

Service Innovations: Review and Synthesis of Research Priorities

Dharmesh Gadhavi*

*Assistant Professor, Centre for Management Studies and Research,
Ganpat University, Gujarat, India
dharmesh.gadhvi@ganpatuniversity.ac.in*

Amit Shukla

*Assistant Professor, V.M. Patel Institute of Management,
Ganpat University, Gujarat, India*

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of the study is to outline the research priorities in the area of service innovation in leading service sector journals like journal of service management, journal of service marketing, journal of service research, service industries journal and managing service quality. **Design/methodology/approach** - The final screening search for “service innovation” in titles within top five service marketing journals resulted into 45 articles from 2004-2015. The classification of papers was made based on geographical provenance, research approaches, service innovation typology and service innovation perspectives. **Findings** - This study revealed that service innovation studies are based on quantitative research design predominantly focusing on measurement and strategy & management, researched heavily in Europe and leveraged radical innovation type most. **Research limitations/implications** - The outcome of this study is based on only these five journals and excluded allied journals. **Practical implications** - This study provides valuable insights to researchers in setting the research priorities in service innovation context.

Keywords: Service Innovation; Content Analysis; Review; Radical; Incremental

1. Introduction

Though innovation in service sector is not new for academicians in service marketing stream but it is gaining ever more importance from the era of 1980s (Barras, 1986; Gallouj, 1998; Sundbo, 1997) to 21st century (Salter and Tether, 2006; Gallouj and Savona, 2010; Rubalcaba et al., 2010; Reynoso et al., 2015). As widely accepted in service literature that service innovation (SI) is one of the top priorities in service marketing research and yet much work need to be done in coming years (Page and Schirr, 2008; Ostrom et al., 2010; Ostrom et al., 2015). From market practitioner point of view, a recent survey by Boston Consulting Group revealed that CEO's marketing strategy is largely depends on nature of innovation (Boston Consulting Group, 2010). Toivonen and Tuominen (2009 p. 893) defined service innovation as “a new service or such a renewal of an existing service which is put into practice and which provides benefit to the organization that has developed it; the benefit usually derives from the added value that the renewal provides the customers”.

*Corresponding author

One more reason behind most priority of understanding service innovation is its direct relationship with firms' performance (Sorescu et al., 2008; Eisingerich et al., 2009; Aas and Pedersen, 2011; Lin, 2013) and its relationship with development of customer experience (Victorino et al., 2005; Su, 2011). Henceforth, service marketers have already started working on service innovation to cater the changed preference of customers across globe. However, studying trends and success drivers in new product development, Barczak et al. (2009) revealed that 90% of innovations failed in last 10 years. This has challenged the way services are innovated and more importantly the use of established theories on service innovation. Hence service innovation perspective need to be understood well to increase the chances of success in various service operations/industries. By large, appropriate innovation selection and implementation helps service marketers to gain added advantage in complex consumer markets (Andreassen et al., 2015).

In changed economic environment, the critical issue for service innovators is to identify the key innovation operations and its beneficiaries which in result can provide positive financial results to marketers. Ideally service innovation by keeping customers into center should be given more priority as customers are the main lifeline for marketer but service innovation research contradicts to claiming this fact. So it is yet debatable issue for service marketers that whether service innovations revolve around customer needs or operational needs.

As classification of service innovation is yet novel (Carlborg et al., 2014) for building theory for generalization in service research. Since its inception, innovation has been classified in radical type and incremental type. Radical innovation deals with creating a completely new offering and incremental innovation deals with alteration of existing service (Gallouj and Weinstein, 1997). But the shift the global economy from product dominant logic to service dominant logic has created need to explore other form of innovation which can be implemented to get financial advantage in cut throat competition in market.

It is no more surprising to accept that articles published in scholarly journals are the reflection of industry practice and parallel to that scholarly articles works as a path showing medium for the industry. This study attempts to fill the gap in service marketing literature by addressing most contemporary issue in marketplace. The purpose of present paper is to do review of scholarly articles on service innovation published in “5 leading” service marketing journals in last ten years. This research classify service innovation studies based on geographic provenance (Svensson et al., 2009), methods used in service innovation articles (i.e. quantitative or qualitative), topicality (Carlborg et al., 2014), innovation typology (Gallouj and Weinstein, 1997; DeVries, 2006) and classification service innovation has been done based on stakeholder perspective. Thus, capturing the aspects of classification of service innovation articles can be beneficial to academia and service innovators both.

2. Literature review

Service innovation is defined as “elevated service offering” that is made up of “new client interface/customer encounter; new service delivery system; new organizational architecture or marketing proposition; and/or improvements in productivity and performance through human resource management” Agarwal and Selen (2011a, p. 1172).

