Since the publication of Vargo and Lusch’s seminal article (‘Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing’) in 2004 in the prestigious Journal of Marketing, a wide range of international journals have devoted many pages to the service-dominant logic, including both individual articles and special issues. Around the world, researchers from varied disciplines have adopted this new perspective at multiple conferences, forums, workshops, and seminars. In 2008 Germany’s marketing academics really began taking up the topic and invited Stephen L. Vargo to participate in an intensive discussion at their Annual Conference in Berlin. The approach was also taken up within other management disciplines. The vast spectrum of perspectives on the service-dominant logic thus has come to range from total rejection to critical further development (i.e. ‘evolving’) to full approval.

We thank the editors of DBW for entrusting the publication of the first German special issue on service-dominant logic to us. We have been glad to accept this task, because from the outset, this fascinating topic has prompted our participation in international discourses. During the process, we have encountered almost the entire spectrum of views on the service-dominant logic, which has enabled us to identify some key challenges related to fresh ways of looking at the subject. In this sense, DBW represents the ideal outlet for the first German special issue on service-dominant logic, in that it addresses not only marketing academics but all business disciplines, while also attaching great value to practical applications.

**Herausgeber des Themenheftes**

Professor Dr. Helge Löbler, Lehrstuhl für BWL, insb. Marketing, Universität Leipzig

Professor Dr. Herbert Woratschek, Lehrstuhl für Dienstleistungsmarketing, Universität Bayreuth

After our in-depth discussions with Stephen Vargo and Robert Lusch, we are especially delighted that they agreed to provide the introduction to this special issue, with their ‘Prologue and Prospects.’ We accordingly express our great appreciation to them.

Our thanks also go to all the authors who have submitted papers to this special issue. Unfortunately it was not possible to include all the articles submitted for publication. We encourage these authors to continue developing their interesting ideas. Herein, we present four articles that we believe best advance the theory and practice of the service-dominant logic.

In particular, Haase and Kleinaltenkamp discuss the service-dominant logic as an example of the non-cumulative progress of science, in reference to the thesis of non-cumulative progress that Kuhn proposed as a contrast to the idea of cumulative scientific progress, and which was further refined by Lakatos and Laudan. In questioning whether knowledge grows continuously by scientific progress, Kuhn distinguishes two ways of doing science: ‘Normal’ science works within a ‘paradigm’ and seeks to solve problems; ‘revolutionary’ science takes a different stance in relation to the scientific tradition and relates it either indirectly or not at all to existing paradigms (incommensurability). According to Haase and Kleinaltenkamp, the service-dominant logic represents the category of revolutionary science, which means it still is not possible to offer a definitive answer in response to the question of whether it represents scientific progress. Accordingly, these authors make an important contribution in terms of understanding the controversial responses to the service-dominant logic.

Polese and Di Nauta attempt to integrate various marketing approaches — service-dominant logic, service science, and relationship management — within the common framework of a viable system approach. In contrast with Haase and Kleinaltenkamp, they do not regard the various approaches as incommensurable but as generally compatible. They thus apply an approach originating in management cybernetics as a common basis. This valuable article takes an alternative position
to the thesis proposed by Haase and Kleinaltenkamp and provides a different perspective, with the potential for integrating contradictory reactions to the service-dominant logic.

In the next article, Horbel has two objectives: to demonstrate the usefulness of the service-dominant logic for tourism management and to extend the range of sources of resources available. The service-dominant logic may be useful for tourism management because it represents a general framework for analyzing problems specific to the field. In particular, the idea of value co-creation through resource integration is stipulated as a significant new departure for tourism management. The sources of resources that appear in the service-dominant logic also can be complemented by natural sources (e.g., sunshine, sunsets, mountain views). The value of this article stems, on the one hand, from its identification of the potential of service-dominant logic for individual disciplines (in this case, tourism management) and, on the other hand, from the way it constructively moves beyond the limits of existing views of the service-dominant logic.

Finally, Drengner, Jahn, and Gaus use the service-dominant logic to classify different approaches to brand management, a central theme of marketing. They resort to selected foundational premises of the service-dominant logic to establish a comprehensive view of brand management, and in so doing, they deal with both modern and socio-cultural brand research, nonexclusively.

The articles in this special issue exemplify the vast potential offered by the service-dominant logic for developing scientific disciplines further. However, they also reveal that the service-dominant logic is a way of thinking that continues to evolve. In our view, it is a candidate for a new paradigm in marketing, and even in other management disciplines. The (still) varying interpretations of the service-dominant logic support this interpretation. The special challenge for understanding the service-dominant logic thus is that it not only represents a new way of thinking but also presents its concepts in a new and still unfamiliar language. In this respect, we cannot expect immediate acceptance by all experts in various fields. In the present stage of development, there is a temptation to eclectically add all possible topics to the service-dominant logic. But we doubt that such eclectic extensions really contribute to the overall development. For the future, the goal should be to develop the service-dominant logic further theoretically and deal with it more intensively in management textbooks and business practice.

In our opinion, the service-dominant logic offers a wealth of interesting new directions. One fundamental consideration is the way it can overcome the distinction between goods and services, in that goods represent indirect services, performing the service when they get integrated into activities as resources. Furthermore, the service-dominant logic dissolves the strict distinction between producer and consumer, by focusing on value creation through resource integration by actors. From this perspective, it is irrelevant whether resource integration takes place during production or consumption. Even in traditional service marketing (Dienstleistungsmarketing), the distinction between production and consumption already had started to blur, such that customers represent external production factors. Yet this view still has held the customer as a consumer who «purchases» value, without any significant role in value creation. Finally, we highlight a third new feature of the service-dominant logic — though we acknowledge that we do not come anywhere close to exhausting the potential list. But a key point is that «Resources are not, they become.» That which is needed for a service is not automatically a resource; it only becomes a resource when it is integrated into value-creating activities.

In four articles, this special issue on the service-dominant logic provides a constructive discussion of a new, still evolving approach. We hope it stimulates academics and practitioners to think more about this topic and derive knowledge, for themselves and others — or, in the service-dominant logic language, to co-create value. The development of any new approach requires the efforts of many. We invite readers of DBW to participate in this process.

Helge Löbler, Leipzig
Herbert Woratschek, Bayreuth
Themenheft »Service-Dominant Logic – Quo Vadis?«

Vorwort

Vorwort Service-Dominant Logic – Quo Vadis? ......................... 87

Stephen L. Vargo/Robert F. Lusch

Stephen L. Vargo/Robert F. Lusch Service-Dominant Logic: Prologue And Prospects ............ 91

Michaela Haase/
Michael Kleinaltenkamp

Michaela Haase/
Michael Kleinaltenkamp S-D Logic as an Example of Non-Cumulative Scientific Progress in the Marketing Discipline ......................... 95

Francesco Polese/
Primiano Di Nauta

Francesco Polese/
Primiano Di Nauta A Viable Systems Approach to Relationship Management in S-D Logic and Service Science ......................... 113

Chris Horbel

Chris Horbel Service-dominant logic and tourism management. Enriching each other ......................... 131

Jan Drengner/Steffen Jahn/
Hansjörg Gaus

Jan Drengner/Steffen Jahn/
Hansjörg Gaus Der Beitrag der Service-Dominant Logic zur Weiterentwicklung der Markenführung ......................... 143
Service-Dominant Logic: Prologue And Prospects

It has been less than 10 years since the first article on what is now called «service-dominant (S-D) logic» was published in the *Journal of Marketing* (Vargo and Lusch 2004) but the article has already had almost 4000 citations (Google Scholar) and motivated hundreds of S-D-logic-focused articles, as well as over a dozen journal special issues/sections and a similar number of focused conferences. These citations (both favorable and critical) and other activities have contributed significantly to the advancement and refinement of S-D logic, some of which has been captured and elaborated in articles we have published. Almost immediately after publication of our first article we realized the effort to advance S-D logic had to be open and collaborative and thus invited nearly 50 scholars to contribute to of book of original essays discussing and debating the evolution of marketing thought and its potential convergence toward a new dominant logic (Lusch and Vargo 2006a). Since then, many other scholars have contributed as the evolution and development continues to be open-source and ongoing. The purpose of this short commentary is to highlight some of the major changes, future directions, and necessary collaborative efforts.

Prologue

In the original S-D logic article (Vargo and Lusch 2004), we tried to capture S-D logic’s essence in eight foundational premises (FPs) and a fairly short 17-page article. Even before the ink was dry on that publication, it became apparent to us that (1) S-D logic was potentially much more encompassing then even we had fully anticipated and (2) some of our discussion of S-D logic was trapped in the lexicon of the more traditional logic, from which we were trying to break free – «goods-dominant» (G-D) logic (see Lusch and Vargo 2006b). Thus, much of our effort since 2004 has been directed toward extension and refinement.

Perhaps the most notable of these refinements and extensions are found in our 2008 article in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (Vargo and Lusch 2008) in which we modified the wording of several of the original FPs and added two more. Since then, we have realized that some of the original FPs can be derived from others and, thus, have identified four FPs from this expanded set of ten as particularly foundational, essentially the axioms of S-D logic.

FP1, which says that service, defined as the use of ones competences for the benefit of another, is the basis of exchange, and is of course the heart of S-D logic. It is important once more to emphasize that this «service» (singular), a process, should not be confused with «services» (usually plural), a unit of (intangible) output, which we associate with G-D logic and find redundant, and thus unnecessary, in S-D logic. The FP implies that in economic exchange, as well as social exchange in general, fundamentally, it is service that is exchanged for service and, when goods are involved, they are best understood as service-delivery mechanisms.

FP6 establishes that value is co-created. The original scope for this axiom was the micro level, typically involving a firm and a customer and was intended to shift the locus of value creation to the later, with the former providing input. In part, it is intended to capture the shift in thinking primarily in terms of value-in-exchange, toward a realization of the primacy of «value-in-use.» More recently, we have used the term «value-in-context» to capture the notion that value must be understood in the context of the beneficiary’s world. While we stand behind this axiom as it pertains to the micro level, it has become increasingly clear that, viewed from a meso and macro level (see Chandler and Vargo 2011), the massively collaborative nature of value creation becomes even more apparent. That is, value co-creation through service-for-service exchange is at the very heart of the reason for, and of the essential role of society (Lusch and Vargo 2006c).

One other comment on value co-creation is important here. In the original article (Vargo and Lusch 2004), we stated FP6 as «The customer is always a co-producer». However, we soon realized (see Lusch and Vargo 2006b; Vargo 2008) that there are few words that reflect G-D logic more than «production». Thus, we changed the wording in the FP to «co-creation of value.» However, firm output, as captured in «products» and «production» remain important in S-D logic and we retained the
term «co-production» to refer to the customer’s participation in the creation of the value-proposition (the firms offering), such as through co-design, customer-assembly, etc. Co-production is relatively optional. This is different from «co-creation of value» which is intended to capture the essential nature of value creation: it *always* involves the beneficiary’s participation, in some manner, usually primary.

Arguably, one of the most important additions to S-D logic is found in FP9, which identifies the other core activity (besides service provision) of economic (and social) actors: resource integration. It sets the stage for thinking about the mechanics and the networked (and, as will be discussed, systemic) nature of value co-creation, as well as the process through which the resources for service provision are created, the integration of existing resources. Importantly, this resource-integration does not just apply to the actor referred to as a «producer» (e.g., the firm) in G-D logic, but equally, and even more importantly for an understanding of value, to the «consumer» (the customer).

FP9 thus also sets the stage for the explication of the contextual and unique nature of value realization and value determination and, thus, for FP10, the last axiom, which states that value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. Here «phenomenological» is intended to capture the experiential nature of value. That is, value must be understood in terms of the holistic combination of resources that lead to it, in the context of other (potential) resources. It is thus always unique to a single actor and, it follows, can only be determined by that actor, or at least with the actor as the central referent.

**Progress**

All of co-creation of value through resource integration and service-for-service exchange clearly begins to point beyond the traditional dyadic exchange between firms and customers toward much more complex networks of interconnected actors as we began to recognize when we were a bit speculative and suggested that S-D logic could serve as a foundation for general theory (Lusch and Vargo 2006c) and explain both micro and macro structures. But FP9 points us a bit further, toward systems of actors connected not just by resource linkages but also through common governance mechanisms, generated by the actors in the network. In 2008, in presentations at the AMA Converse Symposium and the Logic and Science of Service Science Conference at the University of Hawaii, we began to refer to these systems as service ecosystems. Recently, we have clarified how we define «service ecosystems» and suggest they are: relatively self-contained, self adjusting systems of resource-integrating actors connected by shared institutional logics and mutual value creation through service exchange (Vargo and Lusch 2011). These service ecosystems become the appropriate unit of analysis for understanding value-co-creation but they require additional concepts, perspectives, and components for fuller understanding. Some of these are just now coming into full focus and are briefly outlined below.

- **Institutions**: Co-creation of value requires coordination, rules for working together. These are the institutions of ecosystems, arguably, the most overlooked exchange mechanism in the marketing literature. With some exception (e.g., Lusch 1987 and Heide and John 1992), when dealt with at all, they have been viewed as macro-environmental variables and thus, by definition, exogenous to value creation. In S-D logic, they become endogenous as we suggest in Lusch and Vargo (2006).

- **Structuration**: Perhaps the best research stream for capturing the endogenous nature of institutions is the structuration theory of Giddens (1984). In brief, it contends that the structure of systems, including its rules (institutions), is both the context for and the outcome of the activities of actors in those systems.

- **Levels of analysis**: It is becoming increasingly clear that systems are nested (and overlapping) in other systems and that this nesting must be accounted for to understand activities at any one level (Lusch 1987; Kiel, Lusch, Schumacher 1992; Lusch 2006). Chandler and Vargo (2011) have used a micro (e.g., dyadic exchange), meso (e.g., ‟industry‰ level, complex exchange) and macro level (e.g., societal) framework, with the levels connected through structuration. One of the implications is that phenomena at any one level can only be fully understood from the vantage point (context) of another level.
- Practice theory: The activities within and between these nested systems have arguably been studied the most in sociology, under the rubric of practice theory a loosely connected literature found in the work of Giddens (e.g., 1976, 1984), Bourdieu (e.g., 1977, 1984), Schatzki (e.g., 1996), and others. As implied by the term practices the units of analysis are institutionalized activities. This activity focus connects well with the operant resource focus of S-D logic. In marketing, probably the best representation of practice theory can be found in the work of Kjellberg and associates (e.g., Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007), in which practices are seen in terms of three categories: representational, normative, and exchange, with changes in one type implying commensurate changes in the others, thus creating a dynamic system.

Prospects

All of this might seem to be getting somewhat far afield from marketing. In our opinion, it is not. As discussed elsewhere (e.g., Arndt 1986; Venkatesh, Penaloza, and Firat 2006; see also Vargo 2007), marketing is an applied science without a well-established basic science. Rather, it rests on concepts borrowed from other disciplines, such as economic science, which were established for different, though somewhat similar, purposes. What looking at markets and marketing through an S-D logic lens, based on value co-creation through resource integration and service-for-service exchange, is beginning to reveal is a massively collaborative world (service-ecosystem), in which sub-ecosystems dealing with subsets of human issues emerge representing institutionalized solutions – that is, the meso-level service ecosystems that we call markets. To the extent that we can understand their formation, stability, and disruption, we should be in a position to create better normative theory for facilitating their progress – that is, to do the practice of marketing. This however will itself take a massively collaborative, scholarly effort. Special issues like this one are part of that effort and we encourage similar co-creative efforts by all interested parties.

