

FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE INNOVATION IMPLEMENTATION

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Front line employees often are in a prime position to accelerate acceptance of a new Self Service Technology (SST) by explaining its benefits and demonstrating its use to customers. Yet, often they are reluctant to do so.

This research examines employee behaviors and motivation regarding recommending a new SST to end customers. More than 300 sales and service employees in dealerships of a major manufacturer were surveyed to assess their motivation for recommending a new consumer SST.

Results of the research suggest that managers can improve employee motivation to participate in service innovation implementation by:

- Creating a sense of the importance of the innovation and building buy-in throughout the organization.
- Providing training for employees about how to use the SST themselves and how to demonstrate and recommend it to customers.
- Establishing organizational processes that allow employees choice and independence regarding the implementation of their job tasks, even while emphasizing the value and importance of their participation.

Research Category: Service and Technology

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THE INFLUENCE OF C2C COMMUNICATIONS IN ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITIES ON CUSTOMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOR*

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This article reports on a study of consumers' use of online message boards as a means of "customer-to-customer" service in providing product opinions, usage information, and other forms of guidance that influence purchase decisions. Increasingly, consumers use the internet as a form of service technology for pre-purchase information gathering. While technical specifications and potentially biased selling points can be gleaned from corporate web sites, online brand communities are becoming essential conduits for the customer-to-customer (C2C) sharing of product information and experiences. This study uses a *netnography* technique to code and analyze conversations between brand community members of two competitor firms. These data are combined with a survey component and actual purchase data to develop insights into how these communities operate and influence participants in important ways. This study provides several managerial insights, including considering the relative strengths and weaknesses of company-sponsored versus anonymous, and moderated versus open communities as service vehicles for the company.

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ENCOURAGING EXISTING CUSTOMERS TO SWITCH TO SELF-SERVICE TECHNOLOGIES: PUT A LITTLE FUN IN THEIR LIVES

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There is clearly rapid growth of technological applications being used in the customer – firm interactions. In most situations where a technological service delivery option is implemented, existing customer are already using an interpersonal service delivery approach. This research helps us to better understand how consumers can be encouraged to switch from the interpersonal mode to a technologically based service delivery mode.

Here a predictive model based on consumer attitudes and anticipated outcomes (such as utility, enjoyment and social acceptance) is used to predict intentions to switch to a technologically based service delivery approach. The research was conducted within the banking industry. As expected, consumer attitudes toward technology were critical. In addition, it was determined that enjoyment is a stronger predictor of intentions to change than utility, even in the banking context.

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PROCESS COMPLETENESS: STRATEGIES FOR ALIGNING SERVICE SYSTEMS WITH CUSTOMERS' SERVICE NEEDS*

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The growth of electronic commerce, coupled with the continuing growth of the service sectors of the global economy, has spawned newfound attention to service systems. However, despite growing attention to IT-enabled customer service, most organizations still struggle with designing and implementing process flows to enable their customer service strategy. In this article we introduce the notion of “process completeness,” which is achieved when a firm’s service delivery system matches the typical customer’s breadth of expectations, and discuss a set of process completeness states and strategies in order to provide a vocabulary and a framework for research and practice concerned with the design of optimal workflow for customer service processes. Based on a set of six case studies, our work shows that identifying the optimal process completeness strategy is necessary for organizations in order to avoid either under-completeness, and customer dissatisfaction, or over-completeness, and an unnecessary depletion of limited resources.

Research Category: Service and Technology

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INTERACTIVE SERVICES: A FRAMEWORK, SYNTHESIS AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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This article briefly reviews marketers' current knowledge about interactive services. It defines interactive services as services that have some form of customer–firm interaction in an environment characterized by any level of technology (i.e., a high or low technology environment). Customers may interact with the firm's physical elements (including technology), processes and people in both service creation and delivery.

Consequently, customer participation directly influences service quality and behavioral outcomes (e.g., service usage, repeat purchase behavior and word-of-mouth)—as well as firm outcomes (efficiency, revenues and profits). Hence, a recurring theme throughout our article is that the nature of customer participation is critically important for the effective creation and delivery of interactive services. The article identifies key research areas and their relevance to managerial practice. This analysis yields a set of research questions that provides an agenda for future research.

