm the need to further strengthen extant literature in a more appropriate manner for smaller family wine businesses and to facilitate winery decision-makers' understanding of branding strategies.

**Keywords:** *brand architecture, brand heritage, Cretan wineries*

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# Marketing Strategy

## Optimizing Sales Negotiations: The Interplay Between Conflict Management Styles and Negotiation Channels Preferred

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### **Abstract**

Business negotiations incorporating information and communication technologies (ICT) have been gaining significant momentum since then COVID-19 and the adoption of a hybrid work format, in many technological organizations. Along with the challenges and opportunities, there is the need for congruence and precision between the employee's personal factors and the selection of communication channels employed, notably in the context of sales negotiations.

This case study examines correlations between preferred negotiation management channels and conflict style, among sales managers employed in a technological organization.

Two synchronous negotiating channels were examined:

- I. In Person Negotiations [IPN]
- II. Synchronous Computer-Mediated Negotiations [SCMN]

The study included quantitative content analysis for survey questions anonymously answered by executive employees.

Findings show a significantly positive correlation between collaborating and IPN preference, as opposed to a negative correlation between the accommodating style and IPN preference.

A positive correlation was found between compromising and SCMN while a negative correlation was found between the competing and SCMN. No significant correlation was found between preference to conduct IPN or SCMN and the other styles.

A broader follow-up study is proposed and would consider additional variables, with the aim of helping organizations map their workforce in accordance with personal conflict management style.

**Keywords:** Business Negotiations, Hybrid work, Conflict management style, Sales Negotiations.

### **Introduction**

Business negotiations have incorporated information and communication technologies (ICT) for several decades, particularly within marketing and sales. The accelerated pace of technological development, combined with the growing acceptance of flexible work schedules and remote work, has further expanded the scope and prevalence of technology-mediated negotiations since the 1990s.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in mid-February 2020 created a new reality, necessitating that individuals and organizations worldwide adapt to new modes of working and living

(De et al., 2020; De Lucas et al., 2020; Militello, 2021). This situation compelled sales managers to conduct negotiations primarily through technological means, with limited opportunities for traditional face-to-face interactions. The pandemic accelerated the rate of digitalization (Feliciano-Cestero et al., 2023), thereby facilitating the adaptation of employees and organizations to remote work. Additionally, it prompted the adoption of hybrid work models, a trend that has persisted even as the pandemic has subsided.

The advent of COVID-19 marked a pivotal moment in the digital age, providing a significant opportunity to explore the hybrid work format across various contexts. This exploration encompasses investigations into employee perceptions regarding remote work during and post-pandemic (Amen et al., 2023), satisfaction levels with hybrid work arrangements, the balance between home and career responsibilities, and an examination of the repercussions of this situation on labor market dynamics and employee well-being (Zhang et al., 2024; Lyttelton et al., 2020; Fana et al., 2020).

This study, classified within the 'post-pandemic' category, delves into the correlations between preferred negotiation channels and conflict resolution styles in synchronous negotiations within hybrid work environments.

Two synchronous negotiating channels were examined:

- I. In Person Negotiation [IPN]
- II. Synchronous Computer-Mediated Negotiation (SCMN)

Beyond theory, this research also has a practical aspect, which may help map the allocation of negotiators in a hybrid workforce, while maximizing the process and achieving success.

### **The negotiation channels**

Synchronous and asynchronous negotiations have been online for over two decades and have been studied in much research (Croson, 1999; Galin et al., 2007; Rouhshad, 2016).

One of the proposed frameworks for analyzing the interactions within organizations and effective communication channels is the Media Richness Theory (Geiger, 2020), which suggests a continuum distinguishing lean and rich mediums. The studies examined how traditional media (e.g., e-mail, phone, print), as well as new media (e.g., Internet, social media, Intranet), are differently and concurrently used (Daft & Lengel, 1983; Men, 2014; Dévényi, 2016).

They distinguish between asynchronous media (email for example) or synchronous (phone call) which produces information subject to interpretation, to face-to-face communication characterized by media richness. The cues present in face-to-face interaction, such as body language, voice connotation, personal presence and speed of response, complete the verbal message and create a shared understanding, and more, that contribute to the success of the negotiations (Rosette et al., 2012; Geiger, 2020).

### **Conflict Styles**

In a personal and organizational context, conflict styles have a broader impact than their result, and they are important for planning and conducting efficient negotiations (Friedman et al., 2000; Shell, 2001; Zarankin, 2008). Brewer et al. (2002) argue that conflict management skills are imperative for effective individual performance at any level within organizations. Gross and Guerrero (2000) also concluded that conflict styles are linked to perceived competence. Those who manage conflict effectively are generally seen as "competent communicators and capable leaders" (p. 200).

Conflict styles are closely linked to personality types (see, e.g., Friedman et al, 2000; Moberg, 2001; Shell, 2001), and culture (Elsayed, 1996; Brett, 2001; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; Rosette et al., 2012; Barsness & Bhappu, 2004; Morris & Gelfand, 2004; Moslehpour & Qiu, 2021).

The style selection may also be related to organizational status; the identity of the parties as potential situational factors that influence conflict style choice, orientations, motivational constructs and context (Friedman et al., 2000; Brewer et al. 2002).

