

# 13

## Expansion and refocusing: two alternative trajectories for service marketing research

*Olivier Furrer and Jie Yu Kerguignas*

### 13.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, we take a longer-term perspective and discuss two different trajectories for the evolution of the service research domain. As illustrated in the previous chapters, service research is a dynamic and prolific discipline that has undergone substantial transformations over the past 30 years. However, discerning the future evolution in this research domain might be a challenge, given the different trajectories such an evolution could take.

Drawing on their analysis of the evolution of the service literature between 1993 and 2019, Furrer, Yu Kerguignas, Delcourt, and Gremler (2020) identified two potential trajectories for the future of the service research domain: (1) diversification and expansion, and (2) refocusing and revisiting. Diversification and expansion, the first trajectory, suggest that service research could continue to grow, exploring and adding new themes to its domain. Such an expansion might be fueled by studies exploring new service research themes, which are also closely related to neighboring disciplines. For example, studies on service climate and service employees, which belong to the human resource management (HRM) discipline, could be investigated from a service perspective. In another illustration of this, service-dominant logic (SDL), as a broad theoretical framework, could be instrumental in developing studies exploring ideas and topics originating from disciplines such as strategic management, operations, and HRM, or even economics, psychology, and sociology. This expansion could also be fueled by studying emerging research themes in other disciplines (e.g., robotics, biometrics, cybersecurity, biostatistics) and applying them to the service context and integrating them into the service research

domain. Accordingly, the service research domain continues to grow and expand.

Refocusing and revisiting, the second trajectory for service research, might involve a recentering of research on service core themes, such as service quality, service failure, service encounter, by revisiting these “classic” themes in the light of new and emerging service themes. For example, service quality and its measurement could be re-researched to understand how they are affected by new technologies, such as robots or AI. Alternatively indigenous service theories and concepts (Hunt, 2020), such as SDL and Transformative Service Research (TSR), could be used to focus the service domain on emerging concepts such as service eco-systems and value co-creation.

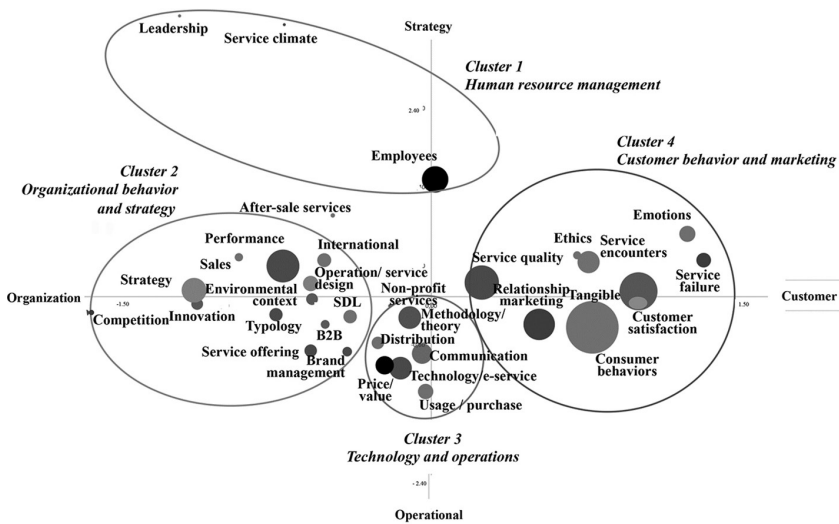
These two trajectories are likely to generate very different research agendas. In the present chapter, we further detail these two trajectories and illustrate them with recent studies published between 2019 and 2023, which are identified in the introductory chapter of the work of Furrer and others (2023). Thus, the main objective of the present chapter is to provide insights into the potential future evolution(s) of service research by developing alternative research agendas consistent with these two trajectories. As such, this chapter seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the structure and future evolution of the service literature.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. First, we present the methodology developed by Furrer and others (2020) to identify the two trends of service research, and the recent update by Furrer and others (2023). Second, we briefly summarize Furrer and others’ (2020) findings about the evolution of service literature between 1993 and 2019. Third, we detail the two future evolution trajectories of service research and illustrate them with research published between 2019 and 2023. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of how key research themes could be studied in ways that are consistent with the two possible trajectories for service research.

## **13.2 Furrer and others’ (2020) methodology and findings**

In their study analyzing the structure and evolution of services research, Furrer and others (2020) used a series of methodical steps. First, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between research themes in the service literature, they conducted a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA)

of the 3,177 service research articles published between 1993 and August 2019. The results of this MCA were depicted in a two-dimensional map (Figure 13.1). The proximity between themes on the map reflects shared substance, with themes being close to each other when a large proportion of articles treat them together and distant when only a small number of articles discuss these themes together (Furrer & Sollberger, 2007). The center of the map represents the average position of all the articles and thus represents the center of the services marketing research domain (Furrer et al., 2020).



**Note:** The size of the point represents the proportional number of articles containing a given theme.

**Source:** Adapted from Furrer et al., 2020.

**Figure 13.1** The structure of the service research domain

The dimensions of the map represent distinctive “poles” of topical orientation within the service literature (Furrer & Sollberger, 2007). On the horizontal axis of the map, research mainly focuses on the organizational dimension of service research (on the left side of the map), while others adopt a customer-centric approach (on the right side of the map). On the vertical axis, research can be categorized as either strategic (top) or operational (bottom).

