

# Tuning the Sounds of Service: Essays in Honour of Michael Kleinaltenkamp

By Sascha Raithel, Frank Jacob, and Martin Benkenstein

April 2020 marks an important milestone in the life of Michael Kleinaltenkamp (hereinafter, Michael): he has retired from his position as Full Professor of Business and Service Marketing in the Marketing Department of Freie Universität Berlin. To honour and celebrate Michael's life-work, this special issue of the *Journal of Service Management Research* brings together research contributions by people who are friends of, have collaborated with, and/or have been inspired by Michael.

Many have come to know that Michael has two dominant passions: the first for research, knowledge creation, and knowledge dissemination in the field of service and the second for playing and performing modern music (not to mention his passions for cooking and laughing) together with others. This special issue is a reflection of these passions. It presents eight research articles that provide a variety of contributions in the field of business-to-business (B2B) marketing and service research. Each article has a unique link to Michael's work and his publications – or, in musical terms, articles that resonate with Michael's melody in how he understands B2B marketing and service.

According to Google Scholar (last update: March 2020), Michael has produced more than 250 works, with the oldest work dating back to 1984. His publications have 8,307 citations, an h-index (number of h publications with a minimum of h citations) of 45, and an i10-index (number of works with 10+ citations) of 116. The reader will find an impressive 50 of Michael's publications being cited in this

issue alone. Yet, such impressive numbers only quantify the impact of Michael's academic achievements; to fully understand Michael's impact on the academic community, we, the editors of this special issue, invite readers to actually qualify his research through the articles herein.

The issue begins with a brilliant analysis of Michael's academic research. *Ingo Karpen and Carolin Plewa*, in their article titled "From Muso to Academic and Back: A Time and Person-Based Acknowledgement of Michael Kleinaltenkamp," undertake an intensified literature analysis of Michael's publication output as a marketing researcher over his 36-year career, putting special focus on his English-language publications between 2002 and 2019. The authors identify central and recurring themes in Michael's oeuvre: relationships, service, and value emerge as the most prominent ones. Karpen and Plewa's analysis impressively highlights how diligently and continuously Michael contributed to the advancement of knowledges on topics so core for understanding modern business markets and for guiding management decisions therein.

In their study titled "We're So Bad It's Funny – Effects of Using Humour in the Marketing Communication of Low-Quality Service Providers," *Ilias Danatzis, Jana Möller, and Christine Mathies* analyse the impact of a specific type of service provider message content, that is, humour, on service customers' attitudinal outcomes. The authors take a unique position in establishing humour as an effective moderator in offsetting negative ramifications from low-quality, or no-frills, service offerings. This study ties in



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with Michael's research on humour in service (e.g. Matthes, Chiew, & Kleinaltenkamp 2016).

*Judith Dannenbaum, Laura-Maria Edinger-Schons, Mario Reise, Olaf Plötner, and Jan Wieseke's article focuses on improving understanding of the performance impacts from so-called hybrid offerings in the context of industrial companies. In their article titled "What Does It Take to Successfully Implement a Hybrid Offering Strategy? A Contingency Perspective," hybrid offerings are understood as integrated bundles of goods and service. Using extensive empirical research work with industrial companies as a basis, the authors demonstrate the effects of hybrid offerings on performance. This paper complements Michael's research on manufacturing firms moving into the solution business (e.g., Macdonald, Kleinaltenkamp, & Wilson 2016).*

Researchers and practitioners alike have begun paying increasing attention to the novel concept of customer success recently. Under the title of "Managing Customer Success in Business Markets: Conceptual Foundation and Practical Application," Andreas Eggert, Wolfgang Ulaga, and Anna Gehring propound foundational delineations of core concepts for customer success research. In addition to clarifying concepts, the authors progress knowledge in their systematic presentation of business practices as relevant to customer success. The authors do so by also building on and extending Michael's work in this domain (e.g., Kleinaltenkamp, Plewa, Gudergan, Karpen, & Chen 2017).

*Michaela Haase's paper titled "Considering Value-related Concepts in Service-oriented Approaches to Marketing Studies in Light of Philosophical and Economic Value Theories" compares how value and related concepts are comprehended in two different science disciplines. She identifies research on customer integration, mainly anchored in Michael's work (e.g., Kleinaltenkamp, Fließ, & Jacob, 1996) as one strand in economic research on value. Haase's discourse unearths accordance, similarities, and differences between the two perspectives. The article bears great potential to more accurately categorize existing studies and guide future value research.*

*Albrecht Söllner and Tessa Haverland address modes of coordination for the rather novel phenomenon of energy communities in their analysis titled "From Centralized Energy Generation and Distribution to Clean Energy Communities: Exploring New Modes of Governance for the Energy Sector." They describe and categorize such communities, provide background information on the legal and regulatory context, assess the body of relevant extant literature, and derive four governance schemes from a theory-based analysis. Their work explicitly relates to the concept of customer integration, one of the themes Michael's writings are so essential for (e.g., Kleinaltenkamp et al. 1996). Söllner and Haverland's article also resonates*

nicely with Michael's lasting interest in governance modes in business market settings, the continuum between transactions and relationships in particular (e.g., Kleinaltenkamp, Plinke, & Söllner 2015).

