
Editorial

Mega trends and opportunities for service research

Introduction

Service research is a dynamic field, with academics and practitioners alike struggling to understand the realities of a rapidly changing marketplace. As the marketing discipline enters 2019, and the 20th year of the third millennium approaches, the *Journal of Services Marketing* seeks to be at the forefront of generating current and interesting knowledge that benefits academics, practitioners, communities and, hopefully, mankind. To achieve these lofty goals, we seek to guide service researchers, and other social scientists and practitioners, on exploring areas in which there are plentiful opportunities for theoretical, methodological, practical and societal insights.

Interestingly, the research priorities that we put forth in this editorial viewpoint are driven by marketplace trends reported by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO, www.csiro.au), an Australian Government corporate entity, and which are also supported by the Marketing Science Institute (www.msi.org), as well as personal insights from the journal's Associate Editors.

More specifically, this editorial examines six “mega trends” that have been identified as altering the way we live, work and play, and which will impact services, service delivery, service providers or service systems in some manner. We encourage service researchers to guide explorations in these six areas during 2019–2020 and to expand the service discipline's knowledge to transform consumer, communal, and even global welfare through improvements in service delivery and design efforts. These six trends have been termed as follows: more from less; going, going [...] gone; the Silk Highway; forever young; virtually here; and great expectations. In the following sections, we develop each of these trends in more depth and identify opportunities for service researchers.

More from less

Following the global financial crisis of 2008 and the global recession in 2009, many commercial, non-profit, and governmental service organizations found their establishments and institutions in situations in which they were increasingly challenged to co-create more value with consumers with less input (Finsterwalder and Garry, 2011). We draw upon Finsterwalder and Garry (2011) to conceptualize “doing more with less” as an investigatory focus that considers how actors involved in service co-creation, such as producers and consumers, collaborate in creating value as a ratio of inputs to outputs. In many instances, especially in

governmental and public services, this ratio is increasing along with consumer demand for value.

Even though many industrialized nations have emerged from the recessionary crises of 2008–2009 and are experiencing economic expansion, many service organizations, especially governmental and state service agencies, remain financially challenged due to rapidly increasing pension obligations and dramatic changes in population demographics (e.g. aging and immigration; Fisk *et al.*, 2018). Recent harbingers from the services domain (Wirtz *et al.*, 2018) suggest that many service organizations, which are driven by a “more from less” mantra, will increasingly turn to service robots as well as to rapidly improving technologies, such as artificial intelligence, mobile, cloud, big data and biometrics, to provide customers with “more” value with increasingly “less” resources.

We encourage researchers to explore the extent to which service systems may integrate contemporary technologies into their service encounters to yield higher levels of value with less financial and human labor resources. For example, by building upon the customer journey and customer experience research (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), researchers may explore which areas of a journey are more opportune for a “technological infusion” than others, or which types of customer segments may perceive increased value when working with technologies in contrast to human labor.

Along these lines of “more from less,” we encourage service researchers to explore “service sustainability,” that is, the creation and delivery of services which minimize the depletion of natural resources. For example, we believe that research opportunities abound for investigations into the role that retailers may assume in sustainable fashion (see www.greenstrategy.se), especially in terms of understanding the emerging renting, loaning, swapping and bartering collaborative service industry.

Going, going [...] gone?

The world is losing species at an alarming rate, which is reducing biodiversity and affecting our ecology (Hajkowicz *et al.*, 2012). Biodiversity is important for providing mankind with clean air and water, food security and resilience against natural disasters. Service researchers have tended to overlook the role that service industries may assume in helping or hindering biodiversity; however, the reality is that the creation of many services which create value for consumers often comes at the expense of the environment. Service researchers in the areas of well-being, bottom-of-the-pyramid (BoP) marketing, food and beverage and tourism are especially affected by changes in biodiversity. Although ecotourism represents a response by the tourism industry to the negative impact of tourism on certain destinations, we believe that all services may use some type of conservation effort in their services production (USAID, 2017).

Service innovation in particular has a lot to learn from biology, and the recent field of biomimicry draws on the principles of nature to offer solutions for innovation (see <https://biomimicry.org/what-is-biomimicry/>). If we continue to lose species, we lose inspiration sources that could hold the key for solving many of the human problems we currently face. For instance, a self-cleaning surface was developed based on the water-repelling hairs of spiders (Hsu and Sigmund, 2010). Interestingly, in the examples of biomimicry available, there are few to no applications in service fields. Thus, we encourage transformative service researchers and service innovation scholars alike to draw upon biomimicry;

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at: www.emeraldinsight.com/0887-6045.htm



Journal of Services Marketing
33/1 (2019) 1–4
© Emerald Publishing Limited [ISSN 0887-6045]
[DOI 10.1108/JSM-02-2019-436]

that is, to harness biological strategies from nature as a basis for designing new services and for testing service theories, see <https://asknature.org>

The Silk Road

Service researchers are increasingly realizing the need to explore and understand service industries in countries that have been part of the former Soviet Union or under its Communist influence. These post-Soviet states include many nations in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Central Asia, along the Silk Road. The Silk Road comprised an ancient network of trade routes that, for centuries, were central to cultural interaction and economic cooperation through regions of the Asian continent connecting the East and West from China to the Mediterranean Sea (Fayzullaev *et al.*, 2018). Examples of nations on the Silk Road include Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.

