

Insights and Future Directions in Service Design: A Global perspective

Purpose

This paper critically reviews the evolution of the service design literature over the past two decades, with a particular focus on its maturation and application in a global context. The study aims to address gaps and inconsistencies in existing knowledge and to propose a comprehensive research agenda for future studies.

Design/methodology/approach

The study applies three co-citation bibliometric methods including multidimensional scaling (MDS), hierarchical clustering (HCA), as well as exploratory factor analysis (EFA) together with text-mining techniques to conduct a systematic review and chart the intellectual and conceptual foundations of the service design field.

Findings

The analysis maps the intellectual and conceptual structures of the service design domain. The co-citation analysis produced five clusters/factors from the EFA and HCA, identifying five groups that highlight the theoretical underpinnings of the field. In addition, the text-mining analysis shows that themes such as customers, technology, and the international market are among the most dominant in the literature. Taking together, these findings provide a consolidated understanding of the fragmented service design field, which not only highlights existing gaps but also supports researchers in developing and proposing more integrative, globally relevant conceptual frameworks for future studies.

Research limitations/implications

While the combination of bibliometric and text mining techniques offers objectivity and breadth, some context-specific nuances may be overlooked. The findings underscore the necessity for future research to develop unified frameworks and region-specific models to address the complexity of global service ecosystems.

Practical implications

The proposed integrative framework assists organizations in aligning their service design strategies with emerging global trends and practices, supporting more effective international marketing and service delivery.

Originality/value

This study is among the first to provide a holistic, mixed-methods review of service design from a global perspective. It advances the literature by integrating diverse research streams and offering actionable directions for both scholars and practitioners in international marketing.

Keywords: Service design; international marketing; global; new service development; integrative understanding, text mining

Introduction

The rapid expansion of the service sector has elevated “service” to a central theme in academic research across a wide range of disciplines (Fu et al., 2022). Within this broader evolution, service design has gained significant traction as a distinct area of inquiry, attracting growing scholarly interest (e.g., Chen et al., 2022; Guenther & Guenther, 2021; Joly et al., 2019; Koskela-Huotari et al., 2021; Kumar & Dada, 2021; Vink & Koskela-Huotari, 2022). From a global marketing perspective, this increasing attention reflects service design’s strategic role in shaping service experiences, driving differentiation, and enhancing positioning in competitive international markets (Beveridge et al., 2022; Mostafiz et al., 2024).

As service firms expand globally, service design becomes vital for ensuring offerings are not only efficient but also culturally aligned, user-centered, and adaptable across regions (Naeem, 2025). Since its emergence in the 1990s alongside interaction design (Holmlid & Evenson, 2008), service design has remained conceptually fragmented and methodologically diverse (Carlini et al., 2024; Field et al., 2021; Vargo et al., 2023), reflecting its interdisciplinary roots in operations management, new service development, and design theory (Mariani & Borghi, 2024; Pöyry et al., 2024; Tuunanen et al., 2024). While some scholars emphasise human-centred approaches that prioritise customer experience (Tussyadiah, 2014; Ponsignon et al., 2024), others focus on structured methodologies and tools (Wang & Yang, 2024). More recently, research has turned to cultural and cross-cultural influences (Carlini and Wu, 2024; Francesco & Roberta, 2019; Sarantou et al., 2021) and the role of servicescapes in shaping experiences across global contexts (Line & Hanks, 2020).

In light of such rapid expansion, although service design research has expanded considerably, it remains fragmented, with no unified framework that addresses its conceptual and practical implications in a global context. While the diversity of approaches has enriched the field, it has also produced inconsistent definitions, partial insights, and limited critical synthesis. Crucially, most studies remain situated within narrow cultural or sectoral boundaries, overlooking the global dimension of service design and thereby restricting the transferability of findings across industries and geographies. Recent contributions illustrate this limitation. Wenninger et al. (2022) identified attributes valued in proactive service design but failed to criticize the Kano model's lack of cross-cultural generalizability. Gao et al. (2022) restricted their review to B2C and C2C tourism interactions, neglecting the wider stakeholder ecosystem central to global service contexts. Similarly, Vaz and Venkatesh (2022) offered limited practical guidance for application across diverse healthcare systems, while Vink et al. (2021) acknowledged the need for stronger system-level integration to enhance international relevance. Other works, such as Trischler (2022) also fall short of critically assessing contextual constraints, leaving unanswered questions about applicability beyond localised settings. Collectively, these gaps underscore the urgent need for a global perspective in service design studies that systematically interrogates cultural, institutional, and contextual variations. Advancing this agenda calls for the development of an impactful future conceptual model that not only synthesizes fragmented insights but also equips researchers with a globally transferable framework for advancing theory and guiding practice.

Further, much of the research on service design remains confined to specific national or cultural contexts, producing findings with limited generalisability. This narrow scope overlooks the complexity of global service ecosystems shaped by diverse cultural, institutional, and regulatory environments (Patrício et al., 2018). Without global perspectives, current frameworks

risk being ethnocentric and ill-suited for multinational contexts. Moreover, the literature is dominated by qualitative case studies and conceptual narratives, which, while rich in depth, lack the systematic rigour needed to map the field's intellectual trajectory. The underuse of quantitative, data-driven methods such as bibliometric analysis and text mining has constrained cumulative synthesis, obscured large-scale patterns, and hindered the development of integrative theoretical frameworks (Rajala, 2024; Marvi et al., 2024).

Taken together, while recent studies have made valuable contributions to the field of service design, significant gaps remain in our understanding of global stakeholder interactions, region-specific models, and the systemic conceptualization of service design in a global context. Therefore, a more unified and integrated framework for service design research is necessary to address these global challenges and advance the field. Such a framework is critical not only for driving innovation and operational effectiveness across borders, but also for enabling sustainable, transformative change in global service systems shaped by cultural, institutional, and technological variation (Akaka et al., 2013; Kuure & Miettinen, 2017). To deepen understanding and support the field's progress, a thorough literature review is needed. Content analysis can help researchers synthesise prior studies from multiple perspectives (Samiee & Chabowski, 2012), but it is prone to bias and may not offer a fully reliable foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the domain (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

With this background we hope to (1) identifying influential contributions using co-citation and text mining techniques in service design from a global perspective, (2) synthesizing foundational global concepts in service design in global settings, and (3) developing an evidence-based framework to guide practitioners in international contexts. To achieve our objectives, we employ a combination of bibliometric approaches and text mining, to reveal the fundamental traits

of the service design field. Specifically, the co-citation analysis identifies citation patterns within the scholarly network, revealing the underlying intellectual structure of the field and its linkages to adjacent research streams, thereby mapping the broader landscape of service design from a global perspective (Mahavarpour et al., 2023). Complementing this, the text-mining approach introduces an additional layer of methodological rigour by mitigating bias and systematically uncovering conceptual structures. While co-citation traces the theoretical foundations and highlights the most influential contributions, text mining clarifies the thematic contours of sensory, experiential, and design-oriented research. Together, these methods generate a comprehensive and multi-dimensional synthesis of knowledge, offering a transparent and replicable basis for future inquiry and directly informing the development of a globally oriented service design framework (Marvi et al., 2024).

Building on the outcomes of this analysis, we outline strategies for synthesizing service design knowledge from a global viewpoint, advancing the literature in several keyways. Firstly, through co-citation analysis, we establish the foundational knowledge of service design from a global perspective. This provides a structured overview of the intellectual structure and identifies the core knowledge structure of the service design from global perspective. Specifically, we identified the foundational knowledge base underpinning global service design research through a co-citation analysis (Marvi et al., 2024). This analysis delineated the core knowledge structure of service design, underscoring the influence of cultural, institutional, and cross-national factors in shaping the intellectual structure of service design scholarship.

Second, by combining our findings from co-citation and text-mining we set the agenda for future studies that can integrate concepts and theories in service design from global perspective. Such a framework is crucial for future scholars as it moves beyond localised insights to account

for cultural, institutional, and sectoral diversity that shapes service design practices across geographies. By synthesising disparate streams of research, a global framework can offer a coherent structure that not only explicates antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes but also enhances the transferability of theoretical and managerial insights (Zha et al., 2023). This would provide future scholars with a robust foundation for comparative analysis, foster cross-disciplinary integration, and enable the development of actionable knowledge applicable to complex international service ecosystems.

Finally, on the methodological front, this study advances the literature by integrating co-citation analysis with text mining, providing a rigorous alternative to conventional literature reviews that are often prone to subjective bias (Zha et al., 2023). The combination of these techniques allows for systematic extraction and analysis of scholarly data while improving accuracy in dictionary construction, text coding, concept correlation, and concept mapping (Stead et al., 2023). This integrated approach reduces potential biases across multiple stages of the research process and facilitates a more objective, comprehensive, and reproducible synthesis of the service design literature (Marvi et al., 2024). The following sections begin with a review of relevant service design literature. We then apply our chosen methods (MDS, EFA, HCA, and text mining) to identify the field's defining features. The paper concludes by presenting an integrative, globally oriented model of the service design domain.

Overview of service design

Service design is commonly defined as an interdisciplinary approach to shaping and improving services so as to meet customer needs while creating value across the service journey. It integrates design thinking, user experience principles, and strategic business perspectives to ensure seamless

and user-centred service experiences (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2021). Nevertheless, despite being positioned as a human-centred and innovation-driven framework (Trischler et al., 2017), its application in practice often remains fragmented, inconsistent, and superficial.

