



## Editorial to the special issue “International entrepreneurial behaviors of African firms: Emerging issues, challenges and opportunities”

Joseph Amankwah-Amoah<sup>a,\*</sup>, Nathaniel Boso<sup>b,f</sup>, Samuel Adomako<sup>c,d</sup>, Albert Danso<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Durham University, United Kingdom

<sup>b</sup> Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana

<sup>c</sup> University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

<sup>d</sup> Adnan Kassab Business School, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon

<sup>e</sup> De Montfort University, United Kingdom

<sup>f</sup> Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, South Africa

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Africa  
Development  
Markets  
Sub-Saharan Africa

### ABSTRACT

In recent years, the international entrepreneurial behaviors of African firms have garnered considerable attention within the global business context. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, African firms are stepping onto the international stage with growing confidence and ambition. This trend is fueled by a combination of factors, including advancements in technology and communication, as well as evolving trade agreements. However, along with the opportunities presented by international expansion, African firms also face a myriad of challenges. Despite these challenges, African firms are demonstrating remarkable resilience and innovation in their pursuit of international entrepreneurship. In this Special Issue Editorial, we showcase and capture the emerging and diverse range of scholarly contributions to the international entrepreneurship field in Africa. The papers in this collection provide various ways to enhance the conversation on the constraints on development and the different dynamics of international entrepreneurship. We also shed light on the inherent challenges in attempting to unlock the full potential of African firms and national economies in the 21st century.

### 1. Introduction

For decades, it has been contended that African economies and firms are closed to international business activity (see Boso et al., 2018; Boso, Adeleye, Ibeh, & Chizema, 2019; Ibeh, Wilson, & Chizema, 2012). This contention may have been justified to some extent by notable cases of certain African nations temporarily closing their national borders to foreign investors and multinational enterprises (Babarinde, 2009; Boso et al., 2018). Certainly, the inadequate enforcement of private property rights has had profound repercussions, creating a climate of uncertainty and instability that discourages both local and international entrepreneurial endeavors across the continent (Adomako et al., 2019; Amankwah-Amoah, 2023; Boso et al., 2023). Nonetheless, recent years have witnessed a notable shift in this narrative, with increasing evidence suggesting a gradual opening of African economies to international business activities (Ibeh, Wilson, & Chizema, 2012; Ovadje, 2016). Scholars such as Boso et al., (2018,2019) have highlighted this trend,

pointing to a growing willingness among African firms to engage with global markets and embrace internationalization strategies. Furthermore, researchers such as Boso et al. (2019) have underscored the longstanding challenges facing African economies in terms of their integration into the global business arena.

Nevertheless, amidst these challenges, there are signs of progress. Recent studies have noted efforts to enhance the enforcement of private property rights and improve regulatory frameworks have been observed across various African nations (Adomako et al., 2019; Boso et al., 2023). These initiatives aim to create a more conducive environment for business operations, fostering greater confidence among both local and international entrepreneurs. Moreover, the emergence of regional economic blocs and the implementation of trade agreements have facilitated cross-border trade and investment, further opening opportunities for business expansion and collaboration. Despite lingering uncertainties and disparities, there is a growing recognition of the importance of fostering a more inclusive and globally connected

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [joseph.amankwah-amoah@durham.ac.uk](mailto:joseph.amankwah-amoah@durham.ac.uk) (J. Amankwah-Amoah), [N.boso@knust.edu.gh](mailto:N.boso@knust.edu.gh) (N. Boso), [S.Adomako@bham.ac.uk](mailto:S.Adomako@bham.ac.uk) (S. Adomako), [Albert.danso@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:Albert.danso@dmu.ac.uk) (A. Danso).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114763>

Received 12 April 2024; Received in revised form 28 May 2024; Accepted 5 June 2024

Available online 17 June 2024

0148-2963/© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Inc. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Table 1**  
Summary of articles included in this special issue.

Authors/ study	Data/approach	Comments on key findings	Overall contribution to the SI
Drinkwater and Robinson (2024).	1.37 African countries from the World Bank Enterprise Survey 2. Ordered probit models	The study identified a significant impact of corruption and political instability in each of the regressions. Customs and trade regulations were seen as less problematic for small firms and individual establishments in upper-middle-income countries as compared to low-income countries	1. The study provides policy implications to clarify responsibilities to reduce political instability and corruption, as politicians are motivated to implement beneficial policies.
Donbesuur, Owusu-Yirekyi, Ampong, and Hultman (2024).	1. Ghana 2. random selection of 534 entrepreneurial firms 3. structured questionnaire through face-to-face and postal delivery 4. hierarchical-moderated regression	1. Engaging in bricolage may have negative consequences for firms in the long run, even though it is crucial for firms operating in resource-constrained environments. 2. Examining the impact of international opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial capability on driving the export success of international entrepreneurial firms contributes to the export intensity literature.	1. This study contributes to research by exploring the advantages and disadvantages of bricolage in venture outcomes in international markets, along with the identification of opportunities and their processes. This study significantly enhances the role of the entrepreneur's capabilities and improves export performance through orientations. 2. From an industry perspective, the management of entrepreneurial firms can capitalize on the combined advantages of explorative and exploitative learning to achieve export success.
Adams, Attah-Boakye, Yu, Chu and Ishaque (2024).	1. 157 companies from 17 African countries (2007–2020) 2. Econometric model	1. The study indicates a positive correlation between early internationalization and management competence. 2. The findings support the managers' ability to operate in the global market and compete internationally in line with global paradigms and resource-based theory. 3. The findings indicate that organizational capacity, financial resources, and knowledge accumulation are	1. The study provides empirical evidence from EMNEs operating in Africa, contributing to the early internationalization debate. 2. There exists a robust connection between closing the knowledge gap and the initial internationalization performance of African EMNEs. Using a polycentric corporate governance system African EMNEs can 'make' or buy' foreign executives to drive long-term value.

