

Examining the recent developments in services marketing research

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Received: 9 June 2011 / Accepted: 30 January 2012 / Published online: 15 February 2012
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Abstract Against the background of the rising importance of services in research and practice, this study systematically examines service-related publications over the last ten years to identify a set of the most relevant topics in services research. This enquiry involves pursuing two central research objectives. The first question is directed at analyzing the recent development in theoretical research activity in this field and its scope as well as identifying recurring research topics and research methods. The second objective is to investigate the global diffusion in services research. With these objectives, the study reviews 1,840 papers on topics specific to services marketing that were published between 2000 and 2009 in the 34 most relevant marketing journals, based on the VHB JOURQUAL 1 ranking from 2003 (VHB 2003). The findings of the first question report on recent developments in services marketing research since 2000, culminating in its current status as an established discipline within marketing research. The study identifies the most frequently covered research topics (i.e., ‘service quality’ and ‘service customer’) and shows that quantitative empirical research frameworks prevail within services marketing research. Focusing on the geographic development of services marketing research, it shows that services marketing research is not yet undertak-

en on a truly global scale; associated with the identification of geographic areas of concentration, it furthermore reveals a correlation between an author’s and editor’s geographic location of activity.

Keywords Services marketing · Service science · Literature review · Research topics · Research method · Marketing journals

Introduction

In recent years, modern economies have experienced a shift from the industrial manufacturing sector to the service sector. In line with this development, services marketing as a sub-discipline of marketing science has established itself as a widely accepted field of research (Rust and Chung 2006, p. 560 f.). The origin of services marketing has its seeds in the late nineteen-seventies: Since it was not possible for traditional concepts to be applied successfully to marketing services, academics called for marketing science to break free from its product-orientated viewpoint (Shostack 1977). Recent research discussions in marketing science even suggest that, in time, interest in the service aspects of marketing will totally eclipse the interest in goods, given the growing service-oriented logic that is beginning to predominate in this field. It is not long ago, with discussions on the challenging new paradigm presented by the book, “New Dominant Logic for Marketing” (Vargo and Lusch 2004), that the discipline of services marketing began to attract acute scientific interest. Against the backdrop of growing scientific attention, it is now time to reappraise the development of services marketing research over the past decade. Additionally, previous research has highlighted the ethnocentricity or globalization of authorship in the marketing

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discipline (e.g., Stremersch and Verhoef 2005; Svensson 2005; Polonsky et al. 2006; Svensson et al. 2007; Polonsky and Ringer 2009). Thus, the two main research objectives are the following:

- 1 The first research objective aims to discover the development of theoretical research in services marketing that means how research topics and research methods have changed between 2000 and 2009.
- 2 The second research objective investigates the geographic dispersion of services marketing research. In this context, potential ethnocentricity is examined by analyzing possible similarities between the authors' and the editors' geographic background is analyzed.

The first research objective primarily draws on previous research carried out by Fassnacht and Homburg (2001). They traced the development of services marketing for two specific countries, comparing Germany with the United States. For this, they systematically examined services marketing articles published in the German journal "Marketing ZFP" and the U.S.-based "Journal for Marketing" for the period from 1980 to 2000 with regard to five relevant research dimensions. The first dimension establishes the importance of services marketing research within the marketing discipline overall; the second dimension identifies the major topics of this research and the third dimension focuses on how these topical areas have developed over time. Where the fourth dimension determines the proportional share of papers that apply empirical research designs, the fifth dimension identifies the types of enterprise (i.e., banks, airlines, etc.) that were studied by services marketing research projects over the period reviewed.

In our study, based on these research dimensions, we trace the specific impact of services marketing research on marketing research in general, identify its predominant research topics and track how these have developed over time, as well as the methodological aspects of the research carried out. In contrast to Fassnacht and Homburg (2001), the present paper does not focus on specific country comparisons but is, instead, characterized by its comprehensiveness: It not only includes data samples but also covers virtually all of the services marketing articles published in the journals considered by this study. Moreover, we do not narrow down the study's focus to specific research dimensions within the field of services marketing research as is the case with other bibliographic analyses on services marketing literature (e.g., Fisk et al. 1993; Knight 1999; Tyler et al. 2007). Thus, the chosen approach not only promises to capture a more comprehensive picture of the current status of services marketing research, but in so doing also charts the global geographic dispersion of this research, which is the second research objective of the study.

With regard to the second research objective, ethnocentrism is defined as "the view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and shows contempt for outsiders" (Sumner 1906). In this context, ethnocentricity will be present, if the reviewer of one journal prefers papers submitted by authors who are from the same home country as the reviewers are.

The global development of services marketing examines the geographic origin of authors who have published in service research, the presumption being that the greater the diversity of nationalities present among the publishing authors is the higher the global diversity of services marketing research. For example, Stremersch and Verhoef (2005), on the one hand, underlined the positive effect that the globalization of authorship has had in diversifying marketing research. They were able to empirically prove that U.S. dominance is decreasing. On the other hand, the research by Svensson (2005), based on the analysis of one unspecified top marketing journal, showed that at least 95% of all articles had one author who was affiliated in the United States. The content analysis conducted by Polonsky et al. (2006) examined the authorship of all articles appearing in 20 leading marketing journals between 1999 and 2003 and showed similar results, revealing the existence of a strong negative bias against researchers from outside the United States and Canada: They see this as being problematic, since any bias, intentional or accidental, "against non-North American research perspectives can stifle new ideas and theory development" (Polonsky et al. 2006, p. 439).

