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MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Analyzing research methodologies and publication trends in service marketing literature

Mehvish Umer^{1*} and Shama Razi¹

Abstract: *Purpose:* This paper explores the key trends in publications and research methodologies used in Service marketing literature across geographical regions during the past 28 years. Examining academic content over a selected time period presents valuable insights into how service marketing has evolved and approached to maturity. *Design/methodology/approach:* This paper is based on literature review of the published papers during the time period (1974–2014) in academic journals. A total of 153 relevant papers were analyzed excluding book reviews, conference papers. The paper analyzed firstly, research methodologies developments in terms of data collection, research design, sample size, sampling technique, statistical technique, respondent type, response rate, and time horizon used in different studies. Secondly, authorship type, authorship collaboration, top journal and journals rating in terms of publication trends. Descriptive statistics provide an overview of the research contribution in this specific time domain for service marketing. *Findings:* The main finding during the 28-year period analysis discloses that there is an inclining importance to research in Europe and other regions of the world than in North America. Other findings include a trend towards co-authorship, the preference to use of surveys over experiments and rising trend incorporating reliability and validity measures, factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and analysis of variance as the most popular

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The research focuses on studying and analyzing the trends in service marketing in the last 28 years. The existing literature has been overviewed from the years 1974 till 2014 with the help of different academic journals. Past studies gauged service marketing as a technique which has reached its maturity in recent years. The research was conducted to evaluate the position of service marketing as a marketing technique with the help of 153 relevant articles. The research contributes to the existing literature by amalgamating the past studies of service marketing. The major findings of the study depicted that service marketing has greater significance in Europe and other regions as compared to North America. The research gives due importance to the increasing trend of using surveys and incorporating validity and reliability measures in the statistical techniques being used.



Mehvish Umer

statistical techniques. *Research limitation:* This study focuses on the methodological and publication trends analysis based on 153 research papers published in scholarly journals. One of the limitations of our study is the number of papers reviewed.

Subjects: Customer Relationship Management (CRM); Service Operations Management; Marketing; Marketing Management

Keywords: service marketing; trend analysis; content analysis; descriptive; literature review

1. Introduction

Marketing for services cannot succeed if the traditional marketing mix is followed. With the ever-increasing role that services have in the economy today, it is important that new ideas are derived to effectively market services. In 1977, Shocstack emphasized on the difference between service marketing and goods marketing and elaborated how it evolved as a separate field of marketing.

The current study investigates the evolution and development of research in the discipline of service(s) marketing from its origin as an area of academic study in the 1960s/1970s up till the present day. To understand what service marketing is, we first need to shed some light on what services are. According to Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1985), Murray (1991), Vargo and Lusch (2004a), Grönroos (2006), Kealesitse (2009), and Schulte (2015) services are inseparable, intangible, heterogeneous, and perishable products, which are used and consumed by people, organizations, and systems. Services marketing are the procedure of selling the invisible. It recently evolved as an independent academic field. Prior to this evolution, services marketing was considered a part of general marketing. However, when marketers faced immense challenges while marketing for services, which are not standardized unlike products, they recognized it is an important field worth researching. The value derived from an academic literature study as in this article is that it gives understanding into the various types of studies conducted in the recent past. Nel et al. (2011). This study concludes in highlighting the research gaps in terms of methodology and publication.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we give a brief impression of progress of services marketing literature over a period of 40 years. Then the method used in the study is discussed, followed by the analysis done through counts, frequencies, and cross tabulations of methodological and publication trends. Furthermore, the standing of services marketing as an independent field has been observed with respect to past studies. We also observe the authorship-type trend such as single author papers, multiple author papers. The paper is concluded with a dialog of some apprehensions about the future of the service marketing field and gives guidelines for further research.

2. Study objective and scope

This paper investigates deeper and broader literature review of service marketing that highlights the trends in services and future research topics for researchers. Content was analyzed for industry and journal rating by geographic regions over period of 28 years and advance cross tabs which were not done in earlier literature review in service marketing.

The key objectives of the study are as follows:

To study the concept of service marketing in a comprehensive manner.

To study the service marketing research current trends to better grasp and predict their impact on the development of the field.

To study the current trends in methodologies and publications in the services marketing field to gain an understanding of the impact that it has had on the development of this field.

To study the geographical trends, yearly trend and a combination of time and regions in service marketing to provide some clues about the future developments of this literature.

