

# Foreword (for Springer Proceedings - Business and Economics series)

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**Suggested Citation:** Camilleri, M.A. (2023). Foreword, In A.L. Negruşa and M.M. Coroş (Eds.), Sustainable Approaches and Business Challenges in Times of Crisis (3rd Edition), International Conference – Modern Trends in Business, Hospitality, and Tourism, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 2023, Springer Proceedings (Business and Economics series), Springer Nature, Cham, Switzerland.

I congratulate my colleagues, Adina Letiția Negruşa and Monica Maria Coroş for planning, organizing and leading their International Conference – Modern Trends in Business, Hospitality, and Tourism that was recently held at the Faculty of Business in Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. I am honored to prepare my Foreword for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of their book, entitled; “Sustainable Approaches and Business Challenges in Times of Crisis”.

I am very pleased to announce that this title features seventeen (17) contributions that were accepted for publication in Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics series. It covers a broad range of topics focused on business, tourism and/or hospitality, including tourism strategy, tourism planning, tourism policy, airline economics, crisis management, sustainable tourism, fund raising of non-governmental organizations, branding, tourism marketing, destination marketing, small town destination marketing, smart destinations, agri-tourism, mountain tourism, spa tourism,

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as well as on the adoption of disruptive tourism technologies (including Blockchain, innovative mobile applications, et cetera), among others.

This publication is a useful guide for practitioners including those who are actively engaged in the tourism and hospitality sectors. However, it is a valuable resource for consultants, senior executives and managers who work in other service-based industries.

The contributing authors utilize various methodological approaches including theoretical, empirical and real-life case studies to shed light on the latest technological developments as well as on the most modern trends that appeal to business researchers and scholars. They critically analyze the global marketing environments, and discuss on a wide array of economic, socio-cultural, technological and environmental realities in the aftermath of the unexpected Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Chapter 1 investigates sustainable business-models (SBMs). Gorski and Dumitraşcu (2023) focus on the sustainability challenges related to the businesses' interconnectedness with society and the environment. The authors present their findings from a bibliometric study (of articles that were published through Web of Science database) about SBMs. They identify current trends and discuss about challenges and opportunities for today's responsible businesses. They clarify that the sustainability of several businesses is disrupted by the digital transformation that was accelerated by COVID-19, and brought forth by Industry 4.0 technologies. Their contribution implies that SBMs ought to engage in a responsible manner as they are expected to prioritize the interests of stakeholders, at all times.

Chapter 2 discusses about sustainable tourism development in Sicily, Italy. Cusumano (2023) argues that local policies relating to the carry capacity of tourists and to environmental

sustainability, have a crucial role to play in the planning and management of destinations. The author implies that her contribution analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of local tourism policy. She puts forward her recommendations for policy makers. In sum, she suggests that they have to implement common and integrated sustainable tourism strategy to: (i) increase education and training opportunities for tourism employees, (ii) invest in infrastructural development and transportation facilities, (iii) provide access to tourist attractions for all vulnerable visitors like the disabled and/or to elderly people, and (iv) improve the local economy by promoting authentic food and traditional handcraft, among other propositions.

Chapter 3 is related to the development of sustainable innovations in tourism. Meneses et al. (2023) report the findings from a systematic literature review of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed studies on this topic. They summarize theories, ideologies, methods, as well as practices adopted at different levels and stages, in different tourism contexts. The authors describe various business models, sustainable innovative strategies, innovative leadership, and shed light on a wide array of stakeholders' relationships within the tourism industry. Their findings underline the importance of introducing innovations that are intended to foster sustainable development. They imply that a collaborative engagement among stakeholders adds value to the destinations and to their tourism service providers.

Chapter 4 outlines a roadmap for the aviation industry in a post COVID-19 context. Gurcoskun and Ayazlar (2023) review International Air Transport Association's (IATA's) and the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO's) reports to examine the economic impacts of an unprecedented epidemic on the airlines' financial performance, in terms of revenue per passenger-kilometre (RPK) flown. They also evaluate the economic effects of COVID-19 on tourist destinations. In conclusion, the authors discuss about the implications for the future.