References

Konzernrechnungslegung nach HGB und IFRS

Küting/Weber

Der Konzernabschluss
Praxis der Konzernrechnungslegung nach HGB und IFRS
13. Auflage


- Hinweise zum Vorgehen bei konzerninternen Umstrukturierungen
- Für die Praxis: Beispiele und Konsolidierungsbögen
- Rechtsstand: 1. September 2012

SCHÄFFER POESCHEL

Jetzt bestellen: info@schaeffer-poeschel.de | www.schaeffer-poeschel.de
S-D Logic as an Example of Non-Cumulative Scientific Progress in the Marketing Discipline

Die S-D logic als Beispiel nicht-kumulativen Fortschritts in der Marketingwissenschaft

Schlüsselbegriffe

Desiderata der Forschung; (In)Kommensurabilität; Problemlösungsfähigkeit; Sichtweisenwechsel; Wahrheit; Werte

Keywords

Desiderata of research; gestalt shift; (in)commensurability; problem-solving capability; truth; values

Zusammenfassung


Abstract

The success of the service-dominant (S-D) logic has been proved, but is it also a scientific progress? We illustrate the development and success of the S-D logic against the backdrop of four selected marketing approaches. Because the philosophy of science has rejected »internalism« in favor of community-external standards of success and progress, we address external standards in the form of two basic explications of the concept of scientific progress in the philosophy of science: truth (truthlikeness) and problem-solving capability. Neither approach is a source of immediate assessment of S-D logic. On the basis of Kuhn’s analytical framework, modified by Laudan’s (1977) amendments and Lakatos’s (1974, 1978) criticism, we reconstruct S-D logic’s development as a paradigm shift in the marketing discipline and provide an answer to the question whether S-D logic can be considered an example of non-cumulative progress in social science.

Autoren

PD Dr. Michaela Haase (E-Mail: Michaela.Haase@fu-berlin.de) und Prof. Dr. Michael Kleinaltenkamp
(E-Mail: Michael.Kleinaltenkamp@fu-berlin.de), beide Freie Universität Berlin, Fachbereich Wirtschaftswissenschaft,
Marketing Department, Otto-von-Simson-Str. 19, 14195 Berlin.
Finally, the sciences are our own creation, including all the strong measures which seemingly are a burden imposed upon us by them. We should bear this fact in mind and recall as often as possible that science, as we are familiar with it from our perspective of today, is not inescapable and that we can build up a world in which it doesn’t play a role at all. (Feyerabend 1974, p. 219; italics in original)

As Whitehead said once, good theories are not so easily to find as blueberries. (Hempel 1984, p. 33)

1. Introduction

The service-dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo/Lusch, 2004) has proved successful in terms of its impact within (and beyond) the marketing community. Beyond such success, however, can it also count as progress? The success of S-D logic is an expression of mainly community-internal comparison and appraisal. The primary aim of this article is to contribute to the understanding of this success and to tie it to community-external standards of progress. Therefore, we refer to two basic explications of the concept of progress in the philosophy of science: verisimilitude (truthlikeness) and problem-solving capability. The former approach is associated with Popper (1963), and the latter with Kuhn (1962).

Because neither correspondence-theoretical truth nor truthlikeness can be made operative for the appraisal of theories, we discuss S-D logic within a framework based on Kuhn’s analysis of scientific development, amended by Lakatos (1974) and Laudan’s (1977) subsequent works. Lakatos tries to reconcile Popper’s and Kuhn’s views, whereas Laudan explicates Kuhn’s problem-oriented approach in more detail: He adds the category of conceptual problems to Kuhn’s category of empirical problems.

Although the concept of truth or truthlikeness has been used by many scholars in both the human and natural sciences, it cannot be made operative for the appraisal of scientific theories or theory development. As we argue, the Kuhnian framework is the only option that can be put into practice. The question we answer herein therefore is not whether the S-D logic is an example of cumulative or non-cumulative scientific progress. Rather, we answer the questions of, first, whether S-D logic’s development is sufficiently close to theory development in the sense that Kuhn (1962) describes and, second, whether this development is progressive or leads to scientific progress.

To answer the first question, we describe S-D logic’s development within a framework based on four approaches in the marketing discipline: selling concept and marketing concept on the one hand and relationship marketing and services marketing on the other hand. Thus, the extended (by Laudan and Lakatos) Kuhnian framework not only provides a reference for our discussion of scientific progress but also serves as part of our analysis of S-D logic’s development.

Within this framework, we reconstruct the emergent S-D logic as a partly continuous, partly discontinuous development that has led to a paradigm shift from what is called the goods-dominant (G-D) logic. However, the choice of approaches for our framework is not the only one possible; an analysis based on a different selection may give rise to different results. Therefore, our results are limited to our framework. Note that we overstate several characteristics of our description for the sake of explicitness. For example, we treat the S-D and G-D logics as if they were theories and the source of a paradigmatic conflict and gestalt shift in marketing theory.

An answer to the second question requires a non-relativistic reading of Kuhn (1962). The Kuhnian framework allows for inter-paradigmatic standards of progress; it is also harmonious with the idea of non-cumulative progress evolving from what Hempel (1984) calls desiderata of research. With regard to the epistemic subject of a Kuhnian theory development, the scientific community is ascribed a decisive role for the definition and achievement of scientific progress.

1 The original wording is »Die Wissenschaften sind schließlich unser eigenes Werk, eingeschlossen all die strengen Maßstäbe, die sie uns auferlegen scheinen. Es ist gut, wenn man fortwährend an die Tatsache erinnert wird, daß die Wissenschaft, so wie wir sie heute kennen, nicht unvermeidlich ist und daß wir eine Welt aufbauen können, in der sie nicht die geringste Rolle spielt.«

2 »Wie Whitehead einmal sagte, sind gute Theorien nicht so leicht zu finden wie Blaubeeren.«

3 The total number of citations counted in Google Scholar (ISI) reached approximately 4400 (1000) through mid-2011, with the 2004 Journal of Marketing article alone accumulating approximately 1800 (600) citations (see http://www.sdlogic.net/Naples Forum 2011 Looking Ahead.pdf, p. 4).
Although this paper is in line with calls for theory-driven programmatic research aiming to solve cognitively and socially relevant problems in marketing science (Anderson, 1983, p. 28), it does not address marketing’s scientific status in general. Nor do we promote a particular position in the philosophy of science, epistemology, or metaphysics (Khalifa, 2010, p. 48; Löbler, 2011). We address the theories and the entities or the problems they specify; thus, this is an objective orientation without commitment to »realism, positivism, empiricism, and so on« (Löbler, 2011, p. 51). By »objective orientation« we mean an extension of the limited reasonableness of inter-subjective meanings »created« in dyads, groups, or even single communities. This type of objective orientation is linked with an inter-subjective orientation with respect to the epistemic subject, the scientific community (Löbler, 2011, p. 54). As for the philosophy of science, we are committed to the style of analytic philosophy, which »is a broad and still ramifying movement in which various conceptions of analysis compete and pull in different directions« (Beaney, 2009).

This paper proceeds as follows: We begin with a discussion of external criteria or standards of success and progress (sections 2 and 3). Then, we reconstruct the development of S-D logic in terms of a gestalt shift and paradigm change (section 4). Next, we address criteria of non-cumulative progress (section 5). Rejecting relativistic interpretations of Kuhn’s (1962) work, we refer to ubiquitous values in science (Bird, 2000) as potential criteria of transparadigmatic scientific progress. We discuss the state and potential of S-D logic with regard to non-cumulative scientific progress in section 6.

2. Reasons for the amendment of community-internal standards of success and progress

Most scholars would probably agree that at least from a pragmatic perspective (Van Fraassen, 1980; Hunt, 1990, p. 3), the development of the sciences (particularly the natural sciences) is a success story. Putnam (1978) claims that scientific success is an established fact. However, in terms of understanding what explains this success, disagreement remains, and a »variety of successes in science« (Wray, 2007, p. 82) are available.

Theory acceptance (Anderson, 1983, p. 28) does not need to draw on explicit criteria (of success or progress), though the criteria of success and progress can overlap (see Hunt, 1990; Wray, 2007). Putnam (1978) argues that success can only be understood if the terms of mature theories refer to theory-independent, objective entities in the real world and the laws of these theories are approximately true (see also Leplin, 1981, p. 279). Other scholars view the basis of scientific success not in the congruence of world and theory but in the use of methods (Laudan, 1977; Niiniluoto, 2002) or in the social structure of scientific communities (Hull, 1988). Addressing what he regards as a general pattern of human knowledge production, Feyerabend (1975) argues that it is the scientific communities themselves that create the legitimization for their knowledge production because they recognize the methods or evaluation criteria that are allowed or accepted.4 This procedure can give rise to dangers of »internalism« (Bird, 2007, p. 69), thus calling for an examination of community-internal standards of success or progress from an external perspective.

External perspectives do not need to draw only on the philosophy of science. Layton’s (2008, p. 218 ff.) discussion of »what criteria an acceptable world view or dominant logic should satisfy« provides an »external perspective« grounded partly in neighbor disciplines of marketing and partly in the philosophy of science. Among the criteria traced to economics and sociology are that (1) »(t)he central ideas should be natural, intuitive, and universal« (ibid.); (2) disciplinary boundaries should specify what is part, or not, of the discipline; (3) »where the boundaries touch those of other disciplines there should be some commonality of ideas and insights« (ibid.); (4) between different levels of analysis, »the theoretical framework in use should facilitate a smooth transition of ideas« (ibid.); and (5) »the world view should be responsive, adaptive, evolutionary, resilient, [and] open to new perspectives« (ibid.). These criteria reflect changes in economics and sociology as well as experience with inter-

---

4 According to Laudan (1977, p. 3), cultural relativism is related to this view: »that science is just one set of beliefs among many possible ones, and that we in the West venerate science, not because it is more rational than its alternatives, but simply because we are a product of culture that has traditionally set great store by science.« For references with regard to marketing, see Leong (1985, p. 23).
disciplinary research, which are of relevance for the discipline of marketing if marketing is to «fit» into inter-disciplinary social-scientific research. With it, externalist perspectives accruing from the philosophy of science do not become redundant.

The philosophy of science has provided explications of the concept of progress, which in turn provide further external perspectives. A meta-theoretical concept of scientific progress is expected to

- «propose an account of theory change ... that does not hinge on judgments of individuals or groups» (Chalmers, 1982, p. 110), 5
- «transcend community-internal standards» (Niiniluoto, 2002, p. 3),
- work against the danger of community-internal ossification (Lohmann, 2004), and
- meet the demands of scientific communities to gain input to improve their «cognitive weighing» activities (Laudan, 1977, p. 32; see Hunt, 1990, p. 8).

A reflection on internal standards of success and progress from an external perspective can provide or substantiate arguments based on which scientific communities can improve their practices or avoid errors (Leplin, 1981, p. 274). The next section addresses two explications of the concept of scientific progress in the philosophy of science.

3. Meta-theoretical concepts of scientific progress

The determination of progress presupposes that change or development is assessed in the light of a target measure such as applicability or meaningful «talk of truth as the aim of science» (Chalmers, 1982, p. 152 and p. 163). In the philosophy of science, cognitive, methodological, educational, economical, and professional progress have been discussed (Niiniluoto, 1995, p. 33; cp. Jonkisz, 2000, p. 199). In particular, cognitive progress – or epistemic progress – addresses the achievement of knowledge as the main end of scientific activity; therefore, knowledge is at the center of discussions of scientific progress (Niiniluoto, 2002). 6

Taking cognitive progress as the highest-ranked end of scientific activity, two proposals have dominated the discussions in the philosophy of science: problem-solving capability and verisimilitude (truthlikeness). The first is based on Kuhn’s (1962) description of scientific development (see also Laudan, 1977); the second is characterized by Popper’s (1963) and other philosophers’ attempt to find a substitute7 for the missing criterion for the determination of the truth value of sentences according to Tarski’s correspondence theory of truth (Tarski, 1935, 1944).

The application of both concepts is subject to restrictions: On the one hand, scholars do not search for truth per se but rather for interesting and illuminating truths (Popper, 1984, p. 55; Bird, 2007, p. 71); on the other hand, scholars do not want to solve problems per se but rather relevant problems. Truths are of interest because they can contribute to the understanding of the world, increase the explanatory power of theories, and improve instrumental abilities. Truth is an end of scientific activity recognized by many scholars (for references, see Hunt, 1990). However, neither truth nor truth-likeness (verisimilitude) has proved to be a real option for the appraisal of scientific progress (Bird, 2007, p. 72 ff.).

3.1. Truth and truthlikeness

Before the advent of the semantic conception of truth (Tarski, 1935, 1944), «truth» was a disreputable concept in the philosophy of science (for a contrary view, see Hunt, 1990, p. 2 f.). 8 Tarski provided a precise meaning of the concept of truth within formalized languages. He explicated what it means if a sentence stating «snow is white» is true – namely, that snow is white. However, Tarski did not provide a criterion on the basis of which the correspondence-theoretical truth of a sentence could be determined: «(W)e are unable to recognize...»
our target even when we have found it» (Buzzoni, 2010, p. 315). Therefore, with Tarski’s definition, one can understand what it means for a sentence such as »snow is white« to be true, but one cannot determine the instances that fulfill the definition. As Tarski (1944, p. 361; italics in original) clarified: »In fact, the semantic definition of truth implies nothing regarding the conditions under which a sentence like ... snow is white ... can be asserted.« Putnam (1981, p. 49) points out that the attempt to determine whether a particular sentence is correspondent-theoretically true would require comparing a proposition with the mind-independent, objective reality (i.e., presuming a God’s eye point of view).9

This creates some difficulty for scholars who identify »knowledge« with »true knowledge« (see Leplin, 1981, p. 271 ff.). According to Popper (1963), the presumption of epistemological realism belongs to metaphysics; that is, it is something that cannot be proved true or untrue by the sciences or their methods. Perhaps having the end of maintaining the idea of growth of knowledge in mind, Popper regarded the idea of truthlikeness or verisimilitude as a back door to escape this situation.10 Although many scholars, at least in today’s natural sciences, might state that their academic work aims to achieve (approximate) truth, they will never know whether a statement or proposition is (approximatively) true.

