COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023/2024 (JAN - MAY 2024)

HIGHLIGHTS

2ND ANNUAL COB TOURNAMENT

DESTRESS DAY

STUDENTS PROJECTS EXHIBITION

au_kuwait au_kuwait au_kuwait Australian University

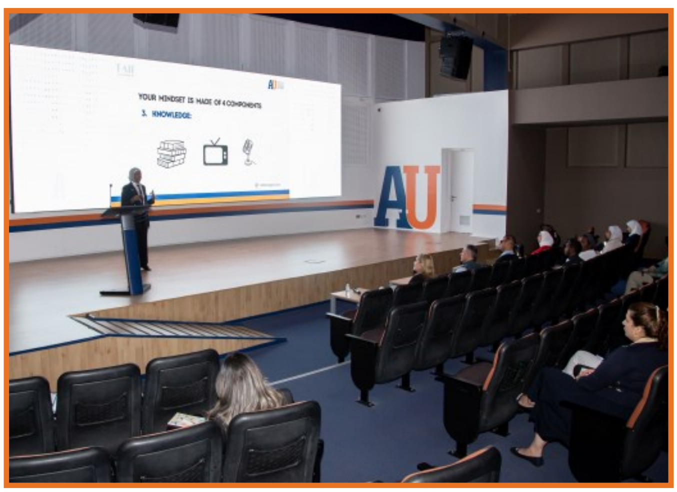
www.au.edu.kw

Seminars

How E-commerce is Going to Change in the Next Five Years

On the 15th of February 2024, Mr. Abdulaziz Albahar delivered AU's 1st seminar of the year marking an impressive start. With his background in product design engineering as well as remarkable skills in business intelligence analysis, he was able to take the audience through a journey of how e-commerce started, evolved and how it successfully has been attracting customers across the globe over the years. Mr. Albahar highlighted the importance of data in the world of ecommerce as he deployed several poll questions during his interactive session in regard to the intension of buying a product when various techniques such as BNPL, Social Commerce, Reviews and recommendations from people we know were used. His latest work on application 'mojo', allows users to earn commissions by purchasing a product and then creating and posting content about it publicly.

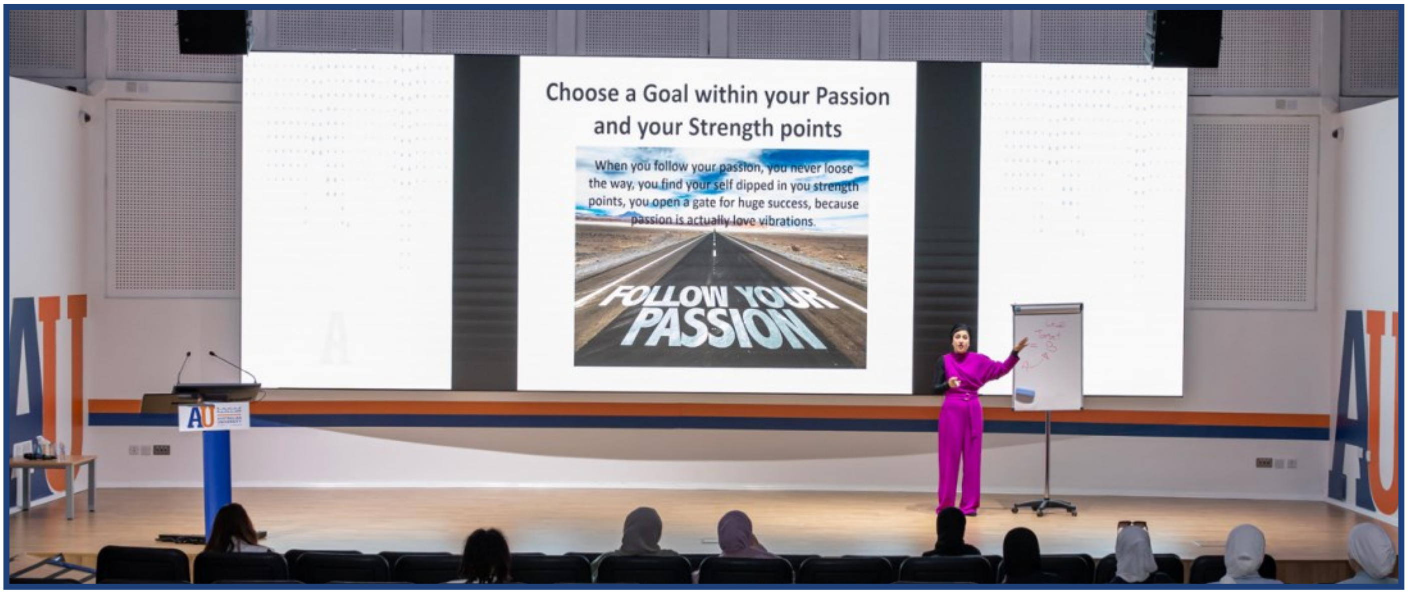
The Power of a Changed Mindset



The guest speaker Taif Alshemmari; a Young Motivational Speaker and Certified Coach, was invited to present a seminar titled “The Power of a Changed Mindset” on the 22nd of February 2024.

Throughout the seminar, the speaker meticulously navigated through four key objectives, each objective shed light on the intricate workings of our mindset and how it influences our actions and achievements. The first objective delved into the foundational components that shape our mindset: Experience, Values & Beliefs, Knowledge, and Environment. This segment served as a crucial foundation. Building upon this foundation, the seminar also explored the dichotomy between a Fixed and Growth Mindset, backed by scientific evidence. The third objective focused on ways to develop a growth mindset to achieve goals and the importance of creating a supportive environment. In conclusion, "The Power of a Changed Mindset" seminar served as a catalyst for personal growth and self-discovery. Through engaging discussions and thought-provoking insights, the speaker imparted invaluable wisdom that has left an indelible mark on the audience.

Keys to Success



In an interactive seminar which took place on the 25th of April 2024, Ms. Alaa Hamdana; A professional Trainer, Cognitive Behavioral Therapist, and Life Coach, highlighted how important it is to set a small yet achievable and realistic milestones to be able to move forward towards our minor goals which eventually would lead us to our major goals. She also focused on the importance of following our passion because when we do that, we can't miss the path and we would find ourselves dipped into our strength and would open gates of huge success for us. She mentioned that this bold action at times would require us to step out of our comfort zone and be responsible and committed. She wrapped her motivational seminar with a meditation that was designed to assist in extracting responses from our unconscious mind to influence us without our conscious awareness.

Field Trips

The Avenues Mall

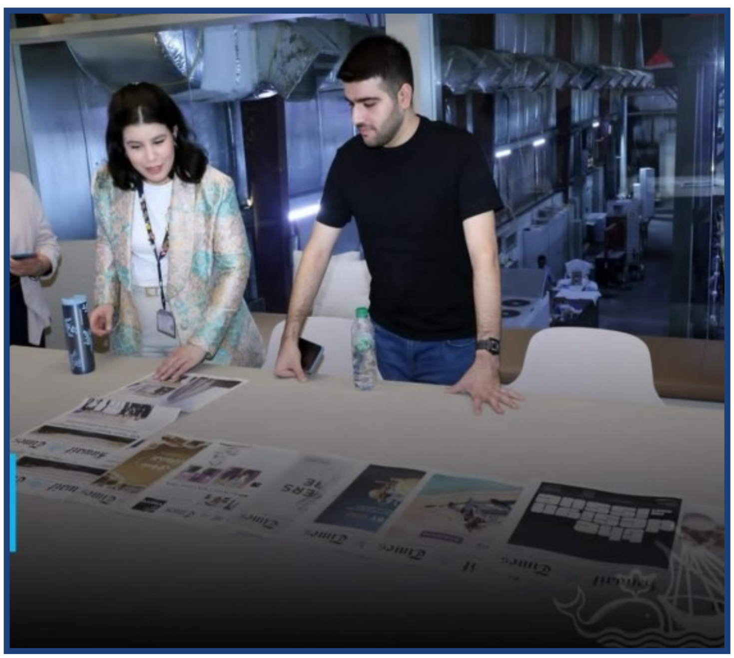
On the 21st of February 2024, the Retail Marketing students attended a field trip to the Avenues Mall to explore topics related to visual merchandising and store layout. During the filed trip, Mr. Waleed from Urban Outfitters explained to the students all aspects on store aesthetics, conversion rates, merchandising and signage. The field trip concluded with an exercise in which students evaluated, analyzed and compared store window displays.

