

Twenty Years of Scholarship in the International Journal of Business Science and Applied Management: Reflections on and Pathways for Future Inquiries

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Abstract

This editorial paper reflects on the research published in the International Journal of Business Science and Applied Management to celebrate its 20th anniversary and a new phase for the journal. We discuss the theoretical, methodological, and thematic approaches that depict the journal's contributions. Through this analysis, we identify six key research streams that have been most prominent in the journal's discourse: organisational behaviour and leadership, information systems management and adoption, customer service satisfaction, consumer behaviour, strategy, and supply chain and operations. As we reflect on these research themes, we emphasise how they will need to evolve in order to strengthen the impact of future research. In addition, we highlight the importance of ongoing transformations in the broader business environment, technological, economic, socio-cultural, and ecological shifts, and their relevance for setting the agenda for future submissions.

Keywords: editorial paper, review, future research directions

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1. INTRODUCTION

The International Journal of Business Science and Applied Management (IJBSAM) was established in 2005, with its first publications appearing in the journal in 2006. The mission of the journal is to provide emerging and established scholars with an accessible platform for disseminating knowledge that has a strong focus on theory and practice in various business and management areas. Since then, the journal has been true to its goal as it has housed research from scholars across the world, embracing a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary focus, utilising various methodologies to explore an inclusive range of topics. Apart from inclusivity, a defining feature of the journal has been its emphasis on scholarship that has strong applications and implications for practitioners and policymakers, to support and guide operations in increasingly complex and dynamic business environments.

As the journal marks its 20-year anniversary, in this editorial paper, we reflect on the scholarship generated by the journal contributors and analyse the key themes, methodologies, and theories that have characterised research for the past two decades. By doing so, we provide a snapshot of how we have been advancing and bridging the gap between theory and practice across diverse, organisational, geographical and practice contexts. We discuss research inquiries across the six key business and management domains, covering organisational behaviour and leadership, consumer behaviour and service satisfaction, information systems management and adoption, strategic change and supply chain management. Through this brief overview of past contributions, we are able to understand how the journal's intellectual work challenges and addresses the forces shaping the business world.

As organisations navigate rapid technological change, socio-economic uncertainty, and cultural shifts, this editorial also considers how IJBSAM can continue to serve as a forum for disseminating impactful business and management research. We conclude by charting future directions and outlining research questions that scholars can pursue to better address emerging environmental, societal, technological, and economic challenges. Accordingly, this editorial not only reflects on what has been published to date, but also looks forward by providing a useful point of reference for future scholars and setting an agenda for submissions that will shape the next phase of the journal's development.

2. OVERVIEW OF PUBLICATIONS IN IJBSAM

In this section, we provide an overview of the contributions to IJBSAM in terms of their underpinning theories, geographical context and methodological approaches. The published authors tend to rely on theories that transfer across contexts, with the most frequent ones describing and explaining individuals' behaviours and dynamics within organisations (e.g. Social Exchange Theory, Agency Theory, Job Demand – Resource Theory, Justice theories, Conservation of Resources Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Learning theories). The decision-making styles and heuristics of organisational decision makers are an area of particular interest, explored through Leadership theories and theories of decision making. Contributions also take a wider meso-level perspective through adoption theories that focus on organisations as a unit of analysis, and by exploring resources, capabilities, strategic management, and institutional forces through the lenses of the Resource-Based View, Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and Social Network Theory, among others.

Given the generalist nature of the journal, the research has transcended the organisational and management domain and gone into marketing by using frameworks and theories related to service marketing and customer motivations. With the increasing role of digital technology, we have also been increasingly open to research on the application of enterprise systems and customer-facing technologies, drawing on innovation diffusion, technology acceptance, and adoption theoretical stances.

The geographical setting of the research demonstrates international reach, with a stronger regional concentration in European countries, as well as a balance between location-specific applications and cross-cultural research. The location-specific studies tend to apply and extend existing theoretical assumptions in new contexts, offering meaningful explanations of business and management practices in settings where evidence is still limited. So far, regional evidence comes primarily from European countries (e.g. Greece, Germany, Portugal, Norway, Sweden) and East and South Asia (e.g. Malaysia, India).

Methodologically, the portfolio shows a strong presence of survey-based empirical work, with substantial use of techniques that test multivariate path relationships and focus on theory testing. The papers primarily adopt a single-study approach, either testing theories and relationships or, less often, generating new assumptions and theories through qualitative techniques such as case studies and interviews. Review-based scholarship appears in both general literature reviews and more formal systematic literature reviews, with a fraction of papers developing new conceptual models. These observations show a tilt towards quantitative research, with fewer papers offering deeper contextual explanation.