Whereas verisimilitude draws on realism, realism does not need to draw on verisimilitude. A realist position needs to presume neither verisimilitude nor the correspondence theory of truth. If we avoid the »fallacy of high redefinition« (Hunt, 1990, p. 6f.) or point to scholarly practices, respectively, we refer to aims and knowledge production that can but need not be interpreted as truth-seeking activities.11 Leplin (1981, p. 281 ff.), for example, points to increasing predictive success: the greater number and diversity of predictions ... generated by theory change; ... increasing explanatory problem solving and question answering power as science develops; and ... a form of progress which consists in extension of the scope of observation – in the ability to observe newly postulated entities.» These criteria are neither necessarily nor exclusively linked with approximate truth or an allegedly »referential superiority« of a theory. They can also be indicative of the conceptual and empirical progress with respect to the assessment of a theory from a Kuhnian perspective; thus, they also conform to Lakatos’s (1974) progressive problem shifts. Notwithstanding, some scholars conclude that historical relativism is the only position left if these criteria cannot be considered indicative of »approximative« truth (Leplin, 1981, p. 281 f.; Chalmers, 1982, p. 107; Hunt, 1990).

The first externalist criterion might work as guiding principle for the motivation of scholars, but it cannot be put into practice in the matter of theory choice. However, the second externalist concept also does not lead to an immediate solution.

### 3.2. The problem-solving capability of a theory

Kuhn’s (1962) historical descriptive analysis outlined the development of the natural sciences as follows: First, pre-paradigmatic, paradigmatic, and post-paradigmatic stages characterize the development of theories. Second, knowledge does not grow in a cumulative manner (i.e., we do not know more and more about the same).12 Third, the application of methods based on logics and

---

9 On the perspective of metaphysical realism, »the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects. There is exactly one true and complete description of the way the world is. Truth involves some sort of correspondence relation between words or thought-signs and external things and sets of things. I shall call this perspective the externalist perspective, because its favorite point of view is a God’s Eye point of view« (Putnam, 1981, p. 49).

10 »Verisimilitude ... has been the realists’ weapon of choice in their battles against anti-realists« (Bird, 2007, p. 65). Popper believes that it is possible to compare the truth content and the falsity content of theories and, thus, to base scientific progress on the increase of the verisimilitude of theories, saying, for example, that »Newton’s theory is closer to the truth than Galileo’s, even though both are false« (Chalmers, 1982, p. 157; see Popper 1963, p. 309 ff.).

11 The empiricist scientific orientation (Galtung, 1972; Arndt, 1985, p. 13) requires the comparison of theory sentences with data sentences—not of the objective, mind-independent reality on the one hand and theory sentences or data sentences on the other hand. In epistemology, empiricism and realism fall apart (Haase, 2010). Tarski’s concept of truth is epistemologically neutral because it does not presuppose that a mind-independent, objective reality exists (Tarski, 1944, p. 361 ff.; Chalmers, 1982, p. 152).

12 Scientific realists claim that there is a connection between human knowledge about the world and human ability to design the world, or to manipulate or control entities (Khalifa, 2010, p. 57; Hacking, 1983). They argue that this is a paradigm-transcending ability that would not be understandably if »knowing more and more about the same« (Moulines, 2000, p. 179) were not possible (see also Leplin, 1981, p. 281).
probability analysis is not tantamount to scientific rationality. According to Kuhn, a supersession of a paradigm by another one – a «scientific revolution» - is preceded by a phase called «extraordinary science» in the course of which new theories and instruments or tools are sought because the old ones have stopped functioning fruitfully. In the paradigmatic stage of normal science, one paradigm (or disciplinary matrix) supersedes all other candidates or is at least a candidate that challenges them. The status of an untested dogma (Arndt, 1985) has been ascribed to a paradigm in the phase of normal science. However, if the number and relevance of anomalies is increasing, this may fertilize or speed up the development of candidates for alternative paradigms (disciplinary matrices), which then can supersede or oppose a prevailing paradigm (disciplinary matrix).

We use the term «paradigm» in the sense of «exemplary solution» to define a class (type) of research problems that «is sufficiently unprecedented to attract the members of the other schools, and is sufficiently open-ended to leave enough interesting problems for further scientific work» (Hoyningen-Huene, 2001, p. 8172). «Disciplinary matrix» thus has a broader meaning than «paradigm» including the formal (codified) statement of the theory in question, methods and methodology, practices, value judgments, and so on (Kuhn, 1970, p. 182; Kuhn, 1977, p. 318 f.; Bird, 2000, p. 68). The disciplinary matrix thus provides scholars with a particular world view; it also determines the problems to be solved as well as the methods regarded as appropriate to solve them.

Normal scientific puzzle solving is characterized by a pre-given problem horizon, a pre-given way to «see» and «understand» a problem, and a pre-given way of finding and realizing problem solutions. Grönroos (1994, p. 4f.) describes such an example of puzzle solving in the normal-scientific phase based on the four Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) model of marketing, or the «holy quadruple» (Kent, 1986). This approach has dominated marketing thinking in such a way that the solution to every problem that could not be achieved by the four Ps, or the characterization of every field of interest that could not be analyzed by its means, could only be thought of as an extension or modification of the four Ps model (see Brownlie/Saren, 1991, p. 38; Lovelock/Wirtz, 2011). Although the four Ps model is not theory, and the memory of its theoretical origin has gotten lost, it has achieved paradigmatic status at the level of instruments or marketing tools.

Whereas the (correspondence-theoretical) truth of a sentence is independent of anyone believing it, qualifiers such as «relevant problems» and «solved problems» bring into play a community of scholars, who work on problems considered relevant. Who determines what is considered a relevant problem category or accounts for an adequate problem solution? Should we look forward or backward in this regard? As Laudan (1977, p. 13) highlights, the «literature of the methodology offers us neither a taxonomy of the types of scientific problems, nor any acceptable method of grading their relative importance. It is noticeable silent about what the criteria are for an adequate solution to a problem.» According to Kuhn (1962), it is the scientific community that must answer these questions.

Laudan (1977, p. 32), with the aim to make Kuhn’s (1962) approach more precise with regard to the concept of problem solution, calls for a development of guidelines «for weighting ... scientific problems on a scale of relative importance and cruciality.» Laudan also criticizes the widespread

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical problems</th>
<th>Conceptual problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phenomena focusing on what is not theory,</td>
<td>Problems focusing on the conceptual frameworks of theories such as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Phenomena of the natural and social world giving rise to questions about the structure and relations of domain objects (Losee, 1978, p. 333)</td>
<td>• The irrelevance or imprecision of concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• «Something in the natural and social environment (that) clashes with our preconceived notions or ... is otherwise in need of explanation» (Anderson, 1983, p. 23)</td>
<td>• Entertainment of jointly implausible theories (incongruity between a theory and the logical presuppositions of the domain; Losee, 1978, p. 333)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inconsistencies within the theory itself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Two kinds of problem categories (see Laudan, 1977, p. 11ff.)
focus on empirical problems in the philosophy of science. For this reason, he introduces the category of conceptual problems into the analysis of Kuhnian theory development and claims that scientific theories are designed to solve both empirical and conceptual problems (Laudan, 1977, p. 14 ff.).

The introduction of the category of conceptual problems is not without relevance with respect to the four Ps model: If one looked only at empirical problems, the »outcome« of research grounded in this perspective would be impressive. Conversely, if one looked at the theoretical framework or the »hard core« of this research program, not much would become visible. Marketing based on the four Ps model seems like an applied science being engaged in the solution of instrumental or technical problems, occupied with the refinement and improvement of research methods (Arndt, 1985, p. 17; Leong, 1985, p. 33). From this perspective, the success of the four Ps model was not quite the result of its theoretical foundation or strength, but rather its ability to serve as a roof under which a wide range of different theoretical approaches were developed, transferred, and applied, especially in the area of consumer behavior, which offered solutions for the solving of marketing problems. In other words, the four Ps model, with its eclipsed theoretical origin, is the origin of applied research that lost its pure research »business unit.« In marketing, the problem is rather one of spinning off a basic science from a problem solving discipline (Arndt, 1985, p. 20).

4. The reconstruction of S-D logic within an extended Kuhnian framework

4.1. The coexistence of continuity and change

Approximately 100 years ago, the marketing discipline’s development began with the early commodity and institutional schools, system-oriented approaches, functionalist approaches, and parameter theory (Jones/Monieson, 1990). In the middle of the last century, the four Ps marketing-mix approach (McCarthy, 1960; Borden, 1964; Brownlie/Saren, 1991; Kotler et al., 2003) burgeoned and turned into the mainstream, followed by the emergence of services marketing and relationship marketing approaches (Arndt, 1979; Grönroos, 1994). This line of development is not successive; that is, it is not characterized by a succession of approaches that supplanted the previous one (Leplin, 1981, p. 276). Rather, the appearance of the services marketing and relationship marketing approaches can be interpreted partly as a complementary movement and partly as a countermovement to the four Ps model. Marketing approaches built on an amendment of the four Ps can be considered complementary developments (see Grönroos, 1994, references 41–51). Other approaches have directly tackled the four Ps model, sparking a paradigm shift in marketing theory (Grönroos, 1994; Coviello et al., 1997; Sheth/Parvatiyar, 2000; Gummesson, 2008).

Ten years after the publication of Grönroos (1994), the S-D logic entered the stage with Vargo and Lusch’s (2004) seminal article. The S-D logic provides a unifying perspective for theory development within and beyond marketing theory, including the resource advantage theory, the knowledge-based view, and the Penrose approach within the theory of the firm. In Table 2, we provide a framework that provides reasons for the palpable success of S-D logic in the field of marketing. We present S-D logic’s development within a simplifying framework of analysis (many other theoretical concepts and approaches have been developed within marketing science) that draws on both the selling and the marketing concepts (merged into the four Ps concept) on the one hand and relationship marketing and services marketing on the other hand. The S-D logic has both continued and completed a line of development of marketing approaches. It continues this line of development because it builds on its immediate predecessors in marketing theory (i.e., relationship marketing and services marketing approaches). It completes this line of development because it represents a perspective that replaces that on which the four Ps model is based and thus is the origin of a new »logic« for marketing. This holds true for the four Ps model on the one hand and the relationship and services marketing approaches on the other hand—the components of the line of development that appeared after the origins

of marketing thought (existed before the appearance of the four Ps or at the same time) have fallen into oblivion.

Lakatos’s (1974, 1978) methodology of research programs describes the development of research programs as the persistence of »hard cores« and the change (in the case of success: proliferation) in »protective belts« (constituted by hypotheses). According to this approach, the unit of comparison with respect to scientific progress is not single theories but complete research programs or theory development. In the course of its emergence, S-D logic was part of such theory development. As we argue in the next subsection, with the »inauguration« of the »new logic« as S-D logic and the identification of G-D logic as its adversary, this line of development was completed (Figure 1).

The development of the relationship marketing and services marketing approaches has also revealed that the hard core of a research program can become blurred. This underscores Laudan’s (1977, p. 150 ff.) criticism of Lakatos’s (1974) characterization of the hard core of a research program as a static entity (see also Poser, 2001, p. 165). The »maceration« of the hard core is a source of continuity in theory development14 and contributes to the translatability of changes in conceptual frameworks or to the comparability of problems that can

---

14 As Poser (2001, p. 164) notes, calling this continuity »scientific progress« does not mean progress in terms of verisimilitude.
be addressed by them (Lakatos, 1978, p. 47). For example, the relevance of maintaining and growing relationships in relationship marketing has its counterpart in the concept of co-production in services marketing and value co-creation in S-D logic. Thus, S-D logic «confirms» the basic perspectives of relationship marketing and services marketing as expressed in its focus on actor–actor relations (Table 2). Both the continuing and the finalizing aspect of the development of marketing approaches are in line with Kuhn’s (1962) schema of scientific development, as well as Lakatos’s observation that competing «paradigms» can co-exist (Laudan’s, 1977, p. 74; Poser, 2001, p. 163). The problem classes of the preceding and the succeeding theories can overlap and thus connect research traditions.

G-D logic misfits with what is regarded as necessary with respect to marketing theory and practice. The shortcomings of the marketing-mix or four Ps approach, or its inability to grapple with the necessary changes in marketing theory and practice (accruing from the changes in the economy indicated by the increasing importance of services), have led to calls for a paradigm change in marketing theory. To this adds the notion, as Grönroos (1994, p. 6) emphasizes, that the four Ps model has never been substantially legitimized. Marketing theory seems to have lost the memory of its theoretical origin in classical and neoclassical economic theory.¹⁵ The foundational premises of a «new logic» or the discussions sparked by them have met the need of going beyond toolbox reflections or marketing technology in the marketing community (Arndt, 1985; Prahalad, 2004¹⁶). Dissatisfaction with the four Ps model was thus an important catalyst for change processes within the field and paved the way for the S-D logic.

### 4.2. The new roof

Philosophers of science assume that no paradigm (disciplinary matrix) is surmountable as long as no alternative candidate is available (Hempel, 1984, p. 33). Thus, S-D logic is not simply a reaction to a shift in the understanding of problems. Such shifts have characterized the development of marketing theory for many years. Rather, S-D logic is the first approach to provide a new, unifying roof for the criticisms of the previous decades. S-D logic has fostered an understanding of its forerunners, point-

¹⁵ Grönroos (1994, p. 6) refers to Waterschoot and Van den Bulte’s (1992) article in *Journal of Marketing* and quotes their conclusion: «To our knowledge, the classification property (-ies) or rationale for distinguishing four categories labeled ‹product›, ‹price›, ‹place›, and ‹promotion› have never been explicated.»

¹⁶ «Marketing scholars need more of the ‹let us examine our premises› perspective in scholarly work for the field to catch up with and shape next practices» (Prahalad, 2004, p. 23; italics in original).
ing out that the change processes in marketing theory and practices that took place before its appearance were only incompletely understood. As Gummesson (2008, p. 10) contends, «it was not until Steve Vargo and Bob Lusch ... presented a new marketing logic ... that many of the scattered thoughts from the past began to fall in place.»

From a Kuhnian perspective, S-D logic has completed this form of development of marketing approaches because it outlines the paradigm or disciplinary matrix, which it attempts to overthrow and replace with a better candidate for a marketing theory—namely, a marketing theory accruing from itself. «Better» expresses a valuation that can be justified with respect to transdisciplinary standards or criteria. If S-D logic is to be recognized as an approach from which exemplary problem solutions (or paradigms) have evolved, the relationship and services marketing approaches can be identified as approaches characterizing an extraordinary, pre-revolutionary phase of marketing. The «pre-paradigmatic» character of the relationship and services marketing approaches is the source of the continuity in the development from relationship marketing or services marketing approaches to S-D logic.

Thus, S-D logic has taken over the attack on the four Ps model and its implicit underpinnings. One basic step in this regard helped S-D logic identify its adversary. Because its adversary had lost its theoretical heritage and been limited to a marketing-mix toolbox, S-D logic needed to rebuild or reconstruct its adversary; it also needed to put a name tag on it – known as «G-D logic» (Figure 2). By doing so, the adversary gained a history, an identity, and a «face» from which it could become the subject of attack.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem type</th>
<th>Selling Concept/Marketing Concept</th>
<th>Relationship Marketing Approaches</th>
<th>Services Marketing Approaches</th>
<th>S-D Logic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Selling products (inside out)</td>
<td>• Customer retention from the supplier’s point of view</td>
<td>• Goods – services-rights bundles are designed as problem solutions for customers</td>
<td>• Design of service flows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fulfilling desires and wishes of customers (outside in)</td>
<td>• Commitment, switching costs</td>
<td>• Co-production</td>
<td>• Resource integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Firms must discover what prospective customers want (Brownlie/Saren, 1991, p. 41 f.; Valentin, 1994, p. 66)</td>
<td>• Customer lifetime value</td>
<td>• Co-creation of value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhancing the market share</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Comparison of selected marketing approaches

![Figure 2: S-D logic’s adversary](image-url)
S-D logic has given the previous change processes in marketing theory meaning and the ongoing and future a new roof. If S-D logic is the origin of a gestalt shift in marketing theory, from its perspective, the problems specified by G-D logic are irrelevant (see Table 3). S-D logic has actually partly redefined the problems specified by relationship marketing and services marketing. Beyond this, S-D logic has identified new relevant problems that result from a shift in focus from entities to processes or activities (Figure 3).

