A typology of mass services: the role of service delivery and consumption purpose in classifying service experiences

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Abstract

Purpose — The purpose of this paper is to provide services marketers with a deeper understanding of the elements that characterize mass services. The paper shows that many studies have been conducted within the context of professional and retail services, knowledge of mass service contexts is limited despite the growth of services within this context.

Design/methodology/approach — This paper provides a conceptual overview of mass services and develops a typology for mass services based on an extensive review of the services literature. Specifically, the typology developed classifies mass services on the basis of service delivery and purpose. The typology forwarded, therefore, classifies mass services using a two-by-two framework with individual and collective mass services classified as either utilitarian or hedonic in nature.

Findings — The typology found in this paper provides a practical insight into the characteristics of services falling into the classification of mass services. The value of the classification is that managers can better understand the unique aspects of mass services, thus, allowing for a better utilization of limited resources. Moreover, the paper provides insights into a service classification that has received limited research emphasis, yet, is attracting increasing industry attention.

Originality/value — This paper provides academics and practitioners with a framework that has both tactical and strategic implications. These implications include enhancing the customer experience and thus customer retention, resource management, employee training and service management. Given that such a framework has not been forwarded in the literature, the typology presented in the current paper makes an original contribution to the literature.

Keywords Services marketing, Consumption, Service delivery
Paper type Research paper

An executive summary for managers can be found at the end of this article.

Introduction

Service output accounts for over two thirds of the gross domestic product and four fifths of employment in the economies of highly developed countries (ABS, 2002; Statistical Abstract of the United States (SAUS), 2003). Indeed, the service sector has grown to become a dominant driver of economic well being (Dabholkar et al., 1996; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Against this background, a classification scheme is helpful in allowing marketers to better understand the characteristics of the nature of services. It also provides an important foundation upon which researchers can develop theories of relevance to specific service organizations. Hence, the value of developing a service classification scheme lies in the ability to facilitate and develop meaningful strategies and action plans for service marketing programs. Moreover, given that organizational strategies ultimately give rise to profitability and market performance (Dawkins and Reichheld, 1990; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Zeithaml, 2000) understanding the nature of specific service contexts and the tactical and strategic implications of these contexts is important.

The services and operational literatures provide many examples of broad service classification schemes (e.g. Bowen, 1990; Haywood-Farmer, 1988; Kellogg and Chase, 1995; Lovelock, 1983; Mersha, 1990; Silvestro et al., 1992; Shostack, 1977). While most of these schemes were developed on the basis of intuitive appeal, the typologies of Bowen (1990), Kellogg and Chase (1995) and Silvestro et al. (1992) provide classifications that are based on empirical examination. In particular, the classification scheme proposed by Silvestro et al. (1992) identifies three service types, namely, professional services, service shops and mass services.

At present, research into professional services (e.g. Aldlaigan and Bottle, 2002; Barsky and Nash, 2002) and service shops (e.g. Dabholkar et al., 1996; Sweeney et al.,1997) has dominated the services literature, with limited attention given to mass services such as spectator sports, delivery of educational content and theatre. This is possibly due to the traditional non-business orientation of many of these mass service organizations. However, as the pressure to be commercially viable mounts, organizations that have not normally adopted business models are beginning to embrace marketing concepts. Given that mass services represent several of the fastest growing industries in the economies of developed nations it is surprising that research into the unique characteristics of mass services has not been forthcoming. The US sports industry, for example, injected approximately $320 billion dollars into the economy during 1999-2000 (Douvis, 2002). Moreover, the industry is expected to sustain a growth rate of 6 percent per year (US Census Bureau, 2003). Despite this type of growth, mass services in general are not well understood.

The prime objective of this paper, therefore, is to better understand the unique characteristics of mass services. This is achieved through the development of a mass service typology. The purpose of the typology is to provide managers of mass services with a better understanding of the characteristics that differentiate their service organizations and to provide researchers with a basis for studying mass services. Ultimately, the classification scheme should provide managers and researchers with insights to assist in the management and positioning of individual service firms. To this extent, we build on the typology put forward by Silvestro et al. (1992) and develop a service typology specific to mass services.

This article is organised as follows: first we discuss the importance of developing service typologies. Next, we review prior theory relevant to the development of service typologies and profile several typologies offered in the literature. We then develop a mass service classification model based on service purpose and delivery. We conclude by discussing the implications of our typology.

A review of service typologies

In an effort to classify and bring mental ordering across the broad range of service industries, academics develop service typologies (Cook et al., 1999). The purpose of such typologies is to address the complexities of services by developing service criteria that reflect core service aspects that go beyond narrow industry boundaries (Cook et al., 1999). Service typologies, therefore, assist practitioners in developing meaningful strategies for particular service contexts while giving researchers a foundation for developing theories within a specific service classification (Cook et al., 1999).

