

SERVICE: FROM GENERAL VALIDITY IN ECONOMICS, TO DOMINANT LOGIC IN MARKETING

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Abstract: *The paper aims at revealing certain core service elements and features of the nowadays economy that come from services' economics but have general validity. The approach is purely theoretical and we make no mathematical or empirical propositions or developments. The roots from the classical economic thought and from the services literature concerning the service feature are also underlined as characterizing the whole economy developed to the level of a generalized market. The capital role of the business literature (and especially of the marketing developments) in the field of service and services is evoked, but the concern of the paper is for the economics approach, underlining that the most common approaches of this last one are scanty in involving the issue of serving and of service immaterial marks in its very substance. Certain details describing the characteristics of immaterial activities brought by the services economy literature are also evoked, in the purpose of seeing that their validity is not limited to the only most immaterial economic activities, but it is general, at least in the immaterializing nowadays economy. Thus the necessity of including their approach in the scientific theoretical perception of economic phenomena can be revealed, and the importance of capturing such marks in general economics is shown. Therefore, the presentation is focused just on those traits that are not particular (neither for material production, nor for immaterial), but consistent with all the economic activities, no matter their degree of materiality or immateriality. The paper concludes that such elements and approaches should be more profoundly included in economic analyses and more accurately described in theoretical plotting of nowadays economy. Such a research will be of use to scholars and generalists, in improving their approaches and in directing their researches on attempts to take into account widened (and thus more realistic) horizons, if compared with the most usual (rather particular) ones.*

Keywords: *services economy; service economics; generalized service; Bastiat.*

JEL Classification: *L80; D49; E23; O14.*

1. Generally Introduction

We live in a world where the number of services was very much growing in the last half of century, and it still is. Moreover, certain services have high shares, mainly in the most developed economies. It is mainly the case of the services capturing the highest technical level.

The immaterial component of all “productions” or economic activities and of all human activities is growing, having as consequence the modifying of practically the whole economy and society.

In such conditions of nowadays, economics remain grounded on the industrial bases, as it was built beginning with the industrialization periods – when “a kind of «production crowning» (during the period of industrial take off) [and thus] a censoring of judgements started” (Jivan, 1993, p. 21). As a result, in the most usual economic approaches, important parts of the economic reality are still remaining marginal if compared with the characteristics, features and approaches set during that periods of dominance of the growing industrial production. Such common materialistic and industrialist approaches are still defining mainstream economics, in despite of the growing complexity and immaterial character of nowadays economy, in the knowledge based society.

Our paper proposes an unorthodox approach, grounding an inquiry after service economics and also possible developments for general economics. It is a part of a larger research (please see our bibliographical list), by which certain orthodox approaches are put under question and openings to widened horizons are brought in economics.

As expected, the main background of our paper is from the literature concerning service and services, but also from the general economics. In fact, our stress is not on the business literature (mostly developed in the marketing field): but we focus mainly on the general economics, we adopt an economics' approach.

The background of our research is not shortly presented in the introduction – as usually in a research paper – but it (and certain content of it) represents the very matter of our presentation and, therefore, it comes in the next sections of the paper. Thus the conceptual elements concerned – that can usually be ignored by common economics literature – are pointed out in the suitable sections and their most important literature sources as well.

We also explanatorily note from the very beginning that our paper is a theoretical one, and we do not develop mathematical models and operate no empirical developments.

We focus on certain features defining the nowadays economy that were seen in services economy, and the core one is the defining *service* mark. Those specialists (theoreticians of service and of services economy) have firstly perceived such characteristics, noted and pointed them out, and developed a suitable economic literature, in service economics and in business literature; the specialists in market were the first ones who understood the importance for their science of developing the suitable approach for services. Thus the marketing literature became very rich in the field of services.

