

# Guest Editorial. Service-mix: new channels and consumption patterns in services

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The world's economies are dominated by services. The average value added in the services sector as percentage of GDP was 55.43% in 2021 (TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2022). In the most advanced economies, services account for an even larger share of their GDP - 75% on average (Nayyar *et al.*, 2021). In addition to its economic relevance, a vital services sector is also increasingly important for the competitiveness of agriculture and manufacturing, as the intertwin of the product-service bundle highly enhances value for customers. Actually, manufacturers have transformed themselves in service or solution providers (Gebauer *et al.*, 2011). The acknowledgement that services are transversal to all business sectors (Gustafsson *et al.*, 2016) has been furthered by the recognition that today all businesses in any sector compete on service, therefore, "*it makes little sense to treat service as a special case; all businesses are essentially service businesses*" (Gustafsson and Kristensson, 2020, p. 609), regardless of country and context (Gustafsson and Bowen, 2017). From a theoretical standpoint, the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) view has supported this paradigm shift in which service is the dominant logic of how organizations manage their businesses (Lusch *et al.*, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Vargo and Luch, 2008).

Other important and interrelated paradigms underpinning research in services are concerned with the human-centric and customer-centric view of services. Regarding the former, while the humanistic paradigm is still dominant among the services management scholars and business practitioners, the increasing use of interactions and service delivery through technology within services highlights a progressive shift to a technology-centric paradigm (Keating *et al.*, 2018), leading some scholars to predict apocalyptic scenarios (Mende and Noble, 2019). Concerning the latter paradigm, the interactive dimension of customer experience is of particular relevance in the service context, where interaction processes among providers and customers are often long-term and iterative, requiring reciprocal contributions from all parties (Grönroos and Ravald, 2011; Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015), reinforced by a trend towards a sharing-centric paradigm where customers are shifting from '*having-to-being and from owning-to-experiencing*' (Cristini *et al.*, 2017, p. 101), fostering a circular economy perspective (Machado *et al.*, 2019). This explains why research on platform businesses and their underlying business models is a raising area of interest in the service literature (Wirtz *et al.*, 2018; Jain *et al.*, 2022), while intercepting the technology-centric paradigm. Another emerging theme is related to luxury services (Wirtz *et al.*, 2020). The papers included in this special issue are concerned with all these topics.

Notwithstanding studies on services emerged as a niche field - focusing their underpinnings in the belief that services are different from goods (e.g. Shostack, 1977) - service research has progressed as an open, vital and inclusive field, naturally infused by interdisciplinarity, developing a longstanding tradition and strong reputation for its impact on the management field both among academics and managers and practitioners (Lariviere and Kandampully, 2019). Actually, “*to solve problems in which managerial relevance and academic rigor are intertwined*” (Keating *et al.*, 2018, p. 767) is a core feature of service research.

Topics such as service quality, servicescape, servitization, customer experience, service design, service delivery networks and ecosystems, customer participation in service organizations, collaborative service and the sharing economy are strongly rooted in service research and connected with service scholars from our Retailing & Service Management SIG community under the Italian Society of Management (SIMA) flag. This is where this special issue sees the light. It is devoted to foster the academic knowledge on the way in which businesses operating in the service industries are innovating, re-shaping and revising their service-mix in order to respond to the new challenges of a dynamic and increasingly uncertain competitive context. The aim is to respond to the call for research to better understand how value is created in different service settings (Verleye *et al.*, 2017). Papers dealing with emerging themes related to servitization, to the provision and use of existing and temporary services as well as to the planning, design and offer of services to individuals and businesses according to the management perspective and to the issues posed by the current pandemic have been welcomed. Studies on new customers’ service needs and wants have been greeted too.

Specifically, with this special issue we aimed at identifying, understanding, and addressing how new consumption patterns and the emergence of new channels are leading businesses to revise the service-mix, considering the implications for the management of resources. The result of this intellectual endeavor is the provision of context-specific evidences regarding the development and delivery of services, informing service management theory by proposing new insights and further research areas in the service management discipline. Many of these areas are covered by the seven papers included in this special issue, concerned with a variety of service sectors: hospitality, retailing, cultural, among others. Each paper is briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.

The first two papers are concerned with the hospitality service sector and customer experience.

The article, “Luxury tourism in sustainable accommodation - what can compromise the tourist experience? An analysis of glamping in Italy” (Angelini, 2023), offers interesting insights into a kind of niche of sustainable tourism, namely glamorous camping (so-called Glamping) as a type of guest accommodation that combines luxury and camping. As it can be difficult for the service provider to achieve luxury levels of comfort in environments in close contact with nature, the study aims to identify and classify the causes of dissatisfaction associated with glamping in order to suggest strategies and actions to glamping’s service providers to improve

guests' experience. This is performed analyzing user-generated contents through the reviews written by the glamping guests on the Booking.com portal. Findings can help service providers in pro-actively minimizing the sources of potential failure in service encounters. To develop a gorgeous hospitality customer experience, glamping providers should manage not only traditional service factors such as the employees-customer direct interaction or accommodation units' distance, but increasingly posing attention to the role of devices and technology enabling constant support without invading guests' privacy: in fact, glamping customers demand privacy but also personalized caring in line with their luxury service expectations.

