

Editorial

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Volume 5, Number 1 of the ASEAN Journal of Management and Innovation. This is my first issue as Editor in Chief and I am very pleased to assume this new role. The purpose of AJMI is to publish insightful, original, and timely research that is meaningful and contributes to management and/or innovation in the region. Effective management and innovation are particularly important as this diverse and multi-cultural region forges an Economic Community predicted to mature by 2025. One of the purposes of the community is “To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields” (ASEAN.org, p.1). Your research will be important to further these goals.

As the ASEAN Economic Blueprint states (ASEAN.org, 2018), there are five interrelated and mutually reinforcing characteristics of the envisioned community, “...namely: (i) A Highly Integrated and Cohesive Economy; (ii) A Competitive, Innovative, and Dynamic ASEAN; (iii) Enhanced Connectivity and Sectoral Cooperation; (iv) A Resilient, Inclusive, People-Oriented, and People-Centred ASEAN; and (v) A Global ASEAN” (p. 1). As ASEAN comes of age upon its 21st anniversary this year, we will focus on providing well-researched and useful articles that advance theory or have positive practical implications.

In this issue, we include many articles of direct relevance to our purpose. For example, **Ehret and Ortiz** make an optimistic prognostication about the future of ASEAN. They analyzed “...incentives that aim at deepening the existing economic relations between the different ASEAN nations. The existing Westphalian order in this part of the world is waning and a new system of intergovernmental relations is on the rise.” They help us understand how regional blocks may just be superseding the function of the state, much like aspects of the European Union (EU) has become a supranational governing body that molds regional behavior through policies ranging from trade, currency, and customs to human rights and the promotion of social justice. That may be in store for ASEAN down the road.

Regarding contributions at the level of the firm, we have several of note, among many in this issue, that help us better understand key functions of management and organizational behavior. All managers are concerned about motivating high performance, regardless of sector. By utilizing a cross-section of the employees working at a multinational manufacturing firm in Thailand, **Kunte and Rungruang** tested whether the role, job demands, job resources and personal resources were predictors of work engagement in Thai employees. The results suggested that job, and personal resources, such as self-efficacy, played a significant role in predicting work engagement. The outcomes of this study should be helpful to the managers and leaders at other manufacturing and non-manufacturing Thai firms but will undoubtedly help inform managerial behavior elsewhere in ASEAN as well. **Pimpan, Jhundra-Indra, and Raksong** surveyed 289 hotels in Thailand to discover whether dynamic service innovation leads to firm profitability. They found that indeed dynamic service is the most important contributor to firm profitability and confirmed Goldstein, et al’s original findings (2002) that a firm’s ability to constantly introduce new processes and new activities and adapt to the changing world of customer needs contributes to competitive advantage and business success. They walk us through a jungle of data to substantiate their claim. Though not necessarily

applicable to other sectors of the economy, hotels throughout ASEAN would do well to place innovation, creativity, and sound management at the center of any customer service strategy.

Given the multi-cultural nature of the region where Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian nations have coexisted for some time, but are now closely cooperating on shared concerns, **Goerlich** shows us the power of a simple intervention to reduce the tension between people of diverse cultural origins. He conducted an experiment among a heterogeneous group of MBA students to determine if a short training could help build understanding between people from different backgrounds. The idea was to develop cultural intelligence within the students leading to, as he says, “a better understanding [of each other] and happiness among fellow MBA students.” After only one cross-cultural training, he directly observed a positive change that was also reported by the students. As with so many things, a little focused consciousness raising goes a long way. Given the multi-cultural nature of the ASEAN region there are useful lessons in his article for educators and business managers alike.

Last but certainly not least, **Leelhaphunt** and **Suntrayuth** remind us that we might fool ourselves into thinking that crime pays in the short run but we live in the long run and sooner or later, either justice or Karma will catch up with the ethically errant, though perhaps not before they inflict financial and interpersonal harm. Their article asks, “Do business ethics enhance financial performance of the firm? To find the answer to that question they surveyed 785 participants in 84 companies on the Thai Stock Exchange and found that an ethical manager needs the support of an ethical culture and a code of ethics. Ethical middle managers do reinforce an ethical culture. Setting an example does, in fact, help. Ethical behavior in practice, in their view, has a positive relationship with servant leadership theory but ironically, they concluded that, “a strong code of ethics may not, itself, be a major factor to enhance ROA, but it can be used in minimizing unethical business conduct.” To put it another way, your actions actually do speak louder than your words.

The issue is filled with insight and though I have not mentioned all of the articles in this edition, I do not suggest that any article is more worthy than the others, simply that a small collection seems appropriate to the theme of this introduction. Enjoy them all.



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References

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