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## Journal of Retailing

Volume 69, Issue 1, Spring 1993, Pages 61-103

### Tracking the evolution of the services marketing literature \*

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(05\)80004-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(05)80004-1)

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The authors offer their personal interpretations as participant-observers together with a data-based analysis of the evolution of the services marketing literature. Bibliographic analysis of more than 1000 English-language, general services marketing publications spanning four decades provides the empirical base for the paper. Using an evolutionary metaphor as the framework, the authors trace the literature through three stages: Crawling Out (1953â€“79); Scurrying About (1980â€“85); and Walking Erect (1986-present). The discussion of the three stages shows how the literature has evolved from the early services-marketing-is-different debate to the maturation of specific topics (e.g., service quality, service encounters) and the legitimization of the services marketing literature by major marketing journals. A classification and summary of the publishing outlets where the literature has appeared is presented. The article closes with discussion and speculation on the future of the services marketing literature.



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\* The authors acknowledge the insightful comments of the following people to previous versions of the manuscript: Leonard Berry, Bernard Booms, A. Parasuraman, Carol Surprenant, and Lauren Wright. The support of the First Interstate Center for Services Marketing, Arizona State University is also acknowledged.

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