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USING PERSONAL BRANDING TO FRAME PERSONAL STRATEGIC PLANS IN AN MBA CAPSTONE COURSE

Stephen C. Betts, William Paterson University

ABSTRACT

A primary objective of MBA programs is to adequately prepare candidates to enter the workforce and start a career. As part of this preparation, we designed an MBA capstone course with two components - an integrated experiential action-learning project and a personal strategic plan. In the action-learning project, students solve a real business problem, gaining valuable experience and learning the problem solving process. In the personal strategic plan, students use reflective writing, self-assessments, goal setting and planning techniques to map out their careers. In this presentation, we will explore an approach to the personal strategic plan using personal branding. We will share the specific activities, assignments and guidelines used to help students analyze and develop their 'brand'. When the personal strategic plan is successfully completed, the student will know their 'brand, who they are and what they 'bring to the table', and have a timeline for their careers.

Key terms: Personal Branding, Personal Strategic Planning, MBA Capstone

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN ONLINE COURSES

Stephen C. Betts, William Paterson University

ABSTRACT

Academic integrity is an important concern in higher education. As professors, we try to establish and maintain a culture of high integrity in our courses, programs and institutions. Although online teaching is not new, COVID 19 has greatly increased the number of courses given online as well as a proliferation of different modes of online delivery. These recent changes in course design and delivery have brought new challenges. In this presentation, we will discuss how academic integrity can be established and maintained in an online environment. We will start with a consideration of different forms of online courses (such as synchronous vs asynchronous) and an exploration of the integrity issues arising in these different course designs. We will then look at specific strategies for establishing academic integrity and minimizing academic dishonesty, such as codes of conduct, plagiarism and proctoring software, assignment design and assessment methods.

Key terms: Ethics, Academic Integrity, Online Courses, Plagiarism, Proctoring

CRYPTOCURRENCIES AS HEDGING TOOLS

Han-Sheng Chen, Lipscomb University
Julio Rivas, Lipscomb University

ABSTRACT

Cryptocurrencies have emerged in recent years as popular targets of alternative investments and as means of payments. While most of cryptocurrencies exist only for a short period of time, enthusiasts believe they create a market independent to the current monetary system and financial markets, and hence provide hedging opportunities for investors. We try to examine the belief that cryptocurrencies can be used for hedging. We explore four possible sources of risks for hedging – inflation risk, political and economic uncertainty, interest rate risk, and investment risks in stocks. We approach this research question by establishing the concurrent correlations and potential lead-lag relationships between sources of risks and returns of cryptocurrencies. With the constraint of limited history in cryptocurrencies, our findings provide further insights to investors who wish to look for effective alternative investment vehicles and hedging tools but are concerned about the volatility in the cryptocurrency markets.

SMALL BUSINESS RESILIENCE AMIDST THE PANDEMIC: ENHANCING WORKPLACE COLLISIONS

J. Stephen Childers, Radford University
Andrea Stanaland, Radford University

ABSTRACT

The role of 'collisions' in the innovation process, those spontaneous and informal opportunities for workplace communication and collaboration, is well-documented. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the presence of others presents the greatest risk to one's health; mitigation of that risk creates distance; and distance in and of itself creates barriers to collisions. We examine how today's COVID-19 occupied workplace landscape has hindered innovation-producing thought collisions and discuss examples of ways small businesses can navigate to maintain innovative effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Small businesses represent the backbone of the U.S. economy and have been heavily impacted by COVID. While full impacts are still unknown, the Small Business Administration reports that the largest drop in employment occurred among businesses with 20 to 49 employees (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2020). A U.S. Census Bureau Small Business Pulse Report found that 89.9% of surveyed small businesses had negative effects from COVID, with 51.4% reporting "large effects" (US Census Bureau, 2020). Not fully captured by these numbers are the many ways small businesses have been challenged with significant changes to operations as well as employee communication, interaction, and contributions, which are critical to small business innovation.

In this manuscript, we will examine the long-term, structural impacts to small business innovation exacerbated by COVID limitations. We will first report the effects of the pandemic on small businesses, assessing how this impacts the important elements necessary for innovation and workplace collisions, then we will offer examples of tools and approaches that may be used to mitigate those impacts and nurture the innovation process.

SMALL BUSINESS IMPACTS

Defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration, a "small business" can generally be defined as "an independent business with fewer than 500 employees." Small businesses have been called the "lifeblood of the U.S. economy" and account for 44% of all economic activity prior to the pandemic (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2019). The fact that small businesses have a higher percentage of vulnerable jobs during this pandemic is especially relevant given that they provide nearly half of all private-sector jobs in the United States (Dua et al. 2020a).

While many small businesses may be classified as lifestyle businesses, others are oriented towards growth and the creation of innovative contributions to society. Kirchhoff's typology is widely used to classify small firms by growth and innovation objectives. Low-growth, low-innovation firms are deemed "Core," while high-growth and high-innovation firms are labeled

"Glamorous" (Kirchhoff, 1994). Multiple studies have been conducted and have indicated that these Glamorous firms create even greater returns and contributions than large firms and that the employee growth of these firms lead to greater innovation (Breitzman & Hicks, 2008; Isom & Jarczyk, 2009; Sherer & Kirchhoff, 2006). As a significant contributor to U.S. growth and productivity, it is valuable to explore more deeply the impact of COVID on these innovative small businesses.

Innovation is the "development and implementation of new ideas by people who over time engage in transactions with others within an institutional context" (Van De Ven, 1986, p. 591). They can include products, services, or processes, and extend beyond the business world to include the sciences and social change (Deloitte, 2015; Meissner, Polt & Vonortas, 2017). Engaging in innovation activities, whether oriented towards new products, services, or markets of internal processes, is a top priority of CEOs (BCG, 2020).

Small businesses are not merely small versions of big businesses; according to Richard Branson, "small businesses are nimble and bold and can often teach much larger companies a thing or two about innovations that can change entire industries" (Nasdaq, 2017). Small business leaders can overcome the scale advantages afforded to large firms by staying focused on the drivers of small business innovation success. Common themes emerge when examining the literature on small business innovation. These advantages center around the following elements and represent distinctive competencies of small businesses in the innovation process:

- Ability to execute ideas more quickly;
- Pivot faster to avoid dead ends and seize new opportunities;
- Less bureaucracy to quickly deploy resources;
- Closer to customers and suppliers;
- Team environment.

THE ROLE OF COLLISIONS

The role of 'collisions' in the innovation process, those spontaneous and informal opportunities for workplace communication and collaboration, is well documented. Eureka moments from the lone entrepreneurial genius certainly happen, but to move from idea to reality it more often takes diverse perspectives to perfect innovation offerings. The standard approaches to control the spread of COVID in the workplace-- curtailing travel, working remotely, maintaining social distance, etc.-- create barriers to spontaneous collaboration. How will we continue to create and encourage the interactions and conversations necessary for innovation and entrepreneurial pursuits when faced with working from home, reduction in travel, fewer face-to-face and more streaming interactions, etc., all of which naturally hinder informal yet valuable communication and sharing of ideas? Firms that have most of their employees working from home account for nearly 75% of small businesses in 'glamorous,' knowledge-based industries, and the majority of those firms plan to continue to allow remote work (Gurchiek, 2020). As many small businesses make the difficult decision to remain remote into 2021, what will be the new normal and how can that new normal be as innovative as possible?

RE-CRAFTING SMALL BUSINESS COLLISIONS

New ideas will need to be considered to stimulate innovation within the realities of industry, workplace, and employee limitations. As discussed, small businesses have been observed to possess unique innovation capabilities that are difficult for large businesses to duplicate. We suggest focusing on these elements, each being a key success factor that small business decision makers must redesign to rebuild resilience and maximize firm environment in terms of culture, technology, and physical environment.

1. Ability to execute ideas more quickly;

Launch networks of teams in a 'hub and spoke' arrangement, where new teams are quickly formed and spun-off in order to rapidly address new challenges.

2. Pivot faster to avoid dead ends and seize new opportunities;

Encourage learning with feedback loops (scanning and connections), sense making and absorption, and having support to engage in emergent strategic directions (Ancona, 2011; Argyris & Schoon, 1978; Weick, 1995; Winter, 2003). Timely pivots based upon organization learnings can also be associated with reduced time to exit and an ability to de-escalate poor prior decisions and commitments (Kirtley & O'Mahony, 2020; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1998).

3. Reduce bureaucracy to quickly deploy resources;

Nimbleness and responsiveness are key-- Deloitte Global (2020) recommends that small business leaders make sure to be visible and check-in frequently with employees to counter perceptions of virtual distance that reduce trust and innovativeness. They also suggest empowering self-leadership among remote employees and teams to take initiative.

4. Proximity to customers and suppliers;

Build connections and bonds with your customers and suppliers. Include them as a source and inspiration for new and improved ideas. Engaging your customers and suppliers also increases your firm's learning capabilities (Selnes & Sallis, 2003).

5. Team environment.

In terms of health impact, loneliness is as damaging as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (HRSA, 2019). With shutdowns and moves to work at home, COVID has made the situation worse. Borrowing from the start up and educational space, practical tools like Thoughtexchange and Pear Deck may be used to encourage employee engagement. Such informal, spontaneous opportunities for colleague input which are less sterile and encourage human interaction can be invaluable at mimicking the value of pre-COVID collisions.

LOOKING FORWARD

Our current reality is that the hurdles associated with COVID are not going away anytime soon. Many well-known large companies (e.g., Google, Microsoft, American Express, etc.) have extended their remote work policies well into 2021, and more than half of Americans want to continue working remotely (Hadden et al., 2020). Small businesses, especially those with better-educated workforces, seem to be following suit (Senz 2020). Small business survival and success will hinge on adapting to these challenges with a more sustainable, long-term horizon.

Preserving those elements that differentiate small business innovation from the rest, and nurturing the collisions that contribute naturally to creativity and innovation will be critical for small business resilience through the COVID years and beyond.

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THE ROLE OF VIDEO IN PANDEMIC-PERIOD SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Terry Stringer Damron, Austin Peay State University
Miranda Lowell, Austin Peay State University

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the United States throughout 2020 and into 2021, significantly affecting everyday life and forcing consumers to reconsider their approach to once routine activities. New York was the epicenter for the national crisis, recording nearly 19,000 deaths in the eight weeks following the March 1, 2020 identification of the city's first case (Francescani, 2020). As infection and death numbers skyrocketed in late March, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo closed all nonessential businesses, including dental offices, effective the evening of March 22 (10 point plan, n.d.). For the following ten weeks, dental practices could be fined for treating anything other than a dental emergency (Governor Cuomo's most recent executive order, 2020). On May 1, 2020, dental practices were able to reopen for routine services, following the state's guidelines for safety and social distancing (Governor Cuomo Announces, 2020). The death toll for New York continued to climb, reaching more than 23,000 by the end of May.

In normal circumstances, 52.3% of Americans visit the dentist twice a year while 41% avoid dental offices due to anxiety and others skip the dentist due to lack of insurance/cost (Yarbrough, Nassah, & Vujicuc, 2014). Those who frequent dental offices generally do so in order to stop tooth decay, prevent gum cancer, maintain whiter and fresher teeth, and screen for throat cancer (Johnson, 2013). Those who skip dental office visits tend to suffer negative consequences such as tooth loss, various forms of cancer, and trauma (Dosumu, Ogunrinde, & Bamignoye, 2014). Both dental office workers and patients suffered during pandemic-related office closures. With 90% of practices reporting patient volumes of less than 25% their normal volume, 82% of dental practices earned less than a quarter of their typical revenue (Ghani, 2020). Patients, unable or afraid to seek dental care, experienced more oral problems. Dentists reported increases in stress-related conditions such as bruxism, chipped and cracked teeth, and temporomandibular disorder symptoms, as well as an increase in caries and periodontal disease (Versaci, 2020).

Recognizing (1) the coronavirus is a respiratory-transmitted disease, (2) dental work often produces aerosols that can transmit illnesses such as the coronavirus, and (3) the nature of dental work precludes consumers from taking protective measures (mask wearing, social distancing), consumers had reason to be concerned about visiting a dental office during the pandemic. Dental offices, like other health care providers already in the habit of using social media to better communicate with patients (Smailhodzic, Hooijsma, & Boonstra, 2016), responded to the evolving situation on social media pages. Consumers reported 75% of social media content shared to dental practice pages during the first wave of the pandemic pertained to COVID-19 safety and advice while only 2% of content was designed to attract patients (Gawel, 2020). Social media content decisions during this intense time of uncertainty were particularly important as, even under normal circumstances, 57% of users indicate a health care provider's social media presence would greatly influence service provider selection (Ventola, 2014).

Social media aids consumers in service provider selection, as it enables users to observe attributes prior to an encounter. Services such as dental care are intangible and variable in nature, making it difficult for consumers to assess attributes considered important in dentist selection, including professionalism, experience, and psychological (e.g. patience, respect (Lamprecht, Struppek, Heydecke, Reissmann, 2020). Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) explains people work to gather such information in order to reduce the discomfort that comes with uncertainty about behavior or actions (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In the digital age, social media and the internet make it easy for consumers to gather information online (Wan-Ying, Zhang, Song & Omori, 2016). The more pre-appointment information a consumer gathers online about a medical professional, the less uncertainty the consumer experiences and the more productive the medical consultation (Perrault & Silk, 2015). In August 2020, 58% of consumers said they were afraid of getting infected with COVID-19 the next time they attended a dental appointment (Gawel, 2020). Especially during this period of overall uncertainty and newfound concerns related to the safety of dental office visits, social media offered dental clinics a means of communicating directly with consumers about practices and protocols designed to keep patients safe, thereby creating certainty for the consumer.

In communicating with patients, cue-rich video is particularly effective for diminishing consumer uncertainty. Easier to understand than lean media like emails or photos alone (Maity, Dass, & Kumar, 2018), rich media produces higher customer satisfaction (Gimpel, Huber, and Sarikaya, 2016). Video is especially effective for showing consumers different aspects of a product (Xu, and Chen, and Santhanam, 2015), as video helps the consumer feel as though they have experienced the brand (Coyle and Thorson, 2001). Given the degree of consumer uncertainty and concerns tied to hygiene (Gawel, 2020), video offered dental clinics a unique opportunity to help consumers better understand what their experience would entail and how the clinic was preventing the spread of illness.

