

**TRADE TALES: DECODING  
CUSTOMERS' STORIES**

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ADVANCES IN CULTURE, TOURISM AND  
HOSPITALITY RESEARCH VOLUME 14

# TRADE TALES: DECODING CUSTOMERS' STORIES

BY

**ARCH G. WOODSIDE**

*Curtin University, Australia*



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# **PREFACE**

Arch G. Woodside

A drama includes an inciting (usually unexpected) incident that a protagonist reacts to; one or more natural, policy, or human antagonists is identifiable; a psychological and usually a physical journey (process/action) resulting in some outcome; a search for, and the possibility of receiving, help occurs that enables the protagonist to move toward a desirable milestone or outcome; milestones necessary to complete to reach an outcome are observable; world and personal blocks temporarily or permanently prevent the protagonist from reaching an objective or completing milestones; doubt, surprises, and suspenseful moments occur about achieving an objective; sometimes pauses, reflections, insights, and humorous asides by participants occur; an undesirable or desirable ending concludes the drama. A hospitality service drama (HSD) includes all these ingredients as they occur in hospitality service contexts. An HSD is a hospitality service encounter on steroids. HSDs include dialog and behaviors beyond the expectations and programmed routines that customers and service providers expect to experience. Yet, it seems that everyone we know tells stories of HSDs. Experiencing HSDs can have huge impacts on customers' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions toward a service provider.

Trade Tales, *Advances in Culture, Tourism, and Hospitality Research*, Volume 14 describes and explains HSDs. Volume 14 includes 26 original first-person customer experience stories of problems/opportunities and outcomes, with most stories including customer and sales/service associate dialogues. The volume includes experiential exercises for the reader to hone her/his skills in managing HSDs – a multiple-choice exercise following each story. The exercises ask the reader to select a solution to the problem/opportunity in the story. Each chapter includes a story, offers a learning exercise, and both surface and deep assessments of plot, climax, and outcome of the story as well as a critical review (an arm's length independent review by a researcher of the story). This volume describes customers' reports of the big and

little things that happen when customers and sales/service associates talk and co-create a buying and/or consumption and selling–service experience. The volume also offers a general descriptive theory of storytelling narratives of customers’ and sales/service associates’ HSDs. Chapters include stories written by Asian, European, New Zealand/Pacific Rim, and North American customers. With the select-a-solution exercise in each chapter, this volume provides sense-making training in solving moments-of-truth problems. The volume describes the seemingly little as well as big things that cause happy/sad customer assessments as well as unintended consequences. This volume increases the reader’s abilities to detect nuance in multiple international contexts and to create workable solutions for HSDs.