

# Services And Exchange Relations Involving Certain Non-Commodity Factors Under Current Conditions

M.A. NGUYEN THI MAI

The University of Danang, Vietnam – Korea University of Information  
and Communication Technology

---

## Abstract

The article presents Karl Marx's theory of commodities under current conditions, thereby highlighting the diverse development of various services and exchange relations involving non-standard commodities. Clearly identifying their nature contributes to building an appropriate economy and fostering increasingly modern development.

**Keywords:** Commodities and services, non commodity factors, market economy, integration, digital transformation

---

Date of Submission: 14-06-2026

Date of Acceptance: 27-06-2026

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern market economy, alongside the robust advancement of science and technology and the process of globalization, economic exchange forms have become increasingly diverse and complex. Particularly, digital transformation has altered the nature of production and exchange activities, raising new theoretical and practical issues that warrant comprehensive research.

In political economy, since the time of Karl Marx, a commodity has been understood as a product of labor capable of satisfying certain human needs through exchange or buying and selling, embodying both use-value and exchange-value. However, under current conditions, many factors participating in exchange relations do not fully possess the characteristics of conventional commodities. For instance, educational and healthcare services, environmental resources, or digital data possess both economic attributes and inherent ties to public interests and social factors, rendering pricing and distribution mechanisms more complex.

In addition to traditional commodity exchange relations, service activities are playing an increasingly vital role and tend to expand into new spheres of socio-economic life. Remarkably, under present conditions, various factors that are not traditionally conventional commodities such as knowledge, information, data, intellectual labor, environment, reputation, or brand value have directly entered exchange relations in the form of services.

Therefore, researching "Services and Exchange Relations Involving Certain Non-Commodity Factors Under Current Conditions" holds profound theoretical and practical significance. This paper aims to clarify the theoretical foundations of commodities and services, analyze the characteristics of these specific factors in the modern economy, and assess their impacts on exchange, distribution, and state management mechanisms. Thereby, it contributes to proposing appropriate orientations to ensure economic efficiency coupled with social justice in the new developmental phase.

## II. CONTENTS

### 2.1. Overview of services and exchange relations in the modern economy

#### 2.1.1. The concept of services

The concept of services has been researched and developed from various perspectives across academic and business domains. Below are several prominent definitions of services from influential studies:

According to Philip Kotler (1991), a service is any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another, which is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. He emphasizes that services encompass all activities that create value through performance.

According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2000), services are deeds, processes, and performances provided or co-produced by one entity or person for another, executed to address customer needs and desires. They place specific emphasis on the service delivery process and the interaction between the customer and the service provider.

---

According to Christian Grönroos (2007), a service is a process consisting of a series of intangible activities that take place in interactions between the customer and the service provider. A service is not merely the delivery of a specific benefit but also includes the very process through which that benefit is provided.

According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), services are defined within the ISO 9000:2015 quality management standard. Here, a service is defined as the result of at least one activity necessarily performed at the interface between the provider and the customer and is generally intangible.

These definitions indicate that a service is a multidimensional, complex concept that can be understood in various ways depending on the researcher's perspective. However, all agree that services are characterized by intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability (inability to be stored), and a dependence on the interaction between the customer and the provider.

In the modern economy, services encompass not only traditional sectors such as transportation, education, healthcare, and tourism, but have also expanded into emerging fields like information technology services, data services, banking and financial services, creative services, consulting services, and environmental services.

### **2.1.2. Characteristics of services**

Services possess distinct characteristics that differentiate them from physical goods, including:

**Intangibility (Non-tangibility):** This characteristic implies that services are invisible; customers cannot see, touch, taste, smell, or hear them prior to purchase, making quality evaluation more challenging. Intangibility is a fundamental trait of services, meaning that service promotion and marketing must rely heavily on tangible evidence and testimonials.

**Heterogeneity (Inconsistency):** Service products cannot be standardized. The quality of the service can vary depending on who provides it, as well as when and where it is delivered. Differences in the skills, attitudes, and competence of service personnel can lead to fluctuations in service quality.

**Inseparability (Simultaneous Production and Consumption):** Services are typically produced and consumed simultaneously; the processes of production and consumption cannot be decoupled. Services differ from physical goods in that they cannot be manufactured in advance for later sale. The active participation of both the customer and the service provider is indispensable to the service delivery process.

**Non-ownership:** Upon purchasing a service, customers do not acquire ownership of any physical asset. Instead, they only benefit from utilizing the service for a specific period. This characteristic shifts the approach to customer relationship management, placing the focus on experiential value and satisfaction throughout the duration of service usage.

**Perishability (Inability to be stored):** Services cannot be kept in inventory; for the most part, they cannot be stored or transported from one location to another. A service only exists at the time it is provided. Today, however, with the advancement of digital transformation and modern technology, certain services can indeed be packaged and stored, such as online courses, video streaming, music, and entertainment services.

**Inability to transfer ownership:** When consuming conventional goods, customers become the owners of the purchased products through the transfer of ownership rights. Conversely, when buying a service, customers are only granted the right to use the service and enjoy the benefits it brings within a specific timeframe.

