

Special issue editorial

Interplay between commercial activities and well-being during the pandemic: Studies from Asia

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a multidimensional phenomenon, affecting the medical, personal, business and societal fields. It has had a tremendous impact on a variety of aspects of our life including human interaction, business management and also the well-being of our individuals, society and the planet. Businesses, organizations and diverse institutions have played critical roles in the ongoing societal reaction to the pandemic. The papers selected – from Thailand, Philippines and India - illuminate how stakeholders, organizations and the broader macroenvironment interact in response to the new normal.

Chan, Favila, J. Lao, K. Lao, Blasa-Cheng and Aure explored the drivers of sustainable consumer behaviour in the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumers were forced to alter their behaviors and priorities as a result of the pandemic. Even though a significant number of customers moved to online shopping due to mobility limits and COVID-19 dangers, the majority of consumers still prefer to purchase in stores close to their homes. The pandemic has also resulted in a surge in the demand of household cleaning goods. It was found that most consumers have grown more aware of their health and the things they buy, but they have not entirely embraced a sustainable lifestyle owing to their preference for shopping at neighboring businesses during the shutdown and their long-term commitment to products they have used. Although brick-and-mortar stores are still very important, consumers have begun increasing their online shopping activities. Overall, across the urban and non-urban context, the findings suggest that consumers' attitudes toward sustainability and well-being activities, have to some extent influenced their sustainable behavior.

The study by Geroche and Gatchalian investigated user perceptions of usage and e-satisfaction with cashless transactions in Thailand and the Philippines within the pandemic setting. Overall, across all respondents, e-satisfaction with cashless transactions is driven by perceived benefits, ease of use, speed, and trust. The study provides insights to how a cashless society is more relevant given how the pandemic forced stakeholders to move towards digital channels. The authors recommend policymakers to further develop cashless transaction literacy given its benefits for consumers in terms of financial and social well-being.

The study of Gonzales explored the drivers of micro, small, and medium enterprise well-being and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic through multiple qualitative case study research. MSMEs have been shown to be particularly susceptible in the value chain, personnel management, IT infrastructure, financial management, the digital divide, and government policy, according to the findings. As a result, the organizations that did survive or show resilience were those whose basic principles were anchored in the humanistic management paradigm, which holds that people are ends in themselves rather than just tools to achieve conventional commercial goals. Human dignity, employee well-being, and increasing people's quality of life

helped organizations become more resilient during the pandemic; on the other side, the companies that followed a typical resource-based approach to people did not survive.

The research of Jimenez, Habaradas, and Mia also draws on a multiple case study research approach to examine the role of altruism, sacrifice, solidarity and innovation in manifesting responsible entrepreneurship among Philippine small businesses. Their findings contradict the mainstream conception that for enterprises to survive they have to operate with self-interest as the primary consideration. The cases demonstrated that responsible entrepreneurship can be performed even in adverse conditions. The entrepreneurs' personal beliefs, how they are tied with their communities, and their desire to do good for others inspire other stakeholders to support the enterprise beyond what is minimally expected. This study suggests that resilience can be viewed in terms of how an enterprise harmonizes with its broader community.

The paper by Gautam Agrawal & Chandrima Roy investigates the impact of the pandemic on the frontline retail employees especially those engaged in the food delivery. In this qualitative study, the authors researched the changed working conditions and the related occupational stress of the food delivery personnel from five major cities and towns in India. The findings have been categorised under three themes: perceived threat (source of anxiety and stress), self-protective behaviour (fear related) and perceived benefits (Coping behaviour).

The studies published in this special issue highlight the interplay between personal and organizational well-being in further driving overall societal well-being. Businesses, employees, entrepreneurs, consumers, the government, and all other kinds of organizations can help form an eco-system that promotes resilience as we enter (hopefully) the final stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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