The researchers used different names for the styles (Mouton, 1964; McKersie, 1965; Thomas, 1976; Pruitt, 1983; Sebenius, 1986; Rahim, 2000; Leung & Kim, 2008).

This case-study uses the five defined styles of the Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI): Competing; Accommodating; Avoiding; Collaborating and Compromising.

### **Methodology**

The study included quantitative content analysis for survey questions.

The research group included 185 sales managers in a large hi-tech company, with different seniority and experience. The subjects answered an anonymous questionnaire that included three parts:

1. Socio-demographic data.
2. Questions regarding negotiation channel preference
3. Conflict management style questionnaire

Data collection took place between January 2023 and May 2023.

During this period, all employees switched to hybrid work that included three working days from the company's offices and an additional two days remotely. The research was conducted in real time, while adapting to change and laid the foundation for further research from a time perspective.

### **Findings**

The data was analyzed using a statistical data analysis system.

Due to the word limitation, this abstract only addresses relevant correlations.

#### Main socio-demographic variables:

185 employees, sixty-eight percent men, age range from 23 to 65 years.

More than half defined their negotiating experience as extensive.

#### IPN Preference and Conflict style

A significantly positive correlation was found between collaborating and IPN preference.

A negative correlation was found between the accommodating style and a IPN preference.

No significant correlations were found between a IPN preference to conduct IPN and the other styles.



#### SCMC Preference to SCMC and Conflict style:

A correlation was found between compromising and to SCMC

A negative correlation was found between the competing and SCMC

No significant correlations were found between SCMC preference to conduct SCMC and the other styles.

#### **Insights and conclusion**

COVID -19 was the first significant digital age opportunity to explore the hybrid work format and the deep and long-term meanings of integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) in various fields, including marketing and sales.

This study examined the correlations between conflict negotiation channels and preferred IPN versus SCMN style, among sales managers in the high-tech industry.

The correlation between IPN and the collaborating style is consistent with the media richness theory presented. The desire to resolve the conflict requires synchronized information, which is fully possible only in IPN. Following this argument, for accommodating negotiators, the multiplicity of details and conducting a dialogue of interests in IPN, is inconvenient and therefore prefer distance.

Compromising negotiators address an issue but don't explore it in as much depth as collaborating negotiators. They are quick to exchange concessions or seek a middle-ground.

It is possible, the fact they are exposed to the same corporate culture and most of them knew each other before COVID, obviates the need for a lot of information and makes SCMN ideal for them. For competitive negotiators, we found an insignificant negative correlation to SCMN, but no positive association to IPN was found.

We propose follow-up research, which includes additional parameters such as product characteristics, marketing and sales strategies, and various aspects of personality, gender, and culture that impact negotiation style preferences. Finding the right correlation between the employee's personal style and the communication channel in which the negotiations will be conducted may maximize the negotiation processes, especially for organizations and individuals adopting a hybrid work format coupled with innovative technology.

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# **Green Entrepreneurship and Governance**

## **Evaluating the Effect of Digital Transformation on Green Entrepreneurship and Green Accounting: A Bibliometric Perspective**

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### **Abstract:**

Digital transformation of organizations has become a critical component in encouraging sustainable practices and green entrepreneurship. This transition entails incorporating modern digital technology into diverse company activities encouraging creativity, efficiency, and a lower environmental imprint. (Ngen Phong Ngen, et.all.,2022). Business strategy aligned with sustainable finance, digital payment systems and financial inclusion can help achieve net-zero emissions and improve sustainable performance (Lisnawati Lisna, et.all.,2024). Furthermore, green computing important part of this transformation includes methods that assess and report on environmental costs and benefits, supporting openness and sustainability in financial reporting. Sufang Xue et.all highlight the crucial necessity of a sustainable shift in the mining industry, recognizing the significant role in resolving numerous socioeconomic and environmental, shift associated with conventional mining practices. The increasing awareness of environmental issues and the need for sustainable business practices have accelerated the adoption of digital tools and technologies. Companies are now leveraging digital transformation not only to enhance their operational efficiency but also to align with global sustainability goals.

This research aims to explore the impact of digital transformation on environmentally-friendly business practices and to examine how digital innovations support the advancement of green accounting. Through the question how digital transformation influence the development and implementation of green businesses and practices a bibliometric analysis was conducted using R, with data sourced from Scopus. The analysis involved data collection, processing, and visualization, to identify key trends, influential publications, and collaboration networks within the research domain. Biblioshiny and VOSviewer were utilized to generate co-citation and co-occurrence maps, thematic maps, and country collaboration networks providing a detailed understanding of the current state and evolution of the field.

The bibliometric analysis revealed several critical insights into the role of digital transformation in foresting green business and green accounting. First, there has been a rise in scientific production, however according to major research in Scopus, there were 252 papers published between 2006 and 2024. Co-citation and co-occurrence analyses highlighted the most influential publications and key theme, such as sustainable innovation, environmental management, and digital tools for sustainability. Additionally, the analysis identifying Ukraine as the country with the most public articles related to this issue. Finally, the findings underscore the importance of digital transformation as catalyst for sustainable business practices and enhanced environmental accountability.