To achieve these above objectives, Table 1 provides two content analysis-based papers in comparison with the current study (see Table 1). Sollberger and Furrer (2004) and Nel et al. (2011) reported simple counts while the current study goes a step further and incorporates cross tabulations of (a) sample size and statistical techniques, (b) sample size and respondent types, and (c) statistical techniques and respondent types. Further this study has analyzed the geographical trends, yearly trend and a combination of time and regions (Annor, 2012).

3. Literature review

Although service industry dominated the US economy in the mid-1940s, the focus was on the marketing of physical goods rather than services. Scholars who wanted to contribute to services marketing literature took risks and discovered new concepts and ideas through dissertation research mostly. Bateson (1979) raised the first and foremost question that elevated the attention of all

Table 1. An analysis of content analysis-based literature reviews in service marketing

	Our study	Sollberger and Furrer (2004)	Nel et al. (2011)
Time span	28 years	11 years	11 Years
Identification of publications by author(s)	No	Yes	Yes
Identification of publications by year of publication	Yes	No	Yes
Publication counts by major theme	No	Yes	Yes
Publication counts by research methodology	Yes	No	Yes
Industry type	Yes	No	No
Research type-empirical	Yes	No	Yes
Research type-conceptual	No	No	No
Research design-sample size	Yes	No	No
Research design-data collection method	Yes	No	Yes
Research design-country of data collection	No	No	No
Research design-respondent type	Yes	No	Yes
Research design-statistical techniques	Yes	No	Yes
Research design-reliability and validity	Yes	No	No
Research design-response rate	Yes	No	No
Research design-sampling methods	Yes	No	No
Research design-pretest/pilot	Yes	No	No
Research design-cross section/longitudinal	Yes	No	No
Research design-survey, model, experiments, simulations, etc.	Yes	No	Yes
Publication trends-authorship type-academics vs. practitioners	Yes	No	No
Publication trends-authorship collaborations by regions	Yes	No	No
Publication trends-authorship per study	Yes	No	Yes
Publication trends-by journals	Yes	No	No
Publication trends-most prolific authors	No	Yes	No
Publication trends-most influential universities	NO	No	No

marketing scholars to consider services marketing as an independent field rather than considering it under the umbrella of general marketing.

Fisk, Brown, and Bitner (1993) identified three stages of services marketing i.e. (a) Crawling out stage, (b) Scurrying about stage, (c) Walking erect stage. The first stage debated the differences between goods vs. services. This stage ended with the paper published by Shostack in 1977 in which she distinguished goods from services and highlighted the importance of service marketing as an independent field. Further, she concluded that the strategies used for marketing goods were different from that of marketing services. This led the field to step into the second stage. This stage is considered as a stepping stone for services marketing as scholars accepted the existence of the field as a separate identity and published the maximum number of researches. In the last stage, the scholars moved from conceptual research towards more empirical researches and sub-topics (service quality, service-scape, service encounter, etc.) evolved under the authority of services marketing.

Sollberger and Furrer (2004) analyzed top 10 service marketing journals over a period of 11 years to see the trend of service marketing themes. Most of the experts identified the role of service quality, technology, and self-service in changing marketing as a direction that the service marketing field should take in the future. Reinders, Dabholkar, and Frambach (2008) reviewed the implications of the Internet in particular and technology in general for services marketing and service quality as a productive ground for future research. Furrer et al. stressed that service quality is the biggest factor that has affected services marketing from 1993 to 1998 while in 1999 till 2003, service failure and recovery appears as the fastest-growing factor that has and will affect the future of services marketing. However, the study by Nel et al. (2011) reviewed articles for 11 years in the *Journal of Services Marketing* from 1998 to 2008. Results showed a similar picture to that of Furrer and Sollberger (2007) on the important themes that evolved in the field of service marketing. Customer retention and relationship marketing appeared to be the second most influential and researched theme among the service marketing researchers.

The prior work carried out on services marketing failed to differentiate how the operations of service firms differ from the traditional goods-producing firms. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) suggested that the unique characteristics (intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability, IHIP) that services possess have created a problem for marketers as they cannot apply the traditional marketing mix to come up with effective strategies to promote services. However, Vargo and Lusch (2004b), stressed that research conducted on marketing for services acts as a foundation for developing well versed strategies to efficiently market services. They wanted to break free services marketing from goods marketing and this separation occurred on the basis of the definitions and delineation of four characteristics of services marketing. Further, James Reardon, Chip Miller, Ronald Hasty, and Blaise Waguespack, Jr. recommended that it was not only important to break free services from goods but it was enormously important to break free the whole of marketing from the manufacturing-based model if wholesome results were to be achieved. Moreover, the heterogeneity of services is a competitive advantage for service marketers rather than an operational obstacle.