The only other work that has analyzed the extent to which research in the field of services marketing is distributed globally is that of Svensson et al. (2007). The authors investigate ethnocentricity by comparing the geographical affiliation of the editor(s), editorial board(s), editorial review board(s) and author(s) for 1,189 articles appearing in the five top journals in services marketing over a six-year period. The study reveals that services marketing research is also affected by ethnocentricity, at least with regard to some of the journals investigated. They see this as 'troublesome and challenging' as a skewed ethnocentricity potentially prejudices the opportunity to acquire unbiased knowledge and does not reflect the 'world view' of research on services marketing (Svensson et al. 2007, p. 565).

Firstly, in contrast to the study of Svensson et al. (2007), we do not restrict our analysis to articles appearing in service-specific journals, but also consider articles specific to the field of services marketing that have been published in general marketing journals in order to capture a more holistic picture of services marketing research. Secondly, in line with Polonsky et al. (2006) we also take the different journal ranking categories into account in order to iden-

tify a possible correlation between the author's geographic background and the number of publications in the different ranking categories. This issue is of particular interest as publishing in high-ranking A-Journals is seen to indicate an author's publication success and plays an increasingly vital role in promoting an individual's academic career prospects (Hawes and Keillor 2002; Polonsky and Ringer 2009). Thirdly, as we also expect ethnocentricity to bias the decisions of marketing journal editors and editorial boards (as revealed by Svensson et al. 2007), this aspect might be responsible for the poor globality of authorship in (services) marketing research. Thus, we subsequently examine the relationship between the regional affiliation of authors and that of editors. By adopting these issues, our study provides a new approach in examining the geographic background of authorship in services marketing research.

The paper is divided into five focal points. The first point provides the introduction. Second, we describe and explain the study's underlying research design. The third point deals with the development of theoretical research in services marketing identifies: (a) patterns of how services marketing research has developed since 2000 with regard to the relative importance of services marketing within marketing science; (b) the topics currently investigated in services marketing research; and (c) the prevailing research frameworks and data analysis methods that have been applied most frequently in services marketing research. Fourth, we address the geographic development of services marketing research and seek to determine the extent to which services marketing research is carried out around the world. Here we provide evidence in support of an assumed relationship linking the geographic background of an author's academic institution with that author's publishing success. Finally, we summarize the study's results, identify implications for future research, indicate the limitations of the study and offer a brief outlook.

Research design

Within the context of this study, a team of five marketing researchers screened more than 12,500 papers published in 34 English scientific marketing journals published between 2000 and 2009. By using the EBSCO scientific database, a total number of 1,840 papers were considered specific to services marketing and were classified systematically by means of a content analysis. Research notes or conference summaries are not included. In order to assign a marketing paper to a specific field of services marketing research, the persons involved in the study agreed on the following procedure: First of all, the title, the key words (provided by authors to define the individual paper's focus), and the abstract were screened for indicator words such as 'service' or refe-

rences to specific service industries (e.g., bank, airline, etc.). In order to avoid ambiguity and identify all the information necessary for answering the research questions comprehensively, the manuscript was then thoroughly re-examined. Moreover, the researchers met regularly to discuss individual papers that could not clearly be ascribed to services marketing research in order to thus resolve this problem.

The selection of journals examined in the study was based on the outcome of the so-called JOURQUAL 1 (2003-version) ranking (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; VHB e. V. 2008b). This is a ranking scale of scientific (marketing) journals based on the assessments of German academics in the field of business administration. The ratings range from A⁺ (highest quality) to E (lowest quality). All of the 34 marketing journals bearing grade A⁺ to C that publish exclusively in English were incorporated in this study (Table 1). Even though a newer edition of this ranking scale (so-called JOURQUAL 2) has recently appeared in 2008 (VHB e. V. 2008a), the study adheres to the 2003 ranking version. This is because the period under review almost completely coincides with the period valid for JOURQUAL 1.

In view of the fact that the selection of journals considered in this study is to some extent arbitrary, we will preserve the proposed approach for the following reasons. First, JOURQUAL reflects a journal quality appraisal representing the assessments of more than 1,000 German academics and is therefore widely accepted. Furthermore, we study globalization of authorship from the specific perspective of the German-language area. As the JOURQUAL-Ranking is the most highly regarded appraisal index for the German area, we have consciously chosen its selection of journals upon which to base our present study. On the one hand, its use as a guide in our selection of appropriate journals helped us capture a broad picture of past developments in services marketing; on the other hand, it helped us distinguish between different quality standards in research work, enabling us to conduct interesting analyses in this study.

Theoretical research development in services marketing

The first objective of research question 1 is to identify the role that services marketing publications play within marketing research and to investigate how this role has developed since the year 2000.

As mentioned above, 1,840 papers (14% of the total number of articles published in the examined journals) could be identified as belonging to the discipline of services marketing. Our results also show that the proportion of papers specialized in services marketing within the overall category of marketing science fluctuated from a minimum of 11% (in 2006) to a maximum of 26% (in 2009) over the

Table 1 Name, ranking and national location of the editors of the analyzed marketing journals