Marks & Spencer

On the 17th of April 2024, the Retail Marketing students attended a field trip to Marks and Spencer Salmiya. The Store Manager introduced students to all the departments and explained topics related to merchandising, promotions and pricing strategies. Students discussed different types of merchandise, their ordering cycle and their popularity. The field trip was very informative and helped students with their upcoming projects.

Kuwait Times

On the 21st of April 2024, the Marketing students visited Kuwait Times and were given a tour of the entire organization, which included an explanation of the business operation. The marketing manager provided input into the B2B marketing process, and students had a lot of fun in the studio filming logo-related quizzes.



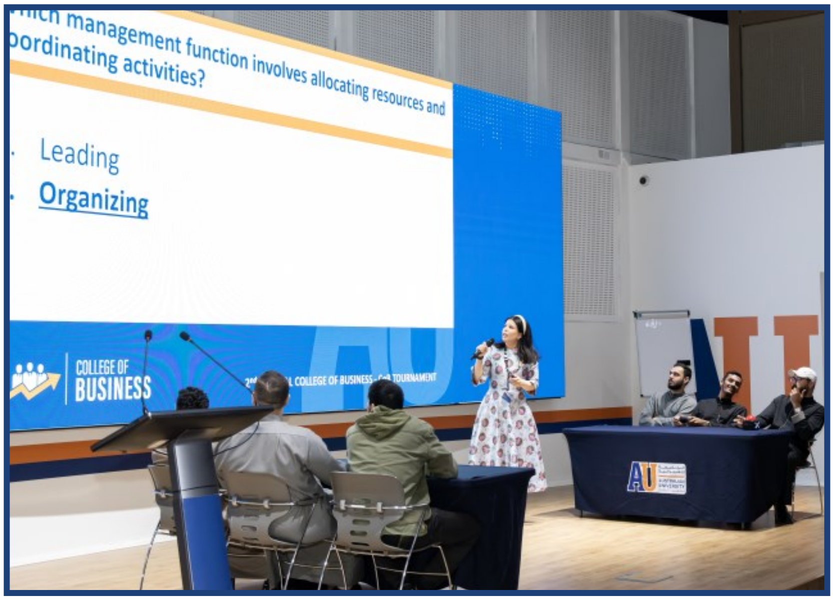
Kuwait Society for the Handicapped

On the 24th of April 2024, as part of a research project identifying the capacity for remote work for people with disabilities in Kuwait, the research team recently visited KSH. The team was given a tour of the facilities and were able to see students in their learning environment as well as the wide variety of facilities available at the center.

Events

2nd Annual CoB Tournament

The second CoB tournament kicked off on the 6th till the 7th of March 2024 (Round 1 and Final Round) and was conducted by the CoB Events Committee. The event was a huge success, 8 teams were participating from across all AU Colleges. This year’s tournament was a bit different as the questions used were from all disciplines, as well as trivia and pop culture questions. Students enjoyed the event and the winning teams were awarded by the COB Dean with medals and financial incentives as well.


management function involves allocating resources and
coordinating activities?
Leading
Organizing
COLLEGE OF
BUSINESS


AUSTRALIAN
UNIVERSITY
Thank You

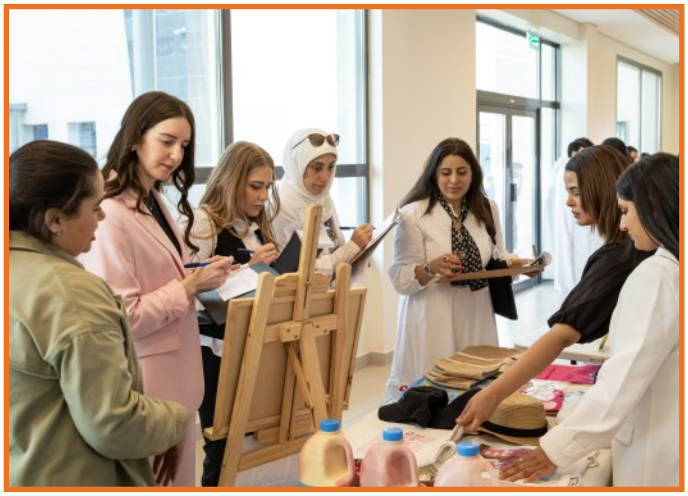

2nd ANNUAL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS


الجامعة
الأسترالية
AUSTRALIAN
UNIVERSITY
KUWAIT - الكويت

Fill the Gap

As part of the Marketing Principles course, students were tasked to put their knowledge to the test by creating a product, pricing the product, promoting the product and ultimately selling the product. These products were showcased by the Marketing Principles students in the “Fill the Gap” event which took place on the 15th of April 2024 and winners and prizes were announced.


Introducing our
cozy new




cozy new


Security


Security


Security

Retail Marketing 3D Store Displays Projects

On the 29th of April 2024, the Marketing students presented their 3D store displays for a new retail branch. As part of the course, students learned theory related to store layout, aesthetics; and how these elements impact customer retention, sales, and brand positioning. The students were expected to apply their knowledge to a retail store of their choice. In addition, students displayed their visual merchandising video, where they designed and implemented a specific theme for the storefront window of their retailer. Visual merchandising is a key promotional tool in the retail industry, and the application thereof allowed students to use their creativity in this project.


KEVINGSTON


cotton clip


The Lot


BROWN LOFT

Destress Day

The College of Business-Event Management students played an integral role in organizing the AU Destress Day this semester which took place on the 30th of April 2024. They had the opportunity to put their newly learnt event skills into a real-life practice under the guidance of the Event Management coordinator-Ms. Aleksandra Jovanovic. The students were responsible for planning and implementing many activities for our guests, as well as creating a diverse program that helped educate and entertain guests with various relaxing topics to distress before the Final exams. Effective partnership and creating a positive and cheerful environment are skills our students are practicing in the Event Management course. It is a brilliant learning experience for the students as they were able to experience organizing an event on campus.


COLLEGE OF
BUSINESS
LET'S BE
STRESS
FREE
3:00 PM - 7:00 PM
B1 Garden Area


Welcome to
AU Destress Day Event
Team : BAF
Our Activities :
1- Several Football Fun Activities
2- Enhash Yal Theeb


Try drawing

Final Award Ceremony for Injaz Company Program

Injaz Company Program (CP) is one of Injaz most prestigious program where students from different universities come together to pitch their business ideas. Before the final pitching off the idea which includes a booth, fund raising, presentation and business report, they attend various training with their mentor on SDG's, business incubators teaching them about local and MENA market, detailed business plan, competitor analysis, SWOT analysis, PESTEL and an extensive training on presentation skills and team work.

This year the College of Business started by posting an ad internally on social media inviting students from all colleges of AU. The announcement was also displayed on internal screens by AU to reach the maximum number of students on campus. All the students were interviewed and finally, the team was selected.

The AU team including students from College of Business, College of Engineering and School of Aviation was finally selected as seen in the picture below:

The team was a mix of talents including students who developed ideas and prepared the prototype. The Business students Sara Mohammad and Abdulmohsen Kassem worked on booth and marketing, while Alaa Hassan worked on the HR and financials, and Abdulaziz Alomair supported marketing and operations. The Engineering students Faisal AlBalool and Nazanin Agha worked on the final presentation. Overall, the team members prepared everything together, worked committedly during their assessments and devoted extra time under the guidance of Ms. Rupali Bhagat as their mentor, and the Aviation student Abdulrahman Alsayed as their team leader.

