

The evolution and impact of qualitative research in *Journal of Services Marketing*

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to review the evolution of empirical research methods in *Journal of Services Marketing* (JSM), how the choice of methodology is related to the research topic, and how methodology affects the impact of papers published in JSM.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on citation data from Scopus, bibliometric methods are used to describe the methodological evolution of literature over the period 1987-2017. Indicator correlations and logistic regression are used to test the methodological predispositions of research topics. Negative binomial regression is used to test the impact of paper methodology on paper citations on 1,036 papers.

Findings – Qualitative research methods have remained relatively rarely used in JSM (7.5 per cent qualitative papers, 13.4 per cent mixed methods), with no major changes over the past 15 years. The variety of research methods has slightly increased in the latest years. There are considerable differences in the methodological predispositions of research topics. The methodology does not directly affect the impact of papers. However, use of mixed methods may positively affect paper impact. Papers focusing on conceptual development tend to be cited more.

Research limitations/implications – The review indicates that quantitative methods dominate research in JSM. However, future research challenges in service marketing research call for a reconsideration of the role of qualitative research for JSM. Findings point out that several research topics could benefit from further qualitative research.

Originality/value – Provides an overview of the latest development in research methodologies used in JSM, and direct statistical evidence on how paper methodology and other characteristics influence paper impact. Identifies areas for further qualitative research.

Keywords Qualitative research, Content analysis, Time series, Regression

Paper type Literature review

1. Introduction

Qualitative research methods such as case studies, grounded theory and ethnography can play a key role in the evolution of a research field. These methods are typically used in the early stages of the development of an emerging research field (Edmondson and McManus, 2007) to identify new phenomena (Siggelkow, 2007), describe and categorize these (Dubois and Gibbert, 2010; Levy, 2005), to introduce and delineate new theoretical constructs (Hirsch and Levin, 1999) and to generate theoretical explanations for observations (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gummesson, 2005). Qualitative research has played a crucial role in the evolution of the service marketing literature, as much of the early research from the Nordic school of service marketing built on qualitative methods (Lages *et al.*, 2013).

Previous reviews have traced the evolution of service marketing literature in terms of research methodology (Baron *et al.*, 2014; Kunz and Hogreve, 2011). However, these reviews have not addressed what role qualitative methods specifically have played in the evolution of the research field. Moreover, prior studies have not addressed how methodology choice affects the article impact in terms of citations (Hanson and

Grimmer, 2007; Nel *et al.*, 2011). The purpose of this article is to address these shortcomings by tracing the use of empirical methods in the service marketing literature, to analyze if there are predispositions toward certain methods depending on the research topic, and how the choice of methodology affects the subsequent impact of an article. Similar to Benoit *et al.* (2017), this study focuses on a single journal – the *Journal of Services Marketing* (JSM) – to control for differences in methodology preferences between journals and journal-based differences in article impact. Three specific research questions are addressed:

- RQ1. How has the use of qualitative research methods evolved in JSM?
- RQ2. What are the methodological predispositions among the research topics in JSM?
- RQ3. How does the methodology affect the impact of articles published in JSM?

This study uses bibliometric methods to trace the use of qualitative research methods, topical biases, and the impact of specific methodologies on subsequent use of an article (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007; Kumar *et al.*, 2017). The bibliometric analysis uses article citation data to trace the evolution of published literature and citation patterns. Although this approach loses details of individual article contents, it provides

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Journal of Services Marketing
34/1 (2020) 8–23
© Emerald Publishing Limited [ISSN 0887-6045]
[DOI 10.1108/JSM-12-2018-0359]

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Received 6 December 2018
Revised 19 June 2019
18 October 2019
Accepted 28 October 2019

an objective view of the evolution of the literature, as well as the interrelationships between articles, including impact in terms of citations. Given the main objective of tracing the overall methodological evolution of research in JSM, this methodology fits the purposes of this review. However, given the focus on articles and methodologies, this study will forgo descriptive bibliometrics of topics and authors, as these have already been explored by Nel *et al.* (2011).

This review contributes to this JSM special issue on qualitative methods by providing an overview of the role and impact of qualitative research in the history of JSM. It provides a basis for further articles and discussion regarding the role of qualitative research in the journal. In contrast to prior reviews of research published in JSM (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007; Nel *et al.*, 2011), the current study extends the period reviewed, and thus, describes the latest development in the methodological evolution of the journal. Moreover, as noted by Nel *et al.* (2011), prior reviews have not studied the impact of research published in JSM. This article specifically addresses this issue. More generally, this article complements prior reviews of services marketing research covering single (Benoit *et al.*, 2017) and multiple journals (Baron *et al.*, 2014; Kunz and Hogreve, 2011) by using bibliometric instead of qualitative analysis to study, which factors affect the impact of articles. In more practical terms, the review provides editors and authors description of what type of research in terms of methodology is appreciated by the readership of JSM and identifies, which topical areas have been under-researched using specific methodologies.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2, the methodology for identifying articles, inclusion/exclusion criteria of articles for further analysis and analytical procedures for extracting data are elaborated. Section 3 reports the evolution methodologies used in JSM articles. Section 4, the topical biases in the choice of the methodology are analyzed. Section 5 analyzes how methodology choice affects the impact of an article in terms of the number of citations. In Section 6, discussion of the research implications of the findings concludes the paper.

2. Methodology

Bibliometric methods analyze the structure and evolution of research areas using citation data (Zupic and Cater, 2015). They are used, for example, to identify central articles and authors in a research field (Kunz and Hogreve, 2011; Nel *et al.*, 2011). Citation data are usually complemented by coded data on article contents, such as methodology or theories used (Kumar *et al.*, 2017). This coding can be done manually or automated through content analysis (Duriau *et al.*, 2007). This study uses automated content analysis given a large number of articles to be analyzed.

The overall research process is depicted in Figure 1. First, relevant articles are identified. After excluding incomplete and meta-articles, automated content analysis is used to identify the methodology of articles based on their abstracts and references. A similar method is applied to identify the research topic of all articles. These data are the first used to track the evolution of the literature in terms of different methods.

The second analysis seeks to identify the methodological predispositions of research topics. This is done by studying the correlations between topic indicators, as well as logistic regression of methodology choices with research topics as explanatory variables.

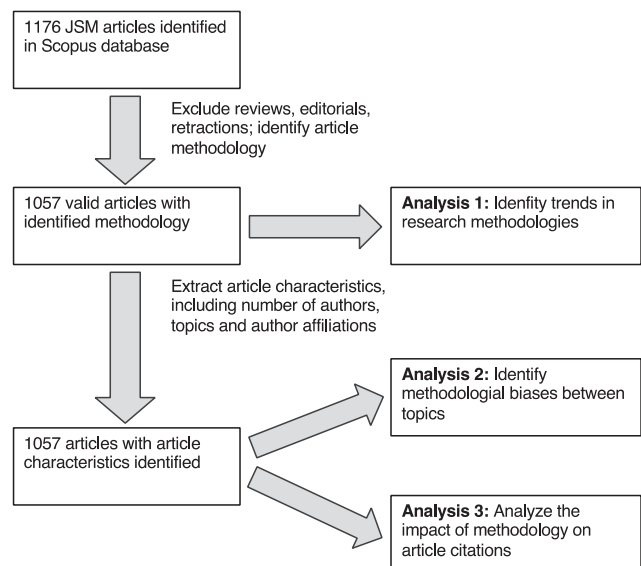
Assessing the impact of methodology on article citations requires controlling for many article characteristics that can affect the impact of an article (Stremersch *et al.*, 2007; Kumar *et al.*, 2017). These variables were largely derived from Scopus data, appended by further analysis of the papers. Negative binomial regression is used to analyze how these factors influence article citations.

