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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS CONTENTS

ECONOMICS AND FINANCE

1. OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE THE ACTIVITY OF FARMER NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN LATVIA, Mg.oec. Kristaps Zdanovskis, Prof. Dr.oec. Irina Pilvere, Latvia ................................................................. 3

2. AGRICULTURE AS A RESULT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICE, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Brinzan Oana, Lect. Dr. Eng.Gavrila Simona, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tigan Eugenia, Romania ................................................................. 11

3. ANALYSIS OF COMMON FEATURES OF COUNTRIES BASED ON THE GLOBAL REAL ESTATE TRANSPARENCY INDEX, Ing. Simona Cincalova, Ph.D., doc. Ing. Bc. Petr Suchanek, Ph.D, Czech Republic ................................................................. 17

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ATTRACTION OF VARNA AS A DESTINATION FOR CONFERENCE TOURISM, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Milena Stoyanova, PhD Student Stefka Hristova, Bulgaria ................................................................. 25

5. BULGARIA AS A SOLO TRAVELER DESTINATION: ASSESSMENT OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES, PhD Student Katina Popova, PhD Student Miroslava Malceva, PhD Student Filip Marinov, Bulgaria ................................................................. 33

6. BULGARIAN CUSTOMERS’ ATTITUDE TOWARDS TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN HOTEL SERVICE, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Velina Kazandzhieva, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgina Lukanova, PhD Student Hristina Santana, Bulgaria ................................................................. 41

7. CIRCULAR AGRI-FOOD MODELS—OPPORTUNITY FOR NEW BIO BASED BUSINESS MODELS, Lect. Dr. Eng. Gavrila Simona, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Brinzan Oana, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tigan Eugenia Romania ................................................................. 49

8. CONSUMER SURPLUS OF THE QUADRATIC DEMAND FUNCTION AND PRODUCER SURPLUS OF THE QUADRATIC SUPPLY FUNCTION BY FUZZIFYING POLYGONAL FUZZY NUMBERS AND DEFUZZIFYING GRADED MEAN, Ismail Oztacan, Prof. Dr. Salih Aytar, Turkey ................................................................. 57

9. CUBAN TOURIST ENCLAVES: A CRITICAL APPROACH, Dr Renata Rettinger, Poland ................................................................. 65

10. CULTURAL-TOURIST RESOURCES IN DOBROGEA, ROMANIA—UNCAPITALIZED ECONOMIC SOURCE WITHIN LOCAL TOURISM, Dr. Camelia TEODORESCU, Dr. Mihaela GADOIU, Dr. Mariana BANUTA, Dr. Laura Georgiana COMANESCU, Dr. Marian MARIN, Romania ................................................................. 73
11. DETERMINANTS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FORMS, P.G., Yuliya Shashlova, Assoc. Prof., PhD Igor Zhitnikov, Assoc. Prof., PhD Irina Gerasimova, Russia .......................................................... 81

12. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF AGRICULTURE IN RUSSIA AS A FACTOR IN INCREASING ITS COMPETITIVENESS AND DEVELOPMENT, Prof. Dr. Olga Ruzakova, Assoc. Prof. Ph.D in Economics Aleksandr Kuryumov, Russia .......................................................... 89

13. ECONOMIC PREFERENCES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN RUSSIA, Prof. Olga Bashrina; Ass. Prof. Leysan Davletshina, Ass. Prof. Natalia Mameeva; Ass. Prof. Artem Fedoseev; Ass. Prof. Olga Fedoseev, Russia .......................................................... 97

14. EVALUATING THE STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN IMAGE COMPONENTS, OVERALL IMAGE AND DESTINATION LOYALTY OF BULGARIA AS A SPA AND WELLNESS DESTINATION, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Milena Stoyanova, Bulgaria .......................................................... 107

15. EVALUATION OF PESTICIDE USE IN AGRICULTURE IN ROMANIA, PhD Student Bianca Eugenia Soare, PhD Student Andreea Antonieac (Lungu), Romania ........................................................................... 115

16. FEATURES OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE BORDER POSITION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE ADJACENT REGIONS OF RUSSIA, CHINA AND MONGOLIA, Dr. Erdeni Sanzheev, Dr. Petr Osodoev, Julia Zhanyanov, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tatyana Tsyrendorzhieva Russia .......................................................... 123

17. FINANCIAL SITUATION OF MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN THE LATVIAN FISHERY SECTOR, Inese Biuksane, Latvia .......................................................... 131

18. FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF TOURIST-EXCURSION ACTIVITY IN ZAPOROZHYE REGION, Associate professor, PhD (Geography) Arsenenko I.A., Associate professor, PhD (Geography) Donchenko I.M., Associate professor, PhD (Geography) Donets I.A., Associate professor, PhD (Geography) Baiteriahkov O.Z., Associate professor, PhD (Geography) Levada O.M., Ukraine .......................................................... 139