Name of journal	Ranking	Editors
Journal of Marketing Research	A ⁺	USA
Marketing Science	A ⁺	USA
Journal of Marketing	A ⁺	USA
Journal of Consumer Research	A ⁺	USA
Journal of Applied Psychology	A	USA
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	A	USA
International Journal of Research in Marketing	A	NL
Journal of Service Research	A	USA
Journal of Retailing	A	USA
Journal of International Marketing	A	USA
Marketing Letters	A	USA
Journal of Product Innovation Management	B	USA
Psychology and Marketing	B	USA
International Journal of Service Industry Management	B	SWE
Journal of Consumer Satisfaction Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior	B	USA
Journal of Advertising Research	B	USA
Journal of Interactive Marketing	B	USA
Journal of Consumer Psychology	B	USA
Advances in Consumer Research	B	USA
Journal of Strategic Marketing	B	UK
Journal of Consumer Behavior	B	UK
Journal of Consumer Affairs	B	USA
Academy of Marketing Science Review Online	B	USA
Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing	C	USA
International Marketing Review	C	UK
European Journal of Marketing	C	UK
Journal of Marketing Management	C	UK
Industrial Marketing Management	C	USA
Journal of Advertising	C	USA
Journal of Services Marketing	C	USA
International Journal of Advertising	C	USA
Journal of Relationship Marketing	C	USA
Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	C	USA
Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice	C	USA

period investigated. Compared with the findings of similar studies, these results reveal that the portion of service marketing research published in the English-language in the field of marketing science has increased considerably. For example, Fassnacht and Homburg (2001), studied all articles published in the *Journal of Marketing* between 1980 and 2000 that were categorized as service-specific and found out that only 6.9% of these dealt with a service-specific content.

Our results, which have boundary values (11% and 26%) exceed the Fassnacht and Homburg (2001) value of 6.9%. The results might be partially biased owing to the fact that some of the journals examined are by definition explicitly

dedicated to services marketing research or, at least, have a strong emphasis on it: the *Journal of Service Research*, the *Journal of Services Marketing* and the *International Journal of Service Industry Management*. We had expected to find a much higher proportion of papers relating to services marketing represented in these journals, and our expectation was confirmed: On average, 72% of all the papers published in these three ‘service journals’ between 2000 and 2009 dealt directly with topics related to services. Conversely, it was interesting to discover that 28% of the papers published in these services marketing journals did not explicitly deal with service-specific content, despite the journal’s thematic specialization. Next, we repeated the analysis, but this time excluded the three above-mentioned service journals. For the remaining 31 non-service-specific marketing journals, we gained an average of only 9% for articles dealing with a content specific to the field of services marketing for the period between 2000 and 2009. Compared to the results of Fassnacht and Homburg (2001), our results indicate that the portion of publications on services marketing research within general academic marketing journals has increased markedly within the last few years, demonstrating that academic interest in subjects concerning services marketing research has grown over the last decade.

We repeated the analysis with these journals a third time, this time taking four ranking categories into account, to see whether the ratio varied in relation to the different quality levels of the journals. It turned out that the percentage of services-related publications does not markedly vary for the different ranking categories (A⁺/A/B/C) defined by the German journal ranking JOURQUAL.

The second objective of research question 1 examines which particular research topics services marketing has focused on since the year 2000. For this purpose, we thematically classified the 1,840 papers that we had preselected as being specific to services marketing. In acknowledgement of Fassnacht and Homburg 2001, our selection of relevant topics draws on the research work carried out by Fisk et al. (1993, 1995). They identified six topics as being central to research on services (i.e., Service Characteristics, Service Quality, Human Resource Management, Relationship Marketing, Service Design, and Service Encounter). In addition, we chose a compilation of representative subjects by Rust and Chung (2006). We added the Four P’s of Marketing (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) to the list of topics for service companies, and also included topics relating to business functions other than marketing. Thus, we generated a long list of approximately one hundred different topics to which the individual papers were then assigned. Next, through in-depth interviews and discussions with five independent marketing experts, these topics were aggregated into a selection of 16 topical categories of services marketing research. According to the work of Ostrom et al.

Table 2 Topics of services research from 2000 to 2009

Subjects of services research	Number of papers	Percentage (%)
Service Quality	270	15
Service Customer	216	12
Service Employee/HRM	150	8
4 P: Promotion	141	8
4 P: Product/Service	134	7
Service Encounters	125	7
4 P: Place	114	6
Managerial Service Information	113	6
Relationship Marketing Instruments	112	6
Relationship Marketing Strategy	103	6
Theory of Services	90	5
4 P: Price	74	4
Service Markets	65	4
Relationship Experience	51	3
Market Orientation	49	3
Service Organization	37	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,840</i>	<i>100</i>

(2010) these 16 categories represent three broad aspects of business: strategy (e.g. Relationship Marketing Strategy), development (e.g. Employee services/HRM, Service Organization) and execution (e.g. 4 P's of marketing, Service encounters) (Ostrom et al. 2010, p. 6). Additionally the two topics service quality and service customer were added, as these topics had been identified as highly relevant during the literature screening. The 1,840 identified service-related articles were then screened and categorized by using the following steps.

As a first step, the articles were categorized by authors and the authors' main research field (e.g. Zeithaml as an expert for services quality). Second, we examined the keywords published by the authors. Additionally, the reference sections of key articles were scanned for additional citations. Finally the abstracts of the articles were screened. This helped us to assign most of the articles to the relevant research topic. In some cases, where an article's allocation was unclear, it was discussed in the team and agreed to the topic that predominantly had been examined in the article. Table 2 provides an overview of the topics and their percentages.

As illustrated, the topics most frequently considered in services marketing publications over the past eight years have been 'service quality' and 'service customer', clearly outstripping the rest (Table 2).

Figure 1 shows the development of services marketing topics over time. Interestingly, at the chosen level of abstraction no outliers could be identified. This expresses a constant academic interest in the above-mentioned topics over time. Moreover, both of these topics, 'service quality' and 'service customer', have constantly been the two most frequently addressed fields of research within the services marketing discipline, not only over the whole period, but also in each individual year.

