The Frontiers in Service Conference: It's Twenty-Year Impact

Stephen Grove[2], Raymond Fisk[1], Michael Dorsch[2]

[1]Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas, USA, [2]Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, USA

Purpose - The Frontiers in Service Conference has been a leading conference for exchanging and disseminating services marketing and management knowledge since its inception in 1992. The conference emerged during the dynamic "Walking Erect" (Fisk, Brown and Bitner 1993) phase of service's early development. Subsequent overlapping evolutionary phases characterized by improved service tools, emergence of a technical service language and building service community emerged during service's second era (Fisk and Grove 2010). Correspondingly, the foundation and building of service science has occurred (Spohrer and Kwan 2008). In light of these remarkable events, it is interesting to examine how the Frontiers in Service Conference reflects the evolution of service inquiry.

Design / Methodology / Approach - We investigate participation at the Frontiers Conference over its twenty-year history to discern its role in advancing service knowledge. Through content analysis of the conference programs, frequency tables and cross-tabulations are generated that identify trends and patterns among the data, as well as noteworthy events.

Findings / Implications - Our analysis assesses conference participation at the individual level, institutional level and country level, as well as identifies collaborative efforts involving each. Results indicate a recognizable increase in participation in each of the foci, suggesting that the conference has indeed nurtured the service community.

Research limitations - This analysis only considers the role of the Frontiers in Service conference in building the service community and provides just anecdotal insight regarding its impact on the development of original service thought.

Originality / Value - This analysis provides a unique perspective on 20 years of history in the service research community.

The Impact of Channel-Based Price Differentiation on Customers

Michael Paul, Julia Beckmann

University of Muenster, Muenster, Germany

Purpose - Crucial decisions for every multichannel service provider are whether and how to engage in channel-based price differentiation. Yet, no research has provided guidance to managers to take decisions on these issues.

Design / Methodology / Approach - We identify price instruments for realizing channel-based price differentiation and develop a conceptual model of their effects on customers. We empirically test the model in the context of mobile communications using a laboratory experiment with 590 participants and analytically investigate the conditions under which channel-based price differentiation is feasible.

Findings - Results show that channel-based price differentiation positively affects customer retention through perceived value, but negatively impacts retention through price unfairness and limited self-determination. We determine that a mobile communications firm requires 5.1% lower operating costs in the Internet than in the store to ensure profitability and that the right customers self-select into the right channels.

Research limitations / Implications - Direct effects of online promotion and service fee should be investigated by including additional mediators. The acquisition potential should be considered as well. Replications are needed to provide evidence for the generalizability of our findings.

Practical implications - Results encourage multichannel service providers to engage in channel-based price differentiation if they carefully select price instruments and fulfill feasibility conditions.

Originality / Value - We close an often discussed gap in multichannel research. Our study is first to empirically show how customers react toward channel-based price differentiation and to formalize feasibility conditions in a generalizable manner so that they can be applied to any industry.