2.1 Article identification and data collection

The Scopus database was used as the source of data on the JSM articles as the Web of Science database provides only limited coverage for JSM, and the goal of the review was to cover the entire history of the journal. Using the Scopus search functionality, all articles appearing in JSM between 1987–2017 were identified. Articles published in 2018 were excluded to ensure the availability of complete data for included articles. All available data for the 1,176 identified articles were exported in text format in September 2018. As some articles in Scopus database were missing abstracts and keywords, the data were appended with data from Emerald's citation database for JSM articles.

The *bibliometrix* package for R (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017) was used for bibliometric analysis of the article data. Before starting a closer analysis, editorial articles and commentaries were excluded, given the focus here on empirical research methods. The exclusion was primarily based on the article type reported in Scopus, and secondarily by excluding articles with strings “editorial” or “commentary” in the article title. One article redaction note was also removed. These exclusions left 1,057 articles for further analysis. However, as certain data such as article abstract or keywords were missing in Scopus for

Figure 1 Overview of the article



some articles, the actual number of observations is smaller in many analyses.

2.2 Identification of article methodology

The methodology used in an article is the central characteristic of this study. However, as methodology is not directly recorded in the Scopus database, an alternative heuristic for identifying methodologies was required. In many literature reviews, identification is done by manual coding of each article (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007; Kumar *et al.*, 2017; Nel *et al.*, 2011). However, given a large number of articles and practical limitations, this study used an automated heuristic to determine article methodology. While lacking in contextual awareness and detail, the procedure has the benefit of being transparent and easily reproducible.

Two types of heuristics were used to ensure sufficient coverage and improve the reliability of the categorization. First, a keyword search was used for the abstracts of articles, using predetermined keywords to determine article methodology. Second, the references cited by an article were inspected. Using known methodological articles and books as indicators of a specific methodology, the methodology likely applied in an article could be inferred. Abstract keywords and key references were both identified iteratively by inspecting the abstracts and references of articles and revising the list of used search terms until sufficient coverage.

The categorization of article methodology had two levels. First, the heuristic checked whether an article used any specific methods, such as grounded theory or regression analysis. An article was flagged as using a specific method if it matched any of the search terms for that method. The overall qualitative/quantitative categorization was based on the relevant specific methodology indicators. An article was marked as using qualitative methods if it used at least one specific qualitative method (case study, grounded theory, ethnography or general qualitative). Similarly, an article was marked as quantitative if it used at least one of the specified quantitative methodologies. The procedure allowed articles to be simultaneously categorized as both quantitative and qualitative; i.e. *mixed methods* research (Harrison, 2013; Harrison and Reilly, 2011). Appendices 1 and 2 describe the heuristic procedure and specific keywords and references used for qualitative and quantitative methods.

Table I reports the resulting categorization of articles. Articles categorized as *quantitative* use only quantitative methods. For example, Lee *et al.* (2001) studied the impact of

Table I Categorization and shares of articles using qualitative and quantitative methodologies

Uses quantitative methods	Uses qualitative methods	
	No	Yes
No	Non-empirical <i>n</i> = 259 24.5%	Qualitative <i>n</i> = 79 7.5%
Yes	Quantitative <i>n</i> = 577 54.6%	Mixed methods <i>n</i> = 142 13.4%

Note: *N* = 1,057

switching costs on satisfaction-loyalty relationships using data from personally administered surveys and regression analysis.

Similarly, *qualitative* articles use exclusively qualitative research methods such as case study or grounded theory. For example, Lijander and Roos (2002) developed a typology of customer relationships based on a case study of a company encompassing both customers and employees.

Mixed methods articles combine at least one type of both quantitative and qualitative methods. There is obviously a wide range of method combinations (Harrison and Reilly, 2011). For example, Andaleeb and Conway (2006) conducted a qualitative pre-study to identify factors explaining customer satisfaction that was later measured and tested using quantitative methods.

The final category, *non-empirical* articles, comprises articles that subscribe to neither quantitative nor qualitative research approaches. These are varied, including viewpoint articles (Javalgi and Martin, 2007), retrospectives of previously published articles (Wakefield and Blodgett, 2016), purely conceptual articles (La *et al.*, 2005) and normative articles, typically written by practitioners (Libonati, 1992).

Overall, only 7.5 per cent of articles were determined to use a “pure” qualitative approach. By contrast, 54.6 per cent used only quantitative methods. A relatively large share of articles, 24.5 per cent, were categorized as non-empirical. This is partly because of a lack of data – many early articles do not include an abstract, and do not cite any methodological references, precluding the use of automated heuristics. For this reason, the analysis of article impact is also conducted for the limited time period 2002–2017 as more complete data is available for this period.

The shares of mixed and pure qualitative research published in JSM are similar to those reported by Hanson and Grimmer (2007) for the period 1987–2002 and Nel *et al.* (2011) for the period 1998–2008. As these prior articles used a closer inspection of articles to determine article methodology, this suggests that the automated approach used in this article provides sufficiently reliable categorization of articles.

2.3 Identifying article topic

Similar to article methodology, article topic identification was based on using keywords to deduce the topics discussed in an article. A dummy variable was used to note if the keywords of an article included at least one of the search phrases for a specific topic. These search phrases, listed in Appendix 3, were identified through inspection of the most common keywords among all articles, resulting in a categorization nearly identical with Nel *et al.* (2011). Each article could have more than one topic.

2.4 Extraction of additional article variables

Besides research methodology, prior research has studied how various article characteristics, including article age and length, affect article impact (Stremersch *et al.*, 2007; Kumar *et al.*, 2017). Hence, it was important to include such variables in the analysis of article impact. These data came either directly from the Scopus database or were extracted using the *bibliometrix* package. Descriptive statistics for the extracted variables are reported in Table II. Correlations between the variables are included in Appendix 4.

