

## Call for Papers

### **Journal of Service Theory and Practice (Special Issue)**

#### **Emerging digital technologies and professional services – Current and future research agenda**

**Submissions open: 1 January 2022**

**Submissions deadline: 23 April 2022**

#### **Introduction**

Digital technologies and platforms such as computers, mobile devices and social media have changed the way consumers and service providers interact with each other, in the last few decades (Moffett et al. 2020; Yadav and Pavlou 2014; 2020). This trend is continuing with the emergence of new digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence (Davenport et al. 2020; Huang and Rust, 2018; 2020; Rai 2020), augmented and mixed reality (Hilken et al. 2017, 2020), Blockchain, Machine Learning, Internet of things (Hoffman and Novak 2018), robotics (Mende et al. 2019), and virtual reality (Sample et al. 2020), which are further transforming the way service firms develop and deliver their services to customers (Grewal et al. 2020a, 2020b).

Despite such growing widespread interest in the emerging digital technologies, most current research focuses on their impact in the consumer services contexts, such as education, healthcare, retailing, transportation etc. (Grewal et al. 2020a, 2020b). By contrast, there is hardly any research on the impact of these new digital technologies on the professional services despite their important contribution to economic growth and employment around the world and significant differences with consumer services in their decision-making process (Pemer, 2021). We aim to address this gap in this special issue and make a new contribution to the extant research on the role of emerging digital technologies in service theory and practice.

Specifically, this special issue aims to extend the growing research on the impact of emerging digital technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence, blockchain, internet of things, machine learning, virtual reality etc.) to the professional services context (e.g., advertising, audit, consulting, engineering, marketing, research etc.). We will achieve this aim by attracting high quality manuscripts that use a variety of conceptual and empirical (qualitative and quantitative) approaches to create new knowledge about how these technologies may influence the attitudes, perceptions, behaviours and decision-making for the professional services providers, customers, and other value chain partners.

In this context, the limited extant research on the role and impact of emerging digital technologies in the professional services context shows findings that clearly highlight the need for more research on this topic. For example, a recent study shows that applying digital technology indiscriminately to the professional services context may have a significant negative impact on customer perceived value if the service firms do not balance their service quality dimensions with the application of these new technologies (Nguyen et al., 2020). Professional service providers are also faced with the challenge of integrating the components of these new digital technologies with the knowledge-intensive nature of their activities (Lubarski et al., 2017).

More recently, Pemer (2021) shows that frontline workers in knowledge-intensive professional services are influenced by the fit between technological innovations and the type of intelligence their services are built on coupled with their occupational identities and the service climate in their organisation. Thus, an indiscriminate adoption of emerging digital technologies by professional services providers may restrict their ability to standardize complex recurring tasks while continuing to offer customized services to address the unique needs of their diverse customer base. All these results indicate the importance of this topic and the need for more research to help service providers apply new digital technologies in the professional service context in a responsible and effective manner.

## **Scope of the special issue**

In this special issue, we are not looking for mere replications of prior studies from the consumer services area into the professional services domain. Instead, we are looking for both conceptual and empirical papers with strong theoretical foundations grounded in the well-established professional services and the growing emerging digital technologies literatures that aim to make original theoretical contribution. We also welcome papers using multi-disciplinary perspectives that help break fresh ground in our understanding of how professional services providers may use the emerging digital technologies to improve their performance and satisfy their customers.

## **Indicative list of topics**

We share the following list of suggested topics for this special issue that is only indicative and not exhaustive by any means.

1. Use multi-disciplinary perspectives to conceptualise the challenges and opportunities for professional services firms to adopt emerging digital technologies
2. Explore the reasons for the various emerging digital technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence, blockchain, internet of things, machine learning, robotics, virtual reality etc.) to be adopted by professional services providers to improve their performance in terms of customer experience, process efficiency etc.
3. Identify the drivers and inhibitors of the adoption and usage of emerging digital technologies in professional services, which may influence their popularity and sustainability in the long run.
4. Develop conceptual models and frameworks to capture and depict the attitudes, perceptions, evaluations and behaviours of customers, employees, users and decision-makers in the professional services contexts
5. Explore the impact of emerging digital technologies on important customer and employee outcomes, such as affective well-being, commitment, retention, and satisfaction in the professional service contexts
6. Assess the influence of emerging digital technologies on internal service quality, service climate, and organisational culture in the professional service contexts
7. Investigate the impact of emerging digital technologies on the performance of professional service firms, in terms of both marketing and financial metrics, such as market share, profitability etc.
8. Study the organisational level drivers of the adoption and usage of emerging digital technologies, such as firm innovativeness, industry type, firm size, country-of-origin etc.
9. Explore the national level factors that influence the adoption and usage of emerging digital technologies, such as national cultural value, socio-economic indicators, technological development and infrastructure etc.

## **Procedure**

All the papers for this special issue would need to be submitted on JSTP submission system (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jostp>) and would go through the regular double-blind peer review process followed by this journal.

Each paper will undergo two rounds of reviews, after which a final decision will be made. Submissions will open on 1 Jan 2022 and close on 31 March, 2022. The review process would be completed by middle of 2023 and the special issue will be published by the end of 2023.

Articles should not exceed a word limit of 8000 words (all-inclusive) and must make a contribution to service theory and practice. Please ensure that your papers follows the JSTP author guidelines available here: <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/jstp>

Each submitted manuscript would be randomly assigned to one of the three guest co-editors to ensure complete fairness and transparency in the review process. Each guest co-editor would handle the complete review process for the manuscripts assigned to them but the final decisions would be made in consultation with the chief editors of the journal.

### Guest co-editors

For any enquiries about this special issue, please email the following guest editors:

- 1) Piyush Sharma, Curtin University, Australia ([piyush.sharma@curtin.edu.au](mailto:piyush.sharma@curtin.edu.au))
- 2) Kimmy Wa Chan, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong ([kimmychan@hkbu.edu.hk](mailto:kimmychan@hkbu.edu.hk))
- 3) Russel PJ Kingshott, Curtin University, Australia ([R.Kingshott@curtin.edu.au](mailto:R.Kingshott@curtin.edu.au))

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