Ms. Rupali mentioned that the students' project has potential, and the team will further work to improve the service after the feedback they have collected from the competition. She mentioned that these types of activities are important and help in skill development in the students. That's why we encourage our students to participate and commit to these types of events.

After extensive practice, the competition began with the booth and the presentation of the team called ONE LINK. The below pictures show AU students participating in the booth where they met visitors and media to explain their product.

Ms. Rupali Bhagat receiving award from Ms. Laila, CEO–Injaz, Kuwait for her contributions to Injaz as a volunteer and supporting the cause developing youth talent during the final ceremony of INJAZ Company Program held on the 11th of May 2024 in the Cultural Central at AUM.

- **<u>Feedback from team leader of the students team Abdulrahman:</u>**

  “The Injaz Company Competition stands as a pivotal moment in our pursuit of fostering innovation and entrepreneurial prowess among students. With thorough planning and collaboration, the competition offers a stage for emerging entrepreneurs to unveil their inventive concepts, improve their business insights, and compete for recognition on a national scale. Our journey on the competition day on 10th of May 2024 commenced with a seminar delivered by Dr. Abdullah Al Ali, enlightening us with invaluable insights and guidance. Subsequently, we presented our projects to esteemed judges, articulating our visions with passion and precision. Following this, we eagerly welcomed judges to our booth, showcasing our innovations and engaging in insightful discussions. Culminating the experience, we participated in a panel interview, where we demonstrated our depth of knowledge and unwavering commitment to our ventures. Through each stage of the competition, we embraced the opportunity to learn, grow, and demonstrate our potential to make a meaningful impact in the entrepreneurial landscape”.

  All the students thanked the College of Business for reaching out to them and preparing them for this competition.

Students Projects Exhibition

On the 15th of May 2024, the College of Business organized its first students projects exhibition, whereby students from different courses presented their innovative projects. The exhibition featured a diverse array of projects that highlighted the creativity, cleverness and hard work of our students. The exhibition also included four projects from the College of Engineering, reflecting the broad spectrum of talents and positive collaboration between the two colleges. Based on the professional judging process, the three top projects were awarded with monetary prizes. The exhibition was a resounding success, and students, faculty and external visitors praised the diversity and professionalism of the projects on display. Dr. Farid Abdallah; Dean of the College of Business, commended the students for their dedication and creativity, noting that the exhibition exemplifies the College's commitment to fostering a learning environment where innovation thrives.

We look forward for these young innovators to continue to develop their skills and contribute to their fields in the future. Congratulations to all participants for their outstanding work and special congratulations for to the winners for their inspiring projects.


TABARA3


DEDICATION


COLLEGE OF BUSINESS


TABARA3


WE TAKE PRIDE IN WHO WE ARE

School Visits

Bayan Bilingual School

On the 2nd of April 2024, One team from AU's Marketing Principles class taught by Ms. Fatima Allougman paid a visit to Bayan Bilingual School (BBS). The team presented their project to Ms. Fatima Kamali's Business class, where AU students and BBS students collaborated by exchanging ideas and suggestions. Both AU and BBS students thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity.

Workshops

Employability Skills Training Sessions

- **1st Workshop: "From Student to Young Professional"**

The 1st Employability Skills workshop in the Spring 2023-2024 semester was conducted on the 13th of February 2024 by Mr. Fuad Al Obaid; Assistant Manager in Talent Management at Boubyan Bank.

The main idea behind this workshop was to carefully examine the transition students experience post-graduation as students to young professionals.

The workshop focused on various different discussions regarding the job environment, the right skill set required to thrive in the workplace and discipline that one needs to have during this phase but most importantly, Mr. Faud wished to stimulate a discussion regarding the right mindset to enter the job market. He prompted the idea of planning and envisioning ourselves as professionals in the workplace. Finally, although the talk had some very significant theoretical details it left us with not one but two thought provoking questions: Where do we see ourselves in five years and what are we doing now to achieve it ?

- **2nd Workshop: "Interview Preparations and Practices"**

The 2nd workshop was conducted on the 21st of February 2024 by Ms. Salwa AlHajri; Educational and Psychological Specialist, and Ms. Maniza Raissy; Education Consultant and Career Advisor, and hosted by Dr. Yamen Nissi from the College of Business. This workshop was aimed at helping students achieve the best chances for securing a job interview and it was addressed to all students from different levels, though graduating students were mostly present. The workshop was conducted in both English and Arabic to maximize the delivery of the content, both Ms. Maniza and Ms. Salwa enlightened the students and applied practical thoughts and ideas in there presentations. Students were happy with the contents and gained new skills when in Resume writing and preparation for a job interview.

- **3rd Workshop: "Interviewing Workshop"**

The 3rd workshop was conducted on the 19th of March 2024 by Mr. Jaber Al Mallah; Manager-Recruitment at the Australian University.

Mr. Jaber introduced the students to the job interview process and the essential preparations and key success factors to conduct a successful job interview. They learned what HR and hiring managers look for and how to be an ideal candidate!

- **4th Workshop: “Workplace Attitude, Ethics, and Etiquette Workshop”**

The 4th workshop was conducted on the 2nd of April 2024 by Ms. Dalal Dawwas; Senior Manager-Employee Relations at the Australian University.

Ms. Dalal discussed the workplace professionalism and enhanced students to explore strategies for resilience and positivity, understand the importance of ethics, integrity, and accountability in decision making, and learned practical etiquette for effective communication and relationship-building. Ms. Dalal also introduced inclusivity and diversity, resolving conflicts with diplomacy, and the significance of personal branding in professional growth.

- **5th Workshop: "Enhancing Communication Skills for Success"**

The 5th workshop was conducted on the 16th of April 2024 by Ms. Hiba Tayara; Senior Instructor-English Language Program at the Australian University.

The workshop focused on the vital role of effective communication in every aspect of life. It also emphasized the significance of clear communication between students and teachers, offering practical strategies for improvement. Participants engaged in activities to enhance key skills like active listening, non-verbal communication, and assertiveness. Additionally, the workshop tackled the innovative role of Artificial Intelligence in developing effective communication strategies for academic, professional, and personal success. It was an interesting experience that equipped students with valuable tools for effective communication in various contexts.

Communication skills enable building relationships, achieving goals, and navigating various personal and professional situations effectively.

Collaborations

CoB Collaborations

1. Collaboration with Central Queensland University (CQU) during Spring 2023-2024:

The College of Business has collaborated with CQU in terms of AU Internal Grant and KFAS project applications. In the scope of those collaborations:

a. We have established a team of faculty members from AU CoB and CQU, and submitted two projects for external funding from KFAS in 2022. Although one of those projects was unfortunately rejected due to the large number of applications on the same theme, one project has been approved. We have already initiated the activities in accordance with the project plan.

b. We have also initiated a different collaboration and formed two different teams with different faculty members from CQU. We have prepared and submitted one project to KFAS for possible external funding, and submitted two projects to AU Research Center for possible internal grant.

2. Collaboration with Other Universities:

We have collaborated with Portland State University, OR, USA, as well as universities from Turkey, such as Izmir Bakircay University & Istanbul Topkapi University for the AU CoB conference. In the scope of those collaborations:

a. We had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Istanbul Topkapi University, and collaborated with several faculty members in the scientific committee.

b. During the Fall 2023-2024 conference, we had the chance to host Prof. Tugrul Daim from Portland State University and Prof. Erman Coskun from Izmir Bakircay University, who delivered Keynote Speeches at the beginning of the conference. In addition, we also collaborated with Prof. Erman Coskun from Izmir Bakircay University as one of the Editors of the Edited Books (from IGI Publishing), which we plan to publish as an output of this conference.

3. Collaboration with KIPIC:

Under the scope of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) and Australian University–Kuwait , we are still working on different collaborations like: Research, Trainings, etc..

