Editorial

Being relevant, interesting, timely, and entertaining

Introduction

I am honored and delighted to have been selected by Emerald as a co-editor of the *Journal of Services Marketing* (*JSM*). I have served the journal as an author, guest editor, associate editor and reviewer during my academic career. Today, I look forward to continuing *JSM*'s legacy in the service domain by working closely with my co-editor, Rebekah Russell-Bennett, on supporting the journal and exploring new areas of interest.

In terms of leading an editorial direction, my thoughts and perspectives are motivated by RITE, which is an acronym that stands for relevant, interesting, timely and entertaining (Trow, 2013). I admittedly came across the acronym almost accidentally during a search. However, I encourage authors to consider RITE when they submit articles to *JSM* and for reviewers to consider the acronym when they judge the quality of submissions and provide feedback to authors. I will

The relevant, interesting, timely and entertaining way to publish

RITE may help authors who engage in both theoretical verification investigations via logico-deductive methods or theoretical creation investigations via conceptualization (MacInnis, 2011) or by employing inductive methodological approaches, such as grounded theory (Martin and Gynnild, 2011) or storytelling (Woodside *et al.*, 2008). I will discuss how RITE can be applied to *JSM*.

Relevant

Perhaps, it is trite for an editor to request that submitted manuscripts be relevant. Indeed, I am confident that authors consider their submissions as being significant and important and I seriously doubt that that any editor would ask for anything less than relevant articles. Thus, the question that needs to be addressed regards how *JSM* interprets the term relevancy. It is worth nothing here that relevancy in any discipline is ever changing. The services discipline emerged in the 1980's with a focus on establishing foundational theories on concepts that differentiated goods from services and on understanding service quality. Next, academics turned attention to understanding issues associated with managerial relevancy, such as satisfaction, loyalty, market orientation, relationship marketing, value creation, experiential marketing, customer journey mapping/service design and interactive/digital marketing. These investigatory efforts represent the underpinnings of the service domain; yet, one speculates about relevancy in the service discipline in 2020 or beyond.

Considering the future, I believe that our present research challenge, as service researchers, is for us to better understand how services, service systems, and service providers may work together to enhance consumer, communal, societal, and global welfare. Admittedly, I am influenced by the transformative service research (TSR) paradigm and the need for us, as scholars, to contribute to human wellbeing via service offerings, design and delivery (Anderson *et al.*, 2013; Gustafsson *et al.*, 2015).

Further, I encourage service researchers to reconsider the generalizability of our sacrosanct foundational theories, and conceptual frameworks, and to analyze their steadfastness from the perspectives of consumers whom are often ill represented in our sample studies (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2017). For example, consumers with financial vulnerabilities, the homeless, senior adults and the elderly, consumers with disabilities, recent immigrants, and those belonging to non-traditional household units, or possessing characteristics that make them susceptible to receiving lower levels of value in the marketplace, compared to other consumers, have often been absent from our seminal theoretical and conceptual studies. A recent special issue in *JSM* (Vol. 31, Issue 4/55) included many key papers on this topic.

Demographic realities are such that service organizations, systems and providers will be increasingly confronting non-traditional consumers during their exchanges (Cohn and Caumont, 2016), and thus, many consumers may find themselves susceptible to receiving the maximum potential of value inherent in a marketplace exchange. Yet, a fundamental assumption of TSR is that humanity is surrounded by, and embedded, in service systems that have great impact on how people live their lives (Fisk *et al.*, 2016).

As service academics, we can assist practitioners achieve this objective by helping them understand how to work with non-traditional consumers and to design services that promote inclusivity for all consumers. As service organizations design the life-affirming practice of service inclusion into every aspect of their service system, consumers, communities, and nations will steadily benefit from fundamental improvements in human wellbeing (Fisk *et al.*, 2018). Thus, as editors, we encourage submissions to *JSM* that are relevant in terms of being transformative in nature and that adhere to the goal of enhancing well-being for everyone.

Interesting

The consequences of living in an overstimulated society is that many academics read nothing more than a journal title or abstract – we have a three second spot to grab our reader's attention. We read tidbits of information quickly and then decide whether to move forward, to click for more details, or to move onwards. Authors should consider the importance of clarifying their theoretical, methodological, managerial and/or societal implications in the abstract and relatively soon within their submissions (Russell-Bennett and Baron, 2016).

In this manner, authors are encouraged to partake in investigatory endeavors that arouse curiosity and that will catch the attention of the editorial staff, reviewers and, ultimately, reviewers. To accomplish this task, I turn to a favorite phrase employed by one of my early mentors, Barney Glaser, and his concept of "grab" (Glaser, 2002). In the context of service research, grab refers to the ability of a concept, a framework, or a theory to explain how consumers, employees, organizations, or systems resolve their main concerns or problems. For example, consumers struggling

with obesity resolve their need for social support by turning to others via online support venues (Parkinson *et al.*, 2017). Alternatively, female servers battling physical or mental abuse at home may resolve their need for some type of human affection by turning to elderly customers in a diner for emotional support (Rosenbaum, 2009).

As an editor, I encourage submissions that are novel in terms in subject content, research methodology, or in moving the discipline forward. Indeed, I would rather see an author embark in an original, thought-provoking article that deals with a captivating topic than to submit an article which represents an irrelevant addition to a "tiny topic".

