

Editorial: Management, Informatics and Governance

Rembrandt Klopper

As we live through the digital revolution and, for that matter, have entered the much acclaimed fourth industrial revolution, we need to also take a glance back, to look at where this has all began. There are many academic scenarios – and some not so academic – but in principle, it appears that, like many other scientific endeavours, it was started by and for the military. With regard to *Alternation*'s own trajectory, Smit and Chetty (2018a; and 2018b) provide a few brief insights.

But be that as it may. Tim Berners-Lee was the first to connect the dots, and provide a vision for the future, in 1989, with the sketch on the cover of this issue of *Alternation*. And, after the 30 years, since, we want to dedicate this issue to him.

In this issue, in their '23/ 25 Years of *Alternation*, and the African Digital Humanities: Capacity, Communication, and Knowledge-Power', **Johannes A. Smit** and **Denzil Chetty**, condense the presentation by Prof J.A. Smit, as the international Open Access keynote lecture, of 23 October 2017, at Westville Campus, UKZN. It forms the first of a double-barrel article that seeks to open up some research possibilities with regard to the subject and knowledge-power (cf. Smit & Chetty in this issue, p. 360). Drawing on Foucault, they firstly provide a theoretical framework that may assist in assessing the significance of *Alternation*, followed by a positioning of the questions Foucault raised through his nearly twenty years of research, on this matter, within the framework of the digital, or electronic age, specifically with regard to the African Digital Humanities. They then briefly reflect on a sample of the historical events in the history of *Alternation* (since 1994/ 1996), followed, by positioning it in the international dynamics of the digital age, and the move from Humanities Computing in *Alternation*, to the Digital Humanities.

Joshua Chukwuere, Sam Lubbe, Jan Meyer, and Rembrandt

Klopper focused their research on the issues related to rigour and relevance in Information Systems research in South Africa. Given that there are many reasons for the division between rigour and relevance, the gap between the two has promoted debate and argument that has lasted for years. Many believed that IS research is effective and others oppose the argument. Some scholars within or outside the discipline are considering whether IS research output is affecting and impacting decision making in the industry, and visa versa There is also an on-going criticism that IS research lacks rigour, relevance, effective communication and acceptance in the field as noted in the literature. The debates seem to be conflicting, which also means that the debate continues, and the gap still persists, in spite of efforts by researchers. Their efforts and hard-work seems ineffective. The study determined whether the needs of practitioners through focuses on rigour and relevance of IS/academic research are being met, and also sought to determine whether this lingering debate over the decades has worth from an academic viewpoint.

This is followed by the article by **Prudence Khumalo**, titled, ‘Governance and Local Economic Development In Three Southern African Countries: Namibia, South Africa And Zimbabwe’. Khumalo points out that the Local Economic Development (LED) terrain in Southern Africa is punctuated by a high attrition rate of initiatives, which triggers both development practitioners and scholars to search for solutions to this challenge. This work engages this matter, and explores the centrality of Governance in the process of LED implementation. The thrust of the work is to explore governance issues that may help improve economic development performance of localities in Southern Africa. The article unpacks both concepts with a goal of uncovering essential linkages so as to determine what entails good governance for LED. Despite its popularity as one of the vehicles to attaining the Millennium Development goals, LED has had a number of setbacks in its implementation. This work endeavours to critically examine the aspect of governance as a key factor in the success of LED. Using lenses of the bottom-up approach to development, the governance challenges are discussed as some of the key setbacks to the success of LED in the region. Consequently, the article discusses the possible ways of strengthening governance for the success of Local Economic Development.

The article by **Eric Mang’unyi** and **Krishna Govender**, titled, ‘Perceived Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction – Employees’ Perspectives of Kenyan Private Universities’ reports on an empirical study conducted among a sample 133 employees of private higher education institution in Ken-

ya, to examine the relationship between perceived service quality (SQ) and customer satisfaction (CS), using the HEdPERF instrument. Although service quality was measured using six dimensions namely: academic, non-academic, reputation, access, programmes and understanding, by using structural equation modelling (SEM), the six SQ dimensions needed to be collapsed into four. Main reasons is that these four were the most significant for the employees of private universities. The employee is viewed as a 'customer' of the private higher education institution, thus service quality refers to the employee-customers' perceptions. The results partially support the proposed conceptual model that non-academic, access, academic and reputation dimensions have a positive and significant influence on the employees' SQ perceptions, and in turn influence their satisfaction. It can be inferred from the findings that university quality should not only be looked at in terms of academic activities alone, as non-academic aspects also need to be considered since they are deemed important to the employees. Since universities are in both national and international competition, they (management) should aim at ensure that all services related to organizational life like physical services, and implicit and explicit services, are delivered to acceptable standards to realize increased satisfaction.

