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AN EXTENDED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMATIVE SERVICE RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION: TRANSFORMATIVE SERVICE AND WELL-BEING

Transformative service research (TSR), a recently-envisioned branch of service science, is about understanding connections between service offerings and well-being. It has at the core of its conceptualization the goal of improving the well-being of individuals. A founding statement characterizes TSR as: "the integration of consumer and service research that centers on creating uplifting changes and improvements in the well-being of consumer entities: individuals (consumers and employees), communities and the ecosystem" (Anderson et al. 2013). It is also clear that service touches innumerable aspects of daily life. It is then natural that the field of service science explores mitigation of negative and enhancement of positive service experiences beyond the value co-creation and customer satisfaction paradigms. This is well summed up in the conversation between the switch from goods-dominant to service-dominant logic (Vargo et al. 2008).

Currently the TSR agenda is lacking a measurement tool which considers the foundational structure of how well- and ill-being implant itself into service-oriented society. In order to use well-being as a societal indicator, that indicator must first be delineated in a way that is reliable and replicable. Mapping well-being, or its negatively correlated partner ill-being, is not such an imminently achievable task. Well-being is per definition highly subjective, multi-dimensional, dynamic, and at best fuzzily defined. As noted by White and Pettit it is important to recognize that the concept under discussion is normative – that well-being and its assessment are inevitably based on values and judgment. This wellness is attributed to states – 'being' in terms of material endowments, psychological attributes, and subjective assessments of the personal and environment one exists in (White and Pettit, 2004). The hesitance to design services and policies around such a capricious topic is not hard to understand (Ahn et al. 2011).

In order to move the transformative service research agenda forward, we argue for an extension to the existing framework of (Anderson et. al. 2013) which captures the intersection between service and well-being of individuals, communities, and the ecosystem. Our paper is structured to support this approach. We conclude with a discussion of the implications and future research.

CONSUMER-SIDED SERVICES FOR INCREASING WELL-BEING

Services are pervasive. As services and service provision becomes ubiquitous, researchers are increasingly looking at the role of service relationships from the perspectives of provision, perception, and impact. This implies that both macro- and micro-aspects of provision are in effect. Vargo's 2009 paper on service relationships and service-dominant logic makes this case, writing:

> "Thus, value creation through service provision and service exchange relationships at the micro level must be understood in the context of value creation through service provision and service exchange relationships at the macro level. The elements are value, relationships, and networks; the driving force, and thus the nature of value, relationships, and networks, is mutual service provision for mutual wellbeing (Vargo 2009 p. 378)."

Service science in turn can be characterized generally as "an emerging interdisciplinary field of inquiry that focuses on fundamental science, models, theories, and applications to drive service innovation, competition, and well-being through co-creation of value" (Ostrom et al. 2010a p5). Likewise, service science can be looked at as systems of relationships between providers, consumers, and targets. Often, providers and consumers co-create value, with each party taking ownership over its assigned dimensions. This creates a complete service cycle in which co-creation leads to co-created value (Spohrer and Maglio 2010). Whereas goods-dominant logic focuses on tangible and productive goods, service-dominant logic is a scientific process looking at value-in-use as created in and by service systems and design (Spohrer et al. 2008; Vargo et al. 2008). Specifically, we consider service design as the design of service symbols, things, interactions, and environments (Buchanan 2001).

Service design is transformative when it has a measurable, even optimizing, positive affect on well-being. Within the service-dominant logic paradigm, this is a worthy target; moreover, well-being's positive economic and societal outcomes have been scientifically proven in works of (Spohrer et al. 2008;

Berry et al., 2005; Diener et al. 1999; Diener & Chan 2010). As such, TSR is an exciting approach: irrespective of domain, it offers the prospect of well-being outcomes like enabled or increased access, social justice, agency, and ecological stability (Rosenbaum et al. 2011). Both the end goal and the measurement of success are consumer well-being.

TSR was borne out of the recognition of the importance of services to both the global economy and individuals' daily life. Uplifting changes and improvements refer to design changes in service provision which are conducive to a "better" life. It is increasingly clear that rapid technological changes and the global economic changeover to a service economy has changed how people live (Stiglitz et al. 2010). This becomes especially important considering that by 2050 is it estimated that the world's population will approach nine billion.[i] An estimated one million people move into cities daily. Researchers and policy makers need to define and measure readiness to provide (well) for the next two billion people. This is no small task when the current seven billion are unevenly serviced. It is with this in mind that the TSR agenda was created. A TSR framework has a fundamental role in developing this approach by taking both provider commitments and consumer well-being into consideration (Rosenbaum et al. 2011), creating service design that enables well-being.