19. HEALTH TOURISM IN ITALY AND CROATIA – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL EFFECTS AND POTENTIALS, Hana Paleka, MA, Croatia .......................................................... 147

20. HOW TO MANAGE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDUSTRIAL CLUSTER, PhD, Economics, Assoc. Prof. Alena Dyrdonova, PhD, Pedagogy, Assoc. Prof. Elena Girfanova, PhD, Economics, Assoc. Prof. Nailya Gareeva, Russia .......................................................... 155
21. IMPLEMENTATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS INTO THE ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT OF A LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE REGION, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Olga Artemeva, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sergei Tyurin, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alexander Wojnarowski, Master Student Maxim Lichman, Russia ..........................163

22. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF FOOD CONSUMPTION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, Assist. Prof. Dr. Alina Zaharia, Assist. Prof. Dr. Maria Claudia Diaconeasa, PhD student Raluca Jianu, Romania ..........................171

23. INTRODUCTORY ANALYSIS FOR CONDUCTING LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT OF SILK COCOON IN BRAZIL, Silvia M. Barcelos, Graca Guedes, Rodrigo Salvador, Antonio Carlos de Francisco, Portugal ........................................179

24. IS BRAN CASTLE THE PLACE TO MEET DRACULA? A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON VISITORS’ OPINIONS REGARDING DRACULA TOURISM IN THE MEDIEVAL FORTRESS, Assoc. Prof. PhD. ADINA NICOLETA CANDREA, MSc.DIANA PETRE, Romania ........................................................................187

25. IT SYSTEMS IN CRM AND E – CRM USING IN HOTELS INDUSTRY, Ing. Kristina Sambronska, PhD. - RNDr. Jana Mitrikova, PhD., Slovakia ..............................................195

26. MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MIX IN THE PROMOTION OF AGRITOURISM SERVICES, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Iasmina Iosim, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gabriela Popescu, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Claudia Sirbulescu, Lecturer Dr. Ana Mariana Dincu, Dr. Andreea Urfica, Romania ........................................................................203

27. MARKETING RESEARCH CONCERNING THE BEHAVIOR OF BUYERS OF ORGANIC AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS, PhD Student Bianca Eugenia SOARE, Romania ........................................................................211

28. OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF ONLINE PLACE BRANDING STRATEGIES IN A CIRCULAR ECONOMY CONTEXT, Lecturer PhD Victor Alexandru Briciu, Lecturer PhD Arabela Briciu, Romania ........................................................................219

29. OVERVIEW OF THE ROMANIAN DRINKS MARKET SINCE 2013: UNDER THE SUSTAINABILITY UMBRELLA, Prof. Dr. Gabriel Popescu, Prof. Dr. Nicolae Istudor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Alina Zaharia, Romania .................................................................233

30. POLISH ECONOMIC SECURITY – THE LOGISTICS DIMENSION, Dr inż. Renata Pietrowska-Laska, Poland ........................................................................241

31. QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING: THE PROSPECTS OF MODERN METHODS IN THE REHABILITATION TECHNICS PRODUCTION, Rufia Mingafina, Assoc. Prof. Anatoly Shikhalev1, Assist. Prof. Dmitry Vorontsov, , Assoc. Prof. Irina Akhmetova, Assoc. Prof. Oksana Rozhko, Russia .................................................................249
32. REMITTANCES FROM EMIGRANTS IN THE CONTEXT OF YOUTH ASPIRATIONS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, Dr Renata Rettinger, dr Agnieszka Kwiatek-Soltys, Poland ................................................................. 257

33. SHRINKING GOVERNANCE – ECONOMICAL ASPECTS IN LATVIA CASE, Dr. geogr. Armands Puzulis, Dr.Oec. Andris Miglavs, Dr.Geogr. Peteris Lakovskis, Dr.Geogr. Maija Usca, Latvia ................................................................. 265

34. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN NEW MEMBER STATES AFTER JOINING THE EU, Researcher Dr. oec Armands Veveris, Researcher Dr. oec. Arturs Pauilins, Latvia ................................................................. 273

35. THE MARKETING ROLE IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY-THE KOSOVO CASE, Dr.Gani Asllani, Dr.Simon Grima, Dr.Jonathan Spiteri, Albania .............................................................................................................. 281

36. THE EU FARM ACCOUNTANCY DATA NETWORK (FADN) AS A TOOL FOR ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN LATVIA, Leading Researcher, Head of Department Dr. oec Valda Bratka, Researcher Dr. oec. Arturs Pauilins, Latvia ................................................................. 289