Focusing on public healthcare in their 'Managing and Valuing Diversity in the South African Public Healthcare System', **Rubeshan Perumal** and **Sadhasivan Perumal** starts their article by pointing out that human capital remains a critical component of healthcare, particularly in low and middle-income countries where there is a dire shortage of professionals. They argue that recruiting and retaining health professionals has become a key strategic focus in South Africa. Innovative recruitment strategies coupled with increasing access to higher education and training has resulted in an increasingly diverse workforce. Identifying, appreciating, and managing this diversity across all diversity dimensions is important for both social and economic reasons. These efforts are likely to provide an opportunity for optimizing productivity while building a cohesive workforce. This paper explores the impetus and possible methods for effective diversity management in the South African public healthcare environment.

To be successful in the current highly competitive market a South African alcoholic beverage supplying company (SAABSC) must guarantee customer service and service quality. So argue, **Jacques Beukes, J.J. Prinsloo, and Theuns G. Pelsler** in their 'Customer Service Expectations from South African Alcoholic Beverage Suppliers'. As a means of differentiation, companies have

to focus their efforts on quality customer service. The purpose of the study was to measure the service delivery expectations and realisations of customers that receive delivery from SAABSC based on their geographical location. It required the implementation of a descriptive research method. The target population comprised customers of SAABSC situated in the Gauteng, Western Cape and North West Provinces of South Africa. The results from the study indicate that customers expect the SAABSC to deliver on all five service quality dimensions but fail to do so to their satisfaction. Recommendations on how to improve on these dimensions are given in the form of CRM strategies that SAABSC can implement. Ensuring that these recommendations are implemented will ensure a higher level of service quality and customer satisfaction. This should lead to increased customer retention, sales and profit growth, increased loyalty, the addition of new customers and overall better customer relationship.

e-Government (e-Gov) projects are continuing to fail in countries across the world, including South Africa. Therefore, although e-Gov presents a means to transform government service delivery to citizens, the intended benefits are not achieved. In addition, the failure of e-Gov leads to significant wasteful expenditure. So argue **I. Abdulla** and **B.W. McArthur**, in their ‘Government-to-Government e-Government: A Case Study of Challenges Facing User Adoption in KwaZulu-Natal’. Their article focuses on a specific category of e-Gov, Government-to-Government (G2G), concerned with the use of Information and Communications Technology to automate and stream-line business processes within a government department and across departments. Challenges facing user adoption of G2G in a South African context are analysed using the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport as a case study. As the first step in this research, cases of G2G user adoption challenges in South African government were identified. This helped to inform the focus of the literature review and the research instrument used. A qualitative research methodology was used to understand the G2G user adoption challenges. This research has shown that user adoption is a central challenge facing G2G. User adoption is influenced by six main themes: *Addressing User Requirements, Business Process Management, Change Management, User Involvement, Organisational Culture* and *Priority*. The six main themes in turn are influenced by sub-themes: *strategy, usability, complexity, HR skills, resistance, systems development methodology, management support* and *data quality*. Technology infrastructure was identified as an important yet peripheral issue affecting G2G. This research has provided a deeper understanding of the challenges

facing G2G user adoption, by focusing on these emerging themes and sub-themes and describing how they impact on G2G. The findings are summarised in a G2G User Adoption Challenges model.

In the paper, by Grant R. Howard, Sam Lubbe, Magda Huisman and Rembrandt Klopper, the first objective of is to demonstrate the quantitative corroboration of the Green Information Systems (Green IS) management framework, which comprises the enabling capabilities of Green IS, the moderating concepts, and their relationships to environmental sustainability. The second objective is to demonstrate the framework's verification using the focus group method and member checking. The achievement of these objectives establishes that the framework successfully captured the essential Green IS concepts and interrelationships to be relevant for environmental sustainability, that it was credible, relevant, and an original contribution to the academic body of knowledge. The research was empirical, confirmatory, quantitative, and qualitative. The study provides research design insights by detailing research design choices and rationale. The framework presents verified and salient management focal points for environmental sustainability in the South African banking sector.