The purpose of this study was to examine how dental offices in New York City utilized video on Facebook, the most widely adopted social networking site and second-most used social media site among U.S. adults (Social media fact sheet, 2019), to potentially reduce patient uncertainty from March 1, 2020 to March 1, 2021. Three research questions were addressed:

> *RQ1: What are the characteristics of videos shared on dental clinic Facebook pages during the COVID-19 pandemic?*
>
> *RQ2: What is the purpose of videos shared on dental clinic Facebook pages during the COVID-19 pandemic?*
>
> *RQ3: To what degree did consumers engage with videos shared on dental clinic Facebook pages during the COVID-19 pandemic?*

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Available upon request

DEDICATED TO THE CAUSE: THE IMPACT OF HIRING DECISIONS ON MISSION DRIFT IN CERTIFIED BENEFIT CORPORATIONS

John S. Daniel II

ABSTRACT

Benefit corporations are a form of hybrid business wherein the organization has both a financial obligation to earn a profit as well as an obligation to fulfill a social mission, typically one of their own choosing. A certified benefit corporation is one that has chosen to undergo a third-party audit and meet an operational standard for social responsibility. One of the risks faced by hybrid business organizations is mission drift, the real or perceived disconnect between organizational identity and actions. A multi-case study conducted in 2018-2019 examined strategic decision-making in certified benefit corporations. Interviews were conducted with the primary decision-makers of six geographically diverse certified benefit corporations in the United States. The social mission of each organization was embedded into the daily operations of the company. Within these organizations, hiring decisions partially mitigated the risk of mission drift. Applicants exhibiting values similar to that of the organizational leadership was more important for the hiring decision than base technical skills. Employee commitment to the social mission of the organization is a factor in preventing mission drift.

INTRODUCTION

Benefit corporations are a business structure first introduced in 2010 and now available in 37 U.S. States (Benefit Corporation, 2021). A certified benefit corporation, or B Corp, has met the standards set by the non-profit entity B Lab, which also serves as the primary source of certification. Other hybrid business forms that meet the qualification standards may also achieve B Corp status. The number of certified benefit corporations has seen steady global growth (B Lab, 2021). The majority of B Corps, are small to mid-size business entities, although there are some examples of large business entities choosing to convert to this form of business, ex. Patagonia, Laureate Education, Ben & Jerries (B Lab, 2021). These organizations are designed around concepts of conscious capitalism and stand in contrast to traditional views of shareholder primacy (Bapuji & Neville, 2015; Neubauer, 2016). Mele' (2016) views these business entities as a return to an older form of business enterprise, ones that were embedded within and providing service to the communities in which they exist. The social missions supported by these business entities represent social change and contribute to social support networks.

Strategic decisions are those that have long term, lasting consequences for the organization (Shepard & Rudd, 2014). Of these, hiring decisions are one of the most critical. The data for this research is drawn from a series of interviews conducted in 2018 and 2019 regarding strategic decision-making practices within certified benefit corporations. The interview subjects were principle decision makers of six geographically distributed certified benefit corporations. Four of these were small companies with less than 50 employees, two of them qualified as mid-size companies (up to 500 employees).

The importance of hiring as a strategic decision emerged as a common theme within the data. The results indicate that hiring decisions have an impact on the ability of the company to maintain their social mission, and how the company integrates and maintains focus on the social mission. In each of the six case interviews, the values and ethics of the interviewee, as well as their ability to demonstrate understanding and commitment to the social mission were more important to the hiring decision than the technical skills they brought to the table. By being able to align the values of the employee with the values of the company the leadership is better able to mitigate the risk of mission drift. The leaders of hybrid business entities established these companies because of personal dedication to a cause, an intentional choice to provide a social benefit to their communities. Employees that are committed to the social mission contribute to the success of the business and the perpetuation of the social benefits to the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The interest in socially responsible products and services has been growing globally, this has fueled growth in number of hybrid businesses (Haigh, Walker, Bacq & Kickul, 2015). Hybrid business organizations are those entities that pursue both for-profit and not-for-profit activities (Wolf & Mair, 2019). In some areas of the world the supporting the creation of hybrid enterprises is part of the overall economic strategy (Coates, 2015). The most common concepts of free-market capitalism revolve around profitability. Hybrid businesses are rooted in an ethics-based business framework where the common good of the community and economic justice are embedded within the market exchanges (Mele', 2016). The European Union supports the growth of hybrid businesses as part of a comprehensive economic development plan (Raisiene & Urmanaviciene, 2017). Within the United States, the growth in hybrid businesses is purely a grass roots movement. Benefit corporations are hybrid business form available in 37 states. B Corps are benefit corporations that have chosen to obtain 3rd party certification through B Lab (Benefit Corporation, 2021).

Successfully balancing the need for resources (profit) and the social purpose of the organization is a challenge that hybrid organizations must face. The control and prevention of mission drift is essentially a function of corporate governance (Wolf & Mair, 2019). Conceptually mission drift is considered to be a primary and ongoing risk to hybrid organizations. Mission drift is an organizational change process that creates a divergence from original purpose of the enterprise. Commonly mission drift is seen as a move towards commercialism (Cornforth, 2014). However, mission drift can go both ways: too much focus on profit, or too much focus on the social mission, both have implications for the organization (Raisiene & Urmanaviciene, 2017).

Wolf and Mair (2019) offer three inter-related causes of mission drift; conditions within the business environment, resource instability, and organizational changes. Grimes, Williams and Zhao (2019) conceptually tie mission drift to organizational identity and perceived organizational authenticity. Actions taken by the organization to reinforce perceptions of authenticity and perpetuate an identity around social mission aid in preventing mission drift. Instilling a sense of purpose, demonstrating commitment, and celebrating small wins are business actions that creates alignment and a shared sense of organizational identity amongst internal and external stakeholders (Wolf & Mair, 2019). Additional actions that can mitigate mission drift are identified by Klein, Schneider and Spieth (2021). These actions are related to choices the organization makes, specifically: "the choice to integrate stakeholders in the value creation, the choice to collaborate with partners that share the same values, and the choice to exhibit a high level of transparency."

Discussed below is how hiring decisions can mitigate perceptions of mission drift by influencing, and by being influenced by these factors.

METHODS

The data for this article are pulled from a larger data set focused on the strategic decision-making practices within certified benefit corporations (see Daniel, 2020). In that multi-case study interviews were conducted with decision making leaders within six certified benefit corporations. These U.S. based corporations were geographically diverse and represented six different industries. Participant companies were discovered through a combination of the B Lab online database (URL), the B Hive (URL), and subsequent contacts through B Local chapters in Georgia and Colorado. Interviewees participated in a 14 question interview. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The participants were provided with a copy of the transcript to review for accuracy. Interviews were conducted from November of 2018 through February of 2019.

The text of each transcript was content coded within AtlasTi8 software, organized both by research question and by individual interview question. For this article, the interview responses specific to the question: "How much impact does being a certified benefit corporation have on your hiring decisions?" as well as the interviewer prompted follow-up questions were reviewed. Content codes from the original study were retained and refined through identification and coding of sub-themes, creating a more granular analysis of the data.

RESULTS

Clear themes emerged from the data regarding both the importance of the hiring decision, and how the participants made those decisions. As with the larger study, the importance of values and ethics was a common theme through all six cases. Specifically, did the job applicant demonstrate an alignment of personal values and ethics with those of the organization. How this alignment of values and ethics is identified and manifested through the hiring process can be seen through the themes discussed below.

Certification as a recruitment tool – four interviewees indicated that clearly identifying the company as a B Corp, making the social mission an integral part of the corporate identity and culture influenced what applications were received. In two cases, participants relayed that job applicants had specifically indicated that they applied for employment with the company because of the social mission focus and status as a B Corp. One participant indicated that their organization had partnered with a local technical college that served a low-income minority community, through this partnership they had been able to increase community involvement and recruit a far more diverse work force than was typical for their industry.

Community involvement – in all six cases, participants indicated a high level of company involvement with the local communities. Community involvement served both as a recruitment tool by adding to the visibility of the organization, but it was also a factor in the review of applicants. Resumes were reviewed for indications of social activism. Applicants were asked about community involvement activities as part of their interviews.

Skills can be taught – five of the six interviewees used very similar terms to indicated that the values and ethical alignment of a new employee with the organization was more important than the skills they brought to the table. In these instances the perception was that the skills required for the job could be taught or refined. There was a belief that if there was not an alignment of values around the social mission then they applicant would not be a good fit regardless of skills.

For the sixth case, the work itself required a minimum certification and licensure to practice, so the skills of the applicant were important. However in this case those applying were knowingly pursuing social mission related work and foregoing more financially lucrative opportunities.

DISCUSSION

Aguinis & Glavas (2013) in a conceptual work about corporate social responsibility (SCR) noted that these activities can be embedded within or peripheral to the daily operations of the organization. CSR activities that are peripheral to daily operations are easier for the organization to dispense with should conditions warrant. Hybrid business organizations follow the same lines, either pursing a social mission and profitability as separate activities, or by pursing a social mission that is embedded within the daily operations (Wolf & Mair, 2019). All six cases within this research operate with social missions that are embedded within the daily operations of the company.

Hiring decisions are strategic decisions that have long term impacts to the organization (Ref). The themes noted, especially the idea of certification as a recruitment tool, indicative of an action taken by the company that reinforces the stakeholder perceptions of authenticity. This would support the conclusions of Klein et al (2021). By having the social mission as an integral part of the corporate identity and company culture, applicants would have a clear understanding of the expectations surrounding the social mission. These expectations, built into a social mission based corporate identity, coupled with a hiring decision based on values, ethics, and community service over basic skills creates reinforces the organizational alignment. This alignment aids in the creation of a sense of purpose as well as commitment (Wolf & Mair, 2019), both of which are necessary to prevent mission drift.

CONCLUSION

The body of research surrounding hybrid organizations in general, and B Corps in particular, continues to grow. These organizations, based on conscious capitalism, have the potential to contribute to the betterment of society. This study is limited in both scope and generalizability. The results of this study were based on a single question pulled from a larger study of B Corps, as such the results my only apply to similar organizations. Further research of a larger population incorporating other types of hybrid organizations would be necessary.

All business organizations, especially smaller organizations such as the bulk of B Corps, operate in an environment with inherent risks. Mission drift, whether real or perceived, is a risk that these companies can ill afford. To be seen as "greenwashing", to be seen as not authentically operating to the social mission ideals, by stakeholders has significant negative implications to the organization. The authentic demonstration of a corporate identity based on values and ethics has influence over what candidates apply to the organization. Conversely, these organizations must onboard stakeholder employees that embody the values and ethics of the organization. The hiring decision, if done properly, provides an opportunity for the social mission purposes of the organization to become self-reinforcing, which mitigates the risk of mission drift.

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DRAFTKINGS: A SPAC CASE STUDY

Rakesh Duggal, Southeastern Louisiana University

INTRODUCTION

A special purpose acquisition company or SPAC is a shell company that is created and listed on an exchange with the sole purpose of making an acquisition. Investors who invest in a SPAC IPO do so believing that the SPAC sponsors will succeed in their mission and create value for these investors. SPACS have grown tremendously since their creation in the early 1990s. As of October of 2020, there were 290 SPACS that had either filed for their IPOs or were already listed and looking for acquisitions with an estimated $86.5 billion in cash (Klausner et al, 2020).

Diamond Eagle Acquisition Corporation (DEAC), the SPAC that successfully acquired DraftKings, a digital sports entertainment and gaming company, filed an S-1 with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 11, 2019 and completed the above acquisition in April 2020.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Using the DraftKings case, this study addresses the following questions to achieve specific pedagogical goals.

1. How was DEAC structured and operated?
2. What were the costs and benefits for DraftKings in going public using the SPAC method as opposed to the IPO method?
3. Were there asymmetric information costs that resulted in large returns for DEAC sponsors at the cost of small investors who purchased the DEAC IPO shares?
4. Did DEAC overpay for DraftKings?

DATA

Company filings with the SEC as well as research findings from various studies on IPOs and SPACS will be provided to answer the study questions.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DISTRIBUTION AND ALLOCATION OF COVID-19 VACCINES BETWEEN TWO ADMINISTRATIONS

J. Mayanja, Washington Adventist University
J. Chilipamushi, Washington Adventist University
Y. Zhang, Washington Adventist University
B. Albury, Washington Adventist University
Jude Edwards, Washington Adventist University
L. Halawi, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University

ABSTRACT

The pandemic of Covid-19 is a life-threatening disease that entailed all governments but especially the U.S government, to quickly prevent methods of spreading the virus while strategically putting in place a plan for biological testing for a vaccine for immunity. The purpose was to determine how effective the formulation of a Covid-19 vaccine and the distribution would impact the mortality with efficacy rates. Besides, this research paper underlines the principles for ethical and equitable distribution for mass immunization. A comparative analysis between the Trump Administration and the Biden Administration will be presented regarding the funding stream, distribution of vaccinations, and prioritization efforts against morbidity and mortality. We will determine how the resources and funding were utilized to provide Covid-19 vaccines rapidly enough for mass immunization.

INTRODUCTION

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines "COVID-19 as an illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV)" (2020). The coronavirus is a newly emerging pathogen and has strong infectivity and fast propagation rates. The transmission of SARS-CoV-2 occurs through droplets and can happen through close personal contact with infected persons if effective containment measures are not maintained. China was the first country with a widespread outbreak in January 2020; South Korea, Iran, and Italy quickly followed in February 2020. Soon, the virus was in all continents and over 177 countries, with the United States the highest number of confirmed cases and deaths. The virus is extraordinarily contagious and attacks the most vulnerable, particularly those older than 60 and those with underlying conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time and is considered the most significant challenge the world has faced since World War II. The world has reached the tragic milestone of more than two million deaths, and the human family is suffering under an almost intolerable burden of loss. The pandemic is also an unprecedented socioeconomic climacteric because it has devastated the social, economic, and political wellbeing of the whole world, leaving longstanding scars.

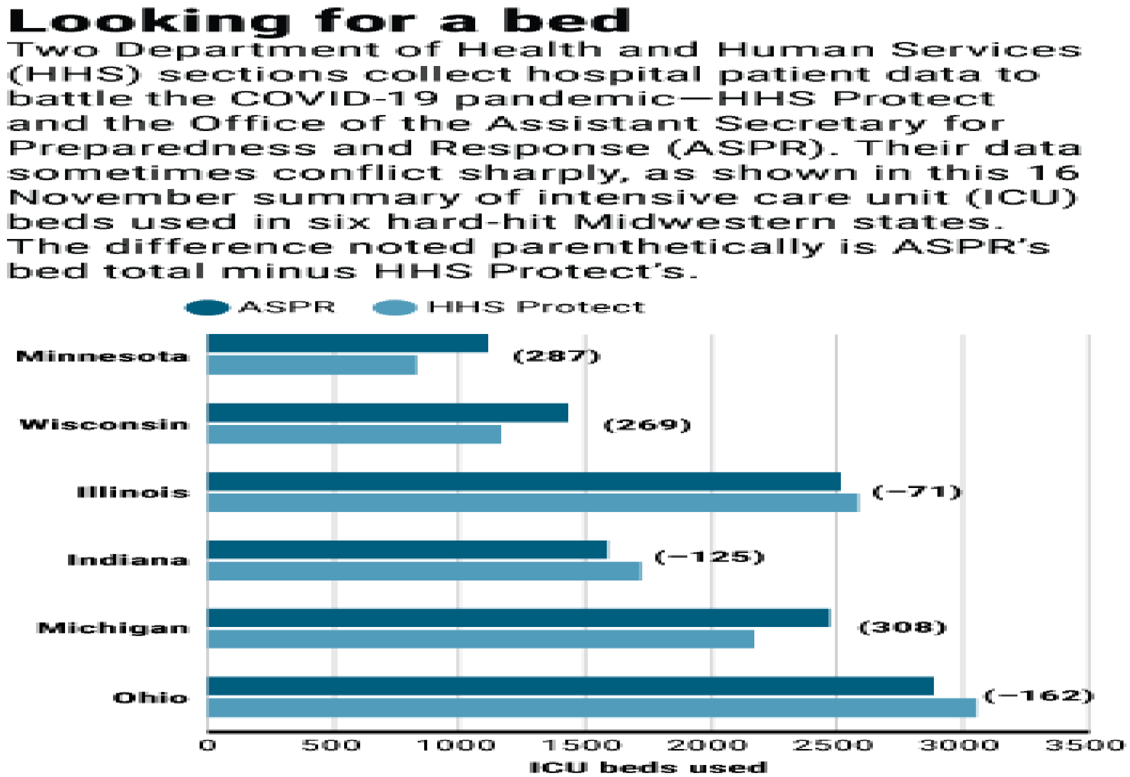
In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Federal government provided funds to healthcare organizations to fight against the virus. This research will explore the usage and distribution of financial resources towards acquiring protective equipment, providing adequate staffing, vaccine development, and distribution to pivot healthcare delivery. A comparative analysis between the Trump Administration and the Biden Administration will also be presented regarding how the resources were utilized under the specific administrations.