The Silk Road is often referred to as one of the most significant achievements in the history of the world's civilization, as it was an important source of merchandise and information that crossed Europe to Asia during the Ancient and Middle Ages. As these newly independent nations that comprised the Silk Road emerge after years of Soviet influence, one may speculate how – and if – the Silk Road will once again assume a prominent role in the global service economy.

We encourage service researchers to engage in ground-breaking research in the former Silk Road nations, as their relatively recent transitions away from command economies into capitalism are unique on the world stage. Further, prior to the transitions to command economies, most of the post-Soviet and Silk Road nations were agrarian economies or emerging industrialized economies that were devastated by the Second World War. Therefore, the emergence of services in these economies, such as tourism/hospitality, health care and retail, will most likely differ from the experiences of industrialized nations. We encourage service researchers to investigate how foundational theories and frameworks need to be altered when considering Silk Road economies. Additionally, we encourage researchers to employ inductive methodologies, such as Grounded Theory (Goulding, 1998), to formulate original theories and frameworks concerning service delivery, service systems or service design in Silk Road economies.

Forever young

One of the greatest changes occurring in the retailing industry is that some consumer goods manufacturers are beginning to offer customers personalized products that are based upon a customer's genetic composition, using at-home genetic services. Rosenbaum *et al.* (2017) refer to the personalization of consumer goods based upon a person's unique DNA, which is typically obtained via genetic services that use a customer's saliva or hair sample as inputs for the manufacturing process, as the "hyper-personalization" of products. Interestingly, hyper-personalization is assuming a major role in the food and beverage industry, as companies such as Habit and Geno Palate are creating DNA-based diets and realizing hefty margins by doing so (Fenech *et al.*, 2011).

Despite the lack of scientific evidence suggesting DNA-based diets are superior to other comparable healthy eating options, consumers seem to be viewing these diets as a means through

which they can play an active role in their well-being. We speculate that opportunities exist for retailers, namely, nutritional supplements, food retailers, fitness/exercise providers and cosmetic/skin manufacturers and retailers, to co-create value with their customers in novel ways – namely through offering hyper-personalization. Along these lines, we encourage retailing researchers to consider the drivers of hyper-personalized offerings and whether these products represent a type of "unconventional luxury." Further, we encourage future researchers to explore the extent to which hyper-personalization is driven by consumers' attempts to engage in preventative health care.

Virtually here

Deloitte (Abrams *et al.*, 2018) recently suggested that virtual care is a must-have for health systems given changing reimbursement models, growing consumer demand and advances in digital technologies. In the health-care domain, unanswered questions regarding virtual-care programs abound. For example, which patient populations should be targeted for virtual care remains unclear. Further, the way patients assess the quality of virtual service providers or develop online relationships remains unknown.

The notion of being "virtually here" is also being used in tourism/hospitality; for instance, Marriott recently launched a mobile application that uses augmented reality to offer consumers the ability to step into a real-world environment via their cell phone. Interestingly, similar research questions exist concerning which types of properties demand augmented reality options and how consumers will assess the service quality of a physical experience after experiencing the corresponding virtual experience.

Finally, social applications that inexpensively and easily bring groups of people together, such as Whatsapp, Zoon, Skype, Messenger and so forth, may eliminate the need for consumers to enter consumption settings to obtain social connections with other consumers (Nicholls, 2010); that is, service researchers have long espoused that consumers often patronize places such as neighborhood diners, bars and libraries, or so-called "third places" (Oldenburg, 1999), to obtain feelings of companionship from others, or to "hang out." Interestingly, as people turn to social applications on their smartphones to obtain feelings of human togetherness, a major reason that many consumers entered the marketplace may dissipate – perhaps ending the need for third places altogether.

Great expectations

Service researchers are very familiar with the role expectations play in determining key service outcomes such as satisfaction, service quality, customer value and the customer experience. Indeed, disconfirmation of expectations theory (Oliver, 1977) has been well-researched across multiple contexts and published widely in service journals. However, with the increase in customer expectations, might there now be an opportunity to revisit some of these "old" theories and frameworks and review them? For example, in 1977, there was no TripAdvisor for people to access as a basis of expectations, dietary preferences were restricted to foods that would kill you and foods that would not, and discretionary income was lower than modern standards. How might these

changes in the way we live and work influence our expectations?

