Proceedings of the 2025 International Academy of Business Disciplines 36th Annual Conference

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Conference organized by
International Academy of Business Disciplines

Welcome

Paul A. Fadil,
University of North Florida

My Dear Friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the 36th annual conference of the International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD) in Orlando, Florida. I would also like to extend a warm gesture of gratitude to our sponsoring institution, the University of North Florida. Without their kind financial support, many of our amenities would not be possible.

With the camaraderie and fraternity of IABD, let's truly try to strengthen old bonds with old friends and forge new ones, all while supportively sharing knowledge and ideas. We are fortunate to have IABD members coming from all over the world. IABD is truly a melting pot of numerous cultures and ethnicities. We are not only organizing international study conferences every year, we are truly an international organization. It is not just what we do, it's who we are, and we are all quite proud of it. With the current political climate, organizations like IABD are more important than ever.

Once participants attend their first IABD conference, they almost always come back for more. We have numerous 10 – 20-year attendees and many of us (myself included) have attended more than 30 of these conferences over the years. We will continue to work with you in the coming years to adapt and evolve to the new academic environments, while maintaining the "personal touch" that has become synonymous with our mission.

I would like to take a moment to thank our Board of Directors. Their support and direction have been invaluable to IABD accomplishing its goals. Many of these Board members have been with the organization for over 20 years and are past presidents, so they are incredibly invested in the workings of our organization. They are truly my compass and have become the counsel upon which I rely.

I would also like to recognize and thank the heart and soul of IABD, our Track Chairs. Without these Track Chairs, who also double as our editorial board and reviewers for our signature journal, The Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines, IABD would not be able to logistically complete the necessary tasks for our annual conference or put a quality journal together. You all have my undying gratitude for all that you have done and continue to do for IABD.

Finally, IABD has put together one of the best team of officers with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working. Thus, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the following people: Dr. Kaye McKinzie, for creating and maintaining our websites; Dr. Cindi Smatt and Dr. Robert Smith, Esq., for continuing to excel in the Program Chair duties; Robert Smith, Esq., for editing our Proceedings; Dr. Lou Falk, for creating the journal's website and forcing us to honor our past; Dr. Greg Payne, for continuing to provide energy to our conference by opening it up to students; Dr. Reza Eftekharzadeh for being our treasurer for the past 30 years; Dr. Vance Johnson, for editing our signature journal QRBD, and Dr. Charles Lubber for his assistant editorship of our journal.

For many of us, IABD is truly a special organization. As we come together for our 35th meeting, please enjoy the scholarship, our members, the venue, and the various opportunities that our organization provides. We truly believe that the discussions that happen outside the presentation rooms are just as important as the formal discussions that take place inside these rooms. Let us continue to advance the values of our institution by exchanging ideas in a supportive atmosphere, understanding the interdisciplinary nature of the conference, and promoting a truly international experience through constructive dialogue and global understanding. Additionally, if any of you wish to volunteer as a Track chair for future conferences please let us know. We will be happy to have you. I wish you a pleasant experience at our 2025 IABD Conference.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Fadil

Paul A. Fadil

Acknowledgements

The 2025 organizing committee would like to thank all those people who were involved in making the conference a success. A great amount of planning and organizing is required to hold a successful conference, so we are indebted to those who volunteered their time and energy.

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About IABD

The International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD) is a worldwide, non-profit, organization established in 1987 to foster and promote education in all of the functional and support disciplines of business.

IABD's objectives are:

- To stimulate learning and understanding and to exchange information, ideas, and research results from around the world;
- To bridge the gap between theory and practice, and to increase individual awareness of business problems and opportunities in the international marketplace;
- To create an environment where the learning, teaching, research, and practice of management, marketing, and other business disciplines can be advanced. The paramount focus is on extending knowledge in these areas so that creativity and practical application can be enhanced;
- And, to cooperate whenever possible with government agencies, academic organizations, and businesses for the furtherance of the above objectives.

IABD will not adopt a partisan position or the ideals of any particular interest group. Furthermore, IABD will not co-sponsor or otherwise be identified with any government agencies, profit oriented organizations, or other non-academic organizations, which may compromise the intellectual integrity of its members.

Membership in IABD is open to scholars, practitioners, public policymakers, and concerned citizens who are interested in advancing knowledge in the various business disciplines and related fields.

MISSION STATEMENT

The organization designated as the International Academy of Business Disciplines is a worldwide, non-profit organization, established to foster and promote education in all of the functional and support disciplines of business.

Website: www.iabd.org

Contents

A CASE STUDY ON “UNHINGED MARKETING”: THE DUOLINGO OWL IS DEAD

Abigail Gagermeier, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, algabby01@vt.edu

This paper examines a case study on Duolingo, a language learning app, that leverages "unhinged marketing" primarily through its social media channels to achieve key business outcomes, such as increased app downloads, higher purchase intentions, and enhanced brand awareness. Unhinged marketing is a largely unexplored concept in academia that introduces elements of guerrilla marketing, viral marketing, and meme marketing to the modern-day social media landscape. It uses unconventional marketing tactics to surprise, disturb, and engage the audience using humorous memes and outrageous online stunts, like killing off Duolingo’s mascot, Duo the owl. By leveraging humor and shock value, Duolingo has crafted a fun, playful brand persona, significantly enhancing its visibility, particularly among Gen Z consumers. However, unhinged marketing is not without its challenges. As Duolingo has discovered, this strategy can lead to reputational damage and complicate the brand’s organizational identity, requiring careful management of stakeholder perception and brand positioning. This analysis explores unhinged marketing and its potential implications, highlighting the need for further research into the effectiveness and risks of this nascent strategy.

A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF CSR AND RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP ORIENTATIONS: UNITED STATES VS. VIETNAMESE STUDENTS

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This conference presentation is based on a study that examined the differences and relationships between corporate social responsibility orientations (CSRO) and responsible leadership orientations (RLO) of U.S. and Vietnamese business students to help conceptualize the emerging field of responsible global leadership. According to the data, no significant differences and relationships existed between the CSRO and RLO orientations based on the two national cultures. Both U.S. and Vietnamese business students weighed CSR in the same order: economic responsibilities, then legal, then ethical, with philanthropic last, matching Archie B. Carroll’s (1979, 1991) hierarchical description of CSR. Additionally, both sets of students scored higher in the opportunity seeker and integrator categories that focus on considering non-economic stakeholders’ needs for either economic gains or authentically supporting issues important to a community, aligning with Nicola Pless, Thomas Maak, and David Waldman’s (2012) responsible leadership model. Also, based on the findings, individual CSROs could not predict RLOs. Although the people in the United States and Vietnam differ culturally based on Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (e.g., High Individualism vs. High Collectivism), both sets of students grouped CSRO and RLO into similar categories (Hofstede et al., 2010). Overall, the results of this study, compared with previous research on CSR and responsible leadership, contributed to conceptualizing the emerging field of responsible global leadership.

ACCESSIBLE ADVENTURE: THE BUSINESS OF ADAPTIVE SPORTS TOURISM IN COSTA RICA

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The economic potential of adaptive sports tourism is increasingly recognized as a growing market segment. Sports event tourism for disabled athletes presents new business opportunities for destinations investing in inclusive infrastructure (Yun et al., 2024). Costa Rica has emerged as a tourism destination for adaptive sports, offering a diverse range of accessible adventure experiences that cater to travelers with disabilities and special needs. As global demand for inclusive tourism rises, tourism businesses in Costa Rica integrate adaptive sports, such as surfing, rafting, ziplining, and scuba diving, into their tour product offerings, aligning with economic and sustainability goals. Government initiatives and private sector investments have positioned Costa Rica as a model for inclusive adventure tourism, earning international recognition for its leadership in accessibility (Fernandez, 2023). Through case studies of adaptive tourism providers, such as Il Viaggio Travel and Surf Adaptado Jacó, this study highlights strategies for incorporating universal design principles and assistive technologies into adventure tourism, reinforcing accessible tourism best practices. Buhalis and Michopoulou (2010) demonstrated how technology and digital platforms can enhance destination accessibility, making adventure tourism more inclusive for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Additionally, this study examines the role of public-private partnerships and policy frameworks in strengthening Costa Rica’s competitive advantage in this niche market.

ADVANCING CTR AND CONVERSION INSIGHTS: A FOCUS ON AD FORMAT, USER EXPERIENCE, AND NEXT-GENERATION MODELING

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Click-Through Rates (CTR) and Conversion Rates (CVR) remain pivotal metrics in digital marketing, yet the complexity of user behavior, ad formats, and data sparsity continues to challenge accurate prediction and optimization. This study builds on recent developments in CTR and CVR modeling by examining how video versus static image ads can shape user experience and subsequent conversions. Specifically, we propose an integrative approach that combines qualitative user feedback with next-generation predictive models (such as Deep Multi-Interest Networks and Entire Space Multi-Task frameworks) to address critical issues like free-rider bias and overfitting. Unlike broad, one-size-fits-all approaches, we focus on small to mid-sized e-commerce businesses, which often have limited resources yet stand to benefit most from targeted ad optimization. We outline a mixed-method design that gathers real-time data on user engagement and conversion paths across multiple ad formats. By analyzing online consumer interactions—both quantitatively (through advanced model performance metrics) and qualitatively (via user feedback on ad experience)—we aim to illuminate best practices for boosting CTR and driving genuine conversion. Additionally, we propose testing adaptive user segmentation based on evolving interests and employing low-intrusiveness design to balance engagement with user comfort. Potential research outcomes include improved accuracy in predicting purchase intent, reduced model overfitting, and actionable insights on when and how video ads outperform static creatives. This work offers a foundation for more precise, context-aware advertising strategies, ultimately helping e-commerce SMEs align their marketing spend with measurable, trust-building consumer engagement.