Difficulty Maintaining Adequate Staffing

In the United States, the hospitals reported a shortage of staff support. They specialized providers to meet the anticipated patient surge and raised concerns that staff exposure to the virus may exacerbate staffing shortages. Hospital administrators also expressed concern that fear and uncertainty were taking an emotional toll on staff, both professionally and personally. The most commonly reported challenges centered on the hospital's efforts to confirm cases of COVID-19, keep health care staff safe, and provide needed services to patients requiring hospital care for a wide array of medical reasons, including COVID-19. Challenges included difficulties related to testing, lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), and staffing. Several hospitals underlined a particular need for technical staff, such as infectious disease providers, respiratory therapists, physicians, and nurses, to provide intensive and critical care of COVID-19 patients. Many hospitals also reported that they lacked trained staff to operate ventilators and treat patients who needed them.

Hospitals reported shortages of critical supplies, such as materials, logistic support, beds, PPEs, etc. Also, the hospitals reported needing items that support a patient's room, such as intravenous therapy (IV) poles, medical gas, linens, toilet paper, and food. Others reported shortages of no-touch infrared thermometers, disinfectants, and cleaning supplies. Isolated and smaller hospitals faced unique challenges maintaining the supplies they needed and restocking when they ran out. The ventilator is very important for COVID-19 patients, but shortages of ventilators were identified as a big challenge for hospitals. Hospitals mentioned an uncertain supply of standard, full-feature ventilators and, in some cases, used alternatives to support patients, including adapting anesthesia machines and using single-use emergency transport ventilators. The ventilator shortages posed difficult decisions about ethical allocation and liability.

Figure 1



During the pandemic, capacity concerns emerged as hospitals anticipated being overwhelmed if they experienced a surge of patients requiring unique beds and rooms to treat and contain the infection. Many hospitals said that post-acute-care facilities were requiring negative COVID-19 tests before accepting patients discharged from hospitals. This means that some patients who no longer required acute care took up valuable bed space while waiting to be released. With the hospital's short of ICU beds due to COVID-19 infected patients, some people were denied care from the hospital if they have mild symptoms.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to describe the relevant studies of a comparative analysis between the COVID -19 vaccine distribution, allocation, and utilization under the Trump administration versus the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, allocation, and utilization under the incoming Biden administration. Specifically, the review asked to differentiate both administrations' measurable outcomes throughout the pandemic and the strategies used to prepare for mass immunizations readily. Consequently, this study included existing literature relative to equitable distribution and principles for allocating the vaccine and the operation used to create the vaccine.

This study's scope was to research the development plan, vaccine distribution, and allocation within the United States of America. When the term is "mass immunization" is implied, it is a reference within our study's scope. The literature review did not include research for a global plan amongst foreign governments for distribution and utilization. However, there is existing literature that emphasizes global herd immunity. "Countries will have to ensure that they have the infrastructure for mass immunization campaigns. Those without experience in distributing influenza vaccines must learn how to establish platforms for adult vaccination. Vaccine hesitancy will have to be overcome (Burki, 2021).

The review of literature has three parts. The first part involved the development plan of the vaccine under the previous administration. Examination of on-time effectiveness and efficiency was fundamental for the production of the vaccine. The second part involved a comparison of two governmental administrations throughout the pandemic and the distribution plans. The third part focused on the principles of ethical and equitable distribution and allocation of the vaccines for COVID-19.

Vaccine Development Under Trump's Administration

As doctors and scientists learned more about the COVID-19, they discovered that although wearing masks, social distancing and isolation, lockdowns, handwashing, contact tracing, and quarantine measures were necessary to control the spread, they were not going to eliminate the threat of people getting infected. The only safe solution was to develop a vaccine that will provide immunity to this air-borne deadly virus. Vaccines work by training our immune system to create antibodies that fight the present virus while also creating memory cells to recognize the invader in future infections (WHO, 2020).

Development Plan: Operation Warp Speed

By April of 2020, just two months into the COVID-19 virus reaching the U.S, 72,251 people had died as a result (CDC, 2021). There was a lot of pressure on Trump, the current President, to share his plan of action with the American people. On May 15, 2020, Trump's Administration announced Operation Warp Speed (OWS), an ambitious research and manufacturing effort designed to facilitate and accelerate the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations. According to the U.S Department of Defense, OWS's focus areas include developing and testing vaccines and therapeutics, developing and testing diagnostics, and supplying and distributing vaccines (2020).

Under normal circumstances, vaccine development and its approval are complex processes that take about 5-10 years, complete with multiple clinical trials on both humans and animals. OWS authorized an accelerated vaccine development process that would take 14 months to complete compared to the typical 73 months (see Figure 1). Through OWS, a total amount of roughly $30 billion was made available for necessary expenses related to vaccine development, manufacturing, and purchase (Sekar, 2021). Two private pharmaceutical companies, Pfizer/BioNTech, and Moderna were authorized by the U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to develop vaccinations for emergency use by Spring 2021.

The reality of OWS Vaccine Development Reality

Scientists had predicted that vaccine development would take 14-18 months. However, by mid-summer, both Pfizer (August 12, 2020) and Moderna (July 14, 2020) published Phase I/II clinical trial data that demonstrated reasonable safety measures on animals (Brothers, 2020). On December 11, the FDA authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to be distributed in the U.S to individuals above 16 years old. On December 18, the FDA also approved the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to be distributed in the U.S for use in individuals 18 years of age and older (FDA, 2021). OWS was very successful regarding vaccine development because its aggressive plans were realized. With over a 90% efficacy rate, vaccines were developed and approved by the FDA in eight months. The vaccine development process is usually very costly and time-consuming; however, in this case, the process was expedited because the U.S government-funded these pharmaceutical companies and also granted Emergency Use Authorization through the FDA.

COMPARISON OF ADMINISTRATIONS

Trump's Administration

The Trump Administration, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Department of Defense (DoD), released two documents with a detailed strategy to deliver a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine to the American people as quickly and reliably as possible. The documents, developed by HHS, DoD, and the CDC, provide a strategic distribution overview along with an interim playbook for state, tribal, territorial, and local public health programs and their partners on how to plan and operationalize a vaccination response to COVID-19 within their respective jurisdictions. Under the Trump administration, once a vaccine had been approved and authorized by the FDA, four critical tasks were established to distribute and achieve the primary objective. This would ensure that the American people would readily have access to the vaccine. On September 16, 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services released the four objectives to facilitate vaccine distribution. These include:

1. Continue engaging with state, tribal, territorial, and local partners, other stakeholders, and the public to communicate public health information, before and after distribution begins, around the vaccine and promote vaccine confidence and uptake.
2. Distribute vaccines immediately upon granting Emergency Use Authorization/Biologics License Application, using a transparently developed phased allocation methodology.
3. Ensure safe administration of the vaccine and availability of administration supplies.
4. Monitor necessary data from the vaccination program through an information technology (I.T.) system capable of supporting and tracking distribution, administration, and other necessary data.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 vaccine and ancillary supplies were procured and distributed by the federal government at no cost to enrolled COVID-19 vaccination providers. CDC used its current centralized distribution contract to fulfill orders for most COVID-19 vaccine products as approved by jurisdiction immunization programs (CDC, 2021). It is imperative to note that the Trump administration had a plan on hand to ensure that vaccine providers report COVID – vaccine stock each time a vaccine was placed so as for accountability and transparency.

Biden's Administration

On the other hand, on January 21, 2021, Biden signed ten executive orders to jump-start his national strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and enhance the vaccine distribution, which is part of a broader stimulus package of $1.9 trillion. According to The Associated Press, the actions established a framework for the federal government to:

- Increase the production and purchasing of vaccines through the Defense Production Act and ensure the availability of glass vials, syringes, and other supplies.
- Accelerate vaccinations by ending a policy to hold back large amounts of vaccines while also giving states clearer projections on vaccine availability to help them plan their rollouts.
- Partner with states to create more vaccine centers at locations including stadiums, convention centers, and pharmacies.
- Direct federal health agencies to consider raising pay for those who administer vaccines.
- Identify communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic and make sure vaccine doses reach them at no out-of-pocket cost to residents.
- Launch a national campaign to educate Americans about vaccines and encourage them to get shots.

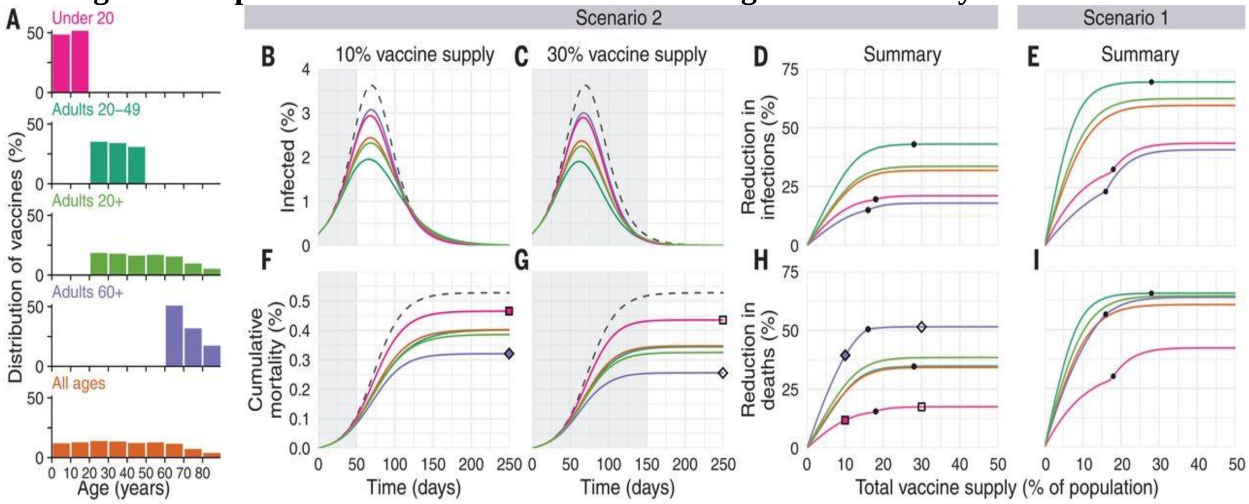
In summary, the Biden administration promised to restore the country's strategy for immunizing Americans and has contributed immensely to expedite the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine. It is also imperative to allude that the Trump administration has also contributed greatly to jump-start the distribution process to reduce the pandemic's spread. All in all, both administrations have worked hard to provide a strategy to deliver a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine to the American people as quickly and reliably as possible.

Principles for Ethical and Equitable Distribution of Covid-19 Vaccines

Throughout the pandemic of Covid-19, the entire world has also experienced a change in political parties' regime, including the United States of America. When considering the strategic plans that Trump Administration and Staff executed with OWS and the approved vaccines, the sense of urgency relied on distribution prioritization. This is notwithstanding the general population's concern of the efficacy rates for the FDA-approved vaccines, Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna, but rather the equitable and ethical principles for distributing the vaccines.

The U.S. Government highly anticipated a reserved supply of the vaccine once approved. The focus was to prioritize and target vaccinating the most vulnerable populations and critical professional groups (essential workers). Bubar, K. et al. (2021) used criteria that included, "considering whether the rankings of prioritization strategies to minimize mortality would change if a vaccine were to block COVID-19 symptoms and mortality with 90% efficacy but with variable impact on SARS-CoV-2 infection and transmissions. We found that direct vaccination of adults aged 60 years and older minimized mortality for all vaccine supplies and transmission-blocking effects under scenario two and for all vaccine supplies when up to 50% of transmission was blocked in scenario 1" (pg. 917).

Figure 2. Impacts of Vaccine Prioritization Strategies on Mortality and Infections.



Emphasis on the vaccination's allocation is just as severe as when the world faced detrimental outcomes of the virus beginning November 2019. When accessing the ethics of vaccine allocation for COVID-19, we must consider the endeavor's intended goal. Gupta et al. (2020) suggest, "The first is the reduction of morbidity and mortality. The second is to minimize the pandemic's effects on societal infrastructure and the economy. The third is to narrow unjust health inequalities, consistent with the view that the moral foundation of public health is social justice and, therefore, the reduction of inequalities by systematically disadvantaged groups" (pg. 136,137).

Although this research paper has not made it an objective to conduct a comparative analysis of ethical and moral responsibility between the Trump and Biden Administrations, it cannot be disregarded that if equitable allocation throughout development, negotiations, and distribution of vaccines were not taken seriously, that herd immunization could create another dilemma if not appropriated proportionally.

Areas for Further Research

This research paper leaves room for several areas where further research is warranted to continue investigating how federal resources were managed to handle the COVID-19 pandemic. Such sites include the following:

- A more comprehensive investigation into how federal resources were distributed between states. This would entail exploring the criteria used to conclude what percentage of the national resources each state received.
- An investigation into how the different states distributed the federal resources to the different healthcare organizations should also be conducted.
- An analysis of how the diverse healthcare organizations that received funds to support the fight against COVID-19 utilized those funds. Were these funds used to purchase PPEs, hire more staff, provide more ICU beds, etc., or where they used to balance their

accounts? This would require the federal government to conduct an audit that would be analyzed.

CONCLUSION

Our research's measurable outcomes demonstrate that although plans for development, distribution, and allocation have already been executed, there is still an emphasis on utilization that should not be dismissed. How does the Biden Administration face the next hurdle of operational management to achieve high acceptance and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines of minimizing vaccine hesitancy and misinformation? According to the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, "Hesitancy and misinformation surrounding the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine are significant barriers to vaccination rates. Ensuring a coordinated, transparent nationwide education campaign that is culturally and health-literacy sensitive by public health experts, community organizers, and the healthcare community will be vital in gaining and maintaining trust within the community."

