

Call for Papers

Special Issue of Journal of African Business

Decrypting the CSR Promises, Challenges and Practices in the SMEs, Start-ups, and Intrapreneurial Initiatives

Guest Editors

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Background

While the positive impacts of Corporate social responsibility (CSR) on competitiveness are increasingly recognized (Tiba, Rijnsoever, Hekkert, 2019), enterprises still face dilemmas when the most socially responsible course of action may not be the most financially beneficial, at least in the short term (Ndhlovu, 2021; Singh, Majumdar, Saini, 2017). Younger customers are increasingly demanding sophisticated and sustainable product and service offerings, and employees, particularly Millennials prefer working more in more for companies with a proven sustainability track record (Jenkin, 2015). In this context, to maximize the creation of shared value, enterprises need to adopt a long-term, strategic approach to CSR, and to explore the opportunities for developing innovative products, services and sustainable business models that contribute to societal wellbeing and lead to higher quality and more productive jobs. However, the complexity of that process will depend on firm growth trajectory (Biga-Diambeidou, 2008) as well as factors such as the size of the enterprise and the nature of its operations. The fact is that, for most SMEs, Start-ups, especially micro- enterprises as well as new ventures, the social responsibility practice is likely to remain intuitive and informal (Singh, Majumdar, Saini, 2017). Furthermore, certain types of enterprise, such as family-owned businesses or social, for no-profit organization such as co-operatives, compared to normal Companies, have particular ownership and governance structures that can be especially conducive to responsible business conduct.

The way by which SMEs and new ventures manage interactions with stakeholders, control socio-environmental externalities and improve ecosystem impact by deploying CSR policies adapted to the context (Azmat & Samaratunge, 2009), firms' positioning and strategy (Murillo & Lozano, 2006), remains a central issue (Singh, Majumdar, Saini, 2017), although insufficiently explored by scholars (Tiba et al., 2019; Samuel & Mqomboti, 2017; Azmat & Samaratunge, 2009; Jamali et al., 2009).

While CSR has been mainly associated with large companies (Abugre & Anlesinya, 2019; Spence, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Perrini, 2006) and well documented in literature, and that some scholar such as Williamson et al. (2006, p. 317) posit that the concept of CSR cannot be applied to SMEs as they are 'heterogeneous, having qualities, pertaining to size, resources, management style and personal

relationships' that make it difficult for them to adopt large firm practices' (Azmat & Samaratunge, 2009). Murillo & Lozano (2006, p. 237) posit that the term CSR is problematic and needs to 'be replaced with a concept closer to SMEs specific reality'. As explained by these scholars (2006:227), «the academic literature reveals the need to undertake more in-depth field studies [...] to discover the organizational culture, the difficulties, [the resistances] and the perceptions surrounding CSR in SMEs ». This perspective is also supported by recent works in the field (see for e.g., Bruna & Nicolò, 2020).

In this context, some alternative concepts such as 'responsible' entrepreneurship (RE) for being associated with small entrepreneurs rather than large corporate entities has emerged as a concept that is parallel to CSR (Azmat & Samaratunge, 2009; Chapple & Moon, 2007). Chapple & Moon (2007) view RE as those who make a significant contribution to society while doing well for themselves. However, in their recent systematic review of RE and CSR, Tiba et al., 2019, acknowledged that 'the RE literature pays limited attention to employee well-being, customer preference, and civil society as a stakeholder'' and 'environmental issues and their balancing with financial and social issues remain relatively under-researched'.

Adopting a transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multi-method approaches, this special issue pleads in favor of a contextualized perspective, sensitive to the SMEs', start-ups' and entrepreneurial specificities (in terms of Business and Social Models, Governance, Ecosystemic Interaction and Local Impact, Managerial Practices and Operational Tooling...). It calls for more research on the mechanisms by which Corporate Societal Commitment contributes to a start-up's or a SME's efficiency, agility and resilience, as well as to the economic viability, social acceptability and ecosystem sustainability of its business model.

This Special Issue is aimed at contributing to the long-standing debate on the relationship between Corporate Social Performance (CSP) and Corporate Financial Performance (CFP) in the SMEs and start-ups, one a hand, and on the estimation of the effective (economic and societal) impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitment, policies, and practices, on the other hand.

Focus of this Special Issue

In this special issue, we provide a platform for the elaboration of theoretical, methodological, and empirical research on practices of CSR, SMEs and entrepreneurship.

Embracing an interdisciplinary, multi-level and multi-focal approach, this special issue is open to any paper adopting an original but robust theoretical framework (including entrepreneurship and management literature, sociology, economics, law and philosophy of management).

Accordingly, it encourages epistemological and methodological sophistication, interdisciplinarity and strategic dialogue between researchers and practitioners. Particular attention will be paid to articles that reports on recent advances in quantitative and qualitative methods, entrepreneurial studies, management, and operational research.