The best method, suggested by Christian Grönroos (2006), Arnould and Price (1993), of getting a service through to a consumer is to attach some sort of physical evidence with it to make it concrete. When developing a service marketing model, it is important to review goods marketing model such as pricing, segmenting, channel selecting will still be conducted in the traditional way. Service can be depicted as an experience, customer satisfaction and value. Services can be linked to consumer behavior and a service/experience should be one that can leave a mark on the memory of the consumers. The consumers should be able to recall a positive thought whenever encountered with a particular service for them to keep coming back (Oh & Kim, 2017). For a service to be characterized as an extraordinary experience in the minds of the consumer, it is important for the service provider to have personnel with courteous qualities that can trigger interpersonal interactions. Mary Jo Bitner (1990) analyzed that individual service encounters result in higher customer satisfaction. Further, she elaborated that the development of relationship marketing would enhance the service encounters and hence increases the customer satisfaction.

Although content analyses are deep-rooted, reliable measures of academic inspiration (Tellis, Chandy, & Ackerman, 1999), they are not replacements for literature review or experts surveys. Rather these type of researches help in validating literature review based on experienced experts judgments. Our study, therefore, offers some insights about methodological and publication trends which will help in future research in services marketing field.

4. Method

The content analysis is used in this study as the most significant method to examine, methodological and publication trends. “Content Analysis is technique for breaking down the substance of a mixture of information, for example, visual and verbal information. In order to better dissect and understanding content analysis empowers the lessening of phenomena or events into characterized classes” (Chatha & Butt, 2012). Researchers in recent times have utilized content analysis for efficient evaluation of past literature so as to distinguish publication trends in a specific discipline.

5. Selection of articles

In order to shortlist articles for this review, following steps were taken:

Literature on service marketing was searched on popular business and management publications database such as EBSCO host, with the keywords: “service marketing” or “services marketing” or “Marketing of services” or “Service marketing and intangible goods” or “service business and Marketing” in either of the “title”, “abstract”, “keywords”, “full text” search fields spanning over a period of 191 years (1823–2014).

The search results from different search engines via RefWorks, a bibliographic management software were exported to Microsoft Excel. The use of RefWorks helped in exporting and saving search results from EBSCO, Science Direct, and Jstore into Microsoft Excel in columnar fashion under various headings such as reference identification number, author (primary, secondary, etc.), title (primary, secondary, etc.), keywords, publication year/date, periodical details (name, volume, issue, etc.)

We ended up with 153 journal articles for the content analysis relevant to “service marketing”. For methodological developments, we narrowed our analysis to 105 empirical quantitative articles.

6. Coding

The working definitions for all classes of information, for instance empirical studies, conceptual studies, primary data, secondary data so forth were initially settled. Essentially, primary data are the particular case that is gathered directly from respondents via researcher of a study. Secondary data are the one borrowed from effectively published sources or hypothetical information (see Appendix 1, for a few working definitions).

7. Analysis

Each of the 105 papers was given a unique identification number which continued to be same throughout the analysis. Likewise, for all the items within each category, alphabetical coding was developed. Once the information was methodically exported into Excel, the database was altered for duplications errors and missing information. All the articles till 2000 were coded as pre-2000 and after 2000 as post-2000 over span of 40 years. Despite all the efforts, we consistently modified our datasheet. Later, for service marketing, we also wanted to segregate our study looking at which specific industry has increasing trend as compared to other industries overtime and again the data-sheet was coded for industry. To enhance a profounder understanding of service trends, the advanced cross tabulations between specific facets of multiple variables were performed.

8. Results

This section provides the results of both methodological developments analysis and publication trends analysis.

9. Overview

A cohesive quantitative evaluation of methodologies of 153 articles on service marketing has been particularized upon in this section.

For the methodological analysis, 105 articles were analyzed. Looking at the research type of studies which incorporates quantitative and mixed method studies. Out of total of 105 studies, 91% are quantitative and only 9% are mixed method. Overtime, the trend suggests the predominance of quantitative studies across the regions (Table 2).

Table 2. Break up of research article

	Total	By years		By region			
		Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
Total studies	105	23	82	22	32	25	26
Quantitative	96	20	76	21	28	24	23
	91%	87%	93%	95%	88%	96%	88%
Mixed method	9	3	6	1	4	1	3

In terms of research design, 78% of the total empirical studies are survey based. And only 1% publications that have used experiment for research, whereas 7% is based on using a mixture of both survey and experiment-based research design. Though experiment provides a better insight for study but it is also expensive, time consuming requires experts in related field. Hence, that is the only justifiable reason behind the increasing trend in survey based research (Table 3).

