



## A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY BUSINESS APPROACH TO COVID-19: LA TROBE BUSINESS SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only exhibited catastrophic outcomes on health, social and global economies, but significant impact on the way business is conducted. We have seen the emergence of a global recession, and business enablers have been identified as a possible silver lining to resolve and reform the economic wellbeing of nations. We provide an emergent enquiry approach of business school discipline-specific narratives to identify enablers to accelerate and accommodate the new normal. The importance of integrated multi-disciplinary business as an enabler to value creation is demonstrated, often in the form of entrepreneurship, innovation, new agile business models and digital disruptions. These enablers are provided within the context of academic research, learning and teaching, and engagement in communities and ecosystems. Finally, we provide suggestions for future business related research during times of hardship, crises and pandemics.

Key words: COVID-19, business, narratives, Business School.

Acknowledgments: Discipline narratives provided by La Trobe Business School Professors and Lecturers as co-authors (please see details below each narrative).

### Introduction

Covid-19 has exhibited a significant impact on the health, social and business aspects of global economies, and Australia is no exception (Isenberg and Schultz, 2020; Maritz *et al.*, 2020; Maritz *et al.*, 2020a). Within Australia, we need to be mindful that the COVID-19 pandemic followed closely after the

brutal bushfires of late 2019. The bushfires and coronavirus is first and foremost a human tragedy, hence the proliferation of many detrimental trajectories associated with such crises (Obschonka *et al.*, 2015). Despite COVID-19 as a stark reminder of the profound impact environmental changes have on business, it may not all be doom and gloom; many new and existing businesses are trig-

gered or booming because of such crises (Davidsson *et al.*, 2018; Devece *et al.*, 2016). The current COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to create the space for University Business Schools to fulfill their missions of teaching, researching and engaging innovative and impactful business education and credentialing, despite times of pandemics and economic crises.

The aim of this paper is to reflect upon cross-disciplinary Business School perspectives from leading and expert discipline-specific scholars at the La Trobe Business School, Melbourne, Australia. We do so by providing narratives on discipline-specific considerations during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing an emergent enquiry approach to the role of related discipline expertise in times of crisis. Discipline-specific considerations refer to research, teaching and engagement-aligned initiatives usually associated with Business schools; such as Accounting, Finance, Human Resource Management, Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Data Analytics, Supply Chain Management, Marketing, Governance, Corporate Social Responsibility, Agribusiness, Digital Business, Sport Management, Economics, Information Systems, Travel and Tourism. It is postulated that each of these disciplines have unique, yet integrated dynamics in the way they align and provide innovation in the interface of COVID-19.

We add to the body of knowledge by providing cross-disciplinary business approaches to the challenges created by COVID-19; further providing reflections where these disciplines may enhance survival, innovation and busi-

ness growth despite the doom and gloom significance of such crises. It is widely acknowledged and supported that inferences in one discipline may well impact other disciplines; for example, opportunities for Entrepreneurs in the pandemic and beyond may have significant impact on the formation of new businesses, enhancement of productivity in existing businesses, economic and financial considerations, organizational behaviour dynamics and even supply chain innovation disruptions (see for example, Isenberg and Schultz, 2020).

Next we provide expert opinion narratives from Business School Scholars, with disciplines reflected in alphabetical order.

#### Narratives

Narratives provided are rather generic from Business School perspectives, yet we are mindful that not all business disciplines are represented. The aim has however been to include a cross-sectional selection of business disciplines.

#### *Accounting and COVID-19*

A pandemic such as COVID-19 has simultaneous impacts on organisations that require proactive management. Actions need to be over three horizons: *respond*, where an organisation addresses immediate operational continuity; *recover*, during which it recalibrates and pivots when feasible; and *reimagine*, where it explores new opportunities and shapes the next normal (Deloitte, 2020). Accountants are integral in each phase given their multi-

ple functions in financial control, risk management, strategic planning, scenario analysis and as business partners.

