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Showcasing the diversity of service research: Theories, methods, and success of service articles

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SHOWCASING THE DIVERSITY OF SERVICE RESEARCH: THEORIES, METHODS AND SUCCESS OF SERVICE ARTICLES

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SHOWCASING THE DIVERSITY OF SERVICE RESEARCH: THEORIES, METHODS, AND SUCCESS OF SERVICE ARTICLES

Purpose of the paper: This study aims to make two main contributions: (1) showcase the diversity of service research in terms of the variety of used theories and methods and (2) explain (post publication) success of articles operationalized as interest in an article (downloads), usage (citations), and awards (best paper nomination). From there, three sub-contributions are derived: (1) stimulate a dialogue about existing norms and practices in the service field, (2) enable and encourage openness amongst service scholars, and (3) motivate scholars to join the field.

Method: A mixed method approach is used in combining quantitative and qualitative research methods while analyzing 158 *Journal of Service Management* articles on several criteria such as their theory, methodology, and main descriptive elements (e.g., number of authors or references) and then using automated text analysis (e.g. investigating the readability of articles, etc.).

Findings: The results show that the *Journal of Service Management* publishes a large variety of articles with regards to theories, methods of data collection, and types of data analysis. For example, JOSM has published a mixture of qualitative and quantitative articles and papers containing firm-level and customer-level data. Further, the results show that even though conceptual articles create the same amount of interest (downloads), they are used more (citations).

Limitations: This article presents many descriptive results which do not allow for making inferences toward the entire service research discipline. Further, it is only based on one service research journal (*Journal of Service Management*) through a 5 year span of publication.

Implications: The results have a number of implications for the discipline that are presented and discussed. Amongst them are that: (1) the discipline should be more open towards conceptual articles, (2) service research shows an imbalance towards theory testing, (3) there is more potential to work with transactional data, and (4) writing style should be more accessible (i.e. readable).

Originality: This article is the first to conduct an in-depth analysis of service research articles to stimulate dialogue about common publishing practices in the *Journal of Service Management* and to increase the openness of the field.

Keywords: Service Research, Publishing, Theories, Methods, Article Success

SHOWCASING THE DIVERSITY OF SERVICE RESEARCH: THEORIES, METHODS, AND SUCCESS OF SERVICE ARTICLES

Parallel with the exponential growth of the service sector, the interest in service research has increased substantially during the last couple of decades (Brown *et al.,* 1994; Kunz and Hogreve, 2011). Service research has come a long way since its emergence in the late 1970s as a distinct subfield of the marketing discipline (Brown *et al.,* 1994; Shostack, 1977). Today's service research is extremely diverse not only in terms of sub-disciplines within the management field (e.g., marketing, operations, human resources management, etc.) but also in terms of academic disciplines (e.g., information systems, engineering, psychology, etc.) (Gustafsson *et al.*, 2016; Ostrom *et al.*, 2015).

The development of service research as a distinct field of inquiry can be traced in academic journals, given that they are the major form of discourse within a scientific community. Good publications are referred to as the "life-blood of research" (Smyth *et al.*, 2006, p. 434). Thus, academic journals are acknowledged as the guardians of scientific advancement (El-Omar, 2014), with reviewers and editors influencing what is published and the quality of research (Stewart, 2008).

The diversity of the service research field creates important opportunities for the cross-fertilization of ideas and perspectives. It is vital for any discipline's development (Tellis *et al.,* 1999), and, therefore, this potential for evolution and growth needs to be supported and enhanced. The decisions made by authors, reviewers, and editors are often guided by unconscious and implicit social norms, including the publication standards and practices in a particular field (Mussweiler and Schneller, 2003). The literature even suggests that academic journals have certain

norms and cultures (Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan, 2007; Sivadas and Johnson, 2005; Sutton and Staw, 1995).

The existence of these norms and practices raises two main issues. First, early career researchers, new entrants to a discipline, and first-time submitters to a journal are less likely to be acquainted with the publication practices governing a specific scientific community or journal, making it more challenging to go through the review process. Second, reviewers might be affected by a "similarity bias" that could lead reviewers to reject or disregard ideas or manuscripts that do not seem to fit the norms and practices of their field, regardless of the merits of the research. Armstrong (1997) and Starbuck (2005) have found that there was limited agreement among reviewers about manuscript quality, supporting the notion that decisions to publish can reflect different viewpoints rather than confirm the objective quality of a manuscript.

Taking these arguments together, this paper first aims to make publication practices within service research more explicit by showcasing the enriching diversity of the field. In addition, the authors believe that—irrespective of the subject area, content, or novelty of an idea or approach—service manuscripts have aspects in common; these commonalities represent the standards that manuscripts must meet to make it through the peer review process (Summers, 2001). This study is based on the idea that showcasing the diversity of published service manuscripts will encourage current scholars to be even more diverse, inclusive, and international (Gustafsson *et al.*, 2016; Ostrom *et al.*, 2015).

The second objective is to evaluate which aspects are strongly related to a manuscript's success, which is operationalized as (1) the interest in a manuscript, i.e., the number of downloads from the journal website; (2) its academic impact, i.e., the number of Google scholar citations; and (3) the evaluation by experts in the field, i.e.,

being nominated and selected for the "Best Paper award" by the editorial board. Surely, these variables are not the only ones measuring the success of an article, since every author will make his or her own judgment about a manuscript; however, these seem to be the least subjective and, at the same time, the most available criteria for success. The goal, then, is to support scholars by identifying how and why past *Journal of Service Management* (JOSM) manuscripts succeeded in getting published so that they may make more informed decisions and produce articles with greater impact.

To achieve these objectives, this research analyzes a sample of publications in the JOSM. A mixed method approach is used combining quantitative and qualitative research methods in the same inquiry (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2013). Publications were first coded on a number of criteria such as their theory, methodology, and their main descriptive elements (e.g., number of authors or references). Automated text analysis then generated data; for example, the readability of articles along with number and recency of references were studied. Combining the data revealed distinctive criteria for successful manuscripts.

By providing empirical results on the current status of the discipline, this study makes two main contributions and that is (1) showcasing the diversity of service research in terms of the variety of used theories and methods and (2) explaining (post publication) success of articles operationalized as interest in an article (downloads), usage (citations), and awards (best paper nomination). From there, three sub-contributions are derived. First, this study seeks to contribute to the field of service research by stimulating a dialogue about common practices within the field. The empirical information in this study provides a foundation for a more informed and factual dialogue about the suitability of current practices for service research.

Second, this study seeks to inspire authors and reviewers alike to be more open to a broader range of theories, research approaches, and methods. The authors of this study believe that once scholars better understand the common practices, boundaries, and diversity of service research, they can make more informed decisions. This new awareness will hopefully encourage authors to write and reviewers to accept unusual yet still rigorous manuscripts, thus further enriching the diversity of the field.

Third, by showcasing the diversity of service research and making common practices explicit, this study encourages newcomers and early career researchers, in particular scholars from outside the management field, to join the service research field and to consider JOSM as an outlet for publishing their work. Inviting the participation of early career scholars from a wide variety of disciplines would make the field even more inclusive and transdisciplinary (Gustafsson *et al*., 2016; Ostrom *et al.,* 2015).

Thus, the purpose of this paper is not to give advice about how to get published. Many others with substantially more experience have done so in a very clear and helpful fashion (e.g. Parasuraman, 2003, Stewart, 2008, Summers, 2001). The purpose is also not to give a historical analysis of the evolution of JOSM. Evolutionary stages in thirty years of service marketing research (1982-2013) have been analyzed by Lages *et al.* (2013), and a 20-year retrospective on The Frontiers in Service Conference has been conducted by Dorsch *et al.* (2014). Instead, the intent is to showcase and encourage diversity in service research.

The paper is structured as follows. First, a literature review of publishing practices lays the literature foundation for this inquiry and provides support to identify those variables that are frequently mentioned to guide authors through the publication process. In the second part of this manuscript, the methodology is

presented. The results section presents findings about various elements of the manuscripts, including theory, method, and descriptive elements of the paper (e.g. number of authors and number of references). Beyond that, results from a quantitative text analysis are reported, e.g., the readability of the introduction. This paper concludes with a discussion on the implications for service research and the limitations of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A significant number of editorials and papers (e.g., Parasuraman, 2003; Stewart, 2008; Summers, 2001) as well as textbooks (e.g. Day, 1996; Huff, 1999) cover the topic of "how to publish" aiming to help authors improve their research and publishing skills. Most discuss the flaws that could negatively affect the paper during the review process. Advice from the literature addresses the following main elements of manuscripts: research contribution, relevance and novelty, theoretical foundation, data collection and methodology, and what is termed as descriptive elements of a manuscript, e.g. the length, number of authors, and references. In what follows, this literature will be reviewed and summarized. As such, the below literature review lays a foundation for the choice of variables to be studied (depicted in Table 1). Four broad areas are explored: (1) theories and concepts; (2) data collection and analysis; (3) descriptive elements; and (4) post-publication success. The abbreviations behind the variables in Table 1 indicate how this data were generated and validated and is further explained in the method section.

