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Article

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Contribution of Services to Economic Development

Service activities have become the main engine for sustainable development. The share of services in the global economic output is about 70% and their contribution to global employment is about 40%. There are substantial differences between countries and regions of the world in the development of services sector, the share of tertiary activities in both output and employment being higher in strong industrialized economies, but growing rapidly in developing and transition economies as well. As services tend to become essential inputs for every activity, service productivity is a key factor of economic performance not only directly, but also by its multiplier effects spread all over the economy, including manufacturing and agriculture. From a qualitative point of view, services are at the core of transformative processes toward more inclusive societies, reconciliation between economic growth and environment preservation, enhancing knowledge production and improving the exploitation of technological advances, and better governance.

Explaining the key role of services in modern economies, the conditions that drive new specialization processes and the contribution of services at reducing the development gaps, understanding the multifaceted interactions between services and other fields of human activity, providing tools for the assessment of services performance and policy recommendations for public decision makers and business leaders is a huge task for researchers. This task is a very challenging one, as services are very diverse by their nature the statistical information is still insufficiently adapted and established business and economics paradigms need to be reconsidered.

The European Association for Research on Services (RESER) devoted the 22nd edition of its international conference¹ to the role of services in economic development, participants' contributions addressing the issue from five main perspectives:

- Services, spatial inequalities, and territorial development
- Service-products systems, and new value chains
- Service innovation for sustainable development
- Services of general interest and economic austerity
- Internationalization, trade and FDI in services

The present special issue of *Amfiteatru Economic Journal* regroups a sample of the contributions presented with this occasion, providing an interesting illustration of the diversity of questions to which the service research community is expected to provide answers.

¹ RESER 2012 International Conference, *Services and Economic Development: Local and Global Challenges*, Bucharest, September 20-22nd, 2012, Conference website: www.reser2012.ase.ro, RESER website: www.reser.net

The macroeconomic concerns are reflected by articles in which the correlation between exports of services and exports of tangible goods is revealed (p. 600), or the impact of the financial services sector on growth variations in time of crisis is estimated (p. 621).

Other articles focus on the key role of services for local development, either in promoting local economic initiatives in general (p. 580), or by addressing more specific local needs like the management of Municipal real property (p. 738) or the assistance in establishing a local identity through strategy and branding (p. 720). Local and regional development can also benefit from promotion of social entrepreneurship, as it results from studying successful cases from Madrid region (p. 774).

Knowledge intensive business services are very complex activities as it is the relationship between the providers of such services and their beneficiaries in creating the final value. Possibilities to improve the productivity management of complex services are explored (p. 635) and the emergence of new value chains and business models is analyzed (p. 680).

Innovation is as important for services as it is for all the other sectors. Articles hosted by this special issue provide insights on how challenge-driven service innovation can benefit from the development of new information technologies (p. 690 and p. 786), but also a research among Polish SMEs unveils the real challenges in promoting innovation in management for small and medium-sized service firms (p. 755).

Concerns about improving services of general interest are approached from a variety of perspectives. One article explores the undermining effect of corruption and bureaucracy in public services (p. 665), another report the results of a survey regarding the perception of private and public medical services, while another analyses the role of mass media in promoting domestic services development (p. 802).

Readers will find for sure many interesting facts and challenging ideas, taking, hopefully, this sample of articles as an invitation to intensifying individual efforts and cooperation toward enhancing knowledge of services and their role in economic development.

**Associate Editor,
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