Goods and service (singular) do not belong to the same category, whereas goods and services (plural) do. Goods and services (plural) are the expression of a dichotomic view on the class of offerings; the concept of service replaces this dichotomy with a different view, as expressed in Figure 3. G-D logic and S-D logic have no coherent world views and state different ontologies. According to S-D logic, »(t)here are no services« (Vargo/Akaka, 2009, p. 39). Such changes in the ontology of theories have been discussed in the philosophy of science under the heading »theory dependence of ontology« (Quine, 1963; Moulines, 1994). S-D scholars view the ten foundational premises of S-D logic as a more adequate representation of the economy than the (forgotten) axiomatic foundation of G-D logic, because they »see« the economy from their perspective as a service economy. This sounds circular, and intentionally so.

Lakatos (1978, p. 90) has criticized the static character of Kuhn’s (1962) approach with respect to paradigms; in particular, he points to the co-existence of competing paradigms in a historical period (Lakatos, 1978, p. 68ff.; see Leong, 1985, p. 24). Using historical case studies, Lakatos identifies continuous theory developments (Lakatosian research programs). In this regard, his findings deviate from those of Kuhn (1962) and Feyerabend (1974). The latter argue that the empirical content of theories does not overlap; for this reason, theories are conceived of as incommensurable (Feyerabend, 1974, p. 219). According to Kuhn and Feyerabend, the incommensurability of research programs can eliminate the ascription of progress from the »battleground of research programmes« (Lakatos, 1978, p. 87; Feyerabend, 1974, p. 211 ff.). If G-D logic, according to the Lakatosian modi of continuity and change, is the assumed predecessor of S-D logic, one can face the idea that the theoretical and empirical content of G-D and S-D logic may not be comparable. In our framework, both positions

17 Note that ontological commitments made by theories need not to be coupled with realism with respect to entities or theories (Hacking, 1983). Thus, our analysis is characterized by an object orientation that does not result from »investigating an object which is ›out there‹« (Löbler, 2011, p. 6). The object (or, as in our case, the decease of services) results from the inter-subjective, objectified knowledge embodied in scientific theories.

18 After the presentation of a series of case studies, Lakatos (1978, p. 87) concludes: »The case studies of this section show that rationality works much slower than most people tend to think, and, even then, fallibly. Minerva’s owl flies at dusk. I also hope I have shown that the continuity in science, the tenacity of some theories, the rationality of a certain amount of dogmatism, can only be explained if we construe science as a battleground of research programmes rather than of isolated theories.«

19 This, however, does not rule out any mode of comparison (see Feyerabend, 1974, p. 212 ff.). For example, the number of novel predictions resulting from two research programs could be compared.

---

Figure 3: The gestalt shift
find an expression (a view also held by Laudan [1977]). On the one hand, S-D logic is in line with the continuity of theory development as observed by Lakatos. For this reason, within limits, interparadigmatic translations between the vocabulary of S-D logic’s predecessor approaches and S-D vocabulary are not beyond reach. On the other hand, as expressed in the gestalt shift, the S-D logic has interrupted a line of development, and thus incommensurability may occur.

### 4.3. Assessment of S-D logic as a development

As argued previously, the S-D logic has “invented” a different approach to the previously identified adversary—namely, the service logic. In the following, we explicate three important characteristics of this service logic in more detail. First, the new logic is sufficiently unspecific and leaves room for development in different directions. New types of problems can be identified on this basis (see Hoyningen-Huene’s (2001) characterization of a paradigm). However, this new logic can integrate the pre-paradigmatic lines of thinking expressed in the relationship and services marketing approaches. The S-D community is built on communities related to the immediate predecessor approaches (services and relationship marketing approaches). For this reason, there is both continuity (finding its expression in foundational premises that draw on services and relationship marketing) and change (finding its expression in foundational premises that constitute the new logic—namely, “service-for-service exchange” and “all economies are service economies”). There is also continuity with respect to the classes of solved and unsolved problems prevailing in the relationship and services marketing communities. Thus, scholars, who belonged to the relationship and services marketing communities and are now members of the S-D community, do not need to discard their previous work; the changes required are mainly interpretative, which enables many scholars to continue their work. This seems to be one reason for the success of S-D logic: It did not need to wait until advocates of the antecedent paradigm (disciplinary matrix) died off and to grow its own offspring. However, the impression could emerge that there is not much new to S-D logic (Stauss, 2005, p. 495). This impression is wrong, because if there is indeed a paradigm change (or will be in the near future), that change took place (or will take place) between G-D logic and S-D logic, not between relationship and services marketing approaches and S-D logic. Relationship and services marketing approaches are (were) then pre-paradigmatic approaches.

Second, S-D logic has the potential to develop into a general marketing theory. S-D logic’s claim that “all economies are service economies” is clear in this regard. The new logic applies to all economies, at all times, on all planets in the universe. Compared with the “apparent fragmentation of marketing” (Vargo, 2007, p. 55; Layton, 2008, p. 215 ff.) expressed by the hat-box approaches that have dominated marketing thinking for many decades—one approach for transactions, one for relationships, one for goods, one for services, and so on—S-D logic has the potential to become a theoretically unifying approach.

Third, S-D logic is not a paradigm and will not develop into one. However, S-D logic can develop into what Kuhn (1977) calls a “disciplinary matrix”—a term that comes close to the broad (historic-pragmatic) concept of theory in the philosophy of science. As a disciplinary matrix, the S-D logic can give rise to a particular type of problem identification or problem solution and with it to a paradigm. For Kuhn, an increase in the number or quality of problem solutions will take place within research traditions; thus, knowledge is generated within such traditions. As an epistemic subject, the S-D community identifies the types of problems it regards as important. The ten foundational premises provide the guidelines to this identification. Table 4 outlines the characteristics of the Kuhnian framework and displays how the theoretical perspectives have affected its results.

In this section, we have reconstructed the development of S-D logic within an (extended) Kuhnian framework. As Hoyningen-Huene (2001) already formulates, a relativistic reading of Kuhn is wrong. The last remaining question then is whether S-D logic can be considered (or become) an example of non-cumulative progress in the social sciences. We address this question in the next section. Before then, however, we introduce some desiderata of research and show how the ascription of progress and, subsequently, theory choice depend on reason and argument on the one hand and values on the other hand.

Next, we list reasons that are indicative of the success of S-D logic but not (at least not without
further qualifications) of its progress. These signify that a certain development has taken place in the marketing discipline; however, they do not allow for a valuation stating that this development is »progressive« (in a Lakatosian sense) or will lead to progress (in the sense of pre-established standards or criteria). This is aggravated by the reasons listed previously being grounded mainly in community-internal appraisals.

5. Scientific progress and desiderata of research

According to Popper (1963), a single »scientific method« exists; it is performed on the basis of two main steps: conjectures and refutations. The Popper school in the philosophy of science claims that the adequate use of this method leads to scientific progress. With it, the Popper school has pocketed the whole idea of scientific rationality for many decades. In addition, the school claims that every deviation of a procedure from which it defines as »rational« amounts to irrational behavior. In particular, Kuhn’s (1962) work in the philosophy of science has been relegated to the realm of irrationality.

However, the falsification methodology based on »conjectures and refutations« (Popper, 1963) has never led to a practice literally based on it.20

---

20 For example, Anderson (1983) has explicated it in terms of problem solution; he misunderstood that according to Popper nothing else than not yet being falsified can speak in favor of a theory (Lakatos, 1974).
Compared with the procedures the performance of the falsification methodology would require, scholars who have embraced the empiricist research orientation have pursued practices that differ from procedures that would have been enacted in the case of falsification methodology. As Hempel (1984, p. 26f.) notes, Popper’s view «is interesting and stimulating but too narrow and untenable» (our translation). The main reasons for Hempel’s estimation include sentences with mixed quantifiers that can be proved neither true nor false, the Duhem-Quine thesis stating the inter-connectedness of scientific knowledge, and the pragmatic aspects of knowledge production that led Hempel to promote the Kuhnian view.

Fortunately, the failure of the falsification methodology does not mean that there is no other, potentially rational method. As Losee (1978, p. 333) notes, the problem-solving model «allows for evolving standards of rationality»; therefore, theory choice based on Kuhn’s (1962) work in the philosophy of science and history of science does not change science into an irrational endeavor (Laudan, 1977, p. 1 ff.; Hempel, 1984, p. 32). Although Kuhn rejected the idea that scientific progress is an approach to truth, he did not deny that there could not be progress at all. As Hoyningen-Huene (2001, p. 8173) clarified, «There is progress in the sciences ... in the form of «an increase in articulation and specialization» of scientific knowledge (Kuhn, 1962). Thus, the widespread characterization of Kuhn’s theory as entirely relativist is simply false.»

It is thus wrong to state that, according to Kuhn, there is no inter-paradigmatic or transparadigmatic progress. Kuhn (1977, p. 321; see also Anderson, 1983, p. 22; Rowbottom, 2010, p. 246) acknowledges that there are superior desiderata of theory building shared by scientific communities as well as superior desiderata addressing the development of instruments in the natural sciences. Because desiderata are always the desiderata of somebody, there are no desiderata per se. The ascription of inter- or transdisciplinary progress presupposes acts of valuation; this highlights again the important role of the scientific community. The old paradigm (and its advocates) does not simply «die out»; instead, a scientific revolution is the result of the activity of the epistemic subject.

Hempel (1984) presents the following list of desiderata of knowledge production: precision, consistency, boldness, simplicity, and compatibility. Some of these are justified by reason of logics and mathematics, others for practical reasons or because of the communities’ value judgments about their knowledge production (Martin, 1956, p. 184; Tadajewski, 2010, p. 213).

In part, these desiderata are in accord with criteria that attest to why S-D logic can be named a success, as follows:

- Compatibility: The S-D logic imbibes the discussions addressing the nature and development of marketing theory that have been ongoing for decades (Anderson, 1983; Wilkinson/Young, 2002; Hunt, 2004). Although S-D logic is not conceived of as a new general theory itself, it is a potentially unifying perspective on both social and market exchange (Ferrell/Zeyferrell, 1977) that incorporates fundamental lines of thinking from which a general theory of marketing could evolve.

- Unification: The S-D logic bundles the available criticisms on the goods-oriented marketing approaches and provides a reason for the occurrence of these criticisms as well as for the approaches that have developed in reaction to these criticisms (in particular, the services marketing and relationship marketing approaches).

- Having impact on fields of research beyond marketing theory: S-D logic’s impact has already gone beyond marketing theory. Organization theorists, information scientists, system scientists, and others have applied S-D thinking to identify and address problems based on their theories and the practices in the domains of these theories. From this, the possibility arises that S-D logic not only can evolve into a theory (or disciplinary matrix) in the discipline of marketing or inspire the development of disciplinary matrices in marketing theory based on its perspective but also can contribute to the development of inter-disciplinary matrices.

- Boldness with respect to the future development of marketing approaches: S-D scholars claim...
that a general unifying theory is possible in the field of marketing (e.g., Lusch/Vargo, 2006; Vargo/Akaka, 2009).

The desiderata of research serve as a helpful guide to compare theories; however, they cannot form the basis for a decision-theoretic model of theory choice. As Hempel (1984, p. 31, our translation) admits, there is no algorithm for theory choice: «But this project that would have accelerated my heartbeat a couple of years ago, this project is utopistically for the construction of a decision-theoretical model of theory choice. With some exceptions, the desiderata are too vague a basis for a precise explanation of theory choice that on the one hand, can provide sharp decisions between competing theories and on the other hand, can cope with the character of scientific research.»

The desiderata express values of scientific communities that in part must be translated into heuristic devices or practices to become operational. Again, an epistemic subject is required. With respect to Lakatos’s (1974, 1978) methodology of research programs, Feyerabend (1974, p. 220) concludes that «basically, we allow any procedure.» However, this does not mean that scientific communities should not try to find good reasons or arguments for their decisions. The ascription of inter- or transdisciplinary progress is based on the construction of arguments and value judgments made by scientific communities; it is both critizible and fallible (Löbler, 2011, p. 55).

6. Discussion and final remarks

We have provided reasons for the success of S-D logic and, based on arguments against internalism, introduced externalist inter-disciplinary and meta-theoretical criteria of scientific success and progress. We have also reconstructed the development of S-D logic as a paradigm shift within a Kuhnian framework of scientific development. Laudan’s (1977) extension of this framework by introducing conceptual problems has helped overcome the «empiricist bias» of both Kuhn’s (1962) and Lakatos’s (1974) work. Because solutions to both empirical and conceptual problems (and their interplay) can contribute to knowledge, the extended Kuhnian framework can address cognitive progress in a more effective way.

Cognitive progress is related to the epistemic end of scientific activity—that is, the generation or achievement of knowledge. According to Laudan (1977, p. 7), cognitive progress is «progress with respect to the intellectual aspirations of science.» Anderson (1983, p. 27) notes a «dearth of marketing theory» in the marketing discipline, which is indicative of the minor relevance of cognitive insights compared with practical problem solutions or development of instruments. Against this backdrop, and with qualifications, we recognize that G-D logic is an empirically successful research program but deficient with respect to theory (i.e., G-D logic is a paradigm without theory). The success of S-D logic means that marketing scholars were becoming aware of G-D logic’s deficits. S-D scholars are involved in multiple theory development processes, which can be difficult to assess from the perspective of today. Therefore, it is helpful to remember Layton’s (2008) reflection on inter-disciplinary scientific activity. From this perspective, researchers could ask the following: Which kind of knowledge can and should the S-D community create? and What should and should not be included?

From the perspective of the Lakatosian methodology of research programs (Lakatos, 1974, 1978), the foundational premises can be understood as the «hard core» of S-D logic. Such a hard core is not thought to be subjected to direct empirical tests; notwithstanding, it is considered the source of hypotheses, which are then subjected to testing. Currently, the S-D community is busy mainly with activities that pertain to the stabilization (or interpretation) of its «hard core» as well as with the identification (and interpretation) of phenomena from its perspective.

According to Table 1, problem solutions refer to empirical and conceptual problems. Knowledge can accrue from the interplay of what Galtung

---

24 Consider, for example, the achievement of educational progress. Niiniluoto (2002, p. 4) argues that professional use of methods increases the probability that cognitive progress will occur.

25 Bird (2007, p. 64) argues that Kuhn’s and Laudan’s approaches to problem solving and progress do not adequately address the epistemic end of science.