Theoretically, service design aligns with service-dominant logic—shifting from services as deliverables to value co-creation based on value-in-use and value-in-context (Trischler et al., 2017; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Yet, this alignment remains largely conceptual, with limited practical integration particularly in global settings. Moreover, while service design aspires to foster innovation through multi-actor engagement and context-sensitive development, its execution often lacks the methodological rigor and depth necessary to yield meaningful outcomes. The iterative process from insight gathering to solution development and implementation (Patrício & Fisk, 2013) is frequently underdeveloped or inadequately executed. Concepts like emotional design (Heidig et al., 2015), design thinking (Beverland et al., 2015), and participatory design (Menschner et al., 2011) are cited as central. Emotional design refers to designing services that evoke specific emotional responses from the customers which can enhance satisfaction, customer engagement, and customer loyalty (Ho et al., 2012). In a global setting, emotional design must account for cultural differences in emotional expression, preferences, and values (Gao & Huang, 2022), as different culture can respond differently to culturally diverse service encounters. Further, participatory design which refers to an approach that actively involves users and stakeholders in the design process to ensure that the outcomes meet their needs and are usable in their context (Spinuzzi, 2005). In a global setting, participatory design must navigate cultural, linguistic, and socio-political differences among diverse user groups (Bødker et al., 2022). Engaging stakeholders from various regions requires sensitivity to local norms and inclusive methods to ensure meaningful participation (Varma et al., 2021).

The existing research reveals two distinct phases in the service design literature: (1) the discovery and definition of the service (e.g., Bitner, 1992; Goldstein et al., 2002; Roth & Menor, 2003), and (2) the design, development, and delivery of the service to the target market (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Patrício, Fisk, & Falcão e Cunha, 2008; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). Furthermore, three major perspectives emerge: (1) provider side, (2) service mechanism side, and (3) customer side. Critically, it is essential to distinguish clearly between these concepts to avoid conceptual ambiguity. Service design refers to the process of designing and improving services to create meaningful and valuable customer experiences. This holistic approach considers all points of contact and interactions between customers and providers, aiming to align offerings with customer expectations and to ensure a seamless, engaging journey (Gao et al., 2022; Suoheimo, Vasques, & Ryttilahti, 2020). However, the existing literature often conflates service design with related concepts, thereby obscuring the specific methodologies and outcomes that are distinctive to service design. On the other hand, service innovation involves the development of new or improved services that deliver unique value to customers. This includes introducing novel approaches, technologies, or business models to enhance the overall service experience. Service innovation is critical for organizations seeking to differentiate themselves in the market and gain a competitive advantage (Akter et al., 2023; Park, Lee, & Back, 2023). Yet, there is a need for more empirical studies to validate the long-term impact of such innovations on customer satisfaction and business performance. Lastly, service development focuses on creating and enhancing services to effectively meet customer needs and preferences. It encompasses the entire lifecycle of a service, from conceptualization to delivery. By prioritizing service development, organizations can continuously evolve their offerings and adapt to changing customer expectations (Dubiel & Mukherji, 2022).

With this background, a critical gap is the near-total absence of a global perspective in existing service design research. Most studies are contextually narrow, focusing on localized settings without examining how service design principles translate across different cultural, institutional, and economic systems (Butt et al., 2024). This omission is particularly problematic in an increasingly interconnected world, where services are designed, delivered, and experienced across global networks (Tham and Chin, 2025). Without this global lens, the field risks producing knowledge that lacks external validity and fails to address the nuanced needs of international users and stakeholders (Chabowski et al., 2025). As shown in Web Appendix A and B, current literature reviews expose both theoretical and practical shortcomings that demand a more integrated and globally aware approach.

Method Overview

To critically analyze the core features of service design and develop a comprehensive understanding of the field, we employ three co-citation bibliometric techniques including MDS, EFA, and HCA in combination with text mining. While these methods are powerful, they require careful consideration of their limitations and relevance within service design research (Marvi et al., 2025; Subramony et al., 2021). Co-citation analysis allows us to explore how service design connects with other research areas, shedding light on its foundations and evolution (Hulland, 2024; Marvi et al., 2024; Stead et al., 2023). However, this method may not fully capture the dynamic and interdisciplinary aspects of service design, particularly when newer or less-cited works are overlooked. Text mining, on the other hand, uncovers key concepts and themes, and reveals the differences between early and recent developments in service design, offering a systematic and objective review of a large body of literature (Liu et al., 2024; Antons & Breidbach, 2018). Despite its advantages, text mining may sometimes overlook context-specific nuances and subtle

interpretations that traditional reviews might identify. Integrating these methods provides two main advantages: (1) it mitigates the risk of researcher bias often present in conventional literature reviews, and (2) it facilitates a systematic and objective evaluation of a large and diverse body of literature that would be difficult to analyze in isolation (Antons & Breidbach, 2018). However, despite these strengths, the approach is not without limitations. Each method carries its own complexities and potential biases, which must be critically examined to achieve a well-rounded and accurate understanding of the service design domain (Stead et al., 2023).

We employed the three co-citation techniques to assess the consistency and robustness of our findings. Applying multiple analytical methods serves not only as a methodological precedent but also as a means to verify whether the results remain stable regardless of the technique used. This triangulation enhances the credibility of the outcomes. Moreover, using all three methods allows for cross-method comparisons, enabling the selection of the most meaningful and interpretable mapping output. Given that citation and co-citation data are inherently objective, the resulting visual representations accurately reflect the relational distances between cited works (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). For instance, in MDS mapping, the proximity of publications suggests that they collectively inform a specific subdomain within service design. Conversely, items that appear further apart often represent divergent or competing schools of thought within the service design in the global setting. This visual dispersion opens pathways for identifying novel or previously unexamined thematic connections, ultimately fostering the emergence of new conceptual paradigms (Kuhn, 1996).

Furthermore, while a variety of advanced co-citation tools and software, such as VOSviewer, have been introduced to process extensive datasets and capture structural patterns (Arici et al., 2022), the combined use of MDS, HCA and EFA offers a more balanced approach. These methods not only ensure analytical rigour but also facilitate clearer linkage to established

theoretical frameworks, particularly in studies with smaller datasets (Chabowski et al., 2022; Zha et al., 2022). Together, they minimize potential methodological biases. MDS visually maps the intellectual terrain of service design in global setting through a spatial configuration, while HCA identifies thematic clusters, offering complementary perspectives on the field's development within service design. Lastly, EFA, despite occasionally being viewed as unstable, has been commonly applied in bibliometric research as a trait-oriented technique (e.g., Nerur et al., 2008).

The Data

To critically examine and focus on service design research, we adopted a rigorous and systematic approach. Initially, we consulted four experienced experts to identify relevant keywords, ensuring inclusivity and a sharp focus on service design from a global perspective. This expert-driven method, while insightful, introduces potential biases based on individual perspectives (Chabowski et al., 2018; Schildt, Zahra, & Sillanpää, 2006). We adhered to previous studies in ensuring that our syntax encompass two critical characters: service-design terms (e.g., “service* design*” or “design* in service*”) and global-related terms (e.g., “inter\$nation” OR “bination” OR “global*” OR “cross\$nation*” OR “cross\$border*” OR “cross\$cultur*” OR “multi\$nation*” OR “trans\$nation*” OR “worldwide*” OR “intercultur*” OR “multi\$cultur*” OR “global\$market*” OR “cross\$regional*” OR “international\$business*” OR “global\$brand*” OR “cross\$market*” OR “multi\$market*” OR “international\$trade*” OR “cross\$national\$marketing*”). We searched for articles featuring in titles, abstracts, or author keywords. Adhering to established procedures (Samiee & Chabowski, 2021; Mahavarpour et al., 2022), we included articles from 1970 to end-2025 that matched the selected keywords in titles, abstracts, author keywords, or reference identifiers. Our search spanned all journals on the Chartered Association of Business Schools (Chartered ABS) list related to business and management, resulting in 685 articles. We excluded

book chapters, editorial notes, and other indirect research documents, as they do not undergo standard review procedures. This reduced our sample to 213 articles.

Furthermore, 105 articles were excluded for not focusing primarily on service design, highlighting a critical challenge in ensuring relevance and depth. This exclusion process underscores the potential risk of overlooking valuable interdisciplinary insights. Ultimately, focal articles were considered for analysis. Appendix, Figure 1 illustrates the research design for this study. For detailed methodological information, see Web Appendix C. This meticulous selection process aims to provide a comprehensive and focused dataset for analyzing service design from a global perspective.