Table II Variables and descriptive statistics

Variable	Type	Definition	Mean/(%)	SD	min	max
<i>Dependent variables</i>						
Global citations	Count	Citations to focal article from any source	31.48	47.05	0	606
Local citations	Count	Citations to focal article within JSM	1.37	2.29	0	26
<i>Independent variables</i>						
Quantitative methodology	Dichotomous		67.6%		–	
Qualitative methodology	Dichotomous		20.9%		–	
<i>Controls</i>						
Article age	Continuous	2018-article publication year	12.65	8.48	1	31
Number of pages	Continuous	Difference between article end and start page	11.44	3.82	2	30
Number of references	Count	Number of references cited by article	49.46	28.19	1	169
Number of authors	Count*	Number of authors in article	2.30	1.12	1	10
Number of keywords	Count	Number of keywords recorded for the article	4.71	1.50	1	11
Title length	Count	Number of words in article title	6.85	2.22	2	16
Title novelty	Dichotomous	Article title contains "A NEW," "!" or "#"	1.0%		–	
Special issue	Dichotomous	Article appeared in a special issue	7.7%		–	
Author US affiliation	Dichotomous	At least one author affiliated with US university	60.1%		–	
Author top university affiliation	Dichotomous	At least one author affiliated with top business school	17.3%		–	
Author prior JSM publications	Continuous	Number of prior JSM articles per author	0.55	1.12	0	11
Type: conceptual	Dichotomous	Article is conceptual	14.9%		–	
Type: retrospective	Dichotomous	Article is a retrospective of prior article	2.6%		–	
Article novelty	Continuous*	Cumulative use of article keywords prior to publication year	2.47	1.2	0	4.64

Notes: $N = 1,036$; * = logarithm-transformed variable; share of observations reported for dichotomous variables

Dependent variable: Article impact. Article impact was measured using citations received by an article, as is the common practice in bibliometric research (Kumar et al., 2017; Stremersch et al., 2007). Two different citation measures were used. First, *global citations* are the number of citations from articles published in any source and was directly reported in the Scopus database. Second, *local citations* count the number of citations received by an article from other articles appearing in JSM. As global citations include local citations, it is always equal or greater than local citations.

Article age. The time between publication year and current time affects the potential number of citations that an article can accumulate (Stremersch et al., 2007). Therefore, the article's age was included as a control variable. As the relationship between article age and citations is often non-linear (Stremersch et al., 2007) article age squared was also included as a control variable.

Number of pages. A longer article can potentially convey more valuable information to the reader; on the other hand, shorter articles may be easier to use and cite in subsequent research. Hence, the number of pages in the article, deduced from the start and end pages of the article, was used as a control variable.

Number of references. The number of references cited by an article can affect how often the article will be cited, as there are more articles that are connected to the focal article through citation. Therefore, the number of references, reported in Scopus, was added as a control variable.

Number of authors. Articles with more authors may be more likely to receive more citations, as more authors have an interest in the success of the article. Hence, the number of authors was added as a control variable based on the authors reported in Scopus database. Because of a right-skewed distribution, a

logarithm-transformed version of the variable in further analysis.

Number of keywords. Using more keywords can make an article more likely to be cited as keywords affect how likely the article will be to show up in searches in citation databases. The variable counts the keywords provided by authors reported in the Scopus database.

Article title length. The length of the article title is the first main signal about the article's quality in searches of literature. Therefore, similar to Stremersch et al. (2007), title length variable was included, measured as the number of words in article title reported in the Scopus database.

Article title novelty. An attention-grabbing title can enhance the impact of an article (Russell-Bennett and Baron, 2016; Stremersch et al., 2007). Therefore, a dummy variable indicating the novelty of article title was included. The article title was marked as a novel if the title contained at least one of search terms "A NEW", "!" or "#".

Special issue. Being included in a special issue may affect the impact of an article. Hence, a dummy variable was used to code if an article appeared in a special issue of JSM. This information was added manually using information from JSM publisher Emerald's database.

Author US affiliation. US universities are often seen as prestigious in many research fields (cf. Stremersch et al., 2007). Moreover, the US-Nordic school division in the service research community suggests the importance of observing US affiliation. Therefore, a dummy variable was used to indicate whether one or more authors of an article were affiliated with a US institution, based on affiliation data available in Scopus.

Author top university affiliation. Similar to US institution affiliation, being affiliated with a globally renowned university

can affect the citations received by an article, as authors from prestigious universities may be perceived to be more credible or important (Rosenzweig *et al.*, 2016). Hence, a dummy variable was used to note whether one or more authors or an article were affiliated with a top university. The determination of “top university” was based on whether the university was included within the top 100 of the Financial Times MBA business schools ranking, ordered by quality of research (Financial Times, 2016).

Prior publications in JSM. The stature of an author within a research field affects the probability of their articles being cited (Stremersch *et al.*, 2007). Being a “known author” in service marketing should, thus, influence the citations to further work in the field because of improved name recognition and credibility. Therefore, a variable measuring how many articles the authors of an article had previously published in JSM was included. This measure was normalized by dividing it with the number of authors in the focal article.

Conceptual article. Some non-empirical articles focus on conceptual development. As this can affect the impact of the paper in comparison to other non-empirical articles such as viewpoints, it was controlled with a dummy variable. An article was marked as conceptual if the keyword “conceptual” appeared in the abstract.

Retrospective article. JSM has recently published several retrospectives of articles published earlier, with original authors reflecting on the article and its impact. Given the special type of these articles, a dummy variable was created for them. An article was marked as a retrospective if at least one of the terms “retrospective,” “reflection,” “original paper” or “chronicle” appeared in its abstract of the article.

Article novelty. The novelty of the article’s topic can affect the citations received by the article, as early contributions to a specific topic are likely to receive a disproportionate number of citations than later articles on the topic. The novelty of article’s topic was measured as the additive inverse of the cumulative use of keywords of the focal article prior to its publication year, divided by the number of keywords in the focal article. As this variable was right-skewed, a logarithm-transformed version was used in further analysis. Moreover, as 21 articles lacked any keywords, these articles were effectively excluded from further analysis.

3. Evolution of research methodology

To answer RQ1 on the evolution of research methods in JSM, the methodologies used over time were tabulated, differentiating between quantitative, qualitative, mixed and non-empirical articles. Figure 2 depicts the evolution of the use of these categories in JSM.

As Figure 2 shows, the role of qualitative methods has been limited throughout the history of JSM. The share of purely qualitative studies has never exceeded 20 per cent. For most years, qualitative research has accounted for less than one-tenth of all published articles. Even if combined with mixed methods articles, the use of qualitative methods has remained in the minority of articles published in JSM.

Although there is a slight upward trend in the share of qualitative research over the history of JSM, overall the shares of methodologies have remained relatively stable after 2002.

This implies that even during the past 15 years, there has not been a major surge in qualitative research in the journal. However, there is slight increase in the share of qualitative articles published in 2014–2017 (to 11.8 per cent from 7.3 per cent in 2002–2013). Quantitative research still accounts for around 60 per cent of articles published in the journal. The most significant change over history is the move away from non-empirical articles, which were mostly replaced by quantitative research, but more recently also by research using qualitative methods, in particular mixed methods.

Overall, the evolution of research methods duly reflects the history of JSM with an initial focus on practitioner-oriented articles and company studies written by practitioners (Martin, 2012). As Martin (2012, p. 5) writes, these articles were “typically very thin on theory.” Hence, given the focus of qualitative methods on theory development or elaboration, it is not surprising that qualitative articles were not common in the early years of JSM.

Table III reports the use of specific qualitative methodologies over time. This data reconfirms the conclusion that qualitative methods have seen only limited use in the early history of JSM. However, toward the more recent periods, both the number and the variety of qualitative methodology use has increased. In particular, the role of grounded theory and ethnography have strengthened. In concordance to findings of Benoit *et al.* (2017), this suggests a trend toward increasing diversity in research methods.

To summarize, in concordance with Nel *et al.* (2011), the data suggest that qualitative research has played a minor role in the history of JSM. Instead, quantitative methods have dominated. However, toward the end of the observed period, a movement toward more diverse method is emerging, reflected in the more frequent combinations of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and the increased diversity in qualitative methodology.