The development of service typologies has led to the emergence of many diverse classification schemes (e.g. Bowen, 1990; Haywood-Farmer, 1988; Kellogg and Chase, 1995; Lovelock, 1983; Mersha, 1990; Silvestro et al., 1992; Shostack, 1977). Cook et al. (1999), for example, identified thirty-nine service typologies, among which there appears to be limited synthesis and integration. These schemes have addressed issues relevant to classifying, identifying or quantifying services and/or goods and services (Kellogg and Chase, 1995; Lovelock, 1983; Silvestro et al., 1992; Shostack, 1977), service strategy (Bowen, 1990; Lovelock, 1983), service system efficiency (Mersha, 1990), service quality (Haywood-Farmer, 1988) and service design (Bowen, 1990; Haywood-Farmer, 1988; Shostack, 1987) among others.

The service typology proposed by Bowen (1990) is based on the degree of customer orientation exhibited during the service encounter as defined by seven attributes, namely, the importance of employees, customization, the customer's ability to switch firms, employee/customer contact, services directed at people or things, continuous benefits, and differentiation between firms. Subsequently, these attributes were used to develop three clusters of services including high contact, customized personal services; moderate contact, semi-customized non-personal services; and moderate contact, standardized services (Bowen, 1990). The strategic implications of this classification scheme include market segmentation based on service customization, building customer loyalty and enhancing customer satisfaction (Cook et al., 1999)

Kellogg and Chase (1995) derive their service typology on the basis of customer contact. The elements on which customer contact was assessed included communication time, intimacy, and information richness. According to Kellogg an Chase (1995) the value of this classification is that it enables researchers to refine and re-evaluate research programs, provides service managers with a deeper understanding of customer contact to improve service quality and service system design, and allows managers to assess their environment for the level of customer contact.

The service typology forwarded by Silvestro et al. (1992) categories services into three categories, namely professional services, service shops, and mass services as shown in Figure 1. These service categories are distinguished according to the different orientations of each service category. The criteria on which each service is classified include whether the service is predominantly people or equipment focused, the degree of customer contact time, degree of customization, degree of discretion, where value adding occurs (front office/ back office), the degree of product or process focus and the number of customers processed in one day (Silvestro et al., 1992).The category in which a firm fits is determined by the firms ranking along these six criteria and the volume of the firm's daily service activity.

From reviewing the three empirical service typologies, a table that compares the different service criteria in each typology is shown in Table I. The typologies of Bowen (1990 and Silvestro et al. (1992) consist of seven criteria, while the typology proposed by Kellogg and Chase (1995) consist of three criteria. Commonality between the three typologies can be seen in the category of customer contact. In fact, Kellogg and Chase (1995) focus exclusively on this dimension. The remaining two

typologies share degree of customization and people or equipment focus. The remaining criteria are unique to each typology.

According to Silvestro et al. (1992) professional services, such as consultants, corporate banks, doctors, lawyers, advertising agencies and architects reflect service organizations with relatively few transactions, which are highly customized, process-oriented and have relatively long customer contact times. Most value is added in the front office, where considerable judgment is applied in meeting customer needs. Service shops, in contrast, include retail banks, rental services, hairdressing, repair and maintenance, business services and hotels, among others. These services display moderate degrees of customization and discretion, a mixture of people and equipment, and value is added in both the front and back office. Mass services, however, are service organizations with many customer transactions, involving limited contact time and little customization. Services such as telecommunications, transportation, amusement and recreation services, theatre and movies, and fast food fit within this service classification. Accordingly, these services are mainly product-oriented, with most of the value being added in the back office and little judgment applied by front office staff.

While the Silvestro et al. (1992) typology offers a broad description of mass services, it is limited to mass services that are equipment-oriented such as telecommunications and public transport services. This classification appears to reflect utilitarian mass services and is not well-aligned to hedonic mass services such as spectator sports, theatre and art museums. Yet, it is in these service areas that the highest growth and profit potential appears to exist. The US sports industry, for example, was worth approximately $320 billion dollars during 1999-2000 (Douvis, 2002). In response to this limitation, we extend Silvestro et al.'s (1992) service classification by developing a typology for the category of mass services. Silvestro et al.'s (1992) process-focused, multidimensional classification scheme is used primarily because of its usefulness in providing an underlying framework from which we can develop a more detailed typology of mass services. Specifically, we extend the Silvestro et al. (1992) classification of mass services to consider the key characteristics inherent to such services on the basis of service delivery and consumption purpose.