Results

Co-citation analysis - To develop a general understanding of the service design domain, we utilized HCA and EFA. Additionally, MDS analysis was employed to gain a more detailed perspective. The MDS analysis revealed one research chain (Groups 1 and 2) and three isolated research groups (Groups 3, 4, and 5). A research chain indicates a sequential and linear collaboration where researchers build upon each other's findings. In contrast, a research group involves simultaneous collaboration on the same topic. Although the use of HCA, EFA, and MDS provided similar findings, validating the outcomes, a critical assessment suggests potential limitations. The applied methods provided a structured overview of the service design domain (Appendix, Figure 2) but failed to address the dynamic and evolving nature of the field comprehensively. In the next section we discuss our co-citation findings in detail:

Service Encounter Design & Market Adaptation (Factor/Cluster 1) – In a global context, the effectiveness of service design depends on how well service encounters are adapted and delivered across heterogeneous cultural, institutional, and economic environments. This cluster emphasises two interrelated dimensions: service operations design (Group 1) and service process re-engineering (Group 2), both of

which are integral to advancing global service design strategy. Studies in Group 1 focus on aligning overarching service concepts with the expectations of local markets. From a global perspective, this requires moving beyond the replication of standardised service models to the nuanced adaptation of touchpoints, servicescapes, and interfaces that reflect diverse user behaviours, cultural norms, and consumption patterns (Victorino et al., 2005; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011). Such adaptations ensure that services retain local legitimacy and resonance while maintaining coherence with a brand's global identity. In parallel, Group 2 highlights the organisational and processual underpinnings of service delivery, particularly the re-engineering of workflows, routines, and service blueprints to balance global efficiency with local responsiveness. From a service design perspective, process re-engineering enables the creation of flexible architectures that support localisation without undermining operational integrity (Bitner et al., 2008; Edvardsson, 2005). This dual capacity to uphold global standards while accommodating regional demands is vital for firms operating in international markets. For example, McDonald's illustrates adaptive service design by tailoring menus, interfaces, and customer interactions to local cultural contexts, while consistently reinforcing its global identity through values such as speed and reliability. This demonstrates how global service design requires an integrative approach that simultaneously manages cultural heterogeneity, operational scalability, and brand cohesion, thereby positioning service design as a critical enabler of international competitiveness.

Service Experience & Cross-Cultural Branding (Factor/Cluster 2) – In the global arena, service design depends on crafting meaningful and culturally attuned customer experiences that resonate across diverse markets. This cluster reflects two interrelated dimensions: experience blueprinting (Group 3) and service-dominant logic (SDL) (Group 4), both of which are central to designing customer journeys that are consistent yet locally relevant. Experience blueprinting systematically maps the customer journey to ensure coherence and reliability across geographic and cultural contexts (Shostack, 1984; Bitner et al., 2008). Within global service design, it is particularly important for balancing the standardisation of core elements with the flexibility

required to address regional variations. By detailing each touchpoint, firms can preserve brand integrity while enabling targeted adaptation. Complementing this, SDL highlights the co-creation of value between providers and customers, emphasising that value is contextually produced in use (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). In international markets, SDL stresses the need for adaptable service designs that accommodate cultural norms and behavioural differences, thereby facilitating meaningful interactions that enhance engagement and satisfaction. This perspective positions customers as active collaborators whose contributions help shape tailored service experiences across regions. Global brands such as Airbnb and Netflix exemplify these principles by personalising experiences to reflect local preferences and practices. Airbnb adapts interactions to align with regional customs while maintaining a consistent global platform, and Netflix customises content and interfaces to suit diverse cultural tastes worldwide.

Service Encounters & Global Brand Positioning (Factor/Cluster 3) – In the context of global service design, fostering *positive* service interactions is critical for shaping and reinforcing brand positioning across international markets. This cluster emphasises the strategic role of the physical and sensory environment—commonly conceptualised as the service encounter (Bitner, 1990)—in enhancing customer engagement and emotional connection worldwide. A well-designed servicescape is central to global service design, as it creates immersive environments that align with diverse cultural expectations while sustaining a coherent brand identity. Beyond aesthetics, servicescapes influence perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty by integrating sensory cues, spatial layouts, and atmospheric elements with regional preferences and symbolic meanings. Luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton illustrate this principle by using carefully curated store environments and personalised in-store experiences to communicate exclusivity, sophistication,

and heritage consistently across markets. In doing so, they cultivate emotional bonds that transcend geographic boundaries, reinforcing their premium positioning on a global scale.

New Service Development & Market Expansion (Factor/Cluster 4) – In global markets, the capacity to design and launch new services in response to evolving customer needs is a critical source of competitive advantage. This cluster underscores the importance of a design-driven approach in fostering service innovation that is simultaneously globally scalable and locally adaptable. Within service design, innovation extends beyond technological enhancement to the *reimagining* of offerings through human-centred, creative processes that address heterogeneous market demands. A design-driven orientation enables organisations to systematically investigate customer needs, prototype solutions, and tailor services to the cultural, economic, and institutional contexts of different regions. This positions service design as a strategic enabler of global expansion by ensuring that innovations are not only functional but also contextually meaningful and emotionally resonant. Apple’s Genius Bar exemplifies this principle: while its core concept of personalised technical support in a branded environment remains standardised, its implementation is adapted to local consumer expectations, language preferences, and behavioural norms.

Service Innovation & Competitive Differentiation (Factor/Cluster 5) - In the global service design landscape, integrating service-dominant logic (SDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008) with human-centred design is crucial for creating differentiated and meaningful customer experiences across diverse markets. SDL reconceptualises value as co-created through interactions between providers and customers, aligning closely with service design’s emphasis on user participation and iterative development. Human-centred design further *strengthens* this approach by embedding cultural sensitivity into the design process, leveraging local knowledge, behaviours, and emotional drivers to ensure contextual relevance. This integration moves service design beyond standardised,

one-size-fits-all models, promoting deeper engagement with user needs, expectations, and social contexts—key elements for operating effectively at a global scale. Starbucks' *My Starbucks Rewards* exemplifies this principle, combining global brand consistency with personalised features and local insights to enhance customer engagement across international markets.

Text mining analysis – To gain deeper insights into the evolution of the service design domain (Web Appendix D), we conducted a textual analysis of the literature. Appendix, Figure 3 visualises the resulting thematic clusters, where each coloured circle represents a thematic space labelled at the centre, concepts are denoted by black words, and semantic relationships are reflected in the links between them. Overlaps between circles indicate conceptual intersections across themes. The analysis identified ten dominant themes in service design research: (1) service, (2) customer, (3) provider, (4) social, (5) solutions, (6) people, (7) costs, (8) technology, (9) satisfaction, and (10) international market. These themes capture the broad contours of the field but also highlight tensions within its intellectual trajectory. For example, the prominence of technology and costs reflects managerial priorities but risks overshadowing equally critical dimensions such as ethics, sustainability, and cultural sensitivity—elements that are indispensable in a global service design context.

Furthermore, the broad categorisation of themes may conceal important variation within each cluster. Concepts such as *customer* or *social* can manifest very differently across cultural and institutional contexts, suggesting the need for more fine-grained, cross-national analyses. From a global perspective, the identification of *international market* as a core theme is particularly noteworthy, underscoring the increasing recognition that service design scholarship must move beyond localised case studies and address the complexities of globally distributed service ecosystems. To remain relevant, thematic analysis of service design must therefore be

continuously updated and refined, capturing emerging trends such as digital transformation, inclusivity, and cross-cultural user experience. This dynamic approach not only reflects the evolving nature of global service design but also provides a foundation for scholars to build more nuanced and transferable frameworks that account for cultural, institutional, and ethical diversity in international contexts.

Discussion

This study employs co-citation analysis and text mining analysis to systematically review the service design literature from a global perspective. Co-citation analysis uncovers the core intellectual foundations and theoretical developments of the field by mapping connections among highly cited studies. In parallel, text mining organizes central themes and concepts, highlighting how research has evolved over time. Taken together by comparing these findings we managed to develop and propose our conceptual future frameworks. Our proposed future framework not only synthesizes insights from recent scholarship but also suggests key questions for future exploration, aiming to further advance the academic discourse in this area (Chabowski et al., 2018). To clarify how these concepts were extracted from prior analysis, more details are provided in Appendix C.

Further, we looked into more recent published papers more carefully to identify current research opportunities and develop effective knowledge-building strategies. By examining recent articles in the field, we can identify new concepts and address contemporary issues (e.g., Bellos & Kavadias, 2019; Gummerus et al., 2022; Joshi & Alavaikko, 2020; Kim, Kwon, & Kim, 2023; Koskela-Huotari et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022; O’Keeffe, Assoulin, & Szczepanska, 2022; Trischler & Westman Trischler, 2022; Vink & Koskela-Huotari, 2022). These articles provide valuable insights into emerging trends, challenges, and advancements in the field, and highlight the future pathways that service design researchers should take from a global perspective. Appendix Table 1

shows the comparison between our findings enabling the expansion and refinement of existing concepts and variables and thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the overall process. Building on this, the subsequent section presents a systematic comparison of findings derived from co-citation analysis (i.e., MDS, HCA, and EFA) and text-mining techniques, demonstrating how the integration of these complementary approaches has informed and advanced the development of our proposed future model.

Comparing Co-Citation and Text-Mining Findings for Model Development

The first cluster of our text-mining results (Cluster A) indicates that research has concentrated primarily on core themes such as service, technology, social dynamics, people, and solutions. Central concepts such as design, processes, systems, innovation, and development reflect a pronounced engineering orientation. This perspective foregrounds service system design, the roles of actors, employee and team requirements, resources, and activities, with particular emphasis on service operations. It further highlights the integration of innovation, knowledge, technology, and social factors within service innovation design, alongside environmental, industrial, public, and local considerations shaping service contexts. Notably, technology, people, and social media emerge as critical drivers influencing contemporary global service design practices. These findings enrich understanding of service encounter design within a global delivery framework and align with Factor/Cluster 1 in hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA), particularly in relation to service operations and blueprinting, as mirrored in Groups 1 and 2 of the multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) analysis. For instance, Groups 1 and 2 are connected through an institutional logics perspective, which examines micro and macro level mechanisms through which service design fosters organizational transformation (Kurtmollaiev et al., 2018). In examining service innovation mechanisms, overlaps with marketing-oriented perspectives, especially those

concerning new service development and innovation, further substantiate findings in Factor/Cluster 4 and Factor/Cluster 5 in HCA and EFA. The advancing service marketing literature also underscores the involvement of not only providers and customers but also other customers in service ecosystems, thereby reinforcing the need for comprehensive global service design approaches. Such approaches must integrate the experiences, expectations, and requirements of all stakeholders, a holistic orientation that is critical to effective global service capture.

