

The following two reports summarize the SERVSIG-related sessions that occurred during the 2003 AMA Winter Educators' Conference, "What's New? What's Next? In Marketing Theory, Education, and Practice" that was held February 14-17, 2003, at the Sheraton World Resort in Orlando, Florida. For those of you were not able to attend we hope that these will give you an idea of what occurred.

Dwayne Gremler
2002-03 SERVSIG Chair

SERVSIG Sessions Overview

by Mark Ligas (Fairfield University)

The 2003 AMA winter conference provided the opportunity for both academics and practitioners to explore a rather diverse set of topics in the area of services marketing. The conference program contained four competitive paper and two special topic sessions devoted to services and services-related issues. A breadth of presentations/presenters was available in each session, which further diversified the scope of that particular topic area.

The competitive paper and special topic sessions on the first day could perhaps be best described as sessions focusing on the "current state of services marketing." In the competitive paper session, the general focus was on the need for identifying and understanding what leads to effective customer-provider relationships. A call was put forward for service providers to adhere to customer input in the innovation process. In terms of developing relational bonds with customers, issues of comfort and customer trust via rapport were brought to the forefront for exploration. The special session in the afternoon brought together a number of prominent services researchers and practitioners to discuss what is (and is not) working in services today.

On day two, the focus of the sessions switched to understanding services outcomes. The first competitive paper session contained a variety of topics that looked at ways in which to improve the firm's offering (thus increasing the customer's evaluation of the service). Organizational culture and customer convenience were two key issues that related directly to the customer's perspective of the service encounter. The second competitive paper session explored novel methods for learning about services customers. Two of the papers took a closer look at the popular CIT (Critical Incident Technique) method; one provided a thorough overview of the use of CIT within the discipline, while the other utilized the CIT in a modified way to better understand customers within the banking industry. The third paper focused on a unique model for studying services delivery in the emergency ward. The final competitive paper session looked at two distinct services industries, namely the university system and collegiate athletics programs. Issues pertaining to alumni donations and funding were explored for these services. The third paper focused on the effectiveness of advertising on what has become the largest athletic service provided to an audience, namely the Super Bowl.

The last day of the conference provided the opportunity to explore the role of loyalty in services contexts. The special session focused on b-to-b, financial, and other dynamic services industries.

In all, the 2003 AMA Winter Conference provided a well-rounded and timely set of topics on the services domain. These topics likely resonated with many attendees, especially those who had to deal with airline services as a result of the historical winter storm that pounded the Midwest and East coast!

“The State of Services Marketing Today: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly” Session Summary

by Stephen Grove (Clemson University)

At the recent AMA Winter Educators' Conference in Orlando, Florida, a special session was held entitled, “The State of Services Marketing Today: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly.” The session was chaired by Stephen Grove (Clemson University) and included among the panelists were Christopher Lovelock (Lovelock and Associates), A. Parasuraman (University of Miami), Gillian Hogg (Glasgow Caledonian University), and Ray Fisk (University of New Orleans). Clearly, the panel was comprised of folks that are active in the study and instruction of services marketing, both in the U.S. and abroad.

The impetus behind the session stemmed from several lively discussions that emerged during the Frontiers in Services conference that was held in Maastricht, The Netherlands, last summer (2002). Based on those discussions, it has become apparent that there is a growing groundswell of concern among some scholars regarding the direction that services marketing is headed. The session at the winter AMA conference was designed to assemble a panel and audience of services scholars to explore issues regarding research and teaching foci pertaining to services marketing. Specifically, an overview of the perceived shortages and surpluses that currently exist in those two areas was prompted. Approximately, 20 to 25 folks were in the audience.

Several general themes were evident in the discourse that unfolded. (See the figure that follows.) First, there appears to be a stagnation of sorts with respect to the level of excitement regarding services in the U.S. This, in part, explains a second theme: the need for new concepts and methods of study pertaining to services. As an aside, from my perspective, the lack of graduate courses that address services phenomena--a point that was raised during the panel presentation--may play a significant role in both of these circumstances. A third theme that seemed to emerge among the participants' comments was the call for a broader view of services, i.e., the need for more examination of issues pertaining to services strategy, services and ethics, services' macro-marketing significance and the blurring of the services vs. manufacturing distinction. A summary and organized frame for ‘most’ of the specific comments that were offered during the session is presented in the attachment that is included here.

It strikes me that this is simply one step in identifying and encouraging thoughtful examination of services direction. Several years ago, “Parsu” Parasuraman collected information that he shared at a Frontiers conference regarding the focus of services research that was currently underway at that time; it provided a nice overview of the shortages and surpluses in that regard. Hopefully, this session made a similar contribution and/or will encourage some of those who are interested in services to direct their energy in ways that add to our knowledge-base.

Services Marketing Assessment Matrix

SERVICE
FOCUS

		Research	Instruction
<u>STATE OF SERVICES TODAY</u>	Surpluses	Consumer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with service Dimensions of Service Quality Service-Profit Link Tech-based service as wave of future Hotel, airline, emphasis	“IHIP” (Intangibility, Heterogeneity, etc.) Emphasis Limit Consumer Behavior Services Marketing is different Hotel, airline, emphasis Too Many “P’s” – need to move beyond
	Shortages	Experience engineering Multi-disciplinary research Ethics Pricing Issues Comfort Level Concept Convergence Marketing C to C Issues Macro-issues Service Quality in web-based service New methodologies Cost of poor service Implementation Issues	More B to B “Separable” Services E-services Non-ownership services Competitive strategy Ethics Distinction between services marketing and customer service Excepts to IHIP (Intangibility, Heterogeneity, etc.) Mix of personal touch with technology PhD Courses in Services

Some Trends:

- Excitement with services is “Running Out Of Gas” in U.S.
- Distinction between product and services marketing dissipating
- Acceptance of Services is High (more mainstream) in journals, etc.