37. THE IMPACT OF GENERATION Y ON THE SERVICE OFFER IN TRAVEL AGENCIES IN SLOVAKIA, Ing. Ludmila Mazuchova, PhD., Bc. Adriana Krajcovicova, Slovakia .............................................................................................................. 297

38. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT AND INCOME OF GLOBAL THIRD-PARTY LOGISTICS PROVIDERS (3PL), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Helga Pavlic Skender, Petra Adelajda Mirkovic PhD candidate, Andrea Dobrilovich, Croatia .............................................................................................................. 305

39. THE PLACE AND ROLE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN ECONOMIC GROWTH. CASE STUDY ROMANIA, Dpd. Dragomir Teodor Oprica, Assoc. Prof. Dr Marcuta Liviu, Assoc. Prof. Dr Marcuta Alina, Romania .............................................................................................................. 317

40. THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF RUSSIAN FINANCIAL MARKET AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL MARKETS, MASHKINA N.A PhD in Economics Associate Professor, Chernykh N.B., undergraduate, NARYKOVA S. A, undergraduate, Russia .............................................................................................................. 325

41. WINE AND TRADITIONAL GASTRONOMY – FACTORS THAT SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN OENOTOURISM, Assoc. Prof. dr. eng CRISTINA MARIA CANJA, Assist. Prof. dr. eng. Mirabela Ioana LUPU, Prof. dr. Eng PADUREANU VASILE, Dr. MAZAREL ADRIAN, Phd. Eng. Alina MAIER, Romania .............................................................................................................. 333
### BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42. 5G DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS FOR LATVIA BY USING AHP METHOD</td>
<td>Dr. hab. oec. Baiba Rivza, Dr. hab. sc. ing. Peteris Rivza, Mg. oec. Julija Simule, Dr. oec. Gunta Grinberga-Zalite, Latvia</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. ACHIEVING ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fleaca Elena, Dr. Maiduc Sanda, Romania</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPROVEMENT: BALDRIGE AND EFQM MODELS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. ADVERTISING ON SOCIAL NETWORKS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF Y AND Z</td>
<td>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sona Chovanova Supekova,</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERATION STUDENTS</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. ALGORITHMS OF THE COMPANY’S LOYAL MAINTENANCE</td>
<td>Dina Kelsina, Prof., Dr. Rostislav Kopitov, Latvia</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE INNOVATION PROCESS IN THE</td>
<td>PhD. Student Rus Izabela, Assoc. Prof. Dr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY</td>
<td>Toader Rita, Prof. Dr. Habil. Corna M. Rădulescu, PhD. Student Alina Natalia Pop, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Eng. Adrian T. Rădulescu, Romania</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. AN ANALYTICAL VIEW OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF EMPLOYEE LEASING</td>
<td>PhD. Jana Cuculova, PhD. Luba Tomcikova, Slovakia</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASED ON SELECTED INDICATORS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. BEST PRACTICES IN CIVIC INITIATIVES TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP AND</td>
<td>Professor Dr. Paul Marinescu, Drd. Irina Dogaru, Professor Dr. Sorin-George Toma, Romania</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR STUDENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. BRAND POSITIONING AND SELF-BRANDING. THE WAY TO A SUCCESSFUL</td>
<td>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cristina NICULESCU-CIOCAN, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivona STOICA, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andra-Victoria RADU</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS AND A GROWING DIGITAL ECONOMY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. BUSINESS ENTITIES CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND MOTIVATION</td>
<td>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Psych. Blumberga Solveiga, Bc. Sc. Administr. Zane Karele, Latvia</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR ENGAGEMENT IN CHARITY VIA A PORTAL OF A CHARITY ORG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. BUSINESS MODEL AS THE CRITICAL SUCESS FACTOR OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE</td>
<td>Dr hab. Małgorzata Kurleto, Poland</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSITION FROM A LINEAR TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
53. CHANGES IN ORGANIZATION, RESISTANCE OF EMPLOYEES AND POSSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISION TO DECREASE RESISTANCE, Dr.psy., assoc. prof., Solveiga Blumberga, Mg., sc.sal., Ance Saultite, Latvia..........................431

54. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONCENTRATION DEGREE OF INSURANCE, TELECOM AND FOOD RETAIL SECTORS. ROMANIA VERSUS EU., Lecturer Dr. Busu Mihail, Romania.............................439

55. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DEGREE OF CONCENTRATION OF ELECTRICITY MARKETS AT THE NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVEL, Lecturer Dr. Busu Mihail, Romania ........................................447

56. CONSUMPTION OF FISH AND SEA PRODUCTS IN LATVIA, Inese Biiksane, Latvia .................................................................455

57. PAPER CONTEMPORARY APPROACH IN ORGANIZING STATE-OWNED COMPANY: EVIDENCE FROM SERBIAN RAILWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGER, Assoc. Prof. Dr Emil Velinov, Assoc. Prof. Dr Vasko Vassilev, Latvia .................................................................463

58. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FROM PROJECT MANAGER POINT OF VIEW, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sona Chovanova Supekova, Dr. Hana Krchova, Dr. Peter Zbranek, Slovakia ..........................................................471

59. CREATING AN INFORMATION MODEL OF A BUSINESS OBJECT IN THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: METHODS AND TOOLS, TECHNOLOGIES, Prof. Dr. Olga Ruzakova, Prof. Dr. Vladimir Pleschev, Prof. Dr. Varvara Dikareva, Russia .................................................................479

60. DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS IN BUILDING THE IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF THE COMPANY BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE LARGEST POLISH BANK, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Danuta Szwajca, Poland ........................................487

61. EMPLOYMENT AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS IN VENTSPILS REGION OF LATVIA, Mg. Zaiga Oboreiko, Prof. Dr Marga Zivite, Prof. Dr Elina Konstaninova, Latvia ........................................495

62. ENHANCING VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION TO MEET LABOUR MARKET DEMANDS: PERSPECTIVE OF LATVIA, Mg.hist., MSc Zaiga Oboreiko, Prof. Dr.oec. Baiba Rivza, Prof. Dr.oec Marga Zivite, Prof. Dr.oec Elina Konstaninova, Latvia .................................................................503

63. ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT – INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND INCREASING THE ENTERPRISE PERFORMANCE, Ing. Viliam Záthurecký, MBA, Ph.D., Ing. Peter Marinič, Ph.D., Czech Republic ...............511
64. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND THE STATE PROGRAM OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, Prof. Olga Bashina, Prof. Yury Tsaregorodtsev, Ass.Prof. Vladimir Nikolenko, Ass.Prof. Leysan Davletshina, Ass.Prof. Artem Fedoseev, Russia .............................................................. 519

65. EVALUATING EFFICIENCY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: AN EXAMPLE OF ESTONIAN MINISTRIES, Prof. Dr Maret Branten, Dr Lea Roostalu, MA Argo Hallik, Estonia ................................................................. 527

66. EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION OF THE EMPLOYERS OF FREELANCERS, Lecturer Sanja Zlatić, Prof. dr.sc. Marin Milković, Flora Poecze, Croatia .................................................................................. 535

67. EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S ROLE IN CORPORATE GOVERNANCE QUALITY AND REDUCING INFORMATION ASYMMETRY, Research & Teaching Assist. Dr. Delia DELIU, Romania .............................................................. 543

68. FACTORIAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF CLUSTERS RELATIONS ON PERFORMANCE IN THE NORTH-WEST REGION OF ROMANIA, PhD Student Pop Alina Natalia, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rădulescu Corina Michaela, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Boca Gratiela, PhD Student Rus Gabrieli, PhD Student Rus Izabela, Romania ...................................................... 553

69. GDPR COMPLIANT METHODS OF DATA PROTECTION, PhDr. Tomáš Pikulík, Prof. Mgr. Peter Starchoň, PhD., Slovak Republic ........................................................................ 561

70. GENERATION Z: PRIORITIES OF COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS Ing. Martin Zaklasnik, Ing. Zdenka Viđecka, Ph.D., Mgr. Andrea Cebakova, Assoc. Prof. RNDr. Anna Putnova, Ph.D., MBA, Czech Republic ....................................................... 573

71. HUMAN CAPITAL - CENTER FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPETITIVENESS OF CLUSTERS IN THE NORTHWEST REGION OF ROMANIA, PhD Student Pop Alina Natalia, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rădulescu Corina Michaela, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Toader Rita, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hahn Florina, PhD Student Rus Izabela, Romania .................................................................................. 583

72. IMPACT OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY AND LOCATION ON SELECTING FREELANCERS FOR DIFFERENT JOB TYPES, Assis. Prof. Dr. Ana Globočnik Žunac, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krešimir Buntak, Lecturer Sanja Zlatić, Croatia ................................................................. 591

73. INDUSTRY 4.0 – ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHOSEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, Ing. Vilian Záthurecký, MBA, Ph.D., Ing. Peter Marinić, Ph.D., Czech Republic ................................................................. 599

74. INFLUENCE OF DETERMINANT FACTORS OF INNOVATION PROCESS ON THE PERFORMANCE IN TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES, Prof. Dr. Habil. Corina M. Rădulescu, PhD Student Izabela Rus, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rita Toader, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Diana Ighian, PhD Student Alina Natalia Pop, Romania .... 607
75. IS THERE A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FIRM SIZE AND FIRM GROWTH FOR PIG BREEDING SECTOR IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC? Dr. Roman Fiala, Dr. Veronika Hedija, Czech Republic .......................................................... 615

76. KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND THE HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR OF COMMERCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA, Assoc. Prof. Ivanka Nikolova, Ph.D., Bulgaria .......................................................... 623

77. LEAN MANUFACTURING THROUGH THE USAGE OF A DIGITAL TWIN TECHNOLOGY, Ing. Zdenka Videcka, Ph.D., Czech Republic .................................................. 631

78. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING IN RUSSIAN MID-SIZED PRIVATE COMPANIES: A REPORT ON A 2014-2019 RESEARCH JOURNEY, Pavel Lebedev, Slovenia .......................................................... 637

79. ALGORITHMS OF MANAGEMENT OF FULL-SCALE ORGANISATION PROTECTION, Dina Kelsina, Prof., Dr. Rostislav Kopitov, Azir Mamedzayev, Latvia .......................................................... 653

80. MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andra-Victoria RADU, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivona STOICA, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cristina NICULESCU-CIOCAN, Romania .................................................. 661

81. MODEL OF BALANCED SCORECARD – EX-ANTE AND EX-POST DECISION MAKING, Ing. František Hocman, PhD., Mgr. Ing. Kristína Jancovicová Bognárlová, PhD., Slovakia .......................................................... 669

82. MONITORING OF REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL CLUSTER OPERATING CONDITIONS, Prof. DSc. Elena Patrusheva, Assist. Prof. Elena Lifanova, Assoc. Prof. Alina Karashova, Russia .......................................................... 677


84. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTIVENESS AS AN INDICATOR OF ENTERPRISE’S SPECIFIC RISK, Assoc. Prof. Aneta Michalak, Poland .................................................. 693

85. PERSONNEL REMOTE MANAGEMENT – ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES, Dr. psych., asoc. prof., Solveiga Blumberga, Mg. sc. administr., Tatiana Pylinskaya, Latvia .......................................................... 701

86. PROMOTING SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GENERATION Z: THE CASE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, Prof. Dr. Sorin-George Toma, Drd. Andreea Stoica, Prof. Dr. Paul Marinescu, Romania .................................................. 707
87. RESEARCH ON THE USE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT, DEPENDING ON THE SIZE AND FORM OF ORGANIZATIONS, Prof. PhDr. Jaroslav Veteska, Ph.D., MBA, PhDr. Martin Kursch, Ph.D., Czech Republic ........................................... 715

88. THE SECURITY OF INTERNAL CONTROL AND OF THE AUDIT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, Ph. D Student Ionuț Riza, Ph. D Student Aurel Dinca, Ph. D Student Silvia Mioara Troi, Romania ......................... 723

89. SELF-ADAPTING ALGORITHMS: ENHANCING ORGANIZATION CAPABILITY, Irina Kazina, Prof. Dr. Rostislav Kopitov, Latvia ........................................ 733

90. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MODELS IN VIETNAM, Dr. Vu Thang Pham, Dr. Linh Nguyen, Vietnam ................................................................. 741

91. STORYTELLING TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION IN FMCG GOODS BRANDING IN THE RUSSIAN MARKET, Assoc. Prof. PhD. Irina Sergeyevna Samoylenko, Assoc. Prof. PhD. Anastasia Yuriyevna Ladogina, Assoc. Prof. PhD. Vera Viktorovna Golovina, Senior Lecturer Natalia Alexandrovna Razina, Assoc. Prof. PhD. Elena Viktorovna Petushkova, Russia .................................................. 751

92. FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES, Zoltan Bartha, Adam Bereczk, Hungary ................................................................. 757

93. STUDY ON THE CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROCESS IN THE CONTEXT OF ROMANIAN ENTERPRISES, Assist. Prof. Dr. Fleaça Bogdan, Assist. PhD. candidate Coroacăescu Mihai, Romania ................................. 765

94. SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH NATIONAL PROGRAMS. CASE STUDY START-UP NATION ROMANIA, Prof. Dr. Gabriel Popescu, Assist. Prof. Dr. Maria Claudia Diaconeasa, Assist. Prof. Dr. Alina Zaharia, Romania .................................................. 773


96. THE IMPACT OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON DIVERSES GROUPS OF CHILDREN, PhD. Florentina CIULEI (IONESCU), PhD. Angela MORLOVEA, PhD. Diana Nicoleta GEORGESCU, Prof. Dr. Constanta POPESCU, Prof. Dr. Delia Mioara POPESCU, Romania ......................... 789

97. THE IMPORTANCE OF FORECASTING IN BUSINESS DECISION-MAKING PROCESS - ROMANIAN MASS MEDIA INDUSTRY CASE, PhD Student Marinescu S. Florentina-Mirela, Romania .................................................. 797
98. THE ROLE AND BASIS OF ROMANIA’S NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, Prof. Dr. Dan Boboc, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Florentina Constantin, Assist. Prof. Dr. Maria Claudia Diaconeasa, Romania ........................................... 805