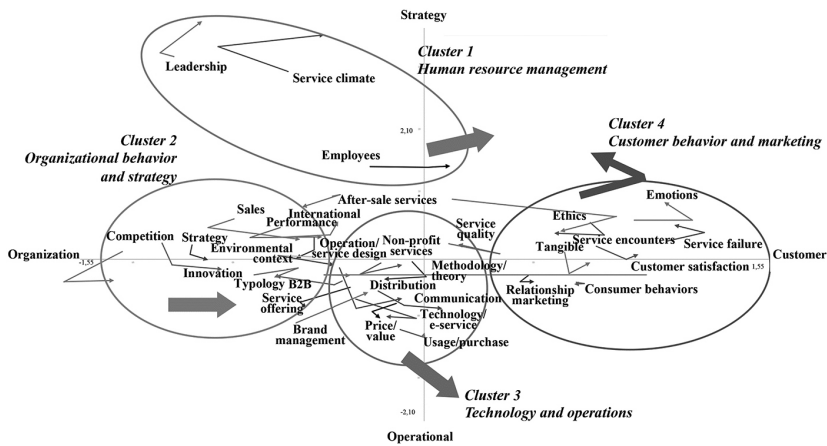
Then, to ease the interpretation of the relative positions of the service research themes, Furrer and others (2020) formed four distinct clusters of service research. The first cluster, located in the upper-left quadrant of the map,

pertains to studies at the strategic level that examine service phenomena from an organizational perspective. This cluster comprises research themes such as leadership, service climate, and employees, and was labeled *Human Resource Management* (HRM). The second cluster, situated on the left side of the figure, is characterized by studies that adopt an organizational perspective, primarily dominated by research themes such as strategy, performance, service offering, and brand management, and was labeled *Organizational Behavior and Strategy* (OBS). The third cluster, located at the bottom of the map, tends to be operational in nature and focuses on research themes such as distribution, price/value, usage/purchase, and communication. As a result, it was designated the *Technology and Operations* (TO) cluster. Lastly, the largest and fourth cluster, located on the right side of the map, takes a customer perspective on research themes such as service quality, customer satisfaction, consumer behaviors, and relationship marketing. Accordingly, it was labeled *Customer Behavior and Marketing* (CBM).

Finally, to examine the evolution of service research literature, they divided the 27 years of the study period into three periods of equal duration, namely: (1) 1993–2001, which comprised 702 articles; (2) 2002–2010, which included 1,208 articles; and (3) 2011–2019, which encompassed 1,267 articles. The outcome map (see Figure 13.2) helped them assess the evolution of the relationships between the themes over time, ultimately generating a range of ideas for possible future directions for services marketing research.

The position of a research theme on the map for a given period corresponds to the average position of all the articles that contain this research theme published during that period. The arrows on the map indicate the direction of evolution of each theme, and their length signifies the extent of changes in the themes. While certain research themes have remained relatively stable in their spatial locations over time, with minor changes in their positions on the map (e.g., price value slightly moving down, technology e-service remaining at the center), others have undergone more significant spatial transformations. For instance, service design has shifted slightly to the left side of the map, while SDL has moved from the relatively peripheral right side of the map to the center. The themes evolve either by traversing substantial distances across the map (i.e., the extent of change) or by shifting in different directions (i.e., the direction of change).

Moreover, the examination of the map in Figure 13.2 shows that clusters of research themes have moved in different directions. Whereas some research clusters (e.g., the human resource management, and technology and operation clusters) have moved towards the borders of the map in an expansion, others



**Note:** The start of the arrow indicates the time period 1, the bend of the arrow indicates the time period 2, and the point of the arrow indicates the time period 3.

**Source:** Adapted from Furrer et al., 2020.

**Figure 13.2** The evolution of the research themes over time

(e.g., the consumer behavior and marketing, and organizational behavior and strategy clusters) have moved towards the center of the map in a refocusing move. Based on these findings, Furrer and others (2020) speculated that service marketing research may develop along two trajectories: namely, (1) expansion and diversification, and (2) refocusing and revisiting.

The first, expansion and diversification trajectory, involves the continued growth of the service marketing research domain. Indeed, new research themes are added to its domain and novel areas of investigation are explored. This sometimes originates from research domains outside the service research domain (e.g., HRM and strategy) or emerging research domains in other disciplines (e.g., robotics, biometrics, cybersecurity, and biostatistics). Applying diverse theories to clarify phenomena relevant to service research can expand and diversify service research, enhancing its breadth and depth, and promoting its expansion. Consistent with the analysis of the growth–share matrix presented in the first chapter of this volume (Furrer et al., 2023), service marketing themes from the “pet” and “question mark” categories might draw on insights from disciplines from outside the service marketing domain. For instance, as part of the “question marks” category, De Luca and others (2021) investigated the service innovation by using affordance theory from psychology to develop a new framework exploring the impact of big data investment on innovation.

Moreover, we can speculate that this trajectory might be spurred on by the overarching role of SDL research, which could enable service scholars to develop more comprehensive and nuanced understandings of service-related phenomena (Tregua et al., 2021). For instance, Struwe and Slepniov (2023) identified a set of four value co-creation capabilities and their impact on co-creation in the context of digital servitization initiatives, providing nuanced insights into how dynamic capabilities manifest themselves in this complex value co-creation setting.

