Foreword

It is increasingly all about services. Whether we talk about traditional manufacturing industries or Internet based social media services, and everything in between, there is a mental shift from focus on products to focus on services. Both the business managers as well as the academics have realized this, and lately a lot of attention has been devoted to issues such as services as an arrangement for coordinating production and consumption, effective service arrangements, and service delivery within ICT-enabled channels.

Services are, of course, not a new thing, as such, but now the service sector, including government, healthcare, education, retail, professional services, transportation, communication, and utilities, is increasingly starting to dominate the economies of the world. E-services, or services that are created, facilitated, or delivered through ICT-mediated networks, are in the heart of this whole new era of services. To this date, there has been a wealth of experiences as well as research around what might already be called "traditional" e-commerce or e-business, but the new technologies and the new business models together with the new consumers preferences and behavior make the area of e-services an important area to understand.

Services are not easy to configure and manage. In this highly timely book, services are looked from the perspective of how ICT can be used to facilitate, create, and deliver services, or more exactly, from the perspective of e-services. As e-services are proliferating, it is extremely important to understand the field also from theoretical perspective, as provided by this book. To fully understand the possibilities as well as the challenges involved, this book also provides a number of case examples, ranging from applications in the area of business-to-business and business-to-consumer, to different e-government services.

This book can sincerely be recommended to all those interested in e-services, in business and academia, alike.

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