**Keywords:** *sustainability, digitalization, green accounting, SMEs, green business.*

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## **The Green equation: How ESG and green computing may boost the Triple Bottom Line a Bibliometric analysis using R**

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The intersection of digital technology, information systems, and green computing has created a dynamic environment for contemporary businesses. As organizations increasingly prioritize sustainability, the integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria has emerged as a focal point. These therefore make it slightly more important to bring in the theory of Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model of business which encompasses socio-economic and environmental sustainability (Lee, Min-Jae, et al., 2024). This model encapsulates the idea that the sustainability or environmental stewardship or social responsibility is a significant but separate economic question. As supported by a range of disciplines, digital technology and information systems support the integration of these goals, and provide a basis for resource optimization, transparency, and inclusive stakeholder engagement (Crace, Logan, 2023).

Digital technologies help in achieving environmental and social goals by enabling a more efficient type of economic performance, making them a tool in a comprehensive approach to sustainability. For instance, green computing aims to improve energy efficiency and minimize environmental implications as a part of the ESG framework - hence the environment (Dahmani S. et al., 2024). Advanced information systems also drive better data management and reporting, which in turn enables companies to more effectively manage and improve its ESG performance. This integration, serves to productively stimulate sustainability objectives along with business purpose, guiding to an even more ecological tomorrow.

The goal of this research is to analyze the influence of the ESG and the green computing in the business model of the TBL through a bibliometric analysis. The study, analyses the scientific literature and co-citation patterns in relation to the digitalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Using multiple correspondence analysis and co-citation analysis, 750 articles are assessed between 2004 and 2024 to identify thematic trends in the literature. The results underline the significance to drive business performance by considering green computing and ESG criteria.

Key findings from the study point towards a correlation between green computing practices and economic benefits for firms. In addition, countries leading in digital transformation exhibit major scientific output on green computing and ESG. Changing practices and areas of concern in the field underscore the increasing importance and awareness of integrating ESG and green computing into business strategies. These insights emphasize the necessity of adopting sustainable practices and leveraging to achieve economic success while maintain social and environmental responsibilities.

**Keywords:** *sustainability, Triple Bottom Line, Bibliometric analysis, SMEs, green computing, accounting*

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## **Extending the Theory of Planned Behaviour with Personal Norms: Germans' and Greeks' intentions to prefer CPGs with recycled CO<sub>2</sub>**

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**Keywords:** *Recycled CO<sub>2</sub>, Cosmetics and Detergents, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Personal Norms*

### **Introduction**

It is well accepted that Climate Change (CC) mitigation demands a multidisciplinary approach and cooperation (UNCC, 2023). In this direction, at the present time, a Horizon 2020 project is about to conclude, in which a reactor was developed that captures CO<sub>2</sub>, recycles it and produces chemical by-products (<https://suncochem.eu/>). These oxo-products are used to produce fast-moving consumer goods, e.g. cosmetics and detergents. Any effort to reduce carbon emissions from the production of cosmetics and detergents is of crucial importance as chemical industries have been blamed to be among the heaviest polluters (DECHEMA, 2017). The marketing of these products is crucial to the success of such an innovation that specifically addresses the reduction of gas emissions aspiring to contribute to neutrality. Therefore, marketing research is needed to examine the factors that might be found able to influence consumers' intentions to purchase new cosmetics and detergents that are going to contain green ingredients, made from recycled CO<sub>2</sub>.

Consumers' decision process regarding pro-environmental behaviours has been investigated many times by the utilisation of the well-known Theory of Planned Behaviour/TPB (Ajzen, 1991). TPB is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action/TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which claims that attitudes towards a behaviour and subjective norms determine an individual's intentions, which in turn is considered the predisposition of the actual behaviour performance. In TPB, Ajzen (1991) added a third determinant of intentions, the situational variable of perceived behavioural control, as a non-volitional factor, which can obstruct or facilitate intentions and behaviour.

Further, Ajzen (2011) acknowledged that when the behaviour under examination is morally oriented, such as pro-environmental behaviours are, people's moral norms or ethical obligations should be incorporated into the model. Regarding specifically pro-environmental behaviours, Stern (2000), when developing the Values-Beliefs-Norms (VBN) theoretical model suggested that these feelings of ethical or moral obligation to perform a pro-environmental behaviour are an individual's personal norms and constitute the predisposition of the relevant behaviour performance.

Further, variations of consumer behaviour across countries have many times been documented. For example, a relatively recent Eurobarometer (2021) revealed that Germans and Greeks differ significantly in their opinions about "who is responsible for tackling climate change" as Germans (74%) think that mostly business and industry are responsible, while Greeks (74%) think that national governments hold major responsibility. They also differ in terms of ascription of personal responsibility (56% of Germans and just 33% of Greeks think they are "personally responsible for tackling climate change") and in terms of "taking action to fight climate change over the past six months" (79% of Germans and 58% of Greeks).