'Problems around Accessing Information in South African Rural Communities' is the title of the article by **Malcolm Seretse, Joshua Chukwuere, Sam Lubbe** and **Rembrandt Klopper**. Poverty is known to be a rural phenomenon regardless of developments taking place. Rural communities of underdeveloped countries are regarded to be living in those parts of the country that lack almost all general services and especially those services focused on basic needs. The information society should be further developed because information has a significant impact in ensuring development in communities. But this is not the case in rural areas because of information poverty caused by a lack of means to access it. Consequently, the study addresses the problems to access information in rural communities. The research explores the problems to access information through ICTs such as computer and Internet access in rural communities, and proposes guidelines on how to ensure proper access to information for rural residents. Rural communities and government will benefit from the findings of the research. Government is responsible to ensure that every citizen has the means to access information in order to bridge the gap of information poverty and the digital divide.

In their article, 'Gesture-based Technology and Organisational Strategy: a Study of a Quick Service Restaurant Franchisor' **Nishal Ragoo-**

beer, Rembrandt Klopper and Sam Lubbe, develop a theoretical framework that is hinged on critical success factors, enablers and inhibitors, for the Alignment of Gesture-Based Technology and Organisational Strategy for the quick serving restaurant sector. The critical success factors, enablers and inhibitors that were used to formulate the framework were extrapolated from the literature. The sample design of this research study is a Non-Random, Purposive Sample. The key analysis of the research was to test whether critical success factors, enablers and inhibitors indeed can be used to derive a theoretical framework using a questionnaire. It was concluded that critical success factors, enablers and inhibitors were indeed core to the formulation of a theoretical framework. All of the critical success factors, enablers and inhibitors presented in the sample were accepted.

‘Students’ Use of Smartphones at a Historically Disadvantaged University’ is the title of the study by **Sello Mokoena, Rembrandt Klopper and Sam Lubbe**. As technology becomes cheaper, the potential for learning is greater, and the preparing and disseminating of learning materials through smartphones are likely to become quite popular. It was not clear whether students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, have the right equipment (smartphones) to support learning at a historically disadvantaged university. This study assesses smartphone ownership as a potential tool for enhancing students’ learning at a relatively resource-poor higher education (HE) environment in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Correspondence universities, such as ‘Unisa’ and examples worldwide in HE, use students’ smartphones for educational purposes. Primary data were collected from postgraduates and undergraduate students using a self-administered structured questionnaire for all faculties. The unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) was employed to account for students’ perceived ease of use (EOU) and perceived usefulness (PU). The results revealed smartphone ownership and use was greater than the ownership and use of regular cellular phones. Regular cellular phone users commented on smartphone capabilities as enhancing learning.

Njabulo Simelane’s, ‘Hands-on Postgraduate Research Proposal Design’, with **Rembrandt Klopper and Sam Lubbe**, aimed at providing an account of empirical research among postgraduate first-time researchers regarding what skills are required to develop sound quality research proposals. The authors identify challenges that novice researchers encounter when designing their research proposals. The first of these challenges is to design a problem statement. The second challenge is how the researcher identifies an

appropriate theoretical framework that is compatible with the problem set under investigation. This contribution also explains how the matrix method of literature review could be used to ensure a review only references sources that relate to the problems under investigation.

Governments and institutions in Africa are increasingly turning to ICT-based solutions in order to improve the education performance of their students. Specifically, the promise of eLearning to improve and to better facilitate learning has spurred innovation towards provision of eLearning resources on mobile devices such as tablets. Tablets hold enormous potential in delivery of eLearning due to their portability and provision for multiple uses. In their ‘Report On The 2016 KwaZulu-Natal Pearson eLearning Pilot Project’, **Rembrandt Klopper, Chao Charity Mbogo and Yigal Rosen** aimed at understanding the efficacy of tablet-based digital content on teachers and learners and consequently, to offer recommendations for sustainable, scalable eLearning models. Their report presents key findings from an eLearning research pilot conducted in 12 schools at KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa. The results indicate that an eLearning intervention could have an impact on the learners’ subject-specific skills, that teachers and learners gained digital literacy in their use of the eLearning intervention, that learners gained confidence in using the eLearning intervention and integrated various digital resources in their learning over time, that learners were sharing content more over time, that the majority of the teachers felt comfortable integrating the digital content in their teaching over time. The findings in this report would help educational leaders, content developers, technological providers and the Department of Education to make sound decisions in relation to developing and implementing eLearning interventions, especially in South African schools. Based on the findings of the eLearning research pilot, this report also presents recommendations based on pedagogy, eLearning, training, support and facilitation, implementation, hardware, partnerships and provides possible considerations for tablets in educational rollouts.

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