Timely

It is an author's responsibility to arouse editor, reviewer, and reader curiosity and interest, and to hold their attention for the duration of the study – from abstract to conclusion. As editors, we support thought-provoking research studies, perhaps, even controversial, as they relate to the evocative role that services often assume in contemporary consumers' lives and personal experiences. Indeed, Nicholas Murray Butler is quoted as saying, "An expert is one who knows more and more about less and less until he knows absolutely everything about nothing (Goodread.com, 2018)". Authors may prevent their falling into this theoretical morass by engaging in research investigations that focus on issues and problems that consumers, organizations, systems, communities or nations currently confront, or for which is there is ample evidence of future implications.

In terms of timeliness, we encourage, if not implore, authors to contribute to contemporary theoretical discussions and topics. Indeed, service researchers will move the discipline forward by engaging in contemporary, cutting-edge, and creative research (Russell-Bennett and Baron, 2015). Interestingly, Russell-Bennett and Baron (2015) state that fresh ideas may create difficulties for their proponents, and "career-limiting" by others; however, authors should realize *JSM*'s favorable stance towards their engaging in, and the publishing of, fresh ideas that provide answers to real world service problems.

To assist authors with putting forth timely research, *JSM* encourages authors to engage in both theory generation as well as theoretical verification studies. Perhaps, my own personal biases towards inductive research, namely, grounded theory methodology, may come into play here. Despite this reality, I envision *JSM* wholeheartedly encouraging submissions that involve the contribution of theory through methodical gathering and data analysis. For example, a novel, contemporary theoretical framework that emerges from data collected via social media monitoring, and analyzed following rigorous methodological procedures, would most likely be more valuable in its generalizability, relevancy and managerial practicality, than say a theoretical verification study that draws upon a long-established theory.

Thus, in terms of timeliness, we encourage *JSM* authors to deal with contemporary topics as they relate to service issues that consumers, organizations or societies are currently confronting. As such, we support both inductive and deductive investigations, as well as thought-provoking conceptual studies that deal with contemporary service issues.

Indeed, *JSM* has two calls for special issues that deal with a critical review and new directions in service research as well as advancing qualitative research methodology in service research (see www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=jsm#news).

Researchers are encouraged to justify their timeliness by referring to priorities put forth by service researchers (Ostrom *et al.*, 2015) or the Marketing Science Institute (MSI, 2018). For example, MSI's 2018-2020 research priorities that have service implications include understanding the customer journey, customer engagement, customer experience and service experiences with mass brands in finer detail. We encourage authors to draw upon research priorities and to clearly indicate their addressing of priority issues relatively soon in their manuscripts.

Entertaining

Perhaps, it is odd to suggest that a journal article be entertaining. Yet, like a performance, a journal article needs to represent fine work that stimulates an audience of editors, editorial board members, reviewers, and readers. Caulley (2008) uses the term, "creative nonfiction" (p. 424) to denote a writing style in which an author tells the truth in a manner that draws upon fiction techniques. Some of these techniques include helping readers understand the article by providing realistic details. For example, rather than simply saying a hypothesis was rejected or supported, authors should provide reader with realism as to what the details mean; that is, authors should help readers relate their words to images. Authors should word concepts in a manner that encourages readers to evoke images, perhaps, by providing examples or situations that correspond to the concepts.

I came across an online article that discusses "5 Creative Ways to Entertain a Serious Audience" (Barker, 2015), and I believe that it is relevant for academics. Barker (2015) encourages speakers to "bring in a hook" almost immediately to stave off losing an audience in a matter of seconds; perhaps, by contradicting the norm. Second, the author suggests that speakers "add in some funk", which authors can easily do by drawing upon photos, video, something other than mere words. Third, Barker (2015) suggests that speakers need to make their audience curious about what may be happening soon in the session. Similarly, authors need to write in a way that encourages readers, and reviewers, truly want to move forward in the article. Indeed, Barker (2015) notes that one way to make an audience curious is to be a revolutionary. That is, think in an unconventional manner and deal with contemporary, interesting topics.

Finally, Barker (2015) poses that a great presentation moves an audience to dance; essentially, to respond not only with their minds but also with the body. How does this apply to academic research? I encourage authors to write in a way they appeal to future research by showing good research direction that encourage others to further expand a theory. Authors should write in a manner that encourages managers or public policy officials to respond in some manner. It is worth noting here that the Emerald abstract asks authors to consider research, practical and social implications.

As editors, we encourage authors to refrain from writing boring articles and to consider how they can move readers, reviewers, and others to not only read their work, but also, to respond to it. Thus, *JSM* values articles that have clear and meaningful implications, and we encourage authors to spend time clearly explaining the impact of their work on future research, practice and society.

Conclusion

Authors should view their submissions as personal masterpieces that have the potential to transform lives, societies and even the world via written text, as well as, pictorial and/or video supplements. Indeed, as an editor, I will do my best to promote each accepted article as such.

I thank Steve Baron for his stewardship of the journal for the past four years and look forward to working with the current co-editor Rebekah Russell-Bennett and future *JSM* authors to continue the journal's contribution to the discipline. I will endeavor to continue to ensure that the journal addresses novel areas which focus on transforming consumer, communal, national, global and organizational well-being via service delivery.

Mark Scott Rosenbaum

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