Working on the review and synthesis of service innovation is ever emerging in service marketing literature and leads to interesting outcomes (Page and Schirr, 2008; Droegge et al., 2009; Vence and Trigo, 2009; Rubalcaba et al., 2012; Carlborg et al., 2014). Among all attempts in classifying and reviewing service innovation work, the most common approach is to classify the service innovation based on three schools of thought namely assimilation, demarcation and synthesis (Gallouj, 2010; Carlborg et al., 2014). The classification based on three schools of thought in service innovation literatures is also most cited approach in

reviewing service innovation related literature (Gallouj, 2010; Drejer, 2004; Droege et al., 2009; Carlborg et al., 2014; Vence and Trigo, 2009).

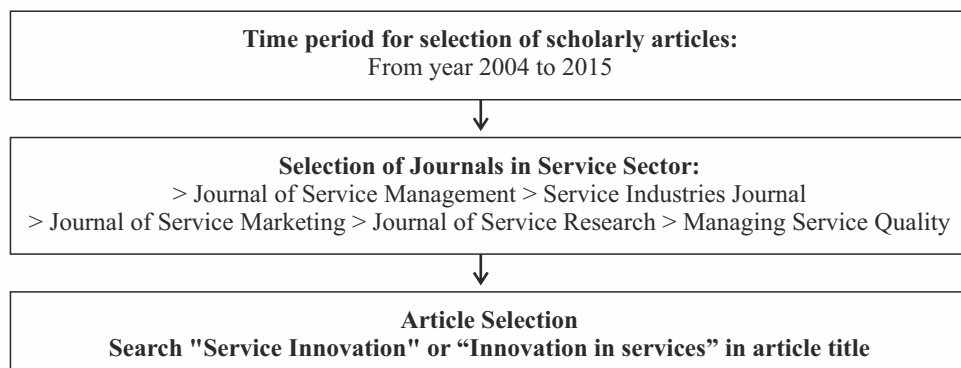
However none of the review on service innovation has classified it based on Gallouj & Weinstein's theory (1997) on service innovation. It leads to apparent need to discuss about the development of service innovation synthesis approach based on service innovation types (Droege et al., 2009) and perspectives of beneficiary. Further the approaches used in SI research are diversified and gaining momentum (Carlborg et al., 2014) which demands synthesizing SI through comprehensive review in a broader manner. To fill this gap, present research deals with review and synthesis of service innovation based on various types suggested by Gallouj & Weinstein (1997), classification based on beneficiary of service innovation effort. The attempt is really important to reduce diversity in approaches and in reducing complexities to understand service innovation literature. The classification of SI based on types of service innovation is really helpful in identifying the types of service innovation take place now days in service marketing literature. As SI leads to the better firm performance (Aas and Pedersen, 2011; Lin, 2013) and also helps in generating better customer experience (Victorino et al., 2005; Su, 2011), it is matter of priorities to develop review in service innovation literature.

3. Research methods

The present research follows the identification of service innovation studies appeared in “top” five service marketing journals considered in the study of Svensson et al. (2008). As per the study by Svensson et al. (2008) the opinion of experts from North America, Australia and Europe in the field of service marketing resulted into identification of following “top” five service marketing journals: (1) *Journal of Service Marketing (JSM)*, (2) *Journal of Service Research (JSR)*, (3) *Managing Service Quality (MSQ)*, (4) *Service Industries Journal (SIJ)*, (5) *Journal of Service Management (JOSM)*. The selection of journals has also been done on the basis of its “scientific identity” i.e. perception of content or style (Mylonopoulos and Theoharakis, 2001; Svensson et al., 2008) assessed through (a) journal's coverage of methodological approaches and (b) authors' geographical affiliation. Considering the complexity in identifying service innovations studies, time frame of 2004-2015 was selected expecting sufficient number of publications representing sample. To fulfill the objectives of present research, the timeframe of 2004-2015 was believed to be an appropriate time period in sampling of papers due to similarity in previous research (Svensson et al., 2008).

The online ABI/Inform database from the period of 2004 to till date reports that “service innovation” has been a keyword in 674 articles published in these leading service journals (followed framework shown in Figure I).

Table 1 : Descriptive statistics





Every research article is classified using

1. Research approaches used
2. Gallouj & Weinstein (1997) & DeVries (2006) framework
3. Carlborg, Kindstorm & Kowalkowski (2014) framework

Source: compiled by authors

The objective of present study is to seek the worldwide spreading of research work on service innovation within set of 5 “leading” service sector journals over last ten-years (Table I). It was observed that SIJ and JOSM had greater proportion of papers (approximately 67 per cent) in comparison to JSM, JSR and MSQ.

