

In a World that Cannot Wait

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Acknowledgements:

This work was supported by Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades (PID2020-115743GB-I00).

Cite as:

Sharma Deepika, Ryan Gerard, Pàmies Maria del Mar (2025), In a World that Cannot Wait. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (124737)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



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Abstract

This paper explores the paradox of waiting in services, highlighting how significant advancements in service efficiency cannot keep pace with growing consumer expectations for immediacy. The result is a cycle of increasing impatience despite substantial technological innovations designed to reduce wait times. We argue that a reassessment of waiting is needed, one that broadens the conceptual frameworks used to study this phenomenon. In this short conceptual paper, we begin this process by emphasizing the multifaceted nature of waiting, shaped not only by time but also by power dynamics, social inequities, gender, discrimination, and psychological factors, as well as by the ways in which waiting is critically examined and represented in art, literature, and culture. By expanding our understanding of the waiting experience, we can move beyond simply reducing wait times to designing services that address the emotional, social, and cultural dimensions of waiting, ultimately fostering more inclusive and human-centered service experiences.

Keywords: Waiting behaviour, consumer expectations, redefining waiting

Track: Services Marketing & Service Innovation