

Integrated Reporting (IR): Business Cases for Sustainability in South Asia

Call for Book Chapters

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

South Asia is the region with the fastest-growing amount of natural resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in the world. The increasing threats to the natural environment associated with rapid economic development result in rising levels of global greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss and social inequality. Significant droughts and floods have caused serious disruptions and volatility in the economies of this region. Many companies in South Asia are already facing serious resource constraints linked to water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, and soil erosion and various other sustainability challenges. These concerns led the United Nations (UN) to develop the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which see the economy, environment, and society as embedded systems. While the primary responsibility of achieving SDGs by 2030 rests with governments, they cannot be achieved without the concerted effort and support of businesses and other organizations (Adams, 2017). Since companies impact on virtually all sustainable development challenges, in the last few decades, public awareness has strongly focused on the role of corporate entities. This has necessitated companies to report not only on their financial performance but also on non-financial performance. In this context, integrated reporting (IR) has become a communication tool between organizations and their stakeholders, while some companies use them as a legitimizing tool (De Villiers et al., 2014).

A non-integrated, 'silo' treatment of non-financial information in corporate reports fail to provide stakeholders with the necessary linkages to effectively evaluate performance, strategy and future value creation of a business (De Villiers et al., 2017). This encouraged the emergence of IR as a new corporate reporting model combining different strands of corporate reporting, namely, financial, governance, and sustainability, into a coherent whole to explain an organization's ability to create and sustain business and societal value (Eccles and Krzus, 2010). In reporting environmental and social performance voluntarily, Lee and Schaltegger (2018) argue that "measuring and reporting sustainability issues remain a challenge because of information uncertainty; the innovation needed to overcome tensions between economic, environmental, and social goals; and the large influence of external and organizational factors" (p.4).

IR is expected to improve the management practices of an organization and move them toward sustainable development. Thus, these are not merely reporting (or broadly accounting) practices but organization-wide change mechanisms that finally lead to the production of a sustainable or an integrated report. For instance, the instant popularity of IR is due to its potential to change the mind-set of corporate actors, leading to further integration of the sustainability of actions and impacts into corporate strategic planning and decision making. Further, IR drives organizational change towards more sustainable performance outcomes by supporting sustainability, integrated thinking and decision making, and actions that focus on sustainable value creation for stakeholders (Simnett and Huggins, 2015).

To improve our understanding and knowledge, it is important to understand the roles and usefulness of IR for companies operating in South Asia. For instance, in countries such as Sri Lanka, it has been identified that IR has been mainly a transition evolving through the incremental changes in sustainability reporting (Gunarathne and Senaratne, 2017). Hence, it is important to identify and address these questions; how does IR support measures of corporate sustainability performance? How and why do companies adopt and use IR for developing corporate sustainability management, and how do they respond to sustainability issues differently in various countries of South Asia? In the adoption and implementation of corporate sustainability management, how does IR play a role in stakeholder communication in South Asia? Particularly for developing and newly industrialized countries where the improvement of economic welfare has been emphasized for the last few decades, the question of how corporate sustainability management practices can be improved with the support of IR, and implemented to tackle the environmental and social challenges whilst supporting economic performance, arises.

This book aims at providing insights into new approaches and corporate practices in IR for sustainability and showcasing their contribution to corporate sustainability in South Asia.

BOOK OBJECTIVE

The book intends to explore and discuss issues, challenges, opportunities, methodological innovations and trends in IR for sustainability from South Asia. Second, the book will contain case studies illustrating the ways in which companies develop and advance corporate IR and sustainability accounting practices, what practical solutions and applications have been developed in South Asia and how certain IR tools and accounting methods are disseminated.

The overall objectives are:

- To present and discuss the new development of IR theories and practices in South Asia;
- To present practical solutions and recent developments of IR and accounting supported business cases for sustainability in South Asia;
- To provide guidance for the further developments in corporate IR and sustainability accounting (including sustainability reporting, IR, auditing and assurance) and integrated corporate governance practices in South Asia; and
- To bridge theoretical developments and practices in the area of IR for sustainability in South Asia.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The book intends to become a reference for researchers, academics and professionals, providing advanced research, concepts, applications, developments, discussions and case studies on corporate IR and sustainability accounting in South Asia and the roles of different IR and sustainability accounting tools and methods in strengthening competitiveness by achieving corporate sustainability.

RECOMMENDED TOPICS

Recommended topics for book chapters considered to contribute to the book may include, but are not limited to:

- Recent development of concepts and methods of corporate IR.
- Business cases for sustainability and IR in South Asia.
- Non-financial information and IR practices in South Asia.
- Analysis of institutional pressures and IR adopting in South Asia.
- Organizational change for sustainability, corporate governance practices and the roles of IR in South Asia.
- Developments in academic and professional education sectors for sustainability and IR in South Asia.
- Materiality determination and stakeholder engagement in IR in South Asia.
- Development of various assurance practices such as combined assurance oriented towards sustainability and IR in South Asia.
- Practitioner case studies describing unique/successful corporate reporting practices/approaches in South Asia.

Contributions with a South Asian focus may analyze case studies, discuss comparative case studies, be conceptual, theoretical or focus on empirical statistical analyses. A broad range of theoretical and practice-oriented approaches is welcome as rich insight into analyses, possible solutions and corporate practices in small and large companies of all industries may be of interest to the readers seeking an overview of the state of the art and practice in IR and sustainability accounting in South Asia.

SUBMISSION SCHEDULE OF BOOK CHAPTERS

Chapter proposal submission: 15 November 2020

Chapter proposal acceptance notification: 30 November 2020

Full chapter submission: 30 January 2021

Review feedback: 15 March 2021

Revised final book chapter submission: 30 May 2021

Final book chapter selection: 31 July 2021

Expected book publication: December 2021/Early 2022

- Chapter proposal should be within 300 words.
- Research-based full chapters should be around 7,000-8,000 words, including references and appendices.
- Practitioner case studies should be around 4,000-5,000 words.
- All submissions must be original work and not have been submitted for publication elsewhere.

BOOK CHAPTER SUBMISSIONS

Please submit your chapter proposal/full chapters by e-mail to all editors: Ki-Hoon Lee (ki-hoon.lee@griffith.edu.au), Samantha Senaratne (samanthisenaratne@sjp.ac.lk), and Nuwan Gunarathne (nuwan@sjp.ac.lk).

PUBLISHER:

The book will be submitted for publication by a reputed international publisher such as Springer or Taylor & Francis.

References

- Adams, C.A. (2017). *The sustainable development goals, integrated thinking and the integrated report*, International Integrated Reporting Council, London.
- De Villiers, C., Rinaldi, L., Unerman, J. (2014). Integrated reporting: Insights, gaps and an agenda for future research. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 27(7), 1042-1067.
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- Eccles, R.G., Krzus, M.P. (2010). *One report: Integrated reporting for a sustainable strategy*, Wiley, NJ, Hoboken.
- Gunarathne, N., Senaratne, S. (2017). Diffusion of integrated reporting in an emerging South Asian (SAARC) nation. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 32(4/5), 524-548.
- Lee, K., Schaltegger, S. (2018) (Eds.) *Accounting for sustainability: Asia Pacific perspectives*. Springer, Netherlands.
- Simnett, R., Huggins, A.L. (2015). Integrated reporting and assurance: where can research add value?. *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*, 6(1), 29-53.