

E-health services: the intervention of digital technology on consumers' health experience and wellbeing

Supervisors: [Dr Xia Zhu](#) and [Prof. Elizabeth Daniel](#), Department of Strategy and Marketing, The Open University Business School.

Service research is pertinent to the well-being of individuals, communities, and societies as people are embedded within services in all aspects of their lives, for instance, health services (Anderson and Ostrom, 2015). The development of digital technology has altered traditional health care services (i.e. face-to-face contact with a health professional) and provides opportunities for innovative health service delivery (Moerenhout et al., 2018). A study over seven European countries reports that 71% of internet users have used the internet to read information for health purposes and decide whether or not to follow up with visiting doctors (Andreassen et al., 2007). Despite the benefits of digitalization of health care (i.e. e-health) in improving the efficient use of health resources and improving public health services (WHO, 2016), there are mixed views on e-health, such as the lack of personal touch (Podina and Fodor, 2018) and the concern for the potential danger of inaccurate and inappropriate use of information (Andreassen et al., 2007). Health services face opportunities as well as challenges in the digital realm (Bolton et al. 2018). A deeper understanding of e-health and how technology may enhance health service experience is needed (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2017).

We welcome proposals that explore the intervention of technology (e.g. self-tracking, online consultation, educational videos, patient interaction on social media etc.) on health services and consumer wellbeing. For instance, how digital technology may empower consumers to be managers of their own health (e.g. health literacy, accessibility of service); how digital self-tracking via wearable devices and health apps may impact on consumers' change of behaviour and lifestyle (e.g. dietary patterns and physical activities); how digital technology may affect people's perceptions and use of traditional health services (i.e. face-to-face contact with a health professional) and its impact on patient-doctor relationships.

The successful candidate will demonstrate a good understanding of related studies to their proposed research. We encourage developing this topic with international perspectives and a wide geographic focus (e.g. developed or developing countries).

Proposed Theory and Methodology

A qualitative research approach (e.g. case studies, focus groups, in-depth interviews and participant observation) are encouraged to be employed in this project. However, we are open to proposals that incorporate mixed method approaches as appropriate to research questions and strengths of the candidate.

About the supervisors:

Xia's main research areas are services marketing and business-to-business marketing. She is interested in researching digital technology, service experience, interactions and relationships in both consumer and b2b contexts.

Elizabeth research focuses on the effective use of information systems (IS) by organisations, and includes the identification and realisation of business benefits from IS. She has also undertaken work on inter-organisational systems, the use of boundary objects and more latterly the use of online working by micro, home-based entrepreneurs.

References

- Anderson, L. and Ostrom, A. L. (2015), Transformative service research: advancing our knowledge about service and well-being, *Journal of Service Research*, 18, 3 243-249.
- Andreassen, H. K., Bujnowska-Fedak, M. M., Chronaki, C. E., Dumitru, R. C., Pudule, I., Santana, S., Voss, H. and Wynn, R. (2007), European citizens' use of E-health services: A study of seven countries, *BMC Public Health*, 7:53, doi:10.1186/1471-2458-7-53.
- Bolton, R. N., McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Cheung, L., Gallan, A., Orsingher, C., Witell, L and Zaki, M. (2018), Customer experience challenges: bringing together digital, physical and social realms, *Journal of Service Management*, 29, 5, 776-808.
- McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Snyder, H., Elg, M., Witell, L., Helkkula, A., Hogan, S. J. and Anderson, L. (2017), The changing role of the health care customer: review, synthesis and research agenda, *Journal of Service Management*, 28, 1, 2-33,
- Moerenhout, T., Devisch, I. and Cornelis, G. C (2018), E-health beyond technology: analyzing the paradigm shift that lies beneath, *Med Health Care and Philos*, 21, 31–41.
- Podina, I. R. and Fodor, L. A. (2018), Critical Review and Meta-Analysis of Multicomponent Behavioral E-Health Interventions for Weight Loss, *Health Psychology*, 37, 6, 501-515.
- World Health Organization (WHO). Ehealth at WHO, www.who.int/ehealth/about/en, accessed on 21/05/2019.