Social inclusion and vulnerable consumers are growing areas of interest to service researchers (Fisk *et al.*, 2018); how might expectations about customer value and customer experiences vary or conform to expectations in mainstream service groups? Service researchers are calling for adaptation and innovation in services to be more inclusive of diverse groups, but this may create challenges for service providers in the form of logistics, operations and profitability. For instance, in Europe, the assistance at airports for people with a disability must be provided by airlines and airports must be free, but who ultimately pays the cost? Airports pass on the cost via the airport tax, which is paid directly by consumers, and give discounts to airlines that have lower proportions of passengers needing assistance – ultimately incentivizing airlines to discourage or avoid these customers (Castiglioni, 2014).

Finally, designing and managing service experiences that meet or manage these great expectations of customers offers fruitful avenues for service researchers. For instance, in coffee shops, restaurants and cafes how should menus and service be developed that meet or exceed expectations that align with the price that the market will pay and meet the business's bottom line? If the lay term “theory of rising expectations” is correct (McElroy, 2016), then customers can never be satisfied as they seek unattainable goals. Where does this leave service marketers (does this theory even exist)?

A service research agenda

Based on these six mega trends, we offer some research questions to inspire future service research:

- What is the role of technology in providing service efficiency and effectiveness?
- What is the relationship between service sustainability, profitability and well-being?
- How do fundamental service theories and conceptual frameworks apply in Silk Road settings? To what extent are they applicable or require modifications?
- How will post-Soviet economies build their service economies? What steps are needed in the process? How will service academics and practitioners work together to build contemporary service economies? Do best practices exist?
- What motivates consumers to use genetic services to create hyper-personalized goods and services?
- Is hyper-personalization driven by consumers' attempts to remain forever young? And, if so, how might this influence the design and delivery of service experiences?
- How do consumers judge the quality of virtual health care? Does relationship marketing exist between a patient–doctor virtually or is virtual technology the end of relationship marketing?
- How does a virtual, augmented reality experience impact a customer's actual experience in the corresponding physical setting?
- How can service ecosystems for well-being services positively influence biodiversity and conservation of species?
- How can biomimicry be used to inspire service innovation?

- How do customers develop expectations for customer experiences?
- Do expectations about customer value and customer experiences vary or conform to expectations between vulnerable and mainstream service groups?

Perspectives from the *Journal of Service Marketing's* associate editors

This special issue contains ten papers authored by the Associate Editors of the *Journal of Services Marketing* who submitted papers for double-blind review on topical issues and areas of future interest to services. The papers have been grouped into four categories: *transforming the human side of services*, *digital interactions in services*, *innovation and experience in services* and *managerial relevance and the future*. The papers are a mixture of conceptual and empirical work and represent multiple countries around the world.

Transforming the human side of services

In the first paper, Johns and Davey propose that the roles of actor-mediators facilitate control and empowerment for the vulnerable consumer in transformative service value creation; that is, the authors suggest that, in many service encounters, vulnerable consumers require the assistance of employees, who assume the role of an advocate more so than merely a sales facilitator. Service organizations have to realize that they have to train service providers to not merely sell goods and services but also to advocate for customers, especially those who are vulnerable in terms of not receiving the value inherent in a marketplace exchange.

This is followed by a second paper by Sharma, Ajitha, Kingshott, Maurya and Kaur, who also use transformative services to understand customer participation. Their paper offers a conceptual model to outline the relationships between customer participation, task-related affective well-being, customer knowledge, task complexity and service outcomes. In posing this model, they draw on self-determination, the elicitation of emotions framework and feelings-as-information theories. Overall, their work urges service researchers and practitioners to consider customer well-being as a managerially relevant outcome, in contrast to our previous focus on outcomes such as satisfaction, loyalty and behavioral intentions.

The third paper by Bove provides a review of empathy literature to explore the potential benefit and limitations for service. Through research propositions, this paper sets an agenda for the future research exploration of empathy in service. One may speculate the extent to which some consumers may perceive service provider empathy as the primary driver of service quality.

Digital interactions in services

The fourth paper by Gummerus, Lipkin, Dubé and Heinonen introduces and characterizes a specific form of self-service technology (SST): customer self-service devices (SSDs). They then apply the proposed classification scheme of such devices to encourage future research on such SSTs. The fifth paper by Alkire, Pohlmann and Barnett examines social media by exploring privacy protection behaviors. Specifically, this paper uses qualitative interviews to understand service

consumer actions to protect their privacy, underlying motives and the values behind these protective actions.