Within our study, 15% of the analyzed publications on services marketing deal with aspects concerning the quality of services. This is not surprising, as research on 'service quality' has a long tradition traced back to the nineteen-eighties (Sasser et al. 1978; Parasuraman et al. 1985) when the popular SERVQUAL (SERVice and QUALity) concept of measuring 'service quality' was first presented to the academic community (Parasuraman et al. 1986, 1988; Zeithaml and Parasuraman 2004). Since the turn of the millennium, in line with the advent of the internet and electronic commerce, 'electronic service quality' (e.g., Parasuraman et al.

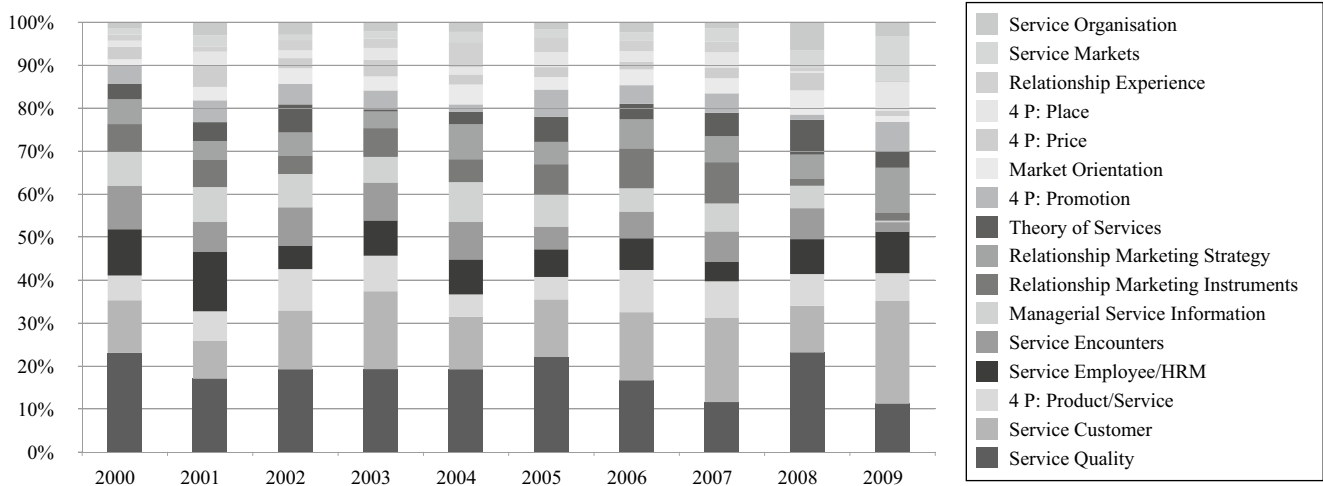
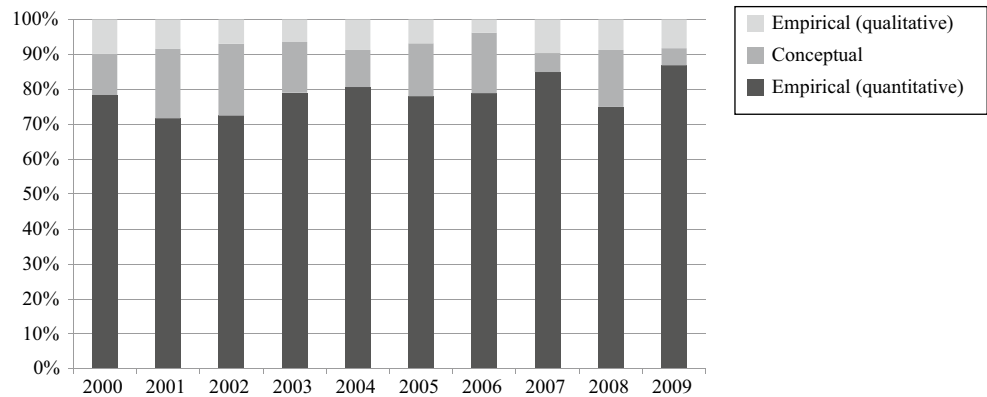
**Fig. 1** Development of service marketing topics over time

Fig. 2 Research frameworks applied in services marketing in A/A+-journals



2005; Fassnacht and Koese 2006), as a sub-branch of the ‘service quality’ research topic, has particularly turned out to be an up-and-coming research topic in services marketing. This is not only true for the quality aspects of electronic services, but also for those of health services (e.g., Dagger et al. 2007), which have also become a subject of increased research interest in recent years.

Since 2000, the ‘service customer’ has been the second most frequent topic, addressed by approximately 12% of the publications on services marketing in the journals considered in our study (Table 2). The following reasons can be given for the exceptional position of the ‘service customer’: Firstly, most service operations are characterized by a high degree of customer participation (e.g., Grönroos 1990) which impacts on the management of service quality and service recovery. For example, customer participation enables the customer to directly impact on the quality of the service outcome. Moreover, it often makes it impossible for service companies to adjust the service outcome once the service has been delivered to the customer (Uhl and Upah 1979; Levitt 1981; Lovelock and Wirtz 2010). Secondly, the paradigm in marketing has been faced by a shift in emphasis from a transactional towards a relational mode in recent years (Grönroos 2000). First of all, customer relationships arise from frequent interactions between customer and provider, and this particularly applies to service customers (Ward and Dagger 2007). Most of the publications reviewed on this research topic deal with different behavioral aspects of the ‘service customer’ such as ‘information search behavior’ (e.g., Dorsch et al. 2000; Black and Tagg 2007), ‘complaint behavior’ (e.g., Marquis and Filiatrault 2002; Chan and Wan 2008) or ‘consumer behavior on the internet’ (e.g., Novak et al. 2000; Keaveney and Parthasarathy 2001). The latter has seen a recent increase in interest which may also be explained by the increasing importance of the internet in daily life. The internet and the use of electronic communication tools make it easy for customers to communicate and interact with other customers. This carries both risks and opportunities for service operators and is thus highly important to marketing research.