**Table 1 (continued)**

Authors/ study	Data/approach	Comments on key findings	Overall contribution to the SI
		more essential than equipment and other physical resources which play a significant role in early internationalization. 4. The findings suggest that executives' knowledge, experience, values, and personalities play a significant role in shaping their strategic orientations and firm values.	3. The study enhances the understanding of how governance and firm performance are affected by top executive influence. Extending the works of Hambrick (2007) The study contributes to exploring how entrepreneurial EMNEs maintain firm performance by acquiring expertise not just externally but also internationally.
Pindado, Alarcón, Sánchez and Martínez (2024).	1. 26,796 individuals from 17 African countries (2003–2017) 2. Multilevel-ordered logistic regression	1. The findings reveal that the extent of internationalization among early-stage African entrepreneurs is impacted by institutional voids, available resources, and individual-level factors. 2. The findings reveal that entrepreneurs often choose to internationalize their ventures in response to corruption in their home country, seeking to escape the domestic market. 3. The findings reveal that as market-unfriendly regulations rise, female entrepreneurs become more internationalised compared to males.	1. The study contributes to how a market-unfriendly regulatory environment and corruption in the home country impact the level of internationalization of early-stage entrepreneurs in Africa. 2. The study contributes to how internationalization strategies can help address the gender gap in entrepreneurship in this region (Africa), particularly in challenging institutional environments. 3. The study offers valuable insights for policymakers looking to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems that support the international expansion of new ventures in Africa.
Zahoor, Khan, Meyer, and Laker (2024).	1. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) including Web of Science and Scopus 2. Chartered Association of Business Scholars' (CABS) 2021 Academic Journal Guide (i.e. Articles ranked 1–4) 3. Analyses of empirical studies on only Africa (1995–2021) 4. Thematic Analysis 5. 66 articles published in 33	1. The findings reveal that international market entry, scholars suggest that certain African non-exporters are motivated to enter foreign markets because of their managerial competence and characteristics. 2. The study highlights the importance of scope, speed, and degree of internationalization for African SMEs looking to expand internationally. 3. The research shows that many	1. The study contributes to the extension of behavioral theory based on the internationalization of African SMEs. 2. This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the internationalization of African SMEs as it relates to the implications of domestic versus international networks for scholars and insight into the adoption of strategic decision-making. 3. The study contributes to how

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Authors/ study	Data/approach	Comments on key findings	Overall contribution to the SI
	leading journals across 12 disciplines	studies rely on subjective measures of international performance compared to objective measures. This is due limited database on the international venturing of African SMEs. 4. International performance amongst African SMEs is significant when moderated under the higher psychic distance between domestic and host countries. 5. African SMEs can leverage political connections to capitalise on domestic environmental uncertainty and enhance their internationalization efforts.	the integration how social business activities impacts social and economic interventions from the perspective of international social entrepreneurship.
Giaiztoghlu and Korede, (2024).	1. 21 Black men (first-generation immigrants) 2. Observation and semi-structured interview (2019–2020) 3. Thematic analysis	1. The finding reveals that businesses owned by Black African men are perceived to be inferior compared to white-owned business 2. Black African immigrants conceal their business identity to appear white at a reputational and operational level such as through business emails and the use of white faces as marketing materials to gain validation 3. The findings reveal that business owners present themselves as ‘white corporate men’ through the cars they drive and the clothes they put on to command respect	1. This study delves into Critical Race Theory (CRT) by exploring how Black African immigrant male entrepreneurs navigate structural racism in business venturing through identity work. 2. The study contributes to the relevance of considering identity as a key yet overlooked issue for UK policymakers collaborating with ethnic minority business owners.
Onjewu, Olan, Paul and Nguyen, (2024).	1.11 countries (North Africa) 2.535 SMEs 3. robust path analysis algorithm using WarpPLS	1. The findings reveal that time spent dealing with new government regulations is influenced by an increment in government support 2.Resilience is built among firms despite the increase in bureaucracy by high government support 3. The findings reveal that	1. The study contributes to the theory in extending the assessment of export intensity literature by examining the relationship between bureaucracy, resilience, and government support in connection with SMEs

Table 1 (continued)

