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TRADE TALES: DECODING CUSTOMERS’ STORIES

BY

ARCH G. WOODSIDE
Curtin University, Australia
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Rachael Bish  
University of Waikato, New Zealand

Po-Ju Chen  
University of Central Florida, USA

Yang-Su Chen  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Rouxelle De Villiers  
Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

Liangcheng Feng  
City University of Macau

Anestis K. Fotiadis  
Zayed University

Xinhua Guan  
Guangdong University of Finance and Economics, Guangdong, China

Anna Hammershøy  
University College of Northern Denmark

Tzung-Cheng (T.C.) Huan  
National Chiayi University, Taiwan

Rachel A. Jared  
University of Central Florida

Srirung Klinjan  
National Chiayi University

Eusebio C. Leou  
City University of Macau

Yaoqi Li  
Sun Yat-sen University

Jarom Murphy  
Hamilton, New Zealand

Rüdiger Niemz  
FH Salzburg, Austria

Aunyaporn Nuntapat  
National Chiayi University

Tom O’Hara  
University of Waikato, New Zealand

Tze-Jen Pan  
National Penghu University of Science and Technology

Tara Redding  
University of Central Florida

Korey Rubenstein  
University of Waikato, New Zealand

Gina Ryan  
University of Waikato, New Zealand
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Berit E. Simonsen University College of Northern Denmark
Nikolaos Stylos University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
Irini L. F. Tang City University of Macau
Chin-Fa Tsai National Chiayi University
Chris A. Vassiliadis University of Macedonia
Jiangeng Yeh City University of Macau
Cheng Zhang City University of Macau
EDITORIAL BOARD

SERIES EDITOR
Arch Woodside
Boston College
arch.woodside@bc.edu

Editorial Board Members

Kenneth Backman
Clemson University
Clemson, SC, USA
frank@clemson.edu

Monica Chien
The University of Queensland
Queensland, Australia
m.chien@uq.edu.au

Maria Dolores Alvarez Basterra
Gran Via 49 – 5 Izda
48011 Bilbao, Vizcaya, Spain
alvarezm@boun.edu.tr

Antonia Correia
University of Algarve
Portugal
ahcorreia@gmail.com

Stephen Boot
stephen.boot@nottingham.ac.uk

John Crotts
College of Charleston
Charleston, WV, USA
crotsjohn@gmail.com

Jenny Cave
University of Waikato
Hamilton, New Zealand
jenny.cave@waikato, ac.nz

Alain Decrop
University of Namur, Belgium
alain.decrop@unamur.be

Giacomo Del Chiappa
Department of Economics and
Business, University of Sassari
CRENoS and RCEA, Via Muroni, 25
07100 Sassari (SS), Italy
gdelchiappa@uniss.it

Joana Dias
Av 5 de Outubro, 66, 10 D, Faro,
Algarve, Portugal
faroflats@gmail.com
Joana Afonso Dias  
*Lecturer in INUAF, Instituto Superior Dom Afonso III*  
*Gabinete Académico de Investigação e Marketing*  
*Algarve, Portugal*  
joanadia@gmail.com

Rachel Dodds  
*Associate Professor*  
*Ted Rogers School of Hospitality & Tourism Management*  
*Ryerson University, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON M5B 2K3*  
r2dodds@ryerson.ca

Eyal Ert  
*Faculty of Agriculture Food and Environment*  
*Rehovot 76100, Israel*  
eyal.ert@mail.huji.ac.il

Li-Yia Feng  
*Teacher Education Center, National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism*  
*Kaohsiung, Taiwan*  
lityiafeng@gmail.com

Helena Reis Figueiredo  
*School of Management, Hospitality and Tourism*  
*University of Algarve, Faro, Portugal*  
hreis@ualg.pt

Anestis K. Fotiadis  
*Zayed University, College of Communication and Media Science*  
*Abu Dhabi, UAE*  
Anestis.Fotiadis@zu.ac.ae

John Goutas  
*j.gountas@murdoch.edu.au*

Sandra Goutas  
*Curtin University*  
*Perth WA 6845, Australia*  
sandra.goutas@curtin.edu.au

Kirsten Holmes  
*Curtin University*  
*Perth WA 6845, Australia*  
k.holmes@cbs.curtin.edu.au

Ute Jamrozy  
*1025 Opal Street*  
*San Diego, CA 92109, USA*  
ujamrozy@alliant.edu

Azilah Kasim  
*Tourism and Hospitality, Universiti Utara Malaysia*  
*Sintok, Kedah 06010, Malaysia*  
azilah@uum.edu.my

Metin Kozak  
*School of Tourism and Hospitality Management*  
*Dokuz Eylul University*  
*Foca, Izmir Turkey*  
m.kozak@superonline.com

Robert Li  
*University of South Carolina, 701 Assembly Street, Columbia, SC 29208, USA*  
robertli@mailbox.sc.edu

Patrick Liao  
*17 Annerley Street, Toowong, Queensland 4066, Australia*  
bid@iinet.net.au
Editorial Review Board

Cui Lixin  
Beijing Institute of Technology  
No. 5 Zhongguancun South Street,  
Haidian District, China  
cuilixin@bit.edu.cn

Martin Lohmann  
Leuphana University  
Lueneburg, Wilschenbrucher Weg 84  
D-21335 Lüneburg (Germany)  
m.lohmann@leuphana.de

Drew Martin  
University of Hawaii at Hilo  
HI, USA  
drmartin@hawaii.edu

Josef Mazanec  
MODUL University  
Vienna, Austria  
josef.mazanec@wu.ac.at

Scott McCabe  
Nottingham University Business School  
Jubilee Campus  
Nottingham NG8 1BB, UK  
scott.mccabe@nottingham.ac.uk

Taketo Naoi  
Tokyo Metropolitan University  
Japan  
naoi-taketo@tmu.ac.jp

Girish Prayag  
Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship  
University of Canterbury  
Christchurch 8140, New Zealand  
girish.prayag@gmail.com

Piyush Sharma  
Curtin University  
Perth WA 6845, Australia  
piyush.sharma@curtin.edu.au

Theodoros A. Stavrinoudis  
Department of Business Administration  
University of the Aegean, Greece  
tsta@aegean.gr

Rouxelle De Villiers  
Faculty of Business & Law  
Auckland University of Technology  
Auckland, New Zealand  
rdevilli@aut.ac.nz

Su Yahu  
No. 194, Jiouru 2nd Road,  
Sanmin Chiu  
Kaohsiung City 807, Taiwan  
yahuisu@mail.nkuht.edu.tw

Şükrü Yarcan  
Fulya Sitesi A Blok A Kapı No. 3  
D. 10, Süleyman bey Sokak  
Gayrettepe Beşiktas 34349,  
İstanbul, Turkey  
yarcan@superonline.com

Endo Yosuke  
〒192-0362  
東京都 Hachioji-shi, 31-13-104  
Matsuki, Japan  
tmu.tourism.endo@gmail.com
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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.