The second refocusing and revisiting trajectory entails refocusing the service domain on its core research themes. This trajectory suggests a renewed focus on traditional topics in service marketing research, such as investigating the concept of service quality under the influence of emerging technologies and the service-dominant logic (SDL). This trajectory also entails studying the role of intercultural service encounters (Sharma, 2023) or emotions during service encounters (Delcourt, 2023) in new environmental contexts (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic). It would be consistent with suggestions from Cronin (2023), earlier in the volume, to place more emphasis on refocusing and revisiting foundational service theories, and promoting indigenous service marketing theory development (Hunt, 2020) to safeguard its distinctive position. Consistent with the analysis of the growth–share matrix presented in the first chapter of this volume (Furrer et al., 2023), service marketing research could revisit older cash cow research themes using new perspectives. For example, service quality (a cash cow) might be reexamined from an SDL perspective. As such, this perspective may suggest a reconceptualization of the service quality construct (Furrer et al., 2020). Similarly, service encounter research could also be revisited from a service technology perspective to develop theories about customer–robot encounters (see the chapter by Wirtz et al., 2023 in this volume).

These two trajectories were identified based on the analysis of articles published between 1993 and August 2019. However, did they continue to materialize and the service literature continue to evolve along the trajectories? Thus, to validate the predictions made by Furrer and others (2020), we confronted these trends with the latest service research. In early 2023, Furrer and others (in this volume) replicated the review protocol used by Furrer and others (2020) to examine the articles published after August 2019. To do so, they collected a new sample of 635 service articles published between September 2019 and January 2023. Thus, next, we further detail and illustrate the trajectories using these recent studies published between 2019 and 2023.

### 13.3 Expansion and diversification

If it continues to evolve along this first trajectory, the future of service research could involve diversifying and expanding the service domain, as well as exploring emerging research domains in neighboring disciplines. On the map in Figure 13.2, research themes belonging to the HRM and TO clusters seem to follow this trajectory. Thus, for the research themes in each of these two clusters, we present how they could evolve along the expansion and diversification trajectory and provide examples from articles published between 2019 and 2023.

#### 13.3.1 A diversifying trajectory in the HRM cluster

Studies on research themes in the HRM cluster, such as leadership, service climate, and employees, have exhibited a general move towards the upper-right side of the map in Figure 13.2. Over time, research in these areas has shifted towards a more strategic and consumer-oriented focus, leading to a move away from the center of the service research domain. Upon conducting a comprehensive examination of the service articles related to this theme published between 2019 to 2023, it is worth noting that a discernible trend has emerged in the use of theories and concepts that originated from outside the service domain. These theories and concepts coming from psychology and HRM include conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989), agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), credibility-enhancing display theory (Henrich, 2009), along with concepts such as customer incivility (Sliter et al., 2010), work engagement (Salanova et al., 2005), job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), leadership behavior (Stoker et al., 2019), job autonomy (Cheong et al., 2016), group cohesiveness (Wendt et al., 2009), burnout (Montano et al., 2017), and stress (Jaworski & MacInnis, 1989). Used in service research, these theories and concepts provide novel insights and contribute to the broadening of the service research domain. For example, Hwang and others (2022) use the conservation of resources theory to examine the moderating effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the relationship between customer incivility, work engagement, and job crafting among frontline service employees. COR (Conservation of Resources) theory is used to better understand the connections between workplace stressors and frontline service employees' resource conservation and vulnerability to further resource losses. The study provides essential insights that can enhance frontline service employees' engagement at work and improve their job crafting, which can ultimately lead to better service outcomes. Bartsch and others (2020) use an input–process–outcome framework to investigate how leadership affects the work performance of

service employees during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic by mediating work-related tension, autonomy, and group cohesiveness. Similarly, Vogus and others (2021) studied leadership behavior and compassionate HRM to enhance service efficiency and quality in healthcare service contexts, by borrowing theories and concepts from the leadership and HRM domains. Puranam and others (2021) used agency theory, from corporate governance, as a framework to examine the impact of minimum wage increases on consumer perceptions of service quality in the restaurant industry. Specifically, they focused on the principal-agent relationship between restaurant owners and their employees, and how this relationship can affect the quality of service that consumers receive. By borrowing theories and concepts from other fields, service research can confront emerging challenges encountered by service providers and frontline employees in contemporary contexts. This expansion enables the HRM cluster to ascend towards the upper-right quadrant of the service research evolution map, thereby shifting away from the central area of the service domain.

### 13.3.2 A diversifying trajectory in TO cluster

The research themes in the TO cluster have also undergone significant moves on the map. The position of B2B, distribution, technology/e-service, price/value, and communication have shifted from its central location on the map towards the lower-right quadrant, indicating a subtle departure from the heart of service research. Notably, B2B research has experienced a shift away from its relatively central position in the period 1993–2001 to a more peripheral position in the 2011–2019 period. This shift may be attributed to service scholars' tendency to explore B2B topics through the lens of organizational and management theories, which lay outside the service domain, such as modularity theory (Simon, 1996), system theory (Chen & Kanfer, 2006), trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003), along with concepts such as service-sales ambidexterity (Yu et al., 2013), value-based selling (Terho et al., 2012), and customer success management (Hochstein et al., 2021). For example, drawing on modularity theory and the concept of service-sales ambidexterity, Hochstein and others (2021) posit that the customer success function and its role as a structural alternative to within-person ambidexterity within service firms is critical. Based on theories and concepts from outside the traditional service domain, the study offers a multilevel perspective, incorporating executive, functional role employees, and customer viewpoints, which provide novel insights into the interplay between different components of the service-sales system. Similarly, based on a systems theory-based framework, Mullins and others (2020) explore the motivational mechanisms that operate at the individual salesperson and collective sales team levels to comprehend how to motivate



and capitalize on value-based selling. In their study, they build on trait activation theory, a theory from psychology, to identify salespeople's preferences for switching between multiple tasks within the same period as a critical driver for enacting sales-service ambidextrous behavior. The diversification of service research allows the expansion of the domain's boundaries and exploration of new areas by embracing theories and concepts from other domains.