AI INTEGRATION IN UNIVERSITY STUDIES

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The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education is transforming students' learning experiences, decision-making, and academic efficiency. This study explores student perceptions of AI's benefits, challenges, and its role across academic disciplines. Findings indicate that while students recognize AI as a valuable educational tool, they also express concerns regarding privacy, reliance, and the need for improved AI training. Statistically significant differences were observed in AI's impact on learning efficiency, decision-making, and academic engagement, supporting the hypothesis that AI enhances education but presents notable challenges. The study also highlights the necessity for balanced AI integration, ensuring that AI complements rather than replaces critical thinking and independent learning. These insights provide valuable implications for educators and institutions in developing AI policies that optimize learning outcomes while addressing ethical considerations and accessibility concerns.

AN APPLICATION OF BENFORD'S LAW IN THE NASDAQGS HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

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We investigate the price distribution of NASDAQGS Health Care stocks for conformity to Benford's Law (BL). BL predicts the leading digits of prices will have a higher probability of lower numbers like 1 or 2 versus higher numbers like 8 or 9.

ANALYZING SUPER BOWL ADVERTISING: MESSAGE STRATEGIES AND THEIR EFFECTS

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As one of the most popular sporting events in the world, the Super Bowl provides great marketing opportunities to reach massive audiences. Super Bowl advertising is one of the most influential marketing platforms and the most expensive advertising battleground for marketers (Yomtov 2025). This paper explores advertising message strategies in Super Bowl commercials from 2016 to 2025, analyzing their effectiveness based on YouTube Super Bowl commercials. Utilizing content analysis, this study examines the evaluation criteria and components that distinguish for top-performing (grade A) versus bottom-performing (grade D, F) Super Bowl advertisements, as evaluated by the Kellogg School of Northwestern. By compiling and analyzing Super Bowl commercials on YouTube, our study categorizes advertising message strategies and measure key

characteristics associated with Super Bowl advertising evaluations. The findings will provide insights into advertising message strategies that can help marketers create successful Super Bowl commercials in the future.

BARBIE GLOBAL REPOSITIONING: THE 22ND EDITION OF THE GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT

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This case study examines the strategic transformation of the Barbie brand as it navigates the complexities of global market dynamics and changes in consumer behavior. Since its inception, Barbie has been a household name, symbolizing not just a toy, but the aspirations of generations of children worldwide. However, recent shifts in cultural norms, gender roles, and global inclusivity standards have prompted the brand to reevaluate its positioning and product lines. This case delves into the critical decision points and innovative strategies implemented by Mattel to reposition Barbie, highlighting the challenges and triumphs in areas such as product design, marketing, and global outreach. The narrative focuses on the brand's efforts to enhance representation by introducing diverse dolls in terms of race, body type, and careers, along with strategic partnerships and digital initiatives aimed at empowering young girls. By presenting real-world challenges and strategic responses, this case study offers a comprehensive view of the complexities of maintaining a brand's relevance in a rapidly evolving global market.

BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE: ASSESSING STUDENT SKILL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

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This study investigates the impact of structured experiential learning on undergraduate business students' skills development. Based on an industry-supported research project between the researchers' university and a partnering Major League Soccer team, several academic opportunities emerged. The two organizations coordinated to launch a marketing research project to develop a measure for gameday satisfaction. This study investigates the academic learning that was activated with the high-experience industry project. During its first year of data collection, the authors observed that the project offered extended benefits beyond the real-world marketing research project. Team collaboration and effective communication were essential skills for the project's success. These insights led to revising the project's ambitions to support skills-based development. The experiential learning activity involved a two-day gameday field data collection with 44 business students who completed an experiential learning survey online. Thematic analysis revealed four themes: persuasion, communication, confidence in professional skills, and leadership/team dynamics. Students stepped outside their comfort zones, enhancing their skills through practice. The study offers several contributions. First, it challenges critiques of

experiential learning lacking theoretical and empirical foundations, using Kolb's experiential learning theory. Second, it explores experiential learning across undergraduate development and different majors, highlighting the role of skill-based development in an evolving labor market. Third, results show students developed problem-solving skills by overcoming challenges, persuading, and communicating, thus experiencing learning through grasping and transforming experiences.

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?: GENERATION Z'S ATTITUDES TOWARD MAJOR MOBILE PROVIDERS, USE OF MOBILE, AND PROVIDER CHARACTERISTICS

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As with previous generations, the movement of Generation Z (Gen Z) into early adulthood has required marketers to reconsider strategies and tactics used with previous generations. Generation Z, often defined as those born from 1995 to 2010, is the first "connected" generation. They have never known a time when they were not instantly able to access the internet. Additionally, past research has identified several ways that Gen Z differs from earlier generations. For example, when compared to other generations, Gen Z exhibits greater support for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, is more concerned about mental health and work-life balance and expect connectivity at any time. The current research used an online questionnaire to discover baseline information about Gen Z, their attitudes toward and behaviors with the mobile phone industry, as well as the importance of DEI and other Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on their consumer behaviors. Respondents to the online questionnaire included 275 members of Gen Z aged 18-27. The results indicate that some brand qualities are more important to Gen Z than others as they make decisions about cell phone providers. Additionally, while there is mild support for major CSR initiatives, other characteristics of service providers and their plans appear to have a stronger impact on Gen Z preferences for mobile phone providers.

COGNITIVE APPRAISALS, EMOTIONS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) ENGAGEMENT

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As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly integrated into our daily lives and work processes, understanding the psychological mechanisms that shape human-AI engagement becomes crucial for successful AI adoption and human-AI collaboration. This paper develops a theoretical framework to understand how AI characteristics influence human-AI engagement through cognitive appraisals and emotions. Drawing from cognitive appraisal theory, emotion theories, and coping theories, this paper examines how five key AI characteristics - anthropomorphism, understandability, autonomy, intelligence, and personalization - trigger different cognitive appraisals and emotions among users. It proposes that users evaluate AI through primary appraisals (opportunity vs. threat) and secondary appraisals (perceived control), which lead to distinct emotional responses and human-AI engagement patterns. The research framework identifies and explains different human-AI engagement patterns that emerge from various combinations of primary and secondary appraisals, reflecting varying levels of human agency and

AI agency in the interaction. By theorizing the relationships between AI characteristics, cognitive appraisals, emotions, and engagement patterns, this framework advances our understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying human-AI interaction and provides guidance for designing AI systems that facilitate productive engagement patterns. The paper contributes to both theory and practice by offering a comprehensive lens for examining human-AI collaboration while suggesting directions for future empirical research and AI system design.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MACHINE LEARNING MODELS FOR KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION, UTILIZATION, AND APPLICATION IN INTELLIGENT ASSISTANTS

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As intelligent assistants become more accessible and affordable, organizations rely on these technologies to improve team effectiveness and performance in knowledge acquisition, utilization, and application. Virtual teams find knowledge sharing and application more difficult due to temporal, geographical, and cultural barriers. If intelligent assistants are to be effective in improving organizational team performance, understanding which tasks performed by the assistant are more effective is critical in achieving this goal. The impact of an intelligent assistant performing ten tasks for virtual teams is assessed based on machine learning models. This study presents a comprehensive performance analysis of three machine learning algorithms—Support Vector Machine (SVM), Decision Tree, and Random Forest—across three distinct knowledge areas: learning knowledge from the intelligent assistant, using knowledge from the intelligent assistant, and applying knowledge from the intelligent assistant. The evaluation encompassed ten different tasks for each knowledge area, focusing on classification performance. Results demonstrate that Decision Trees consistently achieved superior performance, maintaining accuracy scores above 95% in most tasks across all knowledge areas. Random Forest showed moderate performance with scores ranging between 85-95%, while SVM exhibited relatively lower performance, typically ranging from 80-90%. Notable variations in algorithm performance were observed across different knowledge areas, particularly in using knowledge where performance fluctuations were more pronounced.

CREATING A BASELINE SECURITY FRAMEWORK FOR NON-FEDERAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS USING NIST 800

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Information systems at the federal and non-federal levels are charged with the proper handling of information in all three of its states, at rest, in use, and in transit. Due to their salient utility in data retention, these systems are of great value to threat actors and thus, must be held to high standards at all times to mitigate their existing threats. At the non-federal level, organizations such as credit card data information processors and health care providers find themselves legally bound to frameworks such as the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) and the Health

Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). At the federal level, all information systems are under the strict expectations of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) 800 series, a set of continually updated publications carefully designed to set the bar on federal-level information system attributes and mechanisms to ensure that they meet the business requirements of the CIA triad. Additionally, certain legislation such as the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) of 2014, impose a plethora of additional requirements, usually in the case of fortifying data's confidentiality. This research examines carefully selected works of the NIST 800 special publication series that pertain to the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data and holds them against non-federal information systems that are not legally bound by these standards, creating a baseline security framework for organizations with those systems to employ against an exponentially growing battlefield of information warfare now backed by artificial intelligence.