26 Note that this is a «test»: the expression appears in quotation marks, in line with Lakatos (1974), to indicate the differences between dogmatic falsificationism and methodological falsificationism in the understanding of the empirical basis. We use the word «test» is line with Galtung’s (1972) sense of an encounter of theory sentences of data sentences (though «data sentence» is only a shortcut for the various types of sentences that might be subsumed to this category).
(1972) calls »theory sentences« and »data sentences.« What Galtung (1972) refers to as the »empiricistic orientation« and Hempel (1984) calls the »foundational empiricistic desideratum« (the deduction of empirically provable consequences and the »good« conformity of these consequences with actual data based on experiment and observation) can become a source of a progressive problem shift from a Lakatosian perspective and, thus, a measure for inter-paradigmatic progress.

At this point, two important questions arise. The first involves empirical »testing« of S-D theory, as soon as it becomes a theory or gives rise to the generation of theories. The second pertains to values in use if scholars or communities make decisions about theory developments; we address this subsequently. As is well known, the leading marketing journals require mainly quantitative and large-number empirical studies. On the one hand, this could be indicative of ossified community-internal standards or wrong-headed community-internal cognitive weighing. On the other hand, it is notable that predictive success is of relevance in most analyses of both scientific success and progress. This is not by chance, because conflicting encounters between theory sentences and data sentences can only result from prediction. Marketing is a part of the social sciences, and thus the value of a theory in this field is not proved before its statements or predictions can be subjected to »testing« in empirical studies.

In the marketing discipline, highly ranked publications count for scientific success. From the perspective of the method-driven marketing community, the appraisal of S-D logic will depend on its ability to induce empirical research and, thus, its ability to solve empirical problems. However, the number of empirical studies based on the S-D logic framework is still low, which is not surprising because, as mentioned previously, S-D logic has not been a fully elaborated theory until now. Critics might interpret this as an immunization strategy in the following sense: As long as the theory is not completed, no empirical testing is possible. As long

---

27 Wray (2007, p. 82) uses Brown’s (1985) list of criteria of success, which can overlap with criteria of non-cumulative progress: (1) the fact that our theories are able to «organize and unify a great variety of known phenomena» (49); (2) the fact that this ability «is more extensive now than it was for previous theories» (49); and (3) the fact that a significant number of novel predictions pan out» (pp. 49–59).
References


A Viable Systems Approach to Relationship Management in S-D Logic and Service Science

Eine tragfähige Systems Approach zu Relationship Management im Vertrieb und Service Logic Science

Schlüsselbegriffe

Relationship Management; Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logik); Service Science (SS); Viable Systems Approach (VSA)

Keywords

Relationship management; Service-Dominant logic (S-D logic); Service Science (SS); Viable Systems Approach (VSA)

Abstract

This study valorizes the Viable Systems Approach (VSA) contribution to relationship management to explore the theoretical connections between Service-Dominant logic (S-D logic) and Service Science (SS). It presents a conceptual analysis of recent developments in the study of relationships in SS, S-D logic, and VSA. As a broad interdisciplinary approach based on systems theory and resource-based theory, VSA represents a useful framework for the interpretation of the complex phenomena involved in the relationship between S-D logic and SS.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Studie wertet den Viable Systems Approach (VSA) als Beitrag zum Relationship Management, um die theoretischen Zusammenhänge zwischen Service-Dominant-Logik (SD Logik) und Service Science (SS) zu erkunden. Sie präsentiert eine konzeptionelle Analyse der jüngsten Entwicklungen der Relationship-Beiträge in SS, SD Logik und VSA. Als ein breiter interdisziplinärer Ansatz, der auf der Systemtheorie und der Ressource-Based Theory basiert, stellt der VSA einen nützlichen Rahmen für die Interpretation der komplexen Phänomene in den Beziehungen zwischen SD Logik und SS dar.

Autoren

Prof. Eng. Francesco Polese, Salerno University, Department of Medicine and Surgery, Via S. Allende, I-84081 Baronissi (SA), Italy, E-Mail: fpolese@unisa.it; Prof. Eng. Primiano Di Nauta, Foggia University, Department of Economics, Via Romolo Caggese 1, I-71100 Foggia, Italy, E-Mail: p.dinauta@unifg.it.

The authors wish to thank the reviewers for their illuminating and detailed suggestions for the improvement of the article, and Professor Sergio Barile for his continuous motivation and valued support in developing many of the proposed concepts. Even though the authors share responsibility for the entire work, output of a common research and development effort, note that par. 2.1, 3, 5.3 may be attributed to Primiano Di Nauta, whereas par. 2.2, 4, 5.1 e 5.2 may be attributed to Francesco Polese, while the introduction and the conclusions maybe attributed to both.
1. Introduction

There are, at least in theory, several potential connections between two of the more prominent and emerging approaches to services research – Service-Dominant logic (S-D logic) and Service Science (SS). The present study proposes that the methodological framework provided by the so-called “Viable Systems Approach” (VSA) represents a promising avenue for forging a synthesis between some aspects of S-D logic and SS. In particular, the intrinsically relational nature of both S-D logic and SS provides common ground for such a synthesis, and the VSA provides some very interesting (and potentially useful) insights into relationship management. The paper therefore develops a conceptual analysis based on recent developments in the study of relationship management to propose a theoretical model whereby the VSA lenses can be worn to synthesise the relational aspects of S-D logic and SS.

The paper is organised as follows. The next section explores some relevant aspects of relationship marketing and business networks. The paper then discusses the relational aspects of S-D logic and SS. This is followed by an explanation of the nature and basic principles of VSA. The paper then applies these principles to relationship management in general and the links between S-D logic and SS. The paper concludes with a summary of the major findings.

2. Relationship marketing and networks

2.1. Relationship marketing

Relationships among people are characteristic of both social and business life. As Gummesson (2005) observed: “Life is a network of relations, and so is business. No individual or business exists in isolation, especially in the modern world of interconnected information and communication technologies.

The trend towards interconnected globalisation in recent years has led to a re-evaluation of the role of relationships in business competitiveness and survival, with a growing recognition that relationships represent distinctive and valuable resources that should be carefully developed and maintained. This is especially so in view of the growing relevance of services in all business sectors – including manufacturing industries, which are increasingly augmenting their goods offerings with additional services. The adoption of such a service-oriented framework in business models and management strategies has fundamentally altered the way in which businesses relate to the market in the modern service economy (Rullani, 1997; Grönroos, 2000; Levitt, 1981).

Relationships among persons and/or businesses are increasingly regarded as valuable resources in the contemporary service economy, precisely because a “service, by its very nature, is essentially an activity that is performed by one person (or group) for the benefit of another person (or group) within the context of a relationship between the two parties. In other words, services are essentially relational in nature (Grönroos, 2000; Rust, 2004, Grönroos/Ravald, 2011). Services provide assistance and expertise, rather than a tangible product, within an interaction between a provider and a client, who usually know another (Katzan, 2008; Pine/Gilmore, 1999). Moreover, the inherent customisation of a service provided to a known client involves a co-productive relationship in which providers and clients both act as participants in the service process. Indeed, the relationship between the two parties represents the key characteristic that differentiates a service-system model from the traditional transactional model of goods-based economics (Normann, 2000).

The relational nature of services is also apparent in the concept of “service solution”. According to Grönroos (2008), services can be understood as a series of activities in which resources (employees, physical resources, goods, systems of service providers) are used in interaction with the customer in order to find a proposal to the customer’s needs. From this perspective, the relationship between a provider and a client can be viewed as a system of parts that interact in search of a solution with a great emphasis upon the active role of many actors within a mutual value creation logic (Prahalad/Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo/Lusch, 2008). Thus, service can be understood as the interaction between entities in a reticular system to improve value co-creation outcomes under a win-win logic inside interrelated processes (Polese/Minguzzi, 2009; Polese, 2009a).

The increasing emphasis on a relational approach to business and marketing has led to the
proliferation of research under the umbrella of so-called ›relationship marketing‹ – within which Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has become the most prominent element. CRM basically assumes a dyadic customer–supplier relationship, which is, of course, the core of marketing. However, more recent research has advanced this proposition by taking into account the articulated ensemble of actors that characterise both the supplier side and the demand side of the dyad in the real world. The ›one-to-one‹ dyadic relationship between supplier and customer has thus been largely replaced by a more complex ›network-to-network‹ interaction, in which visible and invisible interactions, common purposes, and resource sharing, all play a role.

2.2. Business relationships and networks

All relationships exist within networks. As Capra (1997) observed, ›life consists of a network of relationships in which we interact‹. Network theory, therefore, has much to offer CRM in business.

In accordance with the relational approach to business described above, network theory considers every entity to be a dynamic operant resource that engages in reticular (networked) interactions involving many-to-many relationships (Prahalad/Ramaswamy, 2000; Lovelock/Gummesson, 2004; Achrol/Kotler, 2006; Gummesson, 1993, 2008a, 2008b). According to this perspective, networked relationships determine every organization’s behaviour, strategies, and policies – which are calibrated with a view to achieving mutual satisfaction and optimal outcomes from the relationships among components and/or organizations (Womack/Jones, 2005; Lusch/Vargo/O’Brien, 2007).

According to network theory, organizations are not autonomous entities; rather, they are dependent upon individuals and the networks of relationships that exist among them (Vicari, 1991). Just as individuals habitually interact in accordance with accepted cultural norms of behaviour, business networks also adopt certain social patterns and cultural attitudes in their iterative interactions with other parties. In particular, successful business networks seek to develop a culture of ›win–win‹ relationships, rather than engaging in short-term opportunistic behaviour. They seek to do this by fostering and maintaining a shared willingness to enhance co-creation processes through long-lasting relationships and shared values (Polese/Moretta Tartaglione, 2007). This requires continuous improvement in the interactions among network elements with a view to optimising resource allocation, collaborative advantages, and cooperative strategies (Castells, 1996; Gulati, 1998; Capra, 2002). Such relationships are characterised by exchanges of pertinent information in the context of increasing commitment and trust (Richardson, 1972; Hakansson/Ostberg, 1975).

Various terms have been used to describe these voluntary ties among businesses and other economic entities, including ›heterarchy‹ (Hedlund, 1986) and ›polycentric structure‹ (Forsgren/Holm/Johanson, 1991). However, the term ›network‹ has now become generally accepted to describe this emerging economic entity (Bartlett/Ghoshal, 1990). Network theory seeks to analyse the phenomena of resource-sharing and goal-achievement in such networks in terms of various organizational constructs – including ›nodes‹, ›connections‹, ›aggregating forces‹, ›central control‹, ›dynamic equilibrium‹, and ›structural variability‹ (Richardson, 1972; Jarrillo, 1988). These constructs are used in network theory to analyse and explain the multiple contributions to value creation within the observed systems (Polese, 2004; Polese/Russo/Carrubbo, 2009). In doing so, the traditional notion of the supply chain has been replaced by a logic of co-production within constellations of systems and so-called ›virtuous cycles‹ (Normann, 1984).

In contrast to the traditional conceptualisation of the value chain, network theory goes beyond the notion of a distinctive resource (related to an individual entity’s fixed capacities), to embrace the idea that every entity has the ability to reconfigure its own service systems in collaboration with the other entities in the network, to produce a synergistic ›service value network‹ (Allee, 2000), in which all the networked entities are ›embedded‹ (Granovetter, 1985). Apart from the various service providers within such a service value network, another key element in network theory is represented by network enablers. Such enablers promote interactive exchange processes and the essential development of positive relationships within the network through direct and indirect connections with external interdependent service systems (Polese/Russo/Carrubbo, 2009). Enablers, thus, represent the less ›visible‹ relationships among the overt en-
ties of the network (suppliers and clients), but they nevertheless make an essential contribution to the competitiveness of the whole system (Polese, 2009b).

In summary, network theory holds that service systems can best be understood as networks, in which functional interdependencies exist among the various participants in order to succeed in the face of increasing environmental complexity (Richardson, 1972; Hakansson/Snehota, 1995). According to this view, transactional models and linear sequential supply chains are now obsolete. In contrast, networked interactions are understood as the driver of value as the participating entities develop a joint process of collaborative value creation, thus creating a distinctive competitive advantage through their networked relationships.

3. Service-Dominant logic and Service Science

3.1. S-D logic

According to the emerging paradigm of S-D logic, service is defined as the application of specialised competencies (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself (Vargo/Lusch, 2004, 2006, 2008). Moreover, according to S-D logic, value does not reside within a production process to be reflected in the market sale price (in accordance with the conventional paradigm of value-in-exchange). Rather, value is perceived and co-produced by customers in a co-creation process, before being realised as value-in-use, as the value offering is transformed and consumed (Vargo/Lusch, 2006, 2008). Service is thus realised in terms of the mutual benefits and the mutual satisfaction of co-creation processes (Lusch/Vargo/O’Brien, 2007).

In terms of relationships, which are the focus of the present study, S-D logic thus proposes that the customer is a co-producer of service, and that marketing is a process of doing things in interaction with the customer. Customers are therefore active participants in relational exchanges and co-production. In this sense, S-D logic posits that all business consists of relational service activities. Moreover, S-D logic recognises that these relational service activities are conducted within integrated service-provision systems, that involve relationships among many organizations. In darwinian terms, these »service ecosystems« are «conditioned» (or influenced) by a variety of systemic elements (technological, economic, political, and social).

S-D logic, thus, proposes a paradigmatic shift from a goods-dominant logic (G-D logic), that emphasises value-in-exchange through transactions, to a much more challenging (indeed revolutionary) perspective of value-co-creation and value-in-use. This has implications for many disciplines – including marketing, organizational studies, public administration, economics, and many other social sciences. For the purposes of the present study, its emphasis on interactions and collaborative activities means that S-D logic clearly posits business as a network of relational service activities.

3.2. Service Science

Service Science adopts a scientific view of service that emphasises the role of service systems (Alter, 2008). According to SS, service is understood as a dynamic system of interacting and interdependent parts (people, technologies, and business activities), to create and deliver value, thus achieving and maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage (Maglio/Srinivasan/Kreulen/Spohrer 2006; Maglio/Spohrer, 2008).

In emphasising service systems, SS is thus focusing on networks of relationships as the fundamental elements in the concept of service (Spohrer/Maglio/Bailey/Gruhl, 2007). According to SS, value co-creation is the outcome of value proposition-based interaction mechanisms (Spohrer/Anderson/Pass/Ager, 2008), in which relationships between interacting systems, based upon a »win–win« logic, are consciously developed to achieve mutual satisfaction and optimal outcomes for all parties involved (Maglio/Spohrer, 2008) based upon their key dimensions (Mele/Polese, 2011).

SS has become a new multidisciplinary research endeavour involving computer science, behavioural psychology, organizational theory, industrial engineering, business studies, management sciences, and social sciences. This research ground is based upon the practitioner’s perspective, with a view to delineating the factors that characterise service systems and their performance in the real world.
3.3. Links between S-D logic and SS

It is apparent from this brief description of S-D logic and SS that both emphasise the themes of: (i) the centrality of continuous interactions among actors; (ii) networked relationships; (iii) value co-creation; and (iv) the notion of a service system. However, in pursuing these common themes, the two approaches have somewhat different emphases. S-D logic places particular emphasis on service exchange among various complementary and differentiated actors, whereas SS places more explicit emphasis on understanding complex service systems and the promotion of service innovation. In many ways, it might be said that S-D logic represents a cultural/philosophical approach to service, whereas SS represents its scientific research ground.