### 13.4 Refocusing and revisiting

If it evolves along this second trajectory, the future of service research could involve a refocusing on core research themes within the service research domain. The revisiting trend may be sparked by the development of new indigenous marketing services research theories and concepts (Hunt, 2020), such as SDL and TSR, as well as research endeavors to refocus on core service marketing themes in light of new technologies and contextual factors.

#### 13.4.1 The influence of Indigenous marketing service research

Furrer and others (2020) suggested that the trend towards revisiting the "classic" themes in service research might have been influenced by the growth of two service research themes, namely SDL and Ethics (which include TSR), which have become dominant in the period from 2011 to 2019. Since its introduction by Vargo and Lusch in 2004, SDL has garnered significant attention and popularity in service research. During the period 1993–2001, a few pre-SDL studies (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003; Bettencourt, 1997; Hausman, 2003) occupied a peripheral position on the right side of the map, but the SDL research theme has since undergone a notable shift to a more central location with the proliferation of an increasing number of studies focusing on the concepts of value co-creation, value in use, and value in context (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Thus, SDL has become a "star" service marketing theme, as shown in the growth-share matrix discussed in the first chapter.

The re-centralization movement of SDL has also led to the trajectory of revisiting service marketing themes, including innovation, service encounter (including customer engagement), and service design, among others. For instance, drawing on S-D logic, Mitrega and others (2021) investigate service innovation and its success by introducing the concept of "customer co-creation capability." Nystrom and others (2019) contribute to the research on customer engagement by highlighting the importance of the fit between media content and the consumer's underlying value-creation process as a prerequisite for

digital media engagement (DME) and media journeys. Vink and others (2020) advance the research of service design by informing the conceptual building blocks with four core propositions and a multilevel process model of service ecosystem design. Similarly, a comparable trend can be observed in the research on ethics, as depicted in Figure 13.2.

Ethics, as a research theme, has evolved spatially first from a central position in the period 1993–2001 to a more external position of customer focus on the right-hand side of the map in the period 2002–2010, before moving back to a more central position in the period 2011–2019. This relocation can primarily be attributed to the emergence and increased popularity of two strongly service-related topics in this research theme: TSR, which stands in contrast to the traditional organizational and strategic approaches to business ethics, and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).

The TSR movement is aiming to direct theoretical and practical attention towards pressing global human issues, such as justice, inclusivity, equity, and sustainability (Rosenbaum et al., 2017). As humans, we encounter customer vulnerability, which can be defined as “a state of powerlessness that arises from an imbalance in marketplace interactions” (Baker et al., 2005, p. 134), in diverse business contexts and relationships (Furrer et al., 2021), while being embedded within and surrounded by service systems (Fisk et al., 2016). Thus, the TSR perspective is a critical lens to emphasize the fundamental role of service and service systems in influencing our overall well-being (Alkire et al., 2020). As observed previously, the development of TSR, aligned with the refocusing trend, has also resulted in a parallel trajectory for service marketing themes, including consumer behavior and communication, to name just a few. For instance, in line with a TSR perspective, Akareem and others (2021) demonstrate the critical role of individual resource integration as an antecedent for behavioral engagement of vulnerable consumers (e.g., subsistence consumers) with engagement-facilitating technologies, which ultimately leads to an improvement in their well-being. Furrer and others (2020) study customer captivity as a vulnerability and its impact on service evaluation and communication practices, such as word-of-mouth behavior, which contributes to the research theme of communication and furthers its movement towards the core of service research.

Beyond the influence of indigenous service marketing theories and concepts, a re-centralized spatial displacement is visible among the majority of service research themes. The movement indicates a tendency to shift the most “classic” themes in service marketing research, such as service quality, service encounters, and the impact of environmental context, and along with their

associated CBM and OBS clusters, towards the core of service marketing research, as depicted in Figure 13.2.

#### 13.4.2 Refocusing trajectory in the Consumer Behavior and Marketing (CBM) cluster

The majority of “classic” service research themes in the CBM cluster, service quality, service failures and recovery, and service encounters, have undergone a U-shaped movement, moving to the left (towards the center) of the map after having moved away from the center, which shows a tendency towards re-centralization to the core of service research.

The concept of *service quality* has been central to service research since its inception, and scholars have investigated it from various perspectives (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1988). However, recent developments in technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) call for a re-examination of the service quality construct. For example, the rise of technology (e.g., robots, e-commerce, VR, and AI (Wirtz et al., 2023)) adds to the complexity of measuring and conceptualizing co-created service quality (Cronin, 2023). Revisiting the concept of service quality and its measure in light of these new developments will contribute to refocusing the service research domain.

The *service failure and recovery* research theme is one of the most prolific themes of service research (Grégoire & Mattila, 2021). However, with the emergence of new technologies and distribution options, it is potentially relevant to reconsider how service failures occur and who should be responsible for service recovery efforts. Moreover, as new service failure due to new technologies might occur, the classic service failure and recovery theme could be reconsidered, which in turn will contribute to refocusing the service research domain.

*Service encounters* involve various sub-service research themes, including the customer, contact employee, technology, other customers, other employees, and the servicescape. As shown in Figure 13.2, research on service encounters has increasingly become a central focus in service research, especially between 2002 and 2010. This is due to the significant development of related themes, including emotions, customer engagement, and customer experience. Increasing technological innovations (e.g., service robots, chatbots, conversational agents) that are transforming service experiences might provide avenues to revisiting service research on emotions. The proliferation of AI within service provision has caused a shift within the service economy from

a high-tech approach to a high-touch approach (Huang & Rust, 2018). This entails the provision of services using both AI and human employees so that such services are imbued with emotions. Moreover, the roles and benefits of AI in facilitating emotional experiences within the context of service provision might also need to be revisited (Bagozzi et al., 2022). Consequently, the relationship between AI, service provision, and emotion has become more closely intertwined and complex during a service encounter, thus contributing to the refocusing of the service research domain.