4. Collaboration with ISMMA:

The College of Business have initiated a new collaboration with International Strategic Management and Managers Association (ISMMA) to co-organize the 19th International Strategic Management Conference in 2024. Within this scope:

a. We have mutually signed a Memorandum of Understanding that describes the roles and responsibilities of both institutions in detail.

b. According to the MoU, 19th International Strategic Management Conference will be held in Australian University facilities in October 2024. ISMMA will mainly be responsible for all academic processes of the conference, whilst CoB-AU will mainly be responsible for hosting of the conference and providing requested academic support.

5. Collaboration with Injaz:

In collaboration with Injaz, the College of Business organized training programs like: Head start, Google workshops, job shadows and CV workshops.

They have also collaborated and organized business incubators for AU students from the College of Business and the College of Engineering. Moreover, they have worked on volunteering and mentoring company program as long as Internship programs.

6. Collaboration with Al-Futtaim Group:

The College of Business has collaborated with Al-Futtaim Group in offering internship opportunities, job shadows and sponsorships.

Al-Futtaim Group hosted a total of 9 interns over the last academic year.

The Retail Marketing students attended a job shadow at Marks and Spencer Salmiya branch on the 18th of April 2024. Students were given a tour of all the departments and topics related to merchandising, pricing, promotion and visual merchandising were explained to students.

Al-Futtaim group have also provided KD1,000 sponsorship for the upcoming AU teaching and learning forum on the 15th of May 2024.

7. Collaboration with AIESEC:

As part of the collaboration with AIESEC, international internships were offered, students were given the opportunity to participate in workshops hosted by Ernst & Young; the workshops were related to sustainable business, students were to brainstorm ideas and pitch them to the E&Y representatives and finally students were invited to participate in the AIESEC Youth speak forum hosted in May 2024.

AU allowed AIESEC to utilize the CoB meeting room facilities for a variety of meetings.

8. Collaboration with Ahli United Bank/KFH:

The College of Business has collaborated with Ahli United Bank/KFH in offering simulation branch, internships, trainings, and research collaborations.

Due to the KFH takeover, the simulation branch required new branding. The branding is currently ongoing.

Negotiations are in place for KFH to install a mobile branch on campus. Once this is completed, revised MOU terms need to be drafted for the KFH MOU.

Thereafter, updated banking software should be installed in the simulation branch with training of AU faculty to take place in Fall 2024-2025.

Internships

Internships in Spring 20234-2024

Like every semester, the College of Business at Australian University, received extensive support in offering internships to AU students from companies from the public and the private sector in Kuwait. A huge number of AU students from CoB completed their internship in Spring 2023-2024 semester with the help of these companies.

In the beginning of Spring semester 2023-2024, we contacted existing companies and welcomed many new businesses including SMEs to collaborate with CoB to offer internships. The response was overwhelming, and all our students were placed on time.

We have always received immense support from companies that invite our students and give them a once-in-a-life time chance to complete their internship hours in their organizations. Our students from Marketing, Management and HR will learn from this lifelong experience, which will make them more competent and employable in the job market. We at CoB thank all the new companies that collaborated to offer internships.

The AU team is represented by Ms. Marcelle de La Roche, Ms. Rupali Bhagat and Ms. May Khafash. The Internship industrial visits were conducted at the following companies: KOC, KIPIC, NBK, Boubyan Bank, Gulf Bank, KFH, CBK, Zain, Al-Futtaim, LOYAC, AIESEC, INJAZ - Kuwait, Al-Futtaim, Talent Cycle, Ordable and more.

CSR Activities

Corporate Social Responsibility

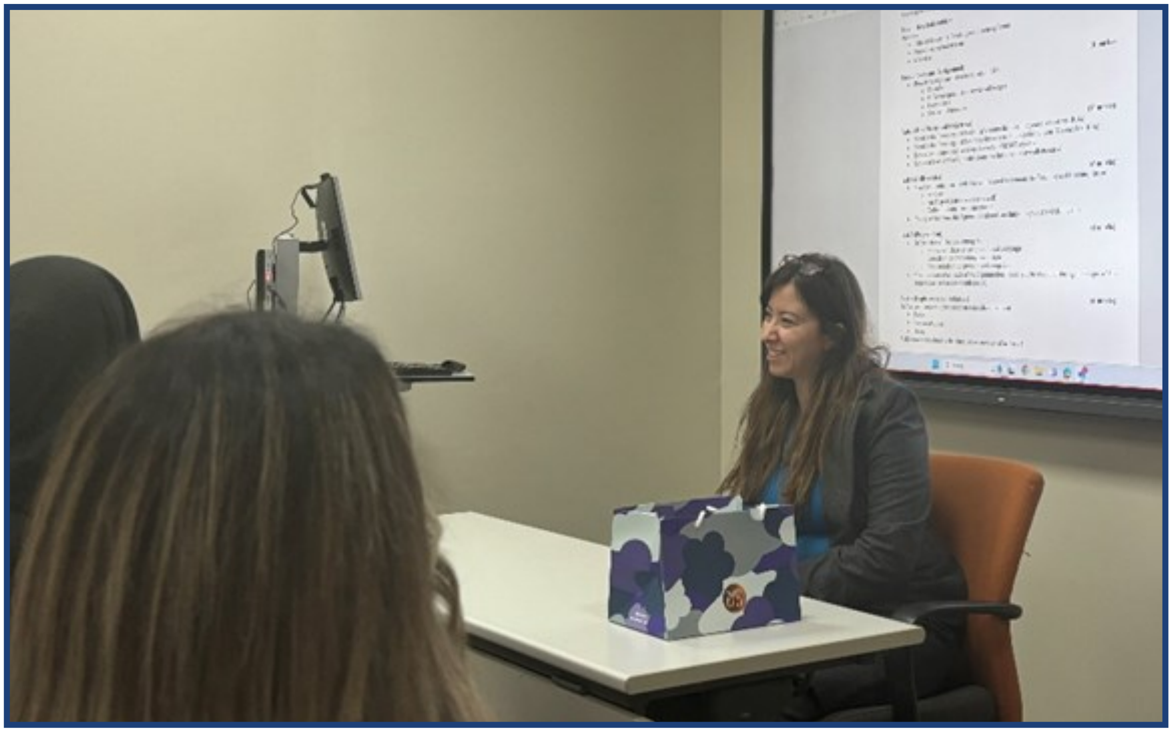
The College of Business Management students played an important role in organizing various CSR activities this semester. Students have been studying the Management Principles course and had the opportunity to put their new-found management skills into real-life practice by reaching out to the wider community. They were responsible for planning and implementing a large number of activities on and off campus under the guidance of the Management Principles coordinator Ms. Aleksandra Jovanovic. Some of these group activities included donating clothes and food to cleaners, gas stations employees and charities, whereas other groups organized beach cleanups and paid visits to nursing homes, orphanages and the autism center. Raising awareness was another priority for these students, who managed campaigns on the dangers of smoking as well as breast cancer awareness among many other topics.

Class Visits

Guest Speaker Visit to Social Media Marketing II Class

Mr. Mazen Abu Diab; the Manager at FAPCOTech, paid a visit to the Social Media Marketing II class on the 5th of February 2024 and assigned them with a grand project. The Marketing students are to carry out a SMM strategy and also implement it to boost the exposure of FAPCOTech's new platform, FAPCOFinance. The students will then present their work and findings to Mr. Mazen.

Visit to Promotion & Public Relations Class



On the 28th of February 2024, Ms. Rola Mourdaa; the Manager of AU's Teaching and Learning Center, visited the Promotion & Public Relations students' class and presented them with a wonderful opportunity to create a promotional campaign for this year's Teaching and Learning Forum! Each group listened attentively to what was required of them by the end of the semester and the deliverables they had to share. The team with the best promotional campaign and deliverable will see their work as part of the promotional elements used to promote this year's forum.