Type of article (conceptual versus empirical)		
Theories and concepts	**Data collection and analysis**	**Descriptive elements**
• Theoretical vs. conceptual foundation (MC, VSC) • Theoretical vs. conceptual testing (MC, VSC) • Theoretical vs. conceptual extension (MC, VSC) • Number of theories (MC, VDC) • Type of theories (MC, VDC)	Data collection • Type of data: qualitative versus quantitative (MC, VSC) • Number of studies (MC, VSC) • Unit of analysis: customer-level vs. firm-level (MC, VSC) • Geographical origin of data (MC, VSC) • Mode of data collection (MC, VSC) • Sampling method (MC, VSC) • Behavioural versus attitudinal (self reported) data (MC, VSC) Data analysis • Analysis method (MC, VSC) Effort level • Data collection (MC, VDC) • Data analysis (MC, VDC)	Type of issue • Regular or special issue (MC, VSC) Length, structure and writing style • Length of article (MC, VSC) • Number of figures (MC, VSC) • Number of tables (MC, VSC) • Readability (ATA) Authors • Number of authors (MC, VSC) • International author teams (MC, VSC) • Practitioner involvement (MC, VSC) References • Number of references (ATA) • Recency of references (ATA)

Post publication success
• Downloads (www) • Citations (www) • Best paper award nomination (AD)

"**MC** = manual coding, **VDC** = double coding, i.e. coding by two independent researchers, **VSC** = verified single coding, i.e. single coding with a verification mechanism of a second independent person checking 10% of a sample, **ATA** = automated text analysis, **www** = information from the world wide web, **AD** = archival data"

Table 1: Conceptual framework and overview of variables

Type of articles

Before analyzing the literature on different variables within articles, two main types of articles need to be differentiated: **empirical and conceptual** (Kumar *et al.,* 2017). Whereas empirical articles contain both conceptual and empirical content, conceptual articles "focus primarily on theoretical development and do not present data and/or analysis for purposes of theory testing" (Yadav, 2010, p. 5). Conceptual articles are seen as important in advancing the discipline; however, they are more difficult to write and to maneuver through the review process (Stewart and Zinkhan, 2006) because the evaluative criteria are less structured and thus less clear (Yadav, 2010). It is therefore not surprising that some disciplines, like marketing, have seen a decline in conceptual articles (MacInnis, 2011; Yadav, 2010).

For both types of articles (conceptual versus empirical), the most commonly discussed topic within the literature on "how to publish" is the research **contribution,**

relevance, and novelty. Manuscripts are criticized for posing an uninteresting question (El-Omar, 2014), conducting a simple replication with minor modifications (Summers, 2001), or lacking a strong, incremental contribution (Ladik and Stewart, 2008). The benefit of a contribution should lie in its ability to (1) trigger scholarly discourse and research; (2) affect Ph.D. students' research and agendas; (3) inspire practitioners' applications; and (4) provide pedagogical material that serves in the education of future managers (Parasuraman, 2003). Since this aspect relates to the content of an article, it will not be the emphasis of the study at hand focusing on theories, methods, and data.

Theories and concepts

With regard to the **theory** within articles, the literature differentiates between manuscripts that mainly "test" theory and those that "develop" theory (Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan, 2007; Sutton and Staw, 1995). Although there seems to be an imbalance in favor of theory testing (Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan, 2007), theory development is identified as a major opportunity to make a contribution (Ladik and Stewart, 2008), further the development of a field (Gummesson and Grönroos, 2012), and even enhance the attractiveness of a journal (Bartunek *et al.,* 2006).

Tellis (2017) defines a theory as an "explanation for a phenomenon" (p. 3). In order to develop a strong theory, Sutton and Staw (1995) propose to immerse "into underlying processes so as to understand the systematic reasons for a particular occurrence or nonoccurrence" (Sutton and Staw, 1995, p. 378).

Theory testing manuscripts require a **theoretical foundation** to be examined. The literature emphasizes the lack of such an underpinning as a major reason for rejection (Summers, 2001). Yet, not all papers test theory or relate their research to an overarching theory. Some base their research on a **conceptual foundation**, then build

on existing theoretical concepts to advance knowledge (Polonsky, 2008). The study at hand uses the term *theoretical foundation* when authors base their research on one or more well-established theories (e.g., Equity Theory), whereas the term *conceptual foundation* is used when the authors rely on one or more concepts (e.g., Customer Experience) and the literature streams around them.

Data collection and analysis

The literature offering advice on **data collection and analysis** generally warns that manuscripts will be rejected when they have methodological weaknesses such as an inappropriate study design or sample and/or invalid measures (El-Omar, 2014; Summers, 2001). In a recent interview, Kumar (2016) identified two fatal methodological errors: (1) data sources mismatched with the research problem, and (2) model estimation not mapped well onto constructs. This study analyzes concerns about data collection and data analysis (see Table 1). The literature review reveals that the following variables are most relevant: the number of studies, the unit of analysis, the mode of data collection, the sampling method and transaction data versus self-reported data.

With regards to data collection, the literature offers advice about the **type and amount of data** that authors should gather as a basis for their manuscript. Recommendations include the need to explicitly state, discuss, and justify (1) the number of studies undertaken (e.g., one main study, one main study with multiple stages or phases, multiple studies, a single experiment, or multiple experiments); (2) the nature of the data (e.g., cross sectional or longitudinal, mode of data collection); and (3) the respondents (e.g., unit of analysis, type of sampling procedures, response rate, etc.) (Kumar *et al*., 2017; Ortinau, 2010).

The **unit of analysis** of a paper can be at the level of the firm, customer,

brand, product, store, or individual (Kumar *et al.,* 2017). In a recent study, Kumar *et al.* (2017) found that in many cases the unit of analysis is not explicitly stated. They also found that most analysis occurs at the level of the customer and the firm. Subsequently, they combined the various levels into "customer-level analysis" and "firm-level analysis" in their models. This research will adopt their approach and differentiate between two units of analysis: customer-level analysis (hereafter referred to as CLA) and firm-level analysis (hereafter referred to as FLA).

Data collection, an essential part of every empirical study, can be distinguished in terms of **data sources**, i.e., primary or secondary data (Sarstedt and Mooi, 2014). Most commonly, however, data collection is seen as synonymous with the collection of primary data through observation, questioning, or a combination of both in experiments (Malhotra, 2010; Sarstedt and Mooi, 2014). Data collection can be further differentiated with regard to the mode, whether it relies on personal interaction (e.g., interviewing face-to-face or by telephone) or interaction through a medium (e.g., a computer-mediated or paper-based survey). The **modes of data collection** (personal, online, paper, telephone) differ considerably in their approach, their financial and temporal costs, and especially the type and quality of the resulting data (de Leeuw, 2005; Grove and Fisk, 1992). Online surveys seem to have many advantages, particularly in terms of saving time and money; such surveys are thus expected to grow substantially over the next few years (Duffy *et al.*, 2005; Couper, 2000). Yet, like all forms of data collection, online surveys have their weaknesses. To achieve methodological triangulation, combining different modes of data collection (e.g., survey techniques together with observational methods) is advised (Grove and Fisk, 1992).

The quality of data and the external validity of the research are also strongly

affected by **sampling**, i.e., the process whereby cases from the population are selected in an empirical study (Malhotra, 2010). Researchers stress the importance of a random and representative sampling (Short *et al.*, 2002). Two approaches can be distinguished: probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Malhotra, 2010). Because non-probability sampling procedures are the most easily executed, the least time-consuming, and very often the least expensive, this sampling of convenient elements is also called convenience sampling.

Two prevailing, but highly controversial, options of convenience sampling are student samples and crowdsourced samples of commercial research panels, e.g., Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Student samples are predominantly used in experimental research in social psychology and consumer behavior, constituting 96% of research subjects in the Journal of Consumer Research (JCR), 68% in the Journal of Marketing (JM), 50% in the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS), and 46% in the Journal of Business Research (JBR) (Espinosa and Ortinau, 2016). Likewise, MTurk has attracted considerable academic interest across a wide range of research fields because it provides access to a diverse set of respondents in a very efficient way (Rouse, 2015). While some studies support the use of student samples, as in research focusing on basic psychological processes or human behaviors (Kardes, 1996; Lucas, 2003), or of MTurk when collecting generalizable longitudinal data (Daly and Nataraajan, 2015), other studies highlight the propensity for biased results in analyses (Peterson and Merunka, 2014). Thus, Espinosa and Ortinau (2016) stress that researchers should refrain from using convenience and quota sampling frames as well as college-student data sources unless the research specifically focuses on this context (e.g., teaching).

Data obtained by market research can be classified as **self-reported** (primary)

data or transaction, i.e., revealed (secondary), data (Talukdar *et al.,* 2010). The gathering of self-reported attitudinal and behavioral measures has been more common in social and behavioral science research than the obtaining of a consumer's actual shopping behavior. Yet, the problem of informant inaccuracy in a wide range of social science disciplines (Bernard *et al.,* 1984) and the gap between self-reported attitudes or intentions and actual behavior (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001) have long been known and investigated. As respondents tend to be forgetful or unconscious about (especially routine) behaviors and decisions, answer in a way that is socially desirable, or post-hoc rationalize previous behaviors, the validity of some survey responses seems questionable. The advent of big data analytics relying mainly on **transaction data** to provide samples of actual behavior has raised hopes of eliminating these problems (McAbee *et al.,* 2017; Sorensen *et al.*, 2017).

