

EDITORIAL

SHARYN RUNDLE-THIELE

Associate Professor of Marketing, University of Southern Queensland, Springfield QLD, Australia

REBEKAH RUSSELL-BENNETT

Senior Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane QLD, Australia

Welcome to our Special Issue of the *Journal of Management & Organization*. We are indebted to our reviewers all of whom gave time to review manuscripts to help us to improve papers for you to read. Special thanks are also directed to the people who responded to our call for papers. We received 25 manuscripts and while all manuscripts were reviewed we were only able to select eight papers. We would finally like to express our thanks to authors of articles appearing in this Special Issue.

The theme for our Special Issue was linking the employee–customer interface. The idea for this Special Issue originated from an idea put forward by Schneider and colleagues (2005). Essentially, their proposition was that research was required to bring together two key areas of organisations – the employee and the customer. They termed this type of research ‘linkage research’. Linkage research involves linking employee experiences at work, with the experiences employees provide for customers leading to outcomes for the employee, the organisation and the customer. In particular, this nexus between the employee and the customer is usually in the area of service delivery (whether it be service as the core product of the organisation or after-sales service and complaint handling). This special edition was aimed at stimulating research that considered employees and customers and

the behaviours individuals engage in within a service context and the effects of these behaviours on employee, organisational and consumer outcomes. The goal of this special issue was to bring together management, marketing, organisational behaviour and customer behaviour researchers.

The employee–customer interface involves two key parties reflecting the two environments that influence the service encounter; internal and external. The internal environment consists of organisational employees and practices while the external consists of the customer and market forces, amongst other things. The papers in this special issue span both of these environments and offer conceptual, qualitative and quantitative insights. The articles are written by researchers from around the world thus indicating that this topic is of global significance. The number of submissions also indicates the level of academic interest in this area. We commence the Special Issue with two articles that examine individual characteristics of service employees, then three articles that focus on situational factors in the internal environment of a service organisation. Next, we move to the external environment with an article that examines the point of interaction in health services. The following two articles focus on the relationship between the internal and external environments, with

emphasis on customer outcomes. We conclude with an epilogue by Professor Ray Fisk of Texas State University who is well known for his research in services marketing. The epilogue is a commentary on two key themes that arise from the eight articles concluding with recommendations for further research in the employee–customer interface.

We have chosen not to summarise the articles for you at the outset. For those seeking a summary, please go straight to the Epilogue where the eight articles have been summarised succinctly by Ray Fisk. Instead, we would like to encourage you to consider how your research could be linked to research conducted by one of your marketing or management colleagues. As noted by Schneider and colleagues, there is a need for linking employee experiences at work, with the experiences employees provide for customers, leading to outcomes for the employee, the organisation and the customer.

This Special Issue is merely a starting point and the articles in this Special Issue note many opportunities that arise for future research. Conceptual papers by Jane Seiling, Rico Lam and Dora Lau, Mark Spence and Sudhir Kale and Nell Kimberley and Charmine Härtel certainly offer researchers a framework for empirical research. The empirical papers by Leanne Cutcher, Angela Martin, Amanda Beatson, Ian Lings and Siggie Guddergan and Loreleigh Keashly and Joel Neuman each offer ideas to further stimulate and extend linkage research. Again we encourage you to link with colleagues to further our knowledge of the interplay between employees and customers, who are both needed for business survival.

The epilogue by Fisk discusses the ‘entangled’ relationship between employees and customers and highlights two themes that arise from the eight articles in this special issue; the

characteristics of people and situational influences. Researchers are encouraged to consider these themes to further academic and managerial understanding of the employee–customer interface.

In closing, we express our deepest appreciation to Professor Ken Parry for his guidance throughout the entire Special Issue process. It has been quite a journey and Ken’s answers to endless questions were essential to make sure that we reached the final destination. We would also like to thank JMO’s Publishing Coordinator, Jen who always responded to our emails and was able to find an answer for every question. We know that she did this in difficult circumstances towards the end of the Special Issue process. Lastly, our thanks go to our colleagues, with a special thankyou to Ray Fisk, for their support and the Queensland University of Technology for their financial support.

References

Schneider B, Ehrhart MG, Mayer DM, Saltz JL and Niles-Jolly K (2005) Understanding Organization–Customer Links in Service Settings, *Academy of Management Journal* 48: 1017–1027.

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