The second cluster in text mining emphasizes the global customer perspective, with a particular focus on the customer journey and service experience. This domain aligns with Factor/Cluster 2 in HCA and EFA and Groups 3 and 4 in MDS, highlighting theories that are central to service experience design. Research in this area prioritizes customer involvement and absorptive capacity as mechanisms for enhancing value creation (e.g., Skålén et al., 2015; Storey and Larbig, 2018). Groups 3 and 4 are closely interconnected, as illustrated by Sudbury-Riley et al. (2020), who introduced the trajectory touchpoint technique to utilize customer experiences in developing stronger value propositions within global service delivery. Similarly, Zomerdijk and Voss (2010) highlight experience-centric service design as a critical differentiator that fosters loyalty. This expanding body of scholarship underscores the fundamental importance of understanding the global customer journey and of designing services that prioritize meaningful experiences, both of which are essential to sustaining long-term engagement and optimizing global service value capture.

The third cluster in text mining reflects a provider-oriented perspective on service design, emphasizing firm–customer interactions with key themes of provider performance, satisfaction, and cost efficiency. This domain corresponds to Factor/Cluster 3 in HCA and EFA and Group 5 in MDS. Co-citation analysis highlights foundational contributions on customer participation in

service design teams (e.g., Lei et al., 2019) and on crowdsourced delivery models that assess performance and satisfaction outcomes (Ta et al., 2018). Although customer involvement emerges across multiple clusters, this stream of research increasingly underscores the ways in which active customer participation shapes both design processes and resulting outcomes, as discussed by Trischler et al. (2018). These insights deepen understanding of global service delivery dynamics and their implications for effective global service design. They also reinforce the critical role of customer-driven innovation in enhancing global service value capture. Given the multidisciplinary trajectory of scholarship on global service design, service delivery, and value capture, this cluster synthesizes evidence from multiple analytic approaches to clarify interconnections and emerging patterns, as summarized in Appendix D

Taken together, the first, second, and third clusters form the foundation of a future framework in which global service design functions as antecedents, global service delivery represents processes, and global service value capture denotes outcomes. Appendix Figure 3 presents the comparison across the findings of each method. The first cluster underscores the engineering-oriented foundations of international service systems, highlighting service architecture, blueprinting, and the integration of technology, knowledge, and social forces. Viewed through an institutional logics lens, these antecedents provide the capabilities of design system capability, innovation orientation, and contextual alignment that enable organisational transformation. The second cluster shifts attention to the global customer journey and lived service experience, emphasising co-creation intensity, absorptive capacity, and trajectory touchpoints as mechanisms of value creation. The third cluster reflects the provider perspective, emphasising interaction routines, performance, satisfaction, and cost efficiency as critical for effective delivery. Synthesising these insights, we theorise a pathway whereby design antecedents (Cluster 1) enable

superior co-creation and experience orchestration (Cluster 2), which, when channelled through provider routines and performance systems (Cluster 3), enhance global service value capture in terms of loyalty, revenue, and ecosystem spillovers. In the following section, we elaborate on our proposed future conceptual model (appendix, figure 4) in greater detail.

Global Service Design (Antecedents)

Our first cluster showed the focuses on the service mechanism side from a global perspective, emphasizing how the internal systems and processes that underpin service design in the global setting. In particular in this cluster, our Factor/Cluster 1 clearly articulated how these interactions, whether human-to-human or mediated by technology, play a crucial role in shaping customers' experiences, perceptions, and satisfaction. These encounters, whether face-to-face or technology-mediated, form the core of customer experience and are a central concern in service design. In a global setting, the complexity of designing effective service encounters increases significantly due to cultural, technological, and institutional diversity across markets.

Global service design is increasingly recognized as a multidisciplinary and emergent field that adopts a holistic, human-centered approach to the creation of services across international contexts (Morelli et al., 2020). While its focus on designing for human experience is well established, there remains a growing critical awareness that effective global service design cannot be achieved in isolation from the foundational infrastructures that support it. These service infrastructures—comprising the principles, systems, and capabilities enabling service delivery at scale are now viewed as essential antecedents to successful service design outcomes (Herterich et al., 2023; Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2014; Martín-Peña et al., 2024). However, the concept of global service infrastructure remains underdeveloped in the literature, often treated as a background enabler rather than an integral and evolving component of design practice.

Emerging work has begun to identify three core dimensions critical to the development of global service infrastructures: global ecosystem orientation (Gao et al., 2022; Sklyar et al., 2019; Trischler & Westman Trischler, 2022), global service organization (Cook et al., 2002), and design insight (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). While these axes offer a useful starting point, their conceptual relationships are rarely theorized in an integrated manner. Current scholarship tends to treat them in isolation, overlooking the interdependencies and tensions that arise when services are designed and delivered across culturally, institutionally, and technologically diverse settings. As a result, there is a pressing need for more critical engagement with how these infrastructure components interact, evolve, and contribute to global service value creation and resilience.

Global ecosystem orientation

Findings from Factor/Cluster 3, grounded in a global ecosystem orientation, emphasize the need for service environments to balance local cultural particularities with global standards to create cohesive, immersive experiences across diverse markets. Within this framework, a global service ecosystem is conceptualized as a fluid and evolving network of loosely connected actors including providers, users, institutions, and platforms who engage through shared technologies, languages, and institutional arrangements to co-create value and deliver services globally (Vargo & Lusch, 2011). While this perspective offers a dynamic view of actor relationships over time, as captured in Clusters A and B of our text mining analysis, existing research often lacks the theoretical and empirical depth necessary to unpack the complexities of such interrelationships. In particular, there is insufficient exploration of how global organizations, consumers, employees, technological platforms, and broader societal institutions interact and influence one another within service ecosystems.

This study adopts a global ecosystem orientation to interpret the roles and contributions of key actors in service design. Prior scholarship has acknowledged the strategic importance of tailoring global service design to segmented markets (Huang & Rust, 2017; Jain & Bala, 2018), but such differentiation introduces cost and operational challenges that are often underexplored. Similarly, the literature on service capacity management has highlighted the need to align global service supply with fluctuating demand (Choi & Kim, 2013), while also accounting for resource limitations, service requirements (Özlük, Elimam, & Interaminense, 2010), and contextual constraints (Ma, Webb, & Schwartz, 2021). However, this research remains fragmented, with limited integration into broader discussions of global service strategy, servitization priorities, and value proposition design. To address these gaps, future research should critically explore: How do global service ecosystems evolve over time in response to shifting institutional, technological, and cultural landscapes? What mechanisms allow firms to balance the competing demands of local customization and global standardization in service design? And how can service capacity management frameworks be adapted to enhance global service value capture across increasingly complex and volatile environments?

Human centrality – Grounded in the insights from Factor/Cluster 4, our analysis underscores that human-centered global service design must transcend superficial engagement to foster authentic and context-sensitive dialogue between individuals and global service organizations. As reflected in Cluster B of our text mining results, this approach positions consumers not merely as passive recipients but as co-creators of value, embedded in complex global service ecosystems. Patrício, Gustafsson, and Fisk (2018) emphasize that such human-centrality plays a critical role in generating innovative global service ideas. Yet, despite growing interest in this paradigm, scholarly understanding remains limited regarding the mechanisms

through which human-centric practices shape consumers' perceptions, emotional responses, and overall service experiences across diverse cultural and institutional settings. A key challenge lies in operationalizing human-centric design in global contexts where expectations, norms, and interpretations of customer-centricity differ widely. Most studies focus on localized or conceptual explorations, with few offering empirically grounded frameworks for integrating human-centric principles into global service strategy. Moreover, the link between human-centric design and actual service performance outcomes—such as engagement, trust, and long-term loyalty—remains under-theorized, especially when services are co-produced across digital and physical channels.

Service future thinking – Future thinking explores trends and drivers for change, considering possible, *probable*, and preferable futures (Anderson, Rayburn, & Sierra, 2018). In a competitive global environment, scholars have examined it through the lens of continuous learning in global marketing (Krishnamurthy, 2020), aligning with service design journey maps. Future research should explore how continuous learning supports global service future thinking and the role of affective forecasting in decision-making (Bø & Wolff, 2019; Karl et al., 2021). Key issues include the relationship between future thinking and service design outcomes and how cognitive processes vary across service types.

Service sustainability – Service sustainability is crucial in today's changing global context, with businesses striving to minimize environmental impact and adopt responsible practices. Global sustainable services, which use fewer *resources* and benefit the environment, support economic growth, happiness, and environmental health (Acuti, Pizzetti, & Dolnicar, 2022). Achieving sustainability as a competitive advantage requires integrating technology, data, and human resources. Future research should explore defining digital service sustainability and leveraging tools like customer journey mapping (CJM). Global organizations must balance profitability with

environmental responsibility, considering stakeholders' needs. Measuring the impact of sustainability initiatives remains a key area of exploration. Adopting sustainable practices across global actors is essential to meet regulatory requirements and promote a sustainable future.