Much research is needed. A recent call for papers for a special issue (AJJ, 2020) has highlighted the importance of multidisciplinary accounting research in the context of COVID-19. The current pandemic creates opportunities for accounting research to explore how organisations could prepare themselves to address business continuity in future crises including the resilience of accounting control systems. This crisis also creates an opportunity to explore how control processes may mediate the association between rapidly evolving organisational strategy and performance and whether accounting provides useful information to manage employee and other stakeholder well being.

Whilst we have evidence on how budgets and risk management tools are used to manage risks amid uncertainty (Chapman et al, 2013), little is known about how the risks associated with extreme crises such as this pandemic are best identified and managed. Similarly, organisations identify climate as a continuing risk. Research into the associations between the current pandemics and the potential impacts of climate risk could also inform necessary revisions to crisis management and business continuity plans (McKinsey & Co, 2020).

We also need to revisit the accounting curriculum to embed learnings from this crisis including the accountants' roles in organizational responses including in the aforementioned *recover* and *reimagine* phases. This crisis also

reinforces the need for educators to work outside our disciplinary silos and prepare future accountants to be agile multidisciplinary value creators who “join the dots” across functional areas.

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#### *Agribusiness and COVID-19*

The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the restriction of the movement of labour, transport and access to capital has markedly impacted the efficient and effective operation of international and local food and fibre supply chains (Jared Greenville et al. 2020). Despite a strong outlook for trade in the medium term the immediate changes noted above have been suggested as a catalyst to refashion the contemporary understanding of our global and local food supply systems (Cappelli and Cini 2020). In particular, creating opportunities for local food production enterprises as consumers seek the reliability of local products.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way consumers engage with their food, both in terms of its procurement and its production (Ewing-Chow, 2020). As consumers seek a greater understanding of the provenance and sustainability of their food, agribusinesses are responding by creating shorter and more transparent supply relationships between consumers and producers using digital marketplaces and social networks. This the case for both raw produce as well as pre-packaged meals from cafes and restaurants seeking to mitigate the impacts of social distancing (Lane,

2020). It is questionable, however, as to whether these approaches in their current form are sufficiently scalable to meet the broader food needs of the community. While the broader uncertainty associated with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on agribusiness is yet to be realised, particularly with respect to international trade, the disruption noted to date has created new opportunities for interactions between consumers and producers at the local level. It is reasonable to argue that as the current uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic eases, further opportunities will be identified enabling more direct marketing of food and fibre products. On that basis, consumers, industry and government will require robust and verifiable information to enable efficient and effective innovation. As such, institutions such as universities will play a crucial role in educating and supporting industry, government and consumers in the development and verification of these new operating environments. *Dr Tim Clune, Lecturer in Agribusiness,* [t.clune@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:t.clune@latrobe.edu.au)

*Corporate Governance, Corporate Social Responsibility and COVID 19*

Despite profound scientific and technological progress, modern economies are facing new and emerging types of risk associated with globalisation and industrial development. One of these is the emergence of COVID 19 and the rise of risks from pandemics. Economic development has been accompanied by negative as well as positive externalities, and has led to a greater vigilance by civil society on corporate practices, especially in regard to social and environmental

responsibility, questioning companies' social licence to operate. As such companies are now quizzed as to their moral legitimacy and their ability to manage human and natural risks inherent in their activities (Bebbington et al., 2008).

In light of the emergence of global risks such as pandemics, individuals are increasingly not only concerned about the risks that they face but also about the process by which companies decide to prioritise and act on such risks. In this context, addressing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues arising from corporate practices has become a point of interest for investors, shareholders, civil society and governments (and stakeholders in general), while for companies it has become an emerging part of competitive strategy (Galbreath, 2013).

In responding to the emergence of these ESG issues and the consequential reputation risks and governance failures, companies have adopted a variety of Corporate Social Responsibility actions. We have witnessed a rise in media, political and community discourse centred on improvements in managerial and director behaviours and corporate responsibility practices (Young & Thyl 2014). Undeniably today's society is preoccupied with the notion of corporate responsibility and sustainability: through their activities civil society activists have largely transformed the working conditions of many employees and changed the behaviours of many companies.

Companies that alter their behaviours and adopt CSR as a response to the pandemic to could be classified as reac-

tionary. Others would argue for CSR as a response from a moral case (see Maon, et al., 2010), of particular relevance for multi-national corporations operating in a global community where they are expected to contribute financial and human resources and to 'give back' so that quality of life is enhanced and sustained (Carroll, 2004). How companies respond to Covid 19, how they incorporate the emergence of such risks into their governance practices, and how the actions of stakeholders impact on corporate practices are important emerging areas of study in the context of Covid 19. *Professor Suzanne Young, Professor of Governance and CSR,*  
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#### *Digital Business and COVID-19*

The pandemic lockdown has seen a sharp rise in the dependency on digital technologies to ensure continuity of work and life (Waters, 2020). This has led to many exemplars of how different industries are pivoting their business models or creating new ones through digital technologies.

In Australia, 13Cabs a taxi company was able to quickly pivot its taxi-booking app (Derwin, 2020) to become a platform for customers to book deliveries of fragile goods, or deliveries involving special instructions that general logistic companies are unable to deliver. Internationally, takewalks.com was able to quickly pivot its business of running waking tours to running virtual tours. The innovation here is a complementary business in the online space, where these virtual tours cover locations that physical walking tours do not. For

example, for \$16 one can tour the home of a celebrity chef and can cook along with the chefs from the comfort of their own home. This looks to be serious business, as (Chandler, 2020) has reported the increased use of virtual tours by the tourism industry since the lockdown.

The shift to 'online' does not mean that online businesses avoided the negative impacts of the pandemic. For many online businesses, the experience now becomes paramount to getting sales. Before COVID-19, the premise of online shopping revolves around 'convenience' and 'price'. That has changed, with a great online experience now a given. An innovation in this space is a new digital business call "Squadded" to "allow one to shop with their friends at online fashion stores" (Gerard, 2020). Adding this social element to online shopping looks here to stay, as online group activities caught on during the pandemic.

Will social e-commerce take off remains to be seen but from an education and research perspective, many of these innovations will become textbook examples in the years to come for academics teaching into areas of digital disruption and approaches to driving innovation. Some of these innovations may alter existing frameworks and theory around innovation as researchers started studying these activities. For now, educators and researchers interested in this space certainly have no lack of cases to look into with over 800+ innovative ideas already curated at <http://covidinnovations.com>. *Associate*

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#### *Economics and COVID-19*

The COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably brought to the fore many aspects of economic and social activities that are impacted, and the implications for growth, trade, unemployment, inequality, well-being as well as the question of how to incentivise best the race for developing a vaccine. There has been an explosion of research from the economics profession. The London based Centre of Economic Policy Research (CEPR) has recently made some of this research available (<https://cepr.org/content/covid-economics-vetted-and-real-time-papers-0>)

The issues involved are multifaceted and complicated, and many require coordination between stakeholders, including an increasing role for government, at national, international and supra-national level (e.g., Bénassy-Quéré et al. (2020) discuss the EU case). The consensus is that this crisis is much more serious than the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. For Australia, it is now certain that we are facing a serious recession, for the first time in 30 years, coupled with potential trade tensions with China. On top of this, we have to deal with climate change effectively.

We are now staring at the Great Crash of 2020 (Garnaut (2020)). We are forced to address questions and seek solutions that will shape the future for generations to come. Economics has a definite role to play and now seems a good time to re-focus and develop a closer

appreciation of how economics can shape policy decision-making and disseminate the main arguments to a wide audience. Do we still have to think in terms of the traditional trade-offs? (Gans (2020)). Is 'economic health' more important than public health? How long will the damage due to COVID-19 last? How serious will this be? What is the future of globalisation and how might a resurgence of national autonomy shape the response to the pandemic effects? What are the salient characteristics of a sustainable recovery? *Professor Joanna Poyago-Theotoky, Professor of Economics, [j.poyago-theotoky@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:j.poyago-theotoky@latrobe.edu.au)*

#### *Entrepreneurship and COVID-19*

Global research has shown the importance of entrepreneurship during an economic crisis, such is faced with the current COVID-19 adversity (Obschonka *et al.*, 2015). Factors such as entrepreneurial personality, entrepreneurial spirit, humility, empathy, innovation, opportunity recognition, self-efficacy, social entrepreneurship, commitment to a cause, intrapreneurship, minority entrepreneurship, new business models, entrepreneurial ecosystems and entrepreneurial resilience, to mention a few, may be relevant to dampen economic hardship during such challenging circumstances (Devece *et al.*, 2016; Maritz *et al.*, 2020a).

The current COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to create the space for Universities worldwide to fulfil their mission of teaching entrepreneurship. For many years now, universities have taken on the responsibility for developing graduates with employability (or gradu-



ate) attributes that enable both lifelong and lifewide learning (Jones, 2019). An additional increasing area of responsibility now is for the provision of Entrepreneurship Education (EE). A challenge here is that many universities still rely on the traditional face-to-face lecture as a central method for delivering EE, thereby restricting the full range of possible student development from EE. We now have an opportunity to extend active engagement of entrepreneurship students to online and virtual platforms (Isenberg & Schultz, 2020).

Notwithstanding individual entrepreneur orientation and characteristics, global research has also examined the effect of external enablement of new venture creation. Such research identified the influences of entrepreneurial action on the outcomes extended by external conditions like new technologies, economic or natural environments, or even pandemics like COVID-19. Associated research identified that the most obvious mechanisms by which COVID-19 creates business opportunities is the creation, expansion, and substitution of demand. Further, the pandemic can shape either the product or service offered, the start-up, or the organisation of the start-up (Davidsson et al., 2018).

Recent research has also highlighted an exponential surge in opportunities for entrepreneurs in the pandemic and beyond (Devece *et al.*, 2016). Enduring drivers such as safe separation, home centrality and physical isolation have accelerated robust opportunities such as flexible manufacturing, online education, emergency management, healthcare analytics, senior care, telemedicine, digital

micro-finance, supply chain resilience, remote communication platforms, multi-player entertainment, fitness equipment, remote tech support and even smarter cities (Isenberg & Schultz, 2020). *Professor Alex Maritz, Professor of Entrepreneurship*, [a.maritz@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:a.maritz@latrobe.edu.au)

#### *Information System and COVID-19*

As coronavirus pandemic requires social distancing, the touchless mobile payment system has become a popular financial information system. The impact occurs consumers are requested to dramatically change their payment method rather than cash to keep safe. The existing studies also show that a great deal of developed and developing countries around the globe are heavily relying on the mobile payment system (Gong, et al, 2020). Cashless transaction is the trend followed today by most people during Coronavirus crisis. Moreover, the world payment market could hit a foremost breakthrough from 2020 on. Countries like Sweden and China took a step further towards cashless society, while still many other counters relying on cards and cash. With the advancement of science and technology and changes in consumption patterns, plastic currency has gradually moved towards the era of mobile currency.

The environment of unprecedented post-COVID 19 is moving very fast. The uses of information technology and systems permitted business societies to do business activities faster and more efficient. An indescribable connected network of mobile payment systems progressed from last many years, particularly modernisation in the field of

cashless societies (Liébana-Cabanillas, et al, 2018). Today, online buying and selling trends is on high demand when people in self- isolation or work from home. It makes online transactions and payment method very popular. However, payment through internet is not only technically advanced method of payment, mobile payment is another dynamic and continuous development area (Zhu, et al, 2017).

Several financial institutes have recently accepted technology applications into their finance systems, which allow consumers to transfer fund flexibly. Today mobile payment methods are gaining reputation with customers due to easy and secure to use (Humbani & Wiese, 2018). Mobile payment system thus becomes a safety token that produces a random code for every financial transaction or business deals. In the use of mobile payment system three parties, the mobile user, the service provider of mobile payment and the merchant share responsibilities for defending the consumer's information and privacy. The precise division of accountability among the service provider of mobile payment and merchant vary depend on the particulars of the software application, device types and services in use. Overall, mobile payment system refers to an interesting and significant digital technology to be explored further by consumer and business. There is obvious benefits and inevitable challenges of mobile payment adoption when we foresee its future. Associate Professor Mei-Tai Chu, Information Systems, [m.chu@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:m.chu@latrobe.edu.au)

*Leadership and COVID-19*

*Enabling agile practices: an extension to shared leadership in lockdown*  
Enabling employees to respond effectively to challenges and business opportunities, as they occur, has been a key business practice to sustain organisations during COVID-19 lockdown. The recent shift to leadership being a shared process rather than being vested in one individual has never been more critical than during this period of working in isolation during a pandemic as well as an economic slowdown.

Shared leadership occurs when all members of the team are fully engaged in influencing and guiding their fellow team members in an effort to maximise the potential of the team as a whole (Pearce 2004). COVID-19 working conditions requires an extension of shared leadership to incorporate an agile mindset and agile processes so that employees at all levels of an organisation feel empowered to deal with their immediate responsibilities, with little or no supervision, as well as think of new ways of working to improve organisational effectiveness.

This means individuals, whilst empowered to work autonomously, share power and influence with their team members to achieve collective goals (Chhotray, Sivertsson & Tell, 2018). The shared leadership model in a remote working predicament brings about leadership as a set of shared practices that can and should be enacted by people at all levels and adapted to each situation. The difficulty associated with leaders 'giving up' their authority is reduced in a crisis (Wheatley & Frieze 2011), such as the COVID-19 pandemic,



because the day-to-day business operations call for people working in isolation to continuously solve problems as they arise. When organisations enable agile practices together with a shared leadership approach they can continuously iterate, learn and innovate.

How do you create an agile-shared leadership approach?

- Anticipate trends and challenges to respond more effectively to those challenges
- Build an open, inclusive culture by sharing information within and between individuals, teams and organisations
- Empower employees by providing strong direction and removing bureaucratic barriers
- Motivate employees and involve them in decision-making that supports business sustainability
- Leverage the perspectives of individuals and teams and external stakeholders to encourage creativity and innovation.

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### *Marketing and COVID-19*

During times of crises, consumer behaviour alters rapidly (Kaytaz & Gul, 2014). The impact of COVID-19 on suppliers and retailers alike means that consumers have had to look for new ways to obtain required goods and services. The ramifications of which are predicted to be felt well beyond the COVID-19 pandemic (Wright & Blackburn, 2020). Therefore, understanding consumer behaviour during these unprecedented times is important for mar-

eters, organisations and policy-makers (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020).

Specifically, the fallout of this pandemic on consumers saw a shift in buying behaviour. In the early stages of the pandemic, consumer hoarding became the “new normal” with consumers quickly buying up household goods, putting tremendous strain on both manufacturers and retailers (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020). Once social distancing regulations were put in place, consumers re-evaluated what they deemed as essential items, thus altering their traditional consumption habits (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020). Further, regular brand switching and changes in brand engagement have created a barrier to obtaining previously held consumer loyalty (Wright & Blackburn, 2020).

As depicted, in these unprecedented times, marketers have been faced with challenges they have unlikely encountered before. Whilst this is a daunting prospect for any organisation, we are also seeing a number of opportunities that marketers can leverage. Specifically, by focusing their current business practice to include global social and environmental concerns, firms can receive reputational benefits associated with genuine CSR (He & Harris, 2020). This also enables firms to expand their target market by meeting the needs of the growing groups of socially and environmentally conscious consumers which has accelerated during this pandemic (Wright & Blackburn, 2020).

Additionally, firms who proactively embrace digital marketing can obtain sustainable competitive advantage

as consumers further transition to digitalisation in their workplace, social interactions, goods and service obtainment and brand interactions (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020). Digital channels such as websites, social media platforms and apps facilitate effective and flexible communication, interaction and transactions between firms and their suppliers, distributors and customers whilst enabling marketers to closely monitor new consumer behaviour through data gathering, providing key insights into new consumer behaviour trends. Drs' Daniel Rayne, Ninh Nguyen and Rachel Fuller, Lecturers in Marketing and Digital, [d.rayne@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:d.rayne@latrobe.edu.au)

#### Sport Management and COVID-19

COVID-19 was the punch that knocked the sport industry to the canvas. Whilst we can wonder if they should have seen the punch coming, perhaps we should celebrate those who did. In his essay on managing crises and disasters in sport tourism, Shipway made a non-specific but still prescient reference to biological hazards (Shipway, 2018).

Resilience is a prominent concept within the sport-disaster recovery literature (Shipway, 2018; Wicker, Filo, & Cuskelly, 2013). Resilience is a contested, multidimensional concept. For some scholars, resilience is about situation awareness, management of keystone vulnerabilities, and adaptive capacity. Others talk about bricolage, attitude of wisdom, and virtual role system; or robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness, and rapidity. Empirical research suggests that proactively pursuing government

grants, suitable insurance coverage, and interorganizational relationships are key to improving a sport organisation's (post-disaster) resilience (Wicker et al., 2013).

Once sport organisations get themselves off the canvas, they will help others do the same. Sport can play important roles in post-disaster recovery. Sport organisations provide experiences that promote both physical and mental health, sense of community and social capital. They also provide experiences that entertain and or distract. Research has examined the role of sport in disaster effected communities. Though much of this focussed on natural disasters that are highly focussed geographically and temporally (e.g. terrorism, earthquakes, bushfires, floods), the premise that sport organisations have a role in post-COVID-19 recovery efforts remains valid. To support disaster relief efforts, sport organisations can provide tangible support (i.e. monetary donations, fundraising, matching donations, cause-related marketing, in-kind donations, volunteering, shelter, public service announcements) and emotional support (i.e., memorials, site visits, community outreach programs) (Inoue & Havard, 2015). Sport events expedited the development of a new sporting facilities in an earthquake-devasted city centre and re-branded the city to international tourists and sport enthusiasts (Hall & Amore, 2019). *Associate Professor Geoff Dickson, Sports Management,* [g.dickson@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:g.dickson@latrobe.edu.au)

#### *Supply Chain Management and COVID-19*

Supply chains are the blood vessels of global economy. A crisis like COVID-19 has once again reminded us that if these blood vessels are clogged up chaos supersedes crisis. We are perhaps witnessing one of the tipping points in the history where we have no choice than embracing what I call the 'rethinking supply chain' agenda. This is appropriate as we are also more receptive to behaviour change than anytime thanks to this dreadful crisis. Here I outline a few opportunities for SCM community arising from the COVID-19.

It is not an overstatement to say 'supply chain transparency' is the new holy grail for innovation whether it be for preparing or responding to any crisis. Supply chains are far more complex than before, and companies are often part of networks of suppliers/customers and encompass multiple physical (materials flow) and support (information and financial flows) nodes (Carter et al. 2015). Supply chain transparency initiatives must be fast-tracked including the role of emerging technologies (e.g. blockchain and IoT).

Redesigning supply chains for agility is back on the agenda to allow for augmenting the company's capability for swift sense and response to a crisis while future-proofing supply chains. It is critical that we revisit the paradigms such as Triple-A Supply Chains (Lee, 2004) and Dynamic Alignment (Gattorna, 2016). Not only we need to sustain and bolster the culture of adaptability for learning (and unlearning) but also realign supply chains to foster strict cost control (day-to-day spend), continuous improvement, and flexible working arrangements.

Supply chain academics and practitioners should give particular thought to 'regionalization' of supply chains (strategic supplier co-location), leveraging regional alliances and trades, and creating 'temporary supply chains'. Temporary supply chains are of specific interest as COVID-19 demonstrated their utility in offering companies temporal flexibility for sustenance and resilience. A final area worth exploring is cross-supply chain (-industry) open asset sharing in line with the notion of Physical Internet (a network where boxes are bytes moving through the supply chain network in the same way data does on the internet, Dans (2019), which is and will be gaining increased attention among stakeholders. Associate Professor Sajad Fayezi, *Supply Chain Management*, [s.fayezi@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:s.fayezi@latrobe.edu.au)

#### *Human Resource Management and COVID-19*

COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on the value of well-being focused human resource (HR) management (e.g., Guest, 2017). Rapidly changing and novel work conditions are coupled with increasing job insecurity and caring responsibilities for many individuals who remain employed. More generally, widespread reports of loneliness, anxiety, and social isolation have led mental health experts to warn of long-term spikes in mental health issues. HR has responded quickly to COVID-19 with resources, guides, and training; but employees are still reluctant to approach HR for help (Kern et al., 2020). HR must knock down ineffective and bureaucratic practices and policies and demonstrate their

ability to positively support employees and their well-being.

Many organisations' first response to COVID-19 was to ramp-up Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), but EAPs are under-utilised in the best of times. HR can provide role-specific resources and support around truly flexible work, managing caring responsibilities, stress management, self-care, and trauma (especially for employees in healthcare and other essential services). Line managers may also need upskilling to be able to support and identify well-being concerns within their teams. Perhaps most importantly, HR and other organisation leaders can help to reduce the stigma around mental health issues by modelling vulnerability and the importance of caring for one's mental health.

HR also needs to innovate its thinking and approach to well-being (Guest, 2017), and COVID-19 may reveal unique partnerships and opportunities to keep people connected (Lucas, 2020). Although there is a need for COVID-19 specific research, insights can be drawn from existing literature. Akkermans et al. (2020) describe the COVID-19 crisis as a career shock, and they draw on this prior literature to analyse the likely short- and long-term career impacts of COVID-19. Carnevale and Hatak (2020) suggest looking to the entrepreneurship literature as they argue that the uncertainty and challenges brought on by COVID-19 resemble some of the typical work experiences of resilient and satisfied entrepreneurs. Thus, HR can seek to foster typical characteristics of entrepreneurs (e.g., valuing

autonomy, tolerance of uncertainty), whilst also examining the creative ways that entrepreneur's access work-related social support despite having relatively few co-worker interactions. *Dr Jennifer R Spoor, Deputy Director MBA Program and Senior Lecturer in Management, [j.spoor@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:j.spoor@latrobe.edu.au).*

### *Travel, Tourism and COVID-19*

In the related industries of Tourism, Travel, Events and Hospitality the effects have been severe due to the restrictions introduced to combat coronavirus. The result has been widespread and dramatic falls in turnover, with many operators closing or operating greatly reduced services. The scale of the impact of the pandemic on these industries is partly due to the face-to-face nature of the services provided and the structure of these industries (dominated by large numbers of small to medium enterprises, low capital reserves and organisational resilience, the seasonal nature of demand, the highly casual workforce resulting from what is nowadays termed the gig economy). These systemic issues can particularly be seen in Events, Hospitality and Tourism Operators and the impact is more severe in rural and regional destinations, which have traditionally been dominated by small family operators. Air travel - which is different in being characterised by large companies - has suffered an almost total decline in revenue, with drastic impacts on the sustainability operations that were already under financial strain (for example Virgin).

There has not been much in the way of innovation, possibly because past

research and strategies have assumed that exogenous shocks would be short term and confined to certain countries or geographical regions (see for example Mair et al, 2016). Furthermore, the structure of the industry (small operators, marketing-focussed business plans) will probably mitigate against strong recovery planning. Whilst governments could potentially have a strong leadership role, they have failed to act. In the past, their involvement in these industries has mainly been to undertake destination-advertising campaigns and it has become apparent that they lack the skill-sets to encourage innovation. Industry organisations suffer from a similar problem. The result has been that the current focus is on marketing, primarily the development of new campaigns to be rolled out as restrictions ease. *Professor Warwick Frost, Professor of Tourism, Heritage and The Media, [w.frost@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:w.frost@latrobe.edu.au)*

### Discussion and Conclusion

Our *discipline-specific* scholars provided significant enablers and platforms associating their disciplines to possible business solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. These included *Accounting* and risk management resilience; *Agribusiness* and procurement, production and sustainability of food; *Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility*, globalisation and industrial development; *Digital Business* and pivoting business models through digital technologies; *Economics* and policy decision-making and dissemination; *Entrepreneurship* and the exponential surge in opportunities in the pandemic and beyond; *Human Resources* and well-being initiatives and implementations;

*Information Systems* and technology applications and mobile payment systems; *Leadership*, work autonomy, power share and influence; *Marketing* and buying behaviour, social, environment and digital marketing solutions; *Sport Management*, resilience and sport-disaster recovery; *Supply Chain Management*, transparency, redesign and ‘regionalization’; and *Travel and Tourism Management*, exogenous shocks and destination campaigns.

The narratives also provided varied and a myriad of thoughts on the shape of the new normal. These align with elements for business leaders to consider as they plan for the next normal (see, for example, Sneader and Singhal, 2020), including distance is back (imposed restrictions), resilience AND efficiency (better than the competition), rise of the contract-free economy (digital commerce, telemedicine and automation), more government intervention embrace government control in the economy), more scrutiny for business (shareholder value is not the only corporate value), changing industry structures (consumer behaviour, market positions, sector attractiveness) finding silver linings (necessity as the mother of invention, entrepreneurship and digital disruption).

Furthermore, and closely aligned to the Sneader and Sternfels (2020a) article on surviving to thriving: reimagining the post-COVID-19 return, our discipline experts provided inferences to provide resolve, resilience, return, imagination and reform. Such reform may be in the way of digital disruption, rebuilding operations or supply chain

innovations, but will most likely incur the rapidly recover revenue (speed matters) by embracing a start-up mindset, human at the core, acceleration of digital, tech and analytics, purpose-driven customer co-creation, ecosystems and adaptability, acting with urgency, and developing an agile operating model. Other initiatives include rebuilding operations by enhancing operations resilience, accelerating end-to-end value chain digitalization, embracing the future of work and taking proactive action. Rethinking the organization include diagnostics and interventions around who we are, how we work, how to grow, nimble teams and accelerating digital adoption to enable imagination. The latter includes refocussing digital efforts to reflect changing customer expectations, Internet of things and artificial intelligence, accelerating tech modernisation and increasing the speed of digital solutions.

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To wrap up, the multi-disciplinary business narratives have identified many aspects and initiatives surrounding the post-COVID-19 pandemic; yet demonstrated the importance of integrated business as an enabler to value creation, even if in the form of (digital) disruption and creation of new business models. We again highlight the catastrophic global impact of COVID-19 on health, social and economic levels, but regard proactive business intervention as a possible silver lining from surviving to thriving.

This paper has identified a need for future empirical and case-based regional and global business specific studies surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, together with limitations regarding a single business school's perspectives of discipline-based approaches to COVID-19.

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