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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Dr. Angappa Gunasekaran is a Professor and the Chairperson of the Department of Decision and Information Sciences at the Charlton College of Business, University of Massachusetts (UMass)-Dartmouth, USA. He teaches 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 about 60 papers and published about 60 articles in conferences. He is on the editorial board of over 20 journals. He edits several journals in operations management and information systems. He is also the Director of the Business Innovation Research Center at UMass-Dartmouth.

Dr. D. Steven White is a Chairperson of the Department of Management and Marketing and Professor of Marketing and International Business at the University of Massachusetts (UMass)-Dartmouth. He is an award-winning author and prolific researcher. His research has been published in *International Marketing Review*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *Journal of Marketing Management (UK)*, *Journal of Marketing Education* and *International Business Review*. He has received the Charlton College of Business Higginson Award for Excellence in Teaching three times since joining the faculty in 1998.

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In January 2008, nearly 200 academicians and practitioners from around the world gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil at the first Global Business Innovation and Development conference (GBID 2008). The articles presented in this special issue of the *International Journal of Services and Operations Management (IJSOM)* represent the leading edge in interdisciplinary research on the topic of business innovation and

development. Participants came from every continent and diverse academic disciplines including accounting, engineering, finance, information systems, law, management, marketing, operations and supply chain management to discuss the relationship between innovation and business development and to diffuse best practices in an effort to stimulate sustainable economic development.

The articles in this special issue of IJSOM represent some of the best research presented at the conference. All have been through multiple and rigorous reviews at both the conference and journal submission levels. A special thank you is due to the reviewers at both levels who provided feedback and guidance to the authors in order to ensure the high quality of the research presented in this issue.

Business problems rarely fall into well-defined functional areas of operations. Yet, this compartmentalised approach to solving the problems associated with service and operations management exists in institutions of higher education globally. If the academy at large truly seeks to positively impact the sustainable economic development of its constituents, innovative, creative and interdisciplinary approaches must be fostered and rewarded. Only through synergistic collaboration between disciplines can we hope to develop a systems view of service and operations management. The GBID 2008 conference sought to become a catalyst for fostering these interdisciplinary collaborations. Thus, the reader will notice the primary academic discipline of each contributing author is listed in the article summaries below. The hope is that the success of this conference will stimulate future interdisciplinary applied business research. The articles presented below answered the challenge and the authors are to be commended.

In the first article, Min (supply chain strategy) and Lambert (public administration) investigate the utilisation of Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs) in managing global supply chains. Firms locate in FTZs to take advantage of deferred customs duties, among other reasons, and to provide them with potential competitive advantages in the marketplace. Goods that move through FTZs without customisation and/or value added activities typically do so for little to no import or export duties, tariffs or fees, thus providing global supply chain managers with the aforementioned potential competitive advantages (lower costs, *ceteris paribus*). Despite the potential benefits associated with utilising FTZs, few multinational firms take advantage of this opportunity. Through an exploratory study, the factors that facilitate or hinder the use of FTZs are identified.

In evaluating mixed-model assembly lines, Battini (management and engineering), Faccio (mechanics innovation and management), Persona (management and engineering) and Sgarbossa (management and engineering) creatively address the problem of line balancing. Normally, a mixed-model environment problem is solved by transforming the system into a single assembly line balancing problem and creating a virtual average model. Unfortunately, this approach does not accurately reflect the actual characteristics of the system. To determine the best way to solve this balancing dilemma, the authors perform a comparative evaluation of eight different methodologies to determine the best potential approach given five different performance measures.

Radio frequency tags serve many purposes in supply chain management and logistics. In the third article of this special issue, Ribeiro (production engineering, business and economics), Scavarda (supply chain management) and Batalha (production engineering) describe the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags in the management of the live cattle supply chain in multiple countries. Three broad themes are investigated using a qualitative research methodology: the context and use of RFID in the cattle industry, legislation regarding the use of RFID in the cattle supply chain and consumer privacy.

Hanzaee (marketing) and Sheikhi (marketing and industrial management) investigate package design from the perspective of consumers in countries who read right-to-left, rather than left-to-right. This under-investigated market potentially represents more than one third of the world's consumers living in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. By creatively addressing the lack of research in package design for consumers in right-to-left reading countries, Hanzaee and Sheikhi provide a foundation on which to build future research in the area of package and promotional customisation.

Inventory management and materials management is the focus of the next article and the second in this issue from Battini *et al.* Usually in assembly-to-order systems, the degree of centralisation or decentralisation of parts is of critical concern. The purpose of this research is to present an integrated framework for optimising the inventory/parts feeding system including the level of centralised inventory. By doing so, the authors contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the assembly-to-order manufacturing process.

The final paper in this special issue is from Regattieri (industrial and mechanical plants), Gamberini (engineering sciences and methods), Lolli (engineering sciences and methods) and Manzini (industrial and mechanical plants) addresses queuing problems in the airport passenger security screening system. Beginning with a review of the strengths and weaknesses of queuing theory and the authors develop a new model to address the inadequacies of past models in dealing with multi-delivery platforms (production systems and services). To illustrate the applicability of the proposed model, the authors apply it to the problems associated with airport passenger security screening including predicting optimal numbers of security gates needed to handle varietal demand.

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 deserves our gratitude for having the foresight to push the boundaries of interdisciplinary research on the topics of business innovation and development. In addition, the service of the 31 members of the international scientific committee in promoting and reviewing for the conference is appreciated. And Dr. Godwin Ariguzo deserves special recognition for bringing it all together successfully. Finally, thank you to the researchers and participants for making the conference successful and for spending some time with us in the beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro.

Many thanks and appreciation goes to Dr. Mohammed Dorgham, Mr. Jim Corlett and Mrs. Barbara Curran of Inderscience Publishers for their continued support to IJSOM.

It is with great pleasure that the articles in this special issue are presented to you herein.