Table 3. Research design by decade and region

Research design: # of studies	Total	Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
Survey	78%	69%	86%	68%	75%	96%	77%
S/DPI	13%	16%	9%	14%	25%	0%	12%
S/E/DPI	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Experiment	1%	3%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Survey/experiment	7%	13%	3%	14%	0%	4%	8%

Table 4 shows that the statistical techniques used for most studies are descriptive i.e. 27% of the total techniques applied to all 105 studies and there has been a consistency in using the advanced statistical techniques in both pre- and post-era. Confirmatory factor analysis CFA, regression and CCA are most extensively used techniques, respectively, 14, 12, and 9%, whereas only 5% is based on structural equation modeling SEM. The trends of using regression—linear and confirmatory factor analyses are also increasing with time; the reasons for that are the advances in data analysis techniques and software developments in statistical tools for conducting such analysis. Although in pre 2000 after descriptive, CCA and ANOVA were among the mostly used statistical techniques but in post-2000, the trend changed towards regression, SEM, and CFA. Cluster analysis is a new statistical technique introduced in post-2000. Region-wise analysis depicts that CFA is becoming famous in Europe, whereas the descriptive technique has almost the same level of use among all the regions of the world.

Table 4. Major statistical techniques across region and time

Statistical techniques	Total	Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
ANOVA	8%	11%	7%	10%	3%	12%	15%
CCA/correlation	9%	11%	8%	6%	12%	6%	19%
MANCOVA	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
MANOVA	1%	4%	1%	6%	0%	0%	0%
ANCOVA	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	8%
Descriptive	27%	34%	25%	31%	25%	31%	46%
EFA	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%
CFA	14%	9%	15%	8%	22%	4%	42%
Regression—Linear	12%	9%	13%	10%	11%	15%	27%
Structural equation modeling (SEM)	5%	2%	6%	6%	5%	8%	4%
T-test or Z-test	4%	2%	4%	4%	2%	8%	4%
Cluster analysis	1%	0%	2%	2%	2%	0%	4%
χ^2	5%	6%	5%	8%	6%	4%	8%
Path	5%	2%	5%	4%	3%	6%	12%
Others	5%	4%	6%	2%	8%	4%	15%

Table 5 depicts an alarming situation of an increasing trend of using small sample size between 101 and 200 both in pre- (39%) and post-2000 (11). It presents the distributions of sample sizes across regions, though an increasing trend in publications was observed in Europe but most of their studies are based on small sample size and that doesn't give most accurate results in comparison to greater number sample-sized surveys.

Table 5. Sample size across region and time

Sample size	Total	Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
0-100	11%	13%	11%	16%	0%	6%	8%
101-200	28%	39%	11%	20%	20%	18%	15%
201-300	22%	22%	22%	20%	60%	29%	35%
301-500	21%	17%	22%	28%	20%	24%	19%
500 above	18%	9%	21%	16%	0%	24%	23%
Not reported	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 6 depicts that primary data collection has mostly been through mail (36%). The other noticeable methods have been self-administered (15%) and online/Internet/Email (10%). The increasing use in online/Internet/Email can be attributed to the advances in computer industry, software development and it also less time consuming and low cost. The increasing trend in data collection in various regions have been observed. It can be seen that data collection through mail is highest in Europe (38%) and North America (38%) and then in Asia (33%).

The analysis on respondent type reveals that most of the empirical quantitative studies have mainly based on general public (42%) to capture their perspective on service market. Since they are the end users of service and could provide a better understanding of perspectives that they have for a certain service offered. Moreover, the perspective of experts and professionals have also been taken into consideration because they are the ones who have already faced problems and perspectives of the consumers and can give a better response for a certain study based on their experience.

Table 6. Data collection by decade and region

Data collection method	Total	Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
Experiment setting(Lab)	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	4%	4%
Field	6%	14%	4%	12%	0%	4%	15%
Dropoff/pickup	4%	0%	2%	0%	0%	4%	15%
Mail	36%	50%	33%	38%	38%	33%	46%
Online/internet/email	9%	0%	13%	8%	13%	4%	15%
Personal/face to face	4%	4%	4%	4%	8%	4%	0%
Self-administered	15%	7%	18%	15%	10%	19%	23%
Telephone	8%	11%	7%	8%	18%	0%	4%
Presence of an interviewer	10%	11%	10%	8%	10%	15%	12%
Not given	6%	4%	6%	8%	3%	15%	0%

Though 40% of the total studies didn't reveal the response rates in their studies but by looking at the time comparison analysis of the study, it can be concluded that in pre 2000, the response rate for the studies was quiet low between 21 and 40% and it was very difficult for the researchers to collect data from respondents but in post-2000, the increased to 61-100% response rate.