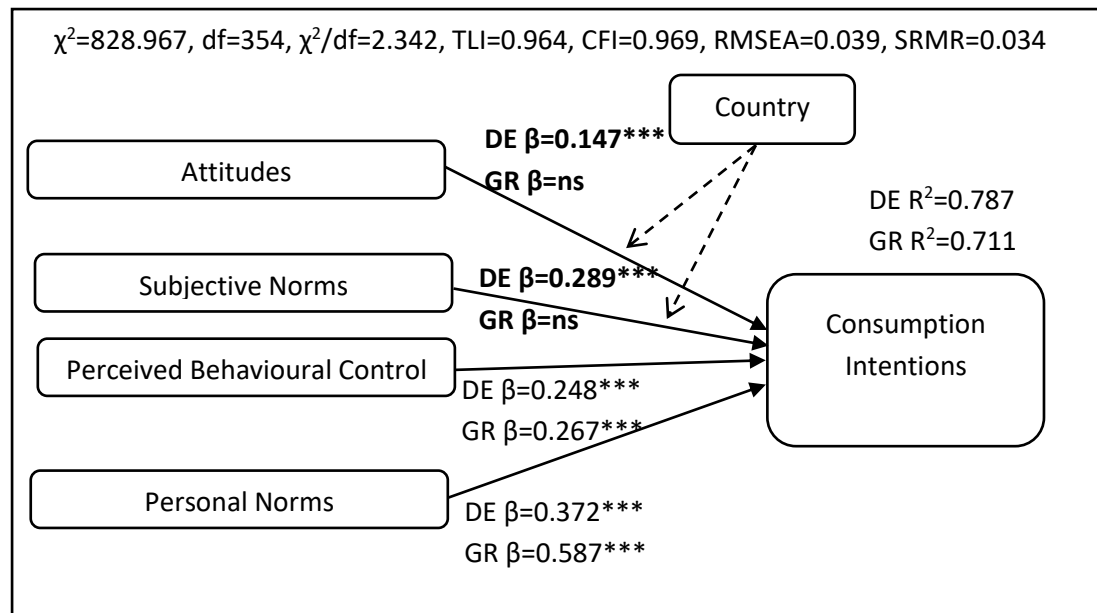
Therefore, this study examines Greeks' and Germans' intentions to purchase innovative green cosmetics and detergents containing recycled CO<sub>2</sub> by adopting a TPB model extended by Personal Norms. Theoretical suggestions and previous research results guided the conceptual framework of this study (Figure 1).

### **Methodology**

An electronic survey was conducted in Germany and Greece with structured questionnaires containing the following variables: Attitudes with four items measured on a 6-point semantic differential scale; Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control, and Consumption Intentions with four items each and Personal Norms



with eight items, all measured in 6-point Likert scales. The questionnaire also included five demographic variables, namely Gender, Age, Education, Income, and Occupation. The final sample came up to 882 respondents, selected with the stratified sampling method, and the strata were designed according to the Gender and Age population distribution (Eurostat, 2021), in each country (DE: 574, GR:308).



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

## Results and Discussion

Structural Equation Modelling was used to analyse the data collected via AMOS v.20. Data screening excluded 12 outliers; hence, the final sample came to 870 cases (DE: 563, GR: 307). The final Measurement Model, after validity assessment and the exclusion of three items (Att1 from Attitudes and CI1, CI2 from Consumption Intentions) was judged to be valid in terms of Construct Validity (Discriminant and Convergent validity) in both countries. Measurement invariance was assessed with configural invariance between the unconstrained and the constrained (factor loadings varying and equivalent respectively across the national samples). The structural model resulted in well-accepted GOF values in both countries, indicating that the model fits the data of the two countries well.

Personal Norms was found to be the stronger predictor of Consumption Intentions, though significantly stronger in the Greek versus the German sample. Further, the standardized regression weights indicated that there are differences between the structural relationships found in each country. Moderation analysis was then conducted to verify the statistical significance of the differences found. Indeed, the multigroup moderation analysis revealed statistically significant ( $p<0.001$ ) differences (critical ratios and  $\Delta\chi^2$  test  $\geq \pm 1.96$ ) between the two countries in the relationships between Att and CI as well as between SN and CI. In the Greek sample these relationships were found to be statistically non-significant, while in the German sample they were found to be statistically significant ( $p<0.001$ ) and positive (Figure 1).

The squared multiple correlations indicated that the expanded by PN TPB model of this study can explain 78.7% of the variance in German and 71.1% of the variance in Greek consumers' intentions to buy cosmetics and detergents containing ingredients made from recycled CO<sub>2</sub>.

## Limitations and Further Research Suggestions

As in any pro-environmental research study, it is possible that a social desirability (SD) effect is present and causes a slight over-evaluation in the findings. Special techniques to reduce SD should be always desirable in future efforts. It is surprising that the TPB scale of Attitudes provided weak evidence of impact in Germany and no impact at all in Greece. Improvements in the scale phrasing or in its response scale are required while additional attitudinal measure of environmental concern might indicate better evidence of impact on intentions. Further, the successful employment of personal norms indicates that most probably a full combination of both moral and practical criteria might be found able to enrich our understanding in the complex area of consumer's

pro-environmental behavioural choices. Last but not least, duplications of this study in other European and/or non-European countries are expected to add to our knowledge in the topic.