The COVID-19 pandemic has critically strained nearly every aspect of society within the USA and across the globe, but there are still obstacles that lay ahead. Evaluation of vaccine prioritization strategies and the significance of the vaccine's utilization are each essential to combat this fatal disease that has changed the way we few immunization for ages to come.

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SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Yousry Eldardiry, Missouri State University
Ismet Anitsal, Missouri State University
M. Meral Anitsal, Tennessee Tech University

ABSTRACT

Community engagement has become a growing priority among universities all around the world. In the form of collaborations, constructive relationships and partnerships between institutes of higher education and community partners help improve their communities' livability. Community engagement activities and service-learning classes strengthen the connections through the active participation of the students. The partnerships are also vital in preparing students after college to become active citizens in their communities, either civically or politically. Students acquire many skills as a result of participating in learning experiences through service-learning classes. The research studies the effect of students' participation in activities guided and monitored by the university, either on-campus or at the businesses' premises. Exit surveys of graduating seniors of a large Midwestern public university from different departments of the college of business were the data source to develop emerging themes that reflect students' experiences. The findings of this research could help universities develop and enhance their service-learning programs to suit community needs better. Finally, the paper discusses future research avenues to understand better other factors that might affect students' participation in community engagement activities, eventually impacting communities.

RETHINKING CREDENTIALS FOR AVIATION SUSTAINABILITY: A DACUM APPROACH

Leila Halawi, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University

ABSTRACT

The pandemic of Covid-19 Millennials aren't the youngest working generation anymore, and Gen Zers are the new kids on the block. This group of individuals, born between 1995 and 2019, already makes up 5% of the total U.S. labor force, roughly 9 million people. However, the skills gap is real and exists, one in which research shows that new college graduates either do not have all the skills employers want, or they are not doing an excellent job of demonstrating those skills in their resumes.

Sustainability programs consistently encounter challenges that threaten the future as a viable academic discipline. It is exceptionally critical that academicians recognize these challenges, their implications and thus devise particular approaches to address them. Therefore, this research aims to identify what constitutes aviation and aerospace sustainability job skills to align better, improve, and fortify course content to support undergraduate and graduate students' future employment. Furthermore, this research intends to reinforce a present research effort to bridge the skills gap between industry needs for sustainability in aviation and aerospace workforce and university curricula.

INTRODUCTION

Millennials aren't the youngest working generation anymore, and Gen Zers are the new kids on the block. This group of individuals, born between 1995 and 2019*, already makes up 5% of the total U.S. labor force, roughly 9 million people. In 2016, the global Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) market grew to $1.4 billion, and by 2025, the global A.I. market is expected to expand to almost $60 billion, according to TechJury. Automation is a clear and present danger to an ever-increasing number of jobs. A widely-cited study placed 47% of U.S. jobs in the "high-risk category, meaning that associated occupations are potentially automatable over some unspecified number of years, perhaps a decade or two." The skills gap is real. Research shows that new college graduates either don't have all the skills employers want or do not do an excellent job of demonstrating their resume skills.

While in the past, the United States depended significantly on employers to identify specific job skills, currently, employers are seeking job-ready applicants. There is some agreement between educators and industry leaders that we should determine particular core skills, which should be instilled in the curriculum (Binkley et al., 2012). Administrators within higher education need to ensure that their curricula are relevant and contain enough flexibility to accommodate different learners and different social and economic needs (Husbands & Pearce, 2012).

A leading-edge education system should offer students training to obtain skills for the jobs that we foresee and those we cannot predict. Educators need to train and prepare students to adapt quickly to varying technologies, forms of work organization, and jobs. It is often assumed that the advent of digital technologies requires a fundamental change to the curriculum and the teaching and learning approaches used in schools and higher education institutions, such as universities, to prepare not only this generation of "digital natives" or the "net generation," but also to accommodate older learners and those who may be contemplating career changes.

Sustainability and aviation/aerospace are massive areas. Air transportation is still one of the world's largest influential industries and global economic engines. Aviation is a primary direct and indirect employer. It accelerates world trade growth and offers tourism means, often operating under a business model of tight margins and needed profitability. Within the aerospace and airline industry, sustainability and its environmental impact have long been a talking point. However, sustainability programs consistently encounter challenges that threaten the future as a viable academic discipline. Thus, it is exceptionally critical that academicians recognize these challenges and their implications and devise particular approaches to address them.

Educators need to train and prepare students to adapt quickly to varying technologies, forms of work organization, and jobs. It is expected that this effort will provide the groundwork for developing proposals to submit to organizations that support this type of work, such as the NSF initiative on environmental sustainability and the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI).

Many universities designed sustainability programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. For example, at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, College of Aeronautics (COA), Department of Graduate Studies, sustainability in Aviation and Aerospace graduate program was introduced in 2018. To support this program, the Industry Advisory Board (IAB) often provides a broad and strategic view of the workforce's needs. However, feedback always lacks the specifics of any given job description and job analysis. A proposal of this nature seeks to expand upon the knowledge of those specific via a DACUM event.

The purpose of this research is to reinforce a present research effort directed at bridging the skills gap between industry needs for sustainability in the aviation workforce and university curricula.

DACUM PROCESS

The DACUM process is a structured brainstorming technique for job skill identification and comparison. The process consists of a panel of five to nine expert workers in the occupation/industry under examination, a competent and trained DACUM facilitator, and a recorder. During this process, panel experts create and verify professional job skills and proficiencies that employees should possess depending on the job skill category**.** For the DACUM to succeed, panel members are expected to be eloquent, outstanding workers in their occupation with highly-developed technical knowledge and skills. A facilitator should be particularly trained in the DACUM process for good and practical outcomes. The facilitator should draw upon particular task statements, deal with the conflict between experts, and moderate the debate to reach a consensus of job skill identification. The findings are then compiled and presented in a survey format to a larger group of experts to validate job descriptions. Job description and eventually curriculum are then developed keeping required skills in mind to ensure assessment and activities align to industry required skills. The entire process's fundamental goal is to produce an industry-ready workforce by creating an industry-relevant curriculum and encouraging the flow of information between industry and academia.

DACUM Framework

This research aims to identify what constitutes aviation/aerospace sustainability job skills to align, improve, and fortify course content to support graduate students' future employment. This research project will rely upon a DACUM framework as its method and Design as the process for using a DACUM, and the process for conducting a DACUM is the same.

Therefore, a DACUM event will be conducted; the location and date will be determined during initial planning. The DACUM process is brainstorming, yet structured technique, for job skill identification and comparison (Dacum.org, 2001). The process consists of a panel of six to nine expert workers in the occupation/industry under examination, a competent and trained DACUM facilitator, and a recorder (Eastern Kentucky University, (n.d.). During this process, panel experts create and verify professional job skills and proficiencies that employees should possess depending on the job skill category**.** For the DACUM to succeed, panel members are expected to be eloquent, outstanding workers in their occupation with highly-developed technical knowledge and skills. A facilitator should be exceptionally trained in the DACUM process for good and practical outcomes. The facilitator should draw upon particular task statements, deal with the conflict between experts, and moderate the debate to reach a consensus of job skill identification (Eastern Kentucky University, (n.d.). The findings are then compiled and presented in a survey format to a larger group of experts to validate job descriptions. The curriculum is then developed keeping required skills in mind to ensure assessment and activities align to industry-required skills.

To prepare to host a DACUM event, experts will be sought from organizations with an established sustainability and sustainability consultants and subject matter expertise (SMEs) through snowball sampling. Our research subjects will be selected from a pool of professionals with significant experience in the field, whether identified through conference attendance, academic memberships, or current literature concerning the airlines and aerospace sustainability research projects. Additionally, for diversity, the author plan to secure experts from independent, nonprofit, and globally identified associations that engage in the development, adoption, and use of globally accepted, industry-leading knowledge and practices for the topic of sustainability as an entire curriculum.

For a DACUM to succeed, this project requires two expert groupings: (a) the expert DACUM panel and (b) the extended expert survey group, who are expected to validate the DACUM workshop findings. The author is a certified DACUM facilitator that will support the event's overall facilitation. The author will hire a recorder for the session and will help identify the experts' pool based upon her previous work as the principal program developer of the Sustainability Program at COA. For initial expert pool identification, the author plan to conduct Zoom interviews with Consultants, Managers, and senior personnel from various companies during any of the following conferences: Sustainability Summit 2021, the Sustainability Consortium Summit (TSC 2020); or the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (ASHE), 2021 Climate Leadership Conference.

The author plan to recruit survey participants from the university's existing pool of faculty to collect data about their perceptions of our existing programs' effectiveness. Initial expert interviews will be conducted during said conference time allows or interviewee availability where possible; thus, this method supports a more personable, comfortable, and effective communication method to best support the overall initial DACUM process. During the initial interview, participants will often provide only surface-level information, which helps ask yes or no questions concerning who they believe is an expert in the field. The author will interpret what each participant shared and then share the transcript with additional field experts in the form of a survey for validation of DACUM findings

The researcher plan to create initial survey instrumentation to support the interview process to identify the overall expert pool.Within the DACUM workshop, the researcher will follow the normal DACUM workshop process of brainstorming, categorization, and summarization of job skills per job category and document findings by creating Job Descriptions for each of the positions identified by the panel during the event. No additional instruments, other than supplies, and ranking tools, such as note-taking tools or software, will be required. A printed packet containing the DACUM Process will be supplied to all the workshop attendees.

The purpose of this two-part project aims to conduct a DACUM event that involves expert identification and a DACUM workshop. A DACUM is a well-organized workshop held to analyze job skill tasks associated with a given employment position or job description (Reid, 2003). The event operates under the advisement of a skilled DACUM facilitator with the assumptions that the selected panel members:

> (1) can better describe their job than anyone else, (2) any job can be effectively described in terms of the competencies or tasks that successful workers in that occupation perform, and (3) the specific knowledge, skills, attitudes, and tools required by workers to perform their tasks correctly can also be described (Reid, 2003, p. 1)

Part one of this research seeks to identify an expert pool and narrow down this pool to a six to the nine-member panel, a unique sample size as indicated within the literature (Reid, 2003). Other identified experts will be used to validate DACUM workshop results. The overall DACUM process's objectives are to identify job skill need versus curriculum assessment and activity inclusion. Therefore, part two of this project seeks to document the initial DACUM workshop results and survey the vast expert pool to validate DACUM findings and convert findings into usable results within the curriculum development process. Findings will then be analyzed to generate supportive curricular assessment and activity alignment to support future course development that best supports graduation employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

While many researchers and associations have examined sustainability's deepest foundations, it is still imperative to investigate its methods philosophically to recognize better the key issues confronting sustainability, appreciate the field, and recognize the discipline. The outcomes of this research will provide new resources to advance the body of knowledge on aviation and aerospace sustainability practices. The findings may be used to improve the existing frameworks and policies.

The proposed research will enhance the understanding of sustainability as a discipline by investigating existing models and frameworks and the different perspectives on sustainability to propose a solid curriculum. The goal of this research is to leave no stone unturned and to move sustainability from where it is today, in the pre-paradigm phase, to the realms of normal science where sustainability can be deployed to help organizations not limited to the aviation and aerospace fields accomplish goals such as increase profits, reduce risk, remain agile, and address common threats within their industry.

Identifying what attracts learners into a particular program is a question companies and administrators have been trying to answer for years. With the increased pressure of state and federal accountability systems, an effective, viable, and aligned curriculum is critical to student success. This research proposed has the potential to expand the knowledge of data about employment skill identification and curriculum alignment and provide insight on how these data can be used to signal weaknesses or flaws in the current written curriculum instead of being used solely to identify gaps in student learning, which may be of further investigation.

This research will conclude with recommendations for mitigating the gap between enrollment and employment through curriculum development, which may lead to external funding considering the state of STEM-related programs. Curricula recommendations play an important role in developing academic and professional fields and should reflect consensual views of educational programs to best contribute to their identity and employment variability. Furthermore, the discussion of outcomes from this study will benefit curriculum designers, program managers, program evaluators, and accreditors alike, all of which have a stake in this field's broader impact.

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ROUNDING PHENOMENON IN THE OTC MARKET

Daoping He, San Jose State University
Yao Tian, San Jose State University
Caixing Liu, California State University, Sacramento

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the rounding phenomenon in the over-the-counter (OTC) market and finds that (1) similar to firms listed in the major U.S. stock markets, OTC-listed firms manipulate their reported earnings and revenues through rounding; (2) rounding manipulation is more severe in the OTC market than in the major stock markets and (3) the enforcement of SEC's mandatory disclosure requirements in 1999 reduced OTC firms' rounding manipulation activities. This study extends the rounding manipulation literature and provides the first piece of empirical evidence of rounding manipulation in the OTC market. It helps scholars and investors better understand firms in the OTC market. This study also provides feedback to policy makers and regulators on the effectiveness of the SEC mandatory disclosure requirement on OTC firms' financial reporting quality.

Keywords*: Rounding phenomenon, Benford's law, OTC market, financial disclosure.*

CHANGES IN TYPES OF HELP INSTRUCTORS GIVE DURING A PANDEMIC

Obyung Kwun, Southern University at New Orleans
Ghasem S. Alijani, Southern University at New Orleans

ABSTRACT

Since introduction of the internet and mobile technologies, the way instructors and students interact has changed tremendously. This is especially true in HBCUs where the majority students have a full time or a part times jobs and they are overwhelmingly commuter students. For example, smartphones make it possible for students to carry e-books, find answers quickly, and improve communication with instructors. However, typical students in HBCU still may have difficulties to find a way to get help from professors outside of the class hours if the professors are not available in person. Proper interaction between student and instructor becomes very important, especially when student seek help for assistant in order to learn independently and seek time-consuming explanations, rather than just answers to problems. This is not a unique problem to students. Instructors also experience some frustration during interaction with students in online environment, especially those who need extra help that requires time-consuming explanation and demonstration. This problem may be more obvious in online only classes during the recent pandemic. This paper is to investigate differences in types of help instructors give between pre-pandemic and during pandemic time in which only online interaction is available. The findings may assist professors and school administrators in class instructions and interaction with students.

INNOVATIONS LARGE AND SMALL TIED TO COVID-19

Robert J. Lahm, Jr., Western Carolina University

ABSTRACT

As COVID-19 has impacted the U.S. and global economy in unprecedented ways, pivoting on the part of businesses, small and large, as well as many other types of organizations has occurred. Many educational institutions (administrators, faculty, staff and students) made drastic shifts in their operations and the delivery modalities for instruction in the spring of 2020. Government office lobbies were closed with many services re-directed to online resources; tax deadlines were moved at the federal and state level. DMV registration and vehicle inspection requirements were postponed. Some businesses were regarded as essential, whereas others that were not, ceased operations altogether, or did what they could to pivot. Some restaurants, for instance, began selling inventory such as food and wine in a manner that was more like butcher shops and grocery stores. Breweries and distilleries, along with some brand name companies in the cosmetics industry like L'Oréal and Nivea, shifted operations and began to produce hand sanitizers in the wake of shortages (while other less ethical entities did the same, except some of these produced toxic formulations resulting in widespread Food and Drug Administration recalls). Many historians, R&D engineers, and innovation and product development observers, predict that COVID-19 –similar to other previous pandemics (like the 1918 Spanish Flu, and the Black Death) – may lead to a human response that could be characterized as a world-wide technological and socioeconomic: Great Pivot. Some things are not likely to be returning to the way they were, before.

