

Position Statement for Cambridge SSME Symposium

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Many of the concepts, techniques, and curricula for service design and operations originate in and emphasize person-to-person services. Words like “experience,” “performance,” “empathy,” and “dramaturgy” are used to describe service encounters, and a central idea is that the quality of the service is determined at the “moment of truth” when the service is delivered or “co-produced.” The relationship between the service provider and service consumer is a critical determinant of the service outcome.

However, many of the traditional concepts and methods for service design and delivery don’t fit well when person-to-person services are replaced or complemented by self-service, and hardly fit at all for automated information-intensive services provided by one computational or automated process to another. In these latter kinds of services, instead of a variable experience shaped by the provider-consumer relationship, the service consumer expects an efficient, scaleable, and more transactional interaction with the service provider, which can be transparently substituted without any impact on the service outcome.

We might conclude that “service” in person-to-person services and “service” in “service architecture” are homonyms and not try to unify them conceptually and methodologically. But I contend that we won’t be able to design effective service systems that contain a mixture of person-to-person, self-service, and automated services unless we achieve that unification. We must generalize how we think about services and service design to create design concepts and methods that span the traditional gap between “front stage” or “experience” design and the “back stage” components that intrinsic to automated services.

An attached position paper that expands on this argument is *Bridging the “Front Stage” and “Back Stage” in Service System Design* – an abridged version of a paper recently submitted by Robert Glushko and Lindsay Tabas to the Service Science track of the 2008 Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.