## Conclusions and Implications

The extended by Personal Norms TPB model of this study successfully explained an impressively high percentage of the variance in German and Greek consumers' intentions to buy packaged goods containing recycled CO<sub>2</sub>. Personal Norms were found to be the most influential factor of consumers' intentions in both countries. Besides Personal Norms, Germans' intentions are also influenced by Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioural Control and to a lesser extent by their Attitudes towards these products. On the other hand, besides Personal Norms, in the Greeks' sample just Perceived Behavioural Control among the original TPB predictors indicated evidence of impact on intentions to choose the new innovative cosmetics and detergents.

Cosmetics and detergents marketing efforts should design the relevant products' marketing communications aiming mainly to enhancing feelings of moral obligation towards consumption choices able to contribute to the global effort of CC mitigation. Further, both Germans and Greeks should be convinced that neither obstacles exist nor special effort or cost is required in choosing the innovative, green products. In Germany, messages should also incorporate advocates of such products, i.e. testimonials of important opinion leaders arguing how positive, wise and desired is to choose cosmetics and detergents containing recycled CO<sub>2</sub>.

When designing policy interventions favouring carbon neutrality, public authorities and organizations in Germany and Greece should ensure that public communication will focus on everyone's ethical obligation to contribute to CC mitigation, primarily via everyday activities such as consumption choices.

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## **Waste management and circular economy: bibliometric analysis toward sustainable and efficient urban areas**

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### **Abstract**

A bibliometric study was conducted on a sample of 627 documents to provide a comprehensive overview of the available knowledge on waste management within the context of the circular economy and its contribution toward the development of sustainable and efficient urban areas. The investigation encompassed the time frame spanning from 2008 to 2020. The study's findings emphasize that publications related to waste-to-energy technologies have a significant representation among those receiving the highest number of citations. These technologies are crucial in the development of circular economy systems. The examination of concepts reveals a robust connection between the circular economy and the practices of sustainable manufacturing, waste management, and recycling. The research trends in the field have experienced a shift, moving away from a primary emphasis on processes and industry-oriented methods. Instead, there has been a more recent focus on waste management, recycling, and the circular economy. Consequently, the attention has turned towards sustainable development and urban solid waste in the year 2020. The examination reveals four prominent research topics within the realm of circular economy and waste: (i) the implications of greenhouse gas emissions; (ii) the interplay between circular economy, waste management, and recycling; (iii) the examination of waste treatment methodologies; and (iv) the investigation of anaerobic digestion and recovery techniques. The correlation between research trends and the execution of policy interventions and regulatory actions by governing bodies is significant. These efforts aim to facilitate the transition towards a circular economy, promote the adoption of recycling and reusing habits, and discourage the proliferation of a culture centered around excessive consumption. The findings indicate the difficulties associated with the adoption and execution of complete policies in the context of circular economy. Finally, the above represents a significant possibility for achieving a sustainable recovery in light of the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic and energy crisis.

**Keywords:** circular economy; efficiency; sustainability; urban areas; waste management

# **Tourism Marketing and Management**

## **Wine tourism and climate change: How resilient is Crete?**

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### **Abstract:**

Its unique natural environment, biodiversity and cultural resources have developed Crete into a well established tourism destination, depending predominately on the traditional Sea-Sun-Sand triptych. The last two decades have seen the emergence of various forms of special interest tourism, in an effort of the island to diversify its offer and promote more sustainable patterns of development. Amongst these forms, wine tourism represents a dynamic bridge between viticulture, winemaking and hospitality, receiving growing attention as a potential pathway to revitalize the rural areas. Since the creation of the regional winemakers' association in 2006, namely, Wines of Crete, strategic alliances and joint ventures between different actors of the supply chain have resulted in significant improvements with respect to a range of aspects that concern product quality, regional branding and infrastructure.

Despite the steps forward in this regard, the sustainability of the sector still faces challenges on many fronts, as wine tourism constitutes a complex and multiply interrelated system (Hall et al., 2000) that is particularly exposed to several stressors (Gilinsky, Newton, & Vega, 2016; Gosling & Hall, 2013). Out of those, climate change, i.e., long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns (United Nations, 2024), is considered as a main threat to both viticulture and tourism, causing adverse impacts to the entire system at multiple levels (Alebaki & Ioannides, 2017). To date, scarce attention has been devoted to the potential of island and coastal wine regions (Thibault et al., 2020) and even lesser evidence is available on climate change and wine tourism interactions, especially in the Mediterranean context.

The present study aims to contribute to this regard by empirically exploring the resilience of the Cretan wine tourism system to climate change, i.e., the system's ability to respond, together and effectively (Walker & Salt, 2006) and also develop the industry in a sustainable manner (Holladay & Powel, 2013). Building on previous qualitative work (Alebaki & Ioannides, 2017; Germanier & Moricciani, 2023), this paper examines the perceptions of various wine tourism stakeholders regarding: (1) the current state of wine tourism development on the island; (2) the main challenges of climate change to the Cretan wine tourism sector; and (3) the effectiveness of the existing resilience strategies. In order to address these objectives, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with participants chosen with the use of snowball sampling method. Between December 2023 and May 2024, a semi-structured guide was used to gather data from representatives of the wine and tourism industry; scientific experts; and members of the regional governance. Thematic Analysis was employed to identify key themes in interviewees' responses and desk-based research assisted in sketching the profile of the Cretan wine tourism industry.