Table I: Year wise classification of journals

<i>Journal</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>JOSM</i>						1	2	2	4		1	1	11
<i>JSM</i>					1				2	1	1	1	6
<i>JSR</i>		1				1		2		1			5
<i>MSQ</i>		1				1	1				1		4
<i>SIJ</i>	1				1	2	5	4	1	1	2	2	19

Geographical affiliation of author is an important area of exploration in marketing literature to understand the content appeared in scholarly journals (Svensson et al., 2009). Following the same approach, Geographical prominence of paper was classified based on research context as “America”, “Australia”, “Africa”, “Asia” and “Europe”. It was also analyzed the geographical prominence of journal papers as depicted in Table II. The papers having Europe as a research context dominated the service innovation (60 per cent) literature, followed by America (22 per cent) and Asia (18 per cent). More interestingly, Asian researchers were prominent over Australian researchers. In contrast, there was nil contribution from the researchers of Australian and Africa.

Table II: Geographical provenance of journal papers

Author affiliation	Number of articles
Africa	--
Asia	8
Australia	--
Europe	27
America	10
Total	45

3. Findings

3.1 Empirical research design used in SI

Papers were categorized as “Quantitative”, “Qualitative” and “Review/Conceptual”. Papers based on primary research data collected through surveys were referred as “Quantitative”, papers based on interviews and case studied were referred as “Qualitative” and papers based on secondary data were referred as “Review/Conceptual” (Svensson et al., 2008). Table III summarized that “Quantitative” research design was top contributor in service innovation research (49 per cent), followed by “Qualitative” research design (35 per cent). “Review/Conceptual” category was contributed lowest (16 per cent). Within “Quantitative” category, SIJ contributed highest followed by JSM. SIJ also contributed most in “Review/Conceptual” category followed by JOSM. Furthermore, SIJ and JOSM contributed equally in “Qualitative” category followed by MSQ, JSR and JSM. No contribution was reported from JSM, JSR and MSQ in “Review/Conceptual” category.

Table III: Approaches in service innovation articles

Approaches of articles	JOSM	JSM	JSR	MSQ	SIJ	Total
Quantitative	3	5	3	1	10	22
Review/conceptual	3	–	–	–	4	7
Qualitative	5	1	2	3	5	16

3.2 Classification of service innovation perspectives

As per classification done by Coombs and Mile (2000) and used by Carlborg et al., (2014), service innovations perspectives have been assessed as *assimilation*, *demarcation* and *synthesis*. The same classification has been often used to understand fragmentation and progression of service innovation research till date (Drejer, 2004; Droege et al., 2009; Vence & Trigo, 2009). Further, Carlborg et al., (2014) classified and tracked the service innovation perspectives as *offering development*, *strategy and management*, *organizing*, *policy*, *measurement*, *customer involvement*, *review*, *deployment*, *service profit* and *others*.

With this categorization of SI perspectives the attempt has been done in tracking the service innovation research as depicted in table IV. It was observed that *measurement* perspective of service innovation contributes most (20 per cent), followed by *strategy and management* perspective (18 per cent), *offering development* (15 per cent), *organizing* (13 per cent) and *customer involvement* (13 per cent). *Policy* and *review* contributed to 6.7 per cent equally while *service deployment* and *service profit* contributed the lowest. The '*measurement*' was predominantly featured in SIJ, '*Strategy and Management*' in JOSM, '*offering development*' in MSQ and SIJ, and '*organizing*' covered by all the journals. It was felt that measurement of service innovation stressing effectiveness of value creation has weighted high on their publishable value in SIJ.