In terms of time horizon, data reveals a pretty strong dominance of cross-sectional studies (96%) over longitudinal studies (3%). The strong dominance of cross-sectional studies and the limited focus on longitudinal studies can be explained through the rapid changes in the service marketing sector, advancement in technological innovations. The past research (Rindfleisch, Malter, Ganesan, & Moorman, 2008) reveals that "cross-sectional data are most appropriate for studies that scrutinize concrete and externally oriented constructs, sample highly educated respondents, employ a diverse array of measurement formats and scales, and are strongly rooted in theory". However, longitudinal surveys require additional expenditures with respect to value of money and consumption of time. These expenses are often unaffordable for academic researchers faced with limited budgets and marketing practitioners faced with limited time. With respect to sampling methodology, both probability sampling (48%) and non-probability sampling (44%) have almost equal dominance based on the analysis of data (Table 7).

Table 7. Trend by time horizon

Time horizon	Total	Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
Cross sectional	96%	87%	99%	86%	97%	100%	100%
Longitudinal	3%	9%	1%	9%	3%	0%	0%
Not given	1%	4%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%

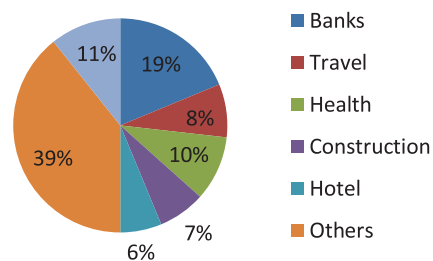
Consistency and accuracy of a data can be measured through reliability and validity respectively. The use of validity and reliability tests is increasing with time. For reliability, Cronbach alpha's (38%) and average tests (16%) are mostly used, whereas convergent (17%) and discriminant validity (19%) tests are mostly used to measure validity (Table 8).

Table 8. Validity by decade and regions

Validity	Total	Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
Convergent validity	17%	12%	18%	12%	21%	14%	23%
Discriminant validity	19%	19%	19%	12%	21%	11%	38%
Validity—others	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	7%	0%
Not given	60%	65%	58%	72%	54%	68%	62%

In terms of the industry chosen for study in service marketing reveals that banks (19%) have shown an increasing trend as compared to other industries overtime. Moreover, in post-2000, an increasing trend towards health (10%) and travel (8%) service is also observed by analyzing data. The reason to that would be because people are becoming more and more health conscious and becoming more prone towards traveling and tourism and researchers have also started working on it. Europe focused mainly on banking, construction, legal, and travel industries researches, whereas North America has focused more on health services researches. Comprehensive models measuring service quality in service-oriented industries (such as Hotels, Travel, Banks) have been developed based on an extensive literature review and qualitative and empirical research. Hence, it becomes evident that there is a large scope for developments of new strategies which in the long run will result in competitive advantage. This proves that high-quality service is recognized as the key element in the success of firms in the service industry (Bitner, 1990, 1992).

Figure 1. Industry chosen (service marketing).



10. Publication trends

This section is based on the results from the publications trend analysis in service marketing literature. This section is divided into three subsections including authorship analysis which shows the trends in authorship type (academic or practitioner), the level of collaboration in authorship across region (single or multiple countries), number of authors per study. The second subsection is based on the journals and their publications subjects or field of study. The third subsection is based on the ratings of the journals published. The analysis of the publication trends is based on region (North America, Europe, Asia, and others) and time comparison (pre- and post-2000). A cross-sectional analysis of publications was also done with regions vs. time. With respect to region there has been a distinguished improvement of publications in Europe and Asia whereas the number of publications in North America remained almost the same.

11. Authorship

In terms of authorship type, it is revealed that overall 97% articles were authored by academicians, whereas only one percent by practitioners and remaining 2% were the result of collaboration between academicians and practitioners. The most academicians belonged to Europe region.

The trend of multiple countries (78%) is increasing as compared to single country (12%) authorship. In the authorship per study the most interesting trend was that most of the publications have single author, two authors or three authors' publications but there are few publications with four or more articles. The reason behind this would be the difference of opinion among increasing number of authors.