4. Relation between research topic and methodology

The relation between the research topic and research methodology was analyzed in two ways. First, polychoric correlations between methodology and topic indicators were used to create a map of methodological predispositions of different research topics. Second, logistic regression was used to test more robustly how research topics are related to the choice of quantitative and qualitative methods. Given the clear trends in methodology reported above, article age was included in this analysis as a control variable, along with publication in a special issue, number of authors, the affiliation of authors and article novelty.

Figure 3 shows the relative positions of research topics with respect to a predisposition toward (or away from) quantitative and qualitative methods. There are clear differences between different topics with respect to the choice of research method. The topics can be categorized as quantitative dominant, qualitative dominant, balanced and conceptual. Most topics are predisposed toward either quantitative methods (in the lower right quadrant) or qualitative methods (upper left quadrant). In short, topics such as consumer behavior, service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty have leaned toward

Figure 2 Share of article methodologies in JSM, 1987-2017

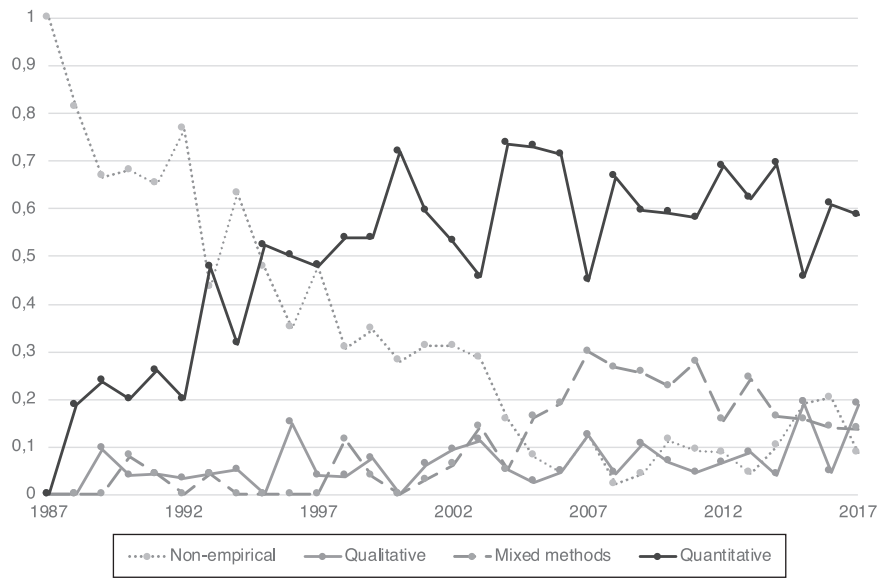
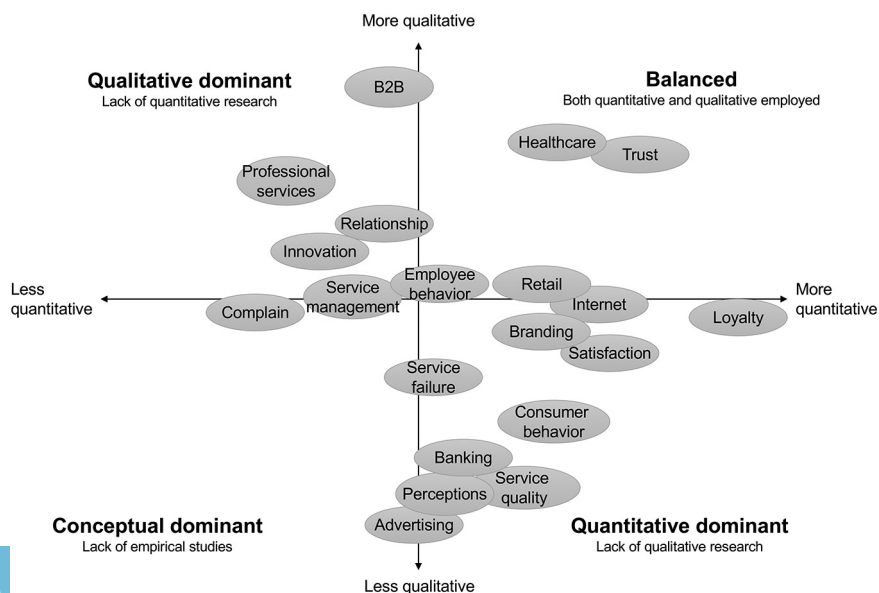


Table III The use of specific qualitative methodologies, 1987-2017

Methodology	Period						Total	Share of all articles (%)
	1987-1991	1992-1996	1997-2001	2002-2006	2007-2011	2012-2017		
General qualitative methods	0	2	4	17	42	60	125	11.8
Case study	4	3	6	15	28	29	85	8.0
Grounded theory	1	0	3	3	13	29	49	4.6
Ethnography	0	0	1	5	5	16	27	2.6

Figure 3 Research topic positioning with respect to quantitative and qualitative methods



quantitative methods. Qualitative dominant topics include business-to-business (B2B) services, professional services, relationship management and service innovation. Healthcare and trust are balanced topics that have been studied using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Interestingly, research on complaining appears to be lacking in both qualitative and quantitative orientation. In conclusion, the analysis indicates that there is room for further research using complementary qualitative or quantitative methods.

The results of logistic regression testing the relation of research topics and control variables on the choice of quantitative and qualitative methods are reported in Table IV. While the explanatory power of the models is relatively low, as judged by McFadden's pseudo- R^2 's (0.21 and 0.10, respectively), the findings are consistent with the previously identified methodological trends and the methodological predispositions of topics discussed above. As expected from the overview of methodological evolution, article age has a negative impact on the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, implying that overall empirical research has become commonplace. Special issues tend to favor qualitative methods while shunning quantitative methods. Interestingly, articles with US authors are less likely to use qualitative methods. In line with arguments about the maturation of the research field (Edmondson and McManus, 2007), article novelty is negatively related to using quantitative methods.

The findings on the influence of research topics confirm some of the methodological predispositions identified above: quantitative methods are preferred in research on consumer

behavior and loyalty, for example, while research on service management and relationship management tends to disfavor quantitative approaches. By contrast, research on healthcare and B2B context tends to use qualitative methods. Studies on service quality and failure instead shun qualitative methodology.

5. Impact of research methodology on article impact

Multiple regression analysis was used to study $RQ3$ on how methodology and other characteristics affect the impact of articles. The dependent variable of interest is the number of citations received by an article after its publication. An article with more citations is considered more impactful as more scholars have found the article useful enough to cite in their own research. Two measures of article impact were used, namely, global citations and local citations. These reflect, respectively, the appreciation of the article among all scholars interested in service marketing, and appreciation of the article among scholars who publish in JSM. While these target audiences are likely to be nearly identical, the latter is more stringent, as publishing in JSM directly ties an author to research relevant to JSM.

