
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Arpita Khare is currently an Assistant Professor in Indian Institute Management – Rohtak, India. She has a MBA Degree in Marketing and DPhil in International Management. Her research interests span over consumer behaviour, retailing, services marketing and supply chain management. She has authored quite a few research papers in international and national journals.

An organisation's ultimate goal is maintaining a loyal customer base that can transcend into a long-term sustainable relationship. Intense competition has led firms to focus on building stronger relationships with their customers and stakeholders. The purview of relational approach has extended to encompass all people and firms involved in the value chain. The customers' interpretation of 'value' is influenced by inter-relationships as these relationships denote the value product or service conveys (Kandampully and Duddy, 1999). The value perception of the customer is not only based on the tangible components of the product or offering, but also includes intangible benefits that a customer expects from product purchase, consumption, and disposition processes. The value delivery can be improved through interactions with the customers. Relationship marketing was coined in 1980s to understand customer behaviour related to the services (Berry, et al., 1983; Peppers and Rogers, 1995). Since services constituted a large portion of intangible elements, understanding customers and researching their loyalty behaviour was a critical part of relationship approach. Relationship marketing required a dramatic change in marketing thinking and required blending of network approach, quality, traditional marketing, services marketing and organisational theory (Gummesson, 1997). Relationship approach is focused towards retaining customers by building sustainable relationships with them. This is only feasible if the firm is able to inculcate a value driven culture among the employees. The employees of the firm should be able to comprehend the importance of building relationship with the customers. Developing and building relationships with customers are important if the firm wants to grow and improve its performance (Bove and Johnson, 2000). However, just focusing on relationship approach would not suffice. The relationship approach has to be applied at the business and functional level, so that it may be transmitted in the value delivery process.

Firms give importance to processes that strengthen relationship between the customer and service provider. The relationship management approach can be a competitive advantage for firms and part of corporate strategy (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2002). Business

processes should be tuned to manage customers as assets for the firm. The relationship principles rest on knowledge about the customers (Kasabov, 2007) and how this knowledge can be used by the employees to manage the customers. Employees have to be nurtured for building relationship with the customers. The organisational culture and business processes play a vital role in enabling employees to perform their role. If the environment is not conducive, it leads to dissatisfaction among the employees and affects their performance. Relationship set-up is governed by knowledge or resource imbalances (Kasabov, 2007). If it is appropriately handled, it can help the firm to understand the core competencies of their employees and use them for managing front-end customer interactions. The external environment also facilitates in setting the right tone for customer–employee interactions. If the government policies, legal framework and infrastructural issues are in place, the employee would be able to deliver the service without hassle. The competitive environment, technology usage levels and organisational systems are as relevant as the relationship theories. We talk about relationship management or marketing because it has become an important factor in building long-term relationships with end customers. Employees can facilitate learning about customer needs and behaviours that can be instrumental in framing firm's relationship strategy. Thus, to foster a culture of innovation, operational efficiency and building competencies retaining employees is important. The business culture sets the performance and customer-focused culture. The internal processes and performance metrics are driven by employees, and so is the value placed to organisational excellence.

This issue of the journal presents thoughts of the researchers on varied business dimensions that are interwoven around the theme of enhancing organisational systems for providing more value to the end-user. The key to performance and profitability lies in optimising the knowledge repository. This repository resides among the customers and the employees. Firms practising employee- and customer-centric approach are more likely to generate more value for business. The earlier theories of job satisfaction, business growth and profitability have been examined with reference to emerging economies. These research papers examine performance and profitability dimensions in service and manufacturing sector. Khare and Rakesh argue that mobile marketing can be used as a strategic tool to improve promotional endeavours in Indian retail sector. They suggest that to use mobile technology as an effective promotional and marketing medium, firms need to change Indian customers' perception towards it. Most customers perceive it as inconvenient, which affects their relationship with the firm. In their paper on Islamic banks profitability and country income level, Noor and Ahmed found that profitability was associated with equity against assets, higher operating expenses against asset in high-income countries. They conclude that profitability of Islamic banks is associated with income levels of the country. Another paper authored by Naidu on labour legislation in Fiji attempts to examine the impact of Employment Relations Promulgation on employment conditions. Furthermore, a paper co-authored by Jena, Goswami, and Mohapatra discusses the levels of job satisfaction among employees in Ferro alloy industry in the state of Orissa in India. The last paper by Atristain and Rajagopal explores the operational efficiency parameters of SMEs in Mexico. The study suggests technical propositions to SMEs for improving their performance.

We hope that the papers in this issue would throw light on business activities in developing countries and would enhance knowledge about different sectors. These papers would contribute in building the existing literature and enable future research on the subject.

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