Global service organization

The configuration of global service organizations particularly in terms of who performs actions within the servicescape is a pivotal consideration in service design (Bitner, 1992). Different organizational types, such as self-service, interpersonal, and remote service models, each present unique design challenges and opportunities. In self-service settings, customers are expected to manage service processes independently (Biedenbach et al., 2022; Guissoni et al., 2021). While efficient, this model often downplays the complexity of consumer agency and variability across global contexts, potentially leading to fragmented or suboptimal service experiences, especially in culturally diverse or digitally uneven environments.

In contrast, interpersonal service organizations rely heavily on social interactions between employees and customers, *making* the quality of these encounters central to perceived service value (Hanks, Line, & Kim, 2017). Although Kimbell (2011) advocates for a constructivist perspective that views value creation as emergent through such interactions, there remains a limited understanding of how these interactions can be consistently managed across international service settings with diverse labor practices, social norms, and communication styles. The remote service model, characterized by minimal customer involvement and high employee dependency, poses another design dilemma: while it can streamline operations, it raises persistent concerns about service consistency, emotional engagement, and perceived quality, especially when human contact is reduced.

Critically, the literature has yet to fully explore how these organizational forms translate into effective global service design strategies, particularly in multi-market environments with varying expectations for autonomy, personalization, and employee-customer interaction. This highlights several important research questions: How can global service organizations select and tailor service models to align with the cultural and operational demands of specific markets? What organizational capabilities are required to balance automation, human interaction, and service quality in different global contexts? And how do different service organizational types influence long-term value co-creation and global service performance outcomes?

Service insight

Service insight, crucial for effective service design and model development, encompasses two key aspects: the intangible nature of service and the memorable nature of service. The intangible nature of service focuses on touchpoints and consumer interactions, often neglecting strategic levels (Grenha et al., 2017; Gummerus et al., 2021), while the memorable nature of service emphasizes creating emotional resonance through intentionally designed experiences (Kim et al., 2020; Trischler & Westman Trischler, 2022; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). User experience design in service provision presents opportunities to address customer emotions, perceptions, and responses during service interactions. User experience design should explore defining user experience across touchpoints, variations by service industry, and effective methods to capture and measure it.

Global Service Delivery

Our cluster A in text mining demonstrated the key concepts that are relevant to delivering global service delivery. Global service delivery involves designing and managing services that meet the needs of diverse global markets while maintaining consistency across different global regions. Global service delivery in service design presents significant challenges, such as integrating

various global touchpoints, maintaining consistency across multiple global channels, personalizing on a global scale, and adapting to cultural differences globally. Achieving seamless integration demands coordination, training, and technology solutions. Consistency and quality across global channels require understanding of global customer needs, effective communication, and adaptation to evolving technologies discussed below:

Service concept

The service concept defines the design foundation (Patrício et al., 2011), representing the tools necessary for knowledge development and showing the schema of a collaborative design team (Beverland et al., 2016). However, the recent technological revolution, including artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), necessitates a shift from traditional to smart service concepts (Lee et al., 2022; Sklyar et al., 2019). The accelerating growth of digitization, interconnected networks, and intelligent technologies has significantly expanded the scope and capabilities of global service design, dissolving traditional geographic and operational boundaries (Gartner, 2017; Lee et al., 2022). Central to this evolution is the emergence of 'smart' service design, which integrates advanced digital technologies—such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, machine learning, robotics, and the Internet of Things (IoT)—to transform how services are conceptualized, delivered, and experienced at a global scale. AI-driven systems, for example, are increasingly employed to predict and respond to customer needs in real time, facilitating hyper-personalized interactions that enhance customer engagement and perceived value (Huang & Dootson, 2022; Pandey & Kulshrestha, 2021). Likewise, automated service design—supported by big data and machine learning—enables firms to anticipate preferences, allocate resources dynamically, and improve operational efficiency through continuous learning and adaptation (Behl et al., 2022).

In addition, the deployment of robotics and IoT infrastructures enables the automation of routine tasks, reducing human error and increasing the speed and consistency of service delivery. These technologies not only streamline standard service functions but also free up human resources for higher-order, value-creating roles. As a result, smart service design is increasingly positioned as both a technological and strategic imperative in global service ecosystems, offering new avenues for innovation, scalability, and performance enhancement. However, despite these advantages, critical challenges persist. The cultural adaptability of automated services, differences in customer expectations across regions, and concerns related to privacy, security, and trust pose significant barriers to global implementation. These tensions highlight the need for a more context-sensitive and ethically informed approach to deploying smart service systems internationally. This raises several key research questions for future inquiry: How can global service organizations adapt smart technologies to accommodate diverse cultural, regulatory, and consumer trust landscapes? In what ways do digital technologies differently shape service experiences across various service sectors (e.g., hospitality, healthcare, finance) in global contexts? And how can firms strategically redesign service architectures to balance automation, personalization, and human-centered value creation in an increasingly intelligent service environment?

Servicescape

Servicescape refers to the intentionally designed physical and digital environments where services are delivered, shaping customer and employee experiences, behaviors, and perceptions (Line & Hanks, 2020). Traditionally categorized into self-service, interpersonal, and emerging types, its scope has expanded with technological advancements. *Self-service* servicescapes (e.g., ATMs, e-commerce platforms) prioritize customer autonomy through intuitive design, minimizing direct staff interaction (Collier & Barnes, 2015). Interpersonal servicescapes (e.g., hospitals, retail stores)

emphasize shared spaces where interactions between customers and employees are facilitated via functional layouts and clear signage (Hanks et al., 2017). However, the rise of virtual worlds has shifted scholarly focus toward emerging servicescapes, blending physical and digital elements to meet omnichannel customer experience demands (Ballantyne & Nilsson, 2017; Bolton et al., 2018; Quach et al., 2020). This evolution reflects the need for dynamic environments that adapt to technological innovations like AI, IoT, and immersive platforms, redefining service delivery and engagement.

With the advent of emerging technologies such as the metaverse, understanding the need for a dynamic servicescape has meant scholars are paying increasing attention to an emerging servicescape, combining physical and digital elements (Ballantyne & Nilsson, 2017; Bolton et al., 2018). The extension of the servicescape domain has prompted some scholars to consider the requirements for omnichannel service experience in global service-based organizations (Quach et al., 2020). The technological revolution has introduced virtual environments, particularly the metaverse, as an emerging trend in the servicescape field. In particular, the metaverse introduces a new dimension to service design, offering businesses opportunities to create immersive, interactive experiences that transcend traditional boundaries. It enables personalized engagement, co-creation, and real-time customer-provider interactions. However, challenges like privacy, security, and ethics must be addressed. Future research should explore its impact on service design, limitations, customer experience measurement, and ethical considerations.

Global Service Encounter

Within the evolving domain of global service design, increasing attention is being directed toward the design of service encounters at both meso- and micro-levels, with a particular focus on customer interactions across various touchpoints (Asante et al., 2022; Larivière et al., 2017).

Traditionally shaped by face-to-face exchanges, these touchpoints are now rapidly being transformed by emerging digital technologies, prompting a shift from physical to digital interfaces and supporting the expansion of omnichannel service strategies (Hallikainen et al., 2019; Joo et al., 2023). This transformation has introduced new layers of complexity in service design, requiring organizations to consider not only the technical functionality of digital interfaces but also their intuitiveness, responsiveness, and capacity to deliver personalized and secure user experiences.

Designing effective digital touchpoints entails navigating critical challenges such as maintaining user trust amidst increasing concerns about data privacy, ensuring accessibility across platforms, and delivering coherent experiences across diverse channels. Moreover, service organizations must strategically incorporate new technologies while remaining responsive to rapidly changing user behaviors, preferences, and feedback. A central tension lies in balancing automation and self-service efficiencies with the preservation of emotional connection and human-like engagement—factors still highly valued in many service contexts.

Despite the proliferation of digital touchpoints, there remains limited research on their differential impact across service types, cultural settings, and consumer segments. Much of the existing work overlooks the dynamic interplay between user experience design and broader service system goals in a globalized context. This opens several important research questions: How do consumer preferences for digital touchpoints vary across service categories and cultural environments? In which types of services do digital touchpoints most significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty? And what design principles or frameworks are most effective in developing seamless, inclusive, and trust-enhancing digital touchpoints at scale?

Moderators

Socio-Cultural Context – Contextual factors broadly shape the customer experience throughout the service journey, yet socio-cultural context emerges as a particularly pivotal moderator influencing both service configuration decisions and overall performance outcomes (Colmekcioglu et al., 2022; Diallo et al., 2018; Lari, Jabeen, & Iyanna, 2020). Given that service encounters fundamentally involve social exchanges, customer expectations and perceptions are deeply intertwined with the cultural norms and values that define their social environment. Building on Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) seminal framework, Elenkov and Manev (2005) highlight how cultural dimensions—such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term orientation—profoundly shape social behavior and, by extension, service interactions. Since culture encompasses both rational and emotional facets, services that authentically integrate cultural elements are more likely to resonate with customers, enhancing their experience and satisfaction. From a global service design perspective, this underscores the necessity of a nuanced understanding of cultural and social conditions as foundational to effective service development and delivery (Hyde & Davies, 2004). However, despite its acknowledged importance, existing literature often treats culture superficially or as a static backdrop rather than as a dynamic, co-creative factor in service design. There remains a critical gap in exploring how service design processes can systematically incorporate cultural insights to address variability in customer expectations and behaviors across diverse global markets. This gap leads to pressing research questions: How can global service design frameworks effectively integrate socio-cultural dimensions to optimize service encounters across heterogeneous markets? In what ways do specific cultural value orientations influence customer preferences and service outcomes in different service sectors? And how can service organizations

dynamically adapt their design and delivery strategies to reflect evolving cultural contexts while maintaining brand consistency?