In addition to the effects of two explanatory variables, qualitative and quantitative research, this study includes two potential moderating effects. First, the analysis tests whether mixed methods research is more impactful than qualitative and quantitative research alone, modeled as an interaction effect

Table IV Results of logistic regression on methodology choice

Explanatory variable	Quantitative method			Qualitative method		
	b	s.e	OR	b	s.e	OR
Article age	-0.10	(0.011)***	0.91	-0.05	(0.012)***	0.95
Number of authors	0.66	(0.176)***	1.93	-0.13	(0.174)	0.88
Special Issue	-1.43	(0.271)***	0.24	0.69	(0.260)**	2.00
US author	-0.10	(0.171)	0.90	-0.64	(0.169)***	0.53
Top university author	-0.12	(0.208)	0.89	0.10	(0.213)	1.11
Article novelty	-0.19	(0.077)*	0.83	-0.03	(0.080)	0.97
Topics						
Consumer behavior	0.58	(0.213)**	1.78			
Advertising	0.86	(0.330)**	2.36			
Customer loyalty	1.24	(0.373)***	3.46			
Customer perception	0.70	(0.389)†	2.01			
Branding	0.80	(0.439)†	2.22			
Relationship	-0.59	(0.272)*	0.55			
Healthcare				0.68	(0.382)†	1.96
B2B				1.02	(0.462)*	2.76
Professional service				0.77	(0.451)†	2.16
Service quality				-0.41	(0.231)†	0.66
Service failure				-0.78	(0.466)†	0.46
Intercept	1.00	(0.267)***	2.73	-0.37	(0.257)	0.69
Fit indices						
McFadden's R^2		0.2083			0.103	
Nagelkerke		0.324			0.1569	
Tjur		0.220			0.105	

Notes: $N = 1,036$; † $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; OR: odds ratio; only significant topic coefficients shown

between the qualitative and quantitative method indicator variables. Second, qualitative research is typically more impactful in the early stages of a research field (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). One would, therefore, expect qualitative articles published early in the life-cycle of a research topic to be more impactful than qualitative studies published later in a mature research field. This effect was modeled as an interaction between qualitative method indicator and article novelty variables.

5.1 Methodology

The dependent variables, global and local citations, are both count variables, indicating the use of Poisson regression. However, if the dependent variable is over dispersed, typically caused by many articles having zero citations, the use of negative binomial regression instead of Poisson regression is recommended (Stremersch *et al.*, 2007). An inspection of variable statistics shows that the variance of both dependent variables is significantly larger than their mean. Moreover, the Cameron-Trivedi test for the over dispersion is significant, indicating that negative binomial is preferred over Poisson regression (Cameron and Trivedi, 1990). Hence, this study uses negative binomial model for estimating the model on article impact.

Alternative regression models, including quasi Poisson regression, zero-inflated negative binomial models (Rosenzweig *et al.*, 2016), and regular OLS regression with log-transformed citation counts (Kumar *et al.*, 2017; Thelwall and Wilson, 2014) and standardized Z-score of citations in comparison to yearly cohort (Benoit *et al.*, 2017) were also tested. As the differences in substantive results were minimal only the negative binomial models are reported.

The main analyses focus on the effects on global citation count. For added robustness, two further analyses were included. First, the main regression model is replicated with articles published between 2002 and 2017, as this period is more stable methodologically and has virtually complete article data. This demonstrates if the results are consistent over time and not subject to missing or highly variable data. Second, the main model was also estimated using the local citation count as dependent variable. This provides further evidence for the findings and shows if there are differences in the effects between general JSM readership and those who have authored JSM articles.

5.2 Results

Hierarchical negative binomial regression analysis results are reported in Table V. The first model includes only control variables, including all topic indicator variables. For reasons of brevity, and the interest in methodological rather than topical explanations of article impact, the regression coefficients of these indicators are not listed explicitly, although several were statistically significant.

The direct effects model adds the indicators for qualitative and quantitative research. The coefficients for both are nonsignificant and small in magnitude. This is also reflected in the overall fit of the model; the difference in χ^2 is nonsignificant. These results indicate that methodology does not directly influence article impact and that article impact is affected more by its topic than its methodology.

The full model includes moderation effects. The difference in χ^2 is again nonsignificant, indicating that the added interaction terms do not improve the explanatory power of the model. The coefficients of quantitative and qualitative methods are both negative but only quantitative method is weakly significant ($\beta = -0.14$, $p = 0.093$). Both interaction term coefficients are non-significant, indicating the absence of moderating effects. However, the interaction between qualitative and quantitative research is weakly positive ($\beta = 0.23$, $p = 0.136$), hinting that mixed methods research based on both qualitative and quantitative methods may positively influence article impact.

The fourth model fits the full model with data from articles published between 2002 and 2017. The results are mostly in line with the findings from the model with full data. The effect of qualitative methods is non-significant. However, the coefficient of quantitative methods is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.30$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that, notwithstanding the effects of the research topic, during the past 15 years using quantitative methodology appears to adversely affect article impact. Both interaction effects are again non-significant; however, the coefficients of interaction between qualitative research and quantitative research ($\beta = 0.29$, $p = 0.103$) and qualitative research and article novelty ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.133$) weakly suggest that the use of mixed methods may lead to slightly higher impact and that the use of qualitative methods early on in a topic's development may be more impactful.

Finally, the fifth model fits the full model using local citations as the dependent variable. No significant direct or interaction effects emerge, largely consistent with prior tested models.

Apart from these main results, the models indicate how other factors affect the impact of JSM articles. First, the results suggest an article life-cycle effect – article age has an inverted-U shaped relationship with a number of citations. This indicates that, as can be expected, recent articles have not yet had time to accumulate citations, and that old, less relevant articles start to become less frequently cited. This suggests that there is a specific time window for which articles are considered for citation.

Second, the number of references and the number of authors consistently have a statistically significant positive relationship with article citations. These suggest that being connected both scientifically via references and socially through collaboration tends to enhance the citations garnered by an article.

Third, the article title does not matter. Coefficients for both title length and novelty are non-significant in most models. This suggests that article title does not play a significant factor in subsequent citations received by the article (Russell-Bennett and Baron, 2016). Similar to Stremersch *et al.* (2007), an attention-grabbing article title does not affect the citations received by an article. However, the final model suggests that for local citations, in effect scholars publishing in JSM, longer title length is related with fewer citations, consistent with prior studies (Stremersch *et al.*, 2007).

Fourth, being published in a special issue may have a slight positive effect on article impact. The coefficients for the special issue indicator are positive, but only weakly significant for three of the five models. This suggests that special issues may influence the research on specific topics, at least in terms of research impact.