Such treats of the nowadays economy are very important. It is true: they were revealed by service' economics mainly as features of services and of services' economy; but their general relevancy and their validity for the whole actual market – at least in the case of the most important of them – cannot be denied. We observe that they should no longer be kept in just a marginal approach of it. The fact that certain such marks are generally significant and that their importance for the whole

economy – *i.e.* including the material goods' production and market too – is, in our opinion, either underestimated, or not well understood. Thus, such service characteristics are taken into account just at lower levels, levels that are not consistent with their spread and general significance. O perhaps they are not enough seen and, therefore, adequate developments are not enough involved in the most usual analyses of general economics approach.

2. Approaches, definitions, conceptions and the generalization of 1993

In this section and in the next one, we focus on certain important developments concerning the service mark, or connected, in the purpose of noticing main roots of it, even if certain of them are forgotten or less known.

As Romanian author, the discussing concerning the literature on the service issue is appropriate to start with referring to the fact that, around the year 1930, *Mihail Manoilescu* employed, in his analyses on the differences between countries (concerning mainly the productivity of those economies), the criterion of capital level, *i.e.* of the technical level of the industries developed in such economies, but not the criterion of *materiality* of such industries. We notice such view of the Romanian author, because it is relevant against the classical approach in economics, which was – and still is – very much focused on material-immaterial distinction.

In the sixty years of the XX-th century, *William J. Baumol* (Baumol, 1968) provided his famous researches concerning the cost disease. Thanks to the developments brought by the service economy, we can today (in nowadays) better understand realities linked to the *service* issue and, thus, we can already show up that such approach was fundamentally made on materialist (industrialist) perceptions on the economic realities. We can have now a better understanding in what can be suitable for the immaterial activities that characterize our nowadays economy inside the knowledge society.

Very important contributions are brought by *Jacques De Bandt* (see De Bandt, 1991 and other many papers) and *Jean Gadrey* (see references concerning Gadrey, 1992, 1996 and other many researches could be referred). Gadrey better defined services, designing the representation of a service activity by a triangle taking into account (1) the supplier, provider or, better said, performer, (2) the client and (3) the reality transformed (that represents the result of the activity concerned).

One of the most important contributions to analysing the services economy is that concerning the issue of productivity (De Bandt, 1991; Gadrey, 1996), consistent with the particularities revealed by those authors and by other researches in the field.

Such researches may ground important approaches, like, for instance, the generalized manner in understanding the economic activities (Jivan, 1993). “Considering the economic phenomenon from the market point of view and not only from the production point of view, [...] the whole system of economics is centred on exchange. The economic model is one-sided and imbalanced if it is centred on production, because it ventures to perceive, to conceive and to analyse all other aspects of reality under a distorting angle. [...] If we really accept exchange as being

the centre of economic life (and not the production), and if we approach the economic activity by starting from its functionality, then we can see that all human activities are made to be supplied to our fellows. In a market economy the necessities are covered through the indirect way of exchange.” (quotations from Jivan, 1993)

The quoted paper comes as a synthesis of the service economy that was already well developed in the beginnings of the last decade of the XX-th century, as a qualitative further step, scientifically stimulated by the Services World Forum.

The core point of this research is *the general scheme of an economic activity*. The components detailed in this scheme are: (a) the conception/conceiving and organising the activity; (b) obtaining the resources (materials, information etc.); (c) realising other works (manipulating or/and modifying the resources, manufacturing objects etc.); (d) delivering or to fulfilling the command. “The functions fulfilled by each economic agent in the economic and social mechanism exist under the form of services that are done to the beneficiaries, to the business partners and to the society as a whole. [...] We live in a world with some economic phenomenon of great amplitude which demonstrates another type of economic growth than that classical one based on productivity and quantitative measures: it’s about a functional growth, a service-type growth.” (Jivan, 1993)

The representation of a service activity made by Gadrey (1992) by his well-known *triangle* (see *supra*) may be taken as a starting and inspiration point of the “generalized scheme of an economic activity” (Jivan, 1993), but in the more recent paper here quoted, the *general* character was seen and pointed out: the stress is especially on the general validity of such scheme (design). That scheme is representing, either the case of services, or that of the material productions. It reveals the service character of economic activities developed in a generalized market economy. Such an approach is consistent with the invisible hand of Adam Smith (defining for the market economy), being valid not just for the most immaterial performances, but actually for all “productions” and business (and even for non-market services): it represents (in a unique scheme) the core spirit of serving. Therefore it was later called the scheme of the *general service* (Jivan, 2000).