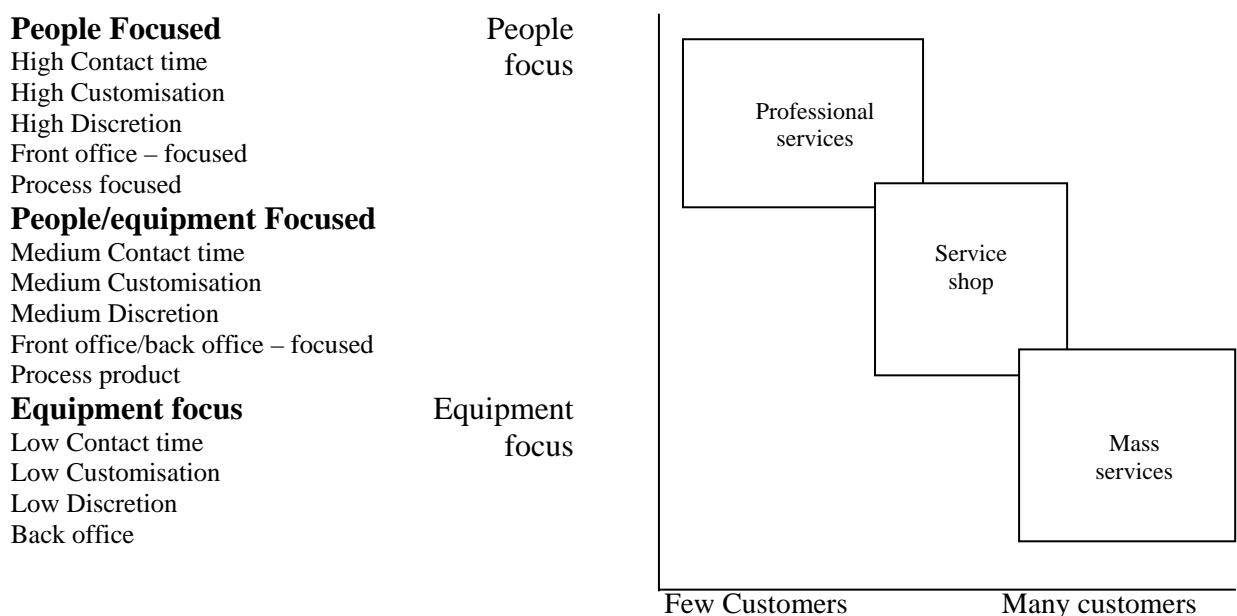**Figure 1** Silvestro et al. (1992) model of service processes

People Focused
High Contact time
High Customisation
High Discretion
Front office – focused
Process focused

People/equipment Focused
Medium Contact time
Medium Customisation
Medium Discretion
Front office/back office – focused
Process product

Equipment focus
Low Contact time
Low Customisation
Low Discretion
Back office

People focus

Equipment focus

Professional services

Service shop

Mass services

Few Customers   Many customers

Table I Comparison of the three empirical service typologies' criteria

Bowen (1990) Taxonomy of services	Silvestro et al. (1992) Classification of service processes	Kellog and Chase (1995) Customer contact criteria
Employee/customer contact	Degree of customer contact time	Communication time
		Intimacy Information richness
Customisation Services directed people or things importance of employees Customer's ability to switch firms	Degree of customisation People or equipment focused	
	Degree of discretion Front office/back office orientation	
Continuous benefits Differentiation between Firms		
	Product or process Focused No. of customers processed In one day	

Note: Cells that are shaded signify that the dimension is not present

Towards a mass service typology

The term "mass" refers to a large number of people or things that are grouped together (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1995). Thus, mass services reflect services characterised as delivering their offering to a mass audience, for example, higher education, libraries and museums, telecommunication services, amusement services and recreation entertainment services (Lovelock et al., 2001; Schmenner, 1986, Silvestro et al., 1992). Silvestro et al. (1992) propose that mass services are distinct from other service types (e.g. professional services and service shops) due to the close physical proximity and verbal interaction between customers. Within the framework proposed by these researchers, customers wait collectively, and share time, space, or service equipment, thus presenting a situation in which customers will be interacting with each other. The presence of other customers in these situations makes mass services unique as a service type. According to Silvestro et al. (1992), mass services reflect situations where there are many customer transactions, involving limited contact time, and little customization. Further, such services are generally equipment oriented, with most value being added in the back office (Silvestro et al., 1992).

   We believe Silvestro et al.'s (1992) definition is limiting in that it does not reflect the diversity of mass services in the marketplace. Spectator sports, public transport, museums, theme parks, education and theatre performances, for example, are also mass services (Lovelock et al., 2001). However, these services are not primarily equipment oriented and their value is typically added in the front office. Similarly, a theatrical performance, which provides its service to a mass of customers, cannot be classified as having limited contact time as the performers engage with the audience for an extended period of time. Further, the assumption that mass service customers have limited involvement in service production is restrictive and does not consider the role of the audience in co-producing the service experience, which is a vital component of mass services such as spectator sports, theatre and concerts. In these

service situations, customer involvement is high as the audience often contributes to, or detracts from, the overall service experience.