As part of the service encounter, *customer experience* is a widely studied theme. The proliferation of touchpoints in today's business landscape has resulted in increasingly omnichannel service encounters and complex customer journeys, with customers interacting with companies on face-to-face and technology-based frontlines, interactive marketing channels, and remote relationships. Consequently, the delivery and communication of omnichannel service, which links omnichannel strategies and service logic, have become the norm. This has required companies to allocate resources and coordinate efforts among multiple channels to optimize the customer experience, according to Dalla Pozza (2023). Moreover, customer-to-customer interaction (CCI) and its management as a critical part of the overall customer experience in the service industry are receiving increasing research attention (Nicholls, 2023). For instance, understanding the customer segmentation and identifying sources of information about CCI and its impacts on customer satisfaction and retention are critical for an effective customer experience management, according to Nicholls (2023). The ongoing research effort to further investigate the concept of customer experience, specifically focusing on omnichannel service encounters and customer-to-customer interaction, reflects the growing recognition and emphasis placed on these areas within the service research domain. This renewed interest and increased research activity contribute to refocusing and advancing this research theme.

#### 13.4.3 Refocusing research in the Organizational Behavior and Strategy (OBS) cluster

Figure 13.2 shows that research areas related to the environmental context, innovation, and performance within the OBS cluster have shifted from a focus on the organization (i.e., left of the map) to a more central position within the service research literature map. This shift suggests that the research themes contained in this cluster, which were traditionally examined from an organizational standpoint, are now incorporating more consumer-centric approaches. It also suggests that strategic and organizational concerns, which are crucial to service delivery, have gained more mainstream attention.

The *environmental context* with its specific sub-themes, such as the service context and service ecosystem, have evoked increased interest due to the growing complexity of the context for international and global exchange systems (Akaka et al., 2013) and the COVID pandemic (Mollenkopf et al., 2021). This complex environment challenges service organizations and signals new research avenues. Research with a service ecosystem perspective thus is likely to contribute to a better understanding of key concepts in service research, such as value propositions (Frow et al., 2014) and innovation systems (Chandler et al., 2019; Vargo et al., 2015). Moreover, service research could evolve beyond the study of dyadic and triadic interactions to encompass service ecosystems and their institutional arrangements and mechanisms in service exchanges at different levels of analysis (micro, meso, and macro), as advocated by Tsiotsou and others (2023). Likely, the shift towards a systemic approach to understanding service environments and markets, which views markets as complex social networks of individuals and groups that are linked through shared participation and exchange in the creation and delivery of economic value is needed, according to Edvardsson and Tronvoll (2023). By exploring new avenues and embracing a broader understanding of service environments, researchers are actively redirecting their efforts to delve deeper into the complexities of intricate interactions and institutional arrangements. Through this intentional shift, researchers are poised to unlock new insights and perspectives, fostering a comprehensive understanding of service environments, and propelling the field towards a more focused and refined direction.

### 13.5 Discussion and conclusion

In this study, we offer a comprehensive overview of two overarching trajectories for the long-term evolution of the service research domain: (1) expansion and diversification, and (2) refocusing and revisiting. By detailing these trajectories and illustrating them with recent studies, this chapter contributes to a better understanding of the structure and future developments in the service literature.

This chapter has also shown that in the recent past, different service research themes have evolved in different directions following either trajectory. Research within the HRM and TO clusters has so far followed the expansion and diversification trajectory. Research within the CBM and OBS clusters has, thus far, followed the refocusing and revisiting trajectory. These two trajectories present research agendas with different areas of focus and potential research directions. However, these research themes might not be bounded

by these trajectories. Research themes and clusters might evolve in a different direction and switch trajectories. Moreover, these trajectories should not be considered in competition but complementary.

Therefore, for each of the research themes discussed in the previous paragraphs, we propose in Table 13.1 two alternative sets of questions for future research, building different research agendas depending on the trajectory followed by each of the themes.

As the field of service research continues to evolve, service scholars can choose to explore new horizons and expand the domain or refocus on core themes and reinterpret them in light of contemporary developments. Both trajectories offer exciting opportunities for further advancing knowledge in the service research domain and shaping its future. By embracing these trajectories, service scholars could contribute to the growth and enrichment of the discipline while addressing emerging challenges and opportunities in the service industry. Service scholars find themselves at a crossroads, with two distinct trajectories to consider. They can choose to explore new horizons and expand the domain by venturing into uncharted territories, or they can refocus their efforts on core themes and reinterpret them in light of contemporary developments. The first trajectory, expanding and diversification, invites service scholars to push the boundaries of the field and delve into emerging service themes and context, drawing inspiration from theories and concepts borrowed from other domains. In doing so, they could uncover new insights, challenge conventional wisdom, and contribute to the expansion and evolution of the service research domain. Conversely, service scholars could follow the trajectory that emphasizes refocusing, revisiting and reinterpreting core themes in the context of contemporary developments. This approach recognizes the value of building upon existing knowledge and theories while examining them in the context of new and emerging service themes. By refocusing their efforts, service scholars could gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental principles and concepts within the service research domain, adapt them to changing realities, and explore their implications in light of emerging challenges and opportunities.