The characteristic traits of services are based on their immateriality, supposing a defining human inter-relation (between diverse categories of economic actors); the orthodox “production” (performance) and “consume” (benefit) are not distinct processes, but just a single unique one. Each performance is also unique, even personalized, defining the variability of services, which amplifies the defining heterogeneity of the tertiary sector. Such features are described in the already well set theory of services (see, for instance, Gadrey, 1996, Jivan, 1998).

In the new theory issued by Jivan (1993) and developed afterwards, such marks are not just certain particularities of some part of the economy (*i.e.* valid particularly for the case of immaterial activities): but they become characteristic for the material production too.

More generally speaking, such features are shown (Jivan and Năchescu, 2017) as being more and more valid for the whole economy: in the conditions when nowadays economy is growingly immaterial. The servicity theory (Jivan, 1993 and 2000) also shown that the marks here reminded generate capturing the characteristics of a

monopolistic kind of competition and other features of the market that make it being “untypical”, *i.e.* very different against the orthodox type of competition; and such competition being more and more valid for the whole economy. In other papers (see our references from the bibliographical list) we detail also other important teachings coming from service economics, such developments being much contributively in the important matter of productivity, which can be generous in developing economics, here included the problem of putting under question the valences of marginal calculations in the conditions of the growing immateriality of the economic activities in nowadays.

After all, the main element to be pointed out – as ground for all features of services and even of all nowadays economy – emerges from the *service* defining element itself.

3. Forerunners and followers

Pierre de Boisguillebert considered the material goods and the services as having the same position against the final consumption (according to Jivan 2016, p. 21); in this respect he deserves to be considered a forerunner of the conception of the generalized service (Jivan, 1993, 2000).

The physiocrat *François Quesnay* was taking into account the destination of the activities, despite the “*form of productions*” (the form remains the criterion still employed in the modern times for defining the difference between the first two economic sectors, on one side, and the tertiary sector on the other): he included in his famous “sterile class” either activities like that of handicraftsmen, or trade, transport and other services (Jivan, 2016, p. 115).

The approach of *Theodore Levitt* (1974) is considered by *Christian Grönroos* as meaning that “people do not buy goods and services for basically different purposes” (Grönroos, 2008, p. 301). The same researcher Grönroos quotes also a paper of himself from 1979 (in Swedish), adding that: “The citations from 1979 [...] imply that goods and services are consumed in essentially the same type of process.” (Grönroos, 2008, p. 301).

It may be right that certain such possible forerunners are just in terms of *meaning* and *implications*, but it is fair to mention them, as we founded them as having a logical connection.

In any case, no matter what other possible forerunner could be considered as valid, but it is sure that the fundamental forerunner was and remains *Frédéric Bastiat*: from the classical economics he generated the idea of the general service: economic activities are all services. It was not important for him if the concrete form was that of material goods or of services (immaterial), but the importance was given by the fact that a work (effort) of an individual brings satisfaction to another: this is the way human activities develop (Bastiat, 1982, p. 118). The researches we mentioned (and also those that follow) can be considered as having the value-service as their conceptual base.

It can be seen that certain contributions brought by service economics after 1993 are valid not strictly for the immaterial activities, but for the entire nowadays

economy. We refer, for instance (as made in Jivan, 2014), to *circular economy*, *functional economics* (Stahel, 1997), "economics of experience" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). In the same way it may also be seen the representation of *product and innovation in terms of characteristics*, in a Lancasterian perspective (Gallouj and Weinstein, 1997; see also Djellal and Gallouj, 2008, where the *characteristics-based perspective* is referred). For all the quotations in this paragraph, please see Djellal and Gallouj, 2008.