In the age of information, there are many mass services that are delivered without close physical proximity and verbal interaction between customers (two of the criteria for Silvestro et al.'s, 1992 definition of mass services). An ATM for a bank is a mass service that has limited physical proximity of customers and virtually no verbal interaction between customers. These discrepancies highlight the need for a detailed understanding of what constitutes a mass service and, more importantly, the need to understand the various types of services that may fall within a mass service classification. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to describe two key criteria for viewing mass services. These criteria include the purpose of consumption (hedonic or utilitarian) and the mode of service delivery (collective or individual).

A typology of mass services

The purpose of this paper is to present a classification scheme for mass services. As previously noted, classification schemes are an important foundation for any field of study. This is primarily because they provide structure by organising phenomena into groups that then allow systematic investigation (Hunt, 2002). Classification schemes are generally conducted at a macro level where broad categories can be created and generalizability can be found. At the macro level we are studying the commonality and generalizability of service characteristics. These broad categories then provide the first step in theory development. The classification scheme we propose, therefore, views service delivery (collective and individual) and purpose of delivery (hedonic and utilitarian) at the macro level. We do recognise, however, that at the micro level there can be variation at an individual level and services can comprise elements of each of these criteria.

At the macro level, for example, theme parks can be broadly classified as individual because the consumer can determine start and leave times, duration and timing of use of the theme park. In determining this classification we have focused on the core reason for service consumption. At the micro level, however, some of the elements of the theme park may be consumed collectively such as a once a day appearance by Disney-on-Ice skaters at Disneyland. In the present study, we adopt a macro level approach to determine the broad commonality between mass service types. Such an approach is necessary to move towards achieving generalizability of the typology, which is an approach taken by previous researchers when classifying service types (e.g. Lovelock, 1983; Lovelock et al., 2001).

The core benefit or main reason for consumption is used as the primary distinguishing criteria for determining the whether the purpose of service delivery is hedonic or utilitarian. That is, whether the core benefit most consumers seek from the service is hedonic or utilitarian. Utilitarian services are more rational and functional in nature (Albers-Miller and Stafford, 1999) and fulfil consumption needs that are considered necessary to consumers (Albers- Miller and Stafford, 1999). Since customers have the expectation that a utilitarian service will fulfil certain needs, it is likely that customers will cognitively evaluate the consumption of these services. Utilitarian services are typically evaluated based on service quality measurements 410 due to their cognitive characteristics (Dabholkar, 1993). The service outcome is therefore based on an evaluation of service excellence (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). Hedonic services, in comparison, are more personal and grounded in individual attitudes and motivations that are related to the consumption experience (Albers-Miller and Stafford, 1999). Indeed, hedonism reflects characteristics such as pleasure, enjoyment or delight (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2002). Specifically, hedonic services highlight the importance of experiencing personal pleasure and

enjoyment during the service consumption episode (Madrigal, 2003; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2002).

Hedonic services are therefore consumed to fulfil psychological needs and the service outcome is evaluated based on the customers' enjoyment of the experience (Cooper-Martin, 1992). This suggests that consumer's affective states derived from the consumption of hedonic services will influence their evaluation of such services (e.g. Holbrook, 1999; Madrigal, 1995; Mattila and Wirtz, 2000).

Temporality or the timing of service delivery is used as the primary distinguishing criteria for the determining whether the mode of service delivery is collective or individual. Collective service delivery reflects service situations where the service provider determines the time of service consumption. These services require the customer to partake in service consumption at a designated point in time. An example would be spectator sports, which are consumed collectively as they are delivered at a certain point in time to all consumers. They have a designated start and end time, which is determined by the service provider. Individual mass services, on the other hand, are those, which allow consumers to determine the time of consumption. Mass services such as confectioners, tobacconists, retailers, libraries, museums and television communication services fall under the individual mass services category. While many customers are processed in a day, these services are not delivered and consumed simultaneously by all consumers at one point in time; instead they are consumed by individuals at separate points in time. These services arc therefore termed individual mass services.

Based on the discrepancies evident in the literature, we propose a two dimensional typology of mass services. Figure 2 illustrates this typology. We suggest that mass services can be classified Using two axes, namely purpose of consumption (hedonic or utilitarian) and service delivery (individual or collective). Based on these definitions we classify our four mass service sub-groups using eight criteria. Specifically, we extend the service classification scheme of the Silvestro et al. (1992) to include the criteria of service delivery and purpose. Moreover, we also examine differences across these criteria on the basis of the nature of service evaluation for each mass service subgroup. We use these criteria to provide a detailed analysis of the characteristics of our four mass service types, that is, collective hedonic services, individual hedonic services, collective utilitarian services, and individual utilitarian services. Note that greater significance is placed on the two criteria of service delivery and purpose of consumption to define the categories of mass services. We do so because these criteria appear to distinguish between the various types of mass services better than the six criteria proposed by Silvestro et al.'s (1992). The purpose of Silvestro et al.'s (1992) criteria was to distinguish between three broad service types rather than focus on a particular services type in depth.