With regards to the **data analysis,** there are a number of ways to differentiate the **type of method** used in a scientific article. A very common typology—the one adopted in this study—describes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Harwell, 2011; Venkatesh *et al.,* 2013). As Harwell (2011) explains, "qualitative research methods focus on discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants", e.g., in ethnographic research, content analysis of interviews or focus groups (p. 148). In contrast, quantitative research methods usually focus on prediction, aiming to maximize objectivity, replicability, and generalizability of findings; surveys or experiments are common instruments (Harwell, 2011). Mixed methods combine either concurrently or sequentially the two methodological approaches to understand a given phenomenon, drawing on the strengths of both methods (Creswell and Clark 2011; Harwell, 2011; Venkatesh *et al.,* 2013).

Since the late 1980s, the **mixed methods** approach has become increasingly popular (Creswell and Clark, 2011). Likewise, scholars have proposed abandoning the either/or approach to view qualitative and quantitative research along a continuum (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007). However, previous research shows that the quantitative paradigm dominates the social sciences (Breen and Darlanston-Jones, 2010; Hanson and Grimmer, 2007). The study at hand differentiates between quantitative or qualitative *data* and a more positivist (i.e., quantitative) or interpretative (i.e., qualitative) approach in the *method of analysis*. Distinguishing between *data* and *methods* is important to account for the growing field of quantitative text analysis (e.g., Benoit *et al.,* 2017; Ludwig *et al.,* 2011). Quantitative text analysis transforms qualitative data into quantitative information that then allows for statistical and "quantitative" methods of analysis. Thus, this study investigates qualitative versus quantitative data and different methods of analysis.

Descriptive elements of the article

The literature also offers advice on the **descriptive elements** of an article, among them the length, structure, and writing style of a manuscript (see Table 1). One interesting variable is whether the article appeared in a **special or regular issue**. The former is a way for editors and journals to highlight a certain topic and attract attention. Common practice suggests that special issues can be "special" in a number of ways: they are (1) often devoted to investigating emerging or "hot" topics; (2) usually edited by a guest editor (Emerald, 2017); (3) have a defined timeline for the article; and (4) often emerge from conferences or workshops. This study will investigate the systematic differences between papers published in special issues and those appearing in regular issues.

The second descriptive element of papers that is regularly mentioned in the

literature is **length**. The advice is that submissions should be aligned with the overall contribution of the paper, meaning that longer papers need to make a more substantial contribution (Sawyer *et al.,* 2008).

Furthermore, a well-written article has to follow a concrete **structure** that revolves around a well-defined and robust research question (Davidson and Delbridge, 2011). The literature review section, also referred to sometimes as the theoretical or conceptual background, helps to propose and develop a theoretical model, conceptual framework, or paradigm in the case of conceptual papers. In the case of empirical papers, this section should provide "a clear discussion of the existing literature-based insights for each of the key constructs as well as any known relationships between those constructs" (Ortinau, 2010, p. 96). Usually, the third part of a manuscript is the methods section, which should detail a well-designed and well-executed research study. Ortinau (2010) stresses that the main aim of the methodology section is to clarify *what* and *how* data were collected. The results section is, according to Cetin and Hackam (2005), "the heart and soul" (p. 166) of a manuscript and should contain all the data that confirm (or refute) the hypothesis of the study. Ortinau (2010) stresses that authors should objectively report the findings, rather than explaining them. Subsequently, a critical discussion and conclusion should be written. One of the main aims is to discuss whether the findings support, disprove, or add to the current body of knowledge (Smyth *et al.*, 2006) and thus show how the study contributes to the field (Cetin and Hackam, 2005). Finally, in the last section of the manuscript, possible avenues for future research should be identified (Smyth *et al.,* 2006) and a reflection about and acknowledgment of the known limitations of the study should be offered (Ortinau, 2010).

Beyond this common structure and content of the manuscript sections, good

academic writing is crucial for publication success (Day, 2007; Summers, 2001). Therefore, the literature also gives recommendations regarding the **writing style** of manuscripts. To publish, one has to write a manuscript in a format that readers and reviewers can follow and learn from (Cetin and Hackam, 2005). It is crucial to use the correct research terminology, the appropriate tense and voice (Davidson and Delbridge, 2011), as well as provide an accurate and complete reference list following the particular journal style (Fried and Wechsler, 2001).

Writing style partly refers to how authors communicate their content, procedures, and findings through means other than "pure" text, i.e., **graphics and figures**. The literature stresses the need to have clear and succinct figures, self-explanatory and self-contained tables (Fried and Wechsler, 2001), plus legends that provide detailed descriptions of the corresponding figures and tables (Cetin and Hackam, 2005).

In addition to the structure of the study and its visual presentation, overall **readability** matters (Sawyer *et al.*, 2008). Sawyer *et al.* (2008) found that longer words and sentences negatively impact readability. In fact, sentence length has a double negative effect on readability; sentence length is positively related to references per sentence, which itself negatively impacts readability. Thus, in general, good manuscripts are coherent, logically structured and economical, and maintain a clear focus (Day, 2007).

Other descriptive elements of manuscripts include the number of **authors** and number of **references**. A greater **number of authors** in scientific articles allows scholars to fulfill the growing expectations for more interdisciplinary research and more complex, demanding and international empirical studies (Manton and English, 2008). Over recent decades, the number of authors per manuscript has increased

(Binswanger, 2015). In a review of six major business journals published between 1970 and 2002, Manton and English (2007) found that there is an increase in the average number of authors per manuscript, a substantial decrease in the percentage of articles written by a single author, and a significant rise in the percentage of co-authored articles by two or three authors. The same trend can be observed in many marketing journals, among them the Journal of Consumer Research, the Journal of Marketing, and the Journal of Marketing Research (Fields and Swayne, 1988).

There are seldom recommendations found in literature regarding the type of references in a manuscript beyond the need to adhere to the journal's style guide (Fried and Wechsler, 2001) and the obvious advice that authors should anchor their work within the existing literature (Stewart and Zinkhan, 2006). With regard to the number of **references**, Sivadas and Johnson (2005) made an interesting observation based on a sample of articles from 1994 and 1995. They found that the average number of references per article in one of the top eight marketing journals is 37.38. The Journal of Marketing articles cited on average 61 references per article, whereas the Journal of Marketing Research and the Journal of Retailing cited on average 38 references per article (Sivadas and Johnson, 2005). Thus, it seems that journals have different common practices concerning the number of references.

Post-publication success of articles

Before analyzing the literature that addresses the "success" of academic articles (e.g., Kumar *et al.*, 2017; Stremersch *et al.,* 2007), this study wants to acknowledge that successfully maneuvering through the review process and being accepted for publication should already be considered a success. Thus, each time the term "success" is used in this manuscript, post-publication success is meant. Highlighting academic impact through subsequent **citations** stands as the closest

proxy for post-publication success (Kumar *et al.*, 2017; Stremersch *et al.,* 2007). In this regard, McFadyen and Cannella (2004) state that "citation count measure can be used to estimate the impact of knowledge created" (p. 739).

Because it often takes months and years for an article to start being cited (Brody *et al.,* 2006), **downloads** are seen as early predictors of **citations** and thus a proxy of the success of an article (Stremersch *et al.,* 2007). Furthermore, **best paper awards**, reflecting the evaluation of experts on editorial boards, clearly identify a successful article (Stremersch *et al.,* 2007). Taking the above arguments together, and in line with previous research, this study will analyze three success variables: downloads, citations, and nominations/awards for best paper.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection

The author team analyzed a sample of 158 articles published during a period of five years. Volumes 22 to 26 (2011-15) were chosen from the Journal of Service Management (JOSM), because it is one of the premier journals in the service research field. JOSM has an impact factor of 2.897 and a 5-year impact factor of 5.121 (both for 2016), while at the same time being particularly interdisciplinary in its approach (Emerald, 2017). The time period was chosen to strike a balance between a contemporary analysis and a study of citations (as a variable). Given that it often takes years for an article to start being cited, a time lag of at least 1.5 years was chosen so as to include citations of articles as one indicator of success (Brody *et al.*, 2006).

This study employs a mixed data, mixed method approach following a triangulation approach of "blending and integrating a variety of data and methods" (Jick, 1979, p. 603). This study combines data from different sources: (1) data generated through manual coding; (2) automated text analysis; (3) web searches; and

(4) archival data. The authors first decided on a literature-based list of variables (see Table 1). In the first step, 158 research articles were downloaded by the authors and made available in a shared folder. Editorials were excluded from the sample when they did not intend to make a genuine research contribution. A codebook was developed that was then used to code publications according to the chosen variables (Hennink *et al.,* 2011). Manual coding was undertaken by four of the authors, split into pairs: two were responsible for manually coding the theory part of manuscripts, while the other two were responsible for manually coding the method/data part. Splitting into independent teams ensured consistency in coding and allowed for inter-coder reliability testing, which is particularly important to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis (Auer-Srnka and Koeszegi, 2007; Hennink *et al.,* 2011). For the manual coding, each author annotated his or her own version of the .pdf file of the manuscript.