A TRANSFORMATIVE SERVICE FRAMEWORK

We propose an expansion to the 2013 TSR framework of Anderson et al. that transforms delicate strands of psychological-emotional states, environmental factors, and personal observations into a service design assessment which is at once reflective and transformative. We utilize a systems approach, meaning the entirety of the service environment needs to be considered in order to assure success (Spohrer & Maglio 2010). In addition to Anderson et al.'s macro-level factors, it adds meso- and micro-level environmental factors. These are generally considered external to service design, service influence defined as a cycle of provision, perception, and impact, and well-being outcomes (Figure 1). Our layered approach allows for analysis of the granularity of daily life; by extending the model with these dimensions, researchers are able to suitably analyze the often compounded aspects of ill-being.
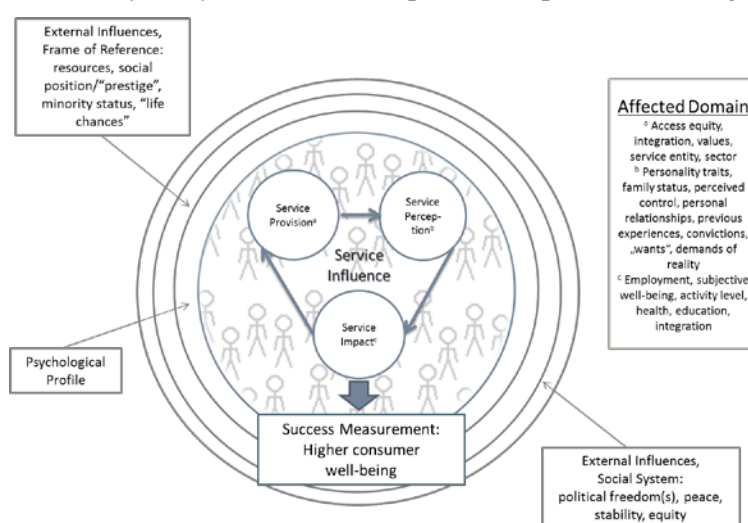

Figure 1. A transformative service design framework, adapted from Anderson et al. 2013

This supports our argument that a fundamental reference point for personal and collective assessment of well-being lies in the greater social system (Stiglitz et al. 2010; White and Pettit 2004). This then must include macro-level assessments like access to political freedoms, general peace and stability, equity and overall development (Anand & Sen 1994) and the meso-level of external frame of reference; i.e., how one perceives their place in society (White & Pettit 2004). Here one finds objective measurements like social hierarchy and minority status, as well as less standard measures like 'life chances' one has had, and the general prestige of their life circumstances (Veenhoven & Jonkers 1984; Veenhoven 2013). In our framework, the micro-level of consumer-service interaction is the psychological profile of the individual. It is well-established that one's baseline psychological profile affects the way one subjectively understands their circumstances overall (Schwartz et al. 2002; Purvis et al. 2011; Hall et al. 2013).

The affected domains referenced in Figure 1 have a strong correspondence with macro-, meso-, and micro- environmental factors. Things to consider in transformative service provision include access equity, integration, values, service entity, sector and overall inclusiveness (Anderson et al. 2013; Gebauer & Reynoso 2013). Perception of service provision is driven by a combination of individual and collective understanding of personality traits, family status, perceived control, personal relationships, previous experiences, convictions, and general "wants" balanced by the demands of reality (Veenhoven & Jockers 1984). The optimal impact domains are those such as employment, subjective well-being, activity level, health, education, and integration (Anderson et al., 2013; Rosenbaum et al., 2011). When service design incorporates these aspects, the resulting effect should be an increased consumer well-being.

The outer circle: Macro level influences on well-being

Within a secure, participatory democracy there are fewer chances for wide disparity levels between subgroups. This implies that each member of society has access, or a reasonable expectation to be able to participate, affording minorities and other subpopulations the chance of equal servicing. This is generally not true for opaque or authoritarian systems: such governments are less likely to be stable and more likely to provision services along partisan, ethnic or religious lines. Not only are groups unequally serviced, but quality of life overall drops with respect to expected welfare maintenance (Muller 2011). Changes in the overall well-being of the state are driven from the aggregate number of citizens in the state and their access to (civil) services, reflecting the view that progress is contingent to the impacts on and richness of the human life, rather than merely economic advances (Stiglitz et al. 2010; Buchanan 2001). Data gained from instruments like the General Social Survey, World Values Survey or other large publically accessible sets such as that provided by the World Bank DataBank can be utilized in this level.