Service Offering Origin – In global service delivery, the concept of perceived country of origin (CO) plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase behaviors, yet it remains an underexamined yet powerful factor influencing service evaluation. Ethnocentrism or the preference for domestic over foreign service providers can significantly bias consumer judgments, particularly in markets where national pride is pronounced, leading to an inherent favoring of locally sourced services perceived as superior in quality (Chrysochoidis et al., 2007). Conversely, in developing countries, admiration for the economic success or lifestyles of developed nations may cause consumers to perceive foreign services, especially those from prestigious countries, as more desirable. These contrasting dynamics underscore two managerial imperatives for global service firms: first, the necessity to monitor ethnocentric tendencies across diverse markets to anticipate how such biases might negatively affect foreign service acceptance; and second, the strategic opportunity to leverage admiration for specific countries to cultivate loyal customer bases through tailored marketing that highlights the CO advantage.

Complicating these CO effects is the phenomenon of global consumer animosity, or consumer involvement, where negative sentiments toward certain countries substantially diminish consumers' willingness to engage with services associated with those origins (Ettenson & Klein, 2005; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004). Such animosity not only undermines trust but can taint perceptions of services linked to a country's design or delivery, often resulting in lower evaluations and rejection of services from those nations (Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008). In more extreme cases, this animosity escalates into prejudicial behaviors, including outright discrimination against services from targeted countries (Dmitrovic et al., 2009; Josiassen, 2011; Russell & Russell, 2010).

These realities present two additional managerial challenges: global service providers must actively counter negative CO perceptions by emphasizing positive service attributes linked to origin stories, and they must strategically identify and address consumer segments exhibiting animosity to minimize its detrimental market impact.

Despite its clear strategic importance, the country-of-origin effect in global service design and delivery remains insufficiently theorized and empirically validated, particularly in its interaction with cultural, political, and economic factors shaping consumer attitudes worldwide. This raises critical research questions: How do ethnocentric biases and consumer animosity toward service origins vary across global markets and service sectors? What mechanisms can global service organizations employ to effectively mitigate negative CO perceptions while amplifying positive associations? And how does the interplay between CO effects and broader socio-political dynamics influence long-term brand equity and service acceptance in diverse international contexts?

Global Marketing Strategy – Marketing strategy is a pivotal determinant in shaping how services are designed and delivered within global markets, yet the tension between standardization and adaptation remains a contentious and insufficiently resolved issue in global service research (Dow, 2006; Szymanski et al., 1993; Zou & Cavusgil, 2002). Global organizations face the strategic choice of implementing standardized service models to ensure uniformity and brand consistency across international markets, or alternatively, pursuing adaptive approaches that tailor service features to align with localized consumer preferences and contextual demands. While standardized strategies facilitate operational efficiency and a coherent global brand identity, they risk alienating consumers in markets where unique cultural, economic, or regulatory factors necessitate customization (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Conversely, adaptation strategies respond to

heterogeneity but may lead to increased complexity, cost, and challenges in maintaining service quality and coherence across markets.

Further complicating this dichotomy, some regional markets exhibit enough cultural and economic commonality to warrant region-specific marketing strategies—neither fully global nor purely local—which adds another layer of complexity to global service design decisions (McDowall et al., 2017; Porter & Kramer, 2006). For universally applicable services, a consistent global marketing approach remains advantageous, allowing firms to leverage scale and deliver a seamless experience worldwide (Kirchherr et al., 2018). These strategic choices profoundly influence marketing capabilities and service adaptation practices across the customer journey, including experience design, sales processes, aftersales support, and sourcing strategies. Hence, comprehending the origin of service offerings alongside the marketing strategies employed is crucial for effective global service delivery. Despite its centrality, the interplay between marketing strategy, service design adaptation, and delivery performance in global contexts remains under-theorized, especially considering the accelerating complexity of international consumer expectations and market dynamics. This gap invites key research questions: How do global service organizations balance standardization and adaptation to optimize customer experience and operational efficiency across diverse markets? What role do regional cultural and economic clusters play in shaping effective hybrid marketing strategies for service design? And how do marketing strategy choices impact long-term global service value capture and brand equity?

Global Service Value Capture (Outputs)

Service performance evaluation in the context of servitization has traditionally been examined through multiple lenses, predominantly focusing on firm-level outcomes or customer and employee perspectives (Liao & Chuang, 2004). At the organizational level, research has largely

concentrated on metrics such as service profit and financial performance, illustrating how servitization initiatives contribute to firm value and competitive advantage (Briggs, Deretti, & Kato, 2020; Lambert, Jones, & Clinton, 2021; Solnet, Ford, & McLennan, 2018). Meanwhile, from the customer standpoint, scholars have investigated dimensions like service responsiveness and overall service experience, recognizing that these subjective indicators are crucial to understanding the success of service innovations. Yet, these analyses often remain siloed, lacking an integrated view that connects firm-level financial outcomes with experiential and operational indicators.

An emerging but underdeveloped concept in this domain is ‘experimentation’—drawn from the notion of ‘beta testing’ in technology development—which highlights the inherent uncertainties in service design and delivery processes, especially in dynamic and complex global environments. This concept foregrounds the iterative nature of service innovation, where trial, feedback, and adaptation cycles are essential to refining service offerings and managing risks associated with novel service ecosystems. Despite its significance, there is a notable gap in how service performance is holistically assessed across multiple stakeholder levels within global service design frameworks. Future research should critically examine: How can firms integrate financial, customer, and employee performance metrics to capture a more comprehensive picture of servitization outcomes? What role does experimentation play in reducing uncertainty and accelerating value creation in global service innovations? And how can service performance measurement systems be adapted to account for cultural, institutional, and technological variances across international markets?

Experimentation – The importance of continuous, collective, and collaborative learning from external and internal sources is highlighted by service-dominant logic and other service design-related studies (e.g., Damali et al., 2016; Storey & Larbig, 2018; Trischler et al., 2018;

Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). The learning process is formal, facilitating the capture, analysis, and synthesis of various resources (notably, knowledge and skills) (De Luca & Atuahene-Gima, 2007). The learning process is crucial for developing new successful service propositions (Stanko & Henard, 2017), mapping the customer journey from the customer perspective (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019), and increasing efficiency during the innovation process (Centobelli, Cerchione, & Esposito, 2019).

Conclusion, theoretical and managerial implications

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the intellectual foundations of service design from a global perspective, employing a combined bibliometric and text mining methodology. The findings reveal three prominent research clusters that address key areas such as global service delivery, and global service design. The study identifies foundational theoretical frameworks. As one of the first in-depth bibliometric investigations focusing specifically on global service design, this research introduces a new conceptual model that connects theoretical perspectives with practical implications. It offers guidance for scholars, and service providers practitioners through identifying critical research gaps that point toward future studies aimed at supporting innovation and strategic decision-making in globally oriented service systems.

This research contributes meaningfully to both theoretical and practical dimensions. First, through co-citation analysis, it establishes a foundational structure that positions global service design as a distinct and evolving field within the broader service management and innovation literature. This recognition is essential for fostering focused scholarly development in addressing the complex realities of cross-border service delivery and design. Second, the integration of text mining with interdisciplinary theories and methods uncovers key conceptual and methodological trends, offering a more systematic understanding of the field's evolution. This approach helps

surface underexplored areas where future research could generate significant impact particularly in global contexts where services are co-designed and delivered across multiple cultural, technological, and institutional environments. Moreover, by combining co-citation and text mining, this study addresses common limitations associated with conventional literature reviews in the domain of global service design. The dual-method approach enhances the precision of concept identification, ensures methodological consistency in coding and dictionary development, and enables robust mapping of thematic interrelationships. This level of analytical rigor reduces subjectivity and enhances the objectivity and depth of literature interpretation (Subramony et al., 2021; Wilden et al., 2017; Liesch, Welch, & Buckley, 2011; Stead et al., 2022). Ultimately, this study not only strengthens the methodological base for future investigations but also advances theoretical insight and practical relevance, providing a platform for addressing the complexities of service design, delivery, and value creation in globally distributed service ecosystems.

Our integrated service design model offers global organizations a comprehensive understanding of the entire service development and innovation process, enabling managers to identify critical improvement areas and allocate resources effectively across diverse markets. Central to this is the adoption of a service-dominant logic, which shifts focus from transactional exchanges to long-term, relationship-based value co-creation. For example, a global healthcare organization can move beyond episodic patient interactions to prioritize patient-centered care models that emphasize continuous engagement and culturally sensitive support tailored to regional healthcare systems and patient expectations.

In an increasingly digital and interconnected world, managers must leverage emerging trends such as digital touchpoints, the metaverse, and omnichannel service delivery to enhance customer experiences globally. Digital touchpoints-including websites, mobile apps, and AI-

powered chatbots-should be optimized for intuitive navigation and seamless transactions, accommodating the linguistic and cultural nuances of different regions. For instance, a global e-commerce company can boost customer satisfaction by tailoring its platforms to local preferences while maintaining brand consistency. The metaverse presents novel opportunities for immersive, culturally adaptive experiences; a global fashion brand might offer virtual showrooms where customers worldwide can try on digital garments in environments customized to reflect local aesthetics and social norms, thereby expanding engagement and market reach.