In addition to the data generated through manual coding, this study produced data using automated text analysis with *quanteda,* an R software package (Benoit *et al.,* 2017). Manuscript files were transformed into plain text files and cleaned up (e.g., the running header was removed on each page or the "downloaded by") prior to analysis. For parts of the automated analysis, the plain texts were also tagged to subdivide the text into sections (e.g., a section on the introduction). Data were then gathered from the World Wide Web (WWW), in particular *Google Scholar*, which provided data on the number of citations (obtained March 30, 2017), and the JOSM website (http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journal/josm), which yielded the number of downloads (gathered March 31, 2017). Data on the nomination and award for the best paper came from the editor of JOSM, who provided archival data from the editorial office. Table 1 provides an overview of the variables and the data collection method.

Operationalizing the variables affected the degree of validity checks. Operationalizing some variables (e.g., the number of authors, country of origin, length of the article, unit of analysis, number of figures) was clear and straightforward. These variables were noted and transferred into a spreadsheet that was later transferred into a SPSS file. When the manual coding involved no or very little freedom of interpretation, what was termed Verified Manual Coding (VMC) was applied. That is, one person coded the articles, and a second person independently coded 10% of the sample. When no discrepancies emerged, the data was used in the final data set. In one case, minor discrepancies were detected that prompted the authors to double-check the entire dataset.

Operationalizing other variables was less clear thereby requiring a sound definition of the variable that was agreed upon by the authors. For example, a *low* **effort level of data collection** was described as using "convenience" including a student or Mechanical Turk (Mturk) sample, comparably low sample size, single items measurement for constructs, no activities undertaken or mentioned to avoid non-response bias, no information of whether pre-tests were done, no triangulation activities undertaken or mentioned, and no reference to established scales for measurement. *High* effort level was operationalized as such activities undertaken or mentioned to enhance validity and reliability such as trial studies, tests for common method variance, random sampling with a comparably high sample size and various activities to reduce non-response bias. Triangulated data and collaboration with a company often involving "real" transaction data was also viewed as a proxy for a high effort level in the data collection. A third category of *medium* effort level was employed when either the individual categories were mixed or their valence was in between the low and the high levels.

The **effort level of the data analysis** was similarly described beforehand to make sure that data were gathered consistently. For qualitative data analysis, the effort level was evaluated as *low* when there were no activities undertaken or mentioned, such as independent coding or procedures for resolving differences in coding that ensured the validity and reliability of the data analysis. Not using software in qualitative data analysis, but opting for hand coding instead, was evaluated as low effort level. Additionally, quantitative data analysis using simple inferential statistics (e.g., ANOVA, linear regression, t-tests) was evaluated as low effort level. By contrast, high effort level for qualitative analysis included independent coding and software support in coding and analysis; quantitative analysis it involved some non-linear effects, moderation or mediation, or some rather uncommon methodologies such as eye-tracking, quantitative text analysis, or choice modeling. To ensure validity and reliability of the codes, a similar verification procedure as described above was used. However, in coding the effort level, verified double coding (VDC) was performed; when the first coder felt the slightest doubt about the code, double coding was performed. Ultimately, this was applied to about one third of the entire dataset.

In keeping with previous research, this study assessed **readability** according to an established index: the Flesch–Kincaid score, which is normed to the school grade associated with that level of reading difficulty (Sawyer *et al.,* 2008). To assess this score, R within the *quanteda* package was used (Benoit *et al.,* 2017). Because this study did not want to bias the analysis by capturing statistical terms, tables, or figures, the readability analysis was performed only on the abstract and the introduction, which usually does not contain any formal terms relating to the statistical analysis.

Data analysis

This study applies a mixed method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data as well as different types of analyses. The foundation of this data analysis is an integrated generalization design based on transforming words from the manuscripts through coding into numbers (codes) that can then be used for statistical analysis (Auer-Srnka and Koeszegi, 2007). For the main part of the descriptive and inferential statistics, SPSS 23 and R were used. Analyses of variance and chi-square tests were performed to explore the data along the criteria depicted in Table 1. Beyond that, *quanteda* not only enabled automated coding of the manuscripts through tagging, but also allowed for an analysis of readability and word occurrence.

RESULTS

The presentation of results follows the structure of the literature review and the variables in Table 1. First the type of article (conceptual or empirical) is analyzed; then, the parameters of articles are explored, including their theoretical and conceptual foundations, methods of data collection and analysis, and descriptive elements such as structure, number of authors, or references. This detailed discussion leads to an investigation of the success of academic articles.

Type of article

The literature claims that conceptual articles have, on average, a higher academic impact. Thus, their overall low proportion in major marketing journals and especially their decline are regrettable (MacInnis, 2011; Yadav, 2010). The proportion of **conceptual versus empirical articles** in JOSM shows that 20.3% are conceptual and 79.7% are empirical. Compared to the Journal of Service Research (JSR) which featured 16% conceptual articles (Bitner, 2015), the Journal of Marketing (JM) with a proportion of 6.7%, or the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS) with 11.48% (between 2003 and 2007, Yadav, 2010), the percentage of conceptual

articles in JOSM is remarkably high. Interestingly, almost two thirds (62.5%) of all JOSM conceptual articles have appeared in special issues.

Theoretical or conceptual foundation

This study examines whether published papers rest on a **theoretical** or **conceptual foundation**. As mentioned above, a theoretical foundation is defined as authors using one or more well-established theories (e.g., Equity Theory) as a basis for their arguments. Articles are defined as having a conceptual foundation when authors use one or more concepts (e.g., Customer Experience) as the basis for their arguments. The results show that 55.1% of the papers are built on a theoretical foundation, while 44.9% have a conceptual foundation. Since theories describe the interconnectivity of concepts (Corley and Gioia, 2011; Gioia and Pitre, 1990; Sutton and Staw, 1995), it may be natural that more conceptual papers have a conceptual foundation (31%) while more empirical papers that test this connectivity have a theoretical foundation (88.5%).

After analyzing the foundations (conceptual vs. theoretical) of the papers in the selected sample, this study further assesses the aim of the paper: **developing, testing,** or **extending** current theories or concepts. The literature seems to perceive an imbalance toward **theory testing** (Sutton and Staw, 1995); however, in some areas **theory developing** manuscripts have been catching up over the past decades or even outpacing the proportion of testing manuscripts (Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Four types of articles were identified in JOSM sample: (1) theory testing; (2) concept testing; (3) theory extension; and (4) concept extension.

Looking at the **theory versus concept testing** articles in JOSM over the sample period, the results show that testing is only done in empirical, quantitative articles, with 31% of the articles testing a theory and 19.6% testing a concept (e.g.,

measuring customer experience). With regard to the **theory versus concept extension** articles in JOSM, extension was found to be applicable to both conceptual and empirical articles. Even though conceptual articles tend to extend theory (15.5 %) and concepts (24.1%), the majority of extension is accomplished in empirical articles, 84.5% of which extend a theory, while 75.9% extend a concept. Interestingly, more quantitative studies extend theory (64.8%) while more qualitative studies extend concepts (40.2%).

This study also investigates the **number of theories** that are used in hopes of capturing the richness or concision of the theoretical foundation. It seems that in some fields the standard is to have *one* overarching theory. While 19.6% of the articles in JOSM used two or more theories, only 34.8% of papers based their analysis on one overarching theory.

TYPE OF PAPER, THEORIES AND CONCEPTS				**Analysis**
Empirical versus conceptual papers	**Empirical**	**Conceptual**		Descriptive results, n=158
Proportion (total numbers) published in all issues	79.7% (126)	20.3% (32)		
Proportion published in special issues (SI) versus regular issue (RI)	SI: 41.6% (52), RI: 58.4% (74)	SI: 62.5% (20), RI: 37.5% (12)		Chi-square: .046 (**sig.**), n=158
Theoretical versus conceptual foundation	**Theoretical foundation**	**Conceptual foundation**		Descriptive results, n=158
Proportion (total numbers) published in all issues	55.1% (87)	44.9% (71)		
Proportion conceptual (C) vs. empirical (E) papers	C: 11.5% (10), E: 88.5% (77)	C: 31% (22), E: 69% (49)		Chi-square: .003 (**sig.**), n=158
Theory versus concept testing	**No theory or concept testing**	**Theory testing**	**Concept testing**	Descriptive results, n=158
Proportion (total numbers) published in all issues	49.4% (78)	31% (49)	19.6% (31)	
Theory versus concept extension	**Theory extension**	**Concept extension**		Descriptive results, n=158
Proportion (total numbers) published in all issues	44.9% (71)	55.1% (87)		
Proportion conceptual (C) vs. empirical (E) papers	C: 15.5% (11), E: 84.5% (60)	C: 24.1% (21), E: 75.9% (66)		Chi-square: .233 (**n.s.**), n=158
Proportion of conceptual (C), qualitative (QL), quantitative (QN) and mixed (M) method papers	C: 15.5% (11) QL: 14.1% (10) QN: 64.8% (46) M: 5.6% (4)	C: 24.1% (21) QL: 40.2% (35) QN: 25.3% (22) M: 10.3% (9)		Chi-square: <.000 (**sig.**), n=158
Number of theories used in the papers	**No theory (only concept)**	**One theory**	**More than one theory**	Descriptive results, n=158
Proportion (total numbers) published in all issues	45.6% (72)	34.8% (55)	19.6% (31)	

Chi-square=Pearsons chi-square, 2-sided significance, n.s. = not significant, sig. = significant at .05, ~sig. = significant at .1

Table 2: Type of Paper, Theories and Concepts

Theory is key to all scientific endeavors. Thus, this study explores the specific type of theoretical foundations examined in the selected service research papers. The

theoretical foundation most commonly used in JOSM is Service-Dominant Logic (S-D logic) with 26 papers extending or testing it.