The typology constructed draws on consumer motivation theory (Solomon et al., 2007) and service delivery theory (Shostack, 1985; Bitner et al., 1994; Lovelock et al., 2001). A fundamental driver of consumer behavior is motivation, which can be represented in terms of hedonic and utilitarian needs (Solomon, 2007). The purchase of mass services can be driven by either of these motivational bases (Albers-Miller and Stafford, 1999). This extended classification scheme, its eight criteria and its application to the context of mass services is shown in Table II. Definitions of the criterion applied can be found in Table III. Additionally there arc two criteria of purpose of consumption and service delivery. Given that the majority of service classification schemes do not use multiple characteristics as the basis of their classification (Clemes et al., 2000) the multidimensional classification scheme presented in Table I provides a more in depth approach to understanding differences between service organizations. Such an approach permits analysis of a greater number of characteristics, which may differ among organizations providing mass services (Bowen, 1990; Clemes et al., 2000).

While the purpose of this paper is to propose a typology of mass services, the categories can also be represented as a continuum using a perceptual map (see Figure 3). The continuum is useful for recognizing that variation may exist within a service type at a micro level, or due to diversity in individual or situational factors. The continuum is important because it highlights that these concepts are not mutually exclusive. That is, a group of friends attending a spectator sporting match may be receiving hedonic benefits; where as a group of corporate customers may be attending the match for business or utilitarian purposes. Although the service is delivered collectively in both situations, the purpose of the activity differs between the consumer groups. The typology we develop looks at the primary purpose of the service, its core benefit. 'While we recognize that for different customer groups the purpose of service delivery may differ, we classify the examples in Figures 2 and 3 on the basis of the core service benefit. In the case of spectator sports, we classify the core benefit of the service as hedonic in nature. Similarly, we classify education as primarily utilitarian in nature.

Figure 2 A typology of mass service

		Hedonic	Utilitarian
Service Delivery	**Collective**	• **Spectator sports** • **Theatre** • **Collective pleasure travel (tour groups Contiki)**	• **Delivery of higher education content** • **Conference/seminars** • **Online informational chat rooms** • **Educational tours**
	Individual	• **Theme parks** • **Art Museum** • **Individual pleasure travel** • **Restaurants**	• **Fast-food** • **Libraries** • **Commuter public transport including buses, trains and air** • **Telecommunications** • **Routine banking services (ATM)**

Discussion

The development of a typology of mass services is important primarily because the four service types identified give rise to different management concerns, service strategy and tactical implications, and control and performance measurement issues. In spite of this, a typology to classify these differences has not been developed. Yet, such information is valuable to organizations striving to improve their service performance and competitiveness. Indeed service marketing researchers have noted that the application of a common measure of performance and service quality across the diverse range of service industries is not appropriate (e.g. Babakus and Boller, 1992; Dabholkar et al., 1996). Thus, research that strives to understand the individual complexities of service contexts provides a valuable framework from which managers can develop quality monitoring practices.

A clearer understanding of the diversity of mass services enables service managers to better segment their markets, communicate more effectively with these markets, develop more effective distribution and pricing strategies, and tailor service elements

to meet the needs of their target consumers. Thus, the classification scheme developed in this study provides managers with a useful way to view and review their current business operations. Mass service firms should carefully examine their marketing and operational programs with reference to the unique characteristics of mass services highlighted in this paper.

Table 11 Comparison of mass services classifications

Criterion	Collective hedonic Services	Individual hedonic services	Collective utilitarian services	Individual utilitarian services
	Spectator sport, theatre	Museum, theme park	Education Conferences	Computer public transport Libraries
Service delivery	Many customers at a specified time	Many customers at multiple points in time	Many customers at a specified time	Many customers at multiple point in time
Purpose of consumption	For pleasure	For pleasure	Functional	Functional
Equipment/ people orientation	People and equipment oriented	People and equipment oriented	People and equipment oriented	Equipment oriented
Customer contact time per transaction	High (more than one hour)	High	High	Mixed (high or low)
Degree of customisation	Low (standardised process)	Medium(some ability to tailor services to customer needs)	Low (standardised process)	Low (standardised process)
Degree of discretion	Low	Low	Low	Low
Front-office/back office orientation	Front office	Mixed	Mixed	Back office
Product/process focus	Process focused	Process focused	Process focused	Process focused