The third and final part of research question 1 of this study concerns analyzing the types of research methodologies which have been predominantly applied in services marketing research over the period reviewed. Here, we first distinguished between papers that were based on empirical frameworks (quantitative or qualitative) and papers that were conceptually-based. Next, we went into greater detail and closely investigated quantitative publications in order to determine which methods of data analysis were used in such articles. We obtained the following results for the articles published in the 11 journals listed in the highest ranked journal groups (A and A⁺) for the period from 2000 to 2009 as depicted in Fig. 2.

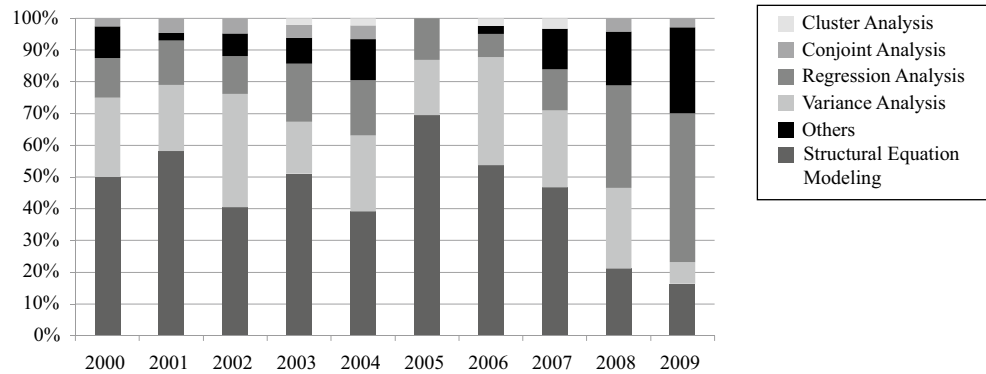
Figure 2 clearly shows that the majority of services marketing papers were predominantly based on quantitative empirical studies (79%), while only 8% of the studies reviewed used a qualitative empirical approach, and 14%, a conceptual approach. These proportional relationships remain relatively stable throughout the period investigated.

Figure 3 specifies the different quantitative data analysis methods applied in empirical studies on services marketing and published in A/A⁺-Journals between 2000 and 2009. In some papers, different data analysis methods were applied simultaneously (e.g. for pretests and main study). In this case, we concentrated on the main study for the categorization of the data analysis method.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is by far the most frequently employed research method for quantitative A/A⁺-Journal publications in the field of services marketing. SEM was used throughout the period in approximately 36% of the quantitative studies, while variance analysis was used in 20% of the cases. Regression analysis was applied in 26%, and other methods were applied in 14% of the quantitative studies.

When considering the development of these methods over time, Fig. 3 shows that SEM was the prevailing method of analysis used in services marketing over the whole period. In 2005 in particular, 70% of all quantitative studies in A and A⁺-journals applied SEM for their data analyses. After 2005, this dominance is seen to decrease. For

Fig. 3 The use of different quantitative data analysis methods in services marketing publications issued in A/A+-journals over time



the years 2008 and 2009 there was an increase in the share of studies using different forms of regression analysis. This result is somewhat surprising, as SEM is considered to be a much more powerful analytical tool than (multiple) regression analysis, because the latter can only analyze simple dependence structures, whereas the former can be used for modeling and simultaneous estimations of complex dependence structures (Homburg et al. 2008, p. 549 f.).

Geographic development of services marketing research

After examining the theoretical background of the services marketing research, the objective of research question 2 is to investigate the geographic background of authorship in services marketing. For this objective the 1,840 service-related articles were categorized by the authors' geographic locations. We want to establish which countries primarily host the researchers who contribute to English-language publications on services marketing. We also want to know whether local clusters have emerged or disappeared over time. Moreover, we want to examine whether services marketing research is also affected by the phenomena of ethnocentricity which has been demonstrated as existing in marketing research in general (e.g., Stremersch and Verhoef 2005; Svensson 2005; Polonsky et al. 2006; Svensson et al. 2007; Polonsky and Ringer 2009).

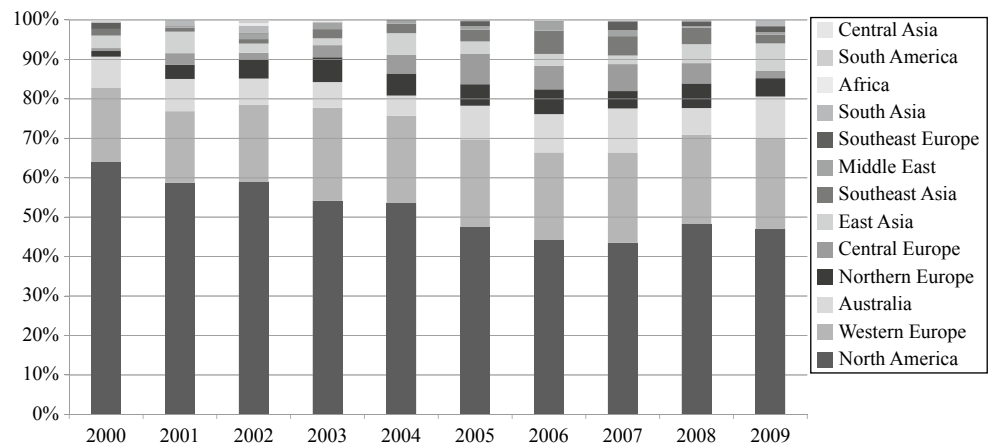
In order to find this out, we recorded the national domicile of the academic institution employing an author when his or her article was published. This information was gained for all the papers we selected within services marketing. Moreover, we deliberately focused on the national domicile of the author's academic institution rather than the author's personal domicile for the following reason: Academics have become increasingly mobile and internationally oriented over the last twenty years. In particular, superior universities in the United States attract academics from all over the world. If we had looked at the nationality of the author but not at the national location of his or her academic insti-