Faculty Representations & Contributions

Research Capacity Building Training

The next round of the “Research Capacity Building Seminars” has been organized by AU-College of Business in collaboration with AU-Scientific Research Center in Spring 2023-2024 semester. These series are being conducted by professional CoB faculty to all AU faculty. These trainings provide foundation for paper development and journal submission processes. The presenting Instructor covers critical elements of paper writing, discusses journal selection, and offers insights on responding to editor/reviewer comments. The below topics were presented:

1. From an Abstract Idea to an Article that Came into Being - Managing Information and Communication Overload in Higher Education Institutions in Kuwait: Prospecting Key Success Factors Gained from the COVID-19 Experience - Delivered by Dr. Mirna Safi
2. "How do Reviewers Read Journal Articles?" - Delivered by Dr. Andri Ottesen
3. "The Evolution of the Research Idea" - Delivered by Dr. Vladimir Simovic
4. "I Know that I Know Nothing" - The Perceptions of Remote Work Competencies of the Persons with Disabilities - Article Development and Publishing Journey" - Delivered by Dr. Vladimir Simovic

CoB Representatives for Student Orientation

The Spring 2023-2024 student Orientation was held on the 23rd of January 2024.

Four faculty members (Dr. Mirna Safi, Dr. Bodour Alshakhss, Ms. Aleksandra Jovanovic, and Dr. Muath AbdelQader) represented the College of Business from different departments to answer the new students' questions and inquiries.

Representing CoB in Injaz Career Fair

The College of Business at AU represented by Ms. Rupali Bhagat and Ms. May Khafash attended the INJAZ Internship fair. This was the first time an Internship fair was organized and many brands like Gulf Bank, Ali AbdulWahab (AAW), Alghanim, Boutiqat and many more participated in the fair. Many AU internship students and alumni participated and were screened by the company. Many meetings were completed with new companies with the aim of new collaborations and new internship opportunities for the coming semester. We would like to thank INJAZ – Kuwait for inviting us for the fair and giving us a chance to our students to reach to possible internship providers. At the same time we are proud of our students who participated and tried to avail these opportunities which will ultimately help them become employable and competent.

Participating in “Artificial Intelligence in Education” Conference

Dr. Mirna Safi; Assistant Professor-Human Resources, was Invited to be a speaker at the Conference titled: “Artificial Intelligence in Education: Opportunities and Challenges for the Next Decade" - Jumeirah Hotel. The conference was scheduled for 13th & 14th of February 2024. It brought together educators, technologists, researchers, and thought leaders to discuss and share insights on the pivotal role of AI in shaping the future of education. The event was dedicated to exploring the evolving landscape of AI in educational settings and its implications for future learning environments.

Attending the American Marketing

The American Marketing Association has organized a Virtual Conference titled: The Year Ahead in Marketing on the 24th & 25th of January 2024, where Dr. Mirna Safi- Assistant Professor in the College of Business attended this conference.

More Information about the conference can be found in the link below:

Virtual Conference: The Year Ahead in Marketing (ama.org)

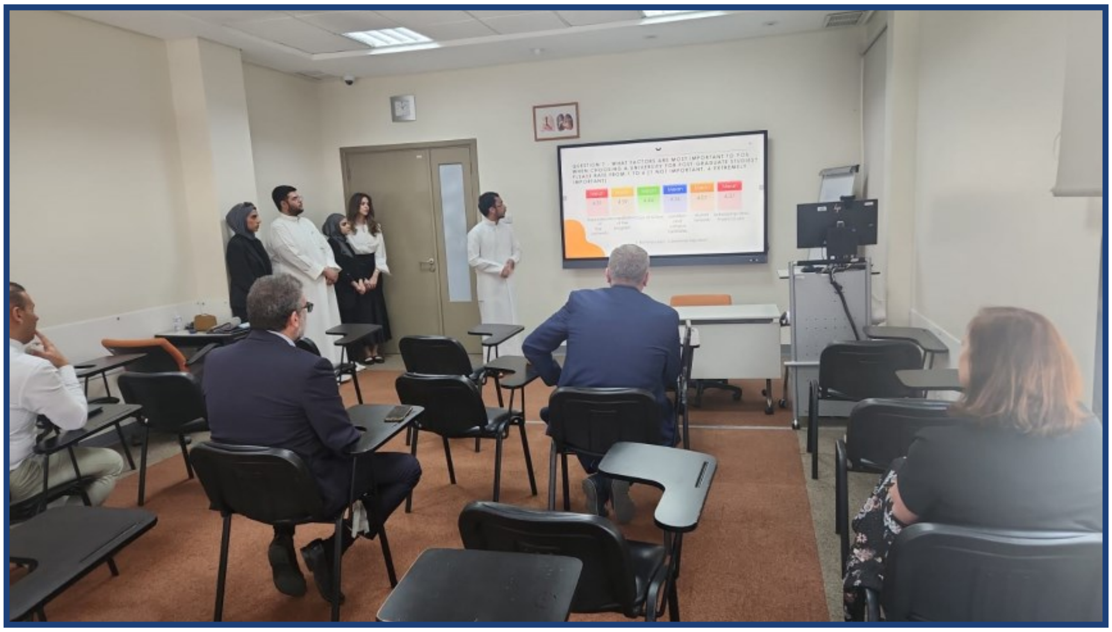
Participating in the Seniors Expo-Boulevard

Dr. Mirna Safi; Assistant Professor-Human Resources, has participated in the Seniors Expo for senior students to see and get introduced to universities and programs. The expo took place in the Boulevard Mall on the 5th & 6th of March 2024.

CoB Representatives in Derasati Exhibition

Faculty from the College of Business-Dr. Mirna Safi, Dr. Muath AbdelQader, Dr. Yamen Nissi, Dr. Steven Telford, Dr. Wael Dabboussi, Dr. Jawad Chahine, Dr. Richard Rutter, Ms. Hamsa Sarhan, Ms. Dania El Achmar, Ms. Massouma Rahat, Ms. May Khafash, Ms. Aleksandra Jovanovic, Ms. Rupali Bhagat and Ms. Sapheya Aftimos-supported in Derasati 3rd exhibition that targeted high school students. The Expo took place from the 16th to the 19th of April, 2024 at 360 Mall.

AU CoB Postgraduate Studies Survey



Dr. Faidon Theofanidis supervised the “AU-College of Business Postgraduate studies survey”, conducted by a Marketing Research student group (Fatma AlTararwah, Fatemah Husain, Khaled AlOtaibi, Mobarak AlMahdi and Zainab Hussain).

100 College of Business alumni and graduating students (final semester) participated in the survey. On the 2nd of May 2024, the Marketing students presented the empirical findings to Dr. Farid Abdallah (Dean–College of Business), Prof. Alper Erturk (Head of Management Department), Dr. Oualid Abidi (Head of Human Resources Department), Ms. Marcelle De La Roche (Head of Marketing and Events Management Department) and Dr. Omar AlHussainan, Manager of the Alumni & Career Placement Center.

The empirical findings provide valuable insights about the offering of a Postgraduate Program within the College of Business.

The most important findings are summarized below:

- The participants are interested in pursuing a master program at AU.
- The participants believe there is a high need to pursue a master program at AU.
- The importance of pursuing business-related master's degree for Career Advancement is High.
- The most preferred mode of learning is Hybrid learning (52% of participants).
- The highest percentage of participants (57%) indicated their willingness to devote 10 – 20 hours per week for their Master studies.
- The most preferred duration for the program is 1 year (41% of participants).
- Accreditation of the Program and tuition fees are the most important criteria to select the university to pursue Postgraduate studies.
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- The highest percentage of participants (57%) indicated their willingness to devote 10 – 20 hours per week for their Master studies.
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Based on the findings, the students provided valuable recommendations regarding the development of a new postgraduate program offered by the College of Business:

- The introduction of a master’s Program at the college of Business is highly recommended because there is a clear need, interest and importance for career development as indicated by the participants.
- Top majors to be considered are Business Administration, Marketing and Digital Marketing. Next preferred majors are HR, International Business, Finance and Strategic Business.
- Provide more courses that help students to improve problem-solving, critical thinking and professional presentation skills.
- Continue to engage with more (international) collaborations with other universities to inspire the students.
- Focus more on project-based assessments and presentations to showcase students’ Creativity + Teamwork + Confidence.
- The master’s program offered must be accredited and with fair tuition fees (approximately 15% above bachelor’s).
- The duration of the program should be 1.5 years (3 semesters), 5 courses per semester, 3 times per week lectures and allow for part-time or full-time registration. Saturdays could also be considered for lectures.
- Live stream lectures and allow students to attend either physically or online.
- Ensure high-quality education and mentorship for students.
- Enhance more academic advising, career counseling, and mental health support of the students.