In their foundational work Vargo and Lusch (2004) stated that S-D logic does not represent a "theory" but rather a lens for studying the economic and social world. Years later, and after witnessing a growing number of S-D logic-grounded articles and presentations, Vargo (2011) stated that the growing body of work led to considerably broadening the scope and increasing the depth of S-D logic premises, and therefore the field is now beginning to move S-D logic closer to a theory. In line with Luca *et al.* (2016) as well as Fidel *et al.* (2015), we have considered S-D logic a theory.

3.9% of all papers with a theoretical foundation used Social Exchange Theory, while Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing, Justice Theory, Practice Theory (also known as practice-based view), and Resource-based View (or resource-based theory) are applied in four different papers each. Consumer Culture Theory, Signaling Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Use and Gratification Theory (also known as uses and gratification theory) have been used three times as a theoretical foundation. A list of the most common theoretical foundations is depicted in Table 3.

MOST COMMON THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS		
	Count	**Percent (of theory within papers using a theory)**
Service-dominant logic	26	20.5%
Social exchange theory	5	3.9%
Commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing	4	3.1%
Justice theory	4	3.1%
Practice theory or practice-based view	4	3.1%
Resource-based view or resource-based theory	4	3.1%
Consumer culture theory	3	2.4%
Signaling theory	3	2.4%
Social cognitive theory	3	2.4%
Social identity theory	3	2.4%
Use and gratification theory or uses and gratification theory	3	2.4%
Other	65	51.2%

Table 3: Most Common Theoretical Foundations

The results show the richness of approaches in service research. At the same time, they also show the impact of S-D Logic on the service research field.

Data collection and analysis: Data collection

Expectations for empirical studies have risen in the past decades, driving ever more sophisticated data and methods (Manton and English, 2008). One indication for these heightened expectations is the rise in the sheer **number of studies**. All articles were analyzed with regard to the number of studies, leading to the exclusion of four articles that were based on macroeconomic data or academic literature as data (such as this article). From the remaining empirical articles in the sample, 77.9% conducted one study and 22.1% conducted two or more studies.

Previous research has shown that the quantitative research paradigm dominates various fields in the social sciences (Breen and Darlanston-Jones, 2010; Hanson and Grimmer, 2007). The literature review has revealed the need for a more fine-grained analysis of **qualitative versus quantitative** *data* and more qualitative and quantitative *methods*. Likewise, scholars have argued that qualitative and quantitative research falls along a continuum rather than standing apart as a dichotomy (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007). From the 126 empirical articles, four (3.2%) relied on secondary data—mostly systematic literature reviews, using academic articles as data. From the remaining 122 articles using primary data collection, 34.4% collected qualitative data in their first study (i.e., text) and 54.1% collected quantitative data (i.e., numbers) with 11.5% mixing both. In the second study, 29.6% collected qualitative data, 59.3% quantitative data, and 11.1% mixed data. Comparing these percentages to previous research analyzing the Journal of Services Marketing (JSM) reveals that JOSM publishes a relatively high proportion of qualitative, or mixed-qualitative, studies. Between 1993 and 2002, JSM published 19.6% papers that

were qualitative or mixed in their approach (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007). In total, for the analyzed JOSM articles, there are twelve different combinations of the numbers of studies and the types of data, with the most common being one study with quantitative data (47.9%) and one study with text data (27.3%). One quarter of all empirical papers reflect different combinations, e.g., one study with mixed data (8.3%), or two qualitative studies (2.5%) or two studies with the first study being qualitative and the second quantitative (3.3%).

Given different needs and behaviors, as in the buying process, differentiating between the **unit of analysis** of CLA (customer-level) and FLA (firm-level) is common in research (e.g., Bridges *et al.*, 2005; Kumar *et al.,* 2017). The perception is that firm-level research is underrepresented, at least in marketing research (LaPlaca and Katrichis, 2009). Does this hold true for service research? Of the 122 studies that collected primary data, 52.5% chose the CLA setting as the unit of analysis throughout the entire paper and are thus considered "pure" CLA papers, whereas 41% are "pure" FLA, with another 6.6% of the papers using both as units of analysis.

In addition to the unit of analysis, the type of data and the mode of its collection can also be analyzed. The first variable to be considered is the **geographical origin** of the data. First of all, and surprisingly, for almost one quarter of the studies with a primary data collection the authors did not specify in which country they collected their data. For the remaining studies, results show the diversity of service research published in JOSM and the openness of the Journal. 14.8% of the data were collected in the US, 48.1% of the data in Europe, and another 18.5% in Asia, whereas 16.7% of data were collected in more than one country and the remaining in Africa and Australasia.

Given the rising popularity of online surveys in the last decade (Duffy *et al.*,

2005; Couper, 2000), the next variable considered is the **data collection channel**. Four channels are differentiated: data collection in person via face-to-face interaction, telephone, paper, or online. As further evidence of the diversity of service research, over 15 different varieties of collection channels were discovered across all papers. Among those studies that made an explicit statement about the collection channel of their primary data, personal (i.e. face-to-face) was the most frequent (43.5%), followed by online (29.6%), paper-based (22.2%) and telephone (4.6%). Again, a number of papers did not explicitly state the collection channel, but explained that, for example, the authors collaborated with a market research institute or authors mentioned interviews without specifying whether these interviews were conducted face-to-face or via telephone.

The use of correct **sampling methods** is a key component of scientific rigor, so different sampling methods used in the JOSM papers are included in the analysis. From 134 studies across all articles for which authors made a statement about the sampling method, 28.4% used convenience samples, 44.8% purposive samples, and 26.9% random samples. There is a significant difference between sampling methods and the three major channels. While, looking at the distribution, random sample and convenience sample have similar collection channel distributions which is also similar to the overall distribution (online, 29.6%; paper-based, 22.2%; and personal, 43.5%). However, the personal collection channel of purposeful sample is used more often with 62.8%.

The literature often refers to a gap between attitude and respective behavior (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001), so it is recommended that researchers not rely solely on **self-reports** that might suffer from informant inaccuracy (Bernard *et al.*, 1984). Moreover, given the rise of electronic business and digital transactions, an increase in

transaction or revealed **data** (Talukdar *et al.,* 2010) is observed. Thus, this study explores whether service researchers have made use of transaction data for research studies in JOSM. Results show that 2.9% of the studies use transaction data and 12.1% use mixed data; in sum, around one sixth of all studies across all articles use transaction data, which is an encouraging proportion that nonetheless has the potential to rise much higher.

Data collection and analysis: Data analysis

Methodological pluralism can be considered a major strength of a discipline (Venkatesh *et al.,* 2013). Mindful of the various possible methods, this study differentiates between qualitative (e.g., content analysis), quantitative (e.g., surveys), and mixed methods (e.g., sequential explanatory design in which unexpected findings from a quantitative analysis are investigated using qualitative methods as described in Harwell, 2011). Results show that 41.7% of papers used quantitative methods, 30.5% used qualitative methods, and 10.7% used some mixed method design. Interestingly, the results show that 58% of papers contained two or more different methods within the first study (e.g., exploratory factor analysis in combination with Structural Equation Modeling or coding and a hierarchical value mapping). If papers included two studies, their breadth of methods was considerably lower; only two papers used two methods in combination for their second study. In sum, this study found over 45 different methods of data analysis. Some are very common, such as exploratory factor analysis (EFA), structural equation modelling (SEM), cluster analysis, conjoint analysis, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Less common methods in service research were also used, including the emerging consensus technique, association pattern technique, social network analysis, event based studies, and sentiment analysis.