Authors/ study	Data/approach	Comments on key findings	Overall contribution to the SI
		government support bureaucracy offers a way for these firms to endure and maintain their performance during times of crisis.	2. This study contributes to the literature by showing that in situations with institutional voids, bureaucracy can enhance the crisis resilience of SMEs. 3. This study contributes a resource guide for SME managers looking to increase export intensity through a better grasp of the impact of resilience, government support, and bureaucracy.
Ochieng, Thornton & Owusu (2024).	1. Qualitative approach 2. Multiple case study strategy 3.10 interviews (Feb-May, 202) via video conferencing which lasted one hour each. 4.40 pages of additional secondary data through sharecom publications	1. The study reveals that market knowledge, market size, technological advancements, regulations financial capacity and infrastructure influence Catch’s internationalization choices. However, internalization across more countries is dependent on adequate financial resources. 2. The finding reveals the similarity between the Asian and African markets in terms of product choices and industry infancy. Regarding, internationalization more resources are required for building networks, learning opportunities, and developing resources. 3. The findings reveal that internationalization into other parts of Africa can be fraught with challenges from language, technological adoption, and cultural and financial constraints.	1. The study contributes to the literature about how ventures ascertain speed by identifying a strategic foreign market first and gradually developing learning, competence, and strategic knowledge to rapidly internationalize. 2. The study contributes to how the strategic positioning and features of the foreign market are more significant in the process of sharecom going international. 3. This study makes a valuable contribution by identifying a unique initial foreign entry strategy that differs from the ‘sprinkler’ approach commonly used by born global models. 4. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of networks in the internationalization of sharecoms

business environment in Africa. In light of these developments, scholars and policymakers must continue to monitor and support initiatives aimed at promoting economic openness and entrepreneurship on the continent. By addressing underlying challenges and capitalizing on emerging opportunities, Africa can unlock its full potential as a dynamic and vibrant player in the global economy (see also You, Salmi, & Kauppi,

2018).

Anchored in international entrepreneurial behaviors (IEBs) is the engagement of individuals and firms with entrepreneurial activities beyond their national borders (Gholizadeh & Mohammadkazemi, 2022; Misati, Walumbwa, Lahiri, & Kundu, 2017; Zahoor, Khan, Meyer, & Laker, 2023). Venturing into foreign markets has the potential to help firms gain access to foreign market knowledge, thereby enhancing firm competitiveness. Since time immemorial, Africans have been involved in trading with foreign industrial nations. However, in recent times, this has failed to play a vital role in lifting a greater number of citizens out of poverty. Thus, there is potential to support such firms and provide an enabling environment to buttress their development (see also Tvedten, Wendelboe Hansen, & Jeppesen, 2014). Such international engagements are partially predicated on a host of domestic and continental factors in both home and host countries. For firms and individuals, specific factors such as risk-taking propensity and international experience play a role in this environment.

Unfortunately, entrepreneurial activities of African firms have often not featured prominently in mainstream international entrepreneurship literature (see Kiggundu, 2002). Although some international entrepreneurship scholars have begun to show interest in internationalizing African firms (Kujala & Törnroos, 2018; Boso et al., 2017; Ciravegna, Lopez, & Kundu, 2014; Keupp & Gassmann, 2009; Kiss, Danis, & Cavusgil, 2012; Tantawy et al., 2024; Zahra & George, 2002), conceptual and empirical studies examining international entrepreneurship in and out of Africa remain sparse.

Existing scholarly works on Africa have largely been directed at understanding the behavior of multinational enterprises operating in Africa. Thus, the rich and unique experiences of African entrepreneurial businesses remain under-researched. Against this backdrop, the call for this Special Issue seeks to provide an avenue for international entrepreneurship scholars to showcase their work on the international entrepreneurial activities of African firms. In this direction, we also embrace papers from across multiple disciplinary areas and different African country contexts, contributing to mainstream international entrepreneurship knowledge.

## 2. Overview of the issue

The Special Issue received several interesting and policy-oriented papers covering a diverse range of subjects, as demonstrated in Table 1. These included investigations into customs and trade regulations, assessments of the export intensity of entrepreneurial firms, explorations of the early foreign listing of medium-sized emerging market multinationals, and analyses of the internationalization efforts of African small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that several promising submissions did not meet the requisite criteria and had to be declined. In the subsequent sections, we provide an overview of the papers that have successfully secured acceptance for publication. Each of these contributions offers valuable insights into the complexities of conducting business in Africa and sheds light on potential strategies for overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities in the region's dynamic economic landscape.

## 3. Addressing Africa's grand challenges

In this section, we outline the major challenges facing the continent and the steps towards harnessing its potential: Africa's population boom, transport infrastructure and connectivity challenges, and bureaucratic hurdles. Over the past 20 years, Africa has undergone significant transformation, repositioning itself as the next frontier in global economic and business development (Kuyoro, Leke, White, Woetzel, Jayaram, & Hicks, 2023; The Economist, 2022b). There is a growing recognition of the numerous untapped potentials across the more than 50 countries on the continent (Kuyoro et al., 2023). Concurrently, mainstream management journals have witnessed

flourishing research on Africa (e.g., Nachum, Stevens, Newenham-Kahindi, Lundan, Rose, & Wantchekon, 2022; Boso et al., 2018, 2023). These publications have sparked new conversations around the continent and its business development. Thus, businesses can play a pivotal role in unlocking the potential of the continent while simultaneously helping to tackle societal challenges by investing in different countries, leading to job creation, economic development, and poverty alleviation. Below, we outline the contemporary opportunities and challenges facing Africa in the 21st century, while also highlighting the opportunities that arise from these challenges.