tution, we would have systematically underestimated the influence that a particular country has on the international academic outcome. This would have happened in the case of the United States as it attracts more foreign researchers than any other country. A second adjustment had to be carried out in order to prevent distortion because most publications have multiple authors. This entailed standardizing the number of authors per article with regard to their location of activity by assigning each co-author per article a percentage presence, such that national percentage presences could be summed across all publications, yielding a total percentage contribution per country.

Even though the academic discourse on services in an economic context began much earlier than the period that we investigate and has been investigated in many different parts of the world (e.g., Berekoven 1966; Levitt 1972; Blois 1974; Shostack 1977; Chase 1978; Sasser et al. 1978), the specific discipline of services marketing originated in the United States: It was in the United States that Rathmell (1974) published the first textbook on services marketing (Grönroos 1990). Moreover, since then, other pioneering topics specific to services marketing such as 'service quality' (e.g., Parasuraman et al. 1985), 'service encounters' (e.g., Bitner et al. 1990), 'empowerment of service employees' (e.g., Bowen and Lawler III 1995) or 'service guarantees' (e.g., Hart 1989), have appeared in influential publications, most of which were authored by American services-marketing academics, such as those cited in the brackets above.

As our results for the period from 2000 to 2009 reveal, the 1,840 papers published on services marketing that we examined were written by scientists from 46 different countries. Despite the multitude of countries, 50% to 70% of the papers were penned by the academics of American and British institutions. However, American dominance is diminishing slightly: Papers published by American institutions represented about 60% of the publications in services marketing in 2000, compared to only 38% in 2007. During this period, certain authors, especially those working in Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany, have gained ground.

Fig. 4 Origin of services marketing research by regions



Aggregating the data of these 46 countries, and assigning the results to 13 geographic regions produces a picture of relatively stable proportional shares over the period investigated, as depicted in Fig. 4. Despite the fact that services marketing has now gained worldwide interest, nevertheless between 90% (in 2000) and 75% (in 2006) of the papers analyzed stem from North America (represented by the USA, Canada and Mexico), Europe (represented by the countries of North, Central, Western and Eastern Europe) and Australia.

We broke our data down with regard to the three highest ranked journal categories (A⁺/A; B; C) and assigned the author's geographic base to these, having grouped the countries into the top three predominant regions of North America, Western Europe and Australia. What we see is that for A/A⁺-Journals the influence of American-based authors is higher than it is in the case for B-Journals and C-Journals, respectively. For example, 67% of the publications in A/A⁺-Journals have their origin in North America (especially in the USA) compared to only 35% of the papers published by American academics in B-Journals. It is the converse case for Western Europe and Australia (Fig. 5).

Svensson et al. (2007) identified ethnocentricity as influencing the *editorial boards* of the five services-marketing journals that they examined in their study. Adopting their research approach, we extended the analysis by investigating the relationship between a journal editor's geographic location of activity and a journal author's geographic location of activity, as we assume there to be a coincidence between these two geographic variables.

Therefore, we conducted the chi-square contingency test so as to evaluate the strength of the relationship between the two categorical variables 'geographic location of activity of an academic author' publishing a paper on services marketing and 'geographic location of activity of an editor of a marketing journal'. The calculated contingency coefficient of $C=0.55$ indicated a strong relationship between these two variables. Since C approximates to 1.0 only for

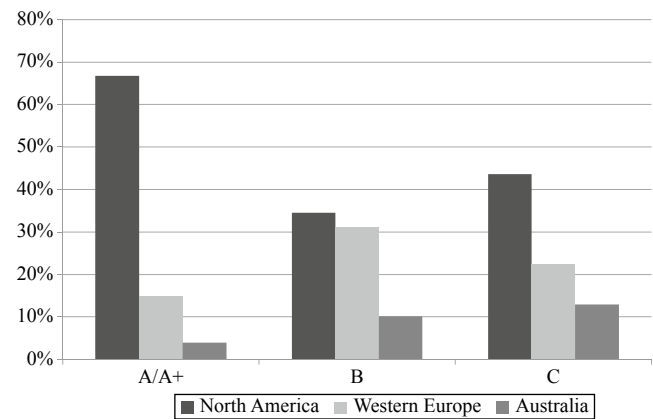


Fig. 5 Percentage of services marketing research by regions and journal rankings between 2000 and 2009

tables of large dimensions, we needed to compute the adjusted contingency coefficient C^* which varies from 0 to 1, independent of the size of the contingency table in order to obtain results that could be more readily interpreted. As C^* varies between 0 and 1, and a higher value implies a stronger relationship, our $C^*=0.63$ showed a clear correlation between the geographic location of activity of journal authors and journal editors, possibly indicating interrelation between the two variables.