**Notes:** [a] Definitions for the criterion can be found in Table 111
Source: For details of operationalizing the list if criteria refer to Silvestro et al. (1992) p.69

Table 111 Criterion Definitions	
Criterion	**Definitions**
Service delivery [a]	Whether the service is consumed by many customers simultaneously at one point u time or consumed by many customers at different points in time
Purpose of consumption [a]	Whether the service is purchased for pleasure and enjoyment or for functional reasons
Equipment/people orientation	Equipment focused services are those where the provision of certain equipment is the core element in the service delivery. People-focused services are those where the provision of contact staff is the core element in service delivery
Customer contact time per transaction	High customer contact is where the customers spend hours, days and weeks in the service system per transaction. Low customer contact is where the contact with the service system is s few minutes
Degree of customization	A high degree of customization is where the service process can be adapted to sui the needs of individual customers. A low degree of customization is where there is a non-varying standardized: the customer may be offered several routes but the availability of the routes is predetermined
Degree of Discretion	A high degree of discretion is where front office personnel can exercise judgement in altering the service package or process without referring to supervisors. A low degree of discretion is where changes to service provision can be made only with authorization from supervisors
Front-office/back office orientation	A back office orientated service is where the proportion of front office (customer contact) staff to total staff is small. A front-office-orientated service is where the proportion of front-office staff to total staff is large
Product/process focus	A product-orientated service is where the emphasis is on what a customer buys. A process-orientated service is where the emphasis is on how the service is delivered
Note: [a] These criterion definitions were developed specifically for the extended typology proposed in this study, the remaining six criterion definitions were taken from Silvestro *et al.* (1992)	

Managerial implications

We discuss, in the following sections, the implications of the two categories in our matrix. That is, purpose of consumption (hedonic or utilitarian) and service delivery (collective or individual). We then discuss the implication of technology on the classification types.

Figure 3 Mass services typology continuum
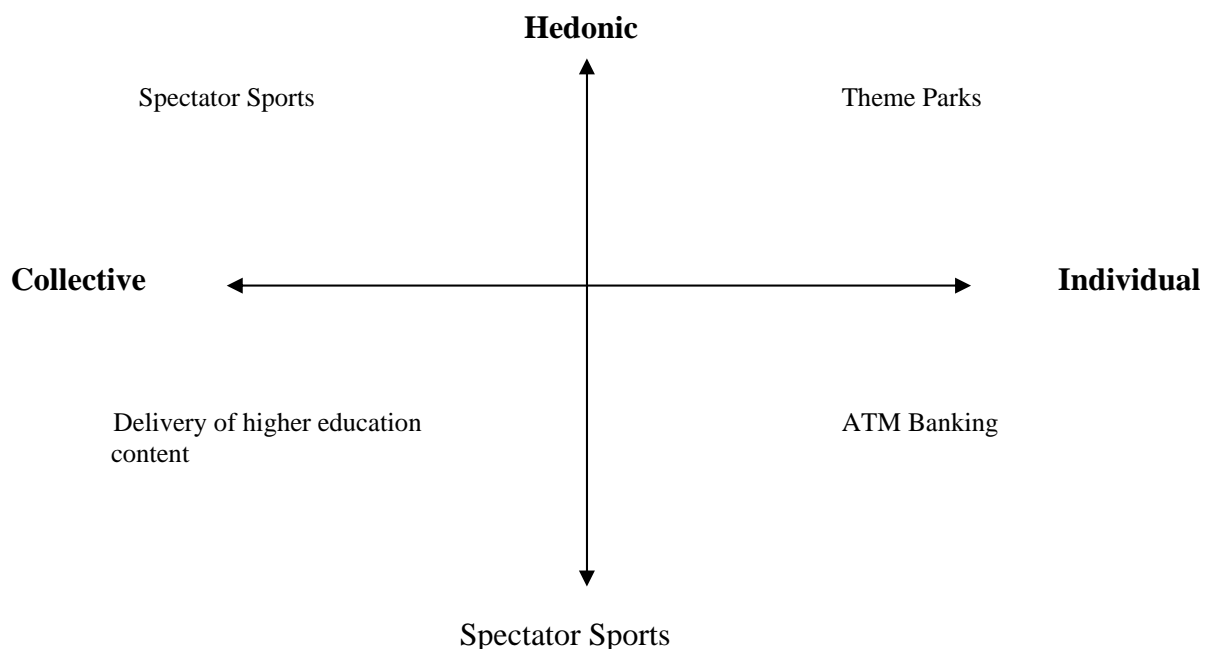
As the purpose of consumption for mass services can be classified as either hedonic or utilitarian, customer contact people must be trained to enhance the experience on this basis. Services of a hedonic nature such as concerts, movies, and theme parks require customer contact people to enhance the service experience in a way that creates excitement, pleasure, and enjoyment. In contrast, services of a utilitarian nature such as education, commuter transport, and telecommunications necessitate that the relationship between the service provider and customer be based on functional rather then emotional benefits.