4. Viable Systems Approach

Given the similarities that exist between S-D logic and SS, especially their shared conception of service as a relational phenomenon, there have been various attempts to link the two. The present study suggests that systems theories (Mele/Polese/Pels, 2010), and in particular the so-called ›Viable Systems Approach‹ (VSA) is a promising avenue for making such a linkage (Ng/Badinelli/Polese/Di Nauta/Löbler/Halliday, 2012; Badinelli/Barile/Ng/Polese/Saviano/Di Nauta, 2012).

The VSA is a scientific approach to business theory that has become increasingly prominent in Italian academic circles in the past decade. Based upon systems theory and its strong European tradition on systems studies in numerous disciplines (von Bertalanffy, 1965, 1968; Parsons, 1966; Saraceno, 1970; Beer, 1972; Luhmann, 1990), VSA focuses on the analysis of relationships among socio-economic entities in search of viable interacting conditions (Golinelli, 2000; Golinelli/Pastore/Gatti/Massaroni/Vagnani, 2002; Golinelli, 2005; Barile, 2000). According to VSA, every entity (a business or an individual) can be considered as a system of many parts or structures (Parsons, 1966), made up of a group of interlinked sub-components, with the aim of realising a common goal. VSA enables an analysis to be made of the relationships that exist among an enterprise’s internal components, as well as an analysis of the relationships between enterprises and other systemic entities in its environmental context.

According to VSA, an enterprise develops as an open system that is characterised by:
- many components (both tangible and intangible);
- interdependence and communication among these components;
- activation of these relationships in order to pursue the system’s goal.

Developed as an interdisciplinary theory between holism and reductionism (von Bertalanffy, 1956), VSA analyses the system’s ability to manage its relationships, in accordance with shared rules, to the satisfaction of every entity involved in the system (Golinelli, 2000). VSA thus seeks to interpret: (i) system construction and organization; (ii) system interactions and relations; and (iii) system behaviour and evolution.

Systems thinking shifts the focus from the parts to the whole; that is, it considers the observed reality as an integrated and interacting unity of phenomena in which the individual properties of the isolated parts become indistinct, while the relationships between the parts (and the events they produce through their interaction) become much more important. By adopting the view that »system elements are rationally connected« (Luhmann, 1990), VSA seeks to observe, and then to explain, a phenomenon in its entirety (von Bertalanffy, 1968).

VSA is based upon 10 Fundamental Concepts (see Tab.1) and several key related principles, described in detail below (Barile/Polese, 2010b):
- **FC 1 – Systems approach**: Individuals, organizations, social institutions (authority) are systems, since they are union of parts directed towards a specific finality (Beer, 1975).
- **FC 2 – Systems hierarchy**: According to the recursivity principle, every system ›belongs‹ to a L level, and can recognize supra and sub-systems. Supra-systems will be identified at a L+1 level. Sub-systems will be identified at a L–1 level (Parsons, 1966).
- **FC 3 – Reductionism and holism**: The interpretation of complex phenomena requires interdisciplinary approaches, and should synthesize both a reductionistic view analysing specific constituents and parts (and their relations) and a holistic view capable of observing the whole. VSA developed as an interdisciplinary theory.
between holism and reductionism (von Bertalanffy, 1956). It aims to interpret systems construction, behaviour, evolution, interactions, and relationships (Golinelli/Pastore/Gatti/Massaroni/Vagnani, 2002). In doing so, there is a shift in attention from the parts to the whole – with the observed reality being perceived as an integrated and interacting unity of phenomena and the properties of the individual parts becoming less distinct. However, the relationships among the parts and the events they produce assume greater significance (Luhmann, 1990).

- **FC 4 – Concept Open systems and systems’ boundaries:** According to VSA, an open system exchanges resources (such as information, energy, and matter) with the environment in pursuing the system’s goal (Barile, 2008). A closed system exchanges only energy (with no exchanges of information and matter), and an isolated system does not exchange any of these elements. However, it is difficult to identify an isolated system, or even a closed one. Most systems (enterprises, individuals, districts, nations, customers, markets, communities) are open systems because they are related to many other systems with which resources (energy, matter, and information) are exchanged. The concept of system boundary is derived from the observation that every object has boundaries, even though the definition and interpretation of a given boundary varies according to circumstances. Drawing on considerations of legal property, it is possible to identify the boundaries of a system in terms of subjective perceptions of: (i) its range of activities (core and peripheral); (ii) the distance of its direct relationships (within a network); (iii) changes in its behaviour and policies; and (iv) its dependence on external resources (Pfeffer/Salancik, 1978) and the influence of contingences (Lawrence/Lorsch, 1967).

- **FC 5 – Autopoiesis, homeostasis and self-regulation:** In the field of biology, systems research has developed the notion of system biology (Naylor/Cavanagh, 2004), which holds that every biological system has the ability to generate equilibrated conditions with respect to internal possibilities and external constraints. The underlying assumption is that every system struggles in search of a sustainable behaviour able of satisfying its operating context. In a complex environment, each system is stimulated to become an autopoietic self-organising system (Maturana/Varela, 1975). Thus, according to VSA, organizations are managed to reach a common finality that is necessary in terms of its environmental interactions. A system is able to maintain a state of internal equilibrium through its ability to adapt within the limits determined by the tolerance of its own structure (Hannan/Freeman, 1977). Living organisms are typically able to preserve their characteristics of vitality and stability by creating an internal environment able to respond effectively to exogenous stimuli. In accordance with this principle of self-regulation in living beings, the notion of system homeostasis has been developed (Beer, 1975). According to this principle, a system maintains its own specific identity by not modifying its internal features excessively in the attempt to achieve internal and external equilibrium. According to VSA, the homeostasis of a system is determined by both the external normative regulatory environment (such as statutory legal requirements) that every system has to respect, and the internal self-regulatory environment (such as a business code of behaviour). In other words, every system possesses an adaptive mechanism that keeps the system in an equilibrated condition within the limits of its structure and the constraints of the outside world (Beer, 1975).

- **FC 6 – Structures and systems:** Every organization is characterised by a structure constituted of a set of individual elements with assigned roles, activities, and tasks that are performed in compliance with rules and constraints. From any such structure, a system can emerge by the activation of relationships into dynamic interactions with external supra-systems and internal sub-systems (Golinelli/Pastore/Gatti/Massaroni/Vagnani, 2002). The passage from structure to system thus involves a passage from the static to the dynamic, as the focus moves from individual components and relationships to a holistic view of the observed reality (Barile/Saviano, 2011). There are diverse ways in which a system can develop and emerge. Any emergence of a system is different from others, that is to say that each system has specific unique characteristics, and then, that from the same structure, a variety of systems can emerge. In this regard, the principle of equifinality refers to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VSA Fundamental Concepts</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FC1 Individuals, organizations, and social institutions are systems that consist of elements directed towards a specific goal.</td>
<td>People, families, networks, enterprises, public and private organizations are complex entities, and they may all be qualified as systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC2 Every system (of level L) identifies several supra-systems, positioned at a higher level (L+1), and several sub-systems, located at a lower level (L–1).</td>
<td>Systems hierarchy is derived from the specific observation perspective, which can modify the position of the observed systems within the different planes. The qualification of supra-systems and sub-systems, hence, is subjective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC3 The interpretation of complex phenomena requires interdisciplinary approaches and should synthesize both a reductionistic view (analyzing elements and their relations) and an holistic view (capable of observing the whole).</td>
<td>In the passages from the whole to the parts (and vice versa) the contribute of relations (static, structural) and interactions (dynamic, systemic) is fundamental for their role in the observed phenomenon (reality).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC4 Systems are open to connection with other systems for the exchange of resources. A system boundary is a changing concept within which all the activities and resources needed for the system’s evolutionary dynamic are included.</td>
<td>Nothing happens in isolation. The exchange of information and service of open systems is fundamental within every system dynamic. Within systems boundaries not only property resources are valorized, but many available, thus accessible resources (even though these are owned by other systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC5 Viable systems are autopoietic and self-organizing; that is, they are capable of self-generating internal conditions, which through self-regulation, support the reach of equilibrated conditions, thus synthesizing internal possibilities and external constraints.</td>
<td>Every system is autopoietic, hence it is able to generate internally new conditions. It is, moreover, self-organizing (all possible changes are limited by internal structural tolerances), so it constantly attempts to aligning internal complexity to the external one. These two characteristics are the basis for a sustainable behavior, hence for the fulfillment of opportunities and threats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC6 Every organization is constituted by components that have specific roles, activities, and objectives, which are undertaken within constraints, norms, and rules. From structure emerges a system through the transformation of relations into dynamic interactions with sub-systems and supra-systems.</td>
<td>The passage from structure to system involves a passage from static to dynamic view, and focus shifts from individual components and relations to an holistic view of the observed reality. From the same structure many systems may emerge, in function of the various combinations of internal and external components consequence of various objectives that the system may pursue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC7 Systems are consonant when there is a potential compatibility among the system’s components. Systems are resonant when there is effective harmonic interaction among components.</td>
<td>Consonant relations are referred to the static view (structure) where you could just evaluate the chances of a positive and harmonie relation. Resonant relations are referred to adynamie view (systemic) where you could evaluate concrete and effective positive and harmonic interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC8 A system’s viability is determined by its capability, over time, to develop harmonic behavior in sub-systems and supra-systems through consonant and resonant relationships.</td>
<td>Viability concepts is, hence, related to systems competitiveness and to the systems co-creation capability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC9 Business dynamic and viability require continuous structural and systemic changes focused to the alignment of internal structural potentialities with external systemic demands.</td>
<td>Viable systems evolutionary dynamics shows how these are in constant alignment between internal chance and external expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC10 Viable systems continuously align internal complexity with external complexity in order to better manage changes affecting its viable behavior. Decisionmakers within these cognitive processes are influenced by strong beliefs, his/her interpretational schemes, and information.</td>
<td>Internal and external alignment is achievable through a cognitive alignment, a knowledge process including chaos, complexity, complication and certainty through processes of abduction, induction and deduction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The 10 Foundational Concepts (FC) of VSA (Source: Barile/Polese, 2010b)
various systems, reaching the same end state from different starting conditions (that is, from different structures) by taking different evolutionary paths. In other words, various systems can emerge from one structure, and one system can be based on different structures.

FC 7 – Consonance and resonance: According to VSA, the term «consonance» refers to the potential compatibility among systems elements; it thus refers to a static vision of a potential harmonious relationship. For system survival, real systemic harmony needs to be achieved as «resonance», which refers to elements operating in a distinctive fashion for a single purpose (Barile/Di Nauta, 2011). Drawing again on the dichotomy between «structure» and «system», resonance is thus harmonious systemic interaction, whereas consonance is structural and relational (Quattrociocchi/Vagnani, 2004).

FC 8 – System viability: According to VSA, a system’s ability to survive is determined by its capacity, over time, to demonstrate consonant and resonant behaviour (Barile/Saviano, 2011). A viable system can dynamically adjust its structure and behaviour to achieve consonance with its context, and thus preserve its stability. This concept relates to competitiveness, which is the capacity to accomplish satisfactory value experiences and exchanges among systemic actors in a changing environment (Flint/Mentzer, 2006). In this framework it is possible to describe VSA implications on value creation concept. Every system tries to pursue a viable and sustainable behaviour, pursuing value creation processes, which are related to the harmonic development in its contexts. In this sense, value creation takes place when these harmonic conditions occur or, in other words, when systems develop according to relevant supra-systems expectations and needs. If this happens, in fact, systems development is strengthened by the access and valorisation of supra-systems’ released resources.

FC 9 – Adaptation and relationship development: To ensure viability, systems have to analyse external changes in demand and their competitors’ behaviour. Then, they have to adapt, in an analogous manner to Darwin’s theory of the adaptive capacity of organisms for survival. According to VSA, firms are able to compete and survive in a particular context if they engage in continuous dynamic processes of adaptation, transformation, restructuring, and business rethinking (Golinelli, 2000, 2010; Nigro/Saviano/Merola, 2007; Barile, 2008; Saviano/Bassano/Calabrese, 2010). Given that the emerging paradigm of value co-creation represents an evolution of business strategy and management to foster competitiveness (Payne/Storbacka/Frow, 2008), VSA would appear to be coherent with a complex value-creation process in which viability and competitive enterprise behaviour are closely linked with the ability to identify and manage functions and relationships, establish communication channels, organize information flow, and rationalise and harmonise enterprise development with the environment (Christopher, 2007; Polese/Carrubbo, 2008). The adoption of such a systems approach implies redefining the concept of environment. As Hall/Fagen (1956) observed: «For a given system, the environment is the set of all objects a change in whose attributes affect the system and also those objects whose attributes are changed by the behaviour of the system». Businesses are considered viable systems if they are able to survive in a particular context through: (i) business adaptation (involving relationships and peripheral components of the structure); (ii) business transformation (relating to the organizational design); (iii) business restructuring (referring to the organizational plan); and (iv) business rethinking (such as a change of identity) (Golinelli, 2010).

FC 10 – Complexity and decision-making: Systems have to align external observed complexity to internal complexity if they have to manage the tumultuous developments that threaten viability (Picocchi/Saviano/Bassano, 2009). Complexity is a relative concept that is never absolute. It can only be assessed in terms of specific contexts of reference, where it refers to a particular combination of multiplicities and autonomies that defy explanation. In the systems approach, the decision-maker needs to distinguish among: (i) «variety» (which refers to possible variants that a phenomenon might present to the observer at a given time); (ii) «variability» (which refers to observed changes in variety over time); and (iii) «indeterminacy» (which refers to whether it is possible to fully understand a given phenomenon) (Golinelli, 2010). By ap-
plying such a personal interpretation scheme, the decision-maker can begin to achieve a better understanding of the observed complexity and achieve viability (Saviano/Berardi, 2009).

