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Innovation in marketing and services in the context of digital transformation

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Marketing seeks to create value and deliver it to the market, while simultaneously capturing value from the market. To do this, it seeks to connect the unmet needs of the customer with the solutions offered by a company, ensuring that both parties benefit (Kotler, 2020). From the 2010s to the present, the era of marketing in which we are immersed could be called the era of engagement and new-age technology, i.e., *the Engagement and New-Age Technology Era* (Kumar *et al.*, 2025). This era is characterised, on the one hand, by more demanding, informed, and hyperconnected customers, and on the other hand, by the emergence of new technologies and shorter product life cycles.

In this context, organisations must constantly rethink the creation and delivery of value, and marketing must seek to generate authentic connections,

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solve real problems, and offer personalised experiences through strategies supported by digital channels and data analysis. Today's marketing discipline must achieve a holistic understanding of the needs and behaviours of its customers across all platforms, devices, and diverse products and services (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). In this sense, to achieve the necessary knowledge of customers and consumers, the integration of advanced analytical and research methods with an emphasis on data has transformed marketing decision-making. Organisations that have adopted these tools have gained an advantage by predicting consumer needs, adapting strategies in real time and achieving measurable results (Kumar *et al.*, 2025).

Likewise, in order to develop innovative marketing, organisations must focus their efforts on strategically developing new products, services, and experiences, accompanied by processes that simultaneously generate value for the consumer, and achieve organisational growth and differentiation in the market. For all these reasons, we can say that marketing innovation has become central to the sustainable competitive advantage of organisations (Rabetino *et al.*, 2024).

Regarding value creation through the addition of services, in 1988 Sandra Vandermerwe and Juan Rada coined the term Servitization in an article entitled "Servitization of Business: Adding value by adding services", which has been a fundamental article on which a rich line of academic research has subsequently been developed (Vandermerwe and Rada, 1988). Servitisation, which refers to the incorporation of services into product offerings to add value, began to be studied in the manufacturing industry. Numerous authors have studied the benefits of adding new services to existing products (Rabetino *et al.*, 2021), the situation of servitisation in different geographical contexts (Baines *et al.*, 2009; Kamp and Alcalde, 2014) and servitization for territorial competitiveness (Vendrell-Herrero and Wilson, 2017; Knapp *et al.*, 2025). However, the difficulties of servitisation have also been analysed, in what has been termed the servitisation paradox, namely that despite servitisation in an organisation, the expected benefits are sometimes not achieved (Gebauer, *et al.*, 2005; Kohtamäki *et al.*, 2020).

In recent decades, digitalisation has given new impetus to innovation and servitisation. On the one hand, the emergence of digital technologies has opened up numerous possibilities for innovation, as customer expectations have increased, and this incorporation of novel technologies has had an impact on companies' business models, processes, and culture (Zabala *et al.*, 2022). In this vein, various aspects have been

examined, such as the design and delivery of digital services, the development of new business models and revenue streams, and the role of value creation ecosystems in driving innovation through co-creation (Lusch and Nambisan, 2015).

Thus, the term Digital Service Innovation (DSI) has attracted growing interest among researchers from various disciplines (Favoretto *et al.*, 2022; Rabetino *et al.*, 2024; Opazo-Basáez, *et al.*, 2022; Vargo *et al.*, 2024; Narvaiza *et al.*, 2024). This interest in DSI has been particularly relevant in business-to-business (B2B) markets, where digital services have the potential to transform traditional business models and improve competitive advantage (Opazo-Basáez *et al.*, 2022; Kowalkowski *et al.*, 2024; Narvaiza *et al.*, 2025).

Despite the growing interest in studying innovation in marketing and services, there are still many gaps to be filled. It is therefore necessary to delve deeper into this area, both to contribute to the advancement of knowledge from a theoretical perspective and to promote its transfer to business practice, thereby improving managerial decision-making.

Therefore, with the aim of exploring the intersection of marketing, service innovation, and digital transformation, this special issue includes contributions from both the industrial sector (B2B) and companies that target end consumers (B2C). It brings together contributions from different sectors (agricultural machinery, car manufacturing, packaging, market research, innovative companies, and luxury fashion, among others). In terms of methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative studies have been used. Geographically, the manuscripts have been developed on various continents (the Americas and Europe) and in various countries (Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Spain, Mexico, Peru). Finally, we would like to highlight that this issue brings together ten academic contributions and two guest articles with a more business-oriented approach.

All of the above contributes to a special issue that offers a melting pot of highly thought-provoking and varied contributions in the field of marketing and service innovations in the context of digital transformation.

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