Table V Results of negative binomial regression analysis

Explanatory variable	Controls		Global citations Direct effects		Full model		Global citations 2002-2017 Full model		Local citations Full model	
	b	s.e	b	s.e	b	s.e	b	s.e	b	s.e
Qualitative article			-0.04	(0.074)	-0.16	(0.168)	-0.06	(0.189)	-0.28	(0.282)
Quantitative article			-0.08	(0.071)	-0.14	(0.081)†	-0.30	(0.111)**	-0.03	(0.119)
Qualitative x Quantitative					0.02	(0.060)	0.09	(0.062)	0.03	(0.099)
Qualitative x Article novelty					0.23	(0.155)	0.29	(0.175)	0.15	(0.252)
Pager age	0.40	(0.019)***	0.40	(0.019)***	0.40	(0.019)***	0.56	(0.039)***	0.18	(0.030)***
Paper age squared	-0.01	(0.001)***	-0.01	(0.001)***	-0.01	(0.001)***	-0.02	(0.002)***	0.00	(0.001)***
Number of authors	0.26	(0.065)***	0.26	(0.065)***	0.27	(0.065)***	0.30	(0.073)***	0.11	(0.101)
Number of pages	-0.01	(0.009)	-0.01	(0.009)	-0.01	(0.009)	-0.02	(0.014)†	0.01	(0.014)
Number of keywords	0.02	(0.022)	0.02	(0.022)	0.02	(0.022)	0.08	(0.024)**	-0.03	(0.034)
Number of references	0.01	(0.002)***	0.01	(0.002)***	0.01	(0.002)***	0.01	(0.002)***	0.00	(0.003)
Title length	-0.02	(0.014)	-0.02	(0.014)	-0.02	(0.014)	0.00	(0.015)	-0.11	(0.022)**
Title novelty	0.25	(0.280)	0.21	(0.281)	0.18	(0.281)	0.09	(0.288)	0.11	(0.419)
Special issue	0.20	(0.115)†	0.19	(0.117)	0.21	(0.117)†	0.14	(0.108)	0.44	(0.180)*
US author	-0.09	(0.065)	-0.09	(0.065)	-0.09	(0.065)	-0.07	(0.069)	0.06	(0.100)
Top university author	0.20	(0.077)**	0.20	(0.077)**	0.20	(0.077)**	0.11	(0.086)	0.18	(0.114)
Prior publications	0.01	(0.028)	0.01	(0.028)	0.01	(0.028)	0.00	(0.027)	0.10	(0.041)*
Conceptual article	0.29	(0.081)***	0.28	(0.082)***	0.28	(0.082)***	0.32	(0.085)***	0.30	(0.122)*
Retrospective article	0.28	(0.196)	0.26	(0.197)	0.24	(0.197)	0.29	(0.183)	0.27	(0.306)
Article novelty	0.01	(0.035)	0.01	(0.035)	0.01	(0.038)	-0.03	(0.040)	-0.01	(0.059)
Topic indicators	Included		Included		Included		Included		Included	
Intercept	-0.29	(0.214)	-0.23	(0.220)	-0.20	(0.223)	-0.80	(0.267)**	-1.12	(0.350)**
AIC	8,467.1		8,469.7		8,471.6		5,134.2		3,165.3	
-2 × log likelihood	-8,393.1		-8,391.7		-8,389.6		-5,052.2		-3,083.3	
χ ²	1,167.0		1,166.5		1,166.4		764.7		1,012.5	
N	1,036		1,036		1,036		689		1,036	

Notes: †p < 0.1; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Fifth, the coefficient for top university authorship is positive and significant for the first three models. This concurs with prior research (Rosenzweig *et al.*, 2016) and indicates that articles with authors from renowned universities garner more citations. This suggests that scholars perusing JSM tend to perceive these articles as more credible or interesting because of their authorship. The coefficient for prior publications is positive and significant in the local citations model, indicating that scholars publishing in JSM favors citing authors who have already appeared in the journal.

6. Discussion

The overall picture emerging from this review is that research published in JSM is dominated by quantitative methods. The role of quantitative methods has remained relatively constant for the past 15 years. By contrast, qualitative methods constitute only a minority of studies in JSM. However, the methodological variety has been increasing recently. This includes the use of mixed methods research combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as different types of qualitative methodology.

This review corroborates the history of JSM as portrayed by the long-term editor Charles L. Martin (2012): the early years were dominated by normative, practitioner-oriented research that did not emphasize theoretical or methodological rigor.

Over time, the journal has moved toward more academic orientation, with emphasis on quantitative methods. The current editorial policy of methodological diversity appears to have had some effect, as the share of qualitative papers is slightly greater during 2014–2017 than previously.

Research topic affects the choice of methodology; topics such as customer behavior, loyalty and satisfaction lean toward quantitative methods, while research on B2B and professional services is instead predisposed toward qualitative methodology. Research on healthcare and trust tends to use both types of methodology.

The findings regarding how methodology affects article impact are relatively weak. The general conclusion is that methodological choice does not significantly influence the citations received by an article. At any rate, the article topic matters more than methodology. However, the findings hint the use of mixed methods may improve the impact of an article. Importantly, articles focusing on conceptual development tend to receive more citations than purely empirical papers. Hence, it is essential to consider conceptual and theoretical development in qualitative articles as well.

6.1 Why not qualitative research?

The rarity of qualitative research in JSM, particularly compared to other service research journals such as *Journal of Service*

Management (JOSM) (Benoit *et al.*, 2017) warrants further discussion. Five potential explanations may be identified.

First, if the share of quantitative articles is interpreted as an indication of the methodological predispositions of scholars in the field, qualitative researchers are the minority. The predominant paradigm of JSM readership, similar to service research in general, is likely based on a positivist epistemology and expectations of quantitative methods (Tronvoll *et al.*, 2011). Given that judgment of articles is affected by readers' own predispositions, qualitative researchers are disadvantaged by the need to fit their studies in an environment that favors quantitative research (Pratt, 2008).

Second, the history of JSM obviously influences its current methodological profile. The origins of JSM – requiring practically useful rather than theoretically insightful research (Martin, 2012) – is likely to have discouraged qualitative research, which typically aims at theory development and elaboration (Gummesson, 2005). This paradigm may persist among the scholars publishing in JSM, leading to predisposition disfavoring qualitative research.

Third, JOSM emphasizes different topical areas, including service operations management and, most notably, business-to-business marketing. By contrast, JSM is more closely linked to consumer service research and North American service quality thinking, which both lean toward quantitative methods. This difference in research topics and traditions may partly explain why qualitative methods less common in JSM. This is apparent in the methodological predispositions of the research topics identified in this review.

Fourth, practical reasons may also explain the bias toward quantitative methods. Rigorous reporting of qualitative studies requires the more extensive elaboration of data and inference processes to demonstrate credibility and transparency than quantitative research (Pratt, 2009), which is challenging to accomplish in a limited number of pages. Quantitative studies can rely on standard and concise analytical and reporting procedures (Healy and Perry, 2000; Riege, 2003), which puts qualitative research at a disadvantage, as given similar space, qualitative articles are likely to be perceived as having poorer quality than quantitative studies, with the skills of the authors held constant.

Fifth, although the expressed editorial policy is to increase the methodological diversity of JSM, it takes time to change the methodological profile of a journal. This could be likened to rebranding, which takes time and faces many hurdles (Miller *et al.*, 2014). Further communication toward potential contributors is likely still needed to influence scholars' perceptions of JSM's profile.

6.2 The need for further qualitative research

Several developments in the service marketing field indicate the need to adjust the methodological profile of JSM toward qualitative methods. First, as noted by Tronvoll *et al.* (2011), the service research paradigm is evolving toward a more dynamic view with the emergence of service-dominant logic and service science perspectives. Qualitative methods would have a better fit with this new paradigm.

Second, Brodie and Gustafsson (2016) note that theory development in service research, particularly of the mid-range theory that holds potential for both academic and practical

relevance, typically relies on abductive reasoning. Such reasoning is characteristic of qualitative methodology (Dubois and Gadde, 2002).