Table IV: Classification of services innovation perspectives journal wise

Perspective*	Description	JOSM	JSM	JSR	MSQ	SIJ	Total
Offering development	Firm-level approach to designing and developing an offering. How to generate ideas and formalize them as concrete offerings	Alam (2011)	---	Ordanini et al., (2013)	Victorino et al. (2005); Gremyr et al., (2010)	Un et al., (2010); Su (2011); Fuglsang et al.,(2011)	7
Strategy and Management	Higher level of service innovation management issues related to the firm's overall strategy and marketing strategy	Droege et al., (2009); Hertog et al., (2010); Lightfoot & Gebauer (2011); Rusanen et al., (2014); Reynoso et al. (2015)	---	Umashankar et al., (2011)	Andreassen & Streukens (2009)	Luo et al.,(2012)	8
Organizing	Managing of service innovation personnel and organizational structure	Steinicke, et al., (2012); Ettlie & Rosenthal (2012)	Gottfridsson (2014)	Eisingerich et al., (2009)	Giannopoulou et al., (2014)	Audretsch et al., (2011)	6
Policy	Contributions to general discussions about the nature and theory of what service innovation is and its specific characteristics	---	Hsieh et al. (2013)	---	---	Abreu et al., (2010); Anderson et al., (2011)	3
Measurement	Investigation and development of methods for measuring service innovation performance or service innovation impact	---	Zolfagharian & Paswan (2008); Sok & O'Cass (2015)	Ordanini & Parasuraman (2011)	---	Pires et al.,(2008); Rubalcaba et al., (2010); Hsueh et al., (2010); Aas & Pedersen (2011); Lin (2013); Vergori (2014)	9
Customer involvement	Means of involving customers in the service innovation process	Gustafsson et al., (2012)	Lee (2012); Cheng et al., (2012)	Kleijnen et al., (2005)	---	Abramovici & Bancel-Charensol (2004); Chen et al. (2015)	6
Review	Summaries of previous research in different forms of reviews	Rubalcaba et al. (2012)	---	---	---	Vence & Trigo (2009); Carlborg et al.,(2014)	3

Deployment	The later phase of service innovation; launching, selling, pricing, delivery, & implementation issues	---	---	---	---	Toivonen & Tuominen (2009); Guardo & Cabiddu (2015)	2
Service profit	How to form profitable service innovation	Hurmelinna et al., (2010)	---	---	---	---	1
Other Articles that did not fit into any of the other topics		---	---	---	---	---	---

Source: * perspectives were adopted from Carlborg, Kindstorm and Kowalkowski (2014)

3.3 Classifying SI based on existing service innovation typology

In present research, the attempt has been made in classifying papers based on the service innovation typology proposed by Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) which was used by DeVries (2006) previously in service marketing literature(see table V). On the basis of service innovation theory (Gallouj & Weinstein, 1997), it was found that radical innovation type dominated the literature (31 per cent), followed by incremental (24 per cent) and combinatory innovation (22 per cent). While formalization, improvement and ad hoc innovation utilized least by the service marketing researchers. This asserts that JOSM and SIJ value radical innovation based studies which stressing practitioners' interest. This also manifests that SIJ also covers studies using incremental innovation and combinatory innovation. JOSM also featured combinatory innovation based studies.

Perspective*	JOSM	JSM	JSR	MSQ	SIJ	Total
Radical innovation	Droege et al., (2009); Hertog et al., (2010); Alam (2011); Gustafsson et al., (2012); Ettlie & Rosenthal (2012)	Lee (2012); Hsieh et al. (2013)	Ordanini & Parasuraman (2011); Ordanini, et al., (2013)	Ordanini, et al., (2013)	Pires et al., (2008); Toivonen & Tuominen (2009); Luo et al., (2012); Guardo & Cabiddu (2015)	14
Incremental innovation	Droege et al., (2009); Gustafsson et al., (2012)	Zolfagharian & Paswan (2008); Sok & O'Cass (2015)	Umashankar et al., (2011)	Andreassen & Streukens (2009)	Toivonen & Tuominen (2009); Abreu et al., (2010); Audretsch et al., (2011); Aas & Pedersen (2011); Su (2011); Lin (2013)	11
Improvement innovation	---	---	---	---	Toivonen & Tuominen (2009); Rubalcaba et al., (2010)	2

Combinatory (architectural) innovation	Hurmelinna et al., (2010); Lightfoot and Gebauer (2011); Rusanen et al., (2014); Reynoso et al. (2015)	---	---	Gremyr, et al., (2010)	Abramovici & Bancel-Charensol (2004); Hsueh et al., (2010); Un & Montoro-Sanchez (2010); Anderson et al., (2011); Fuglsang et al., (2011)	10
Formalisation innovation	Steinicke et al., (2012);	Gottfridsson (2014)	Eisingerich et al., (2009)	---	Toivonen & Tuominen (2009)	4
Ad hoc innovation	Cheng et al.,(2012)	---	---	---	Chen et al. (2015)	2

Source: *Galloway & Weinstein (1997) & DeVries (2006)

3.4 Innovations in services: stakeholders' perspectives

In this study, an attempt has been made to classify the papers from the perspectives of beneficiary. Basically, the undergoing service innovation impacts either customers or companies or society and which has been considered taken as the basis for classification. Table VI indicates that, all service innovations carried out was benefited the company most (60 per cent), followed by customer-centric (35 per cent) and society-centric (5 per cent). It is apparent that *SIJ* has provided a platform in publishing a work related to innovations benefiting to companies, followed by *JOSM*. Focus on customer-centric innovation is equal in all leading journals. However, *SIJ* and *JOSM* have shown an interest in society-centric innovation and that indicate the diversity in approach compared to other leading journals in service marketing.