### 3.1. Capitalizing on the African continental free trade area (AfCFTA)

In an era epitomized by the growing interconnectedness of national economies, the pace of intra-African trade and business development has been relatively slow (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2011; Geda & Kebret, 2008). In the late 1950s and 1960s, as waves of decolonization and independence swept through much of sub-Saharan Africa, there was an expectation that political capital and resources would be directed towards removing barriers to trade and investments (The Economist, 2022a). Although Kwame Nkrumah and Pan-African movements made significant strides towards a common continental market, intra-African trade remained heavily regulated, with laborious regulations impeding cross-border trade and entrepreneurial development (AfCFTA, 2023; Debrah et al., 2024; The Economist, 2022a). Indeed, only around 18 % of exports by African nations are to other African countries, a lower share than equivalent figures for Asia (58 %) and Europe (68 %) (The Economist, 2022a, p. 12). This low level of intra-African trade played a pivotal role in the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement, which sought to link over one billion people across 55 countries through trade and investment (World Bank, 2020).

The AfCFTA was launched at the 12th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Niamey, Niger, in July 2019, and trading under the AfCFTA commenced on January 1, 2021 (AfCFTA, 2023). Since its launch, 41 of Africa's 55 nations have adopted it (The Economist, 2022b). The adoption of the AfCFTA is one of the major milestones in the quest for intra-Africa regional economic integration and has become the world's largest free trade area in terms of the number of participating countries, encompassing 54 members of the African Union (AU) and eight Regional Economic Communities (AfCFTA, 2023; World Bank, 2020). It has been projected to help tackle extreme poverty, with deeper collaboration yielding even greater benefits for nations and citizens. The AfCFTA also seeks to help countries work together towards the elimination of trade barriers to transform the continent into a global powerhouse (AfCFTA, 2023).

Besides easing red tape at border crossings, customs bureaucracies, and regulatory compliance issues, this trade agreement is projected to create enough employment opportunities by 2035 to lift around 30 million people from extreme poverty, increase intra-African exports by 81 %, and raise wages by around 10 % (The Economist, 2022a). By harmonizing trade rules and seeking to create a single market for goods and services through economic cooperation and trade liberalization, the AfCFTA is geared towards creating an enabling environment for the internationalization of African firms and intra-African trade and investment.

Anchored in the AfCFTA agreement is improved market access and harmonization of rules (AfCFTA, 2023). Firms, including African multinational enterprises (AMNEs), would be better motivated to expand into regional markets and reduce the cost of expansion (The Economist, 2022a). By curtailing or eliminating trade and investment barriers such as tariffs, quotas, and bureaucratic procedures, the AfCFTA creates more favorable conditions for African firms to expand their catchment areas, leading to greater access to new customers and market opportunities.

For emerging African SMEs, the AfCFTA also provides additional incentives for intra-African expansion to further develop their

competitiveness for the global market. Across the continent, SMEs are pivotal to the development of national economies in terms of job creation and food production (Muriithi, 2017; Kilian, 2024). Indeed, they account for around 50 % of countries' GDP and 95 % of formal businesses in Sub-Saharan Africa, and they are a potential vehicle towards accelerated industrialization and economic development (Muriithi, 2017; Kilian, 2024).

### 3.2. Africa's population boom and challenges

A major challenge facing Africa is that its population is growing at an exponential rate. In a region characterized by a growing population, there is also a pressing need for nations to capitalize on this and redeploy resources and attention to drive a new wave of economic growth and job creation. Indisputably, Africa remains a continent with a growing population, totaling 1.44 billion in 2023, projected to reach 1.688 billion by 2030 and then 2.489 billion by 2050 (Worldometers, 2023a). According to the McKinsey Global Institute's report, Africa is home to the world's youngest and fastest-growing population, providing ample opportunities to accelerate productivity and reimagine development (Kuyoro et al., 2023).

In tandem with this increasing national and regional population, there is also a growing demand for resources such as water, energy, transport infrastructure, employment, and faster-paced economic development. The continent is poised to become a major player in the global economy, possessing not only abundant natural resources but also significant human capital (Budhwar & Debrah, 2013). Nevertheless, this human capital remains largely untapped, and natural resources are underutilized. Public policymakers, governments, and businesses must respond to these future challenges and turn them into opportunities. Accompanying the rapid population growth is the potential to address the issues of unemployment, poverty, and inequality, which further exacerbate the situation. The growing young population presents an opportunity to provide services and products specifically tailored to the rapidly expanding middle class.

### 3.3. Transport infrastructure and connectivity challenges

One of the recurring themes stemming from the various contributions to this issue is institutional constraints. Transport connectivity is of paramount importance in fostering development, firm internationalization, and regional integration (Doganis, 2005; Isaac, 2019). The role of transportation cannot be underestimated due to its crucial impact on facilitating the movement of goods, people, and services, which are central to fostering economic growth, route connectivity, and a more integrated African economy (Isaac, 2019). Despite the potential benefits that can be accrued from developing transportation infrastructure, this sector is punctuated by factors such as insufficient or non-existing road and rail networks and limited access to air transport. Studies indicate that the prevalence of faulty, crowded, or insufficient transport infrastructure often hampers the effective movement of goods, leading to delays and high transport costs (Isaac, 2019). Indeed, inefficient routes and traffic congestion can increase the cost of transporting goods to market (Amankwah-Amoah, 2018; Isaac, 2019). The problem of bureaucracy and infrastructure can be further illuminated by the case of air transport, where poor connectivity has left many Africans paying more for the same distance traveled relative to travelers in advanced economies. Indeed, traveling on intra-African routes is "more expensive than just about anywhere else in the world" (Kesby, 2023), partly attributed to largely restricted regulatory environments.