More recently, the service character of economic activities is also seen as unitary in diverse ways. For instance, Gadrey and Gallouj (Eds., 2002, p. 225) say that a *continuum* is seen between goods and services (by Pim den Hertog), rather than a distinction. It can be mentioned that another way of retaking the concerned idea is approaching the general service as a logic of marketing: e.g., even more recently, service was approached as a "dominant" logic; Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008) developed very much the issue, making it famous in business (for the particular case of marketing: it is about the well-known SDL – *service dominant logic*). Another famous manner in which the service concept arrived to be developed (re-orientated) in marketing is that of CDL (customer dominant logic). It was initiated by the Northern School, and evolutionary developments are well shown /set in Grönroos, 2008. The conception of Grönroos (2008) is from the aria of the customer dominant logic adopted by the Northern School where Grönroos is a most important representative. We just mention it and we do not develop the ideas of such approach, but it should be underlined that it is also in a marketing approach, bringing another further approach, after SDL. Those most recent developments are the most well-known angles of approach: on the business line.

It is true that the marketing specialists were the first interested by the reality of services that was very obviously growing in the seventh, eighth and ninth decades of the previous century: they saw that there is about selling and promoting another kind of "products": immaterial ones; and from such reality, their researches emerged and were very much developed. In such a perspective – *i.e.* on the marketing line – it is normally to reach important degrees of detailing and of considering thoroughly and, as a consequence, it was successful to get fame (as we already said that is the case of *service dominant logic* and others).

But, in a historical rigorous view, we remind that the approach of *the generalized service in the market economy* was arisen basically in a general approach (*as an economics' development*), many years before the famous developments for the business aria that we just mentioned: *i.e.* the general scheme of an economic activity (Jivan, 1993; and moreover, if we go much backwards in time, the basis of such approaches was put by Frédéric Bastiat, in the classic period of economics; going even more back, certain roots can be considered to be find at François Quesnay – or even at Pierre de Boisguillebert, as previously shown; see *supra* in this section).

4. Resulting requirements (synthetically)

We conclude and underline that, in despite of the fact that the issue of the generalized service was conceived and firstly concerned in the general *economics*,

the area where it gets the most important developments is mainly marketing: such an idea next developed in a distinct way. The *business* specialists took and very much developed the matter, even bringing certain famous concepts.

We consider that certain scientific contributions of the researches concerning services economy must be better taken into account in actual economics, as representing marks for nowadays economy, *i.e.* including for the “material” part of it, not just for the already relatively immaterialized.

Synthesizing, the main aspects revealed by such contributions refer to certain characteristics pointed out by the researchers in the field with respect to services' and services' market characteristics. Among such characteristics, the relative immateriality (rather than the usual agricultural or industrial stressed materiality) is included on the first place, followed by many others coming out from it or connected. We remind as exemplificative: the non-discrete character of the “productions” (the volume of quantities rather cannot be commonly measured in quantitative units or counted), the growing importance of the psycho-emotional, “image” and subjective elements (if compared with the very concrete and objective ones), the determination existing from diverse and complex factors, generating various conditions and variable complexity, here including education, culture, diverse trends and general attitudes in the societal context, and also the growing and complex information and challenges and incentives (advertising, publicity and promotion here included, but not alone) and the complex structure of the offers. The regulations – diversely issued and become manifest – are other important factors. In the same respect, we may add the existence of activities “exterior” to the market (that influence the market performance), the rather rigidity of the offer on the market, in connection with the variability of the demand, the subjective character of the market and the modified role of the price (tariff) on the market too (this last one is a large specific issue that may be developed as a distinct matter). Let's mention also the growing role of qualitative aspects (rather than those of volume and quantity of the elder times), the amplified inter-connectivity on the market and in the society as a whole; the tendency for personalizing performances and experiences as well as possible and, thus, their character rather unique, and the frequently oligopoly situations come to enrich this picture.

“When a higher quality product is offered, a service to the client is made in the same way as when a supplementary service is offered or when the price of the offer is lowered (on the same offer).” (Jivan, 1993).