INTRODUCTION[1]

Both the Spanish flu of 1918–1920 and the Black Death shared some fundamental differences as compared to the latest COVID-19 global pandemic (Greene & Rosiello, 2020; Smith, 2020). For one, technologies are profoundly more advanced. Some researchers have referred to Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and data analytics as enablers of "ultrafast innovation" (Von Krogh, Kucukkeles, & Ben-Menahem, 2020, p. 9). While advances such as these are indeed very relevant, it is worth noting that COVID-19 arose and spread rapidly due to a more connected social and economic global environment. Communications are more instantaneous than in earlier times. Even a few decades ago, news reels filmed on a given day,

[1] This present paper is connected to an ongoing research stream (including literature review databases) pertaining to the small business and gig economy, new product development processes, and innovation.

might reach audiences in the evening, the next day, or several days later. Presently, events happening now, might be transmitted live via social media with audio/video/images captured by smart phones, web cams and other devices (such as drones); there were no communications satellites in 1918. Present day commercial air travelers who were infected with COVID-19 (in many cases without knowing this, having felt no symptoms), could board a plane and depending on the diversity of origins of other passengers, and the respective destinations of all on board, could within hours spread the virus widely – recognition of such possibilities created a crisis in the commercial aviation industry (Rimmer, 2020).

Inversely, a more connected social, economic, and scientific global environment has resulted in a faster recognition of the virus, and quicker responses as well. For instance, experimentation in one laboratory setting might be viewed instantaneously in another one on the other side of the globe, in real time. Because additional strains are surfacing (Bollinger & Ray, 2021), we still do not know what the full impact of this pandemic will be. What we can be certain of, is that COVID-19 may accurately be characterized as "both a health crisis and an economic crisis" (Stephens et al., 2020, p. 427). The purpose of this research is to further explore global responses on the part of small and large businesses, government, and other entities, that are individually and collectively bringing about, a Great Pivot.

LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY

A general search strategy for this present paper has included several often-overlapping topics: 1) new product development (NPD); 2) innovation (e.g., models, constraints, drivers, etc.); 3) small business and entrepreneurship (including variants, e.g., freelancing, a "gig" economy). Upon applying the aforementioned search terms in tandem with COVID-19, returns were voluminous, rich and varied across numerous disciplines' streams of literature, for instance: health (administration, medicine, science, and clinical practice); technology (artificial intelligence); public policy; education; business (economy); engineering. (The point being, COVID-19 is at least recognized if not the center of attention in a vast majority of observed disciplines, and a global phenomenon.) Robust discussion in the innovation literature over time has compared large scale entities to SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises). New product development (NPD) literature is just as expansive, often overlapping (or subsumed by) marketing, engineering, project management, and other literatures. A primary database comprised of approximately 400 artifacts has been assembled for this present paper. Several items are in connection with systematic and meta-analyses (Calantone, Harmancioglu, & Droge, 2010; De Goey et al., 2019; Díaz, Pérez, Alarcón, & Garbajosa, 2011; Hausberg & Korreck, 2020; Kalluri & Kodali, 2014; Page & Schirr, 2008; Sivasubramaniam, Liebowitz, & Lackman, 2012; Tian, Deng, Zhang, & Salmador, 2018).

INNOVATIONS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Myriad organizations that interface with the public installed clear plastic shields (Fischman & Baker, 2020; Smith, 2020) so as to separate customers from employees in check-out lines, bank teller windows, washrooms, parts counters, reception areas, desktops and other workstations. Many retailers' parking lots have been reconfigured to better facilitate more curbside pickup arrangements; Overstreet (2021) writing on the National Federation of Retailers website, observed that buy online and pickup in store also increased (a trend that is expected to continue). When possible, individuals were sent home to work, and communicated via videoconferencing services (Bana, Benzell, & Solares, 2020; Galgani, 2020; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2020). These instances are relatively well known and visible. However, many more responses have also been emerging, like vending machines for dispensing COVID-19 test kits (Kim, 2021), and UV sanitization methods for libraries (Ewen, 2020). A key difference between now and previous times is that "ultrafast innovation" (Von Krogh et al., 2020, p. 9) has been enabled by advances in technologies including data analytics, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence (AI) ("2020 R&D trends forecast: Results from the Innovation Research Interchange's annual survey," 2020; McCausland, 2020b; Von Krogh et al., 2020). An example pertaining to the use of AI was given by McCausland (2020b): in an effort to identify COVID-19 infected visitors, a hospital in Florida used thermal scans, sweating, and facial discoloration screening at entrances. Thus, the technology "helped fill the gap when COVID-19 strained medical staff and healthcare systems around the world" (p. 2).

As observed by Gunay and Kurtulmuş (2021), "work, e-learning, and even remote health services have become practicable" (p. 2), as enabled by an accelerated digital transformation. As an example of this transformation, 3D printing (McCausland, 2020a; Salmi et al., 2020), has been used to quickly respond to the pandemic in addressing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) shortages. "Companies big and small began manufacturing face masks, face shields, swabs, and parts for ventilators to help solve the shortage" (McCausland, 2020a, p. 62). Larger business such as Dyson, most widely known for its vacuums, have employed air compression technologies for medical patient ventilators (Von Krogh et al., 2020). 3M (already recognized by certain trades for protective gear – painters may find dust and fume protective masks in big box home improvement stores), General Electric, and Ford Motor Company, all partnered to produce protective equipment (Obrenovic et al., 2020). Ford has also recently developed a clear face mask for the hearing impaired featuring a clear portion to aid in lip reading (Foote, 2021).

On a much smaller scale, an article in the *Wall Street Journal* covered enterprising efforts of some small entrepreneurs, one of which was a 23 year-old in Queensland, Australia, who has capitalized on COVID-19 merchandise including "coronavirus shirts, hoodies, hats, phone cases, socks and coffee mugs via his aptly named website thecoronavirus.shop" (Gallagher, 2020). Other sources of similar merchandise abound on the Internet. Agrawal (2020) outlined opportunities for mobile app developers. These included mobile shopping and payment apps (i.e., E-commerce such as for the customers of grocery stores, food delivery services and pharmacies); recreational activity and fitness apps; video communications apps; learning apps, and cooking apps. The author concluded with an observation that many more development opportunities exist in relation to COVID-19. Indeed, researchers conducted a study of health-related smartphone apps associated with COVID-19 (Collado-Borrell, Escudero-Vilaplana, Villanueva-Bueno, Herranz-Alonso, & Sanjurjo-Saez, 2020). Based on searches in Google's Play Store and Apple's App Store (data were collected between April 27 and May 2, 2020), they identified 114 such apps for iOS and Android platforms, many of which were cross-platform compatible. Approximately half of the apps were developed by government agencies (globally), and "the most common purposes of the apps are providing information on the numbers of infected, recovered, and deceased patients, recording of symptoms, and contact tracing" (p. 1).

CONCLUSION

Lahm and Tanaka (2020) observed that "while there may be similarities in terms of motivations and strategies for NPD [New Product Development], larger organizations differ from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)" (p.73). Pivoting may be easier for smaller, more agile entities, but the notion of refocusing – as chronicled in this present paper – is not limited to these. In more normal and certain times, organizations may be forced to continually invest in new product development efforts due to the "lifetimes of products shrinking, [and] technical complexity increasing" (Bhaskaran & Krishnan, 2009, p. 1152), in addition to market forces (Schumpeter, 1942; Williams & McGuire, 2010). However, COVID-19 has presented an exogenous shock (Cowling, Brown, & Rocha, 2020; Morgan, Anokhin, Ofstein, & Friske, 2020). Entities of all kinds have taken new approaches due to COVID-19. For instance, Yosemite National Park has instituted a reservations requirement to control visitation levels (George, 2021). Across a broad spectrum of organizations, operations, at least in part, have shifted to workers' homes, with some uncertainties in terms of impacts on productivity (Bolisani, Scarso, Ipsen, Kirchner, & Hansen, 2020). Smith (2020) has suggested that a "COVID Renaissance" is arising, such that: "From the destruction of the COVID-19 pandemic will spring thousands of innovations, large and small" (p. 60).

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CULLOWHEE CONFECTIONARY COMPANY: A SERIES OF TEACHING CASES ON VALUING A FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS

Marco Lam, Western Carolina University
Thomas D'angelo
Ronald Parker, Western Carolina University
Nora Sugar

CASE SYNOPSIS

This series of three short cases covers two decades out of the history of Cullowhee Confectionary Company. While the majority of businesses in the US are privately held, few accounting and finance cases deal with family-owned (privately held) businesses. These cases address unique issues frequently encountered in family businesses.

The Cullowhee Confectionary Company opened in the early 1900's. After almost 100 years of operations, the company faces some trying times as a family-owned company. In the first case, students will address the valuation of a privately held family business and the obstacles of running a business when the owners have varying goals. The second case focuses on the creation of a new business strategy, the creation of a balanced scorecard and identifying performance measures. Finally, the third case dives into valuing a privately held family firm in distress.

These cases are based on real events and publicly available data. However, because we have taken some artistic liberties with the way the story is told, modified available data and added data where gaps in data availability existed, the names of the protagonists and company have been altered. We have taken great care to ensure that the changes made did not alter the actual dynamics and financial relationships for student analyses.

USING STOCK AND OPTION MARKET RESPONSES IN EVENT STUDIES: THE DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL CASE

Marco Lam, Western Carolina University
Sarah Wallace, Western Carolina University
Leobardo Diosdado, Western Carolina University
Leroy Kauffman, Western Carolina University

ABSTRACT

Prior research has looked at the impact of economic events on the firm's stock price as a proxy of market reaction. In this paper, we argue that in addition to stock prices, other financial instruments like options and bonds can be used to provide additional insights into the market's perception of the impact on the firm. In particular, we use the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill from 2010 as a backdrop for this analysis. Our results indicate that options could provide additional insights in the market's perception of the long- and short-term implications of economic events. By using the moneyness concept, we show that both the prices and quantity for 30-day and 90-day options provide incremental information about the lasting impact on share prices.

DIGITALIZATION AND INDUSTRY RESILIENCE AMID THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

John Finley, Columbus State University
Yaojie "William" Li, Columbus State University

ABSTRACT

The coronavirus epidemic has profoundly affected the American economy and society, and every individual. As the power of efforts by individuals, industry, and governments is flattening the curve progressively, the end of the pandemic is almost in sight. For companies, they may rejoice over their survival from the coronavirus crisis, but more importantly, the lesson taken from the pandemic should be leveraged in establishing and enhancing their resilience capacity for future turbulences and crises. In particular, we would accentuate digitalization – integrating digital technologies in every aspect of a business, including but not limited to digitalizing organizational physical assets, digitalizing business platforms and processes, and digitalizing organizational employees. Prior studies provide evidence supporting organizational digitalization in ordinary time, and presumably, digitalization can be a salient technology-driven strategy in response to the pandemic, too. Notwithstanding, however, there is a lack of empirical inquiry and evidence revolving around if higher-digitalized industry sectors (e.g., IT, media, professional services) perform better than lower-digitalized ones (e.g., hospitality, construction, agriculture) in the economic recovery from the pandemic. To that end, this ongoing project tends to investigate the relationship between the degree of organizational digitalization and employment levels by industry, using a recent dataset from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

DOES INFORMATION ASYMMETRY MOTIVATE CORPORATE SPIN-OFFS?

Han-Sheng Chen, Lipscomb University
Ying-Chou Lin, Southeastern Oklahoma State University

ABSTRACT

Prior literature has documented spin-offs serve as a tool to mitigate the misvaluation caused by information asymmetry. With the efforts to improve the information environment for investors in recent years (i.e., Regulation Fair Disclosure and Sarbanes-Oxley Act), we suspect the view no longer holds. In this paper, we re-examine the issue and present evidence showing that information asymmetry may not be the main factor driving firms engaging in spin-offs. Our findings consist of three parts. First, firms engaging in spin-offs do not suffer from a higher degree of information asymmetry, nor do they enjoy a significant improvement in information after spin-offs. Second, while firms engaging in spin-offs see significantly higher abnormal returns surrounding spin-off announcements, the abnormal return cannot be explained by information asymmetry. Finally, firms with a higher degree of information asymmetry are not more likely to engage in spin-offs. In sum, we conclude information asymmetry is not the main factor in spin-off decisions.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study is to re-exam whether corporate spin-offs decisions are driven by information asymmetry. Previous literature has documented some evidence that a company's information environment changes through corporate spin-offs could mitigate companies' asymmetry information, which are the sources of shareholder gain (Best *et al.*, 1998; Nanda and Narayanan,1999; Krishnaswami and Subramaniam, 1999). However, whether a company's spin-off decision is driven by information asymmetry is questionable due to recent findings (Thomas, 2002; Clake et al., 2004). Those findings suggest that conglomerates' information asymmetry problems could be diversified away when segment information is reported.

In addition, managers might lack the motivation to adopt spin-offs to downsize the firm. Since a spin-off is a significant structure or strategic change to a firm, it is suspicious a CEO would like to take such a costly approach to improve the information environment of a firm.

Last, the information environment for corporations has been dramatically changed in the last 20 years due to regulations and innovation. Companies' complete filings are accessible to the public through EDGAR (Electronic Data Gathering, Analysis and Retrieval) and their websites now, and the disclosure requirements mandated by Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) have significantly reduced the information asymmetry of firms (Akhigbe et al. 2010).

In this paper, we challenge the role of information asymmetry in a company's corporate spin-off decision. The first proposal of our study is to re-examine whether a spin-off is driven by information asymmetry. The second proposal of the research is to examine whether the information asymmetry measurements can explain the announced abnormal returns.

DATA, SAMPLE, AND METHODOLOGY

Spin-off Sample & Matching Firms

The sample of U.S. firms that completed a spin-off transaction comes from the Securities Data Corporation (SDC) database and the Stock Spin-offs (https://www.stockspinoffs.com/). We exclude non-voluntary, taxable, part of liquidity, bankruptcy or merger processing, and financial and regulated industry (SIC code 6000-6999 and 4900-4949) spin-offs. We also exclude from our samples where spin-off announcement or effective dates cannot be verified through the news, or financial data are not available on the Center for Research in Security Prices (CRSP) and COMPUSTAT. Our final sample consists of 442 spin-off deals divested by 414 firms over the period of 1980 to 2017. Following Krishnaswami and Subramaniam (1999), we adopt the industry-size match method to create control firms. The control firm is required to have the same four-digit SIC code as each spin-off sample, and its market value needs to be within 25% of the spin-off firm's market value. If no control firm is found using the criteria above, the three-digit SIC code, two-digit SIC code, and one-digital level with the same market value requirement are adopted. If the control firm is still not available, then we relax the market value requirement to 50% and repeat the process described above.