To ensure consistent global experience delivery, managers must invest in comprehensive staff training programs that build cultural intelligence and service design capabilities across international teams. Environmental design should also be adapted to local contexts, ensuring that every physical and digital touchpoint contributes positively to the overall service experience. This includes designing spaces and interfaces that foster belonging, well-being, and emotional connection, which are increasingly recognized as vital components of people-centric design worldwide.

Moreover, the model underscores the importance of holistic journey design-what industry leaders describe as the “street to seat” experience-where customer engagement begins well before direct interaction and continues seamlessly across all channels and locations. This requires breaking down organizational silos and integrating service processes end-to-end, from initial discovery through post-service support, across global markets with diverse cultural and regulatory environments.

Sustainability and ethical use of technology also emerge as critical imperatives. Organizations must embed sustainable practices into their service design, such as minimizing environmental impact and promoting social responsibility, which resonate strongly with global

consumers and regulators. For example, logistics firms can optimize delivery routes to reduce carbon footprints, while consumer brands can incorporate recyclable materials and support local communities, aligning with international sustainability goals.

Finally, managers should foster a culture of continuous innovation and proactive support by utilizing AI and advanced analytics to anticipate customer needs and personalize experiences in real time. This proactive approach not only enhances satisfaction but builds trust and loyalty across culturally diverse customer bases. By embracing these integrated strategies, global organizations can deliver service experiences that are not only efficient and innovative but also deeply human, culturally resonant, and sustainable. Appendix, Table 2 illustrates the more research questions for future studies.

Limitations

This study has several methodological limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the bibliometric analysis relies on data sources and citation networks that may carry inherent biases, potentially affecting the reliability of the results. Additionally, the lack of clearly defined quality or selection criteria for the inclusion of articles limits the transparency and reproducibility of the research process. While co-citation analysis is useful for identifying established connections between research areas, it tends to underrepresent emerging or less-cited studies, which may result in the exclusion of innovative or early-stage work in service design. Furthermore, the selection of relevant keywords was conducted by only four experienced experts. Although their expertise is valuable, this approach introduces a degree of subjectivity and potential bias, possibly constraining the breadth and diversity of the literature captured. Further, the selection of keywords and the chosen time frame (1970–2025), while reasonable, present certain limitations. Service design research was relatively limited in the earlier decades (1970s–1990s), which may result in

underrepresentation of foundational or emergent ideas from that period. Moreover, the specific keywords used can inadvertently steer the literature review toward particular themes, potentially excluding relevant studies that employ alternative terminology or conceptual framings.

Our holistic representation is drawn from previous studies and developed based on a quantitative approach, so further empirical investigation is needed to verify the model. This could involve questions such as: How can the integrated service design model be applied to different organizational and business contexts? and What areas require further modification, development, and adaptation? This research views service design as a design-focused contribution to service innovation. Additional studies could investigate how service design can shape cross-disciplinary activities for new service development and innovation. Possible research questions include: How should service design contribute to better collaboration about and understanding of new service development and innovation? and How can diverse interpretations of service design be better conceptualized? Lastly, since keywords were used to find the articles for analysis, changing these keywords would alter the bibliometric review results. Future studies could use different databases such as Google Scholar or Scopus to compare results and enhance the robustness of the findings.

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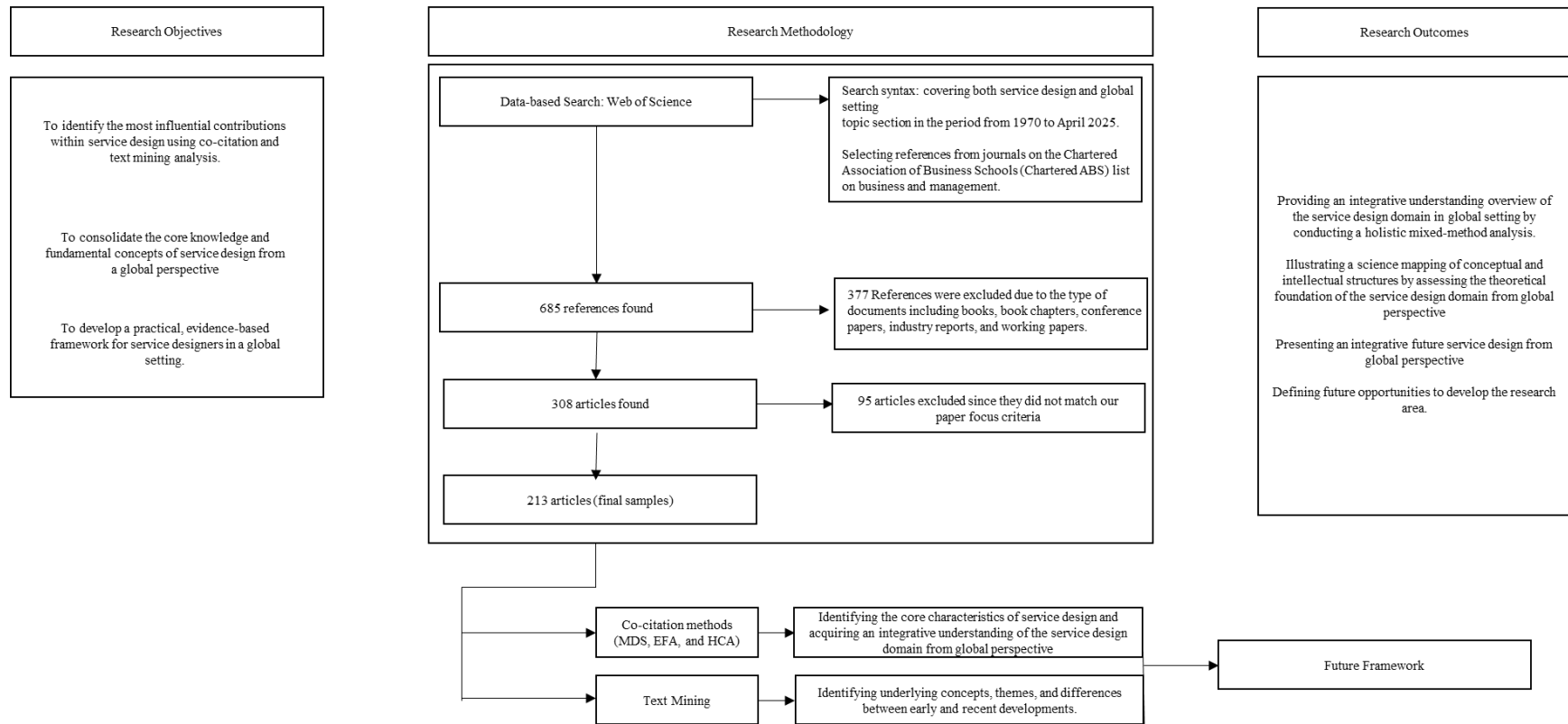
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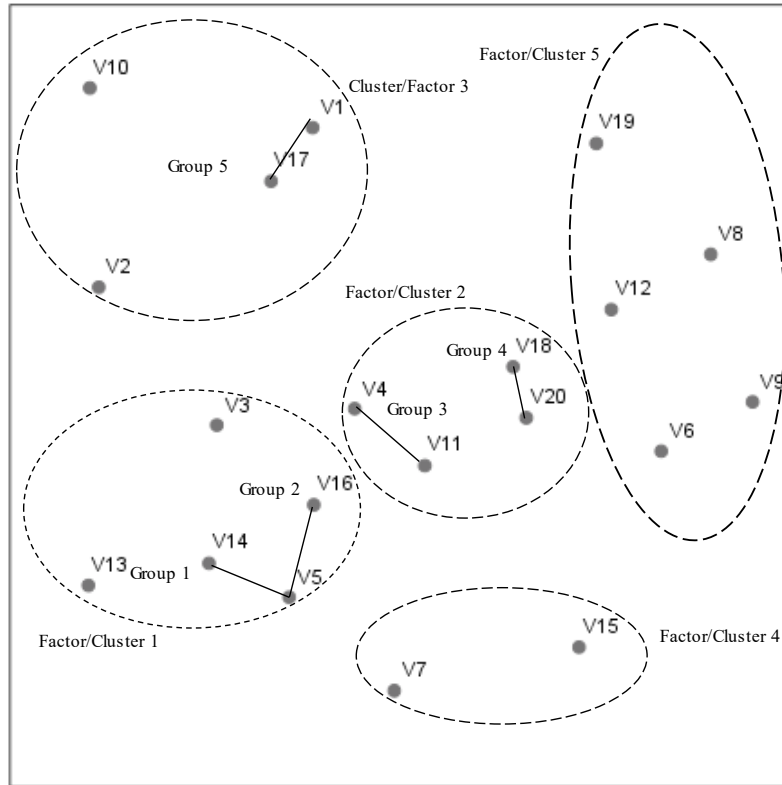
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Appendix Figure 1: Research design (authors' representation)



