



AMERICAN PHYGITAL ASSOCIATION



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APA  
Paris 25



## Call for Papers for *Journal of Services Marketing* Special Issue and APA Paris Summit 2025

The American Phygital Association (APA) is excited to announce a call for papers for the **APA Paris Summit 2025**. This groundbreaking event, themed “Phygital for Positive Change,” is in collaboration with the [A-ranked](#) leading *Journal of Services Marketing*. We are inviting submissions for a Special Issue on:

**“Phygital Service Research (PSR) for Positive Marketplace Experiences:  
Integrating Physical and Digital Realms with Human-Centric Approaches”**

### Important Dates

- Abstract Proposal Submission: Via the APA Paris Summit 2025 portal <https://www.aibxd.com/phygital-hub/apa-summit-proposal-submission-form>. Deadline: **November 19, 2024**
- Acceptance Notification: **December 5, 2024**
- APA Summit 2025 Attendance in Paris: **February 27-28, 2025**
- Full Article Submissions: Accepted from all APA attendees after the summit. Submission Window: **March 5 - July 15, 2025**
- Special Issue Publication: Expected by the **end of 2025**

### Special Issue Editor

**Dr. Wided Batat**, Founder of the Phygital Ecosystem & the Phygital Research Paradigm



## Aim and scope

The digital revolution has given rise to “phygital” spaces, a blend of physical and digital elements. This fusion has led to unique consumer experiences and paradoxical behaviors. The complexity and nuances of consumer behaviors and experiences within these spaces necessitate a distinct research paradigm, the “phygital research paradigm” (Batat, 2024). This paradigm is designed to study consumer behaviors, consumption experiences, and other phenomena in these blended environments. It is connected to service research as it provides a framework for studying how services are delivered and consumed in hybrid environments. It offers insights into how each setting influences human-centricity alongside data collection, analysis, and interpretation. By putting all stakeholders involved in the service ecosystem at the center, the paradigm enhances the understanding of service delivery and consumption in these spaces for positive impact at the individual, community, and environmental level. The phygital research paradigm contributes to this field by providing a comprehensive guide for studying phenomena within phygital or other hybrid settings. It considers two major aspects: human-centricity and positive community and environmental impact. This enriches the understanding of service experiences in these contexts, promotes methodological diversity (Kozinets, 2023), and enhances triangulation efforts, thereby contributing to the advancement of theory in service research.

This special issue introduces Phygital Service Research (PSR), broadly defined as a field that explores the intersection of physical and digital service realms through human-centric strategies to drive positive transformation. PSR is increasingly becoming key to creating satisfactory experiences (Sung, 2020) that deliver value across online and offline platforms. As such, service providers across various industries should consider their relationships with customers by placing them at the center of their offerings. They should focus on the potential positive impact generated while interacting with customers across online and offline platforms through PSR to achieve a competitive advantage. PSR is a new research area aimed at creating a human-centric blend of physical and digital experiences to improve the quality of life for individuals, including consumers, employees, suppliers, and stakeholders involved in the service industry, communities, and ecosystems. Although the term “phygital” has been around for quite a while (e.g., Ballina et al., 2019; Talukdar and Yu, 2021; Banik, 2021), it has often been limited to the integration of immersive technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), and 360-degree video enabled by computers, smartphones, or other devices, such as smart glasses (e.g., Hoyer et al., 2020; Dey et al., 2018; Yim et al., 2017). Scholars have also proposed a categorization of immersive extended reality technologies that are critical in extending customer experiences from physical to digital and their implications for service management (Batat and Hammedi, 2023). Yet, although these works contribute to research on blending physical and digital environments, they are all focused on the critical role of technology integration instead of proposing a more comprehensive analysis of the phygital realm and the place of humans within it. It is not until an academic definition of the phygital has been offered as a holistic ecosystem, that places the human and not technology at its center to ensure seamless transition and value delivery from physical to digital spaces and vice versa (Batat, 2022). The definition of the concept has been followed by the establishment of a new phygital research paradigm that offers scholars the philosophical foundations to conduct research in hybrid settings such as the phygital realm.

Since then, PSR is then considered as one of the emerging research priorities in the field of service and is gaining significant attention across industry, academia, and government. This research is



crucial as phygital services play a pivotal role in our world and have the potential to impact for positive transformation of businesses and service providers by rethinking their strategies and the design of their service experiences across physical and digital spaces through a human-centric approach. This approach takes into account not only customer satisfaction and seamless integration of technologies but also the well-being of all stakeholders and communities and the impact at the spatial and environmental levels as a whole. There is growing interest in phygital service research for human-centricity and positive impact to address critical questions such as: How to design human-centric experiences through phygital services? How to enhance service access, quality, and service provider productivity in various industries through phygital integration? How to blend physical and digital service for a positive individual impact at environmental and social levels?

PSR represents a holistic approach to positive business models connecting physical and digital realms by placing humans at the center and thus goes far beyond questions related to traditional service dependent measures such as service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Phygital service fundamentally affects the transformation of the service providers' strategic approach and mindset that can lead to positive outcomes and sustainable growth at various levels. We hope that PSR will be inclusive of diversity of discipline and method/approach as well as the unit of analysis, focusing not only on the successful integration of technologies to blend physical and digital spaces, but considers a holistic approach to the whole process where humans are placed at the center for positive impact. A non-exhaustive list of the special issue topics, with the aims of stimulating research and driving a more substantive understanding of the implications of PSR in terms of design approaches, strategies, service experiences, and consumer journey, is proposed:

- Exploring how to design service experiences that prioritize human needs and behaviors in blended physical and digital environments.
- Investigating how services are delivered and consumed in phygital spaces and the impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Examining the role of immersive technologies (e.g., VR, AR, XR, ERTs) in enhancing consumer experiences and the balance between technology and human-centricity in the service field.
- Analyzing how phygital services can contribute to positive outcomes for communities and the environment.
- Exploring the unique behaviors and paradoxical actions of consumers in hybrid phygital service settings.
- Promoting methodological diversity and triangulation in studying phygital phenomena in service research.
- Understanding the role of various stakeholders in the service ecosystem and their impact on service delivery and consumption in the phygital realm.
- Exploring strategies for service providers to leverage phygital integration for a competitive edge.
- Investigating how phygital services can improve the quality of life for individuals, including consumers, employees, and other stakeholders.
- Identifying emerging trends and innovations in the field of phygital services and their potential impact on service research and practice.



## Submission instructions

We cordially invite all participants to submit a **500-word abstract proposal** for the American Phygital Association (APA) Summit 2025, which will be held on February 27-28, 2025, in Paris, France. Authors should submit their abstracts via the conference website at <https://www.aibxd.com/phygital-hub/apa-summit-proposal-submission-form>. The deadline for abstract submission is **November 19, 2024**.

Full article submissions from all APA attendees and other scholars will be accepted after the summit, with the submission window opening shortly thereafter (between **March 5 and July 15**). The publication of the Special Issue is expected by the end of 2025.

## Submission Requirements and Information

Inquiries can be directed to the special issue editor: Dr. Wided Batat. Submissions should follow the manuscript format guidelines for Journal of Service Marketing found at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0887-6045>. All manuscripts should be addressed with a cover letter and note to be considered for “*Phygital Service Research for Positive Transformation*” Special Issue.

The deadline for submitting manuscripts for this Special Issue is **July 15, 2025**.  
Potential publication date end 2025.

## References

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