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CONSUMER INFORMATION SYSTEMS AS SERVICES: CASE STUDY OF IPTV SERVICES

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Consumer Information Systems (CIS) are Information System, which provide services primarily to consumers instead of addressing needs of users in traditional organizational settings. Examples of such systems are Internet protocol television (IPTV) services, which are being launch globally at the moment. Design of traditional services typically involves a trade-off between achieving high service productivity and quality. To this end, the use of mass customization has been proposed as a solution. Our paper presents a conceptual framework that can potentially enable designers to achieve such mass customization for consumers information systems. We present that we should consider CIS as services offered to consumers, not only as systems or software, in order to achieve this. We apply the framework to three New Zealand IPTV service offerings and investigate how it applies.

TESTING THE RECRUITMENT OF LEAD USERS FROM VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES TO CO-CREATE INNOVATIVE IT ENABLED SERVICES FOR CONSUMERS

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Contemporary information systems and services must fulfill the needs of a variety of consumers instead of traditional organizational users. New ways to incorporate these consumers as users in development are required. The lead user method used in new product and service development is a promising approach to tackle this problem. However, the finding and recruiting of the lead users has been found very burdensome for the firms. We propose the use of virtual communities for the task. We tested empirically this new way of identifying and contacting the lead users for requirements discovery for an innovative mobile service. The proposed method was compared to a traditional way of recruiting lead users, namely snowballing. Our findings show that the proposed method can be considered to be at least as good method for lead user recruitment as snowballing in terms of perceived quality of the requirements discovered.

SELF SERVICE AND INTER-CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS: BLAME ATTRIBUTION, RESPONSIBILITY ASSIGNMENT, PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY AND REPEAT PURCHASING INTENTIONS

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Inter-customer interactions play a significant role in the management of retail service operations. Our study takes place in a retail self-service setting where the service provider is not directly involved in the service operations (i.e., self-service terminals). Our research shows that fellow customers can exert influence on a focal customer's quality perception and repeat purchasing intentions. When negative inter-customer interaction occurs, how much a focal customer holds the service provider to be accountable leads to reduced service quality perception and reduced repeat purchasing intentions. However, this relationship does not hold when there is a positive inter-customer interaction. When positive inter-customer interaction occurs, how much a focal customer assigns responsibility to the service provider does not translate into enhanced service quality perception or repeat purchasing intention. Such counter-intuitive results give service providers specific strategies on how to actively manage their customers to be efficient technology users and encourage collaboration among customers.

THE TRICK OF THE TAIL: SUPERSTARS, NICHEs AND PRODUCT RETURNS IN INTERNET RETAILING

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Our paper explores and reconciles two seemingly contradictory theories for market growth and appropriate strategic responses in Internet retailing. The popular “Long Tail” view argues that the greater variety offered on the Internet expands the range of products that can be sold profitably by providing better matching between customer desires and available products. The “Superstar” or “Steep Tail” model offers an antithetical view, suggesting that the very best products will increasingly dominate categories due to the growth of “winner-take-all” markets. Our empirical research examines data from over 5,000 SKUs of an Internet retailer of durable consumer goods to understand how product popularity affects return rates and product profitability. While past research on media consumables generally supports the Long Tail view, our data on household durables shows significantly higher return rates in the distribution tail, supporting the Superstar perspective. However, this result is balanced with the finding that product margins are higher for niche products. Overall, these findings suggest the Long Tail view is not unilaterally dominant in online retailing and should be considered in tandem with a Superstar view.

INTERNET RETAIL OPERATIONS: INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE FOR MANAGERS

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The rise of the Internet as the first choice for retail shoppers presents new challenges for retailers and suppliers. This book details how information technology evolved to play such a role in retail supply chain networks, how this has impacted supply chain networks, and how this has changed service operations. The first part of the text addresses information technology in relation to service and retail industries. The second part covers how the new supply chain dynamics impacts traditional service and retail delivery, the costs involved, the impacts on customer service, and customer expectations. The third part presents case studies of how different retailers meet challenges.