WHAT ACTUALLY CONSTITUTES A SOLUTION? – SCRUTINIZING THE CONCEPT OF SOLUTION THROUGH A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Solutions are seen as integrated combinations of products and services aiming to solve customer’s problem. However, the existing solution definitions have been criticized for being too general and encompassing any kinds of offerings, which enables almost any company to call itself a solution provider. Furthermore, solution literature is lacking dimensions which would help to distinguish different types of solutions. The purpose of this paper is firstly, to develop a literature based criterion for solutions, and secondly, to develop a typology of different kinds of solutions on the basis of identified solution dimensions. The study builds on 57 systematically selected papers and the findings reveal that solutions are customized and customer need oriented integrated combinations of products and services. According to the developed typology, there are five types of solutions as solution types vary from basic integrated solutions to four-dimensional extreme solutions. The results contribute to the literature on solution characteristics and the developed solution classification will help researchers to create more detailed contributions on different types of solutions. Furthermore, the identified solution dimensions are one step towards creating measurements for solutions.