Measure Information Asymmetry

Because there are no universally accepted measures to estimate a firm's information transparency, we use a wide range of proxy variables to measure information asymmetry. The first proxy for information asymmetry is the forecast error (Krishnaswami and Subramaniam, 1999; Clarke and Shastri, 2000; Thomas, 2002). The second proxy of information asymmetry is the analyst forecast dispersion (Krishnaswami and Subramaniam, 1999; Clarke and Shastri, 2000; Leary and Roberts, 2010).

We also construct three market microstructure measurements of information asymmetry that are widely adopted in literature: the standard deviation of the daily stock return (Krishnaswami and Subramaniam, 1999; Moeller et al., 2007; Officer et al., 2009), bid-ask spread (Coller and Yohn 1997; Karpoff et al. 2013 and Borochin et al. 2019), and illiquidity (Amihud 2002; Borochin et al. 2019). We also use the accrual-based measurement as the proxy for information asymmetry since low reporting quality is significantly associated with higher information asymmetry (Brown and Hillegelst, 2007; Bhattacharya et al., 2013).

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Spin-off and Information Asymmetry

In this study, the main question is whether information asymmetry is the major factor driving corporate decisions to engage in a spin-off. A natural way to investigate this matter is to look into the information contents around spin-off. Table 1, Panel A shows a direct comparison of information asymmetry measures between spin-off firms and control firms. At first glance, there is no clear evidence showing spin-off firms suffer from a higher degree of information asymmetry. Another way to look at the issue to see if the information asymmetry is reduced after the spin-off. The results are shown in Table 1, Panel B. Our empirical analysis indicates information asymmetry has generally deteriorated, rather than improved, from prior to the spin-off. All measures show an increase in mean after the spin-off, and 4 of them are statistically significant. So do all but one of the medians. In sum, our baseline analysis suggests that information asymmetry does not motivate corporations to engage in spin-offs.

Table 1: Summary Statistics of the Information Asymmetry Measurements

Panel A: Level of before-event information asymmetry for spin-offs and matched firms

	Sample Firm		Matched Firm		Difference	
Variables	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Forecast errors	0.0166	0.0018	0.0214	0.0011	-0.0048	0.0007**
Analyst dispersion	0.0116	0.0019	0.0060	0.0014	0.0056	0.0005*
Residual SD	0.0230	0.0184	0.0239	0.0195	-0.0009	-0.0011
Bid ask spread	0.0085	0.0063	0.0092	0.0066	-0.0007	-0.0003
Illiquidity	0.3648	0.0020	0.5656	0.0019	-0.2008	0.0001
Abnormal Accruals	0.3769	0.2219	0.4347	0.2513	-0.0578	-0.0294

Panel B: Level of information asymmetry for sample firms before and after the spin-off

	Before		After		Difference	
Variables	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Forecast errors	0.0166	0.0018	0.0250	0.0016	-0.0084	0.0002
Analyst dispersion	0.0116	0.0019	0.0184	0.0029	-0.0068	-0.0001***
Residual SD	0.0230	0.0184	0.0270	0.0215	-0.0040***	-0.0031***
Bid ask spread	0.0085	0.0063	0.0104	0.0074	-0.0019**	-0.0011***
Illiquidity	0.3648	0.0020	0.4134	0.0022	-0.0486*	-0.0002***
Abnormal Accruals	0.3769	0.2219	0.4195	0.2278	-0.0426**	-0.0059*

Information Asymmetry on Focus-Increasing Firms

Daley et al. (1997) and Desai and Jain (1999) argue spin-off firms exhibit long-term superior performance due to the increase of focus in the firms' core business. Gilson et al. (2001) also found that focus-increasing spin-offs led to an increase in analysts' coverage and forecast accuracy. Their findings suggest focus-increasing spin-offs may benefit from a decrease in information asymmetry and thus enhance the firm's value. That leads to a possible argument that while reasons for spin-off decisions may vary, focus-increasing spin-offs may be the ones benefiting from reduced information asymmetry. To further investigate this issue, we repeat our analysis on information asymmetry on the sub-samples based on whether the spin-off is focus-increasing.

This analysis's empirical results show that there is no significant difference in information asymmetry between our focus-increasing sample firms and the matched firms. Similar patterns are also found for the non-focus-increasing sample. Therefore, we also conclude that focus-increasing driven spin-offs do not benefit from the reduction in information asymmetry. Thus information asymmetry is not likely the main reason for spin-off decisions for those firms.

Abnormal returns around spin-offs

Hite and Owers (1983), Miles and Rosenfeld (1983), and Schipper and Smith (1983) all documented superior stock returns for spin-off firms around announcement day. While we do not find evidence showing an improvement in information contents after spin-offs, the market may perceive the spin-off differently. Therefore, we then analyze the stock performance of spin-off firms to examine this issue. Table 2 summarizes the cumulative abnormal returns using the market model around spin-off announcements. The empirical results are similar to the literature.

Table 2: **Abnormal Returns around Spin-off Announcements**

Interval	Mean	t-statistic	Median	% Positive
-30 to -6	-0.71%	-1.355	-0.40%	48.42%
-5 to -1	0.87%	3.442 ***	0.15%	52.17%
-1 to 0	2.54%	9.165 ***	1.91%	69.56% ***
0	2.21%	8.660 ***	1.36%	68.36% ***
-1 to +1	3.69%	10.455 ***	2.91%	71.01% ***

We are specifically interested in knowing whether the positive responses are due to an improvement in information asymmetry. Thus, we focus on information asymmetry measures in the model, with other variables that might explain the excess returns in the regression models. The variables we add are market-to-book ratio, sales-based Herfindahl index, return on asset measured as the ratio of income before extraordinary items to the book value of assets, leverage measured as long-term and short-term debt to book value of assets, and the market value of the spin-off transaction relative to the parent company.

We then add the aforementioned controlled variables to the regression model, in addition to the information asymmetry measures. The results[2] show that information asymmetry measures do not explain the excess return well, which suggests spin-off firms' superior returns do no come from improvement of information efficiency.

We then turn to probit regressions to investigate this matter further. We first define the dummy variable as one if the firm in our sample engages in a spin-off and 0 otherwise. We then run probit regressions using each information asymmetry measure along with other firm characteristics as independent variables[3]. First, consistent with prior findings, information

[2] Empirical results are available upon request.

[3] Empirical results are available upon request.

asymmetry measures fail to explain the possibility of the firm engaging in spin-offs. Contrarily, firms with lower market-to-book ratios are more likely to engage in spin-offs. Interestingly, the Herfindahl index is negatively correlated with the probability that firms engage in spin-offs, suggesting that the firms in a more competitive environment are more likely to engage in spin-offs. When firms face intense competition and find themselves in an unfavorable market condition, spin-off may be one way they seek to strengthen their competitive position and to regain the market's attention in the hope of receiving more favorable valuation.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we revisit the role of information asymmetry in corporate spin-off decisions, which was suggested in prior literature. Our empirical has shown that information asymmetry does not appear to be an important factor in spin-offs. We found that spin-off firms' information contents are not significantly different from other comparable firms, nor do they improve much after spin-offs. There is also little evidence suggesting firms suffering from a higher degree of information asymmetry would more likely engage in spin-offs if any. While the spin-off firms still exhibit superior abnormal returns surrounding the spin-off announcement, information asymmetry fails to be the key explanatory factor. Instead, our results indicate the improved valuation is likely a result of the expectations from the market that the firms may improve investment efficiency in order to survive a more competitive environment. We believe information asymmetry may no longer play a significant role in corporate spin-offs because the information environment for the equity market has improved dramatically through the recent regulations, including Regulation Fair Disclosure and Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

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COVID-19 REPORTING: PRIVACY VERSUS PROTECTION

Darrell G. Ford, University of Central Oklahoma
Marty Ludlum, University of Central Oklahoma

ABSTRACT

Among the countless unique situations spawned by the COVID-19 pandemic is the dilemma faced by organizations that have an employee testing positive for the virus. Organizations have a duty to protect the privacy rights of their employees. However, organizations also have a duty to protect their employees and customers. These sometimes-competing duties create uncertainty for organizations that want to respond appropriately when an employee contracts the virus.

This paper examines the privacy rights of employees from a constitutional, statutory and common law perspective to identify which privacy rights exist when an employee tests positive for COVID-19, and what actions constitute a violation of the employee's privacy rights. We also examine the legal duty imposed on organizations to create and maintain a safe work environment for their employees and customers. Finally, we propose appropriate guidelines for organizations that balance their duty to maintain their employees' privacy and protect other employees and customers.

REVENGE OF THE ELECTRIC CAR IN THE 2020S: A CASE STUDY

Ahmed Maamoun, University of Minnesota Duluth

ABSTRACT

To say Elon Musk is a disrupter is quite an understatement. The self-made billionaire has transformed several industries (Electric Vehicles, financial services, space travel, hyperloops, artificial intelligence, etc.). He is also a charismatic marketing genius who is able to create buzz and excitement whenever he speaks or tweets. Tesla is the king of Electric Vehicles (EVs) with a state-of-the-art production factory in California. The company delivered 245,000 vehicles globally, and the Model 3 was the top selling electric car in the United States in 2018. The company turned in a profit for the first time in 2019; and is in the process of building a lithium-battery gigafactory in Nevada and an EV manufacturing facility in China. Between the California and Shanghai factories, Tesla will have the capacity to produce 1 million vehicle a year. The new Roadster, Model Y, and Cybertruck will commence production in 2020. This is all great news for many stakeholders, especially Musk who has never received a paycheck from Tesla. Shareholders voted in 2019 to grant him $2.6 billion in stock options to be vested if Tesla's market value reaches $100 billion by 2028. This could substantially boost the 48-year-old entrepreneur's net worth and make him the richest person on Earth even though he prefers to die on Mars.

Now that Tesla has removed every doubt it can be done, nearly every big name in the industry is trying to get a piece of the electric car market. Major automakers are jumping on the EV bandwagon to capture a piece of the growing pie. Audi, Mercedes, Porsche, and Volvo are rolling out luxurious electric vehicles for the first time. GM, Honda, Nissan, and Toyota are upping their EV game. Tesla will soon compete with a sea of EVs both in the United States and overseas. Only time will tell if Tesla and its boss will keep the crown. The paper highlights the challenges involved in the auto industry in general and the EV niche in particular.

Keywords: Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Self-Made Billionaire, New Product Development, Underdog

WHY DOES APPLE HAVE SO MUCH OFFSHORE CASH?

Jeffrey A. Mankin, Lipscomb University
Jeffrey J. Jewell, Lipscomb University
Julio A. Rivas, Lipscomb University

CASE SYNOPSIS

In 2017, U.S. multinational firms held an estimated $2.5 trillion in foreign accounts. Apple held the most cash of these firms with approximately $230 billion in offshore investments. Why do U.S. multinationals hold this enormous sum of cash in offshore accounts? One of the primary reasons is the United States tax code. In 2017, the U.S. had a worldwide taxation system. That means U.S. companies paid tax on not only on receipts in the U.S. but also on foreign revenues. This means that if an American company earned money in France, it first paid French income tax. Then if the French earnings were brought into the United States, the U.S. tax rules taxed these earnings again.

Interestingly, the revenues are subject to tax only if the cash is moved to U.S. accounts. So, the U.S. tax code provides a significant incentive for American companies to hold cash from its foreign sales in offshore investment accounts. This avoids the taxation for U.S. tax purposes. This causes a lock-out effect for foreign earnings and limits the flow of capital into the United States. This instructional case looks at the specific case of Apple and its large offshore cash and investments.

ANALYSIS OF INVESTMENT RETURN PERFORMANCE FOR U.S. HOTELS

Mahmud Mansaray, North Carolina Central University
James Stotler, North Carolina Central University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of several individual factors on the return performance of U.S. hotels over the 2009 to 2018 time period. The factors evaluated are profit margin, asset turnover, equity multiplier, debt to total assets and debt to equity. This study develops a Differenced-GMM panel dynamic model to evaluate the impact of several individual factors on the return performance of hotels over the study time period. The return measure examined is return on equity and the independent variables are profit margin, asset turnover, equity multiplier, debt to equity and debt to total assets.

The results indicate that each of the factors examined significantly impacts hotel returns except for the asset turnover. These results suggest that while asset turnover does not significantly impact hotel returns, efficient cost control and specific types of debt use can have a significant impact on return for U.S. hotels. The practical implications of the results are that increased focus on factors such as more efficient cost control and selective use of leverage by managers of hotel properties can increase returns more effectively than a focus on asset use efficiency. The originality of this research lies in its application of a DuPont style return analysis of hotel returns using a Differenced-GMM panel dynamic model to better capture the key determinants of hotel returns.

INTRODUCTION

Th research assesses the impact of cost control, asset use efficiency and the use of leverage on the returns of hotels. The return measures and return components assessed are those contained in the DuPont Identity (Return on Equity, Return on Assets, Profit Margin, Asset Turnover and Equity Multiplier) as well as debt to total assets and debt to equity. Cost control is assessed using the profit margin, asset use efficiency is assessed using the asset turnover ratio and leverage is assessed using the equity multiplier components of the DuPont identity.

The Return on Assets (ROA) is Net Income/Total Assets and can be segmented into two components: Profit Margin (Net Income/Revenue) and Asset Turnover (Revenue/Total Assets) to evaluate its components. The Profit Margin can then be used to evaluate cost control issues and the Asset Turnover can be used to evaluate issues of asset use efficiency. The return earned on behalf of shareholders is measured by Return on Equity which adjusts the ROA for the use of leverage by multiplying ROA by the Equity Multiplier (Total Assets/Equity).

While the DuPont approach to analyzing ROE is commonly applied to individual firms to analyze cost control, asset use efficiency and leverage, this study analyzes the components of the DuPont identity across the hotel sector to evaluate the most relevant return component factors impacting return on equity for U.S. hotel firms. By utilizing ROE as a measure of return rather than ROA one can evaluate the impact of debt use on the performance of the hotel company in addition to the profit margin and asset turnover impact captured in the ROA. The DuPont approach determines ROE as the product of the firms profit margin (PM), asset turnover (AT) and equity multiplier (EM):

$$ROE = \frac{NI}{S} \; X \; \frac{S}{TA} \; X \; \frac{TA}{EQ}$$

$$ROE = PM \; X \; AT \; X \; EM$$

$$ROA = PM \; X \; AT$$

Profit margin is the ratio of net income to sales and measures how effectively the hotel firm is managing costs. A high PM indicates effective cost control. Asset turnover is the ratio of sales to total assets and measures how effectively the hotel firm is using assets to generate sales. A high AT indicates that assets are being used effectively to generate sales. The final component is the equity multiplier which captures how the hotel firms' use of debt in the capital structure impacts their ROE. For any firm with debt in their capital structure EM > 1 and as a firm adds debt to their capital structure the EM will increase. Thus, if EM $\neq 1$ the ROE $>$ ROA when ROA is positive and if ROA is negative ROE $<$ ROA when EM $\neq 1$.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Five independent variables were examined to determine their impact on return on equity (ROE). These variables were the three components of the DuPont identity (profit margin, asset turnover and equity multiplier) as well as debt to equity and debt to total assets. Each independent variable (except asset turnover) was found to be significant in explaining ROE for the hotels examined. The profit margin variable showed a positive and significantly significant relationship with ROE. A 1% increase in profit margin resulted in approximately .70% upsurge in return on equity. This positive relationship is consistent with the results of Warrad (2007) and Dimitric (2019) and suggests that efficient cost control can be an effective method for improving return on equity for hotels.