Service providers must also consider the level of customization provided by service staff. While mass services generally have lower levels of customization than professional services and service shops, managers must still strive to semi-customize and personalize their service offerings. This task is especially challenging for utilitarian mass services where customers are seeking utilitarian benefits and may not want service personalization or customization. Mass services of a hedonic nature, however, lend themselves more towards service customization. For example, websites can be developed in a way that enhances personalization, facilitates interaction between the service provider and customer, tickets could be printed with personalized pictures, newsletters can be sent to frequent customers, and clubs can be established to make individual customers feel special.

As mass services are high in experience qualities, service providers can utilize a number of techniques to appeal to their target audience. In the case of hedonic services, where customers rely on their levels of enjoyment to evaluate the service experience, managers should emphasise these aspects of the service in marketing communications. The images, sounds and messages portrayed in such communications should convey excitement, pleasures and enjoyment. Whereas for utilitarian mass services managers should emphasize functional service attributes in their marketing communications. Thus, managers should focus on testimonials, statistics and functional information to assist the customer in their purchase decisions.

In terms of the nature of service delivery and whether the service is delivered collectively or individually managers must first determine whether the service needs to be delivered simultaneously to a group of consumers at a time determined by the service provider or whether the service can be delivered at a time designated by the customer. This decision must be made in light of service efficiency issues and customer needs. For instance, consumers may prefer an education service where lectures start at the time they designate (to fit in with work or personal commitments), however this may result in increased costs to the consumer, for which they are not willing to pay. There is trade-off between consumer preferences and the organization's ability to provide value to the customer in a cost-effective manner. Thus, the delivery of educational content to students tends to be collective rather than individual to offer a cost effective learning environment.

Providing services collectively, however, can create issues that managers must address if satisfaction and value is to be delivered to the customer. Service workers, for example, have to be trained to handle multiple customers simultaneously during extremely high demand periods (e.g. half-time at a football match), and systems and processes need to be streamlined to handle multiple customers at one instance. Arrival and departure times, for example, may need to be staggered to alleviate queuing at spectator sports, drinks should be pre-ordered prior to the intermission for theatre events, and queuing systems should be developed and implemented in libraries and movie theatres.

Individual mass services allow greater flexibility to the consumer than collective mass services in terms of start and end times, and density of the consumption experience. Service providers can gain competitive advantage by altering their service offering from collective to individual delivery (provided that the consumer does not desire high density experiences). For instance, while higher education is traditionally

offered using collective service delivery modes (i.e. lectures and tutorials at predetermined locations and times), some universities are differentiating by offering these services in an individual mode (i.e. online delivery; distance learning). Technology is the necessary resource for service providers to offer individual service delivery to large groups of people.

Companies that are adopting the individual approach to mass service delivery are evident in the banking and durables markets. Amazon.com for example provides service delivery on an individual basis, which is generally utilitarian in nature. As the customer can choose the time of service delivery, the service is classified as individual in delivery and as the purpose of the site is to facilitate finding and purchasing texts it serves a primarily utilitarian purpose. It should be noted that Amazon also has on-line chats, clubs and events which serve hedonic purposes; however, Amazon's core business is to facilitate the identification and purchase of texts. Current affairs programs such as Sixty Minutes offer on-line discussion sessions on topical issues that are delivered collectively for generally utilitarian purposes. These electronic mass services are collective in that they are delivered at one point in time. If customers wish to partake in the event then they must do so at a set time. As the nature of the discussion is information based, the general purpose of these sessions is utilitarian. Reality TV shows such as Big Brother are delivered collectively for hedonic purposes, similarly live chat-room sessions with evictees are scheduled and delivered collectively on-line for hedonic purposes. In this situation, the TV program is delivered collectively, that is, at one point in time for enjoyment or entertainment purposes, which suggests a hedonic purpose. Live discussions with evictees are also delivered collectively in that you have to be present and on-line at a specified time. These sessions are also likely to be hedonic in nature.

In summary, there are three key managerial benefits of this typology. These include the ability to identify opportunities to gain competitive advantage, the ability to segment consumers according to preferred service delivery and/or purpose of consumption, and, recognition of the role technology can play for the delivery of mass services.