**Keywords:** *wine tourism, climate change, resilience, Crete*

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## **Residents' Perceptions of the Transition towards Digital Transformation in the Tourism Industry. The Case of the Chania Prefecture**

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### ***Abstract:***

Crete is probably the archetypal summer tourism destination in the Mediterranean. It 'suffers' from acute seasonality during the summer months, while the tourism season is contracting on an annual basis. Extensive research in Greek and international tourism literature has placed the emphasis on the problems arising from the prevalence of mass tourism on the island (Andriotis 2007, Apostolakis et al., 2020). At the same time, little attention has been paid to the views of the island's residents. Hence, this paper/research aims to identify and discuss residents' opinions regarding the use of technological innovation in tourism. So far, these efforts have been almost exclusively focused on tourists (Andriotis & Vaughan 2003). However, this approach offers a one sided perspective on the matter – problem. The Greek government is making efforts to reverse the adverse effects of mass tourism, emphasizing the need for the country's and the destination's digital transformation. At the same time, the digital maturity of Greek tourism is recorded as "not mature at all" (INSETE, 2021). All these pose serious concerns as to whether digital transformation is indeed the policy panacea to cure the evils of mass tourism in Crete.

This study explores the views of the residents of the prefecture of Chania, Crete, on how they perceive concepts such as a technologically advanced tourism industry, digital transformation and transitory factors towards a technologically advanced tourism industry. A qualitative research approach was chosen, namely the semi-structured interview technique, in order to collect information from participants. In total 30 semi – structured interviews were performed, over a course of four (4) months last winter. The research sample consisted of residents from the Chania prefecture, namely the urban area of the city, the coastal areas and the mountainous hinterland. Spatial segmentation of the sample of participants has been identified as a good research practice in the literature (Macht *et al.* 2022, Karagoz et al., 2022, Hall 2011, Ning F., & Sheng-Jung, 2021). It is considered that the heterogeneous and uneven rate of tourism development within the county, allow for different research results.

Using qualitative content analysis we found that the concept of 'technologically advanced tourism industry' and the 'transition factors' towards it, trigger different perceptions and concerns in the existing local community. More specifically, benefits such as the promotion of localism, the change of visitor typology, technological upgrading and survival of remote destinations were mentioned. While as risks were mentioned, the devaluation of traditional professions - linked to the rural economy, the risk of overdevelopment in the hinterland (mountainous lowlands) and the strong cultural assimilation of the inhabitants to foreign social norms. Hence, one could conclude that the hypothesis considering technological innovation as a panacea for tourism development does not apply to everyone equally.

**Keywords:** Crete, Qualitative Research, Chania, Digital transformation, Perceived benefits and risks

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## **The effect of experiential marketing on religious tourism: the case of Mount Athos**

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This article studies the effect of experiential marketing on Religious Tourism through the experiences of visitors to Mount Athos. Religious Tourism is a special form of alternative tourism and contributes to a large extent to the development of tourist activities. A large portion of tourists from all over the world visit each country because of its strong religious heritage. It is known that the religious motivation is what prompts pilgrims to travel, but the experience and experience they gain are important elements of inquiry that have not been sufficiently explored. Experiential marketing contributes to studying according to the methodology the way of promoting hospitality in tourism. In the case of our study, the Mount Athos monks are a noteworthy element while considering how much they contribute to the experiential experience of the visitor. Methodologically, the research follows the primary data collection using a standardized interview-questionnaire tool addressed to the pilgrims of the religious destination of Mount Athos. The experience of the surrounding space of perceived images, culinary delights and emotions prompts the pilgrim to create an overall perception of the offered added value of the service you address to the pilgrim. The article concludes by capturing the degree of satisfaction of the pilgrims through the experiential experience which contributes to the creation but also to the strengthening of the relationship observed in the choices of religious destinations of a pilgrim. In addition, this article proposes useful strategies in order to better serve pilgrims using elements of their experiential experience that positively affect the degree of satisfaction while at the same time creating a tendency to return to the same religious destination.

**Keywords:** *Experimental marketing, Religious Tourism, Mount Athos*

## **Innovative initiatives in destination management: Culinary diplomacy as a means of tourism promotion and sustainable development**

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### **Abstract:**

Culinary diplomacy is emerging in the field of cultural diplomacy. Food is an important characteristic of the national identity as it is an integral element of daily interaction (Suntikul, 2019). Culinary Diplomacy or Gastrodiplomacy, is an emerging field in International Relations that uses the power of food as a communication tool for people to live peacefully, thus it deters conflicts (Chapple-Sokol, 2013). The tourist experience is strengthened by emphasizing on various local products and customs, therefore adding to the destination important elements of differentiation and competitive advantage (Çalışkan, 2013). In recent years, more and more attention has been paid to the role of gastronomy in the promotion and development of a destination.