99. WOMEN ON BOARDS AND THEIR PATH TO THE TOP: EVIDENCE FROM LATVIA, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emil Velinov, Latvia.......................................................... 813

100. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT. CASE STUDY THE EFFECTS OF STRESS ON THE PROJECT TEAM IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC PROJECTS, Prof. Margareta Stela FLORESCU PhD, Gheorghe COARĂ, Sorin BURLACU PhD, Romania .............................................................. 819

101. NEW CHALLENGES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT – SPECIFIC PROJECT ENVIRONMENTS, Lenka Smolíková, Czech Republic.................................................. 829

102. ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC CHANGES IN THE SERVICE SECTOR, Prof. Elena Ryabova, Assoc. Prof. Denis Shpakovich, Assoc. Prof. Evgeniya Aleksashkina, Russia.......................................................... 835

103. FUZZY PROFIT FOR LINEAR DEMAND FUNCTIONS USING POLYGONAL FUZZY NUMBERS, İsmail Özean, Prof. Dr. Salih Aytaş, Turkey ........................................ 841

104. TOURISM VALORIZATION OF ROMANIAN CRAFTS AND TRADITIONS - OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LARGEST MIGRATION IN THE HISTORY OF ROMANIA, PhD Student Paul-Panfil Ivan, PhD Student Anamaria Bucaciuc, Assoc. Prof. Carmen Emilia Chasovschi, Assoc. Prof. Angela Albu, Romania .................................................... 847

105. THE COUNTRYSIDE BUSINESS. A RADIOGRAPHY OF RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE BUCOVINA REGION OF ROMANIA IN THE CONTEXT OF INCREASED MIGRATION, PhD Student Paul-Panfil Ivan, PhD Student Anamaria Bucaciuc, Assoc. Prof. Carmen Emilia Chasovschi, Prof. Gabriela Prelipceanu, Prof. Carmen Eugenia Nastase, Romania ........................................... 855
SECTION ECONOMICS & FINANCE
IMPACT OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY AND LOCATION ON SELECTING FREELANCERS FOR DIFFERENT JOB TYPES

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ABSTRACT
Business externalization is a common concept in HR management and freelancing is one of the aspects of independent employment. In the past, many authors defined the area of freelancing in media, artistic and creative work, however, contemporary sources note that the area is much broader and changes rapidly. The present study aims to determine the status of freelancing in Croatia. The starting point of this research was to find out whether freelancers have the same opportunity as in other business communities, and furthermore, to discover potential freelancing areas of business activities with a specific interest. Respondents were 158 employers surveyed about the area of business where they are interested to employ a freelancer. Spearman’s rank-order correlation was conducted to discover, whether there is an association between selection of freelancing jobs and firms’ operational areas. To gain more insights about the hereby analyzed freelancing job types and their possible interconnections, principal component analysis (PCA) is used to discover their possible underlying dimensions. The constructed components will be further analyzed in terms of their reliability and internal consistency with Cronbach’s Alpha. The presented results indicate significant monotonic associations between operational areas and freelance jobs such as engineering, software development, journalism and design. The conducted PCA revealed 3 dimensions of the hereby analyzed job types, which displayed adequate reliability as well.

Keywords: freelancers, HRM, outsourcing, independent employment

INTRODUCTION
Kitcing and Smallbone [1] discuss the term “freelancing” and agree with many other researchers ([2], [3], [4], referenced by [1]) who define it as independent workers in creative and media occupations. The same authors think that freelancing as a form of employment is neglected by researchers of small business enterprises and that it should be considered in a different manner than as a part of SME. Freelancers as a large subset of the small business population constitute an interesting target group and are certainly worthy of substantial scientific attention. According to Kitcing and Smallbone [1], there is an organization in the United Kingdom, namely the Professional Contractors Group, a
cross-sector trade association that represents freelancers. Their members are engaged in the IT sector, engineering, project management, technical design and management. Academic researchers typically use the term “freelance” to refer to own-account workers in creative and media occupations, including journalism television and radio, film, publishing, public relations, translation services and artists [1]. However, Kitching and Smallbone [1] note that own-account workers in managerial, professional, scientific and technical occupations should also be considered as parts of the freelance workforce. Solicitors working for personal clients are excluded from this conceptualization, nonetheless, those serving both organizational and personal end-users might be defined as freelance.

In early stages of scientific research regarding freelancers, researchers focused on a narrow set of occupations and sectors. However, the expansion of employment externalization brought in other jobs and professions. The reason for this expansion, according to Beardwell and colleagues [5], lies in the competitive labor market. Johnson and Ashforth [6] term it as the ‘paradox of externalization’ (ibid., p. 287), during the discussion of the problem of relying on external employees in the process of connecting with customers and building customer-oriented services.