Consequently, the articles should provide theoretical insights and/or empirical findings to enrich the state-of-the-art, to enlighten policymaking as well as to update and optimize entrepreneurial strategies and practices in the framework of Business Ethics, CSR and Inclusion.

We look for original and exemplary research addressing the issues focusing on the following topics of interest (but not limited to).

- Conceptualizing, modeling, and mapping the system of interactions connecting a start-up or a small and medium business with its stakeholders through Corporate Social Commitment.

- Investigating CSR, diversity and inclusion policies in the SMEs, start-ups and entrepreneurship ecosystem, viewed as socio-organizational change processes, optimizing the firm's operational efficiency as well as its societal footprint [The authors are encouraged to adopt a holistic perspective, going from strategic diagnosis (as a key for alignment) to impact study (social audit, socio/eco-efficiency measures, evaluation of the added value created and shared with stakeholders, etc.).]
- Addressing the influence of institutional, market and eco-systemic factors on CSR policy design and implementations within start-ups, SMEs and, more generally, entrepreneurial / intrapreneurial projects,
- Investigating the role of entrepreneurs' characteristics in designing and implementing a CSR strategy, practices as well as diversity policy,
- Identifying the encouraging vs braking factors for Corporate Social Commitment in the start-ups and SMEs and/or assessing their impact on organizational efficiency (focusing on economic, technological, social, managerial, and environmental issues as well as on business model competitiveness, viability, and sustainability),
- Evaluating the impact of Corporate Social Commitment on SMEs and start-ups' efficiency, looking at business, technological, social and environmental aspects, including competitiveness, viability and sustainability....,
- Assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of CSR practices (whether prescribed, framed, or autonomous) in SMEs, start-ups and entrepreneurship with regard to strategic alignment, social inclusion, organizational citizenship,
- Evaluating the contribution of CSR activities and practices in the SMEs to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Timeline and Editorial process

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| Launch of the SI call | April 2022 |
| Full paper submission. All submissions must be uploaded electronically at <i>Journal of African Business</i> | November 30, 2022 |
| Manuscript Development Workshop | |
| Abstract submission (Step I) by email to the corresponding guest editors. | June 10, 2022 |
| Virtual Paper Development Workshop (PDW I) | 7-9 July 2022 |
| Short paper submission (Step 2) by email to the corresponding guest editors. | 10 September 2022 |
| Virtual Paper Development Workshop (PDW II) | 24 October 2022 |
| Paper Development Workshop (PDW III) | 8-10 January 2023 |
| Tentative first online publication | November 2023 |

Submission guidelines and Deadlines:

Authors should refer to the Journal of African Business website and the instructions on submitting a paper. For more information see:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?show=instructions&journalCode=wjab20>

Submission to the Special Issue is required through Editorial Manager at:

<http://www.editorialmanager.com/wjab> . Upon submission, please indicate that your submission is to this Special Issue.

The submission deadline for full papers is **November 30, 2022**. Please address all inquiries regarding this special issue to the Guest Editors.

Manuscript Development Workshop:

Abstract Submission (Step I): The abstract submission should include no more than two-page (900 words), and this abstract should be sent by e-mail to the guest editors. Potential authors will be invited to the virtual paper development workshop (PDW I).

Short Paper Submission (Step II): authors will need to submit a short paper (max. 10 double-spaced pages, excluding references and exhibits) to the guest editors. Then, ONLY the selected papers will be invited to continue the editorial process and submit the full manuscripts (Step 3) following the JAB submission guidelines.

Virtual PDW: The idea of our virtual PDW is to meet guest editors and potential authors to understand better the SI aim that allows re-thinking and fitting their contributions to the SI academic conversation. In this view:

- PDW I: the workshop's participation is not compulsory for submitting the short paper (Step 2) and, it does not guarantee the publication of the papers in the SI. The virtual PDW I will be hosted by IRMBAM 2022 on 7-9 July. The full details will be announced to the selected abstracts.
- PDW II: the workshop's participation is not compulsory for submitting the full manuscript and, it does not guarantee the publication of the papers in the SI. The virtual PDW II will be hosted by 2022 African Research Initiative by LouRIM, Université catholique de Louvain on 24 October 2022. The full details will be announced to the selected short papers.

PDW III: Authors are invited to present and discuss their papers during the workshop and to receive feedback for further improvement of their manuscripts. Acceptance for presentation at the workshop does not guarantee acceptance of the paper for publication in Journal of African Business. The PDW III will be hosted by AFAM 2023 on 8-10 January 2023 in Cairo (TBC) and will be facilitated by the SI editors for authors wishing to develop their manuscripts. The full details will be announced to the selected papers.

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