Although Africa accounts for around 17.2 % of the global population in 2023, projected to increase to around 25.6 % by 2050 (Worldometers, 2023b), the continent currently accounts for just 2.1 % of air transport activities (combined cargo and passenger) (International Air Transport Association [IATA], 2023). According to the IATA, if only 12 key countries liberalize the sector by easing the different restrictions to boost

competition and connectivity, this could yield around 155,000 jobs and increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by over \$1.3 billion. The expensive nature of air travel has played a pivotal role in stifling the development of air transport, with Africa accounting for about 18 % of the world's population, yet only around 5 % of global air travel and about 4 % of global greenhouse gas emissions (Kesby, 2023).

As the IATA (2023) stated, "Africa stands out as the region with the greatest potential and opportunity for aviation." The problem of poor infrastructure as a barrier to development is further exemplified by the fact that, given its large geographical size, the continent's railway network is not much bigger than that of France and Germany combined (The Economist, 2022b). Thus, there is huge potential for the development of different mega transportation infrastructure projects, not only within countries but also across multiple countries, to provide the backdrop for development and greater trade and flow of goods. Despite infrastructure constraints, regulatory impediments, and lack of connectivity, adopting the core principles of liberalizing the aviation industry can unlock its potential. The BBC in 2023 illustrated this problem with the following comparisons:

*"Flying from the German capital, Berlin, to Turkey's biggest city, Istanbul, ... set you back around \$150 (£120) for a direct flight taking less than three hours. But flying a similar distance, say between Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria's biggest city, Lagos, you will be paying anything between \$500 and \$850, with at least one change, taking up to 20 h"* (Kesby, 2023).

For instance, a 2017 Bloomberg Report observed that:

*"Kinshasa, the capital of the DR Congo, is one of the biggest cities in Africa, with an estimated population larger than London and a skyline that peers over the wide, snaking Congo River. But if a traveler wants to go from there to Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital and Africa's largest metropolis, it's impossible to fly nonstop. Roughly 1,100 miles separate the two megacities—about the same distance as New York to Minneapolis. But there are no direct flights. Instead, a traveler will need to change planes at least once and pay a minimum of \$1,200. There's a good chance the journey will take well more than 12 h"* (Hattem, 2017).

Perhaps the most instrumental attempt made to transition the airline industry in Africa from a largely protectionist and heavily regulated environment into a liberalized industry with conditions for effective competition was at the Yamoussoukro Convention on Market Access for Air Transport in Africa in 1988 (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2011). At this Convention, African nations agreed on a blueprint for liberalizing intra-African aviation, i.e., the Yamoussoukro Declaration (YD) geared towards incrementally easing nonphysical barriers to create conditions for competition and collaborations among airlines (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2011). Over three decades have passed, yet the YD remains an incomplete project, with many countries still resisting attempts to liberalize and open up the air transport market. This issue can be traced to factors such as inadequate transport infrastructure, a nationalistic attitude toward civil aviation, and failure to fully implement the YD, leading to a largely protectionist intra-African aviation sector with numerous regulatory hurdles (Hattem, 2017). Largely due to the failure to create a friendly environment for intra-African aviation and promote competition, European and Middle Eastern airlines have become better positioned to dominate African skies (Amankwah-Amoah, 2018). In the absence of effective market competition, coupled with poor flight connectivity, the dominance of major airlines has failed to translate into lower fares for travelers (InterVISTAS, IATA, 2014; Kesby, 2023; Hattem, 2017). This issue of poor flight connectivity is further compounded by the fact that Africa's transportation infrastructure, including roads and rail links, remains limited but has the potential to be developed to facilitate greater economic development (Hattem, 2017). The airline industry remains characterized by protectionist policies stemming from the failure to fully implement the YD.

**Table 2**  
Thematic areas of Africa’s societal grand challenges and areas of future research Opportunities.

Some Africa’s societal grand challenges	Opportunities for doing Businesses	Areas of future research
Africa’s Population Boom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid population growth means new consumers but also exacerbates pressure on limited national resources such as water, energy and food.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can businesses be better leveraged as engine for employment creation opportunities and poverty alleviation efforts?</li> <li>• How can new businesses clusters and incubation centres be fostered in growing population and resource-constrained areas?</li> </ul>
The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) implementations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are inherent benefits in easing intra-Africa trade restrictions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent can businesses and consumers benefits from free trade area.</li> </ul>
Transport infrastructure and connectivity challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure impediments and poor transport connectivity present opportunities for diverse range of firms in areas such as road and rail construction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can business partner with government to tackle the transport infrastructure projects in poor countries?</li> </ul>

3.4. Bureaucratic huddles to development

As demonstrated by past studies (Acquaah, 2007; Acquaah & Eshun, 2010; Tantawy et al., 2024), doing business in many sub-Saharan African countries continues to be veiled by rampant red tape, bureaucratic government officials, and regulatory and licensing constraints that not only stifle competition but also innovation. The Economist (2022a) observed that goods transportation across the continent can be three to four times as costly relative to other parts of the globe. For instance, in 2017, it took around 251 h to ensure paperwork was in order when importing goods into sub-Saharan Africa, compared to just nine hours in OECD nations (The Economist, 2022a). Thus, there is potential to capitalize on new technologies toward the elimination of paperwork, smooth customs clearance, and the reduction of government and customs bureaucracy to facilitate trade and investment activities (see Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2024).