Faculty Publications

Dr. Muath Published Articles

1. Firm characteristics and the level of IFRS compliance and disclosure in GCC countries

Khalil Nimer, **Muath Abdel Qader**, Tamer K Darwish

This study aimed to measure the level of adoption of the disclosure requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) for non-financial listed companies in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) markets. We employed a self-constructed disclosure index comprising 379 IFRS mandatory disclosure requirements. A cross-sectional analysis was implemented to test the proposed research hypotheses. We found that the level of compliance varies among GCC countries, with companies operating in the UAE having the highest level of compliance. We also found that leverage and the quality of the external auditor had a significant impact on the level of compliance with IFRS by the targeted companies. Further, our findings demonstrated that companies audited by one of the Big Four audit companies have a high level of IFRS adoption. However, the results did not support the firm size, industry type, profitability and liquidity hypothesis. In this work, the theoretical and practical implications of our results are discussed.

2. Board characteristics and sustainability in higher education institutions: The case of the United Kingdom

Doaa Aly, **Muath Abdelqader,** Tamer K Darwish, Anna Toporkiewicz, Ali Radwan

We explored the relationship between board characteristics and sustainability of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom (UK). We analysed 153 UK universities using data for the year 201. Our analysis revealed that board size, the number of students on the board, and the number of academic members on the board were found to have significant and positive relationships with sustainability. Also, the composition of the sustainability committee was shown to have a significant and positive impact on sustainability score. However, the relationships between board gender diversity, the number of external members on the board, and the number of board meetings held during the year with sustainability score were not significant. The results provide guidance to universities for developing their sustainability practices.

3. CSR transparency and firm value: Is the connection differential for cost leaders and differentiators?

Muath Abdelqader, Ali Uyar, Cemil Kuzey

Drawing on agency and disclosure theories, the study, for the first time, tests whether firm strategy predicts corporate social responsibility reporting (CSRR), a third-party assurance for corporate social responsibility reporting (CSRA), and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) adoption. Furthermore, we investigate whether firm strategy plays a role in the value-relevance of CSRR, CSRA, and GRI. The study is based on an international sample and the period between 2013 and 201. The panel regression analysis indicates that while cost leadership strategy is positively associated with CSRR, CSRA, and GRI adoption, differentiation strategy is negatively associated with the adoption of all three CSRR practices. Furthermore, the moderation analysis revealed that cost leadership positively moderates between CSRR, CSRA, and GRI adoption and firm value but differentiation negatively moderates between those three CSRR practices and firm value. This implies that while shareholders approve of the CSRR practices of cost leaders, they disapprove of differentiators' CSRR practices. We suggest theoretical and practical implications in line with agency theory, resource-based view approach, and disclosure theory in the conclusion.

Dr. Oualid Abidi Published Article

Country Digitalization, Trade Openness, and Innovation: Is There a Symbiosis?

Oualid Abidi, Vladimir Dzenopoljac, Aleksandra Dzenopoljac

Digital transformation programs at the national level had a significant impact on innovation. However, there is a lack of understanding as to whether this dynamic is compounded by the higher exposure to international trade, thanks to digitalization. Thus, the objective of this chapter is to demonstrate that a nation's spending on digital transformation may encourage local organizations to expand their business beyond national borders, which could enhance their innovation potential. Drawing on recent secondary data compiled for 115 countries, the effect of digital readiness on a country's innovation index was tested with path analysis using AMOS software. The findings confirm the positive and significant effect of country digital readiness on both, trade openness and innovation. However, these results show that trade openness negatively mediates the relationship between a country's digitalization and innovation capacity. This result may be explained by the insufficient absorptive capacity of newly internationalized firms and the cultural hindrance in cross-border collaborations.

Group Published Article

   

The Differences in Perceptions of Continuous Intention to Use Mobile Banking Apps: Evidence From Kuwait and Serbia

Vladimir Simovic, Faidon Theofanidis, Marija Antonijevic, **Massouma Rahat, Yamen Nissi**

The literature on continuous mobile banking use lacks research on cross-cultural variations and comparisons between countries at different levels of economic and technological development. These differences can lead to varying perceptions and attitudes among residents. This study aimed to identify significant differences between Kuwaiti and Serbian university students in their use of mobile banking applications and their perceptions of factors influencing such usage. The data on eight constructs that have been hypothesized in previous literature to impact continuous mobile banking app use were collected: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, confirmation, perceived trust, compatibility, privacy, environmental awareness, and satisfaction. The Mann-Whitney U-test was employed to test for differences in perceptions between the two groups. The findings suggest that differences in perceptions between the two countries are influenced by cultural backgrounds, development levels, user habits, mobile banking app characteristics, and socio-economic factors.

Dr. Vladimir Published Articles

1. **'I know that I know nothing' The perceptions of remote work competencies of the persons with disabilities**

Vladimir Simovic, Mihailo Paunovic, Milena Lazic, Ivana Domazet, Goran Boskovic

Remote work arrangements, facilitated through digital entrepreneurship and remote work platforms, represent employment inclusion strategy for persons with disabilities (PWD) who need to possess a certain level of digital entrepreneurial competencies (DEC) and knowledge of remote work platforms to participate in such arrangements. Contemporary academic literature on remote work opportunities for PWD lacks research specifically targeting the competencies required for remote work within this particular group. One approach to measuring the DEC and remote work competencies of PWD is through self-assessment of relevant competencies. Another approach involves assessing their actual competencies through knowledge and ability assessment. This study focuses on the self-assessment of DEC and remote work competencies among a sample of PWD in Serbia (n = 125), and explores their association with various socio-demographic and contextual factors. Statistical analysis included exploratory factor analysis, reliability analysis, and non-parametric tests to compare differences between groups. The results suggest a clear need for capacity building in remote work for PWD. Furthermore, certain socio-demographic and contextual factors were found to have a significant impact on perceptions of PWD remote work competencies.

2. 'Exploring the Nexus: Socio-Demographic Factors and Perceptions of Digital Entrepreneurial Competences of University Students

Vladimir Simovic

1. Objectives

Digital entrepreneurial competences (DEC) are "the total ability of the entrepreneur to perform a job role successfully using a range of ICT means" [1]. The academic literature provides very limited evidence on DEC levels university students acquire during their education. The aim of this research is to measure the perceived levels of DEC and to examine whether socio-demographic characteristics of university students have an impact on their perception of DEC.

2. Methodology

The DEC perceptions of university students were assessed using a questionnaire, and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to process the data and provide the results and relevant conclusions. EmDigital framework [2] was used to develop the assessment tool (questionnaire). A total of 1551 students completed the questionnaire. Non-parametric tests (Mann–Whitney U, Kruskal–Wallis test) were used to examine responses in relation to categorical variables.

3. Results

The students' responses, which were measured using a four-point Likert scale, reveal that students perceive their DEC on average at 2.97 for all the items investigated. The results suggest that the variables of gender and degree level are not associated or have very little association with students' DEC perceptions ($p > 0.05$). The fact that gender proved to be not statistically significant seems like a surprise, especially given that [3] found statistically significant differences in perceptions of DEC levels between male and female students. Employment status, location and field of study demonstrated significant association with DEC perceptions.

4. Implications

The limited confidence among final-year diploma, bachelor's, and master's students regarding their grasp of DEC signals a call to action for universities and educational stakeholders. It's evident that there's a pressing need for digital entrepreneurship curricula to be realigned with the contemporary demands of the job market, necessitating potential adjustments to teaching methodologies and instructional designs employed to impart relevant skills to university students.

5. Originality Value

This paper fills the gap in the literature by providing the empirical evidence on the perceived levels of DEC of university students using the DEC competence framework EmDigital [2] which represents the most detailed specification of DEC competences across different competence areas and a foundation for the creation of the DEC assessment tool.