Third, the rapidly changing business environment and related challenges for service firms (Ostrom *et al.*, 2015) are likely to require a diverse range of research methods to be tackled successfully. For example, the increased focus on customer experience (Baron *et al.*, 2014; McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015) requires research approaches difficult to attain solely by quantitative methods. Similarly, service design uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Teixeira *et al.*, 2017). Together, these developments indicate that qualitative research methods are bound to have an important role in furthering service research.

6.3 Research implications

The above discussion may give a pessimistic view of the role of qualitative research in JSM. Yet, several widely cited JSM articles are based on qualitative methodology (Alam and Perry, 2002; Harris and Reynolds, 2004). The latest article to receive JSM best award is also qualitative (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2017). The journal is, thus, definitively receptive to qualitative research. Moreover, the latest developments indicate an increase in the diversity of research methods and mixed methods (Harrison and Reilly, 2011).

Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with a bias toward quantitative methods, which are impactful in their own right and can help to further theorize on services marketing. The findings suggest that purely conceptual articles can also be impactful and valuable for advancing research on services marketing. Overall, the results indicate that JSM has a specific methodological profile appreciated by its readers. The key implication of this review is the need to become aware of the current profile and support alternative research paradigms and deviating methodological choices. This review suggests that further encouragement and promotion of qualitative research is still needed.

The findings on the methodological predispositions of research topics highlight opportunities for research using alternative methodology. For example, topics such as service advertising, consumer perceptions and branding could benefit from further qualitative research. Conversely, research on B2B and professional services, service innovation and service management in JSM could be complemented by the use of quantitative methods. In both cases, researchers could look into research on healthcare and trust as examples of how research topic can combine both approaches, suggesting the usefulness of mixed methods.

What can be done to attract more qualitative research to JSM? First, as noted above, the reprofiling of JSM is likely to require further time and effort in communication toward service marketing scholars. Unless scholars are aware of the current inclusive policy of the journal, they are likely to base their perceptions on the old, quantitative-dominated profile of the journal, which can discourage scholars using qualitative methods. This special issue will hopefully contribute to the reshaping of JSM methodological brand. Second, to support this communication, it would be useful to point out potentially fruitful areas for qualitative research. This review provides some directions on which research topics could benefit from

further qualitative research. Related, it is necessary to explicate why qualitative research is valuable and how it can contribute to research on service marketing. The above discussion provides some potential arguments for further qualitative research.

6.4 Limitations and further research

Unlike previous reviews (Benoit *et al.*, 2017; Hanson and Grimmer, 2007; Nel *et al.*, 2011), this paper did analyze the identified articles in detail. Instead, the focus was on the methodological big picture and methodology as a driver of article impact. While manual coding of articles would have provided a richer view of article methodology, the automated content analysis of this study produced descriptive results similar to prior reviews. However, certain findings would have benefited from a more detailed analysis. For example, what features of qualitative articles lead to higher impact? Are there differences in the impact of articles based on different types of mixed methods research? These questions are left for further study.

This review covered service research in only one journal, JSM, which represents a small share of service literature. Prior reviews have covered multiple journals (Hanson and Grimmer, 2007; Kunz and Hogreve, 2011); albeit with a shorter time period. The focus on one journal was a conscious choice to ensure the longitudinal coverage of research and controlling for journal-based effects. Although the findings regarding the impact of articles largely agree with bibliometric studies of articles published in top marketing journals (Rosenzweig *et al.*, 2016; Stremersch *et al.*, 2007), the analyses could be expanded to cover further journals in the service research community to provide more conclusive evidence of the impact of research methodology.

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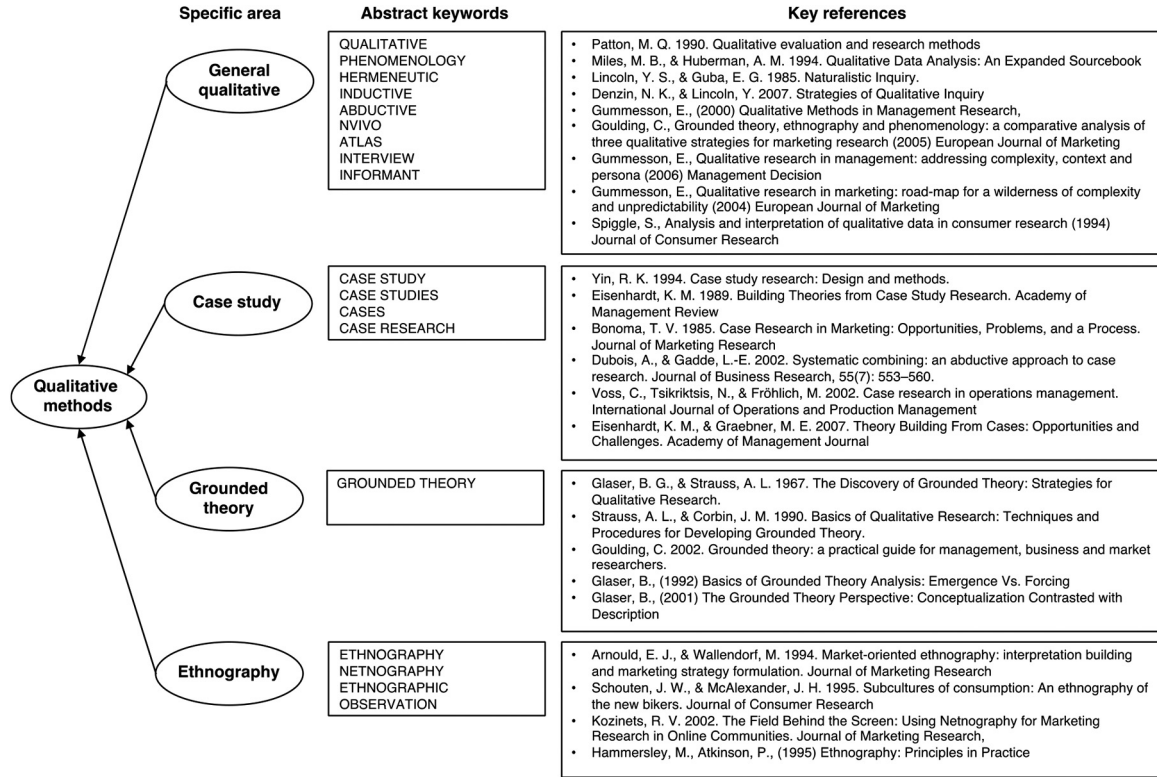
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Further reading