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The second paper, "Marketing Approach to Hotel Patronage and Product Quality during COVID-19" (Eniola, 2023), confirms the importance of paying attention to the traditional drivers of customer experience but also safety when a developing country (Nigeria) and a pandemic situation is concerned. The work investigates the contribution of customers' overall satisfaction with their lodging visits in the observed destination and the likelihood of patronizing the same lodges on the subsequent expeditions by a sample of travelers. The provision of comfortable and secure lodging in a hotel is a critical factor in a tourist's decision to visit a particular destination. The study supports the notion that hotel product quality is a dynamic construct acting in various ways on customer patronage and impacted by a number of drivers which have to be considered from the very beginning of the planning of the hotel servicescape.

The following two papers are still concerned with the COVID-19 pandemic in very different service sectors: broadcast services related to the cultural sector and retailing. In fact, the pandemic has strongly affected the ways in which users request, buy, consume and evaluate services (Sheth, 2020).

The paper "When does live art stick you to the screen? Evidence from audience behaviour towards broadcast content during the first lockdown" (Baroni *et al.*, 2023) aims at understanding the proneness of a sample of theatrical performances broadcast users to watch them on TV or online during the lockdown period. The authors end in evidencing that the possibility of broadcasting contents is a valuable option to enlarge the audience, but only if there is differentiation in the "live" rather than in the "remote" performance; otherwise, the scope for value creation is limited to a relatively niche of customers in quantity and time. Though, the range of opportunities related to the exploitation of digital (but also TV) channels must rely on profound product innovation, creating, for instance, new artistic languages.

The fourth paper, "New shopping behaviour in a changing environment" (Bellini *et al.*, 2023) investigates shopping behaviour changes after the pandemic, exploring the determinants of multichannel behavior in the grocery sector in order to understand the nature of purchasing drivers (utilitarian vs hedonic; permanent vs transitory) and the benefits pursued by shoppers in the phygital shift. This is performed considering two segments - adults vs young people - and discovering that the pandemic has changed the nature of multichannel behavior determinants: mainly

utilitarian and phygital for young people, while mostly hedonistic and physical for adults. This brings interesting managerial implications: any kind of store - whatever it is: physical or digital, modern or traditional, big or small - must be revised and reorganized considering which values consumers are searching for and the multidimensionality of shopping behaviour. The physical experience would not be fully replaced by the virtual one, but integration will occur, requiring a balance between the human-centered view and the technological one.

The grocery sector is the focus of the fifth paper of this special issue “Predictors of cross-buying in grocery retailing: the role of non-traditional product/service categories” (Latusi *et al.*, 2023), focusing on cross-buying as a way to innovate, renew and enrich the service-mix by grocery retailers. Cross-buying can be a powerful tool not only to enlarge the shopping basket but also to respond to the various and multiple needs of shoppers as well as to strengthen the relationship with customers. The paper investigates how cognitive, social and individual features interact in consumer decision-making processes when the retail offer is extended with non-traditional product/service categories (NTPS), contributing in better developing a profile of the PLs consumers. Age, education, behavioural loyalty, value consciousness and perceived PL quality proved to impact on the number of NTPS purchased but not attitudinal loyalty, gender and family size. These results are useful to retailers to better target their clientele, using socio-demographics variables and purchase behavioural data to support their micro-marketing strategies, delivering an extended service mix able to reduce customers’ cognitive efforts and economic costs in light of service convenience.

The sixth paper, “Fashion rental as a new and innovative channel alongside fashion retail” (Arrigo, 2023), investigates the business side, focusing on fashion rental as a new alternative or collateral channel to fashion retail for established fashion brands wanting to collaborate with fashion rental platforms or to engage directly with fashion rental. Analyzing the case study “Please Don’t Buy” launched by the Twinset luxury fashion company, the opportunities and challenges associated with creating a fashion rental channel addressed to the final customer (in a B2C context) or through a collaboration with existing fashion rental enterprises (in a B2B context) are depicted. The Twinset case study enables to understand how to manage traditional retail channels alongside with a new rental channel in order to reach a larger audience, face an increasingly competitive fashion retail environment but also respond to new sustainable consumption patterns.

The final paper of this special issue, “Next-Generation Museum: A Metaverse Journey into Culture” (Longo and Faraci, 2023) focuses on a topic of raising interest concerned with the digital transformation of museums through the application of the metaverse to artworks and archeological artifacts. Specifically, this is performed in order to explore opportunities and challenges for museums committed to making the metaverse journey into culture particularly edutaining and fascinating for young people, especially Gen Z. The study enriches the literature on digital transformation and innovation, highlighting the importance of strategically

planning the multi-sensory experience of the metaverse, especially if it is oriented toward edutainment. It also provides recommendations and advices for practitioners interested in creating metaverse-based museums.

While the abovementioned articles cover some important areas of the service-mix literature, many opportunities to generate new knowledge and extend academic and managerial understanding on the service management discipline and related topics remain. We hope that this special issue can enhance the eagerness of the service management community to foster the discipline with innovative, inspiring and stimulating further studies.

Good reading!

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**sinergie**  
italian journal of management

ISSN print 0393-5108  
ISSN online 2785-549X  
DOI 10.7433/s120.2023.01  
pp. 11-17

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