
Editorial

Angappa Gunasekaran*

Department of Decision and Information Sciences
and
Business Innovation Research Center
Charlton College of Business
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth
North Dartmouth, MA 02747, USA
E-mail: agunasekaran@umassd.edu
*Corresponding author

D. Steven White

Department of Management and Marketing
Charlton College of Business
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth
North Dartmouth, MA 02747, USA
E-mail: swhite@umassd.edu

Biographical notes: Dr. Angappa Gunasekaran is a Professor of Operations Management and the Chairperson of the Department of Decision and Information Science at the Charlton College of Business, the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, USA. He is teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in Operations Management and Management Science. He has over 200 articles published in 40 different peer-reviewed journals. He has presented over 50 papers and published about 50 articles in conferences and given a number of invited talks in about 20 countries. He is on the Editorial Board of over 20 journals. He has several edited books. He is the Editor of several journals in the fields of operations management and information systems. He is currently interested in researching benchmarking, management information systems, e-commerce (B2B), information technology/systems evaluation, performance measures and metrics in new economies, technology management, logistics and supply chain management. He is the Director of the Business Innovation Research Center at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth and received grants over \$250,000 to support his research and other academic activities.

Dr. D. Steven White is the Chairperson of the Department of Management and Marketing and a Professor of Marketing and International Business. He joined the faculty of the Charlton College of Business, USA, in September 1998. His research interests include green business, seafood marketing and logistics, international services marketing, service exporting, global and social entrepreneurship, international marketing, global e-commerce, open-source applications in global business and international business education. He is an award-winning author and a prolific researcher. His research has been published in the *International Marketing Review*, the *Journal of Business Research*, the *Journal of Services Marketing*, the *Thunderbird International Business Review*, the *Journal of Marketing Management (UK)*, the *Journal of Marketing Education* and the *International Business Review*. In addition, he has received the Charlton College of Business Higginson Award for Excellence in

Teaching thrice since joining the faculty. He is on the editorial review board of three international academic journals and has accumulated nearly \$200,000 in small grants in the areas of international business education and blended and online learning.

Business excellence is a complex and somewhat subjective concept. Or is it a construct or a paradigm? What factors or variables should be used to measure business excellence across cultures? Unfortunately, no generally accepted definition of business excellence exists, yet everyone seems to know what makes up business excellence. At the Global Business Innovation and Development (GBID 12008) conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in January 2008, nearly 200 academicians and practitioners from around the world gathered to present research on the topic of business innovation and development. By doing so, these researchers shared state-of-the-art best practices with their colleagues from academia, government and industry. This diffusion of best practices is considered to be a factor in fostering the growth of business excellence globally. The innovative interdisciplinary nature of the GBID 2008 conference, with participants attending from every continent and from diverse academic disciplines, provides hope that a common definition of business excellence can be developed in the future. The positive outcomes that manifest from working collaboratively and systematically across functional boundaries to develop, test and document global best practices far outweigh the risks of pursuing such an agenda.

Thus, the articles in this special double issue of the *International Journal of Business Excellence* address business excellence through the documentation and diffusion of best practices in management and marketing. They have been subjected to multiple and rigorous reviews at all levels of submission (conference and journal). Over 70 professors participated in the review process and deserve special recognition for their service and their dedication to quality. The end result is a special issue of exceptional quality.

In the first article, Piila and Haapasalo construct a Key Account Management (KAM) system to assist in Customer Relationship Management (CRM). The objective of the research is to determine how basic elements of CRM and KAM can contribute to value chain development in the paper industry. Through an in-depth case study methodology that included multiple interactions and measures, including over 200 meetings, a model is developed and subsequently tested. Results support the use of the KAM system to build CRM efforts.

In an exploratory study, Smith and Pitta use the SERVQUAL questionnaire to examine the perceptions of 86 Chinese managers regarding their ability to deliver service quality. Results did not support previous research utilising the SERVQUAL instrument. However, further analysis did reveal two significant variables impacting the managers' perceptions of their ability to deliver service quality: role clarity of the employee and the existence of internal processes. In addition, the two aforementioned variables plus teamwork accounted for nearly a quarter of the variance in perceived customer satisfaction.

Although advances in technology have gone a long way in assisting in the development of CRM programmes, the satisfaction with these programmes is suspect at both the management and customer levels. In the third article in this special double issue, Lundstrom documents the evolution from brand equity to customer relationship equity to trust equity. Subsequently, a new, unified model of customer relationship equity is proposed and explained. This innovative model includes trust as a precursor and antecedent of the equity relationship.