DEFINING IS: ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING AND INTEREST IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS THROUGH A HEALTHCARE-FOCUSED PROGRAM

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The placement and definition of Information Systems (IS) have long been debated, often leading to misunderstandings among students and the general public. To address this, we explore common misconceptions surrounding IS, Information Technology, Information Science, Computer Science, and related fields—terms that may appear interchangeable to non-experts. Our approach involves designing an engaging, interdisciplinary program that immerses students in various aspects of IS development. Grounded in a healthcare community context, this initiative provides meaningful, real-world applications to enhance student engagement. By collaborating with diverse healthcare sites, we introduce technology-driven assignments tailored to multiple scenarios. The program spans from eighth to twelfth grade, progressively equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed for technology-related majors and careers, with a strong emphasis on healthcare applications.

DOVE BODY WASH AD INVOKES ANGER ON SOCIAL MEDIA: LESSONS LEARNED FROM CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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A Facebook advertisement went under fire in October 2017 after the brand received a reverse reaction and accusations that the post was racially insensitive. In the ad, Dove a leading brand for self-care products, showed a black woman appearing to turn white after using its body lotion. The online campaign was swiftly removed but it had already damaged the brand's reputation. This case study assesses how Unilever, maker of Dove, handled its marketing mishap. Scrutinizing online websites , the study reveals the following: more than 30.000 posts (shares not included) discussed the ad between October 6 – October 13, about 45% of the mentions had negative sentiment, more than 12,000 mentions labeled Dove with a variant of the word "racist", Unilever brand was noted in context with the Dove brand in 32% of all cases in the last week compared to 1.69% the week before. Unilever accepted responsibility by swiftly deleting the post and apologizing. However, the company did not elaborate sufficiently on the issues. Unilever’s efforts fell short for the following reasons: poor audience management, lack of social listening, inappropriate tone of apology, and little to no connection between brand voice and tone. The study suggests the following: Dove’s brand needs to make genuine efforts in reviewing the process of their social media marketing and test the ads on audiences with diverse background.

ECOLABELS: TOOLS FOR TEACHING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Ecolabels are important tools in marketing and sustainability. A review of sustainability and environmental labeling studies found that consumers trust information from labels to make choices about the sustainability of the food they purchase. Consumers are willing to pay a premium for environmental and social information, such as environmental footprint, animal welfare, ethical aspects, and health. Despite the benefits of ecolabels, there is no easy way to check if the label has true meaning and value or is just greenwashing.

I propose an exercise using ecolabels to teach students about sustainability and greenwashing. This exercise aligns with the new AACSB accreditation standard on Societal Impact and can be used to teach about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 2: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture." (SDF 2: Zero hunger.). As consumers and future business professionals, we are responsible for supporting farmers' shift towards sustainable agriculture, with more demand for these products from large food processors and consumers.

EMERGING TRENDS IN THE USE OF AI FOR SPORTS & LIVE EVENTS MARKETING

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This presentation will focus on describing the latest trends in the Sports & Live Events industry for using AI for marketing and promotion. We have recently seen a great deal of interest in how marketing professionals can use AI to better promote sports and live events, increase profits, and best organize their time. This presentation will provide several cutting-edge examples of the use of AI in this field. We will also discuss recommendations about how to use AI, as well as the challenges that AI could present.

EVALUATING THE USEFULNESS OF AN INVESTMENT ADVISORY SERVICE IN A DIGITAL AGE

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The rapid growth of online trading has led to spike in trading activity by individual investors. Many of these investors have relatively small portfolios and lack the resources to hire a full time investment manage to manage their investment assets for them. Fees charged by investment advisors range from 0.5% to 2% of assets under management per year, are typically unaffordable by a small retail investor. Many of these retail investors therefore seek investment advice from subscription-based service investment advisors.

In October 2021, CNBC’s famed host Jim Cramer launched the CNBC investing club, a subscription based investment club that told members what Jim Cramer perceived are superior investments in the market and gave them insight in to his charitable trust portfolio that included a limited number of stocks. Investors willing to pay for such advice believe they gain information that will help them to beat average market returns. This belief is contrary to the random walk hypothesis suggested in 1973 by Princeton economist Burton Malkiel. It is indeed interesting that despite the wealth of research published on proving markets are largely efficient in the long run, fifty years after Malkiel’s research is published, the market for paid investment advice is still flourishing with newer entrants every day successfully recruiting clients even on messaging platforms such as WhatsApp. This research presents the results of a retest of Burton Malkiel's random walk hypothesis using published investment advice from the Business Insider.

EXPLORING BARRIERS TO LOW ECOVILLAGE ADOPTION: A SOUTHEAST ASIAN PERSPECTIVE WITH MALAYSIA FOCUS – A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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The world is grappling with intertwined crises such as ecological degradation and socio-economic inequalities. In response, ecovillages are gaining substantial attention worldwide as one solution. However, the development of ecovillages in Southeast Asian nations like Malaysia remains underdeveloped despite early recognition by researchers. While the existing studies are primarily focused on implementing the ecovillage principles into existing communities of Malaysia, there remain insufficient perspectives as to what factors contributed to the low adoption of ecovillages in Malaysia. Understanding the challenges associated with the development of ecovillages may facilitate the successful implementation of the ecovillage concept. This research aims to identify key barriers to ecovillage adoption in Malaysia by using the diffusion of innovation theory, which explains the phenomena of how new ideas or innovations spread within society. To this end, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the members of emerging ecovillages, eco-farm founders/members, sustainable community developers, and ecovillage researchers. A purposive sampling technique will be employed, conducting interviews both in person and online until data

saturation is achieved. The transcribed data will be analyzed through inductive thematic analysis with NVivo software. Findings are expected to reveal the key factors that contribute to the lack of ecovillages in Malaysia. Theoretical implications will extend the scope of the diffusion of innovation theory by identifying the context-specific barriers, paving the way for a wider adoption of ecovillages if addressed comprehensively. The practical implications will inform the enhancement of existing policies to form more conducive policies that support ecovillage development.

EXPLORING CONSUMER ADOPTION AND COMMUNICATION IN MOBILE PEER-TO-PEER (P2P) PAYMENT SERVICES

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The growing popularity of mobile peer-to-peer (P2P) payment services enables consumers to send and receive money through their mobile devices. Mobile P2P payment services are defined as services that allow users to send and receive money using a mobile app or website, such as Venmo and Zelle. These services create a venue for communication among users. For example, Venmo users must leave a transaction note for themselves and their friends with every transaction on Venmo’s social feed. This transaction note is auto-filled with emojis, text, and/or numbers that describe the transaction and can carry different meanings, serving as a mechanism for users to create their own codes within mobile P2P payment services (e.g., paying for pizza for friends might be coded as paying for drugs). This study has two main goals. First, it explores factors influencing consumer adoption of mobile P2P payment services in the U.S. Second, it examines the role of communication among users of mobile P2P payment services. An online survey of 163 current users of U.S. mobile P2P payment services was conducted to test research questions and hypotheses. The findings will address the critical limitations of previous studies and will expand our understanding of this vital topic.

EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS IN ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH

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This paper reviews less-examined aspects of entrepreneurial ecosystems (EEs), highlighting emerging trends, key opportunities, and critical questions for future research. It outlines how EEs function, focusing on the interactions between industries, entrepreneurs, institutions, and policymakers at various stages of development. By summarizing recent studies, the paper presents different approaches to assessing and enhancing EEs, emphasizing the importance of continuous monitoring, adaptability, and refinement of research methodologies. Additionally, the paper reviews the role of digital tools and platforms in supporting sustainable business practices, improving access to funding and mentorship, and fostering global connectivity. It also outlines the influence of policy interventions, corporate engagement, and education in shaping EEs, stressing the need for a multi-stakeholder approach. By mapping past research efforts and identifying gaps, this paper provides an overview of existing knowledge while suggesting directions for future studies on ecosystem dynamics, long-term evolution, and the role of informal networks in

entrepreneurial success. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of how EEs develop and operate in an increasingly interconnected global economy.

EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT TOURISM: ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF AMATEUR SPORTS EVENT PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES

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Sports events are central to sports tourism, with research often focusing on mega-events like the Olympics and World Cup. However, amateur sports events, characterized by high frequency, broad participation, and strong local engagement, may better facilitate the transformation of "event attachment" into "place attachment." This approach is particularly relevant for developing youth-sports-event tourism destinations, leveraging local characteristics to drive tourism growth.

Amateur sports participants serve as competitors and tourists, directly influencing local economies. The 2024 51st AAU Junior National Volleyball Championships exemplifies this impact, attracting 5,865 teams nationwide over 25 days, involving 300,000 participants, and generating an estimated $760 million for Central Florida.

Using this event as a case study, this research quantitatively examines the relationship between the number of participating teams and their social attributes, including local economic development, household income, population size, and education levels. It explores team distribution patterns and socio-economic interactions, shedding light on factors influencing event location selection, integration of local sports facilities, and tourism resource utilization. By analyzing these dynamics, this study proposes a development model for enhancing the integration of amateur sports events and local economies, offering insights for sports tourism destinations seeking sustainable growth.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND ETHICAL SHOPPING BEHAVIOR: A STUDY OF TURKISH CONSUMERS

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This study investigates the relationship between religiosity and ethical shopping behavior among Turkish consumers. Using a survey-based approach, we collected data from a sample of Turkish individuals and examined the extent to which their religiosity, specifically their practice of Islam, influences their ethical shopping behavior. Our results indicate a significant positive relationship between religiosity and ethical shopping behavior, suggesting that Turkish consumers practicing Islam are likelier to engage in ethical shopping behaviors. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the role of religiosity in shaping consumer behavior and have implications for marketers and policymakers seeking to promote ethical consumer practices.

FACE-ISM IN THE 2024 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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This study measured face-ism in the 2024 United States Presidential Election featuring Kamala Harris, female, African American vice-president of the United States, the Democratic nominee, against Donald Trump, male, Caucasian former president of the United States, the Republican nominee. The face-ism theory posits that media images of females display less facial prominence than media images of males, which has been shown to influence media consumers' perceptions of candidates. A total of 1,348 still key images of YouTube videos published by NBC, CBS, ABC, PBS, CNN, FOX and MSNBC national broadcast and cable television channels were coded. Two coders achieved 96% or higher intercoder reliability. The timeframe was Sept. 4-11, 2024, the week after Harris was nominated by the Democratic Party and the only presidential debate was held. Independent variables were candidate and television network. The dependent variables were a six-point body index scale and topic. Images of Trump (692/51.3%) outnumbered images of Harris (656/48.7%). Trump's images were more frequently cropped above the breast (239/34.5%) than images of Harris (181/27.6%). Conversely, images of Harris were more frequently cropped at or below the breast (475/72.4%) than images of Trump (453/65.5%). The face-ism theory was supported ($p<.01$). Images of Trump displayed more facial prominence than images of Harris across all national television channels. The three most common topics associated with Trump were the debate (329/24.4%), legal cases against Trump (68/5.0%) and polls (55/4.1%). For Harris, the three most common topics were the debate (353/26.2%), polls (56/4.2%) and attack on the candidate (53/3.9%).

FEMTECH AND FERTILITY: AN ANALYSIS OF USER INFORMATION SHARING ATTITUDES

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Femtech encompasses the convergence of healthcare and technology, and it is aimed at addressing women's health. The femtech industry includes innovative solutions such as apps, devices, and wearables that cater to women's health needs including fertility, pregnancy, and menopause. In 2022, the global femtech industry was valued at $45 billion and is projected to increase to $139 billion by 2031. The US accounts for more than half of femtech firms worldwide.

Despite being approximately 50% of the population in the US, women's health care has been historically under-funded and under-researched. Subsequently, there is limited data informing the knowledge, prevention, and treatment of women's conditions. In 1996, a federal mandate was enacted to include women in research. While a step in the right direction, an imbalance in awareness and understanding about women's health conditions remains. Given these challenges, femtech firms have emerged to improve the gender health gap and to provide accessible solutions.

Femtech addresses various areas of the female lifecycle including fertility, pregnancy, general well-being, and menopause. It subsequently, has life changing effects on user's lives. Additionally, femtech has the ability to raise much needed awareness and knowledge about women's health conditions and thus facilitating essential research, as well as providing opportunities for critical inclusion in clinical trials. Given the historic exclusion of women from research studies, little is known about the information sharing attitudes of femtech users. This study seeks to investigate these attitudes.

FROM ACADEMIC IDEA TO SMALL BUSINESS: A NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESSES OF A SOLE-PROPRIETOR

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Developing an idea into a small business is no easy task, especially when that idea germinates in the mind of an academic teacher-scholar. Many professional academics may lack the experience or knowledge to start a business. Research literature on business development tends to take on a theoretical approach as in Galbraith's (1982) description of the "stages of growth" for new business ventures. Indeed, Scott and Bruce (1987) broke down the growth process into five distinct stages for small businesses: a) inception, b) survival, c) growth, d) expansion, and e) maturity. More recent research (Griva, et al., 2023) demonstrates that these ideas about growth of small businesses may apply differentially to digital start-ups. As a case study, Stat Tree LLC, registered in 2023, is a digital start-up small business began by a faculty member as a project for his classes. This faculty member had to learn the process of starting a business through doing. This paper will describe the process of starting a small business from idea generation to commercial production from the perspective of an academic first and sole-proprietor small business owner second.

FROM PRACTICE TO PEDAGOGY – THE CHALLENGES & ADVANTAGES OF TRANISITONING FROM INDUSTRY PRACTITIONER TO ACADEMIA

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Kevin Mercuri, Executive in Residence at Emerson College, is a thirty-year veteran of the public relations industry. In this session, Mercuri will reflect on the challenges he faced when transitioning from the corporate world to the rigors of academia, as well as the unexpected advantages that his business acumen provided.

Topics will include the shift from a fast-paced, results-driven corporate environment to academia's measured decision-making processes and a focus on pedagogy over outcomes. The challenges of mastering educational techniques- such as engagement strategies, curriculum design, and assessment methods- will also be addressed.

Mercuri will discuss the unexpected advantages of "coming in from the field." His thirty years of industry experience have enabled him to enhance his teaching by connecting theoretical concepts to practical and current applications. His background also offers a historical perspective that covers the industry's evolution from traditional media relations via phone and facsimile machines, to digital and AI-driven strategies.

GAMIFYNG CYBERSECURITY – ICS TRAINING: CREAFTING EFFECTIVE CTFS AND INJECT-BASED LEARNING

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This research expands beyond the physical Industrial Control System (ICS) test bed developed in the previous paper by introducing gamified/inject-based Capture-the-Flag (CTF) challenges. The primary focus is on Modbus, a widely used open-source protocol in SCADA systems. Unlike simulated environments, the physical test bed replicates key components of real-world Operational Technology (OT) networks, allowing students to interact with live Modbus packets—gaining hands-on experience in traffic analysis, protocol reverse engineering, and exploitation techniques. The paper will start by providing background information on the structure and behavior of the Modbus protocol, exploring function codes, addressing, and vulnerabilities from an offensive perspective. The challenges on the physical test bed are designed to teach adversarial thinking, such as false data injection and register flooding, using tools like Wireshark, Python, and Metasploit. By combining hardware realism with game-based learning, this research bridges the gap between theoretical concepts and real-world applications, while allowing researchers and students to think critically and prepare for evolving cybersecurity challenges in critical infrastructure.

HUMAN CAPITAL IN PERU

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The Human Capital Index (HCI) captures children's trajectory from birth to adulthood measuring the contribution to productivity of a child born today as a future worker, relative to a benchmark of full health and a comprehensive education. Schooling is part of the HCI because knowledge and skills that an individual acquires increases workers' productivity. Better health leads the increase in adult survival improves working productivity. HCI is the result of multiplying human capital outcomes grouped in three components (survival, school and health), and has a value between 0 and 1.

As a result of the global HCI calculations, Peru in 2020 is ranked 72 out of the 157 countries that reported the data, with the score of 0.61 (while worldwide a, which means that the productivity as a future worker of a child born today is 39% below what could have been achieved with comprehensive education and full health. This report shows the gaps in the human capital outcomes of schooling and health in Peru across the level of income groups of countries. The Human Capital Index (HCI) is an initiative to improve the investment in people.

IMPACT OF BEING ON THE DARK SIDE WHEN DEFINING PROFESSIONALISM

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The word "professional" has almost become a colloquial term in today's society. Historically used to delineate between one's paid occupation as opposed to their pastime, today the word is used in a variety of contexts to discuss the acceptability of someone's behavior all the way to the level at which an athlete competes. The purpose of this paper is not only to explore the use of the term professional but also to determine how aspects of The Dark Triad impact how one views what is, and is not, professional. Through the use of a mixed methods study, 150 respondents were asked for their definition of professionalism after which an open-ended methodological approach was used to identify themes within the responses. Confirmed through triangulation, responses were identified as demonstrating one or more of three main categories: image, skills, and competence. Multiple regression was then used to determine how the Dark Triad traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy impacted how one defines professionalism. Of the various interactions, only Machiavellian significantly correlated with the skills-based definitions. While most of the interactions were found to be insignificant, beneficial viewpoints on how The Dark Triad is used within communication are still offered.

IMPRUDENCE IN DEFINED CONTRIBUTION PLANS: THE CASE OF ACTIVELY MANAGED STOCK FUNDS

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We explore the issue of imprudence when applied to defined contribution (DC) plans. Our sole focus here is active fund management and its potential imprudence due to excessive fees as well as uncompensated dispersion risk. We rely solely on S&P Global's semi-annual S&P Index versus Active scorecards and calibrated Monte Carlo simulations. Based on our analysis, fiduciaries are warranted in exercising great care and diligence before including an actively-managed fund within the plan, rather than exercising great care and diligence solely for excluding poorly-performing actively-managed funds. These findings have numerous implications for the use of actively-managed funds in DC plans as the costly ongoing oversight necessary for continued inclusion in a plan is not insignificant and a corollary to the Grossman-Stiglitz Paradox. Additionally, we show that a prudent manager's likelihood of switching active funds increases over the long horizons of DC plans. The approach taken here is easily applied to non-stock funds as well as portfolios outside of DC plans.

IS AI TOO FAST FOR MOTORSPORTS?

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This case study will investigate the impacts of AI in Motorsports from an up-close perspective. Thought leaders in three different sectors of racing participate in a focus group to discuss the impact of AI on and off the track. The discussion will center around recent experiences, pros, cons, fears and projections of the emerging strength of AI. How will it be embraced in the motorsports community?

LEADER CONSIDERATIONS IN FAMILY BUSINESSES: INTERVIEW FINDINGS

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There has been a reasonable amount of work in the family business literature on various aspects of family member employment in the family-owned and operated enterprise. Much of this work has focused on stewardship practices by family members leading the firm and striving to maintain the integrity and vitality of the organization while at the same time providing employment and support for members of the family. Building on our earlier work, we interviewed 20 leaders of family firms to gauge their perceptions and insights on the wide range of questions and considerations that leaders of such firms must navigate as they perform their family business duties. Among the topics covered in the interviews and this paper are development and training, previous experiences, compensation, motivation, communication, discipline, and promotion. The findings confirm that leaders of family firms have a number of special challenges but also some real opportunities when it comes to better-utilizing family members employed in the family-owned business.

LEAVING FACEBOOK: ANCIENT RHETORS AND BREAKING THE SOCIAL NETWORK

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The social media landscape is evolving. With recent changes to corporate media policies related to fact-checking, advertising and user-privacy, some users are electing to find alternate ways to connect with others. Yet, leaving a major social media site like Facebook has consequences for the individual's social network. As Petronio (1991) theorized in Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPM), individuals choose what information to share with others to maintain relationships based on costs and benefits. However, when information is on the Internet, the individual may have less control over the sharing of their information. This paper will describe in the form of narrative case-study the process of leaving a social media network in terms of CPM and Social Network Theory (Liu, et al., 2017), its effects on the social network, and ethical justifications for leaving based Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, and arguments between the Sophists and the pre-Socratics as described in Plato's Gorgias.

MARKETING SELF-CARE AND RESILIENCY: EXPLORING TARGETED CONSUMER WELLNESS STRATEGIES

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The intersection of self-care, resiliency, and consumer wellness has become a central focus in contemporary marketing, as businesses increasingly position health and well-being as both personal responsibilities and market-driven solutions. This study explores the evolving role of self-care marketing, analyzing how brands influence consumer behavior through strategic framing, segmentation, and perceived value. By synthesizing interdisciplinary insights, including consumer psychology and wellness marketing trends, this research examines how self-care products and services shape consumer perceptions of well-being.

Prior studies highlight both the benefits and ethical concerns of marketized wellness, including issues of accessibility, consumer autonomy, and the commercialization of personal care. Through an exploratory approach, this research proposes key questions regarding the balance between individual responsibility and corporate influence in wellness marketing. Additionally, it suggests methodological pathways for future empirical studies, including consumer surveys and experimental studies to assess the psychological and behavioral impact of wellness messaging.

This research contributes to the growing discourse on self-care as a consumer practice, emphasizing how marketing strategies not only reflect but actively shape cultural narratives surrounding health and resiliency. By critically assessing the role of branding, pricing strategies, and consumer engagement in self-care markets, this study lays the groundwork for future investigations into sustainable and ethical wellness marketing.

MEASURING AND DEFINING TRUST

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The purpose of this study is to validate a semantic differential scale of Trust that includes subfactors. Research around the definitions, expectations, behaviors, and other aspects of trust has been ongoing for decades. Some of the earliest research dates to 1958 (Deutsch) and is followed by numerous proposals to define and measure trust concepts, behaviors, and interpretations. One of the more recent articles is from Dietz and Den Hartog (2006), where they reviewed 14 different trust measures and identified areas to be examined. The authors noted areas for further research, especially because competence and predictability were often omitted or peripheral, as was reliability. These were not often included as part of trustworthiness. There is also a wide variation with whom the measures were examined, such as some subjects included an employee and work colleague, employee and employer, and employee and the organization, which contribute to ambiguity in some of the outcomes. Several scales are negatively worded, and most measures were related to trustworthiness and the validity thereof, with a focus on benevolence and integrity. Another measure of trust is proposed, which identifies four different aspects of trust, emphasizing competence, predictability, and reliability. This semantic differential scale offers a different perspective on the identification of trust in an organization based on perceptions and attitudes, focusing on the importance of each of the four areas identified in the seminal literature: Trust of character, trust of judgment, trust of competence, and trust of commitment.

MEASURING GAMEDAY SATISFACTION: A REPLICATION AND MULTICOUNTRY EXTENSION OF STADIUM SERVICE TOUCHPOINTS

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Soccer continues to expand globally. New leagues like Major League Soccer are appearing and finding success. Simultaneously, mature leagues too are growing their product offerings. This study posits that at the center of successful growth is a comprehensive understanding and vigilant focus on the fan. This customer experience is expected to have an influence on the way that sport entities grow fan loyalty and increase revenue. Sport managers are recognizing the impact of total fan gameday experiences and are more regularly choreographing fan-valued services and features that heighten the in-stadium experience at their particular venue. The purpose of this study was to determine what previous studied learned about fan attitudes and behaviors resulted from perception of the gameday stadium experience, but also compare those findings across time – establishing a longitudinal study – and teams. In cooperation with a Major League Soccer team and a LaLiga team, a questionnaire and methodology were developed. Almost 900 fans were surveyed on multiple gamedays (and on two continuous years for the MLS team) The results show there are key gameday service elements that contribute more to enhancing vital attendee responses. Some of these differed across teams.

MODERN TOOLS AND PLATFORMS TO ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY, REPLICABILITY AND GENERALIZABILITY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS RESEARCH

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This paper has the aim to inspire researchers to use modern technological tools that enable research accountability, openness, transparency, reproducibility, and generalizability of results. This paper exposes methodological meliorations in research practices focusing on enhancing reproducibility and generalizability of studies for the advancement of knowledge in all social sciences. This paper goes beyond the statistical tools by discussing reporting standards and disclosure practices that structure the presentation of the data and the disclosure of tools and results that enhance research accountability, openness, transparency, and reproducibility of results.

MOTOR CARRIER PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS ON ELECTRONIC LOGISTICS MARKETPLACES

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Electronic logistics marketplaces play an important part in the efforts to increase transportation efficiency. These marketplaces are particularly useful in securing spot transactions. At a very basic level, these marketplaces bring together shippers and carriers to facilitate the matching of shippers' needs and carriers' capacities. It has been shown in the literature that shippers obtain various benefits by utilizing such marketplaces. For example, various shippers may consolidate their shipments and save on transportation costs. Such collaboration may also involve identifying backhaul opportunities. Though there is a significant amount of literature on shippers' participation on such marketplaces, there is not much work done on the carrier side. There are several challenges that are unique to motor carriers. For example, capacity utilization is very critical for motor carrier performance. It is important for motor carriers to achieve economies of scope and secure the right mix of freight in terms of weight and volume, economic routing and empty vehicle repositioning. In this research, we focus on the benefits that motor carriers may expect by participating on such marketplaces.

NDVI AS A SUSTAINABILITY INDICATOR: TRACKING GOLD MINING-LED DEFORESTATION IN NORTHERN SOUTH AMERICA

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In remote areas of northern South America where few economic opportunities exist and lawlessness prevails, placer gold deposits attract small-scale miners to the region's forested riverbeds. There, extraction methods can lead to large-scale environmental degradation, as well as problems such as malaria, violence, territorial displacement, and control of the work and profits by criminal gangs and government actors. This study examines the growth of the gold mining footprint in southeastern Venezuela using geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing techniques. Through a visual spatial programming model, we apply the normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) to a time-series of Landsat satellite imagery to map and quantify forest loss across the study area over time. Findings suggest a constant expansion of the mining footprint resulting in degraded landscapes. This approach can help stakeholders follow environmental and related social changes from a landscape perspective and propose place-based sustainable solutions.

PAPYRUS, A ROADMAP FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF A BOOK RETAIL CHAIN

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The Papyrus book chain, founded in the 1950s, underwent a long path of changes over the last century, both in its shareholder structure and in the business concept that its various owners implemented. Founded by the prestigious publisher Ramón Valle, it was born with the desire to offer readers in Spain a broad range of titles, among which they could find the one that best met their customer needs. With the transfer of business management to his successors, the focus shifted to growth through territorial expansion via new points of sale. Throughout all these years. Just as the business concept evolved, so did Papyrus's supply chain, which faced challenges such as improving supply times from publishers, optimizing its assortment, improving warehouse efficiency, and delivering the product to the customer as efficiently and effectively as possible. However, in 2013, the chain's management realized that changes had accelerated and a profound process of evolution was imperative.The customer was undergoing a transformation driven by technology, which offered previously unknown power and demands. And, as if that weren't enough, a new competitor arrived in the domestic market with an extraordinary focus on that customer. The time had come to take a break and consider the need to transform Papyrus's business, from its customer-centric approach to its operations, including its organizational culture and the use of new technologies.

PUBLIC RELATIONS ETHICS CODE'S AI GUIDELINES ASSESSED FOR COMPLIANCE WITH ACADEMIC/PROFESSIONAL AND LEGAL STANDARDS

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AI has evolved under a variety of economic and application concerns. Yet already the Public Relations Society of America has addressed their Ethical Code in terms of AI applications. The AI usage supporting and maintaining the standards of the public relations Ethics Code is integrated now into sections of the PR Code. However, the degree of compliance toward ethical standards is examined here in light of an evolving technology with even more issues in terms of educational needs and standards yet to be realized, particularly with Generative AI. AI is presented as the immediate answer for the “student” without students having sufficient skills to confront AI and with a lack of sophistication or knowledge of the discipline's guardrails or areas of need for guardrail development. The evolution continues through the teaching domain, the research efforts, and the professional usage of AI through public relations organizations, including the ancillary groups such as advertising. The evidence is gathered from communication associations affiliated with public relations (AEJMC, NCA, ICA, Educators Academy in PRSA, and IABD.) and continues through the key journals in communication and business now with public relations research on AI impact in the profession. The outcomes reveal a mixture of the complexity of AI under a variety of conditions with public relations developing the “ethical code” use of AI as a very daunting concept.