Both trajectories offer exciting opportunities for further advancing knowledge in the service research domain and shaping its future. By embracing these trajectories, service scholars can contribute to the growth and enrichment of the discipline. Whichever trajectory they choose, they have the potential to contribute to the growth and enrichment of the service research domain while addressing emerging challenges and opportunities in the dynamic service industry.

**Table 13.1** Expansion and refocusing service marketing research agendas

Future research themes	Trajectory 1. Diversification and expansion	Trajectory 2. Refocusing and revisiting
Leadership	How do theories such as credibility-enhancing displays or leadership behavior enhance the comprehension of effective leadership management in a service-centric society?	How can leadership facilitate the transition from product-dominant logic to service-dominant logic across various industries?
Service climate	How can human resource management cultivate a positive service climate to foster employee commitment in a digitally transformed service-oriented society?	How can transformative service enhance customer and employee well-being and satisfaction and contribute to developing a positive service climate?
Frontline employees	How do frontline employees manage stress and perceive job autonomy in technology-mediated employee-to-customer interactions?	How does frontline employees' coping strategy in digital-mediated service encounters enhance service quality and customer satisfaction?
B2B	How can organizational theories such as ambidexterity foster B2B service design?	How can SDL's ecosystem perspective inspire and guide B2B service marketing at the micro, meso, and macro level?
Retail and distribution	How can psychology theories (e.g., motivation theory or theory of cognitive dissonance) enhance the comprehension of customers' perception of service quality in the context of physical or e-commerce retail settings, particularly post-COVID?	How can service innovation be implemented in physical or e-commerce retail settings to mitigate customers' vulnerability and enhance their well-being?
Technology/e-service	How can human resource management theories such as conservation of resource theory improve the understanding of emotion management in employee-machine-customer interactions?	Which emotional factors affect consumers' adoption (or rejection) of smart services?

Future research themes	Trajectory 1. Diversification and expansion	Trajectory 2. Refocusing and revisiting
Price/value	How can economic theories, such as two-sided marketing theory, contribute to advancing the knowledge of value creation in specific services such as crowdfunding platforms or other e-commerce platforms?	How can digital-enabled service failures diminish service value creation in the post-COVID era?
Communication	How can psychology theories, such as psychological reactance theory, provide further insights into the effectiveness of social media communication?	What role do frontline employees play in corporate communication within the service company?
After-sale service	How can organizational theories like ambidexterity improve after-sale service effectiveness and efficiency?	How does technology influence consumers' perception of service quality in the context of after-sale service?
Brand management	How can psychology theories and concepts, such as playfulness, contribute to a deeper understanding of brand management and value co-creation?	How can employer brand management foster service value co-creation and service quality perception?
Competition	How can the competitive advantage of a service company be assessed through the lens of sales and organizational and management theory, such as modularity theory and system theory?	How can transformative service research improve service design to foster a service company's competitive advantage?
Consumer behaviors	How can behavior theories improve the comprehension of sustainable consumption behavior within the service context?	How does a service company's CSR management influence customers' behavior towards sustainable consumption?
Customer satisfaction	How do human resource practices including training, performance appraisal, and information sharing contribute to customer satisfaction in a technology-dominated service society?	What emotional and physical factors influence customer satisfaction in the technology-enabled service encounter?



Future research themes	Trajectory 1. Diversification and expansion	Trajectory 2. Refocusing and revisiting
Service encounter	What organizational factors can lead to service failures in technology-enabled service encounters?	What role does the frontline employee play in technology-enabled service encounters?
Emotions	How can management, psychology, and human resource management theory and concepts be applied to understand better the coping strategies that staff members employ to manage negative emotions in technology-enabled service encounters?	How does a service company's ethical practice or CSR management influence frontline employees' emotions management?
Tangible	How can psychological, organizational, and scientific approaches, such as social facilitation, affective events theory, or neuroscientific methods, enrich the understanding and concept of servicescape?	How does the interplay between service innovation and servicescape influence customers' perception of service quality?
Environmental context	How can organizational and human resources management theories and concepts, such as conservation of resource theory, agency theory, or institutional theories, contribute to a better understanding of value co-creation within a complex, digital-dominant service ecosystem?	How is value co-created between service providers and customers at the service ecosystem's micro, meso, and macro levels?
Ethics	How can organizational theory, such as unintended consequences, expand the understanding of the ethical practices within a service company?	How does service climate foster transformative service?
Innovation	How can social and psychological theories, such as identity theory and self-perception theory, contribute to an expanded study of product adoption, particularly in the context of technological products and services?	How does service climate influence positively and negatively customers' adoption of new services?

Future research themes	Trajectory 1. Diversification and expansion	Trajectory 2. Refocusing and revisiting
International	How can human resource concepts and practices, such as training, incentive management, and group cohesiveness, promote effective cross-cultural management within the service industry in the post-COVID era?	To what extent is cross-cultural management effective in enhancing service failure recovery in an international context?
Non-profit services	How can social and psychological theories, such as the theory of ethics, contribute to a broader understanding of value creation in non-profit services?	How does service innovation influence the process of value co-creation in non-profit services?
Service failure	How can social and psychological theories, such as social cognitive theory, social exchange, and equity theory or justice theory, extend the understanding of service failure, particularly in the context of technology-enabled failure?	How can the implementation of transformative service practices facilitate the process of service failure recovery?
Service quality	How can psychological concepts such as the stimulus-organism response (SOR) framework be applied to enhance the understanding of service quality, particularly in the context of a digitalized service society?	How can CSR or ethical practices focusing on the well-being of customers and employees improve customers' perception of service quality?
Service offering	How can sales and organizational theories, such as value-based selling or customer success management, provide a diversified perspective on service offerings?	To what extent is service failure recovery effective in enhancing loyalty programs and fostering customer loyalty in the context of a digitalized service society?
Strategy	How can HR concepts such as green human resource management practices contribute to fostering a sustainable marketing strategy?	How can SDL change a company's market orientation?
Service design	How can organizational and human resources management theories and concepts, such as conservation of resource theory, improve the service design?	What is the impact of service design on the development of transformative value service within a company?