TYPE OF DATA AND METHODS					Analysis
Number of studies, proportion (total number)	One study: 77.9% (95)		Two studies or more: 22.1% (27)		Descriptive results, n=122* (basis number of empirical papers)
Qualitative versus quantitative data, proportion (total number)	Quantitative data: 55% (83)	Qualitative data: 33.8% (51)	Mixed data: 11.3% (17)		Descriptive results, n=151 (basis number of studies)
Unit of analysis: CLA versus FLA, proportion (total number)	CLA data: 56.3% (85)	FLA data: 39.1% (59)	Mixed data: 4.6% (7)		Descriptive results, n=151 (basis number of studies)
Geographic origin, proportion (total number)	North America: 14.8% (16)	Europe, 48.1% (52)	Asia 18.5% (20)	International, i.e. more than one country 16.7% (18) Africa 0.9% (1), Australia 0.9% (1)	Descriptive results, n=108** (basis number of studies)
Collection channel, proportion (total number)	Personal: 43.5% (47)	Paper based: 22.2% (24)	Online: 29.6% (32)	Telephone: 4.6% (5)	Descriptive results, n=108** (basis number of studies)
Sampling method	**Random sample**	**Purposeful sample**	**Convenience sample**		Descriptive results, n=134** (basis number of studies)
Sampling method, proportion (total number)	26.9% (36)	44.8% (60)	28.4% (38)		
Collection channels within sampling method, proportion (total number)	Personal: 35.5% (11) Paper based: 35.5% (11) Online: 29% (9)	Personal: 62.8% (27) Paper based: 11.6% (5) Online: 25.6% (11)	Personal: 32% (8) Paper based: 32% (8) Online: 36% (9)		Chi-square: .04 (**sig.**), n=99
Behavioral or attitudinal data (self reports), proportion (total number)	Attitudinal data (self reports): 85% (119)	Transaction data: 2.9% (4)	Mixed data: 12.1% (17)		Descriptive results, n=140* (basis number of studies)
Type of method, proportion of papers (total number)	Quantitative methods: 41.7% (78)	Qualitative methods: 30.5% (57)	Mixed method design: 10.7% (20)		Descriptive results, n=155* (basis number of empirical papers)

Chi-square=Pearsons chi-square, 2-sided significance, n.s. = not significant, sig. = significant at .05, ~sig. = significant at .1, * Four studies were excluded from the analysis due to secondary data collection. **Studies had to be excluded from the analysis due to lacking information.

Table 4: Type of Data and Methods

Data collection and analysis: Effort level

Of all the empirical papers within both categories (effort level in data collection and effort level in data analysis), about one third of the papers were evaluated as having put in a high effort (38.1% and 40.5%) and around a quarter as having put in a medium effort. Results show that the perceived effort level of data collection (mean=1.98, SD=0.89) falls below the perceived effort level of the data analysis (mean=2.09, SD=0.85), but this difference is not significant (p=.279). While direct comparisons are not perfect given different underlying constructs, this finding lends support to the notion that authors do not appear to put more effort into analysis than data collection. Comparing the perceived effort level of data collection with the unit of analysis (CLA, FLA versus mixed data), results show that the effort level was perceived as higher for FLA data collections than CLA or mixed data collections. No difference was found for the data collection or data analysis if authors utilized qualitative or quantitative data/methods.

EFFORT LEVEL DATA COLLECTION				Analysis
Effort level data collection				
Proportion of papers, mean	High: 38.1% (48), Medium: 22.2% (28), Low: 39.7% (50)		Mean 1.98 (SD .89) 1=low - 3=high	Descriptive results, n=126*
Unit of analysis and type of data				
Effort level data **collection** depending on **unit of analysis**	CLA data: Mean 1.87 (SD .94)	FLA data: Mean 2.24 (SD .8)	CLA & FLA data: Mean 1.86 (SD .9)	ANOVA: .047 (**sig.**), n=151*
Effort level data **collection** depending on **type of data**	Quantitative data: Mean 2.04 (SD .92)	Qualitative data: Mean 1.94 (SD 0.88)	Mixed data: Mean 2.12 (SD .86)	ANOVA: .737 (**n.s.**), n=151*
Effort level data analysis				
Proportion of papers, mean	High: 40.5% (51); Medium: 27.8% (35), Low: 31.7% (40)		Mean 2.09 (SD .85) 1=low - 3=high	Descriptive results, n=126*
Type of method				
Effort level data **analysis** depending on **type of method**	Quantitative method: Mean 2.4 (SD 0.74)	Qualitative method: Mean 1.68 (SD 0.78)	Mixed method: Mean 2.05 (SD 1.0)	ANOVA: <.000 (**sig.**), n=155*

Chi-square=Pearsons chi-square, 2-sided significance, n.s. = not significant, sig. = significant at .05, ~sig. = significant at .1, *conceptual papers were excluded from the analysis

Table 5: Effort Level Data Collection

Descriptive elements of the paper

To better understand the diversity of the service research field, this paper explores some descriptive elements of articles, including (1) if a paper is published in a special or regular issue; (2) its length, structure and writing style, including readability; (3) the number and type of authors; and (4) the references.

As mentioned earlier, **special issues** may be special in a number of ways. They often highlight a particular issue, may emerge from workshops, and typically have a defined timeline for submission as well as revision. This study reveals that JOSM makes regular use of special issues to capture "hot topics" or discussions at a certain conference: 45.6% of all articles in the sampling time frame appeared in a special issue. Interestingly, a special issue seems to be a good outlet to publish conceptual articles, given that of 62.5% of conceptual articles appeared in a special issue. Moreover, of all articles in special issues, 27.8% were conceptual and 72.2% empirical.

Regarding the length of the articles, results show that papers in JOSM are on average 21.60 pages long with a minimum of four and a maximum of 42 pages—further evidence of diversity. Some authors use figures and diagrams to communicate their findings: JOSM articles from the period analyzed had on average 1.9 figures

with a minimum of zero and a maximum of seven figures. In regards to the use of tables, the articles showed a greater spread with a minimum of zero and a maximum of twelve tables, averaging 3.09 tables per article.

The readability of the articles reveals some interesting findings, or rather non-findings. Overall, the average readability of the introduction to JOSM articles (16.86) is equivalent to articles from other high-profile academic journals in the Marketing field (16.2, Sawyer *et al.,* 2008). With regard to criteria that explain higher or lower readability, only a few variables made a difference. Readability scores are not significantly different for conceptual or empirical, nor for qualitative or quantitative articles. The only variable that affected readability scores was placement in a special versus (16.5) regular issue (17.17), which suggests that articles in special issues may be written "easier" meaning that they require a lower educational grade level. Interestingly, the readability of the introduction did not impact the success of the articles in terms of downloads or citations.

Furthermore, this study found that the average **number of authors** for JOSM papers is 2.99. Comparing conceptual and empirical papers shows that conceptual papers have about one author more than empirical papers (3.78 versus 2.79). With regard to the **type of authors**, the results show that 58.9% of the author teams have at least one native speaker or author living in an English-speaking country and only 5.7% of the author teams include a practitioner.

In the next part, this study looks into the **number and recency (age) of references** and considers the post-publication success of studies in relation to the types of research, i.e., conceptual, qualitative, quantitative or mixed method. Results show that on average JOSM articles have 70.86 references with a minimum of one and a maximum of 159, again showing the enormous variety of published papers and

contributions that appear in JOSM. In comparison to one of the top journals in the marketing field, the number of references in JOSM is slightly higher than in the Journal of Marketing, from about a decade earlier, with an average of 61 (Sivadas and Johnson, 2005). As expected, the average number of references has risen in the Journal of Marketing in recent years from 63 in 2011 to 69 in 2015. However, the five-year average in JOSM is still slightly higher for the study at hand's chosen sample period (JOSM: 71, JM: 68). The references that authors use were on average 12.1 years old; thus, for volume 26 (2015) the average publication year of the references was 2002.90 (so in between 2002 and 2003). The older volumes were corrected to consider the natural differences in the age of references for volume 22 (2011) up to volume 26 (2015) in adding the respective difference in years towards the mean. Analyzing the maximum and the minimum of the mean of the average age of references reveals interesting results. The paper with the least recent references, i.e., oldest average age, had references that were on average 23.64 years old; the paper with the highest recency of references used references that were on average 4.81 years old.

DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENTS					Analysis
		Special issue (SI)		Regular issue (RI)	Descriptive results, n=158
Proportion (total number)		45.6% (72)		54.4% (86)	
Proportion (total) of type of paper		Empirical: 72.2% (52) Conceptual: 27.8% (20)		Empirical: 86% (74) Conceptual: 14% (12)	Chi-square: .046 (**sig.**), n=158
Length, figures and tables	Length, in pages	Mean 21.6 (SD 5.43), min. 4, max: 42			Descriptive results, n=158
	Number of figures	Mean 1.9 (SD 1.49), min. 0, max: 7			
	Number of tables	Mean 3.09 (SD 2.33), min. 0, max: 12			
Readability					Descriptive results, n=158
Overall, mean		Mean 16.86 (SD 2.05), min. 11.94, max. 24.92			
Depending on special (SI) or regular issue (RI)		Readability SI: Mean 16.5 (SD 2.21)		Readability RI: Mean 17.17 (SD 1.87)	ANOVA: .039 (**sig.**), n=158
Number and type of authors					Descriptive results, n=158
Number of authors		Mean 2.99 (SD 1.51), min. 1, max. 8			
Number of authors per type of paper		Conceptual: Mean 3.78 (SD 2.19)		Empirical: Mean 2.79 (SD 1.21)	
One country, multi country author team		One country team: 52.5% (83)	Multi-country team		Single author: 9.5% (15)
			Same continent: 8.2% (13)	Different continent: 29.7% (47)	
Native speaker on author team		Yes: 58.9% (93)		No: 41.1% (65)	
Practitioner on author team		Yes: 5.7% (9)		No: 94.3% (149)	
References					Descriptive results, n=158
Number of references		Mean 70.87 (SD 25.93), min. 1, max: 159			
Number of references and type of paper		Conceptual: Mean 77.63 (SD 28.06)		Empirical: Mean 69.15 (SD 25.19)	ANOVA: .099 (**~n.s.**), n=158
Age of references, corrected*		Average mean: 12.1 yrs, average median: 11.61 yrs Average age: min.: 23.64 yrs, max.: 4.81 yrs			Descriptive results, n=158

Chi-square=Pearsons chi-square, 2-sided significance, n.s. = not significant, sig. = significant at .05, ~sig. = significant at .1, *the average age for older issues than Vol. 26 was corrected by adding the difference in years towards Vol. 26.

