

# An overview of Service Design education in Latin America

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## Abstract

Despite services being the largest component of the world economy, their importance may still not be recognized in regions such as Latin America. Therefore, this contribution presents exploratory research informed by the steps of a systematic literature review to collect, organise, and analyse educational offerings in Service Design, including graduate and specialisation levels, thematic areas, and specific courses offered under these programs in Latin America. The research results reveal that only eleven institutions ranked as the best in Latin America have Service Design offerings at the aforementioned levels. The findings indicate a lack of educational offerings in Service Design in Latin America.

Keywords: Service Design Education, Latin America

## Introduction

The economy is structured from the perspective of productive sectors, with the service sector standing out as it represents 64.8% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is equivalent to US\$ 54.9 trillion according to the World Bank in 2022. Since the 2007 world financial crisis, the share of the services sector in Latin America has been increasing, surpassing other developing economies in Asia and Africa (Rubalcaba, 2013). In 2021, the sector accounted for 65.1% of the GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to the World Bank (2022).

Although services have a significant weight and relevance in the economy, their importance may not be recognised in some regions, such as Latin America, which can be reflected in the lack of educational offers. The theme of "services" is multifaceted in its various operational and management aspects, and it can be considered transversal to different areas. The centrality of services has been

recognised in several areas and themes of research and design. For instance, the dominant logic of service is acknowledged in Marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Areas with environmental concerns have also focused on the service sector, developing the theme of Product-Service Systems (PSS) to dematerialise the offer of products (Mont & Tucker, 2006).

Design has been investing heavily in establishing its own field of activity within the service sector (Penin, 2018). Previously, services were approached by Design as mere appendices of goods. However, their centrality as an object of design and innovation has been increasingly recognised (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011). Consequently, Service Design has been transferring design methods to the world of service provision (Penin, 2018), applying an exploratory and creative design approach, with an abductive orientation towards the innovation of its project object (Martin, 2009). The growth of its practice and research is also influenced by the consolidation and diffusion of "design thinking" (Brown, 2009), which is adopted with a focus on an empathetic and user-centred approach, as well as social innovation and technological processes (Manzini, 2015).

Tidd and Bessant (2015, p. 224) state that Design is "the driver of innovation," and Verganti (2009) indicates that innovation driven by design constitutes a relevant strategy for organisations. Joly et al. (2019) also claim that Service Design is a multidisciplinary approach that plays a key role in promoting service innovation. However, difficulties for design thinking in services originate from their immaterial nature and the continuous participation of users in the production of value, which constitutes a challenge (Gallouj & Windrum, 2008). Despite this, services are increasingly becoming central elements of design disciplines, not as a by-product of other design priorities, but with their own status (Secomandi & Snelders, 2011).

This article aims to analyse the panorama of educational offers in Service Design in Latin America. The study collects, organises, and analyses the educational offers in Service Design, including undergraduate (bachelors), graduate (M.Sc. & D.Sc.), and specialisation (specialist title) levels, as well as the specific courses offered under these programs in Latin America. This research identifies and classifies: i) level of study; ii) geographic distribution; iii) field of study; iv) starting year of the programs. Based on this information, the article discusses the programs and courses available in Latin America. The research adopts investigation procedures informed by the steps of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The introduction section contextualises the article and indicates its objective. The second section presents the methodology adopted, which is informed by the SLR steps. The third section presents the results and analyses the programs and courses, discussing the implications of the scenario of educational offers in Service Design in Latin America.



## Methodology

This work is informed by the steps of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method with a focus on the analysis of institutions listed in QS World University Rankings 2022. The choice of this ranking is due to the fact that it brings together the best-rated institutions. Thus, the procedure suggested by Thomé et al. (2016) for systematic reviews, is composed of 8 steps, which are: 1) planning and formulating the problem; 2) searching the literature (or database); 3) data gathering; 4) quality evaluation; 5) data analysis and synthesis; 6) interpretation; 7) presenting results; 8) updating the review.

In the first step, Thomé et al. (2016) suggest the presentation of the motivation for the SLR, which is covered in the previous section through the presentation of the theme, objective, and justification of this research.

The second step consists in choosing the database, evaluation criteria, and filtering results. The choice for the ranking is justified by the search for centres of excellence in Latin America within Art & Design, Engineering & Technology, and Business & Management categories. The results were filtered to display Latin America institutions only. The searches resulted in 17 institutions in Art & Design, 43 in Business & Management, and 20 in Engineering & Technology. Such results are analysed according to the exclusion criteria described in Figure 1.