Future research themes	Trajectory 1. Diversification and expansion	Trajectory 2. Refocusing and revisiting
Performance	How can psychological and sales concepts and theories, such as trait activation theory, and value-based selling improve a service company's performance?	How can the influence of CSR or ethical practice on a company's long-term performance be measured?
Sales	How can human resource concepts such as skillset, selling behavior, and trainable skills improve selling?	To what extent can SDL foster effectual selling within service ecosystems?
SDL	How can sociology and psychology theories such as social capital theory provide a broader comprehension on SDL, particularly the concept of value-in-use?	How can the key concepts of SDL, such as value-in-use and value-in-context, improve service quality perception?
Relationship marketing	How can social and psychological theories, such as the social exchange, contribute to an expanded understanding of relationship marketing?	How can transformative service foster relationship marketing?
Usage/purchase	How can psychological and computer science theories, such as privacy calculus theory and protection motivation theory, be applied to interpret the adoption or rejection of AI tools to facilitate the purchase process?	How can the design of service robots be optimized to ensure optimal purchase preferences?

## References

- Akaka, M.A., Vargo, S.L. & Lusch, R.F. (2013). The complexity of context: a service ecosystems approach for international marketing. *Journal of International Marketing*, 21(4), 1–20.
- Akareem, H.S., Ferdous, A.S. & Todd, M. (2021). Impact of patient portal behavioral engagement on subsistence consumers' wellbeing. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 38(2), 501–517.
- Alkire, L., Mooney, C., Gur, F.A., Kabadayi, S., Renko, M. & Vink, J. (2020). Transformative service research, service design, and social entrepreneurship: an interdisciplinary framework advancing wellbeing and social impact. *Journal of Service Management*, 33(5), 626–631.
- Bagozzi, R.P., Brady, M.K. & Huang, M.-H. (2022). AI service and emotion. *Journal of Service Research*, 25(4), 499–504.
- Baker, S.M., Gentry, J.W. & Rittenburg, T. (2005). Building understanding of the domain of customer vulnerability. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 25(2), 128–139.
- Bartsch, S., Weber, E., Büttgen, M. & Huber, A. (2020). Leadership matters in crisis-induced digital transformation: how to lead service employees effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Service Management*, 32(1), 71–85.
- Bendapudi, N. & Leone, R.P. (2003). Psychological implications of customer participation in co-production. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(1), 14–28.
- Bettencourt, L.A. (1997). Customer voluntary performance: customers as partners in service delivery. *Journal of Retailing*, 73(3), 383–406.
- Chandler, J.D., Danatzis, I., Wernicke, C., Akaka, M.A. & Reynolds, D. (2019). How does innovation emerge in a service ecosystem? *Journal of Service Research*, 22(1), 75–89.
- Chen, G. & Kanfer, R. (2006). Toward a systems theory of motivated behavior in work teams. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 27, 223–267.
- Cheong, M., Spain, S.M., Yammarino, F.J. & Yun, S. (2016). Two faces of empowering leadership: enabling and burdening. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(4), 602–616.
- Cronin, J.J. Jr. (2023). Revisiting “classic” service research themes in the light of new emerging themes. In this volume.
- Cronin, J.J. Jr. & Taylor, S.A. (1992). Measuring service quality: a reexamination and extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 55–68.
- Dalla Pozza, I. (2023). Omnichannel services. In this volume.
- De Luca, L.M., Herhausen, D., Troilo, G. & Rossi, A. (2021). How and when do big data investments pay off? The role of marketing affordances and service innovation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 49, 790–810.
- Delcourt, C. (2023). Emotions in service encounters: a review and research agenda. In this volume.
- Edvardsson, B. & Tronvoll, B. (2023). Understanding how service ecosystem actors collaborate for value cocreation. In this volume.
- Frow, P., McColl-Kennedy, J.R., Hilton, T., Davidson, A., Payne, A. & Brozovic, D. (2014). Value propositions: a service ecosystems perspective. *Marketing Theory*, 14(3), 327–351.
- Furrer, O., Baillod, C., & Landry, M. (2023). A growth–share matrix of service marketing research themes. In this volume.
- Furrer, O. & Sollberger, P. (2007). The dynamics and evolution of the service marketing literature: 1993–2003. *Service Business*, 1(2), 93–117.

