Special Issue on the Advances in Service Research

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Services are the driving force of developed economies. Service sector represents the major portion of gross domestic product and employs the largest portion of productive workforce. Service economic activities are continuously expanding and provide the largest growth potential for both developed and developing economies. Despite the importance and dominance of services, they have been underrepresented in research and academia. Fortunately, scientific interest in services has been indicating a rising trend over the past few decades. This special invited issue on “The Advances in Service Research” aims to highlight the latest developments and promising future directions. It presents the latest scientific works in a spectrum spanning from theoretical and conceptual development, throughout case studies, to literature review.

Foundations of service science are still emerging. Solid foundations are immensely important, since they provide a solid ground for the development of service science. Various foundational approaches have been proposed; however, they have been relatively limiting in scope and applicability. Interaction-Based Foundation for Services, by Géczy et al. attempt to overcome the limitations and provide a suitable framework for elucidation of a broad range of services. It encompasses contemporary service economic activities and offers expandability of the concept to future ones. The foundations permit rigorous formulations of services that are beneficial for analytic, modeling and simulation purposes. Wieland et al. provide another perspective on services, rooted in service-dominant logic concept. They discuss how the central concepts of service-dominant logic lead to a generalization that all parties participating in services are seen as service-providing. Their provisions contribute to value co-creation in a service. All actors in services are then essentially creating values for themselves. This participatory value co-creating activities are seen from a system-oriented perspective. Conception of value co-creation between entities participating in service economic activities is also central to the work of Ng and Briscoe. They propose a value-centric approach to understanding the interactions between the asset and service provisions. Viable service value proposition has been observed as vital in their case studies of B2B equipment service providers. Designing a feasible value proposition is equated to designing a new business model capable of overseeing diverse uses of the proposed service value. Spectrum of perceived values provided by different services presents a challenge of choice for customers. Choosing a suitable service, in information technology domain, that matches customers’ expectations is the problem targeted
by Kieninger et al. Customer choosing an IT service is supplied with only partial information from a service provider. It is a decision-making problem with incomplete information. The problem is modeled at various levels of detail. It is approached from the optimization perspective—where customer optimizes a value function that incorporates variables relevant to the desired service specifications. The outcome of optimization highlights the choice of fitting service level agreement. Cuthbert et al. explore the problem of choice from the side of a service provider—in servitization of manufacturing. Providers are faced with issues of choosing relevant information requirements and characteristics of services when formulating contracts. Additional information requirements emerge during the service life-cycle. The issues of information requirements, quality and availability are examined in connections with various contract types. Service quality improvement in tourism and hospitality is the focus of work of Yamamoto. Modernization of services in tourism and hospitality domains presents potential for improving services based on semi-automatically acquired data. The services, acquired data, data analysis, and service innovation can be connected in a continuous loop. This service quality improvement loop has been implemented in a hotspring area. It has been proven beneficial for not only improving service quality, but also for providing useful insights to service designs. Service design is an important endeavour. Issues of service design have been addressed by Tuunanen et al. Their particular interest has been in modular service design. Modularity of services is an emerging research domain that is experiencing a promising expansion. Numerous works have been published on the topic. To gain a better perspective on the activity in this research domain, they present the review of literature in typology of service design.

The special invited issue on “The Advances in Service Research” brings together selected works in diverse areas of service research. It presents up-to-date interests and opinions of researchers and academics in the international community. We sincerely believe that academics, researchers, students and practitioners will find it insightful and useful.

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