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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Service Interactions in Platform-Based Sharing Services and Social Transformation of the Base of the Pyramid segment

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Problem Statement

Advancements in technology have facilitated in the development of online service environments, enabling the service actors to interact eagerly both with firms and service peers (Ostrom et al., 2015. p.1). With the emergence of the platform model of services, the digitally enabled service interactions have revolutionized the act of collaborative consumption (CC) into commercial services, facilitating social exchanges in ways that has uplifted the service organizations as well as the macro-environment they operate in (Huarng and Yu, 2019; Mair and Reishauer, 2017; Tsou et al., 2019; Watanabe et al., 2017). For years, the major emphasis of services research has been firm centric, engrossing biasedly on the managerial implications and centring on the organizational outcomes of service interactions (Rosenbaum, 2015). This prejudice was achieved at the expense of exploring the individual and collective well-being stemming from service experiences and interactions (Anderson and Ostrom, 2015; Anderson et al., 2013; Ostrom et al., 2021; Rosenbaum et al., 2011), specifically, from the viewpoint of service providers (Buhalis et al., 2019; Zhang, Bufquin and Lu, 2019), which is an under-represented perspective, owing to the increased inclination of the discipline towards firm profitability i.e., repurchase intentions and customer satisfaction etc. Moreover, when exploring the transformative outcomes of service interactions, previous research has ignored the largest yet underrated segment i.e., Base of the Pyramid (BoP), where not only is this segment considered to be a promising target group, but platform-based service interactions also intend to address a multitude of challenges faced by citizens of this segment (Fisk et al., 2016; Ostrom et al., 2015; Prahalad, 2002).

Research Aim

This study aims to bridge the gap in the stream of services research through exploration of service interactions in platform-based sharing services (PBSS), from a transformative services research (TSR) perspective, within the BoP context. In particular, employing the social exchange theory (SET), the study sets out to identify the determinants of service interaction within the PBSS, that leads to the transformation of service providers belonging to the BoP segment. This approach of studying SET with a TSR approach addresses the shortcoming within services research as brought up by previous studies (Ostrom et al., 2021; Ostrom et al., 2015; Reynoso, Valdés, and Cabrera, 2015; Rosenbaum, 2015).

Methodology

Using a sequential mixed methods research design, an initial exploratory study, comprising of 20 in-depth interviews with bike ride-sharing service providers from the BoP segment were conducted, to develop the theoretical model of the study. This was followed by a quantitative study for validation of the theoretical model, consisting of an electronic survey research, wherein, 277 questionnaires from bike ride-sharing service providers were processed. The data analysis of the initial phase comprised of a Hybrid Thematic Analysis, whereas for the subsequent phase, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Hayes PROCESS Macro were employed.

Findings

The results revealed that trust mediated via the PBSS fostered the service interactions and acted as a major contributor towards flourishing of service providers belonging to the BoP segment. In particular, trustworthy social transactions via digital platforms enable the provision of life security, work-life balance, and social coherence and trust to the service providers, in the milieu of a societal segment with rampant crime and dwindling judicial system. This relationship between trust and flourishing was sequentially mediated by service provider's positive attitude towards CC and their job satisfaction, thus forming a mechanism depicting transformation of service providers through involvement in PBSS within the BoP segment. Furthermore, results revealed that trust also had conditional indirect effects on flourishing, where personal characteristics such as personality traits, and job characteristics such as working hours and income, had diverse moderating effects on the indirect relationship between trust and flourishing through job satisfaction.

Conclusion and Implications

With the results at hand, the study contributes to our understanding on the relationship between services and well-being by highlighting the context and conditions where service interactions can offer socially transformative outcomes, thus contributing to the TSR stream. Secondly, the study advances the TSR literature by bringing to light the perspective of service providers, overlooked by earlier studies that concentrated solely on the well-being of service users. Furthermore, the study contributes to the growth of the field of services marketing, for evading the prejudiced inclination of services research towards firm centric goals/outcomes, at the expense of consumer and social welfare. Managerially, exploring service interactions via PBSS in the context of the BoP segment lays out a roadmap for managers and policymakers who aim at improving well-being of the impoverished market segment by enhancing the service interactions and experience of the service actors with their involvement in PBSS.

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