- Furrer, O., Yu Kerguignas, J., Delcourt, C. & Gremler, D.D. (2020). Twenty-seven years of service research: a literature review and research agenda. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 34(3), 299–316.
- Furrer, O., Yu Kerguignas, J. & Landry, M. (2021). Customer captivity, negative word of mouth and well-being: a mixed-methods study. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 35(6), 755–773.
- Grégoire, Y. & Mattila, A.S. (2021). Service failure and recovery at the crossroads: recommendations to revitalize the field and its influence. *Journal of Service Research*, 24(3), 323–328.
- Grönroos, C. (1984). A service quality model and its marketing implications. *European Journal of Marketing*, 18(4), 36–44.
- Hausman, A.V. (2003). Professional service relationships: a multi-context study of factors impacting satisfaction, re-patronization, and recommendations. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 17(3), 226–242.
- Henrich, J. (2009). The evolution of costly displays, cooperation and religion: credibility enhancing displays and their implications for cultural evolution. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 30(4), 244–260.
- Hobfoll, S.E. (1989). Conservation of resources: a new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, 44(3), 513–524.
- Hochstein, B., Chaker, N.N., Rangarajan, D., Nagel, D. & Hartmann, N.N. (2021). Proactive value co-creation via structural ambidexterity: customer success management and the modularization of frontline roles. *Journal of Service Research*, 24(4), 601–621.
- Huang, M.-H. & Rust, R.T. (2018). Artificial intelligence in service. *Journal of Service Research*, 21(2), 155–172.
- Hunt, S.D. (2020). Indigenous theory development in marketing: the foundational premises approach. *AMS Review*, 10(1–2), 8–17.
- Hwang, H., Hur, W.M., Shin, Y. & Kim, Y. (2022). Customer incivility and employee outcomes in the new service marketplace. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 36(4), 612–625.
- Jaworski, B.J. & MacInnis, D.J. (1989). Marketing jobs and management controls: toward a framework. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 26(4), 406–419.
- Jensen, M. & Meckling, W. (1976). Theory of the firm: managerial behavior, agency costs, and ownership structure. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 3, 305–360.
- Mitrega, M., Spacil, V. & Pfajfar, G. (2021). Co-creating value in post-communist contexts: capability perspective. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 35(2), 169–181.
- Mollenkopf, D.A., Ozanne, L.K. & Stolze, H.J. (2021). A transformative supply chain response to COVID-19. *Journal of Service Management*, 32(2), 190–202.
- Montano, D., Reeske, A., Franke, F. & Hüffmeier, J. (2017). Leadership, followers' mental health and job performance in organizations: a comprehensive meta-analysis from an occupational health perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(3), 327–350.
- Mullins, R., Menguc, B. & Panagopoulos, N.G. (2020). Antecedents and performance outcomes of value-based selling in sales teams: a multilevel, systems theory of motivation perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48, 1053–1074.
- Nicholls, R. (2023). The future of research on customer-to-customer interaction (CCI). In this volume.
- Nyström, A.G. & Mickelsson, K.J. (2019). Digital advertising as service: introducing contextually embedded selling. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 33(4), 396–406.

- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. & Berry, L. (1988). SERVQUAL: a multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
- Puranam, D., Kadiyali, V. & Narayan, V. (2021). The impact of increase in minimum wages on consumer perceptions of service: a transformer model of online restaurant reviews. *Marketing Science*, 40(5), 985–1004.
- Rosenbaum, M.S., Seger-Guttmann, T. & Giraldo, M. (2017). Commentary: vulnerable consumers in service settings. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 31(4/5), 309–312.
- Salanova, M., Agut, S. & Peiró, J.M. (2005). Linking organizational resources and work engagement to employee performance and customer loyalty: the mediation of service climate. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(6), 1217–1227.
- Sharma, P. (2023). Intercultural service encounters in the post COVID-19 world: a research agenda. In this volume.
- Simon, H.A. (1996). *The Sciences of the Artificial*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Sliter, M., Jex, S., Wolford, K. & McInnerney, J. (2010). How rude! Emotional labor as a mediator between customer incivility and employee outcomes. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 15(4), 468–481.
- Stoker, J.I., Garretsen, H. & Soudis, D. (2019). Tightening the leash after a threat: a multi-level event study on leadership behavior following the financial crisis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 30(2), 199–214.
- Struwe, S. & Slepnirov, D. (2023). Unlocking digital servitization: a conceptualization of value co-creation capabilities. *Journal of Business Research*, 160, 113825.
- Terho, H., Haas, A., Eggert, A. & Ulaga, W. (2012). “It’s almost like taking the sales out of selling”: towards a conceptualization of value-based selling in business markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 41(1), 174–185.
- Tett, R.P. & Burnett, D.D. (2003). A personality trait-based interactionist model of job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(3), 500–517.
- Tregua, M., Brozovic, D. & D’Auria, A. (2021). 15 years of service-dominant logic: analyzing citation practices of Vargo and Lusch (2004). *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 31(4), 563–606.
- Tsiotsou, R.H., Kabadayi, S. & Fisk, R.P. (2023). Advocating human rights and Sustainable Development Goals: an ecosystem-based transformative service research (TSR) approach. In this volume.
- Vargo, S.L. & Lusch, R.F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1–17.
- Vargo, S.L., Wieland, H. & Akaka, M.A. (2015). Innovation through institutionalization: a service ecosystems perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 44(1), 63–72.
- Vogus, T.J., McClelland, L.E., Lee, Y.S., McFadden, K.L. & Hu, X. (2021). Creating a compassion system to achieve efficiency and quality in health care delivery. *Journal of Service Management*, 32(4), 560–580.
- Wendt, H., Euwema, M.C. & van Emmerik, I.J.H. (2009). Leadership and team cohesiveness across cultures. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(3), 358–370.
- Wirtz, J., Kunz, W.H., Paluch, S. & Pitardi, V. (2023). Service robots and their implications for service delivery. In this volume.
- Wrzesniewski, A. & Dutton, J.E. (2001). Crafting a job: revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of Management Review*, 2(2), 179–201.
- Yu, T., Patterson, P.G. & de Ruyter, K. (2013). Achieving service-sales ambidexterity. *Journal of Service Research*, 16(1), 52–66.