### **2.1.3. The two attributes of services**

**Use value of services:** The usefulness of the service, reflected in its ability to satisfy a specific customer needs (such as consultation, entertainment, or transportation).

**Value of services:** This is constituted by the labor costs, time, and resources expended by the provider to perform the service.

### **2.1.4. Common service exchange models today**

Thế giới hiện đại phân chia hoạt động trao đổi dịch vụ thành 4 phương thức chính (theo khung Hiệp định chung về Thương mại Dịch vụ - GATS):

<b>Mode of Supply</b>	<b>Operation</b>	<b>Real-World Examples</b>
Cross-border supply	The service moves via the Internet, while the buyer and seller remain in their respective countries	Watching movies on Netflix, learning online on Coursera, or using Google advertising services.
Consumption abroad	The consumer travels to the supplier's country to experience the service	Foreign tourists visiting Vietnam, or international students moving to the US for university.

Mode of Supply	Operation	Real-World Examples
Commercial presence	The service enterprise establishes branches or offices in the host country to serve local customers.	HSBC Bank or the KFC fried chicken chain opening branches in Hanoi / Ho Chi Minh City
Presence of natural persons	Individual experts travel to another country to directly provide the service.	A Singaporean tech expert traveling to Vietnam to maintain the core system for a bank.

## 2.2. Exchange relations involving certain non-commodity factors under current conditions

Today's commodity production has given rise to market transactions involving numerous factors whose identifying characteristics differ from those of conventional commodities. This distinction lies in the fact that while they possess use-value, have a price, and can be exchanged or traded, they are not products of direct labor expenditure like other conventional commodities. Transactions involving such special items often lead to the misconception that Karl Marx's theories are no longer relevant. In reality, critics fail to distinguish between commodities and these non-commodity factors. Below, we examine several typical factors currently subject to significant debate.

### 2.2.1. Representative factors

*First, knowledge and information: Knowledge and information do not exist as tangible material goods, yet they hold immense use-value in the knowledge economy. Under current conditions, knowledge and information are exchanged through services such as training, consulting, scientific research, technology transfer, and digital data provision. Crucially, the exchange of knowledge and information does not diminish their original use-value; instead, it fosters dissemination and value appreciation, presenting a fundamental difference from conventional goods.*

*Second, intellectual and creative labor: Intellectual labor, encompassing creative activities in fields such as science, art, design, software, and media, plays an increasingly vital role. The products of intellectual labor are typically exchanged in the form of services tied to copyrights, intellectual property rights, or time-bound usage rights. In this case, exchange-value is determined not solely by labor costs but also heavily depends on creativity, uniqueness, and market demand.*

*Third, data and digital resources: Data has emerged as a critical economic resource in the digital economy. While data is not a conventional commodity, it directly enters exchange relations through analysis, processing, storage, and exploitation services. Data is characterized by its ability to be replicated and used repeatedly without physical wear and tear, though it raises complex issues regarding ownership rights, privacy, and information security.*

*Fourth, the environment and social values: The natural environment and social values are not inherently commodities. However, under current conditions, they are increasingly integrated into exchange relations through services such as environmental services, carbon credits, ecotourism, and nature conservation services. The exchange of these factors carries not only economic but also social and ethical significance, necessitating strict state regulation*

### 2.2.2. Characteristics of exchange relations involving non-commodity factors

First, intangibility and valuation difficulties: Unlike physical goods, factors such as knowledge, data, and creative services are often difficult to measure and value accurately. Their exchange value depends heavily on social demand, scarcity, and applicability.

Second, non-perishability or negligible depreciation: Utilizing these factors does not diminish their original use-value; in fact, their value can be appreciate through sharing and dissemination.

Third, strong dependence on institutional and legal frameworks: The exchange of non-commodity factors demands a stringent legal system governing intellectual property, copyrights, data protection, and social responsibility.

## III. CONCLUSION

Under current socio-economic conditions, services and exchange relations involving non-commodity factors play an increasingly vital role, reflecting the advanced developmental level of the modern economy. On one hand, they help accelerate economic restructuring toward modernization, leverage non-material resources particularly knowledge and creativity—and contribute to enhancing growth quality and national competitiveness, thereby better meeting the increasingly diverse demands of society in the new development phase. A proper understanding of nature, characteristics, and significance of these exchange relations holds

practical value for building and perfecting appropriate economic mechanisms, contributing to the promotion of sustainable development and social progress. On the other hand, this trend also poses several challenges under present conditions, including difficulties in value determination and benefit distribution; the risk of over-commercializing social and environmental values; gaps in accessing services and intangible goods among different social groups; and the imperative to refine institutional frameworks and management policies.

#### **REFERENCES**

- [1] Acocella, N. (2026). *Economic Policy in the 21st Century - Four Major Challenges*. National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.
- [2] Hammond, R. (2024). *Services Marketing*. Hong Duc Publishing House, Hanoi.
- [3] Ministry of Education and Training. (2025). *Textbook of Marxist-Leninist Political Economy*. National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.