‘Good’ food is a factor to define the destination as of high quality, stimulates higher tourist expenditure and draws tourists’ attention on specialized gastronomical activities (Gündüz, *et al.*, 2024; Kyriakaki *et al.*, 2017). The brand identity and image of gastronomy capture the unique characteristics and perceived benefits of a region’s culinary heritage (Kladou and Trihas, 2022; Suna and Alvarez, 2021). According to Sio *et al.* (2024), the products of gastronomy become essential tools to showcase these varied flavors. As said by Béné (2020), in the domain of gastronomy, regional culinary products surpass mere taste to symbolize deep cultural richness and local identity. Additionally, the flavors of each region serve as mirrors, reflecting the history, traditions, and distinct identity of a region (Dixit, 2019). By connecting tourism with the production basis, tourism acts as an additional distributional channel of primary and secondary local production. Also it boosts agricultural income and the local economy, achieves economies of scale and protects the natural environment and cultural heritage (Dimtsis *et al.*, 2022). Gastronomy has the potential to enhance the cultural uniqueness and identity of a region (Elindawati and Nugrahani, 2023), enabling tourists to immerse themselves in the culture of the destination and engage with its traditions, historical narratives, and cultural heritage (Dimtsis *et al.*, 2022).

This paper is focusing in a tourism destination with long cultural and gastronomical history and presents the role of gastronomy and local production in the sustainable tourism development of the destination. Moreover, the initiatives of the Tourism Department of the Municipality of Veria are presented in an effort to develop local culinary identity, to strengthen partnerships between stakeholders, to achieve economies of scale and to increase the added value of the destination. In other words, the initiatives aim to connect local production, cuisine, tradition, cultural heritage and tourism. The region has a very rich history, dating back to 2,500 years with a great number of monuments with global interest. Veria is famous for the production of fruits, vegetables with great exports globally, and livestock farming known as the livestock capital of Greece. Considering the rich history and primary production, the Tourism Department is targeting to improve the competitive advantage of the region and to add further value to the tourism final product. To do so, gastronomy acts as a means to bring together culture, tradition and history, local production and tourism. The direct involvement of local producers, stakeholders and entrepreneurs in the formation of the final tourism product is considered as a very important factor in the sustainable tourism development (Valachis and Trihas, 2024).

Before the ‘Gastrodiplomacy’ project, which began in 2023, a series of promotional actions were carried out by the Tourism Department to promote gastronomy. Those initiatives entailed participations in exhibitions, festivals and other gastronomy-related events. The next step was to unify all these initiatives under a science-based ‘umbrella’ through the active involvement of local community and entrepreneurship, so as to finally integrate local products and recipes in local stores and businesses. In this context, a study was carried out to

record the local products and recipes of the destination, in order to create an innovative menu in a scientific way according to the needs of modern gastronomy, based on research and the consultation of the local community.

The gastronomical project started with consultations with local stakeholders to record products, recipes and recommendations. The first consultation took place with the productive bodies and stakeholders and the second one was held with representatives and owners of individual businesses (e.g. restaurants, hotels). Moreover, the list of local products and traditional dishes was enriched by studying local gastronomic guides and literature reviews about local culinary culture. The outcome of the project was to develop menus to be served both in local stores and during the official meals and promotional initiatives. The menu should include alternatives and choices of each food category, a children's menu and thematic menus or dishes related to the history, nature and culture of the area.

The words "Menu Veria Gastronomy" were decided to be part of the logo in this project. The logo included the tourist activity, various gastronomical routes reflecting the peach tree, the wine and the beef and the local terroir. The result was the following raw materials, such as fruits, vegetables, spices, fish and meat and most importantly the peaches, the Xinomavro wine, the "tomatoes from Rizomata village" and "peppers from Agios Georgios village", "oregano from Daskio village", Batzos cheese and veal. Finally, nine different menus were developed for the project "Menu Veria Gastronomy", based on the findings of the research, the consultations, the culinary history and plates of the area. Each menu is combined with the description of the dishes, the organoleptic and nutritional value of the products, food pairing and historical review. Therefore, they were named after the aforementioned specifications as "General Veria Menu", "Kids Menu", "Monastery Menu", "Peach Blossoms Menu", "Vegetarian Menu", "Vegan Menu", "Landscapes Menu", "Veria Cheese Pallet", "Gluten Free Menu".

The future steps have to do with the integration of the menus in the stores, but most importantly, the adoption of the philosophy of the gastronomic diplomacy by the local stakeholders and the further development of the synergies between all economic sectors. At the same time, the Tourism Department will continue to communicate the initiative to the tourist distribution channels. The placement of Veria on the gastronomic-tourist maps of Greece and the target to become a member of UNESCO's City of Gastronomy Network, are some principal goals of this gastronomical initiative.

**Keywords:** *Culinary Diplomacy, Gastronomy, Tourism, Destination Management*

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## **Impact of Socio-Demographic Variables on Visitors' Preferences for Safety and Security Policy Initiatives**

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### ***Abstract***

The travel and tourism industry is dependent upon air transport. Especially island tourism destinations are almost exclusively dependent upon air transport. At the same time, the travel and tourism industry is particularly vulnerable to exogenous factors and influences. Hence, safety and security levels are of particular importance to policy makers and practitioners, since they bear a direct and significant effect on tourism arrivals. The current empirical investigation focuses upon the impact/effect of socio-demographic variables (such as age, income, gender and frequency of visit) on tourists' preference patterns. In particular, the paper puts forwards the hypothesis that individual preferences for safety and security policy making at an air transport setting are dependent upon by their socio-demographic profile. For this hypothesis, the paper relaxes the restrictive assumption of preference homogeneity, and adopts more flexible preference specification models.