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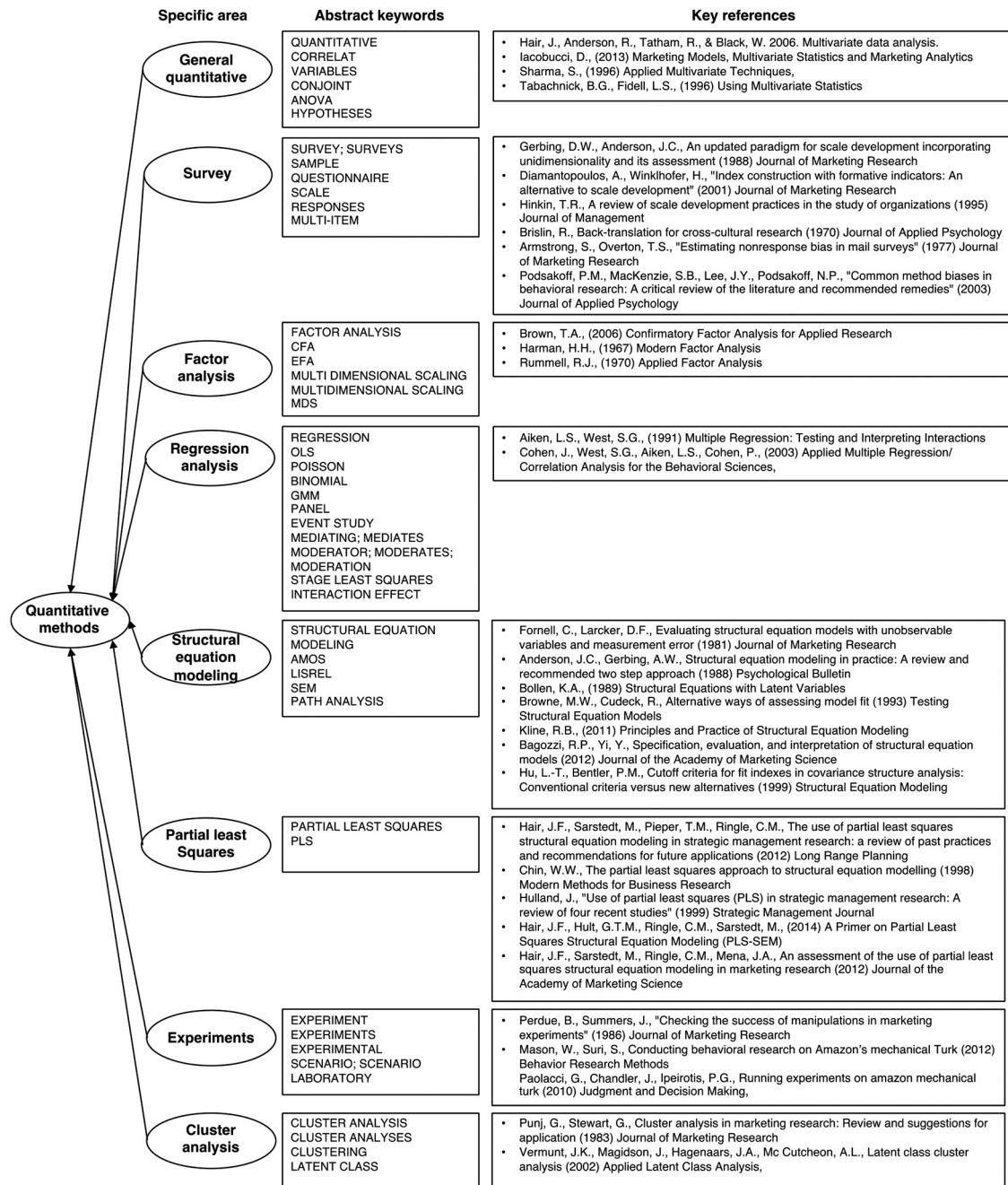
Appendix 1

Figure A1 Heuristics for identifying articles using qualitative methods



Appendix 2

Figure A2 Heuristics for identifying articles using quantitative methods



Appendix 3

Table AI Search terms for topic indicators

Topic	Keywords	Share of articles (%)
Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction	20.9
Service quality	Satisfaction	20.5
	Service quality	
Customer behavior	Quality	19.8
	SERVQUAL	
	Customer services quality	
	Consumer behavior	
	Consumer behavior	
Customer loyalty	Individual behavior	9.9
	Consumer attitudes	
Customer relationship	Customer loyalty	8.8
	Loyalty	
Service management	Relationship marketing	7.9
	Customer relations	
	Customer relationship management	
	Customer service management	
	Service operations	
Financial services	Service delivery	7.2
	Performance management	
Advertising	Productivity	6.0
	Financial services	
Internet/e-commerce	Banking	5.9
	Advertising	
	Marketing communications	
	Promotion	
Employee behavior	Internet	5.4
	Electronic commerce	
	E-commerce	
	Online	
	Worldwide web	
Retail	Website	5.3
	Employees	
	Employee attitudes	
	Frontline employee	
Perceptions	Employee behavior	4.4
	Retail	
	Retailing	
Branding	Retail trade	4.4
	Perception	
	Perceptions	
Trust	Brands	4.1
	Brand image	
	Brand awareness	
	Brand equity	
	Corporate image	
Service failure	Brand equity	4.0
	Trust	
Healthcare	Service failures	3.7
	Service failure	
	Health services	
	Health care	
	Healthcare	
Service innovation	Hospital	2.9
	Innovation	
	Service innovation	
	Service development	
Professional services	New service development	2.6
	Professional services	
	Professional service firms	
Complaints	Complaints	2.5
	Complaint	
B2B services	Business-to-business	2.1
	Industrial	

Appendix 4

Table AII Correlations between variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1 Total citations																	
2 Local citations	0.62																
3 Quantitative method §	-0.02	-0.09															
4 Qualitative method §	-0.19	-0.21	-0.08														
5 Article age	0.31	0.21	-0.33	-0.27													
6 Number of pages	0.22	0.08	0.11	0.04	0.12												
7 Number of references	-0.10	-0.12	0.38	0.27	-0.64	0.33											
8 Number of authors	0.04	0.00	0.23	0.04	-0.24	0.11	0.27										
9 Number of keywords	-0.03	-0.03	0.08	0.11	-0.13	0.01	0.17	0.02									
10 Title length	-0.02	-0.12	0.26	0.07	-0.19	0.10	0.20	0.10	0.07								
11 Title novelty §	-0.21	-0.05	-0.10	-0.17	-0.01	-0.06	-0.10	0.18	-0.19	-0.17							
12 Special issue §	-0.23	-0.06	-0.19	0.34	-0.52	-0.26	0.26	0.20	0.08	0.10	0.21						
13 US author §	0.10	0.16	-0.18	-0.34	0.44	-0.09	-0.44	-0.01	-0.03	-0.13	0.04	-0.31					
14 Top university author §	0.08	0.09	-0.04	0.03	-0.02	-0.05	0.03	0.15	-0.04	-0.04	0.00	-0.03	0.08				
15 Prior publications	-0.01	0.00	-0.03	0.00	0.04	-0.07	-0.05	-0.21	0.02	-0.02	-0.04	0.06	-0.02	-0.15			
16 Conceptual article §	0.02	0.03	-0.12	0.07	-0.22	-0.02	0.21	0.06	0.03	-0.09	0.07	0.26	-0.22	0.04	-0.05		
17 Retrospective article §	-0.26	-0.10	-0.18	0.04	-0.44	-0.45	0.00	-0.19	-0.03	0.03	-0.53	0.17	-0.03	0.10	-0.03	-0.06	
18 Article novelty	-0.21	-0.12	-0.25	0.05	0.06	-0.14	-0.04	-0.06	0.05	-0.07	0.03	0.09	0.01	0.11	-0.01	-0.02	0.10

Notes: $N = 1,036$; § = dichotomous variable; correlations in bold significant at $p < 0.05$

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