This correlation can also be seen by looking directly at the relevant contingency table (Table 3). The statistics assign the publishing affiliation of services-marketing academics, who are active in different countries around the world, to four specific geographic regions where research editors are active (2000–2009).

For example, Dutch academics have mainly published in the *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, which is the only journal in our study that is at least partly edited by a Dutch national (Table 3). Here, with 38.1% (indicated by the highlighted fields in the contingency table), Dutch academics account for the largest group of submitting authors. Similarly, the highest percentage readings for Sweden

Table 3 Contingency Table of the categorical variables ‘Group of authors by location of activity’ against the ‘Journal editors’ location of activity’

Authors’ location of activity	Journal editors’ location of activity			
	NL (%)	SWE (%)	UK (%)	USA (%)
Argentina	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
Australia	1.97	5.66	15.32	5.89
Austria	0.00	0.92	0.17	0.08
Belgium	1.87	0.46	0.17	0.52
Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.00
Brazil	0.59	0.00	0.00	0.04
Canada	14.79	3.29	3.71	3.27
China/Hong Kong	2.37	1.38	1.32	3.01
Croatia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03
Cyprus	0.00	0.00	0.69	0.08
Denmark	0.00	1.03	0.00	0.08
Egypt	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.00
Finland	0.00	3.36	0.46	0.74
France	1.18	1.83	1.00	0.35
Germany	0.00	2.52	1.20	2.87
Greece	0.00	0.46	2.58	1.07
Hungary	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.00
India	1.48	0.46	0.00	0.46
Ireland	0.00	0.46	1.92	0.06
Israel	0.00	2.29	0.11	1.09
Italia	0.00	2.60	0.00	0.35
Japan	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02
Kazakhstan	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03
Malaysia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.12
Malta	0.00	0.00	0.46	0.00
Netherlands	38.07	4.70	3.38	4.44
New Zealand	0.00	1.19	4.41	0.91
Norway	0.00	1.53	0.52	1.04
not specified	0.00	1.99	0.52	1.87
Pakistan	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.00
Poland	0.00	0.46	0.11	0.00
Portugal	0.00	0.23	2.81	0.34
Scotland	0.00	0.00	2.15	0.29
Singapore	0.00	2.79	0.17	1.00
South Africa	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.13
South Korea	0.00	1.91	0.17	0.71
Spain	0.00	6.57	2.41	1.20
Sweden	0.00	9.02	2.58	1.70
Switzerland	0.59	0.84	0.69	0.54
Taiwan	0.00	6.15	0.34	0.94
Thailand	0.39	0.23	0.00	0.08
Tunisia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03
Turkey	0.00	0.15	0.34	0.30
United Arab Emirates	0.00	0.15	1.29	0.02
United Kingdom	0.00	12.81	26.80	6.10
USA	36.69	22.32	21.72	58.18
Total	100	100	100	100

(9.0%), the UK (26.8%) and the USA (58.2%) also reflect the coincidence in the authors’ and editors’ professional location.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was twofold. The first research objective was directed at examining the recent developments in theoretical research on services marketing. This enquiry elicited three investigations: (1a) to establish the relative share that services marketing research has within the field marketing science; (1b) to investigate the current topical areas that services marketing research focuses on; and lastly (1c) to identify the prevailing research methodology applied in services marketing research. The answers to these questions enabled us to proceed to the second research objective, where we examined the geographic background of services marketing research affiliations between authors and editors in order to test for the presence of ethnocentricity within the discipline of services marketing research. Given these research objectives, a total of 1,840 articles on the topic of services marketing, published in 34 high-ranking English-language marketing journals between 2000 and 2009, were analyzed and classified.

Theoretical research development in services marketing

Our first research objective contributes to the field of services marketing research by providing a uniquely comprehensive and holistic review of all the literature in this field. The services marketing discipline is now fully established as a sub-field of marketing science. As the results reveal, around 14% of the classified articles published in English-language marketing journals could be identified as specific to services, which indicates an increase in academic interest compared to the results of previous studies (e. g., Fassnacht and Homburg 2001). The great majority of services marketing research papers deal with aspects of the two research topics of ‘service quality’ and ‘service customer’ and have gained more importance over time. Thus, the topic of ‘service quality’, in particular, is shown to have been the preferred topic within services marketing research since its introduction in the nineteen-seventies (also Fassnacht and Homburg 2001). Quality aspects will probably be in the focus of research in the near future. According to the findings of Ostrom et al. (2010), we believe that research on service quality will also focus on technical aspects; for example, by investigating how technology (e.g. online services, self services technologies etc.) can help to improve service quality in future. Service customer as the second main topic will also be of high interest in future. Future topics in this section may be service co-creation, and customer integration within the innovation process (Ostrom et al 2010, p. 6).

With regard to the most frequently applied research methodology in services marketing research, the results of the study reveal that most of the publications appearing in A⁺- and A-Journals rest on quantitative empirical research frameworks (79%). The majority of these use Structural Equation Modeling, Variance and Regression Analysis as methods of data analysis.

Geographic development of services marketing research

Our second research objective further contributes to services marketing research in studying the geographic development of research activity in this field, which is found to be only partially international and to be affected by the phenomena of ethnocentricity. On the one hand, the 1,840 service-specific academic articles which we studied stem from authors of institutions located in 46 different countries belonging to 13 different geographic regions. On the other hand, the overriding majority of academic articles were written by authors residing in the United States. This effect is stronger, the higher a particular journal is ranked. However, it appears that the dominance of North American countries has diminished slightly in recent years. In line with these findings, it could also be shown that high-ranking marketing journals are primarily edited by American academics.