12. Journals

With regard to Table 11, three journals appear to be the most preferred among researchers: *Journal of Marketing Management* (12%), *Journal of Marketing* (12%), and *Journal of Service Marketing* (7%). Together, these three journals comprise (31%) of all articles published. By the looking at the time and region comparison on these journals, the analysis reveals that in pre 2000, most preferred journals for researchers was journal of marketing but later in post-2000, the trend changed towards journal of marketing management. Europe is leading journal of marketing management which North America is doing the most work on journal of service marketing and journal of marketing. Asia on the other hand, is not getting journals published in the field of marketing management and marketing have only two papers in services marketing (Figure 1).

13. Ratings

With respect to ratings of the journals (34%) of journals are rated in category “A”, and only (18%) of journals are rated as category “A*” the highest category, instead of increasing from the previous time era it has actually decreased, whereas the numbers of not rated journals (28%) is an area of concern. Europe has published the most journals from category “A”, data shows that this trend has increased, whereas North America is the one region that has published the highest rated journals (A*) in the world.

13.1. In-depth findings using advanced cross tabulations

In order to have a better view of this study, further cross tabulations were created between statistical techniques and sample size, statistical techniques and respondent types, and sample size and the respondent types. The cross tabulations exposed some distinguished results which are described as follows:

A cross tabulation between statistical techniques and sample size (Table 9) reveals that the studies that use factor analysis and regression analysis are based on the sample size of 101–200. The studies that use path analysis are based on the sample size of 501 or above but very few studies in number are part of this category, and the studies that use ANOVA are based on the sample size 101–300. So, empirical quantitative studies that are used in service marketing are based on relatively small sample size of less than 200. And this results in raising questions on the validity of results. Similarly, the cross tabulation between the sample size used and the type of respondent reveals: 30% of studies that use general public as their respondents and 31% of studies that uses experts and professionals as their respondents, used a sample size of 101–200.

Table 9. Cross tab of sampling techniques with sample size

Sample size	Statistical technique									Grand total
	ANOVA	Regression	Factor analysis	SEM	Descriptive	Correlation	χ^2	Path analysis	Others	
0–100	2	3	2	0	7	4	2	0	1	21
101–200	6	11	12	3	16	6	3	1	6	64
201–300	6	5	9	0	14	5	3	3	5	50
301–500	2	5	8	5	12	2	3	2	7	46
Above 501	7	3	7	3	11	2	1	4	4	42
Grand total	23	27	38	11	60	19	12	10	23	223

Table 10. Authorship trends by years and region

	Total	By years		By region			
		Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
Authorship-type	153						
Academics	97%	20%	76%	22%	35%	19%	21%
Practitioners	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Acad./practitioner (Collaboration)	3%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Authorship-collaboration							
Multiple country	72%	13%	59%	14%	24%	14%	21%
Single country	28%	8%	20%	8%	12%	6%	2%
Authorship-per study							
Single author	29%	8%	21%	8%	12%	7%	1%
Two author	33%	6%	27%	7%	14%	7%	3%
Three author	26%	5%	21%	5%	6%	5%	5%
Four or more author	12%	2%	10%	3%	2%	1%	1%

Table 11. Journals trends (highest publication)

Journals (highest publications)	Total	Pre-2000	Post-2000	NA	EU	Asia	Others
<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	5%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	12%	6%	6%	6%	5%	0%	1%
<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
<i>Journal of Service Research</i>	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
<i>Journal of Services Marketing</i>	7%	5%	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%
<i>Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences</i>	4%	4%	0%	0%	1%	3%	0%
<i>Tourism Management</i>	3%	3%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%
<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	12%	8%	4%	1%	8%	0%	4%
<i>Journal of International Marketing</i>	7%	5%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%
<i>International Journal of Integrated Marketing Communications</i>	3%	3%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Others	45%	39%	6%	8%	13%	12%	12%

14. Conclusion and discussion

Service marketing studies sphere is also emerging with time in terms of maturity cycle, service marketing lies on fairly mature domain, which gives a chance to researchers for measuring variables more effectively using exploratory research perspectives. In other words, the expanse of service marketing is considerably mature and evaluates high certainty with respect to knowledge because we are at the stage of better understanding the perspective of service marketing. As past literature on service marketing also identified using evolutionary metaphor as a framework that service marketing became an established field within the marketing discipline (Fisk et al., 1993). The publications on many of the primary topics matured considerably. These topics include managing quality given the heterogeneity of the service experience, designing and controlling intangible processes, managing supply and demand in capacity constrained services, and organizational issues resulting from the overlap in marketing and operations functions (Lovelock, 1983; Lovelock & Quelch, 1983).