*Herbert Woratschek, Chris Horbel, and Bastian Popp address the topic of resource integration in their analysis. Their article "Conceptualizing Resource Integration: The Peculiar Role of Pure Public Resources" makes several distinct strides in advancing existing knowledge. Most notably, they provide a thorough analysis of literature, which reveals substantial similarities in understanding resource integration between the older research stream on customer integration, whose proponents are mostly from the German research community, and the more recent international research on the service-dominant logic of marketing. The authors find Michael's works to be foundational for both streams.*

Last but not least, *Suvi Nenonen and Kai Storbacka* dedicate their contribution to the topic of market shaping, a theme currently emerging and receiving widespread attention in B2B marketing and service research communities. In their paper "On the Marketness of Markets and Actor Clout: Market-shaping Roles," they elicit the origins of market shaping, position the topic with respect to various research strands, and carve out a typology of four actor roles in market shaping. Interestingly, the design and evolution of markets was a core area of interest in Michael's early career stages. His habilitation thesis exemplifies the link (Kleinaltenkamp 1993). Michael never lost interest in the topic, as evidenced in his role as a co-organizer of the 2020 Market Shaping and Innovation Colloquium in Berlin (which, unfortunately, was cancelled due to the corona virus outbreak).

Our intent with this special issue is not to close Michael's chapter but rather to present an interim report of his academic achievements. Michael is currently working on a variety of topics and will continue to be active in research and teaching. We want to use this special issue as opportunity and provide some thoughts on future perspectives for service business and service research, which we hope will inspire not only Michael but the entire field to enrich the academic discussion with many more contributions to come. In this sense, we feel confident in predicting that substantial strides will be made with regard to the advancement of knowledge on Michael's core themes, that is, relationships, service, and value (cf. Karpen and Plewa's article in this issue), in the four dimensions that encompass any marketing research endeavours (i.e., customers, suppliers, networks, and markets).

With regard to the customer perspective, Michael's writings played an important role in inspiring and promoting marketing's transition from a value-in-exchange paradigm to a value-in-use paradigm (Macdonald et al., 2016).

Although we believe that this transition has reached a point at which it is no longer reversible, we also acknowledge that many gaps remain unaddressed and that more research efforts are needed in the future. Indeed, the most prevalent aspect of value-in-use is its dynamic nature, which, although considered by many as extremely relevant, is still only partly understood (e.g., Hartwig & Jacob 2018).

From the supply side perspective of the market, Michael deserves full acclaim for his pioneering role in introducing the concept of customer integration into the marketing body of knowledge (Kleinaltenkamp et al. 1996). Customer integration thinking revolutionized our understanding of customer orientation in managing supplier operations. We view the recently emerging theme of customer success management as a most logical extension of the customer integration framework (cf. Eggert et al.'s article in this issue). We expect a special impetus for this stream to come from a shift towards a research methodology that more heavily builds on the investigation and analysis of supply-side marketing practices (e.g., Karpen, Bove, Lukas, & Zyphur 2015).

Networks, a core concept in modern business marketing science, also recur in Michael's writings (e.g., Kleinaltenkamp & Weight 1997). Network thinking assumes an interaction perspective according to which market actors collaborate in lasting business relationships. Again, as one of the pioneers, Michael in a quite early publication pointed to the role of technology in this context (Kleinaltenkamp & Jacob 1997). Since then, the power of technology has risen to levels previously unthinkable. We, therefore, expect another transition, this time related to network thinking and marking a move from actor-to-actor interaction to machine-to-machine interaction. Indeed, extant research has already pointed to a link between this novel type of technology-controlled exchange and the creation of value (e.g., Leminen, Rajahonka, Wendelin, & Westerlund 2020).

Michael's early academic education in both management science and economics at Ruhr-Universitaet in Bochum surely was instrumental in his continuing interest in a macro perspective on what happens in markets – more precisely, the market process (e.g. Haase & Kleinaltenkamp 2009). Market process thinking has traditionally implied that markets are primarily an emergent phenomenon, with actors having only limited capacity to effectively control it. The newly emerging research strand on market shaping (cf. Nenonen and Storbacka's article in this issue) builds on many presumptions of market process thinking. In stark contrast to market process thinking, the market shaping literature, however, explicitly stresses the active role of market actors and considers their potential impact as an opportunity. We, therefore, assign a consider-

able potential as a future field of research to market shaping thinking.

In summary, we hope the articles herein convey the breadth and depth of Michael's contributions to the field. We are honoured to celebrate his achievements and look forward to his continued impact on the field.

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