REBUILDING BRAND TRUST FOR SMALL BUSINESSES: INSIGHTS FROM ONLINE CONSUMER REVIEWS IN NORTH CAROLINA

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Small businesses, particularly those in local markets, face persistent challenges in maintaining consumer trust amidst shifting economic conditions and competitive pressures. While prior research has explored brand trust in corporate settings, fewer studies have examined how small, locally-owned businesses navigate trust-building in real-time through customer interactions and digital engagement. This study aims to bridge that gap by analyzing online consumer reviews from 13-14 small businesses in North Carolina, identifying emerging patterns in trust dynamics, consumer expectations, and brand responsiveness.

Using a qualitative content analysis approach, this research explores how online reputation management, personalized engagement, and transparency practices influence consumer trust and loyalty for small businesses. We propose that businesses demonstrating proactive trust recovery mechanisms—such as rapid response to negative feedback, service customization based on review trends, and digital trust signals (e.g., verified testimonials)—experience higher consumer retention and advocacy. By examining real-world business cases, this study refines existing theories on small business trust and introduces practical recommendations for enhancing credibility in hyperlocal markets.

Future research could expand on these findings by integrating sentiment analysis and longitudinal review tracking to quantify trust evolution over time. This study contributes to the growing discourse on trust restoration strategies in resource-constrained businesses and provides a real-world application of brand trust theories in the context of North Carolina's local market landscape.

RIDING THE WAVES OF CHANGE: PREDICTIVE TOOLS FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS AND MARKETING MANAGERS

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Our world is complex and rapidly changing. Wars, pandemics, hurricanes, fires, recessions, and technological change seem to be ever-constant. How can business owners and marketing managers of small to medium-sized firms keep up with such ever-changing, ever-increasing exogenous economic events? When rapid change does occur, small firms and marketing managers must respond quickly to current events to take advantage of current market opportunities. As a result of such rapid change, firms need to understand their consumers and economic demand. Firms must place more emphasis on predictive data analytics and data modeling to forecast future economic demand. In this presentation, a framework is presented to help small business owners and marketing managers identify key variables to assist in understanding consumer behavior and market demand.

RISK FACTORS IN APPLICANTS TO GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ANALYTICS

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Why do universities have admittance requirements when applying for graduate programs and are those requirements doing them any good?

We identified the admittance requirements for over 40 analytics or general MBA graduate programs of "tier 2" programs. We then chose one of those institutions and deeply studied the students in those programs over the past two years. We investigated what admittance requirements they met or received waivers on and their performance in their graduate programs.

This research is an initial peek into what (if any) admittance standards show any prediction into student performance. What standards should we keep and what new ones might we want to consider?

ROLE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES: EVIDENCE FROM FOLLOWERS

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Earlier work by Grimes and Bennett (2015) and others has theorized that certain leaders have a strong tendency toward servant leadership practices and general nurturing, supporting, and developing of followers due heavily to their Christian faith and generally viewing their job and their position of leadership as a "calling from God." In this paper, we review the foundations for our arguments that Christian faith (and frankly the teachings of many great world religions) compels leaders to adopt a certain style of leadership that emphasizes caring, compassion, and empowerment of followers to achieve great things in their lives. This style is characterized by open communication, relationship building, caring about the person's overall development and success, empathy, sharing glory and taking blame, and a number of other selfless "other-serving" characteristics. In earlier work, we spoke with leaders who viewed their Christian faith as the foundation of their servant leadership practices. In this study, we interviewed 30 mid-level managers and supervisors, primarily from the banking industry, to gauge their perceptions of the servant leadership traits of their leaders who they deemed to possess strong Christian faith. Overwhelmingly, the respondents indicated that the leader’s Christian faith was no doubt an integral component of their leadership style. Findings included a number of common elements among subjects and agreement with some of the traits theorized in earlier research.

SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF FOLLOWING MY FATHER

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The notion of identity engenders social qualifiers usually placed upon an individual by others (see McDonald, 2015). Indeed, this act may create boundaries and in some cases limitations on an individual that feel foreign to the individual. In conversations with my father over many years, it became increasingly apparent that the identity he was given did not match how he saw himself. Thus he began a journey in search of his identity through genealogy. For over thirty years he amassed a collection of data gathered on the ground including on site amateur field research in Nova Scotia and France, searching for his Acadian identity. As Kostler points out, “the past in Cajun culture contributes in a significant way to the construction of identity” (2014, p. 27). Recently, following his passing, I have embarked on a journey following in his footsteps to uncover what he sought. Utilizing the autoethnographic method (see Adams, et al., 2017), this paper will describe the process of searching for identity.

SEAT CUPRA. THE PROJECT LEADERS FOR THE IMPULSE

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It had only been two days since the declaration of the state of general alarm to manage the health crisis due to COVID-19, when, still unaware of what was to come and the repercussions that this pandemic was going to generate, Alex Galofré, Founder & CoCEO of The Coaches (a team of expert coaches and trainers in sustainable leadership development), had just exchanged a few emails with Ismael Lara, Global Head of LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION (hereinafter L.,D. & I.) of SEAT CUPRA (the only company that designs, develops, manufactures and markets automobiles in Spain), with the idea of seeing each other as soon as circumstances permit. Alex and Ismael had met a few years ago in a coaching program, where Alex was a facilitator and from there they kept in touch, with the hope of being able to meet again and collaborate together in the future. The opportunity was not long in coming, thanks to the moment that SEAT, S.A. after more than 70 years of life, was going to experience. The company faced an unprecedented challenge in its history, which had just begun in 2020 when it decided to bet on new strategic pillars, more aligned with an environment and a market as changing as the current one (V.U.C.A.). It was necessary to reinvent itself, to seek a more sustainable profitability and this is shown by its commitment to new brands, such as CUPRA, which, with the electrification of the car, embodied this long-term sustainability. They were clear that this cultural transformation was a challenge that had to involve all the people who worked at SEAT CUPRA, starting with their leaders, fundamental lever of this change and once sensitized to this challenge, needed to know how to implement it quickly, with clear tools and resources. In April 2023 they decided to share their big challenge with several firms, among them with Alex and his team, with whom they had remained in contact.

SOME THINGS ARE NEVER FIXED. LITTLE ERRORS-TITANIC CONSEQUENCES

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After every significant financial crisis, we look to create new policies that will fix the problem and ensure a better future. The resulting careful regulation and adjustments to performance measurements are all prudent. Each change can help organizations implement their strategy and provide rewards for the executives for placing priority on the desired directions. In this paper, we consider that policy alone is never enough. Looking back at the case of the Titanic we can see that performance measures and pursuit of a competitive strategy turned tends to cause managers to view policy as something that must be complied with. In the case of the Titanic, compliance led to over confidence and discounted the importance of diligence. In many ways, it is no different than the course followed by Boeing that has created another existential corporate moment. Titanic provides a colorful reminder that accounting policy and regulations cannot fix problems. The human reality is that CFOs must go beyond rules and be diligent to steer clear of risks, especially the risk of relying on compliance.

STAYING MUM: CORRELATING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE WITH UPWARD DISTORTION, LEADER-MEMBER COMMUNICATION AND LOCUS OF CONTROL

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The “Mum effect," a social phenomenon in which people prefer to avoid sharing bad news, can cause “upward distortion,” as employees give incomplete information to their supervisors to avoid reprisal. Organizations require upward communication to transmit critical information, and disruptions to this process have implications for both workplace efficiency and job satisfaction. Strauss (2011) developed the Upward Communication Distortion Index (UCDI) to measure the propensity of individuals to distort upward organizational communication. The UCDI was compared with the subscales for LMX (leader-member exchange) and Locus of Control. This project analyzed upward distortion in American businesses, specifically how the four organizational cultures contribute to the upward distortion through the hierarchical MUM effect. Survey respondents (n=351) were recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, a crowdsourcing marketplace and completed an online survey. Sampling through Mechanical Turk reduced the inherent weakness of data collection within one or a small number of organizations. Correlation analysis was conducted to determine if employees in organizations with high scores for the four different types of organizations (clan, hierarchical, adhocracy, market) on the OCAI instrument would (1) have a lower propensity to distort upward communication as indicated on the UCDI instrument, (2) exhibit high scores of leader-member communication (LMX), and (3) exhibit strong locus of control scores.

SUBWAY'S "FISHY" TUNA SCANDAL: WHAT CAN FRANCHISEES DO IF A SIMILAR CRISIS REOCCURS?

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On January 27, 2021, Karen Dhanowa and Nilima Amin, both residents of California, filed a lawsuit against Subway alleging that “Subway’s tuna is not tuna but a mixture of various concoctions.” The Northern District Court of California dismissed the case for lack of evidence. However, the spread of harmful misinformation already caused damages to Subway franchisees and the brand after customers questioned the quality of Subway product for a period of time. While the crisis was not the franchisees’ fault, this case study recommends the following strategies to franchisees in case a similar crisis reoccurs: (1) be active in the community by providing food and other items to charity or local groups, (2) work with local media by telling them interesting stories, (3) use social media to allow the community to know the owners, (4) converse with people and make presentations to local groups to address the lessons they have learned, and (5) devise a personal marketing plan to strengthen the relationships with the community. In general, the recommended activities can create goodwill, build relationships and form an insurance policy in case it happens again.

SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH USE OF RESOURCES: AN INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE SERVICES OF THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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A resource-based theory (RBT) is one of the most widely accepted theoretical perspectives in the strategic management study. Accordingly, the present study interconnects the theoretical relationship between the capabilities and competitive advantage of the resources-physical, human, and technology, which provide conditions under which firms may achieve a sustainable competitive advantage from the dynamic capabilities. The new insights suggest that firm’s three dynamic competitive capabilities are considered as complementarities when one capability enhances the value and effect of another capability. The primary result of this study is towards the complementarities, in addition to individual influences of the resources, of these capabilities, which lead to the predictions of its Customer Relationship Management (CRM) advantage that prepares and assures towards a sustainable advantage objective.

TALES FROM THE DARK SIDE: RESPONDING TO YOUNG, UNDERDEVELOPED EMPLOYEES

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Concerns about young employees being unprepared for the world of work are far from new or scarce. Virtually every employee has a tale, or ten, about new, young employees being unprepared for everyday employment responsibilities. Recently, much has been made of a study completed by Intelligent.com (2024) indicating numerous employers report terminating recent college graduates from their initial work positions within a few months of their hiring because they were unprepared or unable to fulfill workplace responsibilities. Complaints about young employees run the gamut from unprofessionalism to inability to complete simple tasks, often indicating a general lack of preparation for the demands of a global market. At the same time, social media (i.e., Reddit, Facebook, Instagram) are rife with complaints about employers who do not provide adequate training for many employees and, especially, new employees. Employers often fail to recognize employees, especially new hires, and to require not only task training for what the employee is hired to do but also training for specific organizational expectations regarding conduct and behavior. Employee detachment from organizations has sharply increased, thus leaving global leaders with fewer opportunities to hire knowledgeable and motivated employees. To help leaders develop such employees, this paper examines the problems facing these young employees and presents a template for a Code of Conduct during the onboarding phase of employment as a worthwhile start to building the employees that organizations need in a global environment.

TALK SMART: THE BUSINESS ADVANTAGE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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According to a 2024 Gallup poll, interpersonal skills alongside written and oral communication skills are rated as the most important for the current workforce. These foundational communication skills are listed as “extremely important or very important by 85% of survey respondents” in order to be successful in today’s economy.

Furthermore, a 2022 Public Relations journal article “Bad connection: Study finds poor communication costs businesses $1.2 trillion annually” explores the impacts of communication on the modern workforce that includes more virtual or flexible work schedules. The study conducted by Grammerly and The Harris Poll explored the impacts and costs of poor workplace communication on U.S. businesses and employees. Grammarly’s State of Business Communication: The Backbone of Business Is Broken “estimates up to a $1.2 trillion annual loss among businesses due to ineffective communication.” Among their respondents, “nearly three in four business leaders (72%) say their team struggled with communicating effectively over the last year, and most business leaders (82%) and employees (59%) are concerned about effective communication with remote or hybrid working models in the future.” This presentation will highlight some of the assignments and readings used to teach effective interpersonal and business communication skills.

TEACHING METHODS IN PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING COURSES: A SYLLABUS ANALYSIS

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This study examines the teaching methods employed in Principles of Marketing courses, analyzing over 100 syllabi from various institutions. We categorized the syllabi by teaching methods, including case studies, simulations, projects, lectures, and discussions, and assessed their prevalence. The results reveal that case studies and projects are the most commonly used teaching methods, followed by lectures and discussions. Simulations and experiential learning activities are less frequently used, but still valued by many educators. This study identifies best practices in teaching Principles of Marketing and proposes innovative teaching strategies, providing marketing educators with insights to enhance student learning outcomes and engagement.

TECHNOLOGY SELF EFFICACY USING SALESFORCE (MAXLABS)

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A challenge of teaching the introductory information systems (IS) course to all business students is getting all students to realize the critical role IS plays in all business organizations. We recently moved to a new textbook that seems to excite students (Information Systems: A Manager's Guide to Harnessing Technology Version 8.0, John Gallaugher), but introducing them to the technical aspects while also providing useful tools that all students can leverage has been a challenge.

A few years ago we started using Max Labs where the students gained experience with Salesforce (the leading customer relationships management (CRM) tool) via 6 different labs. But is it effective?

This study uses pre/post tests for all 6 Max Labs' learning objectives (Cruz, 2018) and the Digital Technical Self-Efficacy Survey Instrument (DTSE). We then compare those results with students' personality test (Big Five). This is being collected for all sections (4 spring, 2 summer, 5 fall) over 5 years. This spring is our first collection term. We will share our experimental design and seek input from the audience.

THE CYCLICAL FEEDBACK RECOMMENDER SYSTEM: HOW MACHINE LEARNING CAN ENHANCE THE USER EXPERIENCE ON MARKETPLACE PLATFORMS

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Recommender systems are web or mobile algorithms that connect platform users with available inventory. Most recommender systems are one-sided, meaning that they consider matching criteria for one platform user, typically buyers or (less frequently) sellers. The information systems literature has introduced two-sided recommender systems that use feedback from both user groups to predict attrition outcomes. The current study builds on this research by introducing a Cyclical Feedback Recommender System "CFRS". The CFRS uses machine learning to co-create value and improve the user experience on online marketplace platforms. It employs a genetic algorithm to create a continuous feedback loop that uses buyers' search activity to inform sellers how to improve their posts and, in turn, improve system recommendations for buyers. A simulation of the CFRS is carried out to demonstrate how platform service providers could implement the functionality. We conclude by discussing the academic, managerial, and social implications of CFRS adoption.

THE INTERACTION OF EGO AND ALTERS IN SOCIAL NETWORKS: A CATALYST FOR CREATIVITY

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Social networks provide valuable informational and emotional resources that can enhance employee creativity. However, creativity does not emerge solely from access to resources; it depends on an individual's (ego's) willingness and ability to utilize them. This study examines the interaction between egos and their network members (alters) to understand how social networks contribute to creativity in the workplace. Drawing on social network theory and creativity research, it explores how an ego's goal orientation—defined as differences in how individuals interpret and respond to achievement situations (Dweck, 1986; Vandewalle, 2001)—shapes this process. The findings suggest that employees with a learning goal orientation who actively engage with their networks and integrate diverse perspectives are more likely to generate innovative ideas. In contrast, passive engagement of employees with a performance-prove orientation can lead to untapped creative potential, limiting both individual and organizational innovation. By emphasizing the ego's role in transforming network resources into creative outputs, this study contributes to the understanding of social networks as enablers rather than automatic drivers of creativity. Organizations can foster creativity by encouraging proactive engagement with social networks and developing mechanisms that enhance employees' ability to absorb and apply network-derived knowledge.

THE POLITICAL BUSINESS CYCLE AT 50: REAL GDP AND MONEY IN THE U.S. AND BRAZIL SINCE 1975

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April 2025 will mark 50 years since the publication of William D. Nordhaus' "The Political Business Cycle" (1975) in The Review of Economic Studies. This important 22-page paper not only named and defined a new hazard to market performance at a time when markets were increasingly viewed as inherently unstable, it pointed to intrinsic tendencies in democratic systems to manipulate the performance of mixed economies to the benefit of the governing class, especially to engage in election interference for the retention of political power. The textbook example offered is the Nixon administration. After a brief introduction, this study will first summarize Nordhaus' original work and some of the most notable responses to it. Next, it will attempt to revise the political-business-cycle (PBC) concept from its original mid-1970s context and assumptions. Using the redefined PBC, it will then examine and compare Brazilian and American monetary policy for proportional and statistically significant structural breaks to detect possible PBCs. Last of all, it will examine the possibility of Granger causality and cointegration between Brazilian and American real GDP and money (M2) in a proposed test of central-bank efficacy.

THE ROLE OF GENDER AND ACCOUNTING COMPETENCE AS DETERMINANTS OF TAX BRIBE ENCOUNTERS: EVIDENCE FROM GHANA AND SIERRA LEONE

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Corruption in tax administration remains a formidable barrier to economic development, especially in developing economies where weak institutional frameworks foster discretionary enforcement. This study investigates the influence of accounting competence and gender on the likelihood of tax bribery encounters among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana and Sierra Leone. Drawing on data from 401 SMEs surveyed by the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (WeFi), we employ logistic regression models to examine how accounting competence and gender of the business owner shape vulnerability to bribery.

Contrary to conventional wisdom that associates robust accounting practices with enhanced financial transparency and regulatory compliance, our findings reveal a paradox: firms with higher accounting competence are more frequently targeted by tax officials for bribery. This counterintuitive outcome appears driven by perceptions that financially sophisticated firms can more readily manage illicit transactions. Moreover, gender dynamics significantly compound corruption risks, as women-led businesses face disproportionately higher incidences of bribery solicitation, challenging earlier assumptions about lower corruption propensities among female entrepreneurs.

