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Editorial

Michael Kleinaltenkamp

In 1991 the first “Services Marketing Workshop” (“Workshop Dienstleistungsmarketing”) took place at the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. Since then current research in the field of services marketing was presented and discussed at 17 further workshops in Germany and Austria.

The five papers that were invited for this special issue were presented at the 18th workshop that took place at the Freie Universität Berlin in 2015. They address different highly relevant aspects of research in services. While three papers approach their research issues across a variation of empirical settings, two papers offer guidance through extant research based on in-depth literature reviews. The papers provide fresh insights and expand our understanding regarding the role of customers in service settings and approaches to manage prevalent as well as emerging service marketing tools and operations.

The first paper “Customer Participation in the Customization of Services – Effects on Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions” authored by Lennart Straus, Thomas Robbert, and Stefan Roth highlights the importance of customers’ evaluation of the service process for service providers. At the same time, it points out that research focusing on customer participation in the early phases of a customization process and its effects on the evaluation of the process and service outcome is still nascent. The study therefore uses this gap as a starting point. In a scenario experiment, the authors analyze the effect of customer participation when customers and salespeople collectively customize a service offering according to customers’ needs. Their findings show the positive impact customer participation has on satisfaction and behavioral intentions irrespective of the actual service outcome. What is more, even in the case of a negative service experience, the participating customers exhibit a significantly higher

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level of satisfaction than customers who play a rather passive role at the specification stage of the service process.

The second paper written by Mirjam Dobmeier is entitled “Understanding and Managing Service Productivity – A Literature Review” and provides a detailed overview of how the current academic literature approaches the definition, empirical analysis, and management of service productivity. The article addresses the critical issue that managers in service industries often strive for high efficiency and high quality at the same time, which might lead to a trade-off as a focus on efficiency may result in decreasing service quality and vice versa. Despite the acknowledgement of this trade-off, research on service performance measurement often focuses only on either operational efficiency or service quality. Service productivity on the other hand is a research stream that deals with the problem of achieving both efficiency and effectiveness. Due to its relevance and the lack of a generally accepted definition of service productivity, this paper aims at getting a finer-grained understanding of this concept and focuses especially on how efficiency and effectiveness are interrelated and which and how antecedents affect service productivity.

The third paper “Exit Strategies of Loyalty Programs” by Lena-Marie Rehnen aims to enhance the understanding of the reasons and means for the termination of loyalty programs. Although loyalty programs are a frequently implemented marketing tool across industries, there is still doubt about their contribution to a company’s economic success. The qualitative study examining five different cases, finds that unfavorable cost-benefit relationships based on diminishing customer interest, and unsuccessful cooperation are among the main factors that lead to the termination of loyalty programs.

Kathrin Albrecht’s paper “Understanding the Effects of the Presence of Others in the Service Environment – A Literature Review” responds to the issue that although many research studies have examined the presence of other customers in a service context, a literature review systemizing both theoretical and empirical findings is missing. When highlighting the fact that sharing the same service environment leads to direct and indirect interactions between customers and can either enhance or damage a customer’s service experience, the relevance of the topic becomes obvious. Especially in situations where customers are observing complaint situations of others, negative effects can be transmitted to the observing party, thus putting the service provider at risk. By the means of the literature analysis conducted in this paper, three contextual factors influencing customer-to-customer interactions during service encounters in the service environment have emerged: customer-related factors, firm-related factors and encounter-related factors. Besides future research avenues, this article provides managers with tools to design their customer experience initiatives with regard to socially present other customers in the service environment.

The fifth paper written by the author team comprising Marc Girard, Anna Girard, Anna-Caroline Suppin, and Silke Bartsch is entitled “The Scentscape: An Integrative Framework Describing Scents in Servicescapes”. It focuses on the trend of the

systematic use of ambient scents, which can be observed in many service companies and has attracted considerable research attention. Yet, to date there exists no theoretical framework that addresses ambient scents' specific role in physical surroundings of services. Thus, the paper develops the 'scentscape', a model describing the process of olfactory stimulation and its impacts on customers and employees in service environments. The model illustrates different scent sources and provides an overview of the process of scent perception as well as evoked internal and behavioral reactions in a servicescape. The resulting 11 key findings and key determinants serve as guidance for managers and scientists when using / investigating scents in service environments.

I thank all authors for the good cooperation in setting up this special issue and hope you all of these papers are of interest for your work in practise or in research, that you will enjoy reading them and that they have an impact on your research or teaching activities in the field of services marketing and management.

Michael Kleinaltenkamp

Editor-in-Chief