Meso-level analysis: the role of the self in the community

As noted in Ozanne and Anderson (2010), individuals, structural issues, and the socioeconomic context of a given area must be taken into consideration when completing impact assessments. Knowledge of the preexisting conditions and self-assessed roles of a given consumer group is necessary when designing and implementing services to increase communal well-being and/or decrease communal ill-being (Saatcioglu & Ozanna 2013). Well-being is not only access and psychological health, but the perception of one's place within the greater environment. Individual well-being is intrinsically linked to the individual's perception of belonging in a community, and their relative status within it. These singular assessments aggregate up to communal well-being. This is to say, in areas where high individual well-being exists, there tends to be high communal well-being. In areas of compounded disadvantage, well-being and its related outcomes tends to be low. This is confirmed in the Framingham Heart Study: high and low well-being networks tend to be clustered within three degrees of separation from one another (Fowler & Christakis 2008).

Our proposed meso-level environment for transformative service design is closely aligned to George Vaillant's finding on the antecedents of flourishing from the Harvard Grant Study, to date the longest running longitudinal sociological study. He writes that formative experiences are crucial to future health and happiness; the presence of positive relationships matter for happiness; the risks one takes with their lives (e.g. drug and alcohol consumption) have high prediction abilities on one's ability to maintain family and social relationships (Vaillant 2008). Meso-level analysis is not foreign to the TSR agenda: quoting (Ostrom et al. 2012), TSR considers "…*the disparity in the quality of service offerings to different groups, the design and cocreation of services with consumers that honors both the agency and the cultural values of individuals and communities,* … (p9)", which require an understanding of the person and their understanding of belongingness in their community. Longitudinal surveys, panels, and various forms of network analysis can establish the indicators of the meso-level.

Me, myself and I: Psychological profiles and well-being

As mentioned earlier, an important factor in well-being is the baseline psychological profile of the person. Considering psychological profile is of upmost importance when measuring service perception as shown in Figure 1, as it is well-established that different personality types report satisfaction and happiness with difference reference points. Confirmed in multiple studies, psychological factors like low(er) needs for circumstance maximization, psychological needs satisfaction, personal goal progress, high

self-esteem, and a positive Big Five Inventory profile are prerequisites for high well-being (John et al. 1991; Schwartz et al. 2002; Purvis et al. 2011; Hall et al. 2013; Sheldon and Hoon 2013).[ii]

Maximization refers to one's ability to be happy with a decision once it has been met. The more one "maximizes" a decision-making scenario, the less happy one is in the long term, 'the paradox of choice' (Schwartz et al., 2002). Considering psychological needs satisfaction, Sheldon and Hoon (2013) modeled optimal human well-being with a hierarchical regression analysis, finding that there are four tiers of personality which are predictors of wellness. Their work shows that social relations, self-narratives, goals and life intension, personality traits, and psychological needs are all necessary for high well-being. The Big Five personality factors are the most well-known and widest used personality models in psychology, human resources, and a plethora of other institutions (John et al. 1991). A well-being inducing or positive Big Five profile here is considered to be low neuroticism, high extraversion, and a combination of optimism, agreeableness, conscientiousness (Purvis et al. 2011; Hall et al. 2013; Sheldon & Hoon 2013). Possible research designs for establishing this level include ethnographies and psychometric surveys.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

TSR aims at improving well-being in connection with provision of services. Movement towards this goal requires, among many other things, (1) identifying and understanding the measurable variables that affect well-being in conjunction to the service experience, and (2) obtaining said data. In this paper we have sought to address this by proposing an extended methodology for the configuration and measurement of these variables. We conclude with a few brief remarks on these topics.

We argue that rather than creating new indicators, repurposing available data sets allows TSR researchers to focus on the central concept: designing uplifting service provision and experiences to touch all customers in the pyramid, especially those at the base. An obvious and important use of currently existing data sources is to have them serve as benchmarks for TSR studies. There are two such modes of use. The first is for validating new instruments to be developed by TSR scholars. Existing questionnaires and other instruments, as well as the data collected with them can be used in designing new instruments and in testing them. A second valuable role of these data is to serve as comparison points for studies done at smaller institutions or regions, e.g., clients of a given service agency. Very often, we imagine, targets of TSR will be particular institutions (government agencies, commercial firms, NGOs, etc.) that are on much smaller scale than the most widely-used surveys. Data targeted at a particular institution will be able to compare the effect of the institution against that of the larger society, or in the formalization of value co-creation between providers and consumers 'at the bottom of the pyramid'. Building on a wealth of existing knowledge and attending to new developments, TSR is poised to contribute enormously to fostering well-being.

Limitations and future work

There are limitations to be addressed with this approach. The framework requires measurement tools from which to gauge success - an integrated study which combines the use of our framework and appropriate measurement functions applied to actual data is needed. Although service design and acceptance, and personality factor have been researched, until now our suggested configuration has not been researched. This suggests room for an extended user acceptance test. Finally, what are the missing variables? Literally thousands of variables pertaining to well-being exist. Identifying the lacunae has to be judged an important priority for TSR research.

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[i] http://www.census.gov/popclock/

[ii] Big Five Inventory here refers to that of Johns et al., (1991) namely, Openness, Contentiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.