3. REFLECTING ON THE KEY RESEARCH THEMES

Based on the frequency of the keywords and their relationships, we identify the six key themes characterising the scholarly work published in IJBSAM, while niche topics are excluded from the analysis. Table 1 details the keywords describing each theme and the percentage of publications in which these keywords appear. That said, these percentages do not indicate papers with an exclusive focus on a single theme; a theme may also be tangential and studied alongside other topics. For example, one paper may focus on the adoption of enterprise technology and its impact on supply chain performance, which would make that paper relevant to two themes. The analysis of each theme and its keywords is discussed further in this section.

Table 1: Most frequent research themes

TOPIC	KEYWORDS	% EST. CASES
ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR & LEADERSHIP	transformational leadership; emotional intelligence; job performance; social exchange; employee engagement; employee job performance; human capital; job satisfaction; altruistic organizational citizenship behaviour	37.36%
INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT & ADOPTION	technology adoption; time pressure; information systems; symbolic adoption; technology acceptance	24.71%
CUSTOMER SERVICE SATISFACTION	customer satisfaction; word of mouth; customer service	19.54%
CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR	virtual goods; viral marketing; consumer behaviour; consumer inertia; social media	18.97%
STRATEGY	strategic change; public relations; recall strategy; capability	18.97%
SUPPLY CHAIN & OPERATIONS	supply chain; distribution centre; supply chain risk; conceptual framework; supply chain integration; information sharing	11.49%

The behaviour of employees and leadership in organisational performance is a dominant research theme. The central question in this body of knowledge is dedicated to understanding various leadership styles as antecedents of employee productivity, the broader work environment, and firm performance. It is leaders' ambidexterity – the capability to explore and exploit new resources – as well as their ability to inspire, transform, and demonstrate empathy, that shape the human workforce and its behaviour. Through numerous empirical inquiries, we have collected evidence of diverse psychological and relational mechanisms mediating the positive implications of leadership styles and the work environment for employees, such as psychological distance, personality traits, self-efficacy, perceived support, and trust, among other conditions. Another theme in this body of research revolves around understanding the drivers of organisational citizenship behaviour, innovation, engagement, wellbeing, and retention – outcomes that extend beyond job performance. While the drivers of organisational outcomes are, by and large, universal, there has been a particular attention to contextual boundary conditions – be they cultural, sectoral, or demographic – that introduce greater explanatory nuance into well-established theoretical relationships. As digital transformation has continued to accelerate, research has increasingly focused on organisational practices and mechanisms such as team formation and collaboration, highlighting the growing attention to technologies that support the workforce and enable digital workspaces. Yet, we acknowledge the need for stronger theoretical integration across research on leadership, employee motivation, behaviour, experiences, and performance, particularly as emerging technologies are

transforming workplaces and, in doing so, reshaping work practices, inter- and intra-organisational collaboration, relationships, and employee engagement.

As technologies have become increasingly intertwined with the business environment, research on the adoption and use of technology in organisational contexts has been pushed to the forefront. The papers in this domain focus on three interconnected themes. First, they examine how digital technologies enable value creation at the organisational and ecosystem levels, where information systems are treated as part of strategic infrastructure, a source of competitive advantage, and a driver of business model innovation. Through a primarily conceptual perspective, these studies explore open innovation ecosystems supporting born-global firms' internationalisation, data-driven business model taxonomies grounded in value networks and ecosystem roles, and digital platforms mediating international operations. The second theme focuses on the evaluation and adoption of specific technologies, including, but not limited to, mobile banking, QR payment systems, human resource information systems, and the Internet of Things. Drawing on technology adoption and acceptance theories, these studies explore application-specific drivers of adoption, thereby informing practice on how best to implement technologies to drive value creation, business model innovation, and improved performance. The third stream of research draws attention to the environmental conditions shaping managerial choices around technology use and their multi-stakeholder implications. Given the growing awareness of the broader market implications of digital transformation and digital business models, this body of research emphasises the importance of regulatory and institutional mechanisms, as well as wider environmental forces beyond individual-level adoption factors. This perspective demonstrates that human-centric and societal views of technology adoption align with a value-driven approach to technology use. However, while acknowledging the meso- and macro-level implications of technology management, we encourage further development of this research stream to move beyond adoption intentions. In particular, we expect a shift of the focus towards the actual long-term outcomes of technology use, alongside deeper integration of governance, privacy, and sustainability considerations into mainstream information systems management models.