The issue of safety and security has gained considerable popularity in the travel and tourism literature recently (Dale *et al.* 2021, Seric *et al.* 2022, Liu and Pratt, 2017). This largely reflects the direct and dependent relationship between safety and security issues and the tourism industry. Lately though, partly because of the need to adopt a more pro-active stance towards safety and security issues, and partly because of the need to develop more tailor – made and impactful policy interventions in the field, there is a surge of studies utilizing stated preferences discrete choice modelling (SPDCM) methods to evaluate individual preferences for safety and security in travel and tourism (Bearth *et al.* 2021, Patil *et al.* 2014, Kalakou and Moura 2015).

The paper uses stated preferences discrete choice modelling (SPDCM) methods to evaluate individual travelers' preferences for security policy initiatives at an international airport in Crete. In particular, the paper utilizes a systematic heterogeneous preference specification in order to relax the restrictive and unrealistic assumptions of homogeneous preferences across the population. This alternative preference specification structure provides interesting insights on the preference of individual travelers belonging in different demand segments. More specifically, the paper examines the effect/impact of a series of destination specific security features on individual preferences for future / hypothetical preferences for alternative policy making at the point of entry (international airport).

The paper is based upon a survey questionnaire study, performed during the summer of 2019 over a sample of 500 individual foreign tourists to Crete, Greece. A team of research assistants facilitated in the delivery and administration of the survey. The survey was undertaken at 4\* and 5\* hotels and other areas of tourism interest across the four (4) regional prefectures.

The first notable finding from our empirical investigation relates to the effect previous visit to Crete on individual preferences for safety and security. Thus, whereas in the homogeneous preference specification, respondents were indifferent regarding the presence of military personnel at airports in general, the empirical findings indicate that repeaters to Crete are particularly negative towards the said policy development. The same

applies in the case of policy deterioration such as the removal of cameras from airports. First time visitors to Crete feel particularly negatively about this policy deterioration.

The current study is one of the first studies in the field to interact safety and security processes with respondents' | tourists' socio – demographic profile. The paper has done so in order to examine the degree to which respondents' profile bears any influence upon individual preferences for safety and security.

**Keywords** – systematic heterogeneity, Crete, security, choice modelling, stated preferences

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## **Sustainable Cultural Routes in Crete – A Stated Preferences Discrete Choice Experiment**

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### ***Abstract***

National and regional governments around the world are increasingly promoting cultural routes tourism development (Council of Europe, 2012). Cultural routes represent a recent policy initiative, originating from the Council of Europe in 1987 in order to promote, *inter alia*, cultural entrepreneurship, cultural heritage and sustainability (Zouridaki *et al.* 2022). Cultural heritage routes have also been associated with a number of positive benefits affecting local populations and visitors alike (WTO, 2017). As a result, there are currently more than 35 certified Council of Europe cultural routes.

Despite their increasing popularity in both the literature and as a tool for tourism development and entrepreneurship, there is a notable gap as far as the absence of empirical evidence regarding policy initiatives shaping their future orientation and evolution (Loulanski and Loulanski, 2011). In other words, there is a paucity of hard proof to support evidence based policy development in this dynamic aspect of tourism activity.

Addressing this gap, the current paper presents the empirical findings from a stated preferences discrete choice modelling (SPDCM) experiment to visitors in the island of Crete regarding future and hypothetical policy initiatives pertaining to the development of a thematic cultural route along the island. Crete represents the archetypal mass tourism destination in the Mediterranean. So, despite its increasing popularity as a holiday destination over the years, it has recently started to experience a decrease in its competitiveness over competing island tourist destinations. For this reason, local policy makers and tourism officials have started to promote routes and cultural routes as a policy initiative to rejuvenate and renew the tourism product on offer.

More specifically, a survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of 500 visitors across the island, asking participants to state their preferences for a number of future and/or hypothetical cultural route policy initiatives. These future and/or hypothetical policy initiatives were described in the form of attributes regarding route management, marketing and promotion, sustainable mobility, spatial connections, attitudes towards waste and prices. The SPDCM experiment that took place assumed preference heterogeneity across respondents (so the experiment assumed that all participants behaved in the same uniform fashion).

The preliminary empirical findings from the homogeneous preference specification model indicate that respondents have strong and positive preferences for all product configurations relating to information provision along the route (ICT / information and guidance along the route). This is a strong indication that future and prospective visitors to cultural heritage routes are very keen on developing a wider understanding of the cultural route in relation to other national cultural attractions in Greece (provision of context), as well as the existence of a dedicated application to guide them throughout the route. Another interesting observation stemming from the empirical findings relate to the fact that respondents felt very strongly about waste management practices and policies, as well as the protection of cultural and heritage sites comprising the route. Hence, collectively, they exhibited very strong preferences towards environmental and cultural management along the route. This could be taken to signify respondents' positive attitude towards policies targeting sustainable practices within a mass tourism and saturated environment.

**Keywords:** Stated preferences discrete choice modelling, Crete, Cultural routes, homogeneous preferences

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