The above described fundamental concepts characterizing VSA highlight the strong convergence of its scientific propositions with S-D logic. We may observe, for instance, on the role of customers in co-creation processes, how S-D logic proposes that the customer is an actor of co-creation of service, and primarily an operant resource (Vargo/Lusch, 2004), highlighting how he can be seen as an active participant in relational exchanges. A service-centered view of markets suggests that businesses strive for consumer engagement looking for growing levels of customization to better fit his or her needs. Customer involvement seems to be dynamic. The VSA contributes to define the design and management of positive connections among actors and stimulate reflections on the dynamic reconfigurations of resources and actors/systems in order to reach/maintain equilibrated and viable conditions. According to this framework, what are the key elements of positive interactions among producers (with their offer to the market) and customers (with their needs displayed in their choices)? The answer, indeed, is not a simple one, due to the fact that these elements are not definite and objectively identifiable: they are subjectively perceivable by every customer, or even, sometimes, by customers’ communities or aggregations. At a general level, we may assume that most of the elements characterizing equilibrated conditions among actors seem to be based upon personal traits. Assuming that VSA critical resources owners could be well intended as every business potential customer of S-D logic, we infer VSA suggestions about the role of enactment and sense-making show how much, and to which extent, business adapt and learn from customers needs through time, in this realizing competitive (viable) behaviour. This is what tuned, in our idea, to the wise market relationship to be pursued in S-D logic. Moreover, the comparison between S-D logic and viable systems for VSA. Both the cited scientific streams propose a dynamic adaptation on external changes influencing business behaviour. In VSA every actor’s adaptive behaviour seems to be crucial for business survival in competitive context; S-D logic as well introduces competitive business defining «complex adaptive systems» (Vargo/Lusch, 2008), as wise models for market management targeted to market share increase and competitive behaviour through adaptations consequent of external changes and stimuli (Vargo/Lusch, 2006). This continuous learning process appears crucial in order to achieve effective positive results: changes should be constantly monitored and evaluated, in order to let cumulative technological knowledge growth happen and produce positive lock in effects. We believe that dynamics characterizing market relationships in S-D logic well suits the scientific positions expressed by the VSA.

5. Synthesising S-D logic and SS through VSA

5.1. Conceptual relationship

The present study proposes that the VSA is a methodology capable of synthesising the cultural/philosophical approach of S-D logic with its research ground, represented by SS. Figure 1 provides a schematic representation of the proposed relationship.

Although S-D logic, SS and VSA share several complementary features, and although the correlations among the three are strong, it is nevertheless true that they appear to represent different conceptual levels. In particular, as noted above, S-D logic represents a philosophical/cultural approach to service, whereas SS represents the scientific research ground of S-D logic, and VSA represents a research methodology.

Referring to early studies of authors that at first proposed and deepened the basis of the modern Service Research, the main difference existing between S-D Logic and Service Science depends on the perspective in the analysis, on the investigation point of view. S-D logic can be represented as a scalable solution for the interpretation of a modern kind of exchange, regarding its attempt to propose the change in perspective (from goods dominant logic) and considering the service logic as dominant for any market interaction, even involving physical products. The service optic under S-D logic leads to a new vision for business strategies.
and actions, more linked to the quality of the supplies, to the sustainability of the propositions, to the relationship with the final users, all those in order to offer a better service. The most insightful suggestion made by S-D logic may be represented by its philosophical approach, by its cultural-and-value-imprint on business behaviour. This is only when actors interiorize the intriguing suggestions offered by this new ‘logic’ that market interactions may show high service co-creation levels.

Service Science, on the other hand, seems to be more related to the practitioners’ operations due to its origins, strongly based upon complex practical problems and possible management solutions (water management, electricity distribution, public transport, education training, healthcare, tourism destination management, etc.). In the attempt to valorise many contributions of different disciplines, SS tries to highlight a single shared paradigm for processes interpretation, and it includes the logic of service, through which it seems possible to connect many activities and to improve the results of any system, seen as a whole. Indeed, the first purpose of the SS is to highlight the main features of the so-called service systems. SS researchers have then investigated every possible operational application of service research, searching for practical evidences of service culture. The service stage, hence, was intended by SS researchers as the research ground in which to experiment S-D logic insights (such as retail, IT, railways, grids, agriculture, finance, healthcare and government).

Moreover, parallels can be drawn between SS, based upon network relationships among actors involved in complex service systems, and the network based view of VSA describing systems’ viable behaviours. In other words, we affirm that SS research context is the answer to practical instances, but still needs the support of a scientific background, highlighting the important role of a business (IBM) as a catalyster of global research targeted to complex service systems.

Given that S-D logic, SS and VSA are all strongly based upon relationships, it seems appropriate to take relationship management as the starting point of the synthesis proposed in the present study.

5.2. Contribution of VSA to relationship management

One of the major contributions that VSA can provide to relationship management in business is the understanding of how a system develops, as illustrated in Figure 2.
The graphical representation in Figure 2 essentially shows that a developing system possesses various abilities and capacities, which are then gradually augmented by participation in a higher-order system, or network. As they progress through this development process, systems are considered as ‘completed’ – that is, demonstrating viable traits for sustained competitiveness – only when they have developed effective positive interactions (classifiable as ‘consonant’ and ‘resonant’ relationships, as described in 4.7, above).

Now, as the concept of competitiveness in VSA is inherently related to a system’s viability (which, in turn, is closely linked to the notion of consonant and resonant interactions among systems) each of the entities in a system must share its own resources for the system’s benefit in a ‘win–win’ relationship. Consonant and resonant relationships are thus essential to harmonious and viable business behaviour – because they ensure the availability of resources through satisfactory relationships among a viable system and its supra-systems.

In order to manage and coordinate the equilibrium of a system within its pattern of relationships, VSA holds that decision-makers must be committed to a sustainable plan to acquire the necessary resources by satisfying the network of stakeholders that possess those resources. In most cases, a system has to deal with both internal constraints (sub-system requirements) and external expectations (supra-system requirements). Business decision-makers should therefore pay attention to: (i) the capacities of elements within the system (intra-system relationships); (ii) the activities of other close and interested systems (inter-system relationships); and (iii) supra-system influences (supra-system relationships). They must structure and coordinate their own tools, techniques, and procedures to improve system competitiveness, and thus enhance the chances of survival. In many ways, this understanding of sustainable and viable relationships (as derived from the principles of VSA) represents a form of co-design, co-production, and co-creation (Barile/Polese, 2009). In the attempt to valorise VSA contribution to the understanding of co-creation of value, we can relate the concept to the evolution of many-to-many relationships among actors that may, through time, show positive and harmonic relations, giving rise to consonant and then resonant interactions (Pels/Polese/Brodie, 2011).

In applying these insights from VSA to relationship management in business, the primary player for consideration is, of course, the customer (Normann/Ramirez, 1994; Ravald/Grönroos, 1996; Grönroos, 1997). However, although customers are the most important external entities in value creation, they are not the only ones. In this regard, Gummesson (2008b) has introduced the concept of «balanced centricity» in the attempt to reduce what he perceived to be an over-emphasis on «customer orientation».

In order to ensure appropriate recognition of the role of other entities and interested parties in value creation, Gummesson (2008a, 2008b) also recommended a «many-to-many» approach, which ex-
tends the notion of value creation to include interactions among providers’ networks and customers’ communities. According to this view, value is created by value propositions and value actualisation within: (i) business-to-business (B2B) relationships; (ii) customer-to-customer (C2C) relationships; and (iii) interactions between businesses and customers (B2C and C2B) (Gummesson, 2008a; Gummesson/Polese, 2009). Moreover, because providers’ networks are not restricted to B2B relationships, but also include relationships with a range of other stakeholders (or interested parties), it has been suggested that the framework of the “many-to-many” approach should add to these relationships (B2B; C2C; B2C/C2B) by also incorporating the important relationship between a business and its stakeholders (B2S/S2B). A final refinement of the model reflects the fact that customer communities are also related to various stakeholders (C2S/S2C), and that these relationships are also capable of influencing the value-creation process.

The complete model is thus represented by a “value pyramid” (as illustrated in Figure 3), in which a variety of relationships (B2B, B2C/C2B, C2C, B2S/S2B, C2S/S2C) are all managed within a system of value propositions (offered by organizations when relating to their possible market, therefore expression of potential value) and value actualisation (concretized by the market every time interaction takes place consequent of choices and decision making, therefore related to effective and concrete value) for the purpose of value co-creation.

The model shown in Figure 3 reflects the reality that providers and customers are embedded within complex relationships that not only include their own networks and communities, but also other stakeholders – all of whom are able of influencing, sometimes strongly, creation of value within a service experience.

The model, moreover, describes the dynamics that takes place among actors when an actor (usually a service provider) offers service propositions which, eventually, are captured, and give rise, through value actualization due to another actor’s (usually a customer) choice, to effective value co-creation. This recursive path involves, indeed, numerous actors since it is not at all dyadic in its representation. This model is challenged by recent service research advances which, progressively, have shaded the differences among socio-economic entities involved in value creation suggesting that all relations could be defined as A2A relations (Vargo/Lusch, 2008, 2011; Vargo/Lusch/Polese, 2012).

5.3. Contribution of VSA to relational aspects of S-D logic and SS

There is a great amount of fuel for the S-D logic research deriving from the VSA, when we note how much VSA theoretical proposal is based upon relationship governance and management. The intriguing suggestions displayed by VSA, in fact, are connected to the system’s ability to look for and foster relationship management through satisfactory, enterprise dynamic evolutions. This seems to be absolutely in line with the concept of value co-creation introduced by S-D logic, that basically refers to a process in which all the actors need to be satisfied in a diffuse win-win interaction. However, value co-creation takes place within dynamic interactions among many actors, and represents a challenging status to be accomplished by decision makers in today’s business arena. Despite the fact that there is a recognition of relationships’ importance – crucial elements of value co-creation and sustainable behaviour –, both S-D logic and SS are not primarily focused on how to manage these relationships for every actors’ benefit and success.

Figure 3: Value pyramid (Source: Polese, 2009b)
Changing conditions of service exchange and how to do it in a dynamic way, due to the ever changing conditions of service exchange.

It is in this dynamic interaction that the VSA can contribute to the design and management of positive interactions among entities (Aguiari/Di Nauta, 2012; Barile/Saviano/Polese/Di Nauta, 2012). Business, individuals, decision makers, have to look to dynamic models that are based on a multi-criteria decision support systems, able of reaching satisfactory conditions with the involved decision makers, in search of a continuous feedback to production processes, in order to align their traits to consumers’ need (Saviano/Di Nauta, 2011). This is co-design, co-processes, in order to align their traits to consumers’ need (Saviano/Di Nauta, 2011). This is co-design, co-processes, in order to align their traits to consumers’ need (Saviano/Di Nauta, 2011). This is co-design, co-processes, in order to align their traits to consumers’ need (Saviano/Di Nauta, 2011). This is co-design, co-processes, in order to align their traits to consumers’ need (Saviano/Di Nauta, 2011). This is co-design, co-processes, in order to align their traits to consumers’ need (Saviano/Di Nauta, 2011). This is co-design, co-processes, in order to align their traits to consumers’ need (Saviano/Di Nauta, 2011). This is co-design, co-processes, in order to align their traits to consumers’ need (Saviano/Di Nauta, 2011).

In this direction, VSA addresses the analysis of the relationships among actors, through the continuous research of consonance and resonance. Then, it is oriented to the creation of virtuous networks, which are the building blocks of models of service systems. So, VSA can be interpreted as a framework and a methodology to understand and interpret service systems.

What are the pillars of S-D logic value co-creation? How can a decision maker identify the right actors to interact with, and how can resource integration effectively take place?

VSA can contribute to answer some of these doubts, by introducing a methodology useful to select and hierarchically order all possible resource owners, actors of S-D logic value co-creation process. In fact, according to VSA, organizations apply competences and integrate the applied competences with other resources determining benefits (value co-creation), thus highlighting the importance of these interactions for all involved entities. For this reason it defines a conceptual scheme (see Figure 4) focused on:

- classify the external supra-systems (in order to understand which of them are more critical and influential for a business behaviour);
- establish a qualitative method to measure the system capability for a satisfactory behaviour – by defining resonance accelerating processes based upon affinity of cultural, knowledge, value and other dimensions – (Barile/Polese, 2009b).

In other words, the relation between service providers and service clients may be integrated by a methodology aiming to contribute to the qualification of these relations from a design and from a government and management point of view. In the first case, designing service systems requires the preventive qualification of relationships among public and private bodies, organizations, individuals. In the second case, in order to reach a diffuse satisfactory behaviour, able of promoting network value co-creation.

As above mentioned, the firm, as a viable system, needs to identify and classify relevant entities within its context, in order to establish positive and harmonic interactions promoting sustainable behaviour. The identification and classification of such observed entities affects every system’s viability, since relevance constitutes the primary differentiating characteristic for the entities that are part of the viable system’s context. The relevance of external/other entities can be determined, for example, through two attributes: the influence exercised by the entity to the system (i.e. a customer/community requiring a specific evolution of a product/service), and the relationship criticality.

Thus, we have an initial distinction between high relevance systems and low relevance systems. The first ones, which will subsequently be recognised as supra-systems, are characterised as being influential and, at the same time, holders of a crucial resource. The other ones, while being able of exerting pressure where a relationship is established, anyway are not exclusive holders of a crucial resource. Further specifications mark the entities as high relevance and low relevance, taking into consideration the constraints or the rules proper to the systems over which they exert influence, and the type of relationships and interactions that can occur between systems which come into contact with one another (Golinelli, 2010).

According to this approach, the analysis of systems outside, the viable system focuses on a fundamental distinguishing feature: relevance can then be interpreted as the ability of an outside system to condition the survival prospects of a viable system. If relevance is taken to be a distinguishing feature of the entities, it can refer to two separate attributes (see Figure 4):

- the relationship criticality: the nature of the resource constitutes a primary defining, basic attribute for establishing how much attention the
systems top government must pay to assessing the weight of interactions and, so, in establishing the appropriateness of maintaining or implementing the underlying relationships, thus shifting from a state of consonance to a state of resonance;

- the influence of the system on methods of use, acquisition and re-appropriation of resources, regardless of the relationship criticality within, or conferred by, the system. Government is also responsible for assessing and measuring the degree of influence the system can exert in placing limits or indicating rules and regulations to the enterprise.

The combination of such attributes results in the construction of a conceptual scheme whose elements provide interesting insights regarding actions government might well undertake in order to guarantee the survival of the firm in its context.

To analyse the relevance of the various systems entities in the context, individual resources must be identified and detailed. We can then outline a rough pattern based on the description of the relationships existing among the various resources.

In this way, the details of the business resources can be mapped, and the different systems from which they originate can be identified. On the basis of this knowledge, we can analyze the specific characteristics that define the attributes we have called resource criticality and influence exerted, or which may be exerted, by the various systems.

In summary, in Figure 4 we can distinguish four conceptual areas in which different relationships’ management strategies have to be pursued. Specifically, we can note that:

- Area 1: the governing body considers as significant either the influence of the system or the resource criticality. The firm, as a viable system, should then invest important resources and considering expectations of the influences. It is the case, for example, of the financial system.
- Area 2: the resource criticality is a matter of fact, but the governing body does not perceive as significant the influence of the system. As an example, consider the supply of electric energy. Once the contract has been done, it does not require any important action except paying the bills.
- Area 3: the resource is not critical, and the governing body perceives that the resource does not

![Figure 4: Systems’ Relevance Analysis (Source: Author’s elaboration on Golinelli, 2010)]
influence the system that owns it. An example can be any occasional supplying contract with the mere respect of agreements.

- Area 4: in this area there are all the systems that the governing body perceive as a significant influence independently on the resource supplying. An example can be the consumers’ organizations.