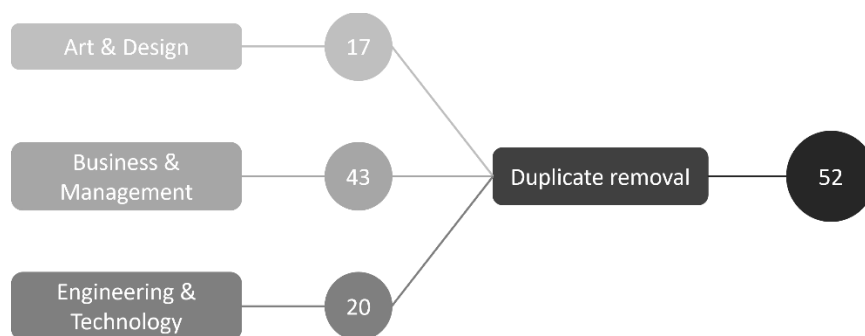


Figure 1. Filter applied. Created by the authors

On the website of each listed university, a search has been performed for the following terms: *Diseño Servicio* or *Desenho Serviço*, in Spanish or Portuguese, respectively depending on the country, and *Service Design*, in English.

For the third step, data gathering, the records are organised into a single table for classification and analysis. Analysis criteria are used (whether a Service Design course is offered, level of education, geographic distribution, subject area).



Limitations in this data collection lay on the methodology adopted by the ranking for the selection of universities, and the lack of information on the universities' websites that may omit whether there are Service Design courses.

In the fourth step, the quality is guaranteed by the QS Ranking, given that it has robust criteria for analysing institutions. In addition, the detailed description of the method and the ability to replicate the process described here ensure compliance with this quality assessment step.

The fifth step, data analysis and synthesis, is based on the presentation of data in the form of graphs and tables, revealing trends and patterns in teaching and research in Service Design in Latin America. To enrich the analysis, semi-structured interviews were performed with three professors from three different programmes: one in Chile and two in Brazil. The sample was chosen to represent different contexts, as even two of them being in Brazil, regionalities apply and make them differ.

The sixth step, interpretation, takes place through the discussion of the impacts of the data obtained and its relationship with the structuring of research in Service Design in the context of Latin America.

The seventh step refers to the presentation of results, described throughout this paper.

The eighth step, updating the review, is suggested in the concluding section of this paper among the opportunities for future discussions.

## Results

### Level of study

Among the 52 institutions, only in 11 of them a Service Design course or thematic area of study is offered in a master or doctorate programme, or as a specialisation, as seen on Table 1.

Institution	Doctorate /PhD	Master /MSc	Specialisation	Courses or thematic area
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile			X	X
Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro			X	X
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México				X



<b>Universidad de los Andes</b>				X
<b>Universidad Iberoamericana</b>				X
<b>Universidade de São Paulo</b>				X
<b>Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina</b>				X
<b>Universidade Federal do Paraná</b>				X
<b>Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro</b>				X
<b>Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez</b>				X
<b>Universidad del Desarrollo</b>			X	

Table 1. List of institutions. Created by the authors.

There's no Service Design programmes, courses or thematic area in the other 41 institutions, which are: Tecnológico de Monterrey, Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), Universidad de Palermo (UP), Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM), Universidad de Chile, Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, UNESP, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María (USM), Universidad de Concepción, Universidad de Santiago de Chile (USACH), Universidade Federal do Rio Grande Do Sul, Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV), Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Universidad Panamericana (UP), Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN), Universidad Anáhuac México, Universidad Austral, Universidad EAFIT, Universidad de La Sabana, Universidad Externado de Colombia, Universidad del Pacífico, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Universidad Diego Portales (UDP), Universidad de las Américas Puebla (UDLAP), Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL), INCAE Business School, Universidad ESAN, Universidad ICESI, Universidad de Antioquia, Universidad del Norte, Universidad del Rosario, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Universidad de Guadalajara (UDG), Universidad de Monterrey (UEM), Universidad de los Andes – Chile, and Universidad del Valle.



## Geographic distribution

The analysis of the geographic distribution of courses (Figure 2) reveals a concentration of offers in Brazil, with 5 institutions, followed by Chile with 3, Mexico with 2 and Colombia with 1.

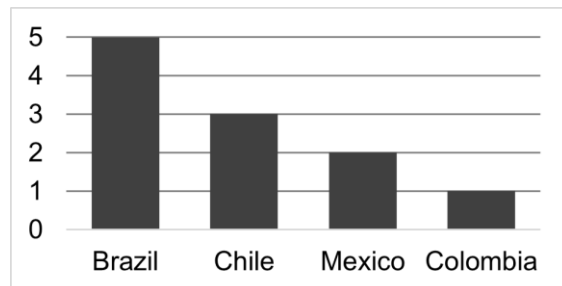


Figure 2. Courses per country. Source: authors

In addition, the city of Santiago shows a closer approach to Service Design studies, with 3 institutions offering courses in the subject, followed by Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City with 2 institutions each (Figure 3).