Moving on to the marketing domain, we have had two interconnected bodies of research on consumer behaviour and service satisfaction. Across the published papers, consumer behaviour is viewed as a set of psychologically mediated processes that are increasingly shaped by digital stimuli, such as gamification, haptic imagery in social commerce, live-streaming commerce, online group buying and participatory platforms. Collectively, these studies highlight how technology-mediated consumer experiences and sensory cues – e.g. interactivity, social presence, and immersion – shape consumer engagement, trust, continuance shopping motivation, and impulsive purchasing. Pertinent to research on marketing stimuli in online environments are the psychological mechanisms that digital forms of interaction and engagement generate, warranting deeper theoretical attention. Another emerging research theme relates to international marketing, where studies explore consumer attitudes towards domestic products as contingent upon institutional environments, levels of digital maturity, and socio-cultural norms. This stream of research underscores the contextual and cultural sensitivity of consumer responses to marketing stimuli across different national settings.

The body of knowledge on customer satisfaction centres on how service quality, value creation logics, and customer relationship practices shape customers' experiences, satisfaction, and organisational performance. As online platforms have become primary marketing channels, research on service-dominant logic and its strategic value for firms appears more important than ever. Existing studies demonstrate that customer satisfaction emerges as an outcome of an organisation's holistic, service-centred orientation rather than isolated service encounters. Holistic customer relationship management and value-driven innovation in the current reality of virtual interactions, digital business models, and omnichannel experiences represent key avenues for future research. In particular, there is a need for a more explicit connection between emerging digital service models, co-creation processes, and long-term customer value across diverse economic and technological contexts.

The strategy-related pillar of the research is driven by questions concerning organisational capabilities and resources, their configurations, environmental uncertainty, and the governance mechanisms that have to be incorporated into strategic decision-making in order to support the achievement of long-term organisational goals beyond short-term performance. As long-term orientation is contingent upon the effective development and deployment of resources and capabilities, information systems are unsurprisingly examined as critical enablers of organisational growth, strategy execution, and the building of sustainable stakeholder relationships, particularly in the context of firm internationalisation. Given the applied nature of the journal, considerable attention is given to understanding how information systems and innovation-oriented business models translate short-term performance outcomes into long-term competitive advantage. One strand of evidence highlights the role of digital collaboration platforms in enabling intra-firm and inter-firm capability development and knowledge transfer. Another recurring theme concerns how strategic decisions are made under conditions

of internal and external environmental pressures and uncertainty, when paradoxical implications need to be navigated. Such paradoxes include tensions between expansion and de-internationalisation, retrenchment and performance, value co-creation and co-destruction. Several studies also emphasise the structural and systemic enablers of strategic change, such as governance and communication mechanisms, showing that long-term strategic outcomes depend not only on what organisations do, but also on how they demonstrate strategic changes. These insights suggest that there are further opportunities to extend the boundaries of existing research by developing novel theoretical interpretations of digitally enabled and mediated collaboration, as well as of dynamic capabilities that enhance organisational resilience in contemporary contexts. Such advances are needed to support the generation of more macro-level knowledge applications grounded in understanding micro-level processes within organisations.

Research on supply chains and logistics addresses emerging inquiries into innovation and optimisation across both large companies with multi-tier logistics systems and small and medium-sized enterprises across sectors. Innovation is closely tied to new methods and approaches for managing the operational side of organisations. Among this body of research is work exploring various innovative management techniques and examining the implications of innovative practices for firms' performance and sustainability outcomes. One study shifted the focus from reviewing traditional academic research to an exploration of existing online discourse using multiple analytical techniques, as a way of understanding emerging tools for innovation management at the supply chain level. As a result of this inquiry, it was found that blockchains, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things dominate current supply chain discourse. This provides a strong example of methodological innovation in contexts where academic knowledge is still scarce. As academic literature often lags behind practice due to the rigour required and the time needed for peer review and the validation of findings, continued efforts to bring practical accounts of technology application from the field into academic literature will remain important in the future.

Another strand of research on supply chains and operations focuses on optimisation approaches aimed at improving information flow within and across organisational boundaries, as well as enhancing overall system performance. The published research discusses digital solutions integrated across the value chain, new optimisation methodologies, and emerging business models. We are encouraged by inquiries that seek to understand the emergence of approaches with the potential to revolutionise supply chains and to support the development of new optimisation models. As automation becomes the new norm in manufacturing and heavy industries, research in this domain is particularly promising from a practical perspective. At the same time, it is important to consider how advances in the empirical field reshape and redefine the existing theoretical body of knowledge. In addition, several papers highlight the role of governance, policy, and legislation in highly regulated sectors. As emerging technologies drive the automation and optimisation of supply chains and create a need for stronger regulation, interdisciplinary research is becoming imperative moving forward.

