

ISSN: 2183-5594

**EJABM** European  
Journal  
of Applied  
Business and  
Management •

# European Journal of Applied Business and Management

**Volume: 10**

**Issue: 3**

**Year: 2024**

**EJABM**

*Editorial*

***Innovative Pathways in Business and Society***

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**1. Introduction**

In today's interconnected and fast-paced world, the dynamics of business and management are constantly evolving, reflecting shifts in societal needs, technological advancements, and organizational priorities. From embracing sustainability through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to rethinking urban development in the pursuit of smarter cities, these transformations highlight the critical role of innovation and adaptability. As Kotter (1996) aptly noted, "True change demands a fundamental shift in the underlying culture and practices of organizations."

The thirty-third regular issue of the European Journal of Applied Business and Management (EJABM) has been published, continuing its mission to provide a robust platform for innovative research in the dynamic fields of applied business and management. This edition highlights an engaging array of topics that reflect the evolving challenges and opportunities in these disciplines.

This issue features seven original research articles, each meticulously reviewed through a rigorous double-blind peer-review process to ensure the highest standards of academic integrity and quality. EJABM is proud to include contributions from authors in Portugal and Nigeria, showcasing the diverse perspectives and global reach of the journal's scholarly community.

The interplay between leadership, culture, and innovation is particularly pertinent in today's business landscape. Effective leadership fosters an environment where creativity and adaptability thrive, setting the stage for groundbreaking ideas. Similarly, the rise of digital platforms and influencer-driven marketing showcases how technology reshapes consumer behavior, driving businesses to innovate in their communication strategies. Giffinger et al. (2007) observe that smart cities, as an example, integrate technology and

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governance to address modern challenges, underscoring the importance of cross-disciplinary approaches.

The research articles in this edition delve into critical themes such as resistance to organizational change in the public sector, corporate social responsibility strategies, the development of smart cities, the influence of digital marketing, quality reporting in public entities, cause-related marketing in luxury markets, and the interplay between leadership, culture, and innovation. These studies offer valuable insights for both academics and practitioners across disciplines including management, finance, public administration, digital marketing, and organizational development.

We trust that the thirty-third issue of EJABM will stimulate intellectual discussions and inspire future research endeavors in the broad spectrum of applied business and management.

We invite readers to delve into this collection, which not only contributes to ongoing scholarly discourse but also provides actionable perspectives on navigating the complexities of contemporary business and management.

## **2. Structure of the Issue**

In this edition, readers will have online access to seven original articles that explore the following topics:

1. **Resistance to Change in the Public Sector: A Modern Concept?:** This paper investigates the phenomenon of resistance to change in the public sector, analyzing the key factors contributing to this challenge amidst efforts to enhance efficiency and citizen-centric governance.
2. **Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility Strategies on Firm Performance: A Sub-Saharan Experience:** This study examines the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies—including corporate volunteering, employee welfare schemes, and service quality—on the performance of firms in Sub-Saharan Africa.
3. **Can a Small City Become Smarter? An Evaluation of Viana do Castelo Based on a Stakeholder Perspective Using Viana do Castelo as a case study:** This research explores the city's potential to transform into a Smart City, considering

diverse dimensions such as governance, environment, mobility, and economic factors.

4. **The Role of Digital Influencers in the Lifestyle Sector: The Impact on Purchase Intent of Instagram Users:** This article analyzes the strategies employed by digital influencers in the lifestyle sector to motivate purchase intentions, focusing on trust, credibility, information quality, and user engagement on Instagram.
5. **Recognition and Measurement Principles of Accrual-Based IPSAS and Quality of Corporate Reporting by Government-Owned Entities in Nigeria:** This study investigates how the adoption of accrual-based International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) affects the quality of corporate reporting by government-owned entities, emphasizing recognition and measurement principles.
6. **Empowering Luxury: How Cause-Related Marketing Influences Gen Z and Millennials' Post-Purchase Guilt in China's High-End Retail Landscape:** Focusing on younger consumers in China's luxury market, this research examines how cause-related marketing (CrM) mitigates post-purchase guilt, particularly in the context of high-end retail.
7. **The Catalyst of Progress: Leadership, Culture, and Innovation:** This paper explores the relationship between leadership and innovation culture, identifying essential elements for developing a management tool aimed at fostering an innovation-driven organizational environment.

### 3. Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the authors for their contributions and to the reviewers for their rigorous and constructive feedback. The collective efforts of the EJABM community continue to strengthen the journal's academic standing and impact.

Special thanks are also due to our indexing and abstracting partners, including EBSCO, CROSSREF, GOOGLE SCHOLAR, LATINDEX, DRJI, ICI JOURNALS MASTER, REDIB, MIAR, and RCAAP, for their ongoing support in enhancing the journal's visibility and accessibility within the global scientific arena.

We hope that the research featured in this issue will inspire further scholarly inquiries and practical applications, driving progress in the multifaceted world of applied business and management.

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### **How to cite this article:**

Borges, A. P. (2024). Innovative Pathways in Business and Society. *European Journal of Applied Business and Management*, Vol. 10, N° 3, 1-5.