6. Contribution

This study adds to the body of knowledge on digital entrepreneurship by presenting empirical findings on university students' perceptions of their DEC competence and demonstrating how socio-demographic factors correlate with these perceptions. Our findings suggest that university students perceive their DEC competency to be moderate, implying a gap in the instruction they receive in DEC throughout their university studies.

Dr. Faidon Published Articles

1. **Perceived Technological Innovativeness, Entrepreneurial Proactiveness, and Performance in Established Women-Led Companies**

Nansy Karali, Christos Livas, **Faidon Theofanidis**

The contribution of women as corporate executives to their companies' entrepreneurial outcomes is significant, as they can often enhance critical aspects of organizational innovativeness and proactiveness. This research investigated the effect of perceived technological innovativeness (PTI) on perceived entrepreneurial proactiveness (PEP) and, subsequently, the effect of PEP on the perceived company performance (PCP) of established firms with females in their top management teams. An examination of a judgmental sample of 83 female executives employed in Greek firms with over €10 million annual turnover showed that PTI had a significant and positive effect on PEP, and subsequently, PEP had a significant and positive effect on PCP. Apart from corroborating existing literature about the positive impact of entrepreneurial proactiveness on company performance, the study indicated that, according to the perceptions of female executives, entrepreneurial proactiveness acts as a bridge between technological innovativeness and company performance. Thus, it appeared that when a company is characterized by (or fosters the advancement of) technological innovativeness, it encourages creative thinking and focuses on opportunity identification and exploitation. This proactive approach to technological innovativeness enables the organization to improve its performance by staying ahead of its competitors, adapting to the dynamic environment, anticipating future market trends and exploiting opportunities.

2. Technological Innovation, Entrepreneurial Proactiveness and Performance: The Perspective of Female Executives

Nansy Karali, Christos Livas, **Faidon Theofanidis**

1. Objectives

Women have been associated with more proactive cognitive processing [1], and women with proactive personality traits are more likely to develop stronger entrepreneurial intentions [2]. Considering the (often) symbiotic association between technological innovation and entrepreneurial proactiveness, the present study aims at investigating the perceptions of female executives about the inter-relationships between technological innovation, entrepreneurial proactiveness, and company performance.

2. Methodology

A sample of 83 female executives employed in firms operating in Greece with an annual turnover of over EUR 10 million participated in this study. Entrepreneurial proactiveness (EP) was measured with three items [3], and company performance (CP) was measured with five items [4]. The respondents were also asked to indicate the level of their company's technological innovation (TI) using a single Likert-type item. The confirmatory factor analysis performed on EP and CP indicated excellent fit of the model.

3. Results

The structural equation model (Figure 1) had an excellent fit (CMIN/DF = 1.032, p = 0.418, CFI = 0.998, TLI = 0.998, RMSEA = 0.020, PCLOSE = 0.668) and showed that TI had a significant and positive effect on EP (standardized $\beta = 0.33$). Subsequently, EP had a significant and positive effect on CP (standardized $\beta = 0.29$). Based on the above information, it appears that, according to female executives' perceptions, TI has a positive effect on EP. Subsequently, as theoretically expected, EP has a positive impact on CP.

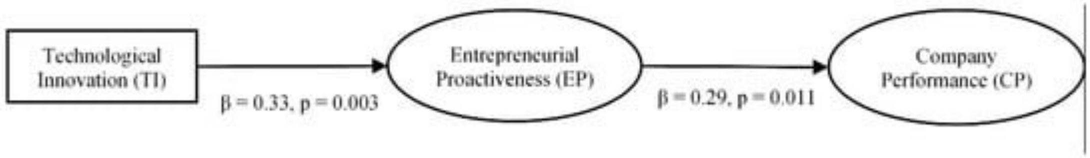

Figure 1. Structural model.

4. Implications

Apart from corroborating the existing literature about the positive impact of EP on CP [5,6], this study has several implications regarding the relationship between TI and EP. According to female executives' perspectives, when a company fosters TI, it encourages employees to think creatively and identify opportunities. Thus, this proactive approach to TI enables the organization to stay ahead of its competitors, adapt to the dynamic environment, exploit opportunities by anticipating future trends, and, ultimately, improve its CP.

5. Originality Value

This study's originality (value) is multifold. The specific focus on the perceptions of female executives is significant as it sheds light on a segment of the workforce that has been historically under-represented in entrepreneurial ventures [7] and corporate leadership positions [8]. Furthermore, this study's emphasis on top firms allows for insights into how TI, EP, and CP interplay in larger, established corporate settings.

6. Contributions

The present research contributes to the existing literature by filling a gap in the research related to women's perspectives on corporate entrepreneurship. It provides valuable insights into the relationship between TI, EP, and CP in the context of female executives in top firms. The positive effect of TI on EP highlights the critical role that technology plays in fostering a proactive entrepreneurial mindset within the corporate environment.

3. Social Media Use, Value Consciousness, and Brand Relationships

Christos Livas, **Faidon Theofanidis**, Apostolos Skotis, Chrysa Agapitou

1. Objectives

In view of the ever-increasing social media use (SMU) from brands and customers [1], authors have highlighted the need to investigate the potential impact of the volume of social media interactions on the quality of customer relationships with brands [2]. Considering that the intensity of SMU varies among consumers and is often associated with certain user characteristics, such as value consciousness (VC), this study investigates the extent to which consumers' SMU influences their relationships with brands.

2. Methodology

During Autumn 2022, a convenience sample of 222 participants, the majority of which were female, university degree holders, and up to 45 years old, participated in an online survey related to SMU. The established measurement scales used for SMU [3], VC [4], brand commitment (BC) [5], brand closeness (BCS) [6], and relational feedback (RF) [7] were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis. To achieve a satisfactory fit of the measurement model, seven out of twenty Likert items had to be removed.

3. Results

The structural model of hypothesized relationships (CMIN/DF = 1.273, p = 0.075, CFI = 0.984, TLI = 0.979, RMSEA = 0.035, PCLOSE = 0.857) showed that SMU had a significant and positive effect on VC ($\beta = 0.27$) and BCS ($\beta = 0.28$) (Figure 1). Subsequently, while both VC ($\beta = 0.18$) and BCS ($\beta = 0.60$) had a significant and positive effect on RF, only BCS had a significant and positive effect on BC ($\beta = 0.57$). Based on the above, it appears that SMU fosters VC and perceived BCS, which, in turn, drives RF and BC.

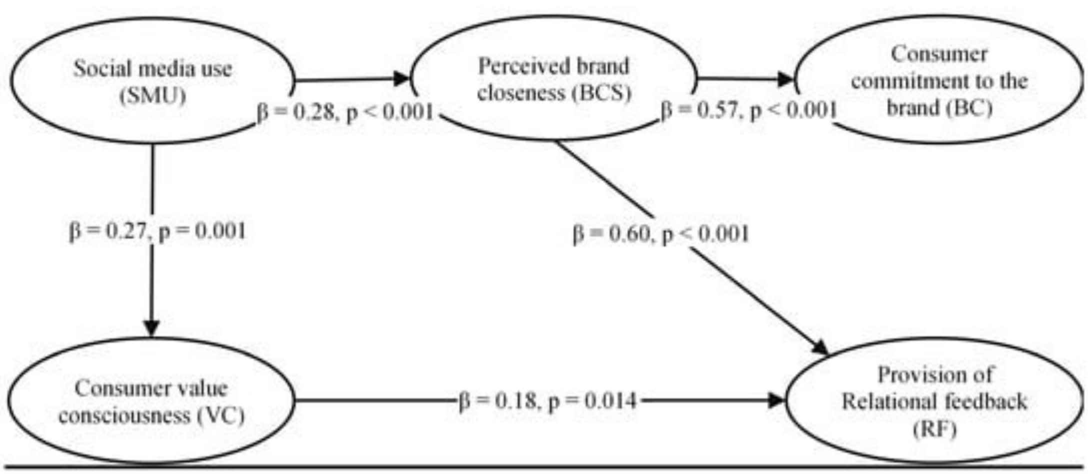

Figure 1. Structural model.