Table 6: Descriptive Elements

Post-publication success

Previous research has shown that conceptual articles often have a higher academic impact (MacInnis, 2011; Yadav, 2010). For JOSM articles, results show that the number of downloads, as a proxy for the interest in an article, was not significantly different for conceptual and empirical articles. Interestingly, conceptual articles are cited, i.e. used more often than empirical ones, although this finding should be used cautiously as the significance level is .062 (see Table 7). Furthermore, the success patterns around the qualitative data, quantitative data, and mixed-data papers were analyzed: Mixed data papers have the highest number of downloads followed by quantitative papers and qualitative papers, but they all score similarly in citations. Beyond this, it seems reasonable to assume that papers with two or more studies might have a higher impact because they cover a broader spectrum of a topic; such breadth might be reflected in a higher number of downloads and citations. This appeal is reflected in the above average scoring of the articles on downloads (sig.

.079, see Table 7). Lastly, the differential effects regarding the success of CLA, FLA, and mixed data papers were of interest, but no clear patterns emerged, showing that JOSM is truly a journal in which both types of articles are read and cited by the academic community. Beyond this, this study explored various descriptive variables of articles aiming to explain their success, e.g. international author teams, bigger author teams, number or recency of references, without any significant patterns. This indicates that the "success formula" for article downloads and citations seems to be more related to the content than to variables that relate to theory, data, and method.

POST PUBLICATION SUCCESS (DOWNLOADS AND CITATIONS)					Analysis
Above/below issue average in downloads and citations	**Type of article**	**Empirical**	**Conceptual**		
	Downloads	Mean .98 (SD .73)	Mean 1.07 (SD .76)		ANOVA: .568 (**n.s.**), n=158
	Citations	Mean .94 (SD .72)	Mean 1.23 (SD .90)		ANOVA: .062 (**~n.s.**), n=158
	Theory or concept testing	**No testing**	**Theory testing**	**Concept testing**	
	Downloads	Mean .96 (SD .69)	Mean .93 (SD .61)	Mean 1.22 (SD .98)	ANOVA: .163 (**n.s.**), n=158
	Citation	Mean 1.03 (SD .78)	Mean .91 (SD .78)	Mean 1.07 (SD .75)	ANOVA: .583 (**n.s.**), n=158
	Theory or concept extension	**Theory extension**	**Concept extension**		
	Downloads	Mean 1.06 (SD .77)	Mean .95 (SD .71)		ANOVA: .332 (**n.s.**), n=158
	Citations	Mean 1.08 (SD .87)	Mean .93 (SD .68)		ANOVA: .219 (**n.s.**), n=158
	Type of data	**Qualitative Data**	**Quantitative Data**	**Mixed Data**	
	Downloads	Mean .83 (SD .63)	Mean .94 (SD .65)	Mean 1.21 (SD .66)	ANOVA: .101 (**n.s.**), n=122
	Citations	Mean .92 (SD .69)	Mean .86 (SD .65)	Mean 1.08 (SD .85)	ANOVA: .485 (**n.s.**), n=122
	Number of studies	**One study**	**Two studies or more**		
	Downloads	Mean .87 (SD .59)	Mean 1.21 (SD .80)		ANOVA: .016 (**sig.**), n=122
	Citations	Mean .86 (SD .62)	Mean 1.13 (SD .90)		ANOVA: .079 (**~n.s.**), n=122
	Unit of analysis	**CLA data**	**FLA data**	**CLA & FLA data**	
	Downloads	Mean 1.02 (SD .74)	Mean .84 (SD .53)	Mean 1.11 (SD .56)	ANOVA: .265 (**n.s.**), n=122
	Citations	Mean .94 (SD .68)	Mean .83 (SD .59)	Mean 1.33 (SD .1.21)	ANOVA: .155 (**n.s.**), n=122

<0 = below issue average, >0 above issue average, n.s. = not significant, sig. = significant at .05, ~sig. = significant at .1

Table 7: Post Publication Success (Downloads and Citations)

Receiving a best paper award is probably one of the highest acknowledgements by the academic community a paper can achieve. Thus, it was of interest to investigate which papers were nominated for or won best paper awards. The results of this study show that being nominated for or winning a best paper award cannot be explained by any patterns that relate to the type of paper, the theory or concept foundation, the data, or the descriptive variables. In the authors' view, this is a testament of the open and inclusive attitude of the editorial board of the journal.

POST PUBLICATION SUCCESS (BEST PAPER AWARD)					Analysis
Proportion (total) of papers nominated for or won best paper award	**Type of article**	**Empirical**	**Conceptual**		Chi-square: 1.0 (**n.s.**), n=19
	Nominated	64.3% (9)	35.7% (5)		
	Won	80% (4)	20% (1)		
	Theory or concept testing	**No testing**	**Theory testing**	**Concept testing**	Chi-square: .091 (**~n.s.**), n=19
	Nominated	50% (7)	35.7% (5)	14.3% (2)	
	Won	40% (2)	0% (0)	60% (3)	
	Theory or concept extension	**Theory extension**	**Concept extension**		Chi-square: .303 (**n.s.**), n=19
	Nominated	57.1% (8)	42.9% (6)		
	Won	20% (1)	80% (4)		
	Type of data	**Qualitative data**	**Quantitative data**	**Mixed data**	Chi-square: .983 (**n.s.**), n=13 (basis empirical papers)
	Nominated	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	22.2% (2)	
	Won	25% (1)	50% (2)	25% (1)	
	Number of studies	**One study**	**Two studies or more**		Chi-square: 1.0 (**n.s.**), n=13 (basis empirical papers)
	Nominated	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)		
	Won	75% (3)	25% (1)		
	Unit of analysis	**CLA data**	**FLA data**	**CLA & FLA data**	Chi-square: .713 (**n.s.**), n=13 (basis empirical papers)
	Nominated	55.6% (5)	33.3% (3)	11.1 (1)	
	Won	75% (3)	25% (1)	0% (0)	

Chi-square=Pearsons chi-square, 2-sided significance, n.s. = not significant, sig. = significant at .05, ~sig. = significant at .1

Table 8: Post Publication Success (Best Paper Award)

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DISCIPLINE

This study aims to make two main contributions, one is to showcase the diversity of service research and then to explain (post publication) success of articles operationalized as interest in an article, usage, and awards. Subsequently, it aims to make three sub-contributions (1) stimulate a dialogue about existing norms and practices in the service field, (2) enable and encourage openness amongst service scholars and (3) motivate scholars to join the field. To start the dialogue even before the publication of this manuscript, we have asked a number of established service scholars in service research, some of them members of multiple editorial boards of the leading service journals including JOSM, to provide their opinion on the implications of this study for the service discipline. The authors are thankful to Roderick Brodie, Bo Edvardsson, Bart Larivière, Ray Fisk, A. Parasuraman, and Jochen Wirtz for having provided their comments.

First of all, Larivière states: “This is the first comprehensive study that identifies and explores such a wealthy set of variables/aspects that characterize successful (i.e., published, downloaded, cited and awarded) papers in the service field

and the Journal of Service Management in particular." Since one aim of this paper was to motivate younger scholars and authors from the boundaries or outside the service field to join, we are pleased to read that Larivière states: "This paper is a must-read for new service scholars and scholars from other fields that are warmly welcomed to join the service community as this paper offers relevant insights and guidelines on how future interdisciplinary contributions to our service discipline can be made."

Encouragement to join the service field can also be deduced from Fisk's and Edvardsson's observations that "this study shows that the service research field is in thriving health. The diversity of topics, concepts, methods, and collaborations demonstrates a robust hybrid vigor in service research (Fisk)" and that "service research is a dynamic and growing academic field, covering a wide range of topics, theories, methods and contributions (Edvardsson)."

Despite the fact that the study at hand did not set a particular focus on the content of the articles, Brodie states that this study "provides the basis for a dialogue about the future of service research" and "an excellent basis to discuss future research directions" (Edvardsson). In lieu of this, Wirtz recommends that papers about "breakthrough developments in the market place" should be encouraged. He states that the discipline seems "to be years behind industry," adding that "There are so many innovations with significant implications for the management and marketing of service. These include rapidly improving technology that becomes better, smarter, smaller, and cheaper will transform virtually all service sectors. Especially exciting are the opportunities offered by developments in mobile technology, wearable technology, geo tagging, cameras, sensors, robotics, drones, virtual reality, speech recognition, biometrics, the Internet of Things, big data, analytics, and artificial

intelligence that will bring opportunities for a wide range of service innovations that have the potential to dramatically improve the customer experience, service quality and productivity all at the same time. Yet, as a community we do not contribute enough thought leadership to these developments." Edvardsson also stresses the need for more research on "novel and useful theoretical and conceptual developments to deepen the understanding of many phenomena in a service-driven economy, such as innovation, design, digitalization, robotization, Internet of Things and virtual realities."