Regarding the predominant position of authors employed by American research institutions, Polonsky et al. (2006) identified that North American institutions, compared to research institutes outside the United States, traditionally set higher standards for the publication performance of their academic staff, in particular by stipulating that papers be submitted solely to A-journals—and that this is an important precondition for advancement on the academic career ladder. It can be assumed that this so-called competitive ‘publish-or-perish’ mentality (Hawes and Keiller 2002) is currently spreading from foreign academics educated in the United States to academics in other regions such as Europe (Schlegelmilch 2000); this explains the noticeable increase in non-American publications in the leading marketing journals. Furthermore, it is evident that publications on services marketing mostly stem from authors active in regions with strong service-sector economies, as is the case for the United States, Europe, Australia and Asia. This is seen in the strong correlation that exists between the geographic distribution of services marketing research and OECD-countries with well-established service-sector economies (Svensson et al. 2007). This means that the economic transformation of developing and emerging countries into service economies will promote the geographic spread of service-sector research.

Moreover, as assumed, a strong correlation was proven to exist between an author’s and editor’s location of professional activity for services marketing papers. These results

clearly show that research on services marketing as compared to research on marketing in general is only globalized to a limited degree and that the phenomenon of ethnocentricity with its associated hazards—even though slowly declining—is yet evident. The findings indicate that it is more likely for an academic article to be published by a journal when an author and editor share the same geographic location of professional activity. It is evident that services marketing researchers prefer publishing in journals that are edited by colleagues sharing the same national background. In the case of our analysis, this is true for the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Limited globalization, reflecting a restricted provenance of authorship, presents several hazards for the services marketing discipline. On the one hand, if research that reaches publication only deals with certain geographic regions, there is a danger that too little attention is paid to the inter-cultural differences affecting research objects such as ‘service quality’ or ‘consumer behavior’. On the other hand, excessive ethnocentricity would prevent theories from being generalized and adapted for global use (Svensson et al. 2007, p. 565).

Limitations and future research

It was a central intention of this study to capture a comprehensive picture of how services marketing research has developed over the past ten years. Therefore, we chose a relatively large sample of more than 12,500 papers which appeared in the 34 most relevant marketing journals for the period spanning from 2000 to 2009 based on the VHB JOURQUAL 1 ranking from 2003 (VHB 2003). Notwithstanding the ongoing interest in measuring the importance and quality of research papers in the field of marketing (Polonsky and Whitelaw 2006), journal rankings have nevertheless encountered vehement criticism within the scientific community (Shugan 2003). For example, the fact that it often matters more where an author’s results are published than how justified their research objectives have been frequently evokes frustration over the review and publication process of some recognized, high-ranking journals (Clark and Wright 2007, p. 612). Furthermore, there is no generally accepted international ranking scale for such journals. With no international standardization, the quality assessment of a journal can vary from one ranking scale to the next. Many countries have their own national journal ranking scales, as is the case with the highly rated JOURQUAL-Ranking, which we refer to here, for example, and which is the ranking scale predominantly used in German speaking countries (Harzing 2008 provides a collation of journal rankings in its Journal Quality List which compares approximately 20 different international business journals).

To the best of our knowledge, this enquiry is the first of its kind. However, in choosing such a large sample size for our observations and analysis, we had to make certain discretionary decisions: First, all papers had to be classified as specific or non-specific to the field of services marketing. Those papers which were classified as service-specific were then assigned to a specific topic on a predefined list of services marketing research topics. Both of these discretionary decisions were made by researchers involved in the study. Although this procedure risked producing potential inaccuracies, we expected these to be within acceptable limits. This omission should be addressed in a future research paper which will then focus more closely on discussing research topics in the field of services marketing research. Given that the number and choice of the journals selected for consideration in this study as well as the length of time specified are to some extent arbitrary factors, it would be interesting to see how the results would vary if the number of marketing journals evaluated were increased and the time period allowed extended.

Despite this minor issue, a total of 16 meaningful research topics on services marketing could be identified. ‘Service quality’ and ‘service customer’ were discovered to be the most frequently chosen fields of research in services marketing in recent years. These topics will probably continue to provide a productive field of research for services marketing academics, largely owing to the ongoing development of information and communication technology. As mentioned by Ostrom et al. (2010), technology aspects will occupy a pivotal position in future research as the technological developments such as self-service-technologies and online-services will affect all fields of services research, spanning strategy, development and execution (Ostrom et al. 2010). Additional aspects, such as ‘value-added services’, ‘customer integration’ and ‘service encounters’, will join the forum of forthcoming topics of future research. Owing to the limits set on the study’s length, we were unable to account for the remaining topics in detail. As mentioned above, some papers examined different topics of services research simultaneously. In this case, we classified these papers according to the topic that was predominantly examined in the study. Therefore, investigating typical patterns of combined research topics would be an interesting field for future research.

The results of the study indicate that quantitative empirical research frameworks are applied more commonly than qualitative-empirical or conceptual frameworks in high-ranking marketing journals. Hence, academics of services marketing research should ponder over their choice of research framework as this will necessarily affect their publishing success prospects, particularly in higher ranked marketing journals where quantitative empirical research frameworks are indispensable.

To summarize, this study has enabled us to identify some developments which we believe will become future trends. This process will accelerate as more and more European academic institutions and scientists become increasingly influential in line with their increasing stake in this specialized field of publishing and as services marketing research becomes more global. One interesting topic would be to investigate any potential whether there exist “research networks” operating between among European and Northern American researchers that might help to accelerate the rising influence of European academics. These trends, once realized, will provide further data for future research.

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