



**PRO-RIS and Customer Engagement
in Complex Services**

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**Professional Service Providers' Resource Integration Styles (PRO-RIS)
and Customer Engagement in Complex Services**

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ABSTRACT

The role of the customer has evolved with increasing transparency of consumption processes, as well as easy sharing of and access to information. While previous research has acknowledged the activity of customers in integrating resources, the dynamic role of service providers in engaging customers and facilitating their resource integration processes has received less attention. To date, literature on dyadic relationships between customers and service providers is primarily focused on the cultivation and building of relationships. As such, this research explores the complementary role of service providers in supporting customer value creation, through customer engagement and resource integration.

This research comprises three papers that investigate the customers' and employees' activities and interactions in an extended and complex service setting. In line with the overall research objectives, we address two distinct yet related themes - the first paper examines customer engagement with a service offering (CESO), while the second paper focuses on the provider side of resource integration, identifying five professional service providers' resource integration styles (PRO-RIS). These two papers are exploratory and qualitative in nature, as we seek to generate rich and thick insights for theory building. The third paper extends the second paper by validating PRO-RIS quantitatively, as well as exploring customer traits that differ across styles, through a variety of approaches including multiple discriminant analysis. This paper suggests how service providers in complex services, may support customer resource integration meaningfully in practice.

We thus contribute to the existing literature by investigating the complexities and nuances surrounding dynamic interactions between the customer and service provider, in the process of resource integration to create value. The first paper is novel in that it explores customer engagement from two perspectives: that of the planner and that of the customer.

By conceptualising CESO, the first paper addresses a fundamental gap in the customer engagement literature by going beyond the current focus on brands and organisations. In particular, CESO is holistic in that it captures customer engagement with a service offering, which includes the service provider, their advice and the service process. In

addition, we advance present knowledge by providing rich insights on the drivers and outcomes from such engagement. The identified engagement activities are ‘openings’ or windows of opportunities for service providers to connect with their customers appropriately in practice.

Building on our improved understanding of such opportunities, the second paper investigates professional service providers’ resource integration styles. In contrast to previous studies exploring how customers may integrate resources to create value, this paper focuses on the role of the service provider by offering significant insights on how service providers can facilitate customer resource integration processes. That is, the research focuses on the *process* and *configurations* of resource integration, rather than the *benefits* realised through the resource integration process [i.e. value cocreation].

Researchers have acknowledged that the function of the institution in value cocreation is a missing concept and that value cocreation roles also need to be investigated from the service provider’s perspective. Yet, little is known about the configuration of resource integration processes in practice, with research recently pointing to this as a service research priority. Hence, the development of the PRO-RIS typology responds to these calls for research, improving our knowledge through detailed explanations of the variations in styles and associated constellations of resource integration activities that service providers offer, in support of customer resource integration.

Further to this, the construction of the PRO-RIS index as discussed in the third paper is crucial in assisting the measurement of these five styles for empirical testing. Indeed, by using this index, we are able to link the resource integration styles with demographical, situational and personal factors of customers commonly associated with each style as well as related service outcomes, supporting service strategy development, through managers identifying customers associated with each style. The PRO-RIS index will enable the replication of this research in a variety of contexts, leading to more findings that are generalizable, bringing our understanding on actor-to-actor resource integration to the next level.

STATEMENT OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Refereed Journal Article

Ng, Sylvia C., Carolin Plewa and Jillian C. Sweeney (2016), "Professional Service Providers' Resource Integration Styles (PRO-RIS): Facilitating Customer Experiences," *Journal of Service Research*, forthcoming. [Chapter 3 in this thesis]

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STATEMENT OF DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Sylvia C. Ng

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