Appendix Figure 2: Interrelated core concepts of service design



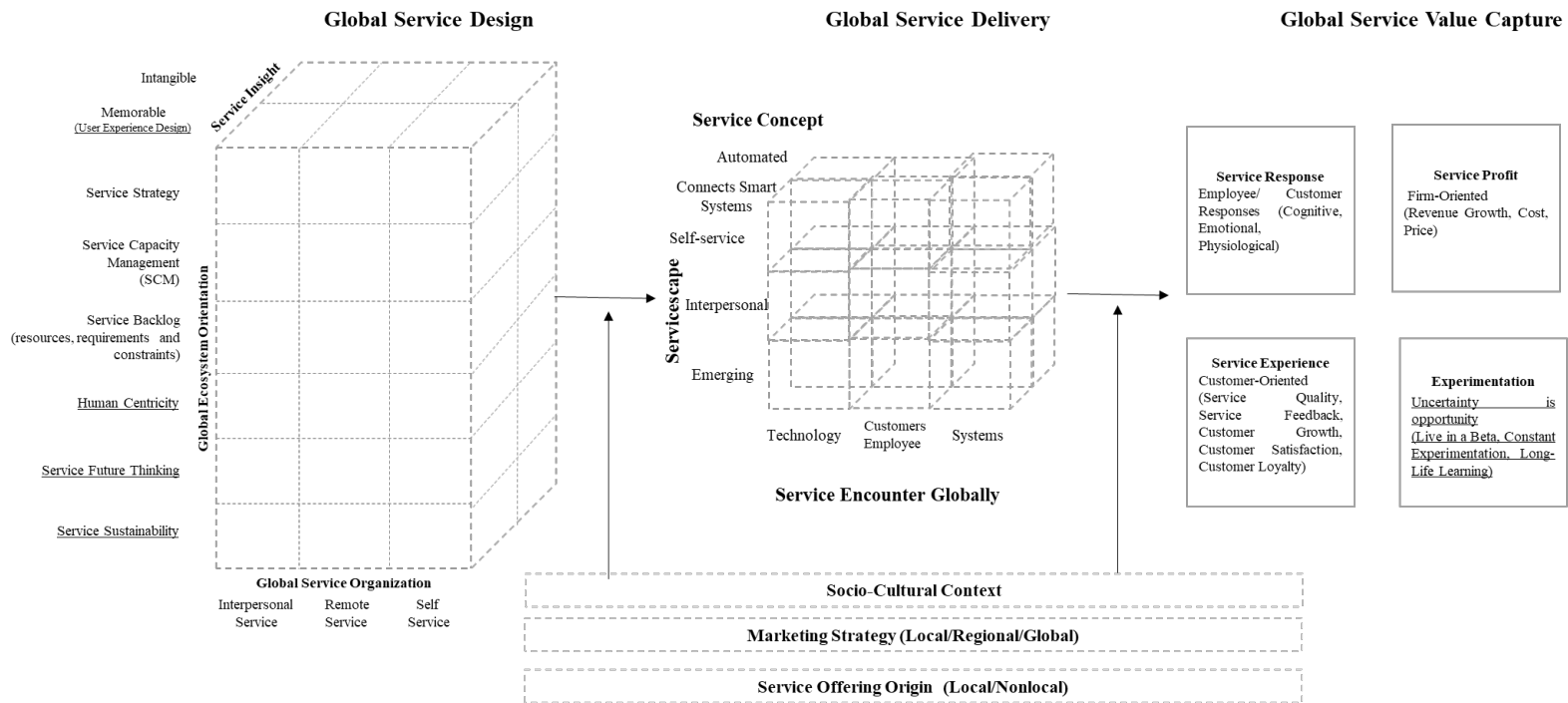
Stress value: 0.016; Standard distance: 0.25

V1 = Bitner et al. 1990; V2 = Bitner, 1992; V3 = Cook et al., 2002; V4 = Goldstein et al., 2002; V5 = Hill et al., 2002; V6 = Lusch and Nambisan, 2015; V7 = Menor, Tatikonda and Sampson, 2002; V8 = Ordanini and Parasuraman, 2011; V9 = Ostrom et al., 2015; V10 = Parasuraman et al. 1985; V11 = Patricio, Fisk, and Falcão e Cunha, 2008; V12 = Patricio et al. 2011; V13 = Pine and Gilmore, 1998; V14 = Roth and Menor, 2003; V15 = Shostack, 1982; V16 = Shostack, 1984; V17 = Shostack, 1987; V18 = Vargo and Lusch, 2004; V19 = Vargo and Lusch, 2008; V20 = Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010.

Factor/Cluster 1: Service encounter design; Factor/Cluster 2: service experience; Factor/Cluster 3: service quality; Factor/Cluster 4: New service development; Factor/Cluster 5: Service innovation and human side of successful service design.

Group 1: Service operation design; Group 2: Service blueprinting; Group 3: Service experience blueprint; Group 4: Experience design; Group 5: Satisfying service encounter and service positioning.

Appendix Figure 4: Holistic representation of the service design and future trends



Appendix Table 1: Linkage between results and discussion

Overlaying Multiple Findings				
Text mining	HCA, EFA	MDS	Exemplary Key themes	Exemplary Key concepts
Cluster A: Service mechanism side from global perspective	Factor/Cluster 1: Service encounter design Factor/Cluster 4: New service development Factor/Cluster 5: Service innovation	Group 1: Service operation design; Group 2: Service blueprinting	service, technology, social, people, solutions	actors, design, team, knowledge, product, digital, international market, market
Cluster B: Global Customer-side	Factor/Cluster 2: Service experience	Group 3: Service experience blueprint; Group 4: Experience design	customer	culture, community, cultural, journey, public
Cluster C: Global Provider-side	Factor/Cluster 3: Service prosumer	Group 5: Service co-design	provider, satisfaction, costs	health, online, attributes, training, leaning, areas,
Text mining	Provider-side	Service mechanism-side	Customer-side	

HCA, EFA	Factor/Cluster 3	Factors/Clusters 1,4,5	Factor/Cluster 2
MDS	Group 5	Groups 1,2	Groups 3,4
Key Concepts	Provider, Product, Information, Consumers, Environment, Market, Performance, Quality, Satisfaction, Online, Costs, Attributes.	Service, Design, Process, System, Innovation, Development, Knowledge, Employees, Business, Actors, Needs, Technology, Social, Organization, Industry, Resources, Activities, Team, People, Community, Public, Local, Life, Health, Food, Solutions, Patience, Care.	Journey, Experience, Customer, Delivery, Management.
Theoretical Roots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service strategy (Huang & Rust, 2017; Jain & Bala, 2018; Pullman et al., 2001; Roth & Van Der Velde, 1991) Service-dominant logic (Skålén et al., 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2004) Value co-creation with the customers (Akaka & Vargo, 2015; Yu and Sangiorgi, 2018) Value proposition (Skålén et al., 2015) Service organization (Guissoni et al., 2021) Actors in service design (Leonidou et al., 2020) Human-centered and reflective learning (Storey and Larbig, 2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service encounter design (Bitner et al. 1990; Pugh 2001) Visual communication design (Shostack, 1977). Service process design (Hill et al., 2002) Design tools and techniques Meso and micro level of service design (Asante et al., 2022) Service concept (Hitt et al., 2016) Machine learning and big data (Antons & Breidbach, 2018; Urbinati et al., 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Francesco & Roberta, 2019) Customer journey (Sudbury-Riley et al., 2020) Experience design (Lim & Kim, 2018)
Holistic representation of service design			
ADO Framework	Service Infrastructures (Antecedents)	Service Configuration (Decisions)	Service Performance (Outputs)
Main Blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Insight Ecosystem Orientation Service Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Scape Service Encounter Service Concept Service Delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Response Service Profit Service Experience Experimentation
The future of service design			
Future Paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Centricity Service Future Thinking Service Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid Service Scape Digital Touchpoints Moving to Smart Concepts Experience Delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertainty is opportunity

Appendix Table 2: Future research questions

Themes	Emerging trend	Research Questions	Adapted by...
Global Ecosystem orientation	Human centricty	How can we suggest new global service solutions in different service ecosystems by applying the human-centricty perspective? What is the role of human centricty in integrated global service design?	Adapted by O’Keeffe et al. (2022).
	Service future thinking	How can service future thinking play a role in the global service decision-making? What are the component processes underlying service future thinking?	Adapted by Karl et al. (2021).
	Service sustainability	What is the association between customer journey and sustainability in the global service ecosystem? What are the effects of service sustainability on global service co-design?	Adapted by Pantouvakis and Gerou (2022).
Service insight	User experience design	How could we operationalize ‘design for user experience’ in the global public servicing by considering the role of digital technology?	Adapted by Trischler and Westman Trischler (2022).
Service concept	Smart concept	How do smart capabilities affect the future of global service design? How could we evaluate the application of a computer-human interaction-based intelligent service robot in the process of global training? How do machine learning data influence the value of global offerings provided by artificial intelligence?	Adapted by Yang (2021).
Service scape	Metaverse	How do we apply the identified attributes and capabilities of the metaverse to provide a better understanding of the implications in the global service design; for example, telemedicine, surgical operations, and other healthcare services?	Adapted by Dwivedi et al. (2022).
Global Service delivery	Experience delivery	What are the factors that influence global service delivery with regard to a theory of emotional experience?	Adapted by Herjanto et al. (2021).
Service encounter globally	Digital touchpoints	How do digital touchpoints affect (un)favorable customer service experiences in different global industries?	Adapted by Alt et al. (2021) and Gao et al. (2021)
Global service value capture	Experimentation	How does experimentation to improve global performance? What is the relationship between experimentation and global service entrepreneurship?	Adapted by Komatsu et al. (2021)