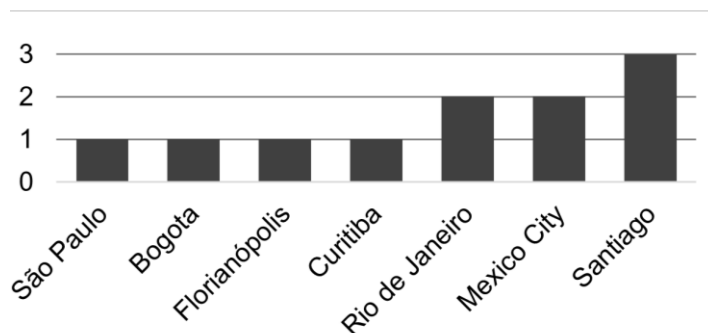


Figure 3. Courses per city. Source: authors

São Paulo, Bogota, Florianópolis, and Curitiba host 1 institution each.

## Field of study

Most of the programmes analysed are in the field of Design, only one of them being an Engineering programme (Figure 4).



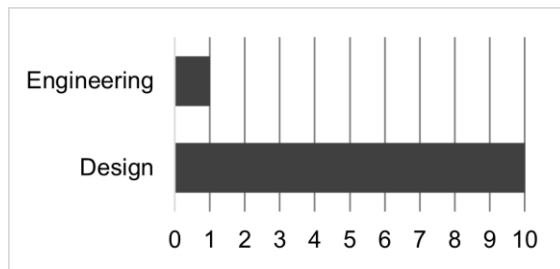


Figure 4. Field of study of the programmes. Source: authors

The only programme not belonging to Design is the one from Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, dedicated to Production Engineering.

### Starting year of the programmes

From a perspective of time longevity, the oldest programme that offers a Service Design course today was founded in 1967 and the earliest in 2019 (Figure 5).

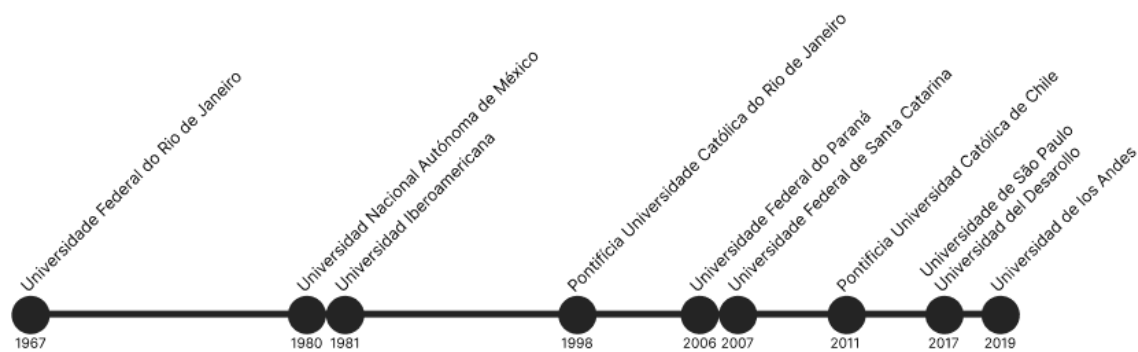


Figure 5. Date of creation of the programmes. Source: authors

It was not possible to find the starting year of the programme at Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez. This timeline brings to light that even programmes that started more than 40 years ago are now offering courses or studies in Service Design.

### Interviews

Interviews include professors from three different programmes in Latin America: one in Chile and two in Brazil.

Professor 1 is an assistant professor at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC). According to Professor 1, a Service Design course has been taught at the UC since 2013. There is only a master's degree with a Service Design programme at the UC,





but a doctorate programme is being implemented to begin in 2023. The programme has contributed to public health services in Chile and partnered with researchers from the left blank for anonymous submission. A UC alumnus teaches another Service Design course in the country.

Professor 2 is a full professor at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), a faculty member of a graduate programme in Design and heads a research group focused on developing knowledge on Design for Sustainability. Professor 2 has been teaching Service Design, particularly PSS, since 2005 and has been an advisor on thesis and dissertations directly or indirectly related to Service Design. Their programme has collaborated with big industries in the state of Paraná, such as Electrolux and Tigre (a Brazilian company of hydraulic materials). The programme has more than 120 alumni with M.Sc. and D.Sc. titles.

Professor 3 is an associate professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), a faculty member of a graduate programme in Production Engineering and heads a research group working on the intersection between social innovation and design for services. Their work includes research activities and initiatives that aim to promote social change through Service Design. The professor has offered Service Design courses in the graduate programme since 2010 and has been an advisor on related doctorate thesis and master dissertations directly or indirectly related to Service Design. In addition, the professor has also offered a course on Service Design at the undergraduate level in Design (Visual Communication) since 2017.

## Conclusion

The present paper highlights the concerning issue of the low offer of Service Design courses in the Latin American context. Despite the presence of a few programmes that offer courses, tracks, or related disciplines, none of the institutions provide a dedicated master's or doctorate programme in this field. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct further studies to re-examine the scenario. With the rising demand for skilled professionals in Service Design, it is essential to explore the possibility of new offers of Service Design studies in Latin America.

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