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Service Systems and Social Innovation: Exploring Service, Value and Innovation within the Social Enterprise

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Abstract
Service science, a growing multidisciplinary field concerned with the study of service systems and the value co-created within them, offers fresh perspectives, theories and analytical tools for understanding service innovation within businesses and organizations today. In recent years this emerging field has expanded considerably. However, despite significant advancements in developing a foundation of knowledge, methods, concepts and tools, a great deal of the existing scholarly contributions have focused on the study of service systems, service design and innovation within the context of competitive profit-seeking entities that focus on a single, financial bottom line. This paper aims to contribute to a relatively unexplored dimension of the service science literature through an investigation of a special type of business venture, the social enterprise.

Keywords: service science, service system, systems design, triple bottom line, social enterprise, social innovation

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Service science, a growing multidisciplinary field concerned with the study of service systems and the value co-created within them, offers fresh perspectives, theories and analytical tools for understanding service innovation within businesses and organizations today. In recent years this emerging field has expanded considerably. However, despite significant advancements in developing a foundation of knowledge, methods, concepts and tools, a great deal of the existing scholarly contributions have focused on the study of service systems, service design and innovation within the context of competitive profit-seeking entities that focus on a single, financial bottom line.

To date, very little research has focused on the study of service within and between businesses and organizations dedicated to not a single, but triple bottom line; people, planet and profit. Coined by the co-founder of a sustainable business consultancy, the term triple bottom line refers to an organization's operational commitment to positive social, environmental and economic performance (Brown et al, 2006).

This paper aims to contribute to a relatively unexplored dimension of the service science literature through an investigation of a special type of business venture, the social enterprise. Broadly speaking, a social enterprise can be defined as a “business directly involved in the production and/or selling of goods and services for the dual purpose of generating earned income and achieving or contributing to social and/or environmental aims" (Enterprising non-profits, 2010, p. 7).

Much can be learned about these social ventures through an evaluation of their service offerings using the theoretical tools developed by the service science community, particularly the application of a service-dominant (S-D) over goods-dominant (G-D) logic. However, development of S-D logic as a foundational paradigm is still in its infancy, and problems arise in various aspects of its application to organizational contexts outside of the traditional business domain. I explore a number of suggestions for addressing these inadequacies with the objective of gaining insights into which aspects of the existing service science theories and philosophical foundations currently fit, and which need to be expanded or revised. In turn, academics, entrepreneurs and business leaders may better understand how to effectively design, improve, evaluate and scale

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service systems that co-create not just economic value, but social and environmental value as well (Maglio & Spohrer, 2008, p 20).

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