Innovation and experience in services

The sixth paper by Witell, Gremyr and Valtakoski presents the result of a longitudinal case study to investigate service modularization in a manufacturing firm, identifies service-modularization processes and examines how these processes change the service module characteristics. The seventh paper by Mahr, Stead and Oderkerken-Schroder systematically reviews the concepts and theories underlying customer service experience (CSE) and five underlying dimensions (physical, social, cognitive, affective and sensorial). In particular, the paper has a special focus on the sensorial dimension of CSE research, which is especially important in service contexts.

A managerial relevance and the future

The eighth paper by Klaus identifies the importance of disseminating service research to practitioners to encourage their participation. The purpose of this paper is to assist service scholars in overcoming the challenge of designing, delivering and disseminating managerially relevant studies. The ninth paper by Reynoso and Cabrera aims to explore and learn about BoP managerial practices of informal services. The final paper by Koku is a personal reflection of the highlights within the journal and offers pathways for the future.

Conclusion

The need for service researchers to be future-focused and provide empirical rigor to industry practice and observations is important. We propose that service researchers can draw on many different sources for research inspiration, and it is the diversity of sources that will yield innovative and useful research. The special issue inclusion of an editorial drawing on practitioner trends combined with scholarly articles provides service scholars with the impetus to reach into new areas and further grow our field.

References

- Abrams, K. Burrill, S. and Elsner, N. (2018), "What can health systems do to encourage physicians to embrace virtual care", available at: www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/industry/health-care/virtual-health-care-health-consumer-and-physician-surveys.html
- Castiglioni, R. (2014), "Cost of assistance for the disabled at European airports revealed", available at www.reducedmobility.eu/20141122536/The-News/cost-of-assistance-for-the-disabled-at-european-airports-revealed.html (accessed 21 November 2018).
- Fayzullaev, K., Cassel, S.H. and Brandt, D. (2018), "Destination image in Uzbekistan – heritage of the silk road and nature experience as the core of an evolving post soviet identity", *Service Industries Journal*, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2018.1519551> (accessed 7 November 2018).
- Fenech, M., El-Sohehy, A., Cahill, L., Ferguson, L.R., French, T.A.C., Tai, E.S., Milner, J., Koh, W.P., Xie, L., Zucker, M., Buckley, M., Cosgrove, L., Lockett, T., Fung, K.Y.C. and Head, R. (2011), "Nutrigenetics and nutrigenomics: viewpoints on the current status and applications in nutrition research and practice", *Journal of Nutrigenetics and Nutrigenomics*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 69-89.
- Finsterwalder, J. and Garry, T. (2011), "Doing more with less": service imperatives of the twenty-first century", *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, Vol. 21 No. 6, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/msq.2011.10821faa.001> (accessed 6 November 2018).
- Fisk, R.P., Dean, A.M., Alkire, L., Joubert, A., Previte, J., Robertson, N. and Rosenbaum, M.S. (2018), "Design for service inclusion: creating inclusive service systems by 2050", *Journal of Service Management*, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-05-2018-0121> (accessed 6 November 2018).
- Goulding, C. (1998), "Grounded theory: the missing methodology on the interpretivist agenda", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 50-57.
- Hajkowicz, S.A., Cook, H. and Littleboy, A. (2012), *Our Future World: Global Megatrends That Will Change the Way we Live. The 2012 Revision*, CSIRO, Australia.
- Hsu, S. and Sigmund, W.M. (2010), "Artificial hairy surfaces with a nearly perfect hydrophobic response", *Langmuir*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 1504-1506.
- Lemon, K.N. and Verhoef, P.C. (2016), "Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 80 No. 6, pp. 69-96.
- McElroy, W. (2016), "The revolution of rising expectations", available at www.fff.org/explore-freedom/article/revolution-rising-expectations/ (accessed 21 November 2018).
- Nicholls, R. (2010), "New directions for customer-to-customer interaction research", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 87-97.
- Oldenburg, R. (1999), *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, Marlow, New York, NY.
- Oliver, R.L. (1977), "Effect of expectation and disconfirmation on postexposure product evaluations – an alternative interpretation", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 62 No. 4, pp. 480-486.
- Rosenbaum, M.S., Contreras Ramirez, G., Edwards, K., Kim, J., Campbell, J.M. and Bickle, M.C. (2017), "The digitization of health care retailing", *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 432-446.
- USAID (2017), "Conserving biodiversity and forests", available at: www.usaid.gov/biodiversity (accessed 27 November 2018).
- Wirtz, J., Patterson, P.G., Kunz, W.H., Gruber, T., Lu, V.N., Paluch, S. and Martins, A. (2018), "Brave new world: service robots in the frontline", *Journal of Service Management*, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-04-2018-0119> (accessed 6 November 2018).

Rebekah Russell-Bennett and Mark Scott Rosenbaum