Despite the small interest of general economics in better capturing and involving the contributions brought by services economy and service economics (Jivan and Năchescu, 2017), we remain convinced that nowadays' realities require such approaches, in the intention of making economics better revealing the actual economic facts, being more realistic, on the new horizons allowed by certain developments got in the services' economy literature. Business represents particular domains (specific areas of acting in the market) and, comparatively, the generality represented by economics offers a more widened perspective for development, containing much reserve for such a generous scientific issue.

But unfortunately, the mainstream economics remains billeted, in certain respects, as like it was set up in the period of the industrialization (centuries ago) and keeps forms and settings that are no longer very adapted all of them to nowadays knowledge society and economy based on the most recent advanced knowledge. We refer mainly to the material-centred (or production-centred) approach. In this respect, we admire the business aria, which, as already said, keeps better in touch with the last decades' developments in the economic life (we refer mainly to the growing immateriality of the economic activities).

All such features are much weightier and influential if compared with how they were when the theoretical conception concerning competition (pure and perfect) and the general equilibrium model (of Leon Walras) were set up. Their impacts are actually much more important and therefore cannot anymore be perceived as marginal. Their conceptual analysis and functional interpretation must not remain as marginal to the former model: they even tend to become the core of the dominant economic mechanism in the economy we have in nowadays knowledge society.

Such realities are not simple accidental facts that are just influencing the model kept by the common economic science as being in the core of the logic of market mechanisms' functioning (orthodox model set up a few centuries ago, in the period of industrialization); but, in nowadays, it can be seen that the mentioned traits and features define themselves as being main important aspects of the actual economy. Therefore, seeing properly their role is a need of actualizing and developing the economic sciences – such task being very difficult in the conditions of their growing complexity.

5. In conclusion

In the previous sections, certain important elements and traits of services, revealed by the services literature developments, were mentioned or pointed out. In that what concerns the *service* conception itself, presented by Jivan (1993), the classical economics role in issuing it was also shown, and a short suggestive inventory of certain important recent contributions too.

The elements and traits of services we revealed have not just specific validity – particularly for the most immaterial activities –, but are actually defining for nowadays economy as a whole and, therefore, they are suitable for general economics' development as well.

In despite of the arising of the issue inside the *economics* literature, in the nowadays dominant economics, such issue remains in a relative marginal place and paradoxically was assumed and developed rather in the *business* literature, evolving from its *general* validity (*i.e.* for all the economic activities) to the role of a *logic* or optics of approaching the marketing work.

We underline that, the contributions we evoked from the literature concerning service and services, elder or more recent, have not a validity limited to only the services, but they are characteristic also for the material productions: because (1) all economic activities involve services, because (2) they all economic acts are connected to such immaterial activities, because (3) they become growingly complex (getting traits

formerly described as particular for services) and, over all, (4) they have the spirit of serving as core and defining mark in the generalized market economy. Such features, elements or marks are consistent with the general scheme of an economic activity (the general service), as described in Jivan (1993) and, therefore, they deserve being taken into account as core in the general economic science too. We mean that the most important developments brought, on the matter, in the marketing literature (namely specially as a dominant logic) represent an important, but insufficient turning to account of the mentioned contributions from the service and services literature: it should be said that the scientific capitalization of such developments is not enough; they deserve a turning to the best account in economics approaches too.

In sustaining our opinion, we quote from Mihail Manoilescu (our translations): „[...] the conclusions that are unilateral in a forced way, which are commanded by calculating produced values, must be adapted in every moment to the structured multilateral frame of reality [...]” (Manoilescu, 1986, p. 78.) “The theorists [...] are merely disputing the facts if such facts do not meet certain theories [...]” (*idem*, p. 123), and the quoted author speaks about “the necessity to crush the false buildings of the [...] economists” (*idem*, p. 138).

By its approach, our paper makes openings and, in the same time, requires developments in the direction concerned: *i.e.* in enriching and reviewing certain main issues of the common economics in the view created and provided by service economics (in the field of market, productivity and others; see also our papers Jivan and Năchescu 2017; Jivan, 2018; Jivan and Năchescu, 2018 a; Jivan and Năchescu, 2018 b; Jivan, Cureau-Pitorac and Tînjălă, 2018).

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