4. Implications

The direct relationship between SMU and VC may be attributed to the ease of conducting online price research and the extensive sharing of offers among users [8]. Subsequently, the provision of feedback from value-conscious users may be driven by their loyalty towards their preferred brands [9] and their emphasis on the post-purchase phase [10]. Nevertheless, active social media engagement appears to create a sense of brand closeness, which, in turn, enhances users' commitment to the brand.

5. Originality Value

The originality of the study lies in its exploration of the complex relationships between social media use, value consciousness, (perceived) brand closeness, relationship feedback provision, and brand commitment. The present research sheds light on how these variables interplay and consequently allows social media marketers to advance their understanding of social media's impact on brand–customer relationships and leverage social media platforms to meet marketing objectives.

6. Contribution

By elucidating the complex dynamics between social media use, value consciousness, perceived brand closeness, relationship feedback provision, and brand commitment, this study shows that marketers can harness social media to foster more meaningful and long-lasting customer relationships, increase brand–customer interactions, and ultimately build brand loyalty.

Dr. Vladimir & Ms. Marcelle Published Article

Towards Inclusive Growth: Remote Work and Digital Entrepreneurship as Tools for PwD Empowerment in Oman

Razeena Rasheed, Soha Achi, **Vladimir Simovic, Marcelle de la Roche**, Neena Uthaman, Mohammed Al Haziazi

Purpose: This paper investigates the potential of remote work platforms and digital entrepreneurship for the employment inclusion of People with Disabilities (PwD) in Oman. PwD face challenges in the labor market due to social stigma and a lack of awareness about remote work options. This study aims to assess the general digital and digital marketing skills of PwD in Oman, identify the gap between their skills and the requirements of virtual platforms for remote work, and recommend online training programs to bridge the gap.

Method: The study will use a mixed-methods approach with questionnaires and real-life scenarios to assess skills and competencies. This study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (real-life scenarios) data collection methods.

Results and conclusion: This study will use structural equation modelling, Linear probability and multiple response regression models to validate and identify predictors of skill levels and potential gaps between self-assessment and performance. This guides in the development of appropriate online training which improves the employment prospects of PwDs.

Group Published Article




Challenges and Obstacles Facing Women's Entrepreneurship in Kuwait

Mirna Safi, Andri Ottesen, Yamen Nissi, Laila El Dabt

1. Objectives

This paper explores women's entrepreneurship in Kuwait in terms of sustainability, as defined by the United Nations (UN). The focus of this study is not only on inequality but also on exploring the role of women's entrepreneurship in a country's economic growth. The focus is explicitly on Kuwaiti institutions that promote entrepreneurship, particularly women's entrepreneurship. We explore whether the term "the Valley of Death" is more prevalent in women's entrepreneurship in Kuwait, which offers one of the biggest opportunities to grow in the post-oil-boom Kuwaiti economy [1,2,3,4,5,6].

2. Methodology

This is a primarily qualitative research based on 10 in-depth interviews with Kuwaiti female entrepreneurs. The guiding methodology is an interview setting and processing technique called Vancouver School of Doing Phenomenology. The Kuwaiti baby clothing company B Cocoon was used as the leading case to develop a model in 12 steps for entrepreneurship development. The remaining 11 cases will be used to validate and adjust this model, which is intended to guide future female entrepreneurs in Kuwait and other places in the world [7,8,9,10].

3. Results

This study aims to construct, validate, test, and develop two entrepreneurial developmental and financial models to provide guidance for the steps to overcome the Death Valley phenomenon—the greatest obstacle to entrepreneurial growth. We have put forth two primary models based on the leading case used in this study—the case of Kuwaiti female-owned B(aby) Cocoon, which is a successful clothing line that has gone through all the 12 steps of the model. The remaining cases will be used to test, validate, adjust, and modify the models, as well as locate their barriers to growth and propose steps to remedy their predicaments [11,12,13].

4. Implications

According to a report published by the Kuwaiti Investment Authorities, "Kuwait in transition, towards a post-oil economy", it is argued that the current welfare state model, which heavily relies on oil, is outdated. It is suggested that the growth of small/ medium-sized private sector companies should be promoted through a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship. It is crucial to identify the obstacles and opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to ensure the long-term and sustainable development of the Kuwaiti economy, particularly for women's entrepreneurship in Kuwait [14,15,16].

5. Originality Value

Shedding a light on these gender-based inequalities in startup funding is of particular importance, as most entrepreneurship fails because of a lack of access to entrepreneurial finance. Foregoing opportunities that might lie in female-founded entrepreneurship ventures is a matter of national importance, as a country like Kuwait needs this growth in order to transition from its oil-based economy. Approaching gender-based inequalities in startup funding is still new in Kuwait. Hence, this topic deserves more attention for the sake of equality and sustainable economic growth.

6. Contributions

Women's entrepreneurship is regarded as one of the most promising strategies to grow the Kuwaiti economy past the oil boom, especially for Kuwaiti institutions that promote women's entrepreneurship. Access to entrepreneurial finance is particularly important, as, according to our interviews, this is where there is the greatest need for change. Both public and private banks and financial institutions should develop programs to fully utilize the potential of women's entrepreneurship for their institution, as well as the country's future economic growth.

Group Published Article

Content Marketing Insights from Kuwait Banking Industry: Matching Managers' and Customers' Perceptions of Social Media Posts Likability and Readability

Marcelle de la Roche, Faidon Theofanidis, Fatima AlLougman, Aleksandra Jovanovic, Vladimir Simovic

1. Objectives

The main objective is to measure the difference in the perceptions of bank marketing managers and their customers regarding the likeability, readability and responsiveness of social media content. Other specific objectives include a comprehensive literature review to facilitate instrument development, data collection and analysis, and the identification of statistically significant differences between the bank managers' and customers' perceptions, considering their socio-demographic backgrounds.

2. Methodology

The existing scales from the literature will be adapted to measure the perceptions of bank managers and customers, having Instagram bank posts in Kuwait as a point of reference using a census approach for bank managers (10 banks) and a convenience sample of 200 customers. The most appropriate parametric or non-parametric test will be selected to test the statistically significant differences in perceptions. T-tests and Mann–Whitney U tests will be used on normally and non-normally distributed data. ANOVA or the Kruskal–Wallis test will compare the mean scores of more than two groups, e.g., the perceptions of bank customers based on different educational levels or age groups.

3. Results

This study utilizes Breckler's [1] theoretical model, which categorises attitudes into cognition (*readability*) [2,3], affect (*likability*) [4] and behaviour (*responsiveness*) [5,6]. The differences in perceptions between the bank managers and customers regarding the impact of the post headline features (exclamation, colon, question mark, sentiment and title length), post content features (text length, text tone and domain specificity) and media types used in posts (image, audio, video or text) on the above-mentioned constructs will be identified and explained based on the existing literature [5,7,8,9,10,11].

4. Implications

This research is aimed at helping the Kuwaiti banking sector develop brand post strategies more efficiently and effectively. This could be achieved through utilising more interactive posts and visual and audio cues to enhance the consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement. Therefore, this study will help bank managers increase their profits and growth, position themselves better in the market, improve communication with their customers, and introduce a meticulous scientific approach to social media studies.

5. Originality Value

From a methodological perspective, comparing the perceptions between bank marketing managers and customers regarding the likeability, readability and responsiveness of social media content is original and innovative. Furthermore, based on the initial literature review and to the best knowledge of the authors, no such research has been conducted on the banking industry in Kuwait.

6. Contribution

The research findings will aid in improving content creation via banks' social media posts, as the study will shed light on the perceptions of content that appeal to the target audience regarding the elements of likability, readability and responsiveness. In return, this will lead to more engagement and the interactivity of current and potential clients on social media. Finally, this study provides a methodological contribution by the adapting scales used previously in the literature to examine the readability, likability and responsiveness of selected social media content.

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