Diffusion of innovation has received much attention in the marketing, psychology, sociology and economics literature. Torckeli *et al.* study the role of foreign investments and trade flow in the knowledge absorption and innovativeness of Russian companies. As a young democracy and relatively recent convert to an open-market economy, Russia provides a fertile ground for research into the diffusion of best practices into the country from outside its borders. The results indicate that foreign investors are significant actors in the knowledge absorption framework in Russia.

As service providers, universities world-wide may be considered as competitors for customers (students) within the same industry (higher education). And although clearly a large industry, little research exists regarding the business of higher education. In the fifth article in this double special issue, de Jager and Soontiens investigate the image of the institution and the academic expectations of prospective students, among other variables, as used by students to evaluate and select a tertiary institution. Results indicate the importance of projecting and maintaining a favourable institutional and programmatic reputation, as well as an acceptable value proposition, in the attraction and retention of students.

Schuster and Harris examine the potential impact of the role of government and the rule of law, and the subsequent level of transparency as influenced by the two, on marketing strategy. By examining the role of government and rule of law across cultures, the structure for doing business in a specific location can be determined. Given different structural constraints in each culture with regard to the role of government, rule of law and degree of transparency, a decision tree is created to determine when and how to adapt marketing strategies to ensure the highest probability of success.

The use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) in supply chain management is still in its infancy worldwide, or so contend Scavarda *et al.* Some of the obstacles for the adoption and use of this technology are privacy and security, cost and standardisation. Adoption of the technology has been slow in the developed, and mostly democratic, countries. Scavarda *et al.* investigate the adoption of this advanced technology in the People's Republic of China. Results indicate that the development and implementation of RFID supply chain management in China is behind that of developed countries, but growing in scale and scope in closed-loop manufacturing applications despite the lack of local standards, low security and high costs.

The diffusion of innovation from a university to the region it serves is increasingly viewed as a positive influence in stimulating the sustainable economic development of both the region and the country. Applied research is closely connected to these technology transfer activities, as reported by Besta *et al.* Thus, the debate between the merits of pure science as opposed to applied science has become one of increasing importance in higher education. The authors identify the critical factors that affect the university's internal environment and chart a course for transforming universities to engines of economic growth. Finally, a research strategy for innovative Greek universities is developed.

The relationship between brand extensions and parent brands are not well understood, despite substantial research interest in this area of study by marketers. Boisvert and Burton test and model the effect of the parent brand associations' salience of the brand extension, branding strategy, and extension innovativeness positing on the extent of the reciprocal transfer of extension association to the parent brand. The results indicate that the line extension associations to the parent brand can be influenced by the launch strategy and provide an opportunity to improve the positioning of the parent brand.

Drotsky *et al.* examine the link between income and acquisition of cellular telephone products and services by college students. No longer viewed as a luxury item, cell phones are the preferred means of communication (both voice and text) for college students globally. Profitable opportunities exist for servicing this segment if providers develop the correct mix of communication products and services given the income constraints faced by students. Differences within the group based on income (high and low) are hypothesised.

Collective bargaining in a beer brewery in Ghana is the topic of the next paper in this special double issue. Turkson investigates the extent to which collective bargaining can minimise conflict between management and labour. Results of the case study suggest that collective bargaining yields positive results for both management and labour in developing countries by reducing and resolving conflicts and disagreements in the workplace.

Kaartemo and Peltola in their paper study the feasibility of existing knowledge of New Service Development (NSD) in an international context by means with the help of a case study. The findings provide insights into the cross-cultural effect of NSD process. Also, the paper suggests some future research to build a New International Service Development (NISD) model and in turn to help managers to better organise their NSD processes in a foreign location.

Thank you to the members of the GBID 2008 organising committee including the American Marketing Association Global Marketing Special Interest Group (SIG), COPPE–Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro and Fundação Getulio Vargas for making the conference an overwhelming success. The hard work put forth by all to bring the conference from concept to reality did not go unnoticed and was much appreciated. Special thanks to Dr. Godwin Ariguzo for working on multiple tasks. In addition, the 31 members of the international scientific committee are thanked for their assistance in promoting the conference and for reviewing the submissions. Finally, no conference can succeed without the participation of the researchers and participants. Your willingness to support the conference and to spend some time with colleagues from around the world in the beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro is appreciated.

We conclude by thanking Dr. Mohammed Dorgham, Mr. Jim Corlett and Mrs. Barbara Curran of Inderscience Publishers for making this special issue possible. Your continued support of IJBEX is appreciated.