

Evolving service thinking: disruption and opportunity in hospitality and tourism

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During the month of May, 2018, over 50 inquisitive and accomplished scholars from the service marketing and management as well as the tourism and hospitality domains, came together to ponder the theory of evolution in service. While not seeking to delve into the depths of Charles Darwin's thinking, but rather draw inspiration from insights such as "it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change," interdisciplinary teams of thought leaders were charged with reimagining service thinking. Grounded in a hospitality and tourism mindset, and extrapolated to a broader service context, the nine papers that form this special issue provide the stimulus for change in increasingly complex and dynamic markets.

With this charge, it should not be a surprise that technology-informed thinking underpins several of the issue's contributions, including the examination of new business platforms, such as peer-to-peer business models, smart service provision to enhance guests experience, and the implications of big data in the customer value creation process. Such themes are accompanied by contributions that address more traditional aspects of service and hospitality research, such as the human element of service, service innovation, or service experience co-creation but they do so through a twenty-first century lens, emphasizing the need for traditional thinking to evolve in a new paradigm. Whether it be emerging or re-imagined service research themes, all contributions in this special issue provide thought-provoking insights that have the potential to disrupt, or provide opportunities for, the rapidly evolving hospitality and tourism industry – a strong contributor to the ever-growing service sector. The nine themes covered in this special issue include: peer to peer platform business models; service systems value creation/destruction; service experience stakeholder management; technological disruptions in service; smart service experience; big data and customer value; social innovation in service; hospitable service and human touch; and innovation and authenticity. Below is a brief introduction to each of these research themes.

Wirtz *et al.* (2019), adopting an eco-system framework, considers the emergence of peer-to-peer sharing platform business models. In recognition that such platforms have redefined the role of brand owner (i.e. platform owner), service providers and users, a comprehensive review enables a thorough understanding of all sharing platform stakeholders' roles with the intention of enhancing the platform's utility.

The emergence of new business models like peer-to-peer sharing platforms presents unique challenges such as identifying ideal service system designs. In response to these challenges, Van Riel *et al.* (2019) develops a framework that conceptualizes how twenty-first century service systems need to be configured for enhanced sustainability. In consideration of the complexity that such new service systems create with respect to stakeholder involvement and value proposition attainment, the paper advances critical thinking with respect to how different service business models create and destroy value with the intent of informing future service system design decisions.

Implicit in both Wirtz *et al.* (2019) and Van Riel *et al.* (2019), is the ever-evolving intricacy of service experience stakeholders in the service ecosystem. Acknowledging the necessity for all stakeholders to make meaningful contributions to the service experience for a sustained competitive advantage to be realized, King *et al.* (2019) emphasize the need



for a shared understanding and a greater appreciation for everyone's roles and responsibilities in the provision of the service experience. Informed by community of practice thinking, they emphasize a macro level, stakeholder management mindset to advancing service co-creation.

A key proposition in King *et al.* (2019) is sharing knowledge within the service experience eco-system which is increasingly enabled through the application of technology. From this perspective, Buhalis *et al.* (2019) is informative as they consider how technology advancements facilitate value co-creation among actors (i.e. stakeholders) in the tourism services eco-system. From an innovation/disruption perspective, they consider the implications for service management eco-systems at both a macro and micro level.

It is from the micro perspective that Kabadayi *et al.* (2019) consider smart services and how they inform the contemporary service experience that derives value for both customers and service providers. In doing so, their conceptual framework also reveals the challenges that are present for service firms wishing to employ such technology-enabled services in the provision of the service experience.

In zeroing in on one of the critical challenges faced by advancing technology, Malthouse *et al.* (2019) consider how technology is disrupting the power dynamics between companies and consumers regarding the ownership and control of personal data. Moving beyond the prevailing one-sided value creation practice, they propose the notion of reciprocal data value creation whereby consumers and businesses negotiate and collaborate to co-create the data value, benefiting all parties involved in the process.

Aksoy *et al.* (2019) further expand the notion of value creation to include sustainable social innovation orientation. By recognizing that service firms can be primary actors apt to produce large-scale positive social change and make profit, they provide a conceptual framework that guides the systematic process of social innovation within service and hospitality organizations and propose metrics to evaluate its outcomes.

Whereas Aksoy *et al.* (2019) consider companies' innovation for social benefit as a source of building consumer value, trust, and financial returns, Solnet *et al.* (2019) look deeper into human touch – the roots of hospitable service – as a value and trust enhancing opportunity. In guiding service organizations to determine and deliver the optimal level of relational human touch and transactional technology-enabled interactions, they propose different relational configurations as a framework for firms to best capitalize on their own market position and allocate resources to create the right level of authentic human interactions as desired and expected by consumers.

Authenticity, as touched upon in Solnet *et al.* (2019), has been recognized as an important factor in impacting consumer experience and creating competitive advantage, but it has rarely been studied *vis-à-vis* innovation. Keiningham *et al.* (2019) make a novel approach to conceptualize the way in which innovation and authenticity are related and propose a model for guiding innovation that does not lose sight of the authentic value and identity of the brand.

As briefed, each of the nine papers in this special issue not only highlights the disruption challenging the hospitality and tourism industry but also presents meaningful opportunities for academics and researchers to consider in their quest to ensure such evolution is sustainable. It is the hope that this special issue's forward-thinking intent informs the industry's evolution and advances agenda for future research priorities.

Publishers note

This special issue was intended to include nine articles, however due to an error made in the editorial process, six of these articles were published in volume 30, issue 3. The publisher sincerely apologizes for this error and any inconvenience.

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