Future research directions

The typology proposed in this paper also suggests several important directions for future research. Most importantly, the typology needs to be empirically tested; the similarities and differences between the four quadrants in the typology need to be examined, and differences in the typology at the macro and micro levels need to be explored. Research could also examine whether a particular service classification is associated with different drivers of key outcomes. Researchers could, for example, consider whether hedonic services are more aligned to relationship management than utilitarian services, or whether the role of emotion is more important in hedonic services than utilitarian services. Research could also examine whether service delivery, that is, if the service is delivered in a collective or individual model impacts on these drivers. Research may find that service quality and customer satisfaction drivers differ depending on the type of service under investigation. That is, the service quality facets that driver customer satisfaction may differ between the service quadrants. It may be found that customers of utilitarian services may value more highly technical dimensions; where as consumers of hedonic service may value the interaction aspects of a service more highly. Similarly, the role of the social environment may be more important in collective services where customer interaction is heightened. The physical environment may be more important in individual services where customer-to-customer interaction is not as prominent. As the typology suggests that there are important differences between service types, research that spans a variety of service contexts is needed if we are to further understand the nuances between service types.

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Executive summary and implications for managers

This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of the article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto *to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefit of the material present.*

To say someone is in the service industry doesn't really tell you much. Maybe he or she fixes bicycles or multi-million dollar military equipment, or sells fried chicken, paperclips, cheese, or combine harvesters. Maybe they fix teeth, maintain nuclear power stations, diagnose illnesses, or drive the bus that takes your children to school. Maybe they entertain by dressing as a clown and juggling apples at a family party, or maybe they run international sports tournaments which attract the world's top athletes. Maybe they run a fish shop, a telecommunications system or an Ivy League university.

Services' importance, not only to customers and the organizations which provide them but also to nations' economies, is well documented and supported by impressive statistics. But if you are an academic wanting to study them, or a practitioner needing to improve them, a fundamental question involves bringing some sort of order and classification to such a disparate list as the one above.

And it doesn't stop there. Once classified, marketers need to identify, to better understand their business, what elements characterize that group. Sandy Ng, Rebekah Russell-Bennett and Tracey Dagger focus on mass services involving such provision as spectator sport, transportation, theatre, museums, theme parks and education. They present a typology to help managers identify what makes their services different, bearing in mind that it may be inappropriate to apply a common measure of performance and service quality across the diverse range of service industries.

A clearer understanding of the diversity of mass services enables managers to better segment markets, communicate more effectively with them, develop more effective distribution and pricing strategies, and tailor service elements to meet target consumers' needs.

In mass services it's partly a matter of when and how that contact time with customers - so important in service encounters - is structured. Many involve limited contact time and little customization. With different sorts of service delivery, where does the value-added occur - front or back office staff - and to what degree?

It's also about convenience. If you are putting on a rock concert all the customers will be expected to turn up at the same time, but consumers of an education service may prefer lectures to start at a time they designate (to fit in with work or personal commitments)

Individual mass services allow greater flexibility to the consumer than collective ones in terms of start and end times, and density of the consumption experience. Service providers can gain -competitive advantage by altering their service offering from collective to individual delivery (provided that the consumer does not desire high density experiences). While higher education is traditionally offered using collective service delivery modes (i.e. lectures and tutorials at predetermined locations and times), some universities arc differentiating by offering individual online delivery and distance learning. Technology is the necessary resource for service providers to offer individual service delivery to large groups of people.

Another aspect of timing which makes mass services distinct is the presence of other customers, sharing the service delivery at the same time, and interacting with each other. Two classifications within the definition of "mass services" are utilitarian or hedonic. Services of a hedonic nature such as concerts, movies, and theme parks require customer contact people to enhance the service experience in a way that creates excitement, pleasure and enjoyment. In contrast, services of a utilitarian nature such as education, commuter transport and telecommunications necessitate that the relationship between the service provider and customer be based on functional rather then emotional benefits.

Service providers must also consider the level of customization provided by service staff. While mass services generally have lower levels of customization than

professional services and service shops, managers must still strive to semi-customize and personalize their service offerings.

This is especially challenging for utilitarian mass services where customers may not want personalization or customization. Those of a hedonic nature, however, lend themselves more towards customization. For example, web sites can be developed in a way that enhances personalization and facilitates interaction between the service provider and customer. Tickets could be printed with personalized pictures, newsletters sent to frequent customers, and clubs established to make individual customers feel special.

As mass services are high in experience qualities, service providers can use a number of techniques to appeal to their target audience. In the case of hedonic services, where customers rely on their levels of enjoyment to evaluate the service experience, managers should emphasize these aspects in marketing communications. The images, sounds and messages portrayed in such communications should convey excitement, pleasures and enjoyment. Whereas for utilitarian mass services managers should emphasize functional service attributes in their marketing communications — testimonials, statistics and functional information to assist the customer in their purchase decisions, for instance.

(A précis of the article "A typology of mass services: the role of service delivery and consumption purpose in classifying service experiences". Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald).