Abstract:
The demise of first generation service models of application service providers (ASP) indicates that moving from individualized services (e.g. many outsourcing offerings) to fully standardised services (e.g. first generation ASP models) leaves many customer requirements unfilled. In our paper we argue that a possible solution for building innovative e-services is the use of modular service architectures. Firstly, the paper introduces the characteristics of IT services, based on a case study with a leading German provider of application hosting services in the ERP market. We pay particular attention to the general composition of IT services, the role of external factors (how customers and their resources participate in service operations), and varying customer preferences. Secondly, the paper explains the general concept of modularity. The concept of modularity is then applied to the domain of IT services. We specifically address how the concept of modular service architecture addresses external factors, and varying service level requirements. We give an example how the concept of modular service architectures can leveraged to improve the design and to allow for improved customization of IT services. Thirdly, we discuss the general advantages and disadvantages of modular architectures. We conclude with identifying possible further considerations that need to be taken
into consideration to achieve the vision of semistandardised, mass customizable solutions for IT service provision.

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