Wirtz further states that there are "too many papers [that] are CB-centric and use variables that have been studied extensively sometimes for two or more decades, [e.g.] service quality, customer satisfaction, trust, loyalty, engagement." In contrast, Wirtz acknowledges there are "far too few papers [.] published that relate to 'Services Strategy.' […] Many of these could be conceptual in nature, but empirical papers are also dearly lacking on this topic. Where are the service papers on strategic management, service marketing and business performance, service marketing and strategy interface, service marketing performance measurement, service firms' organizational structure and strategy behavior, service marketing capabilities, service marketing capabilities, service business model innovation, strategic service leadership, and achieving and maintaining strategic competitiveness in the service economy?"

One possibility for enhancing the managerial relevance and possibly novelty of service research is recommended by Edvardsson: "We also need to develop close relations with reflective practitioners in both services businesses and the public sector and give priority to novel approaches in empirical studies." The results of this study show that only 5.7% of the author teams include a practitioner. More author teams are

therefore encouraged to work with practitioners, not necessarily only as co-authors, but to identify relevant research questions, to collect data, or to include their view on the managerial implication section of the paper (see e.g. Benoit *et al.*, 2016 for an example).

Based on this study's results that the interest (downloads) in conceptual articles is similar to empirical ones, yet their usage (citations) is significantly higher, and given that they influence the discipline and thus have the potential to boost the impact factor, more conceptual articles should be published. The experts agree to this (i.e. Brodie, Parasuraman, Wirtz): "I believe it is especially important to emphasize the need for greater scholarly research attention on developing new conceptual frameworks/theories than at present, along with greater openness in the review process towards novel approaches that deviate from conventional 'norms' in conducting such research" (Parasuraman). This is in line with the literature postulating that conceptual articles are important to advance the discipline (Stewart and Zinkhan, 2006).

Beyond noticing the importance, Brodie makes multiple suggestions on how the lack of conceptual articles can be overcome: "Of particular interest is recognition of the important role of conceptual articles. What is needed now is a more in depth discussion of the role of conceptual papers play in the theorizing process that advances knowledge. To date this is largely a neglected area. For example, while Ostrom *et al.* (2015) recent review of Service Research Priorities makes reference to interface of research and theory, no explicit attention is given to the role of conceptual papers. In a recent research article Brodie (2017) addresses this issue. The article is motivated by my observation that too much of our research is '*stuck in the middle neither being firmly based in real world data, nor reaching a sufficient level of*

abstraction.' To avoid this danger, what is needed are processes in which theory informs empirical research and practice, and at the same time, where practice informs empirical research and theory. In these processes, conceptual work becomes intertwined with empirical research. Abduction reasoning, which involves 'systematic combining' of deductive and inductive methods, plays a key facilitating role in this process. […] It is of critical importance to recognize that practitioners, customers and other stakeholders can play a key role as collaborators in research processes and hence provide powerful insight into theory development. Thus, there is the need to *theorize with them* and not just about them."

However, anecdotal evidence and literature observes conceptual articles are harder to publish (Stewart and Zinkhan, 2006), mostly because evaluation criteria are less clear (Yadav, 2010). Thus, based on the results of this study, authors are encouraged to submit conceptual articles and reviewers to support authors in maneuvering through the review process, rather than rejecting manuscripts that do not fit their norms and practices

The suggested imbalance in favor of theory testing as opposed to theory development in the literature (Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan, 2007) is supported by this study's data. No authors positioned their paper as theory development, and only some as theory extension. This is unfortunate, because papers developing theory offer opportunities to make a significant contribution (Ladik and Stewart, 2008; Gummesson and Grönroos, 2012). This leads Parasuraman to suggest: "A fruitful avenue for correcting the current theory-testing vs. theory-developing imbalance in the service literature is to sponsor special issues based on thought-leadership symposia in which teams of invited scholars from multiple disciplines work together and develop conceptual papers."

This research also has multiple implications with regards to methods and data. Overall, the authors of the study at hand agree with Lehmann *et al.* (2011), who call for keeping an open mind regarding the specificities of methods employed and the rigidity of common practices. These rigid rules tend to confuse desirability with hard requirements and inflexible norms. The authors argue that an overemphasis on analytical rigor, as witnessed in the majority of published academic marketing journals, should not lead to an underrepresentation of other important characteristics such as communicability, simplicity, and relevance.

Literature suggests using more transaction data from the managerial world as opposed to self-reported behavior (McAbee *et al.,* 2017; Sorensen *et al.*, 2017) and Edvardsson encouraged academics to collaborate more with practitioners. A growing proportion of all JOSM articles (15%) based their results on transaction or mixed data, but more authors are encouraged to use transaction or mixed data to overcome biases.

Some journals focus on one particular unit of analysis, i.e., firm-level or consumer-level data (e.g., Industrial Marketing Management focuses on firm-level data while the Journal of Consumer Research focuses on consumer-level data). There are seldom journals that are balanced when it comes to a focus on the unit of analysis. The authors commend JOSM for striking a good balance, with around half of the papers being "pure" CLA papers that use this unit of analysis throughout the entire paper, and the other half being "pure" FLA or mixed papers.

With regard to data, the results of this study show that for a number of variables (e.g., geographic origin or collection channel), some authors did not give specific information about where or how the data was collected. For readers, however, it is important to make a judgment about the applicability of the results to their

particular context. Thus, authors, reviewers, and editors are invited to check whether they have provided all the necessary information about their data collection.

Many papers scored high on effort level of data collection and data analysis. In particular, it seemed that the effort level for FLA data collections compared to CLA or mixed data collections was higher. Thus, reviewers are encouraged to acknowledge that it may be more difficult to collect firm-level data. When dealing with manuscripts based on firm-level data, reviewers should carefully consider the common suggestion to collect new data during the review process. Authors, on the other hand, are invited to anticipate what issues might be raised in the review process and take extra care to ensure the validity and reliability of data as well as include a substantial number of control variables so as to be able to respond to any issues. Furthermore, the results also show that, according to our criteria, some studies were judged as having a low effort level. Of course, we encourage authors to expend as much effort as possible into their data collection to obtain meaningful results that are theoretically and managerially relevant.

JOSM makes regular use of special issues to capture "hot topics" or discussions that happen at conferences, and the results show that special issues are a good outlet for publishing conceptual articles. Moreover, these are often written in a more accessible fashion. Based on the results, the further use of special issues is supported not only to put emphasis on important and timely topics, but also to allow special issue editors to gain experience and thus prepare for eventually taking on this important role as guardians of scientific advancement (El-Omar, 2014).

The analysis on the readability of the articles reveals that, according to the Flesch–Kincaid score, JOSM articles score higher on reading difficulty than Journal of Marketing articles, however considering a different timeframe (Sawyer *et al.,*

2008). Authors and reviewers alike are encouraged to write as simply as possible to enhance the accessibility of service research and are reminded that elaborate, difficult writing is not a testament of knowledge.

This study found a considerable variety in the usage of references, with regard to the total number (ranging from one to 159) as well as recency, i.e., average age of the references, ranging from 23.64 to 4.81 years old relating to the publication year. This reveals a very broad spectrum regarding the number and recency of references to meet standards for publication. The literature has emphasized that authors must locate their manuscripts in ongoing conversations and connect them to the prior conversations through references (Huber, 2008). Based on the results, the authors of this study recommend that future authors pay particular attention to locating their research in prior conversations, in different areas, and from different perspectives up to the point of publication. Thus, authors must keep up to date with contributions in literature.

Lastly, one intended contribution was to inform authors of what makes articles more successful. With the exception of conceptual articles being cited more frequently, remarkably, the results show almost no general patterns explaining the three post-publication success variables: interest (downloads), usage (citation), and award (best paper award). Even though it is partly disappointing to not be able to produce more results on the predictors of post-publication success, this is a testament that the instruments with which the findings were generated seem less relevant than the actual findings. i.e. the content, which was not the focus of this study. The authors believe that this a good sign and testament for the openness of the service discipline.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This research needs to be evaluated in light of its limitations. First, this study presents many descriptive results, which limit direct inferences beyond the set of articles investigated. The JOSM is one of the premier journals in the field, therefore these results should be of interest to the readers of JOSM and other service journals. Second, and related to the above, the set of articles examined sets a limit itself, given that this study has only analyzed one service journal and only over five year span. Similar studies, even though narrower in their scope, have used bigger samples (e.g., Hanson and Grimmer, 2007; Sawyer *et al.,* 2008). The detailed coding and assiduous effort involved could counterbalance the shorter time frame. Third, this study is intended to contribute to the literature by analyzing the post-publication success of articles, even though the acceptance and the publication itself should be viewed already as a success. One trade off that has to be made here is either to choose an older sample (i.e., articles prior to 2015) so that the citation measure is more meaningful or to be cautious with using citations as a success measure. This study has tried to overcome this limitation by including the number of downloads into the analysis and comparing the citation of an article to the issue average. However, highly cited papers skew the average, and thus bias the analysis. Overall, further research is encouraged to extend the dialogue about publication practices in service research. To put the results of this study into context and track their development and underlying factors, similar analyses might be undertaken for other service journals while covering a longer time period.

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