Chapter 5 features an empirical study that explores the tourists' intentions to use a tourism application (app) in the Saudi Arabian context. Alhemimah (2023) report about the tourists' perceptions on the usability of the app (and/or about the website's usability), on information quality, as well as on perceived risks (of visiting destinations during COVID-19). The author hypothesized that these factors can affect their intentions to book their travel requirements through the tourism app (or by using the website). The author implies that his contribution offers practical insights and recommendations for destination managers as well as for other marketers to improve their online and social media presence.

Chapter 6 explores the extent to which tourists are utilizing contactless technologies when they are abroad, as well as their willingness to continue using them in the future. Trihas et al. (2023) rely on a sample of 500 research participants to explore their respondents' attitudes toward digital payment solutions for travel and hospitality services, in the Greek context. The authors elaborate on the advantages, disadvantages and on possible challenges of using contactless payments. In the main, they indicate that these electronic devices provide safe and reliable transactions, are simple to use, improve the quality of the commercial services, and offer greater privacy for customers, among other benefits. They imply that such payment technologies are here to stay in a post COVID-19 scenario.

Chapter 7 examines the drivers that are luring tourists to revisit destinations in a post-pandemic context. Duong and Tung (2023) use a quantitative approach to identify which factors and to reveal to what extent they are affecting the tourists' attitudes and their intentions to travel to Southeast Asian destinations. The authors relied on a structural equation modeling approach to confirm the reliability and validity of their constructs, and to test their set hypotheses. Their findings report about the positive and significant antecedent factors that were affecting the tourists'

re-visit attitudes, which were in turn influencing their revisit intentions. In conclusion, they discuss about managerial implications to practitioners and policy makers.

Chapter 8 critically analyzes the rules and procedures related to public procurement contracts during uncertain times and in crises situations. Cimpean (2023) makes reference to “possibilities foreseen by the legislation to modify the contract without the need to retender”. The author identifies weaknesses in a specific regulatory framework to the detriment of organizations and local citizens (in an Eastern European context). In conclusion, she presents her implications to policy makers.

Chapter 9 discusses about current trends in the travel industry. El Archi and Benbba (2023) feature the findings from a bibliometric analysis, to identify the most prominent themes in the academic literature. They indicate that innovation, sustainability, and specific technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence as well as the Internet of Things are transforming the consumers’ experiences in tourism. In conclusion, they identify future research avenues for prospective scholars.

Chapter 10 explores consumer demand for health, wellness and spa services in the Portuguese context during COVID-19 pandemic. Alves et al. (2023) investigate the demand for thermal spas and evaluate courses of action to attract customers to this niche. Their research clearly distinguishes between classic therapeutical health services and wellness services. The authors report that COVID-19’s preventative measures including the social distancing protocols, have led to a significant decrease in demand to these services. Nevertheless, they identify typical customers for spa services including tourists from different markets. In conclusion, they outline future research directions.

Chapter 11 raises awareness on the mountain tourism areas near Brasov, Romania. Bode et al. (2023) focus on the tourists' length of stay in Poiana Brasov Mountain resort. They indicated that the tourists' nationality, typology as well as the seasonality factors are affecting their average length of stay in this specific resort. The authors found that this mountain destination is popular among domestic and international travelers. In conclusion, they imply that tourism policy makers as well as hospitality marketers ought to devise well-crafted strategies to attract tourists to their mountain areas, all year round.

Chapter 12 advances the idea that smart towns could be transformed into smart destinations. Coroş et al. (2023) argue that like their larger counterparts, small towns may also have access to resources, competences and capabilities. The authors make reference to different aspects that are enhancing their competitiveness including the creativity and versatility of their citizens as well as the use of innovative technologies. They imply that small Romanian towns are turning into smart and sustainable destinations, as they are creating employment and generating economic growth to the country. In conclusion, the authors present their implications to tourism policy makers and to practitioners.