The externalization of employment through outsourcing was the research topic of Harland and colleagues [7] who view it as a term not only used for support services but also for activities ‘closer to core’ ones (ibid., p. 835). The authors note that herein lies a terminological problem, namely the fact that outsourcers have the resources for the specific activity, which is in-source for them. [7] Several authors discussed the problem of outsourcing in the public sector; Baiyie and colleagues [8], for instance, selected cleaning, maintenance, catering and security as the most common ones (ibid., cf. p. 86). The authors found that 70% of their sampled organizations outsourced at least one of these activities and note that by doing so, companies can reach quality improvement and cost-effectiveness [8]. Beardwell and colleagues [5] agree that externalization will result in advantages in terms of decreasing employers’ labor costs, nonetheless, they question the quality of work as the advantage of adjusting the amount of workforce and applying new forms of employment, while Bailey and colleagues [8] find the advantage of outsourcing in increased management focus on core activities.

The aim of the present study is to further investigate activities that can be outsourced to freelancers. In the first part of the paper, such job types and their possible associations with companies’ operational areas will be explored.

The following table (Table 1) represents the hypotheses of the study in terms of significant, monotonic relationships between the companies’ area of operation and freelance jobs offered by them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H1</th>
<th>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “IT business” offered as freelance job type.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “multimedia” offered as freelance job type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “marketing” offered as freelance job type.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

592
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H4</th>
<th>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “translating &amp; proofing” offered as freelance job type.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “cleaning” offered as freelance job type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “engineering” offered as freelance job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7</td>
<td>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “software development” offered as freelance job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8</td>
<td>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “journalism” offered as freelance job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9</td>
<td>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “design” offered as freelance job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10</td>
<td>There is a significant, monotonic relationship between companies’ operational area and “consulting” offered as freelance job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.

After the evaluation of the hypotheses concerning the discussed monotonic relationships, the present study will perform a principal component analysis (PCA) to inspect possible components into which the hereby discussed 10 job types can be grouped. In this manner, an answer for the following research question will be evaluated:

**RQ1:** What kind of components can be derived from the discussed freelancing job types?

Additionally the reliability of the constructed components will be discussed in terms of their consistency by answering the following research question:

**RQ2:** What is the consistency of the hereby constructed components?

**METHODOLOGY**

The paper used an online questionnaire for data collection managed with the tool surveymaker.com. Companies based in Croatia consisted the target population of the study, which were reached through the Croatian Chamber of Commerce with an e-mail containing a link to the constructed survey. The sampling time interval lasted from the 4th to the 25th of June 2018 and resulted in 160 responses. Two participants, however, did not answer to the hereby analyzed questions/statements and therefore were excluded from further analysis.

After the discussion of the descriptive statistics in terms of the hereby analyzed variables, Spearman’s rank-order correlation will be used to explore the degrees of possible monotonic associations between the operational area of the sampled companies and freelancing job types offered by them. During this analysis, operational area will be considered as an ordinal variable ranging from locally operating firms to worldwide ones, while job types are dichotomous (1 = offered; 0 = not offered). The relationship of operational areas and job types will be described by the Spearman’s rank-order correlation coefficient ($r_s$) and its respective $p$-value. [9] Principal Component Analysis (PCA) will be used to understand the structure of offered freelance job types by grouping them into a smaller set of components with retaining as much variable information as possible. Sampling adequacy will be examined with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)
measure. [10] The amount of variation explained by the analyzed components will be discussed with eigenvalues using Kaiser’s criterion [11], therefore, components with eigenvalues greater than 1 will be retained. The paper uses the orthogonal rotation technique named varimax, maximizing the dispersion of loadings. [12] The constructed components will be evaluated in terms of their reliability and internal consistency with Cronbach’s Alpha [13]. All analyses are conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics v. 25.

RESULTS

The present paper grouped operational areas into 6 different categories: firms that do business locally (N = 25; 15.8%), regionally in more than two counties (N = 20; 12.7%), Croatia-wide (N = 42; 26.6%), in countries around Croatia (N = 19; 12%), in the European Union (N = 36; 22.8%), and worldwide (N = 16; 10.1%). Considering the ratios of companies sampled in these categories, it can be concluded that none of the categories is extremely overrepresented in comparison to the other ones.

Freelance job categories were proposed as a multiple-choice question, containing job categories such as IT business, multimedia, marketing, translating or proofreading, cleaning, engineering, software development, journalism, design, consulting and other. The following figure represents the frequencies of different job types that were offered in different company operational areas (Figure 1). (Note that the category “other” was not marked by any of the sampled respondents.)