Asset turnover, the second component ratio in the DuPont identity, was found to have no significant impact on the ROE. Warrad (2007 found asset turnover to have a significant positive impact on ROE. A study by Singh and Schmidgall (2001) found in a survey that property level managers viewed the current ratio and the accounts receivable turnover ratios as very important. This seems to be consistent with the results of the current study in terms of cost control although the current study did not find total asset turnover to have a significant effect on the return on equity. While property level managers view accounts receivable as very important it's impact on overall firm performance as measured by ROE is likely minimal. This suggest the need to align property level managers' focus with cost reduction measures other than the cost of accounts receivable as impacted by accounts receivable turnover.

With respect to the use of debt the equity multiplier (EM) component of the DuPont identity was included as an independent variable as well as the debt to total assets ratio and the long-term debt to equity ratio. The equity multiplier was found to have a significant and negative impact on

ROE. A 1% increase in the equity multiplier of the firms under review resulted in about a 2.21% decrease in the return on equity element for the period under review. These results are consistent with those of Ben (2014) using the same variable (EM) as the independent variable while Dimitric (2019) found comparable results using a solvency measure as the independent variable and finding a positive relationship with ROE. Warrad (2007) found the EM to be insignificant with respect to ROE when using a sample of industrial firms which may indicate that the results are industry specific.

Similarly, when the debt to total assets (DTA) was used as an independent variable it was found to have a significant negative relationship with ROE. A 1% increase in debt to total assets caused a decrease of approximately 1.72% in the return on equity. This is consistent with the results of Ben (2014) using the same variable (DTA) as an independent variable while Dimitric (2019) found comparable results using a solvency measure as the independent variable finding a positive relationship with ROE. When using the long-term debt to equity (DE) as an independent variable it was found to have a significant and positive effect on ROE. This suggests that a 1% increase in the debt to equity ratio resulted in about a 2.05% increase in the return on equity. Dalbor (2007) found a significant and positive relationship between long term debt and firm value.

Overall, with respect to the independent variables related to debt use EM and DTA are found to have a significant and negative impact on ROE while DE is found to have a significant and positive effect on ROE. Both EM and DTA are calculated using total assets and therefore reflect total debt use while DE considers only long-term debt. Thus, the results indicate that for this sample period the use of long-term debt positively impacted ROE while the total use of debt (long-term and short-term) negatively impacted ROE. This suggests that an increase in long-term debt and a decrease in short-term debt could positively impact the return on equity for the overall firm.

CONCLUSION

This study developed a Differenced-GMM panel dynamic model to evaluate the impact of several individual factors on the return performance of hotels over the 2009 to 2018 time period. The return measure examined was return on equity and the independent variables were profit margin, asset turnover, equity multiplier, debt to equity and debt to total assets. The results indicate that all the independent variables except total asset turnover significantly impacted return on equity for U.S. hotels.

The significance of profit margin suggests efficient cost control as an effective method for improving return on equity for hotels. This would require a reduction in costs relative to sales volume or an increase in sales volume relative to costs. A study by Singh and Schmidgall (2001) found in a survey that property level managers viewed the current ratio and the accounts receivable turnover ratios as very important. While this seems to be consistent with the results of the current study in terms of cost control, the current study did not find total asset turnover to have a significant effect on the return on equity. This suggests a management focus on cost reduction through means other than accounts receivable could be more effective in improving return on equity for hotels.

The use of debt by hotel firms as measured by the equity multiplier and the debt to total assets ratio was found to significantly impact the return on equity for hotels in the study. The relationship between these two ratios and the return on equity was negative which would indicate that an increase in debt use during the time period examined resulted in a lower return on equity. However, the long-term debt to equity variable was found to have a positive and significant relationship with return on equity indicating that an increase in long-term debt would increase return on equity. This suggests that a management focus on an increase in long-term debt and a decrease in short-term debt could positively impact the return on equity for the hotel firms.

Interesting areas for further study would be to analyze the impact of both hotel type and ownership form on the relationships observed in this study to determine if the relationships differ between commercial and casino hotels and between REITs and C-Corporations in the hotel industry.

STUDY IN ECONOMIC POLICY UNCERTAINTY AND STOCK MARKET VOLATILITY IN TWO COUNTRIES

Seongju Moon, Gyeongsang National University
DaeRyong David Kim, Delaware State University

ABSTRACT

The financial industry has become one of the most data-driven industries and the recent technological developments in big data, financial services, consumer-data management, social network services, and filtering data quality has made better interpretation of analyzed data possible in the finance industry. Financial data consist of a huge volume of quotes, market data, historical trade data, and time-sequenced transaction data used to model market and customer behavior. These financial data helped FinTech companies develop automated solutions and products for stock investment strategy and risk management.

However, the stock market is full of uncertainties and is affected by many factors that cannot be controlled and automated by computerized products. Among the many factors, the stock market volatility and economic policy uncertainty are closely correlated (Pástor and Veronesi, 2012; Li and Peng, 2017) and can be used to reduce the uncertainties. S. Korea's stock market looks heavily influenced by its economic policy uncertainty for domestic and foreign country markets (Choi S. J., 2017; Cheng, 2017; Kim, 2009; Shin, 2014). A good example was when S. Korea applied for a bailout to the IMF in November 1997, the stock price fell to its lowest level in a decade. Sometimes, a foreign country's economic uncertainty such as the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 plunged S. Korea's stock price to 27.2 percent. Here, we can find the significant co-movement of non-fundamental factors between the U.S. and S. Korea's stock prices (Jeon, 2017; Jeon & Lee, 2017; Jeon, 2018; and Jun and Choi, 2003). Recent research has shown that rising political and economic uncertainty affected stock markets in multiple regions and countries (Skrinjaric and Orlovic, 2020).

Few previous studies were found on economic political uncertainty and stock market volatility comparing in between the United States and S. Korea. Thus, this study aims to find (1) if the EPU index generated by long-term data can trace the volatility of the stock market and (2) how the relationships between EPUs and Volatility found in the two countries are different. The study has utilized the Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) to seek the dynamic relationship between EPU and stock market volatility of the US and S. Korea.

Table 1					
THE LONG AND SHORT RELATION BETWEEN US_EPU AND VIX UNDER VECM					
Long Rn	*Equation (3): VIX=-39.383+0.174* US_EPU*				
Short Run	*Variable*	*Equation (1) D (VIX)*		*Equation (2) D (US_EPU)*	
	ECT (-1)	δ_1	*-0.081****	δ_2	*-0.491***
	D (VIX (-1))	$\beta_{1,1}$	*-0.105*	$\gamma_{2,1}$	*2.385****
	D (VIX (-2))	$\beta_{1,2}$	*-0.213****	$\gamma_{2,2}$	*1.112**
	D (VIX (-3))	$\beta_{1,3}$	*-0.063*	$\gamma_{2,3}$	*1.267***
	D (VIX (-4))	$\beta_{1,4}$	*0.009*	$\gamma_{2,4}$	*1.255***
	D (US_EPU (-1))	$\gamma_{1,1}$	*0.042****	$\beta_{2,1}$	*-0.404****
	D (US_EPU (-2))	$\gamma_{1,2}$	*0.018*	$\beta_{2,2}$	*-0.408****
	D (US_EPU (-3))	$\gamma_{1,3}$	*0.016*	$\beta_{2,3}$	*-0.381****
	D (US_EPU (-4))	$\gamma_{1,4}$	*0.009*	$\beta_{2,4}$	*-0.197***
	C	α_1	*0.034*	α_2	*0.546*
R-squared		*14.019%*		*26.279%*	
Adj. R-squared		*9.648%*		*22.531%*	
F-statistic		*3.207*		*7.011*	

*Table 1 reveals the results of VECM. Here, ***, **, and * are significant level at 1%, 5%, 10% levels. The table shows that the coefficient of* θ_1 (0.174)*is significant at a 10% level of significance and the coefficients of* δ_1 *(-0.081) is significant at a 1% level of significance. It means that there is a long-term relationship between US_EPU and VIX. Table 1 also shows that the coefficient of* $\gamma_{1,1}$(0.042) *in Equation (1) is significant at a 1% level of significance and the coefficients of* $\gamma_{2,1}$ *(2.385) in Equation (2) is significant at a 1% level of significance. It indicates that there exists a positive bidirectional relationship between US_EPU and VIX in the short run.*

Table 2					
THE LONG AND SHORT RELATION between KOR_EPU and VKOSPI under VECM					
Long Run	*Equation (3): VKOSPI = 129.234 + 0.824*** KOR_EPU*				
Short Run		*Equation (1) D (VKOSPI)*		*Equation (2) D (KOR_EPU)*	
	ECT (-1)	δ_1	*-0.015***	δ_2	*-0.366****
	D (VKOSPI (-1))	$\beta_{1,1}$	*-0.125**	$\gamma_{2,1}$	*0.686*
	D (VKOSPI (-2))	$\beta_{1,2}$	*-0.193****	$\gamma_{2,2}$	*-0.484*
	D (KOR_EPU (-1))	$\gamma_{1,1}$	*0.030****	$\beta_{2,1}$	*-0.016*
	D (KOR_EPU (-2))	$\gamma_{1,2}$	*0.005*	$\beta_{2,2}$	*0.035*
	C	α_1	*-0.127*	α_2	*-0.379*
R-squared		*11.342%*		*17.415%*	
Adj. R-squared		*8.920%*		*15.159%*	
F-statistic		*4.682*		*7.718*	

*Table 2 shows the results of VECM. Here, ***, **, and * are significant levels at 1%, 5%, and 10%. This table shows that the coefficient of* θ_1 (0.824)*is significant at a 1% level of significance and the coefficients of* δ_1 *(-0.015) is significant at a 5% level of significance. It means that there is a long-term relationship between KOR_EPU and VKOSPI. Table 2 also* *shows that the coefficient of* $\gamma_{1,1}(0.030)$ *in Equation (1) is significant at a 1% level of significance and the coefficients of* $\gamma_{2,1}$ *(0.686) in Equation (2) is not significant at all levels of significance. It indicates that there exists a positive un-bidirectional relationship between KOR_EPU and VKOSPI in the short run.*

This paper looked at whether the EPU index generated by historical data has information capability in the volatility of the stock market and at whether there are differences between the U.S. and S. Korea stock market. To determine the dynamic relationship between Economic Policy Uncertainty (EPU) and Stock market volatility of the U.S. and S. Korea, the study utilized the Vector Error Correction Model (VECM). The data span to estimate the empirical analysis was from January 2003 to December 2018 in the study.

The main findings of the study are as follows. First, the impacts of US-EPU on VIX and of KOR-EPU on VKOSPI are positive in the long run. This indicates and confirms that economic policy uncertainty is significantly correlated with stock market volatility in the long run in both countries. Second, there exists a positive bi-directional relationship between US-EPU and VIX and exists a positive uni-directional relationship from KOR-EPU to VKOSPI in the short run. This indicates that the U.S. and S. Korea also have a significant relationship between economic policy uncertainty and stock market volatility in the short run, but the relationship has different characteristics. In the U.S., the relationship is bi-directional that means economic policy affects the stock market and the volatility of the stock market also affects the economic policy uncertainty while it is one direction in S. Korea from economic policy uncertainty to stock market volatility. This reveals that stock market volatility does not affect economic policy changes significantly in S. Korea, which implicates that S. Korea is inflexible and inelastic in economic policy changes by its stock market fluctuation. Overall, the paper findings reveal that the EPU index in both the US and S. Korea affects the volatility of the stock market significantly, which in turn, indicates that the EPU index can provide useful and meaningful information to investors in the stock and derivatives markets in both countries.

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HOW MANUFACTURERS WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH MANUFACTURERS' REPRESENTATIVES

Michael W. Pass, Sam Houston State University

ABSTRACT

When manufacturers outsource the selling function to manufacturers' representatives, it is important for them to develop effective working relationships. The representatives enable them to reach customers while also reducing expenses that would exist when employing their own salespeople. If a representative does not perceive the relationship to be effective, representation to end-customers on behalf of the manufacturer may decline, thus leading to lower revenues. This presentation refers to manufacturers as principals and manufacturers' representatives as MRs. The potential loss of revenues underscores the importance of answering the research question: How can principals work effectively with MRs?

This presentation reports findings of a study that examined the MRs' opinions of principals' behaviors and the quality of support they provide the MR when working, on their behalf, with end-customers. MRs responded to a questionnaire that obtained their opinions of principals in relationships with them that were perceived as effective, or ineffective. The findings indicate significant differences between effective and ineffective relationships across two types of principal behaviors and the quality perceptions for eight types of support. Significant differences in the MRs' satisfaction and performance associated with relationship effectiveness were also found.

The findings suggest that attention should be given to "how the principal interacts with the MR" (i.e. principal's behavior) and "what the principal provides the MR" (i.e. principal's support). Both areas are considered when the MRs evaluates the principal's conduct and ultimately determines if the relationship is effective, or ineffective. To further understand the relative importance of the behaviors and quality of eight types of support, discriminant analyses were completed. The relative ranking of these dimensions indicate their importance to achieving relationship effectiveness. The finding is useful to consider when deciding where to place time and effort to improve an MR-Principal relationship.

FAIR DISCLOSURE REGULATION: RECENT ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Sanjay Rajagopal, Western Carolina University

ABSTRACT

Koch et al. (2013) provided a systematic review of the literature on the SEC's Regulation Fair Disclosure ("Reg FD") which came into effect in October 2000. Their study focused on the issue of whether this regulation achieved its intended purpose of leveling the playing field across market participants by removing selective disclosure to analysts and preferred investors, without reducing the overall availability of relevant information to the market. The present article addresses significant contributions made to this body of literature since the Koch et al. (2013) study. For example, one of the more important recent developments in disclosure regulation in the US has been that pertaining to the use of social media for material disclosures by management, and the effects and implications of this are discussed here. Further, those studies are also considered that address Koch et al.'s suggestions for future research based on the findings of the works on Reg FD they assessed. In addition, where considered relevant to ongoing or suggested future research, important work predating the study cited above are covered in this review of the literature. Finally, recent evidence pertaining to disclosure regulation in countries other than the US (such as in Korea and EU countries) are also included. Based on the review of the results of the existing studies, suggestions for further research on fair disclosure regulation are provided.