4. CHARTING PATHWAYS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Drawing on observations from published papers, we offer further considerations on how to advance the research strands from theoretical, practical, and methodological perspectives. Furthermore, as scholarly work is being continuously reshaped by changes in the broader business environment, we also reflect on the ongoing technological, economic, socio-cultural and ecological shifts that challenge existing business and management knowledge. We take these shifts into account and articulate how they necessitate a reorientation of scholarly agendas.

4.1. Stretching the boundaries of existing research streams

While we value the research evidence we have accumulated so far across the six research streams discussed, we strongly encourage researchers to review each topic within these streams and to go substantially beyond them by seeking novel theories and novel phenomena to study. Research should avoid incremental advances on the literature and instead aim at bringing in fundamentally new evidence that can stand the test of space and time.

In line with existing practices of this journal, we still welcome the applications of transferable theories that span organisational, industrial, and national contexts, to test their applications and contextual relevance. Such contributions are highly valued, particularly where such work informs managerial practice and policy. We acknowledge that the increasing complexity of our environments and the diversity of our institutions require a more nuanced and context-sensitive theorisation and deeper explanation. The theories may range from those that meaningfully describe phenomena, explain complex relationships and prescribe interventions and frameworks to tackle emerging challenges. However, we are increasingly supporting research that departs from mere theoretical applications and begins to

critically examine and challenge the prevailing status quo. In particular, we encourage those submissions which challenge the big ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and taken-for-granted ways of thinking in the field of business and management – e.g. exploring agentic systems challenging the boundaries of human judgement, relational norms and stakeholder interactions, thus having direct implications for management and marketing theory and practice.

Theoretical advance should not be at the expense of the possibility of practical application, as we will continue emphasising a practice-driven orientation to research. By doing so, researchers can pinpoint tensions, contradictions, and emerging patterns which push for theoretical refinement and extension. In this sense, practical relevance can be something more than a product to be achieved – it can be a driver behind the formulation of powerful theories that are robust, impactful, and forward-looking in terms of advancing the business and management discipline.

Methodologically, this journal still focuses on rigour and replicability. Although survey-based and cross-sectional designs have been widely adopted to date, future work could expand the variety and creativity of designs and methods. Specifically, panel and longitudinal designs are valuable for documenting dynamics, learning, and change over time. Qualitative methods, which often leave unexplored phenomena and micro-level processes unexplored, can be useful to fill some of the gaps, while experimental approaches can consolidate causal inference and theory testing. We also advocate mixed-methods designs and comparative studies, whenever feasible only if they are based on sound theoretical foundations and are documented in a transparent manner.

4.2. Technological Shifts and Emerging Research Priorities

Rapid developments in information systems (e.g. artificial intelligence, machine learning, automation, and data analytics) are fundamentally changing the way work is organised, managed, and experienced (see Marikyan et al., 2022; Budhwar et al., 2023). Governance structures, employment relationships, and value extraction mechanisms are changing (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Budhwar et al., 2023). Analytical tools are gradually being either replaced or complemented with agentic solutions, requiring less human intervention (Baird and Maruping, 2021). Algorithms have started taking part in decision-making, performance evaluation, management and relationship building, increasingly blurring the line between human and machine agency (Dattathrani and De, 2023). With this comes the unprecedented amount of data being generated, analysed and processed. These technological transformations require a reconsideration of what scholars study and how research is carried out. Thus, conventional ideas about management, labour, and organisation, which generally revolve around human judgement and stable organisational forms, need refinement or reconsideration.

Example future research directions include:

- algorithmic management practices and their implications for workers' autonomy, control, accountability, and inequality.
- AI-augmented decision making and human expertise: dynamics, applications and implications
- Building relations and negotiating trust in hybrid decision-making systems.
- New forms of leadership and governance in digital workspaces
- Revisited ethics for the collection, interpretation, and use of digital data, particularly with the emergence of new technology.
- Emerging technologies in workspaces and their role in shaping interactional and relational norms
- Redefined skills and competencies in the era of new technology
- AI-enabled digital transformation: operational and strategic perspectives
- AI-enabled human resource management and resource implications

4.3. Economic and Institutional Shifts and Emerging Research Priorities

We are living in an era of economic volatility and uncertainty in labour markets that coincides with increasing gig work, freelancing and hybrid organisational forms (Shevchuk et al., 2024). In contrast to conventional employment, the emerging workspaces and work practices need new forms of organisational structure, governance, leadership, management and institutional logic (see Davlembayeva and Papagiannidis, 2023). At an individual level, new economic and labour arrangements challenge the traditional notions of careers, commitment and organisational membership. At an organisational level, this impacts business models, which are becoming increasingly fluid and experimental, with businesses trying to build and create value in the face of persistent uncertainty (April, 2024). More broadly, economic and institutional shifts affect supply chains and value networks, stressing the need for timely research into institutional complexity at all levels and in all contexts.

Future research directions related to economic and institutional shifts include and are not limited to:

- Organisational and individual resilience in the face of recurring crises and systemic shocks.
- Digital labour and algorithmic management of platform work: governance, regulation and structure
- Business model innovation, particularly under conditions of uncertainty, resource constraints, and rapid environmental change.
- Non-standard employment: skills, competencies, routines and career pathways
- Institutional frameworks shaping and being reshaped by emerging forms of work.

4.4. Socio-Cultural Shifts and Emerging Research Priorities

Recently, we have started observing a changing social and cultural context in the workforce that is challenging contemporary expectations around work, leadership roles and corporate responsibility (Lima and Rahman, 2025). There is a more diverse, more multigenerational workforce that comes with varying values, behaviours and career aspirations. Mental health, work-life balance, wellbeing and over-work have become more salient, against the backdrop of increasing expectations of social equity, fairness and ethical behaviour (Partridge, 2025). These socio-cultural changes require a much more context-sensitive and reflexive approach to research. In future research, we should take into consideration the variation in experiences of different populations, including those of different genders, identities, ethnicities, age, and socio-economic groups.

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion, with closer attention to how people's overlapping identities (such as gender, ethnicity, and age) shape their real work experiences.
- Employee wellbeing and mental health, as well as work practices that are sustainable in the long term, rather than viewing people only as contributors to performance.
- Work practices and employee behaviour, especially in settings affected by uncertainty, automation, and less stable career paths.
- Rethinking theories of leadership, human resource management, and organisational behaviour to reflect the changes in employee values and expectations.
- Cultural, institutional, and historical perspective on organisational culture, practices, short and long-term implications.
- Giving voice to marginalised or underrepresented groups through participatory, qualitative, and critical research methods.
- Power, responsibility, and fairness in organisational decisions.

4.5. Environmental Shifts and Emerging Research Priorities

Climate change, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity are making social and environmental sustainability an organisational imperative (Zumente and Bistrova, 2021). Environmental issues are introducing significant risks for organisations in terms of the sustainability of their business models, supply chain inefficiencies, and economic viability (Ghadge et al., 2020; Pankratz and Schiller, 2024). In addition, environmentally responsible behaviour has become an expectation of investors, customers, and other stakeholders (Talan et al., 2024). Not least, sustainability increasingly acts as a driver of innovation that supports long-term organisational viability (Hermundsdottir and Aspelund, 2021). These environmental priorities call for a deeper exploration of environmental initiatives, sustainable business models, and the associated activities, resources, and policies, as well as their short- and long-term implications. As sustainability requires attention to long-term impacts, future research is encouraged to shift the focus from narrow performance metrics towards the broader societal implications of organisational activity. More specifically, areas of potential concern include, but are not limited to, the following research areas:

- Corporate social responsibility: marketing initiatives driving consumer behaviour
- Innovation, adaptation and resilience in response to the environmental crisis
- CSR initiatives and the long-term benefits.
- Green innovation in supply chains and manufacturing
- Regulations and policies that take into account the sustainability implications of innovation
- Compliance and noncompliance with ESGs: short- and long-term firm implications
- ESG measurement and reporting: cross-sectoral perspective

5. CONCLUSION

This editorial paper has provided a brief overview of the research published in *IJB SAM* so far to show where the journal stands, which areas of research interest we pursue, and to outline the methodological approaches that resonate with and are welcomed in our journal. As we reflected on the research themes, we outlined the potential directions of research that are encouraged in the journal going forward in support of strengthening the journal's position in the management literature.

Given the complexity and dynamic nature of the business environment, we discuss the likely forces that our journal cannot ignore and that will probably be the priorities to address in future research. In particular, we have outlined four strategic contexts within which future papers are encouraged to situate their contributions, specifically technological changes, socio-cultural changes, political and economic, and environmental changes. These contexts need to be acknowledged beyond the purely contextual level so that findings inform practice not only within narrow settings, but also contribute to broader, more universal practices, thereby advancing established theories and assumptions.

We welcome research that is cross-disciplinary and innovative. This concerns not only theoretical perspectives, but methodological approaches as well. As such, we invite scholars to be novel, ambitious, creative, and rigorous in order to open new pathways in the business and management field.

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