Chapter 13 postulates that there is scope for Romanian Tourism stakeholders to invest in Blockchain technologies and in Non-fungible Tokens (NFTs). Nastase et al. (2023) posit that there are numerous benefits from using these innovations including increased efficiencies, lower costs, and greater transparencies for their users. The authors indicate that distributed ledger and NFT technologies (like Stramosi - i.e. the first Romanian NFT service provider) enable tourism businesses to reduce their intermediaries, as they allow them to sell their services directly to the consumers. Finally, they outline their implications to tourism and hospitality practitioners.

Chapter 14 presents a revised theory of planned behavior to examine the individuals' perceptions and intentions to donate funds to non-profit organizations. Șeulean (2023) captured quantitative data from a sample of 750 respondents. The author sought to investigate the frequency of donations as well as different types of fundraising methods. In conclusion, he elaborates on his theoretical contribution and discusses about the practical implications of his empirical research.

Chapter 15 suggests that it is in the agribusinesses' interest to adopt branding strategies to differentiate their services from competitors. Buzgău and Cosma (2023) feature the findings from a systematic review and meta-analyses focused on brand value, brand equity, brand trust and brand loyalty in an agribusiness context. Their results reveal that customer satisfaction, vertical/horizontal integration, transparency and association with local products are adding value to the agribusinesses' brands. In addition, the brand labelling process that indicate the products' place of origin, quality certificates/standards, the financial performance of the brand, the age of the brand in the market, as well as the brand familiarity among customers, are affecting their brands' equity. The authors also noted that the products' private label as well as the manufacturers' local/regional/national brands, their type of labelling, the availability of different payment methods, and the implications derived from positive the word-of-mouth publicity, are influencing the consumers' trust in the agribusinesses. In conclusion, they imply that emotional customer involvement and their proximity with the agribusiness, as well as the brand awareness about their standards are influencing the consumers' brand loyalty (and the likelihood of repeat business).

Chapter 16 sheds light on two decades of municipal bond trading at the Bucharest Stock Exchange. Pop and Georgescu (2023) raise awareness on how local governments could raise their capital requirements through sub-sovereign (municipal) bonds. The authors noted that, to date, there is still limited research that explores this topic in depth and breadth. Their finding suggest

that “the quasi-absence of municipal bond offerings (i.e the only exception being the bonds issued by Bucharest) represents an important vulnerability for the future of the municipal bond market segment at the Bucharest Stock Exchange”. The authors identify opportunities and threats for financial stakeholders in the Romanian context.

Chapter 17 evaluates how smart healthcare devices have improved the quality of health services for many citizens. Gaikar Vilas and Mitali (2023) explore the users’ perceptions about mobile health (m-health) technologies in Mumbai, India. Their quantitative study revealed that the users’ perceptions about mHealth apps was affected by their educational level. It also reported that an increased awareness about mHealth apps resulted in more adoption of them. The authors imply that the adoption of mHealth is still relatively low in Mumbai. In conclusion, they recommend that health authorities promote their mobile apps among various demographic groups in society.

Overall, these conference proceedings advance interesting, informative and timely contributions “on sustainable approaches and business challenges in times of crisis”. I believe that this book is a useful guide for academic researchers, practitioners, as well as for post graduate students who are pursuing courses in business administration, and its related topics. Its authors hail from different backgrounds and have acquired relevant qualifications and experiences in academic writing. Hence, it features distinct writing styles and approaches. Some contributors clearly distinguish themselves, among others, particularly those who are capable of captivating their audiences’ attention through articulated arguments.

“In sum, I am very pleased to recommend this authoritative book, as it offers a rich source of thought for everyone who wants to advance his/her knowledge and understanding about contemporary issues affecting business, tourism and hospitality organizations, in the digital age”.



With compliments,

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