Table VI: Service innovation stakeholder perspectives

Perspective	<i>JOSM</i>	<i>JSM</i>	<i>JSR</i>	<i>MSQ</i>	<i>SIJ</i>	Total
Customer-centric innovation	Hertog et al., (2010); Gustafsson et al., (2012); Rubalcaba et al. (2012)	Zolfagharian & Paswan (2008); Lee (2012); Cheng et al., (2012); Sok & O'Cass (2015)	Kleijnen et al., (2005); Ordanini et al., (2013)	Victorino et al. (2005); Andreassen & Streukens (2009)	Abramovici & Bancel-Charensol (2004); Toivonen & Tuominen (2009); Su (2011); Fuglsang et al., (2011); Chen et al. (2015)	16
Company-centric innovation	Droege, et al., (2009); Hurmelinna, et al., (2010); Alam (2011); Lightfoot & Gebauer (2011); Steinicke et al., (2012); Ettlie & Rosenthal (2012); Rusanen et al., (2014)	Hsieh et al. (2013); Gottfridsson (2014)	Eisingerich, et al. (2009); Umashankar et al. (2011); Ordanini & Parasuraman (2011)	Gremyr, et al.,(2010); Giannopoulou et (2014)	Pires et al., (2008); Vence & Trigo (2009); Rubalcaba et al.,(2010); Hsueh et al., (2010); Un & Montoro-Sanchez (2010); Abreu et al., (2010); Anderson, et al.,(2011); Aas & Pedersen (2011); Luo et al., (2012); Lin (2013); Carlborg et al., (2014); Vergori (2014); Guardo & Cabiddu (2015)	27

Society-centric innovation	Reynoso et al. (2015)	---	---	---	Audretsch, Martí'nez-Fuentesd & Pardo-del-Val (2011)	2
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Source: *Gallouj & Weinstein (1997) & DeVries (2006)

4. Discussion

In sum, this review and synthesis has provided significant opportunities concerning service innovation research. More specifically, initial review based on Carlborg et al. (2014) helps practitioners to understand core objective behind practicing service innovation. *SIJ* and *JOSM* are leading journals in publishing research in SI. Authors have also tried to group service innovation practices based on service innovation typologies and interestingly found that practitioners used radical innovation extensively. It was also ascertained that, quantitative research design is among most preferred in service innovation articles in between paper published in top journals of service marketing. Interestingly, company-centric innovations are in central in SI literature compared to customer-centric innovations and society-centric innovations which were of least in importance. Finally, it is expected that this review and discussion will help to nurture and direct the progress of this emerging topic i.e. service innovation research. The study provides insight into current status and research trend in service innovation- a multifaceted discipline that offers vital and promising directions for research.

5. Implications and future research

Present study contributes to service marketing literature in two major ways: it explores the involvement of main stream service marketing journals as platform for publishing research work on service innovation and thus identifies the future possibilities of publication of similar aspects. Secondly, it classifies the published work on service innovation based on various typologies so by looking at it targeting the main stream service marketing journal becomes easier. All scholarly journals differ from one to another with regards to its scope, so present study become helpful to scholars in targeting and in submitting the articles.

More specifically, study provides several implications from managerial perspective experimenting with service innovation. Considering the absence of coherent theories and models of service innovation in literature, current study aims to offer a conceptual framework to the service innovators. More specifically, the outcome of present research will help in providing direction to the researchers, practitioners and managers to focus on a specific type of innovation which in return will be helpful in capability building for service industry. The research on review and synthesis of service innovation is likely to generate valuable insights about service innovation literature. Such research is beneficial in understanding SI classification in leading service marketing journals with respect to beneficiary namely; customer centric, company centric or social centric. Present research can also be beneficial to scholars aspiring to start their research on service innovation area by understanding the classification of research on service innovation in leading service marketing journals.

Present research examines the research design used on the research articles with keyword "service innovation" from 2004 to present. A more extensive review on service innovation could be done on all research articles in different journals (other than leading service marketing journals) since the appearance of first study on this area. Even the linkages between service innovation types and its relationship with firms' performance and customer connection can be reviewed. Moreover, this study utilizes few innovation taxonomies and thus possibly the existence of more powerful and explanatory typology for innovation can be possible.

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