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The Role of Post-retirement Service Jobs in the Well-being of Japanese and UK Elderly Citizens

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Abstract

In their work on service research priorities, Ostrom et al. (2015) drew attention to the need for additional studies that would offer insights on well-being-related aspects and outcomes of service.

Rather than looking at the well-being of the service receiver, this study looks at the well-being of the part-time service provider and in particular, the post-retirement service provider. The study undertaken in two countries (Japan and the UK) with aging populations considers how being involved in the delivery of a service assists the well-being of the elderly population. Both of the countries are now facing an aging/aged society and are experiencing growing psychological well-being related issues impacting on the elderly. As stated by Doyle et al.(2009), retirement is a major life transition that affects daily activities, social relationships, and income and is believed to have important consequences for health.

This paper aims to examine the nature of post-retirement service employment and its impact on well-being through value co-creation with customers. The particular service examined is the provision of tourist guiding services either on a voluntary basis as in Japan or on a paid basis in the UK. The authors conducted depth interviews with 8 members of a volunteer tourist guide group in Japan which started their activities in 1994 and 7 members of a tourist guide association in the UK that was formed in 1968. The groups have 344 and 500 members respectively with the majority of the members being of post-retirement age. In both countries, the authors set questions in terms of motivations of seniors to undertake for guiding/tourism roles, types of interaction the senior volunteer valued, and the actions/interactions detract from the benefits that senior volunteers are seeking. The analysis was undertaken using structural coding.

The study identifies that in addition to the role itself, the senior guides tend to actively share their impressions of tourist spots in a way that not only meets customer needs but that enables interaction providing greater self-worth to the guide. As such, the guides are seeking as much out of the service encounter as the tourists. Furthermore, in addition to the actual guiding role, the retirees seek supporting activities such as a structured training programme to build an "esprit de corp" as well as regular social events to provide the social interaction and overcome the loneliness and lack of a sense of purpose that they may have. In addition to considering the influence of cultural differences between Japan and the UK, the research also highlights the differences between those who undertake the role on a voluntary basis in comparison to those who seek financial rewards.