Omni-channel Service Architectures in a Technology-based Business Network: An Empirical Insight

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Abstract. This article investigates the existing omni-channel service architectures in the front-office of technology-based business networks. It discusses the implications from the existing alignment between the network-preferred channel with other channels and clients. The methodological approach is qualitative, exploratory in nature, and employs case study research in a large private retail bank in Portugal. It includes multiple sources of data collection for corroboration purposes, including semi-structured interviews, direct observation and institutional documents. Although we have identified four types of omni-channel architectures in a business network context, the case analysis revealed that only two of them meet all the requirements, namely: the mixed services and pure virtual services. For academics this is the first attempt to discuss a growing topic in the operations management literature. Thus, this study may also help practitioners to understand the challenges they may have to deal with an omni-channel strategy in a business network context.

Keywords: Technology-based business networks · Empirical research · Service operations · Service Architecture · Case study · Omni-channel services · Front-office

1 Introduction

Services have become an integral part of modern society [1, 2, 3], in a continuously evolving context stimulated by diverse factors such as new technologies and online channels. The integration of online service delivery channels, employing self-service technologies and interfaces (e.g. self-service checkout systems) are enabling firms to change and optimize the design of service encounters in order to meet customer requirements and convenience at an unprecedented pace [4, 5]. This happens along with an unprecedented level of customer connection and empowerment [6], that is enabling customers to exhibit preferences towards the existing channel options when