4. Conclusion and discussion

In conclusion, this special issue on “International Entrepreneurial Behaviors of African Firms” provided an opportunity to illuminate and highlight some of the core challenges facing African businesses, Africa, and development. Considering the rapid population growth, there are grand challenges facing Africa in the current century that must be addressed to create conditions for socially responsible business development. Table 2 highlights these grand challenges and potential research themes for the future. We have emphasized challenges such as the population boom, transport infrastructure, connectivity issues, and the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA. These issues present a clear call to action for governments, industries, regulators, the African Union (AU), and all interested parties to collaborate on capitalizing on opportunities and creating an enabling environment for economic development while addressing pressing societal issues.

We hope that the outlined issues will foster new waves of high-impact research on Africa’s grand challenges, contributing to a greater understanding of and solutions to these challenges. The Special Issue was created to give both experienced and new researchers a chance to explore businesses in Africa, focusing on how African companies behave

internationally and the challenges and opportunities they face (Boso et al., 2019). We hope these papers will boost confidence in African management studies. By bringing together these insights, we can learn more about how African businesses operate on a global scale and what this means for the continent’s future.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Joseph Amankwah-Amoah:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Nathaniel Boso:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Samuel Adomako:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization. **Albert Danso:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Resources, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Acknowledgements

It is with great pleasure to be given this opportunity by the former Co-Editors-in-Chief of JBR, Prof. Naveen Donthu, and Prof. Anders Gustafsson, to shed light on the important issue of ‘International Entrepreneurial Behaviors of African Firms’ and highlight some of the challenges in the region. This topic is crucial not only for academia but also for practitioners. Throughout this special issue, we have received support from the editorial offices and editors. We would also like to express our gratitude to the numerous reviewers and authors for their valuable contributions and cooperation, which have been instrumental in bringing this endeavor to a successful conclusion. Unfortunately, many papers were rejected, and we thank those submitting authors.

References

Acquaah, M. (2007). Managerial social capital, strategic orientation, and organizational performance in an emerging economy. *Strategic Management Journal*, 28(12), 1235–1255.

Acquaah, M., & Eshun, J. P. (2010). A longitudinal analysis of the moderated effects of networking relationships on organizational performance in a sub-Saharan African economy. *Human Relations*, 63(5), 667–700.

Adomako, S., Amankwah-Amoah, J., Dankwah, G. O., Danso, A., & Donbesuur, F. (2019). Institutional voids, international learning effort and internationalization of emerging market new ventures. *Journal of International Management*, 25(4), Article 100666.

AfCFTA (2023). About The AfCFTA. Retrieved 01.07.2023, from <https://au-afcfta.org/about/>.

Amankwah-Amoah, J. (2018). Why are so many African companies uncompetitive on the global stage? Insights from the global airline industry. *Africa’s Competitiveness in the Global Economy*, 195–216.

Amankwah-Amoah, J. (2023). Burning issues: Unraveling the nexus between dysfunctional institutions and counterfeiting in developing countries. *Social Science & Medicine*, 337, Article 116292.

Amankwah-Amoah, J., & Debrah, Y. A. (2011). The evolution of alliances in the global airline industry: A review of the African experience. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 53(1), 37–50.

Amankwah-Amoah, J., Abdalla, S., Mogaji, E., Elbanna, A., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2024). The impending disruption of creative industries by generative AI: Opportunities, challenges, and research agenda. *International Journal of Information Management*, 102759.

Babarinde, O. A. (2009). Africa is open for business: A continent on the move. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 51(4), 319–328.

Boso, N., Oghazi, P., & Hultman, M. (2017). International entrepreneurial orientation and regional expansion. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 29(1–2), 4–26.

Boso, N., Adeleye, I., Ibeh, K., & Chizema, A. (2019). The internationalization of African firms: Opportunities, challenges, and risks. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 61(1), 5–12.

- Boso, N., Adeola, O., Danso, A., & Assadinia, S. (2019). The effect of export marketing capabilities on export performance: Moderating role of dysfunctional competition. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 78, 137–145.
- Boso, N., Debrah, Y., & Amankwah-Amoah, J. (2018). (How) does Africa matter for international business scholarship? *AIB Insights*, 18(4), 6–9.
- Boso, N., & Adeola, O. (2023). Configuring political relationships to navigate host-country institutional complexity: Insights from Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 54(6), 1055–1089.
- Budhwar, P. S., & Debrah, Y. A. (Eds.). (2013). *Human resource management in developing countries*. Routledge.
- Ciravegna, L., Lopez, L., & Kundu, S. (2014). Country of origin and network effects on internationalization: A comparative study of SMEs from an emerging and developed economy. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(5), 916–923.
- Debrah, Y. A., Olabode, O. E., Olan, F., & Nyuur, R. B. (2024). The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Taking stock and looking ahead for international business research. *Journal of International Management*, 101120.
- Doganis, R. (2005). *Airline business in the 21st century*. Routledge.
- Geda, A., & Kebret, H. (2008). Regional economic integration in Africa: A review of problems and prospects with a case study of COMESA. *Journal of African Economies*, 17(3), 357–394.
- Gholizadeh, S., & Mohammadkazemi, R. (2022). International entrepreneurial opportunity: A systematic review, meta-synthesis, and future research agenda. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 20(2), 218–254.
- Hattem, J. (2017). Why Is African Air Travel So Terrible? Retrieved 09.07.2023, from: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-21/why-african-air-travel-is-so-terrible>.
- Ibeh, K., Wilson, J., & Chizema, A. (2012). The internationalization of African firms 1995–2011: Review and implications. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 54(4), 411–427.
- International Air Transport Association (IATA) (2023). IATA's "Focus Africa" to Strengthen Aviation's Contribution to African Development. Retrieved 12.07.2023, from: <https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/2023-releases/2023-04-03-01/>.
- InterVISTAS, I. A. T. A. (2014). *Transforming intra-African air connectivity: The economic benefits of implementing the Yamoussoukro Decision*. England: InterVISTAS Consulting LTD Bath.
- Isaac, O. (2019). Transport infrastructure development in Kenya: How connectivity impacts eastern Africa regional integration. *Insight on Africa*, 11(2), 200–218.
- Kesby, R. (2023). Air travel in Africa: Costly flights hold the continent back. Retrieved 09.12.2023, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65845829>.
- Keupp, M., & Gassmann, O. (2009). The past and the future of international entrepreneurship: A review and suggestions for developing the field. *Journal of Management*, 35, 600–633.
- Kiggundu, M. N. (2002). Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in Africa: What is known and what needs to be done. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 7(3), 239.
- Kilian, L. (2024). How digitalisation can close Africa's gender financing gap. Retrieved 25.05.2024, from <https://african.business/2024/05/technology-information/how-digitalisation-can-close-africas-gender-financing-gap>.
- Kiss, A. N., Danis, W. M., & Cavusgil, S. T. (2012). International entrepreneurship research in emerging economies: A critical review and research agenda. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 27(2), 266–290.
- Kujala, I., & Törnroos, J.Å. (2018). Internationalizing through networks from emerging to developed markets with a case study from Ghana to the USA. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 69, 98–109.
- Kuyoro, M., Leke, A., White, O., Woetzel, J., Jayaram, K., & Hicks, K. (2023). *Reimagining economic growth in Africa: Turning diversity into opportunity*. McKinsey Global Institute.
- Misati, E., Walumbwa, F. O., Lahiri, S., & Kundu, S. K. (2017). The internationalization of African small and medium enterprises (SMEs): A South-North pattern. *Africa Journal of Management*, 3(1), 53–81.
- Muriithi, S. (2017). African small and medium enterprises (SMEs) contributions, challenges and solutions. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Management Sciences*, 5, 2056–5992.
- Nachum, L., Stevens, C. E., Newenham-Kahindi, A., Lundan, S., Rose, E. L., & Wantchekon, L. (2022). Africa rising: Opportunities for advancing theory on people, institutions, and the nation state in international business. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 1–18.
- Ovadjie, F. (2016). The internationalization of African firms: Effects of cultural differences on the management of subsidiaries. *Africa Journal of Management*, 2(2), 117–137.
- Tantawy, A. A., Amankwah-Amoah, J., & Puthusserry, P. (2024). Institutional voids and new venture performance: The moderating role of founders' political ties. *European Management Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12644>
- The Economist (2022a). Long walk to free trade. 442(9289), 12.
- The Economist (2022b). Trade flaws 012. 442(9289), 45–46.
- Tvedten, K., Wendelboe Hansen, M., & Jeppesen, S. (2014). Understanding the rise of African business: In search of business perspectives on African enterprise development. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 5(3), 249–268.
- World Bank (2020). The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi: 10.1596/978-1-4648-1559-1.
- Worldometers. (2023a). Current World Population. Retrieved 09.07.2023, from <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/>.
- Worldometers. (2023b). Regions in the world by population (2023). Retrieved 09.07.2023, from <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-region/>.
- You, W., Salmi, A., & Kauppi, K. (2018). Integration of African firms into global value chains: A comparison of Finnish and Chinese firms' sourcing from Africa. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 14(2/3), 252–281.
- Zahoor, N., Khan, Z., Meyer, M., & Laker, B. (2023). International entrepreneurial behavior of internationalizing African SMEs—Towards a new research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 154, Article 113367.
- Zahra, S. A., & George, G. (2002). International entrepreneurship: The current status of the field and future research agenda. In M. A. Hitt, R. D. Ireland, S. M. Camp, & D. L. Sexton (Eds.), *Strategic Entrepreneurship*. MA: Blackwell, Malden.

## Further reading

- Afuah, A. (2009). *Strategic innovation: New game strategies for competitive advantage*. New York: Routledge.
- Amankwah-Amoah, J. (2016). Coming of age, seeking legitimacy: The historical trajectory of African management research. *Critical perspectives on International Business*, 12(1), 2239.
- Dimitratos, P., Voudouris, I., Plakoyiannaki, E., & Nakos, G. (2012). International entrepreneurial culture—Toward a comprehensive opportunity-based operationalization of international entrepreneurship. *International Business Review*, 21(4), 708–721.
- Lashitewm A. (2022). Digital technologies open vast business opportunities in Africa. Retrieved 01.07.2023, from <https://african.business/2022/11/technology-information/digital-technologies-open-vast-business-opportunities-in-africa>.
- McDougall, P. P., & Oviatt, B. M. (2000). International entrepreneurship: The intersection of two research paths. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(5), 902–906.
- Oviatt, B. M., & McDougall, P. P. (2005). Defining international entrepreneurship and modeling the speed of internationalization. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 29(5), 537–553.
- Tan, J. (2002). Culture, nation, and entrepreneurial strategic orientations: Implications for an emerging economy. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 26(4), 95–111.
- The Economist (2015). Technology in Africa: The pioneering continent. Apr 25th 2015.
- The Economist (2017). Hurdles for hubs. 423(9035), 55–56.
- White, M., & Bruton, G. D. (2011). *The Management of Technology & Innovation: A Strategic Approach*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Mason, OH: Thomson-Southwestern.
- Williams, M. L. (1975). The extent and significance of the nationalization of foreign-owned assets in developing countries, 1956–1972. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 27(2), 260–273.
- World Development Report (WDR). (2016). *Digital dividends*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Zoogah, D., Peng, M. W., & Woldu, H., 2015. Institutions, resources, and organizational effectiveness in Africa. *Academy of Management P.* 29(1), 7–31.

**Prof. Joseph Amankwah-Amoah** is a Professor of International Business at Durham University Business School, UK. He is also a recipient of multiple research awards across the social science disciplines and has consistently published in many journals of international repute, including the *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of World Business*, *British Journal of Management*, *Industrial and Corporate Change*, *Business History*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Social Science and Medicine*, *International Business Review*, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Journal of International Management*, *Journal of Institutional Economics*, *Decision Support Systems*, *Management International Review*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Transportation Research Part E*, *Group and Organization Management*, *International Journal of Production Economics*, and *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*. In all, he has published over 160 articles, many in world-leading academic journals (i.e., over 90 papers appearing in just ABS 3\*/4\* and ABDC A/A\*).

**Prof. Nathaniel Boso** is a Professor of International Business and Strategy at University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science (South Africa) and O.R. Tambo Africa Research Chair in Technology Entrepreneurship at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana). He was previously an Associate Professor of Marketing at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. His research focuses on the interface between entrepreneurship, industrial marketing, and supply chain strategy. He has published in leading academic journals such as *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Journal of World Business*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Journal of Business Logistics* among many others. He received his Ph.D. degree from Loughborough University in the United Kingdom.

**Dr. Samuel Adomako** is an Associate Professor of Strategy at the Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham, UK. Prior to joining the University of Birmingham, Dr Adomako held teaching and research positions in King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Saudi Arabia and the University of Bradford, UK. His research work has been published or forthcoming in leading scholarly journals such as *British Journal of Management*, *International Small Business Journal*, *Journal of Business Research*, *International Business Review*, *Journal of International Management*, *R&D Management Journal*, *International Review of Financial Analysis*, *Business Strategy and the Environment*. He received his Ph.D. from Warwick Business School, University of Warwick (AACSB, EQUIS and AMBA Accredited) and is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, United Kingdom.

**Dr Albert Danso** is an Associate Professor in Accounting and Finance and a Deputy Director for The Finance and Banking Research Centre (FiBRe) within the Leicester Castle Business School at the De Montfort University. Albert joined Leicester Business School in November 2016 from Richmond, The American University in London, where he was an

Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Economics. Prior to joining Richmond, Albert was a Lecturer at Leeds Beckett University and also a Visiting Lecturer at Birmingham University Business School. Albert has a PhD in Finance (York Management School), an MSc with Merit in Finance (Leeds Business School), and a BA with First Class in Psychology and Sociology (University of Ghana), a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) and a Certified Management & Business Educator (CMBE). Albert's teaching and research interests cut across corporate finance, corporate governance, credit market performance, corporate sustainability and stakeholder engagement, having taught modules, such as Corporate Finance, Financial Econometrics, International Accounting & Finance Issues, Liquidity and Financial Risk Management and Research Methods to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. He is also a visiting scholar at the Sunwah International Business School (Liaoning University) in Shenyang (China). Albert serves as a reviewer for several internationally recognised journals. He has continuing research interests in

Finance and management, having published extensively in several internationally recognised journals, such as *Journal of Financial Research*, *International Journal of Finance and Economics*, *International Review of Financial Analysis*, *Review of Quantitative Finance and Accounting*, *Managerial Finance*, *Journal of Business Research*, *International Business Review*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *International Small Business Journal* and *Venture Capital*. Dr. Albert Danso currently serves as an Associate Professor and Head of the Finance Subject Group at the School of Accounting, Finance & Economics at De Montfort University (DMU). Additionally, he holds the role of Associate Editor at three esteemed journals: the *International Journal of Finance and Economics*, *Business Strategy and the Environment*, and *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*. Before assuming his current position, he held the role of Associate Head of Research & Enterprise in the School of Accounting, Finance & Economics at DMU.