Further analysis indicates that the detrimental effect of accounting competence on bribery likelihood is amplified in regions with weaker digital tax administration systems. These results underscore the complex interplay between institutional quality, financial literacy, and gender biases in tax enforcement. The study contributes to the literature by extending research on financial

governance and corruption, and by highlighting the urgent need for targeted policy interventions—such as enhanced digital tax literacy, gender-sensitive anti-corruption frameworks, and comprehensive institutional reforms—to foster more transparent and equitable tax systems in developing economies.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL INTERACTION FEATURES IN INFLUENCING HABITUAL USE OF FITNESS WEARABLES

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Innovative intervention techniques and technologies are continuously transforming how we approach fitness. However, their impact on health outcomes remains unclear. Therefore, evaluating technology usage and its influence on health has emerged as a multidisciplinary research area. A key focus within this field is how wearable technologies influence users' habits, such as their habitual use behavior, which is closely linked to the success of these technologies. This study examines the role of social interaction features in fostering habitual use of fitness wearable technologies (FWTs). Drawing on behavioral theories and technology adoption frameworks, we conceptualize social interaction features as a second-order construct, including data sharing, social encouragement, competition, coaching, and comparison. The study investigates how these features influence habitual use through the mediating roles of social competing and social influence. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a survey-based approach to collect data from active FWT users. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the relationships among constructs and test the hypothesized model. Key metrics such as path coefficients, mediation effects, and predictive relevance were assessed to provide a robust evaluation of the proposed framework. The findings reveal that social interaction features significantly influence habitual use through indirect pathways. Social competing emerged as the strongest mediator, highlighting the importance of competitive dynamics in sustaining user engagement. Social influence also played a significant role, emphasizing the value of peer motivation and connectedness. These results offer actionable insights for FWT developers to enhance user retention and engagement by prioritizing social features in device design.

UNDERSTANDING THE UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITIONS OF JIMM'S STEAKHOUSE AND PUB: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

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Over the last thirty years, the food service industry in the United States has grown at unprecedented rates. Between 1992 and 2021, nationwide sales in the food service sector grew from $200 billion to $876.33 billion (National Restaurant Association, 2022). Historically, the restaurant industry has experienced a failure rate of as high as 30% in the first year of new establishments' operations (Parsa et al, 2005). After the COVID-19 pandemic, many restaurants permanently closed their doors. However, others managed to reopen and have been enjoying a steady flow of customers and resulting revenues. This study aims to explore the value propositions a family-owned restaurant offers to its guests that help it create and maintain a loyal customer base.

The purpose of this case study is to identify a set of value propositions unique to Jimm's Steakhouse and Pub. The data for the pilot study was collected through a qualitative research method of semi-structured personal interviews. This method was selected to allow the researcher to explore interviewees' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about a business. The recurring themes that emerged from the interview responses are as follows: 1) human interactions (guest relations orientation of the restaurant staff), 2) staff's hospitality and passion for service, 3) viewing patrons as guests rather than customers, 4) guests' memorable experience associated with Jimm's fostering trust and tradition, and 5) physical surroundings creating feelings of security and relaxation.

USE OF HIGH-TECH TOOLS TO ASSESS SUCCESS OF SPORT SPONSORSHIP

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Sport sponsorship is an essential revenue stream for organizations promoting and managing sport and live events. The development of new high-tech tools (e.g., artificial intelligence, the Cloud, digital dashboards, and increased computing power) is enabling sports organizations to assess the success of sponsorships in more detail than ever before. The use of these high-tech methods will be essential for sports and live events organizations who need to make sure they are evaluating sponsorships in the most thorough, comprehensive and timely manner. This presentation will discuss several examples of how high-tech methods are being used to evaluate sponsorships.
Challenges that need to be overcome will be identified and discussed.

USING AI FOR TEACHING IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING

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The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the university setting has led to a lot of options. In just about every discussion concerning AI a new utilization is suggested. For the teaching aspect, according to AI – AI can be used for personalized learning, smart tutoring systems, data-driven insights, virtual labs and simulations, chatbots for student support, interactive content creation, and language translation to name a few. What do all those terms really mean and are these applications really practical? This presentation aims to go over these functions, shed some light on what AI is referring to, and discuss the feasibility of using AI for these tasks. In addition, resources concerning AI specialties will be shared.

USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO MAKE ACADEMIC LIFE EASIER

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Faculty members juggle numerous responsibilities, including teaching, research, and administrative tasks. Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) offers transformative potential to streamline and enhance various facets of academic life, similar to its impact in the corporate world. Mundane tasks consume valuable time that could be better spent on other endeavors. Numerous Generative AI options are available, such as ChatGPT by OpenAI, Gemini by Google, DeepSeek by High-Flyer, Copilot by Microsoft, Claude AI by Anthropic, and Grok by xAI. These tools, used individually or in combination, can be utilized for various purposes.

Faculty can leverage AI-driven tools to brainstorm ideas, assist in lecture preparation, create class presentations, summarize research articles, and write letters of recommendation. Integrating AI into academia can make faculty members more efficient and productive, ultimately benefiting the entire educational ecosystem. AI can help automate repetitive tasks, allowing faculty to focus on more critical aspects of their work, such as innovative research and engaging teaching methods.

Adopting AI in academia can lead to a more streamlined workflow, reducing the burden of administrative tasks and enhancing the quality of education. As AI continues to evolve, its applications in academia will likely expand, offering even more opportunities for faculty to optimize their time and resources. Embracing AI technology can foster a more dynamic and efficient academic environment, paving the way for future advancements in education and research.

VALUE AND HEALTH BELIEF MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING VACCINE REFUSALS IN COLLEGES

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No, the Sky did not fall! Vaccines got us past the 2020 COVID Pandemic! Experts and medical community agree that vaccines were instrumental. They helped reduce the deaths, hospitalizations, ICU admissions and severity of the disease in general among the elderly group of Americans. However, exiting the Pandemic phase was not easy. Many college students as well as some other Americans refused to take the vaccine for one reason or the other. The problem today is we could still face new variants, Long COVID, and new viruses such as Monkey pox, Bird flu, etc. In case of another pandemic or even epidemic, unvaccinated college students could pose bigger danger of spreading the disease since they are likely to attend social/sports events, visit bars, be present at large gatherings and risk getting COVID-19 infection compared to seniors. They can be infected without symptoms. Many may also be less likely to be disciplined enough to follow quarantine guidelines. These could come in contact with others thus transmitting the virus and contributing to the spread of the disease.

This paper examines the potential of the "Value-Expectancy" and the "Health Belief" Models based on psychological framework to understand the vaccine refusals among College students. The examination reveals there may be some specific areas government could focus on for developing better strategies to minimize vaccine refusals among college students and minimize potential for dangerous pandemic circumstances. Some suggestions are made for the government and colleges.

WHY WOULD A COLLEGE PROFESSOR STUDY DONK RACING

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Donk racing is the newest and fast-growing sector of racing in the United States. What appeared to have started as illegal street racing in the southern region of the United States presents with an urban vibe has been embraced and legitimatized by the National Drag Racing Association (NDRA). The research attraction is prompted by the diverse fan base, predominately African American, and the use of applied engineering in an informal setting. A professor at a midwestern regional institution discovered this motorsport while covering from COVID and was intrigued by the racing event from a scholarly perspective. She observed STEM in action, entrepreneurship, and cultural relevance concurrently on display. This was happening in a traditionally overlooked and underserved community, especially with respect to STEM education and careers.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FROM PRACTICE TO PROFESSIONAL

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Workforce development is an often-discussed term, but the application eludes most traditional academic institutes and corporations. Universities often label experiential learning as internships or service learning and may place workforce development opportunities under the extended learning or professional learning academic departments aimed at creating certificates and, on occasion, a program, like a speaker series. In recent reports from Harvard (Harvard Kennedy School, 2024) and Brookings Institute (Goger et al., 2024), as well as research published in Perspectives on Medical Education (Verhees et al., 2024), the value of work-based learning in partnership with employers for eventual career success has been highlighted. The presentation aims to discuss segments of workforce development and connect these to real-life opportunities for traditional and non-traditional students. The presenters will discuss Internships, Apprenticeships, Mentorships, and Job Readiness Training. The presenters will provide examples of how this is incorporated into classroom learning outcomes and within a corporate/organizational culture. Both Professor Joy Hermsen and Dr. Maria Scott have extensive experience internal to academia and internal to companies and are able to demonstrate effective workforce development methods. Additionally, the two are working with the Birmingham (Alabama 2025) World Police & Fire Games and with the National Senior Games Association (Iowa, 2025) on workforce development research.

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND GENDER IN THE CARIBBEAN: THE CASE OF GUYANA

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The narratives of research on involvement of women in entrepreneurship are replete with notions of the persistence of gender inequalities in this sphere of socioeconomic life. Studies on youth entrepreneurs globally are emerging as a focal concern as youth entrepreneurship is increasingly promoted as a strategy to combat high youth unemployment. These studies largely confirm the pattern of unequal and discriminatory treatment towards young women entrepreneurs. Informed by data derived from mixed method studies on the factors impacting youth entrepreneurs in two towns in Guyana, this paper examines gender differences in youth entrepreneurs' perceptions of the challenges faced, the availability of institutional support for establishing and running their businesses and analyzes selected dispositions that may influence entrepreneurial survivability in the society. Further this paper reflects on some of enabling factors for creating gender parity in the support of youth entrepreneurs. Findings reveal that while gender inequalities in entrepreneurship persist, contrary to patterns in many developing countries and regions, young women entrepreneurs in Guyana can access loans and other institutional support largely similar to their male counterparts. They differ however in the types of businesses established, the perceptions of challenges faced and in dispositions towards survivability as entrepreneurs.

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