The focus of the research since 2000 has shifted most researchers towards service marketing field. This phenomenon has led to major prospects for researchers to study service marketing in the context of developing and emerging economies. Different socioeconomic conditions, values, and governmental issues provide contexts in which standard management practices developed in developed countries may not necessarily fit with their counterparts in developing countries. Thus, ample chances are brought forth in understanding service marketing strategy from the viewpoint of developing countries. Over the past decade, services marketing has emerged as an academic field independent from general marketing. The changes in the management practices and the global economic trends of services has initiated it to become a completely revolutionized concept. The difference is in the very nature of product and services. Services being intangible, perishable, and inseparable require a completely different set of strategies and techniques to get it through to the customer.

Much of the past research on services marketing was carried out mainly in the North American region. However, in recent times it has been observed that publications have drifted away in a descending pattern for North American region, while for EU, Asia, and other regions, publications have shown exponential growth. The increasing trend in publications, in recent times, may also indicate maturity of the field which shows that researchers are involved in niche topics that are published in specific journals rather than journals of general services marketing. Similarly, (Table 10: Authorship type and collaboration across time), shows that the lack of opportunity prevails because the practitioners are not exploiting to their full potential, which has led to a stagnant collaboration in the research of services marketing. Moreover, the authors of the study have concluded that researchers of service marketing prefer working in a pair or more rather than alone. This is because the potential to capture inherent phenomena of services marketing enhances when two or more minds collaborate.

We have likewise evaluated the work done by researchers to the field and the impact of the influenced articles. This permitted us to distinguish the most productive authors and to evaluate the effect of their work on the field's future improvement. Furthermore, multiple studies were analyzed to draw the conclusion that the use of sophisticated statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) has doubled because of the easy access to the statistical software's to researchers and it increasing the competition among them. The trend of using traditional statistical techniques such as descriptive and regression analysis has declined in services marketing field. Also studies done after 2000 are focusing more on the reliability and validity tests, which shows that the use of the newer techniques in comparison with the old ones has escalated. These findings are similar to the Nel et al. (2011) study in which they are also mentioning the same trend among the statistical techniques.

Since 2000, the world has become a global village with an increased usage of e-technology. This trend is also visible among the researchers as it can be seen that the most popular research design among service marketing researchers is surveys as previously mentioned above and the data collection method which has picked up the speed is "online/email/internet"-based surveys. This is obvious because the convenience and ease that internet provides us with.

Even though services marketing has reached its maturity and developed as an independent academic field from that of marketing and while academicians are teaching it as a separate course in universities, publication trend suggest otherwise. It can be clearly perceived in the (Table 11: Journals (Highest Publications) across time and region) that most research papers are published in the journal of marketing rather than being published in a specific services marketing journal such as *Journal of Services Marketing Management*, *Journal of Service Research*, and *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. Additionally, if compared region wise, the analysis is mirrored as the most publications of services marketing research articles are published in the journal of marketing management rather than a specific journal. Moreover, this trend has remained constant over the two eras under discussion. Which further highlights that explicitly services marketing has been acknowledged as a liberated field of marketing, it is still in reality being reflected as a subfield. The importance of the field is assessed with respect to the quality and the ranking of the journal it publishes its researches in.

Table 12. Summary of major findings

Category	North America	Europe
Magnitude of research	96% of empirical research by NA is of quantitative nature whereas the total research in NA is 21% from 105 articles	88% of European empirical research is quantitative in nature and the total EU research is 30%
Data collection	It can be seen that data collection through mail is highest in Europe and North America	
Sample size	Use of sample size in NA is between 100 and 500+	Increasing trend in publications was observed in Europe but most of their studies are based on small sample size
Statistical techniques	NA doesn't usually use SEM and Correlations to run analysis	CFA is becoming famous in Europe
Respondent type	General public is preferred the most as respondents	Experts/professionals are preferred as respondents

Journal rankings are helpful when considering the significance of the research and the academic field. The findings shed light on how services market researches are being published in an A-rated journal (*Journal of Marketing Management*). This ranking reveals how prestigious, credible, valid and reliable the work being published is. In the pre 2000 era, publishers would rather target their work to A* and A-rated journals, whereas in the post-era, the weightage of publications tremendously expanded for A-rated journals because of the mere fact that the acceptance criterion and procedures were more worthwhile when compared to B or C-rated journals.