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

The 2013 review cited above divided the then extant studies pertaining to the impact of Reg FD on the information environment into five categories: (1) those pertaining to returns, trading volume, and informed trades; (2) those focusing on information asymmetry (with its implications for the bid-ask spread and cost of capital); (3) those examining analyst behavior (forecast accuracy, informativeness of reports, and effort expended on information search); (4) those estimating shifts in the significance of disclosure channels (CRAs, earnings guidance, and conference calls); and (5) those assessing certain analysts' or investors' private access to management. As Koch et al. observed, the early studies based on stock values suggested no change in the information availability post Reg FD, but the results of later studies appeared to be consistent with a deterioration in the information environment for certain groups of firms (such as small-sized firms, and those in the high-tech sector). A differential impact of Reg FD on the information environment of small firms was also apparent in studies revolving around measure of information asymmetry and quality of analysts' forecasts. While studies of the disclosure channels employed post-Reg FD indicated that firms previously using closed conference calls commonly switched to open calls, with regard to selective disclosures itself, firms formerly relying on them did not appear typically to substitute them with public disclosures, enduring instead an attenuation of their information environment. Related to disclosure channels, there had been an ongoing interest among researchers to assess the nature of information transmitted in private meetings between management and groups of analysts or investors, a line of study facing the challenge of actual measurement of possible selective disclosure in these settings.

Based on their analysis of contemporary research on the effects of Reg FD, Koch et al. suggested that several important questions might be addressed: (1) Especially significant to the design and implementation of future regulation, what are the reasons for smaller firms being differentially impacted by this regulation? (2) With regard to the impact of Reg FD over time, in what way has firm behavior evolved since the regulation, and with what apparent effect on the supply of information and selective disclosure? (3) Have ADR firms voluntarily complied with the regulation, and what might have been the motivating factors for those that did? Such an enquiry may help add to an understanding of the unintended consequences of the regulation. (4) What is the effect of reputation and experience on the characteristics of voluntary disclosure? Studying the nature of initial public disclosures by firms that, pre-Reg FD, relied more on selective disclosure may help shed light on this question. (5) Does the apparently continuing “meaningful” private access to management by analysts and certain investors indicate noncompliance with Reg FD, or does it reflect the ability of the latter groups to uniquely exploit non-material information legally transmitted through such private meetings?

The present review aims to assess the ongoing studies that have sought to address the important research questions suggested above. For example, with regard to the previously observed impact of the regulation on high-tech firms, the attenuation of the information environment, and disclosure channels, it is relevant to note a recent study by Huang et al. (2021), which points to an increase in investor demand for information from firms conducting successful innovation. Firms appear to meet the demand through guidance forecasts, and the link between information demand and guidance appears to be stronger in the Reg FD period. Related to information asymmetry, cost of capital, and capital structure, a more recent study by Albring et al. (2016) indicates that in the absence of the option of selective disclosure, firms with potentially high proprietary costs of public disclosure have a relatively greater reliance on debt financing. The question of private meetings and access to meaningful selective information in the Reg FD period is analyzed thoroughly by Bengtzen (2017). With regard to the regulation and subsequent evolution in firm or market behavior, a relevant work would be that by Yu & Webb (2017), which studies intra-industry effects of earnings announcements, and finds market participants adapting to the regulation by employing publicly available information more intensively. In addition to assessing these and other studies relating to previously stated lines of enquiry, the present review proposes to encompass research into fair disclosure regulation in other countries, such as Korea, e.g., Shim et al. (2016), and Oh & Park (2017), and the EU countries, e.g., Cowan & Salotti (2020). Based on a systematic analysis of the current state of research into fair disclosure regulation, the present paper will then seek to summarize the implications for regulators, and propose avenues for further study.

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WHERE DO WE LOCATE THE PLANT? (INTERNATIONAL EDITION)

Kyle Ristig, Centenary College of Louisiana

CASE DESCRIPTION

This case can be used to introduce and utilize Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions as well as the World Factbook published by the U.S. Government by assessing the potential location of a new manufacturing facility located in a foreign country. Using information from these sources and the facts presented to the owner of the business, information must be retrieved and reviewed in order to finalize a new plant location. Rather than considering international financial factors, this case focuses on the cultural differences between countries and how those factors may be used in the evaluation of plant location. The case has a difficulty level of one to two and is designed to be taught in one class hour. Depending on the depth of detail the instructor intends to pursue, preparation time for the students will take from one to two hours.

CASE SYNOPSIS

The founder of a medium-sized company, Wolfpro, that provides electronic manufacturing services to major American and Canadian corporations, has been approached by a prospective client to manufacture parts for them. Wolfpro currently operates two plants in the United States that are operating at maximum capacity. Furthermore, the company has no experience with international operations. The client is based in the Philippines and has, for various reasons, mandated that in order to receive the contract, a plant must be built somewhere in the Far East. The founder has recognized that this could propel Wolfpro to international status but, because of the short lead time, it is necessary for an assessment of cultural issues be conducted in parallel with the financial analysis. To accomplish that, the founder has ordered his CFO to review the financial advantages and disadvantages of locating in each country while you are tasked with assisting the founder in the cultural analysis. Preliminary analysis has determined that the literacy rate, Gini index, Hoffstede Masculinity and Individualism indices, and the Ease of Doing Business Index will be used for the analysis. Using the World Factbook and the Hoffstede Insights Country Comparison, which country would be most accommodating for a new plant?

THE EFFICACY OF USING TEAMS VERSUS INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE ROUNDS IN BUSINESS SIMULATIONS

Robin L. Snipes, Columbus State University
Jennifer P. Pitts, Columbus State University

ABSTRACT

Although the companies that sell business simulations argue that they are effective learning tools for various reasons, the research on the efficacy of business simulations is somewhat mixed. The purpose of this study is to provide more information on the efficacy of business simulations on student learning and, specifically, to provide some insight into the use of groups versus individual-based simulations. A comparison of student assessment scores using the team-based practice method versus the individual-based practice method will be presented in this study. It is believed that the study will show a higher performance average for those classes that employed an individual-based practice method versus the team-based practice method.

INTRODUCTION

Many business schools today use business simulations as a way to provide students with hands-on learning experiences in the classroom. Business simulations can also increase student engagement in the learning process. Simulations have become even more popular in recent years for business capstone courses in which teams of students compete with each other in a simulated business environment. Most universities today have begun embracing new technology to help track learning outcomes and provide more realistic scenarios for students to put into practice the concepts they learn in class. Although the companies that sell business simulations argue that they are effective learning tools for various reasons (e.g., mimics on-the-job learning, risk-free team decision-making, increased student engagement, increased realism, instantaneous feedback, etc.), the research on the efficacy of business simulations is somewhat mixed. Some research suggests that simulations may be too complicated to work effectively in helping students understand cause-and-effect relationships (Neely and Tucker, 2012). Other studies have found that "some learning occurs" and that simulations are "an effective way to enhance students' knowledge and skills" (Hanafiah, Ahmad, Abdullah, 2016). Another study suggests that social interaction and psychologically safe team environments may enhance student learning in simulations, in part by providing support and diverse perspectives (Xu and Yang, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to provide more information on the efficacy of business simulations on student learning and, specifically, to provide some insight into the use of groups versus individual-based simulations. Most business schools use the team-based method to introduce simulations into the classroom. This study will compare student learning outcomes in a team-based environment versus an individual-based simulation environment to determine which method might provide a better and more effective learning experience for students.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Over a decade ago, the "Capstone" business simulation (see www.capsim.com) was introduced to Georgia's WebMBA program in the capstone Business Strategy course that students take in their last semester of the program. The WebMBA is taught by a consortium of seven AACSB-accredited business schools in the University System of Georgia. The seven schools share faculty and resources to deliver the 100% online program. The WebMBA program is designed for working professionals and uses the team learning concept in most classes. For the capstone Business Strategy course, teamwork counts for about one-third of the overall course grade.

Initially, the Capstone simulation was introduced solely as a team project, with both practice and competition rounds completed by teams of three to six students each. Teams were assigned at the beginning of the course and instructors provided students with tutorials and simulation guides covering the basics of the simulation. As a team, students completed practice rounds against computer-based teams prior to entering the team competition rounds. However, course instructors recently changed the course format to require students to complete *individual* practice rounds ("footraces") in which students individually complete four simulation rounds against computer teams prior to forming teams and entering the team competition portion of the simulation. This was done to respond to student complaints of team members who were not participating in the decision-making process and who didn't seem to understand cause-and-effect relationships.

The phenomenon known as "social loafing" is a concept in social psychology that some people exert less effort to achieve a goal when working in a group setting. Since the WebMBA program consists mainly of busy, working professionals, it appeared that social loafing was negating some of the benefits of the team learning process. As a motivation, peer evaluations were added to the Business Strategy course so that team members could rate individual team members' contribution to the group decision-making at the end of the course. However, it appeared that group politics and rating inflation might have affected the motivational power of peer evaluations. So, to combat social loafing and encourage more individual engagement in the simulation project, the format of the simulation practice rounds was changed to require students to complete them individually instead of in teams. It was believed that this would accomplish four objectives: (1) it would encourage students to learn the simulation program early so as to better understand cause-and-effect relationships between decision variables (i.e., R&D, Marketing, Operations, Finance, etc.) prior to entering the team competition rounds; (2) it would increase students' understanding and feelings of efficacy regarding the use of the Capstone simulation; (3) it would increase students' engagement and likelihood of contributing to the team decision-making process; and (4) it would increase students' learning outcomes assessment scores. A learning outcome assessment test is given to students at the end of the course. This learning outcomes test is attached to the Capstone simulation and is called "CompXM." The CompXM learning outcomes assessment tool uses a simulation to assess students' understanding of business strategy and business functional area concepts similar to the one used in the team competition rounds. Therefore, student proficiency in the practice rounds should improve their scores on the CompXM assessment at the end of the semester as well.

A comparison of WebMBA student CompXM scores using the team-based practice method versus the individual-based practice method will be presented in this study. It is believed that the study will show a higher performance average for those classes that employed an individual-based practice method versus the team-based practice method.

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DO REMITTANCES PROMOTE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT? EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Umar Mohammed, Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) continues to lose its skilled workers through migration in a form of brain drain. In return remittances from these migrant workers to the region have been surging and now constitute a major external source of finance. Do these increasing inflow of remittances contribute to human development? This paper examines the impact of remittances on human development in 30 SSA countries using the system Generalized Method of Moments (sGMM) approach for the period 2004-2018. The empirical results show that remittance inflows impact positively on human development in SSA. Based on the empirical results, it is necessary for SSA countries to have a clear-cut policy framework and strategies on migration to attract, increase and harness the full benefit of remittances.

Keywords: *Brain drain, Generalized Method of Moments, Human development, Remittances*

THE RISE OF FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY AND ITS POTENTIAL

Santosh Venkatraman, Tennessee State University

ABSTRACT

Financial Technology or FinTech is the ultimate shopping and funds transfer convenience, and is enabled by a device located in the palm of our hands, back pockets, or handbags for most at all times. The ability to purchase goods and services, pay bills, transfer money, order that last minute birthday gift for tomorrow is all within our reach with a simple tap on a smartphone or tablet. FinTech and Mobile-Commerce has revolutionized the consumer world as we know it today.

Modern FinTech companies like Paypal, Square, Stripe and Venmo are more well known, but there are many more next generation companies in that space like Remitly, Xoom, SoFi (Social Finance), Adyen, Payoneer and ShopKeep. Many of these applications go well beyond just transferring money, and have started to do real time lending for consumer purchases, wealth management, student loans, and "social" investing.

It is clear that there is tremendous potential for applying Financial Technology to the field of banking and finance, and there is a good case for disruption and enhanced efficiency and access. The purpose of this paper is to study the major trends in this digital financial space, and describe the advantages and disadvantages of this fast growing sector. This paper will be prove beneficial to business managers, entrepreneurs, financial institutions and their customers, as it will introduce them to the various ways in which they can use FinTech to improve their work. Academic researchers will gain a good understanding of the great potential of FinTech, and will also be able to prepare their students for future work in the various business sectors.

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TRADING VOLUME AND RETURN VOLATILITY OF DJIA STOCKS

Priti Verma, Texas A&M University, Kingsville

ABSTRACT

Using the mixture of distributions hypothesis, this paper examines the relationship between trading volume and time-varying conditional heteroscedasticity of all stocks in DJIA. Using daily data from January 2nd, 2015 to March 10th, 2021, this paper investigates if trading volume can be identified as a mixing variable for daily information of the stocks in DJIA. Preliminary results show that when trading volume is included in the conditional variance equation, the volatility persistence decreases for some stocks only. These results differ from the findings of the developed market stocks. It is important to further analyze these results to see why they are not consistent with those of the developed markets.

JEL classification codes: C32, G10, G12

Keywords: Stocks, GARCH, Trading volume, Volatility

ENTREPRENEURS AND THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC: CAN RESILIENCE AND CERTAIN PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS HELP ENTREPRENEURS TRANSFORM STRESS INTO SUCCESS?

Martin S. Bressler, Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Linda A. Bressler, Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Mark E. Bressler

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurs, like all other human beings, possess both strengths and weaknesses. We come with our own personality traits and often quirky behaviors. We also sometimes come with psychological conditions and disorders that impact actions in our daily lives. In this paper, the researchers address three conditions exhibited among entrepreneurs and the resulting impact of those conditions. We demonstrate that while these conditions may provide challenges to entrepreneurs and those who interact with them, these conditions also come with a "flip side", allowing the entrepreneur to overcome the negative aspects of these conditions and help them become successful entrepreneurs.

Under normal economic conditions, entrepreneurs frequently face stress, whether from competitive pressures, financial issues, or everyday problems. But now, with COVID-19 and resulting issues, many small business owners are facing the highest level of stress they have faced as entrepreneurs. According to the Yelp Economic Impact report, cited in Forbes magazine (September 16, 2020) an estimated 163,735 U.S. businesses have closed since March 1. This figure represents a 23% increase in business closures since July 10.

The COVID-19 pandemic has multiplied these issues, both in number and intensity of their impact. Small business owners have been saddled with additional costs associated with COVID compliance, while closure or limited opening results in only a fraction of expected sales. The COVID pandemic produces additional and more critical stressors and entrepreneurs need to be aware of how any psychological conditions can be leveraged to mitigate the additional COVID stress.

Key words: entrepreneurs, entrepreneur success, psychological disorders, resilience, COVID-19 stressors

DEBITS, CREDITS, AND YOGA, OH MY! MINDFULNESS AND THE ANXIOUS ACCOUNTANT

Linda Bressler, Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Diana Pence, University of Houston-Downtown
Martin S. Bressler, Southeastern Oklahoma State University

ABSTRACT

Stress can be defined as a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Individuals can be stressed because of internal factors (for example) worry about a future medical appointment/process. Many researchers define stress in the workplace as employees' perceived threat or challenge where they work which can affect individuals in many different ways including stuttering, stomach problems, blood pressure elevation, diabetes occurrence or worsening, workplace burnout, depression, and low self-esteem or the development of irritable bowel syndrome. Considerable research can be found on workplace stress, but limited research can be found in the literature regarding workplace stress in the accounting field, despite stress being more prevalent in the accounting profession.

Key words: accountants, workplace stress, occupational burnout, mindfulness