As the figure below (Figure 1) depicts, freelance jobs were offered in 504 cases by the 158 respondents in the sample. IT business was the most frequently offered freelance job type in the sample (N = 82; 16.27%), followed by translating or proofreading (N = 66; 13.1%), design (N = 64; 12.7%), marketing (N = 63; 12.5%) and consulting (N = 62; 12.3%). The least frequently offered job types were engineering (N = 22; 4.37%) and journalism (N = 21; 4.17%).

Regarding the constructed operational areas, the highest ratio of freelance jobs was offered in companies operating in the European Union (N = 137; 27.18%), followed by Croatia-wide firms Croatia-wide (N = 116; 23.02%), and those that operate in the countries around Croatia (N = 80; 15.87%). Local companies (N = 67; 13.3%) and worldwide operating ones (N = 55; 10.91%) had a slightly lower frequency in terms of offered freelance job types, followed by regional companies operating in more than two counties (N = 49; 9.72%) displaying the lowest frequency in this regard.
The first hypothesis of the present paper examined, whether there is a monotonic association between the constructed operational area categories and the sampled freelance job types. The following table (Table 2) represents the results of the hereby constructed Spearman’s rank-order correlation tests:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEARMAN’S RANK-ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE p VALUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>area coeff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.: Results of Spearman’s rank-order correlation of operational areas and freelance job types. Notes: *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
As the respective results show, significant monotonic association between operational areas and job types was present in the cases of engineering \((r_s = .197, p = .013)\), software development \((r_s = .269, p = .001)\), journalism \((r_s = .236, p = .003)\) and design \((r_s = .166, p = .037)\).

Freelance job types were further analyzed in the interest of giving an answer to the first research question of the present paper; the following PCA analysis serves as means of analysis to extract possible components from these 12 job types. The KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy resulted in 0.785, which can be considered middling, approaching the 0.8 value of ‘meritorious’, according to Kaiser’s classification [10]. The \(p\)-value of the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was statistically significant \((p < 0.001)\), indicating that our data is likely to be factorizable. The following table (Table 3) contains the loadings of the hereby analyzed freelance job types as a result of the conducted PCA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROTATED STRUCTURE MATRIX FOR THE PERFORMED PCA WITH VARIMAX ROTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating or proofreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.: Major loadings for each item are bolded.

As the table above (Table 3) highlights, the present 12 job types can be grouped into 3 components. Component 1 contains multimedia, journalism, marketing and design, while Component 2 encompasses IT business, software development, consulting, translating or proofreading and cleaning. Interestingly, Component 3 is a stand-alone job type, namely engineering.

An in-depth answer to the second research question of the present paper is presented by the reliability analysis of the first two components, achieved by Cronbach’s Alpha. As the following table (Table 4) depicts, Component 1 achieved a satisfactory reliability \((\alpha = .684)\), furthermore, the deletion of either of its job types would result in a decline of its reliability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS OF COMPONENT 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.

Component 2, alike to Component one, shown in the following table (Table 5), displayed an adequate reliability ($\alpha = .663$). In terms of this component as well, the deletion of any of its items would result in a decline of its reliability.

**ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS OF COMPONENT 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Squared Multiple Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT business</td>
<td>.345</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software development</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>.458</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating or proofreading</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>.425</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>.608</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.

**CONCLUSION**

The present study aimed to discover possible associations in operational area categories and offered job types. As the results of the hereby conducted Spearman’s rank-order correlations showed, the wider the operational area is, the more freelance jobs are offered in the categories of engineering, software development, journalism and design. Based on these findings, hypotheses 6-9 are retained (Table 1), while the other hypotheses of the paper are rejected. Furthermore, job types were investigated in terms of possible components into which they can be grouped together, to give a detailed answer to RQ1. 3 components were retained during the hereby conducted PCA analysis. These results underline the theoretical differences in the job types of component 1 and 2, by virtue of the first being the promotional, customer engagement-oriented tasks in the life of a company, while the focus of the second component consists mainly of digital hardware/software maintenance and firm relations. Engineering, being the only job type in Component 3 indicates that the innovation/production is essentially different than the tasks of the first two components, indicating further research in this area. Furthermore, the last RQ2 of the present study, aiming to analyze the reliability of the derived components, indicated that they display an adequate internal consistency.

The present paper set its task to explore companies exclusively grounded in Croatia, whereby the presented results cannot be generalized further. However, cross-country comparisons and broader sample sizes can lead to a deeper understanding in terms of the relationship between offered job types and firms’ operational areas, as well as underlying dimensions of said freelance job types. Further, more detailed category building in future research can further enhance our understanding of underlying dimensions of offered freelance job types, based on the promising results of the hereby conducted PCA and Cronbach’s Alpha analyses. In terms of generalization of the hereby derived PCA results from this sample to a larger population, techniques such as the maximum-likelihood method [14] or Kaiser’s alpha factoring [15] are possibilities for future research.
REFERENCES