From the analysis done in this study, we can say that services marketing still needs a lot of time to reach its full maturity level. Many researchers have worked in this field but it cannot be treated as a separate field or altogether newfangled paradigm. After many publications in this field, it is considered as a subfield of marketing. There are many areas/themes of services marketing which have to be researched, such as “service dominant logic, online services marketing etc.” internationalization and cross-cultural researches have to be done to nourish the field (Furrer & Sollberger, 2007) (Table 12).

After conducting an in-depth analysis of services marketing journals over a period of 28 years, this study observed that most of the service marketing research has been conducted in the Europe region with an increasing trend of collaborations among authors. This study will help researchers in preparing for their submission and projects in service marketing. The analysis shows that in recent years, the use of quantitative techniques to analyze service marketing variables has increased. Statistical techniques such as different types of SEM, and confirmatory factor analysis have been applied to solve the multifaceted problems regarding service marketing. Even though, services marketing has existed in the world for decades it is only now that it has reached its maturity stage, hence, it is important to study the structure and direction of its content, (Fisk et al., 1993).

Lovelock and Gummesson (2004) argued that the four characteristics (inseparability, heterogeneity, intangibility and perishability) of services which have been repeatedly cited in many researches for over two decades are uncertain constructs rather than empirically tested variables. This ambiguity put services marketing into critical situation. Consequently, three alarming questions were raised by the authors; (a) whether the existence of services marketing as independent field should be reversed, (b) whether new and more defensible characteristics should be searched to differentiate services from goods, and (c) whether scholars should focus on specific service categories rather than general services. Even though the service markets are the largest and most growing sector of developed and developing economies, practitioners and academicians are concerned about the independent existence of this field.

A very few researches in the past have been able to capture the true essence of a content analysis. This hierarchical compilation can help academicians to understand how service marketing evolved overtime. All previous content analysis have barely conducted an in-depth analysis of the study at

hand. After thoroughly analyzing the services marketing journals over a period of 28 years, we have been able to portray publication and methodological trends through systemically reviewing the data across region and time to reach concrete future direction.

Furthermore, it has been seen during the literature review process that service convenience is an important factor when evaluating the role of service marketing but it is either treated generally in literature or services and goods blends together to develop convenience construct. So, Berry, Seiders, and Grewal (2002) they developed a new construct for measuring the impact of service convenience on the consumer satisfaction to better understand the nature of service marketing. Lusch, Vargo, and O'Brien (2007) pointed out that service-dominant logic is more than premises and propositions; it is a revised logic of competing through services. Without good services no firm can excel in the market. They further explained that companies selling tangible goods will be successful or have found competitive advantage through the adoption of service logic. Seth, Deshmukh, and Vrat (2005) highlighted by reviewing the various service quality models and found out that measurement of service is dependent on the situations, time, need, etc. Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2010) services marketing strategy focuses on delivering processes, experiences, and intangibles—rather than physical goods and discrete transactions—to customers. All company functions—marketing, selling, human resources, operations, and R&D—must work together to create effective services marketing strategy.

The previously stated results have various ramifications for academicians and practitioners of services marketing discipline. This segment expands upon the exploration insights and highlights future research opportunities.

Research Opportunity 1: with the invention of new statistical software such as AMOS, STATA, and SPSS, researchers cannot only rely on simple statistical techniques like descriptive analysis, and simple count functions if they want to produce researches that fulfill the criterion of A* and A-rated journals. These journals qualify researches that have incorporated more sophisticated statistical techniques such as SEM, MANOVA, factor analysis, and discrete event and continuous simulation methods.

Research Opportunity 2: in order to produce quality work that facilitates the validation of data a combination of several research methods can be used. This concept of triangulation which combine multiple theories, empirical materials and methods results in researchers overcoming the weaknesses and biases which may result from single theory studies. Hence, it is recommended that future researchers adopt triangulation in their research to bring forward more accurate and credible insights within the field.

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Appendix 1

Working definitions of important terms (Chatta & Butt 2012)

Item	Operational definition
Empirical Study	A study that uses first hand (primary) data to conduct the study at hand
Conceptual	A study that uses Secondary Data (data collected from already published source)
Survey	An instrument used to collect data like questionnaires
Mixed method	A study that combines both types of researches i.e. qualitative and quantitative
Empirical quantitative	A study that incorporates first hand collected data and have applied any statistical technique to verify the claims



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