6. Conclusions

Relationship management is an important and fundamental concept for Service-Dominant logic, Service Science, and the Viable Systems Approach. In this regard, the present study makes two important contributions:

- S-D logic could benefit from a methodological approach that is capable of transferring its philosophical/cultural view of service into its natural research ground, which is represented by Service Science, and that this role could well be played by VSA;
- The relationships’ relevance conceptual scheme introduced in VSA could enable the translation of S-D logic suggestions into practice by identifying, and then ordering, all actors of the co-creation exchange. The passage seems necessary in every design and management within Service Science, since performing service systems are based upon an equilibrated harmony characterizing all involved actors.

The study concludes that there are several methodological concepts described by VSA that could be useful for synthesising S-D logic with SS. This paper has canvassed only some of these concepts; in particular, the potential contribution of VSA to relationship management has been explored. Further work is required in this direction to identify which aspects of VSA could facilitate service research.

References


Quattrocchi, Bernardino/Vagnani, Gianluca (2004): Consonance and Resonance in evolutionary path of the tourist industry. The case of the National Park of Cilento. In: the ATLAS Annual Conference Networking & Partnerships in Destination 


Aufgaben ganz konkret angehen


▶ Umfassendes und modernes Marketing-Lehrbuch
▶ Auch zu Fragen der Marketing-Implementierung und -Organisation
▶ Inklusive Online-Tool mit über 2500 Wissens- und Prüfungsfragen

Voeth/Herbst
Marketing-Management
Grundlagen, Konzeption und Umsetzung
ISBN 978-3-7910-3271-9
Service-dominant logic and tourism management
Enriching each other

Service-Dominant Logic und Tourismus Management
Eine reziproke Weiterentwicklung

S-D logic can be interpreted as a transition from a goods-centred to a service-centred view on markets. It seems worthwhile to examine phenomena from the perspective of S-D logic and to reconsider the conclusions that have been drawn from traditional perspectives. In addition, the analysis of specific phenomena through the lens of S-D logic might facilitate the discovery of new facets, which are also relevant for a general theory. In this article, tourism will be used as a case in order to demonstrate the application of this two-way research approach.

Keywords
Destination management; resource integration; service-dominant logic; tourism; value co-creation

Abstract

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselbegriffe
Service-dominierte Logik; Ko-Kreation von Werten; Ressourcenintegration; Tourismus; Destinationsmanagement

Autor
Dr. Chris Horbel, University of Bayreuth, Department of Services Management, Universitätsstr. 30, 95447 Bayreuth, E-Mail: chris.horbel@uni-bayreuth.de.
1. Introduction

The publication of the first article on service-dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo/Lusch, 2004) has led to an intensive and still on-going discussion about the nature of economic exchange and the consequences for the understanding of markets and marketing. S-D logic offers a new perspective which views service as the fundamental basis of economic exchange. It defines »service« as the application of knowledge and skills for the benefit of another party.

The S-D logic conceptualization of service implies that value is created in collaborative processes with other parties. Firms cannot create value and deliver it to the customer, but only offer a value proposition. Value is always co-created in a process in which the customer integrates the value proposition of the service provider with other resources in his or her own context (Vargo/Akaka, 2009, p. 36). The customer therefore is always a co-creator of value (Vargo/Lusch, 2008, p. 7). The S-D logic perspective marks a counterpoint to the traditional economic view of exchange, which assumes that units of output (goods) are the basis of exchange. To illustrate the different perspectives on the nature of economic exchange, Vargo and Lusch (2004) refer to the traditional view as goods-dominant (G-D) logic.

The evolution of S-D logic can be interpreted as a transition from a goods-centred to a service-centred view on markets and as such it »provides an alternative lens, a mindset, through which phenomena can be examined« (Vargo/Lusch/Akaka/He, 2010, p. 126). Therefore, it seems worthwhile to have a look at specific phenomena from the perspective of S-D logic and to reconsider the conclusions that have been drawn from traditional perspectives. This should lead to new insights and a better understanding of specific cases and industries, and hence, to more suitable management implications, models and tools.

In this article the tourism sector will be used as an example to demonstrate this proposed deductive research approach (Babbie, 2010, p. 23). Using tourism as an application for the ideas provided through S-D logic seems to be very suitable because the issue of value co-creation is very obvious in this field. For the general public, travelling on an airplane or a train or staying in a hotel or another accommodation represents what many individuals perceive as »tourism«. However, the stay in a hotel, the flight or the train trip on their own are (usually) not what would be perceived a memorable travel experience by the tourist. The creation of these experiences requires joint actions of diverse parties: besides providers of accommodation and transportation, the travel experience includes food services, recreational activities, cultural attractions, etc. These services offered by the providers in the different sectors are embedded in the natural resources and the infrastructure of a destination. In addition, multiple other factors, e.g. other tourists, the weather or residents influence the travel experience (Goeldner/Ritchie, 2009, p. 347). Consequently, the tourist must combine a lot of diverse resources and interact with many partners in order to co-create his/her travel experience.

Due to the very complex nature of value creation in tourism it is likely that patterns can be observed that lead to the discovery of additional general theories. The analysis of a specific case or industry facilitates the discovery of new facets, which are also relevant for a general theory, because they are more obvious and prevalent in such a specific case (Gummesson, 2010, p. 629). Vargo et al. (2010, p. 161) themselves state that »S-D logic is a work-in-progress; in fact it is more incomplete than it is complete«. Therefore, inductive reasoning will additionally be conducted in order to gain new insights for S-D logic from the analysis of the tourism sector (Babbie, 2010, p. 23).

Hence, the following two research questions should provide guidance through this article:
- What insights for tourism management can be gained through an analysis from the perspective of the service-dominant logic?
- What general insights for the further evolution of the service-dominant logic can be generated from tourism as a specific case?

2. Service-dominant logic

The S-D logic conceptualization of »service« – the application of competences for the benefit of another party – leads to a new thinking about value creation. In this conceptualization, operant resources (Constantin/Lusch, 1994, p. 143) are of critical importance, because these resources, such as competences, knowledge and skills, can be used to act on other resources to create value.
S-D logic suggests that »value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary« (FP10, Vargo/Lusch, 2008, p. 7). Hence, the customer becomes the primary actor. It is important to note that the role of the customer is not limited to his or her participation in the production of the core offering itself (co-production). The customer is always an active and indispensable part of value co-creation, regardless of whether co-production is necessary. As a result, service providers cannot produce and deliver value to the customer; they can only propose value. The offering of the provider must then be integrated by the customer with other market-facing (i.e., service from other providers), public (i.e. public infrastructure) and his or her personal (e.g., knowledge and skills) resources in order to create value. These resources can be of two different kinds: »operand, those that require some action to be performed on them to have value (e.g. natural resources) and operant, those that can be used to act (e.g. human skills and knowledge)« (Vargo/Lusch, 2011, p. 184). The understanding of value creation as a bundle of resources that are combined by the customer is referred to as »value-in-context« (Vargo, 2008, p. 213), because the entire context in which a customer co-creates a firm’s value proposition determines the value that is generated. The notion of »context« implies, that everything a customer (or a firm or anybody else) can get access to, can serve as a resource. However, this does not mean that everything is a resource, but only those parts of the environment which are ultimately integrated into a value co-creation process in fact become resources (Vargo/Lusch 2004; Zimmermann, 1951).

According to S-D logic, service is exchanged for service. As stated earlier, the firm offers a value proposition to the customer that he or she can integrate with other resources to create value (service provision). But, value creation is always mutual and reciprocal. Hence, the customer also proposes value to the firm (Vargo, 2009, p. 377). In a direct sense, customers provide value to the firm by increasing their reputation and supporting customer acquisition through the provision of word-of-mouth, by making suggestions or taking part in new product or services development, or by creating brand meanings in customer communities, etc. (Vargo/Lusch/Horbel/Wieland, 2011, p. 128; Wroatschek/Horbel, 2005, p. 47). However, in most cases the specific service that the customer can offer is not attractive for the firm. Therefore, service by the customer is provided indirectly through money (rights to future service). The specific competences (service) customers can provide are exchanged with others in return for money, which can then be used to obtain the service they desire.

As a result, it becomes obvious, that customers and firms fulfil the same roles: they are both providers and beneficiaries as they provide mutual service for each other’s benefits (Vargo, 2009, p. 377). Thus, the firm-customer (i.e., producer-consumer) distinction vanishes (Vargo, 2009, p. 377; Vargo/Lusch, 2011, pp. 181–182). This is why, Vargo and Lusch (2011, p. 181) suggest using the term »actor« in order to emphasize that the roles of producers and consumers in economic exchange are in fact very similar.

It has already been shown that value creation cannot be limited to the dyadic relationship between firm and customer, because each actor integrates other private, public, and market-facing resources with the value proposition of the other actor in order to create value. Stated somewhat differently, each actor uses a whole network of partners external to the focal service-for-service exchange in order to obtain resources which are necessary for value creation. Consequently, value creation always takes place in a network-with-network context (Vargo et al., 2010, p. 134).

More recently, it has been suggested to extend existing conceptualizations of business ecosystems in order to account for the perception of value co-creation in S-D logic (e.g., Vargo, 2009, p. 373; Lusch/Vargo/Tanniru, 2010, p. 20). In particular, the customer (and the customer’s networks) should be recognized as an indispensable part of value creation. Furthermore, a new conceptualization should take into account that every resource integration event changes the nature of the whole structure to some degree and hence, the context for the next event of resource integration. This modified concept is called a service ecosystem and defined as a »spontaneously sensing and responding spatial and temporal structure of largely loosely coupled value proposing social and economic actors interacting through institutions and technology, to (1) co-produce service offerings, (2) exchange service offerings, and (3) co-create value« (Lusch/Vargo/Tanniru, 2010, p. 20).
3. The tourism phenomenon model

The unit of analysis in this article will be a tourism destination because the destination is an important competitive entity which acts in the tourism market (Bornhorst/Ritchie/Sheehan, 2010, p. 572). It is the place or places that the traveller chooses to visit, where experiences of touristic leisure are sought (Leiper, 1990, p. 23). According to Bornhorst et al. (201, p. 572) a destination is a geographical region, political jurisdiction, or major attraction which seeks to provide visitors with a range of satisfying to memorable visiting experiences. The destination should be an excellent example for the proposed deductive research approach, because it is not a firm, but a network of various tourism service providers, some of which might not even perceive themselves as contributors to the tourism experience of visitors, e.g. local supermarkets (Leiper, 1990, p. 30). The specific characteristic of these networks of enterprises and other actors which contribute to the visitors’ experience is that they are activated by the tourists themselves, who choose their particular means of transportation, accommodation, attractions they visit, etc. (Gnoth/Jaeger, 2007, p. 2; Leiper, 2008, p. 243). So, each tourist constructs his/her own individual network (service ecosystem) from all the alternatives that are given through the existence of the tourism service providers and other social and economic actors at a particular destination. The tourism experience is thus complex and dynamic.

The analysis of tourism from the perspective of Service-dominant logic in this article will be based on the tourism phenomenon model (Goeldner/Ritchie, 2009, p. 13). It is one of the most comprehensive models which strive to describe the very complex phenomenon of tourism, in particular for the case of a tourism destination. The philosophy of this model is that the starting point for the development of facilities, activities and events for tourism needs to be an understanding of the tourist as well as his or her motivation for travel and the factors that influence the tourists’ travel needs. The components of the model are the institutions and activities that are necessary to create the tourists’ travel experience as well as supporting processes and structures that make tourism possible.

As a consequence, the tourist and the travel experiences that he or she seeks are the focal point of this model. The model is aimed at providing guidance to managers in the tourism industry. As such it suggests that the characteristics and activities of all individuals and organisations involved in tourism should ultimately be determined with regard to the tourist, thus making a destination uniquely attractive (Otto/Ritchie, 1996, p. 173).

In the following, a brief overview of the components of tourism and tourism management that have been suggested in the tourism phenomenon model (Goeldner/Ritchie, 2009, p. 13) depicted in figure 1 will be provided.

The fundamental dimension of the model (outer coloured circle in figure 1) often provides the very basis for tourism. The natural resources a destination has to offer, the appearance of its landscape and its climate unchangeably characterize a destination (Fletcher, 2008, p. 161). Additionally included in this dimension are people, both residents and other visitors, who uniquely shape the atmosphere in a destination.

The second dimension in the model is described as the built environment of the destination and defined as those structures that have been created by humans. Obviously, this includes the infrastructure, which the authors divide into two subgroups. The basic infrastructure includes roads, communication networks and supermarkets, which are sufficient, even in places without tourism. In addition, a tourism destination needs to have tourism superstructure designed to fulfill the needs of visitors, e.g. hotels, car rentals, and visitor attractions (Ritchie/Crouch, 2003, pp. 125–126). Although it is also element of the basic infrastructure and the tourism superstructure, technology is identified as another component of the built environment, because it has become so pervasive and important. Due to its high significance for the success of a destination, information has been added to the model. The ability to assemble, interpret, and utilize information about the tourism market, about satisfaction of visitors, about competitors or about trends in the market has an important impact on the competitiveness of the destination. Further, the overall system of governance surrounding tourism is of critical importance for the ability of a destination to compete in the international marketplace (Gretzel/Fesenmaier/Formica/O’Leary, 2006). The last component of the environment that has been created by people is the culture of the host region (Campelo/Aitken/Gnoth, 2011, p. 4).
The operating sectors of the tourism industry represent the third dimension of the model. It includes the firms and organizations that are seen as the typical tourism service providers: suppliers of transportation, accommodation, and food services. Besides these basic tourism offerings, it comprises attractions, events, adventure and outdoor recreation activities, and entertainment, which are important in order to create stimulating, unique experiences for the tourist. The travel trade sector and tourism services complete the dimension of the operating sectors of the tourism industry (Cooper et al., 2008, p. 305). Retail travel agents and wholesale tour operators form the travel trade sector. Tourism services, which include computer support services, financial services and tourism education, are critical for successful tourism (Crouch, 2011, p. 29). A trouble free functioning of these services is mandatory, otherwise tourism suffers.

While Goeldner and Ritchie (2009) identify the mentioned operating sectors of the tourism industry as the main providers of services to the tourist, they emphasize that, in order to deliver high-quality, memorable experiences, it is necessary to foster...
a spirit of hospitality. All services should be provided with warmth and an attitude that makes visitors feel that they are truly welcome.

While there is wide agreement that the competence and ability of the operating sectors have an important impact on the success of a destination, it is equally acknowledged that organizations are necessary which are responsible for the planning, development and promotion of destinations (Bornhorst/Ritchie/Sheehan, 2010, p. 572). These destination management organizations (DMO), which exist at various levels (national, state, city/regional), should provide the insight and leadership that is necessary in order to develop and realize policies and plans for the destination. It is further necessary that planning and development efforts are carried out in a cooperative and collaborative manner, where all stakeholders – public and private – that contribute to tourism are included (Palmer/Bejou, 1995, pp. 617–619).

The tourism phenomenon model is completed by a collection of processes and activities that need to be performed within a destination in order to make tourism happen (depicted in the outer circle of the model). These include the definition of a tourism philosophy, the formulation of a vision and subsequent strategies as well as planning and development that provides ideas for experiences the destination is capable of offering (Ritchie/Crouch, 2003, p. 30). The destination and the potential experiences must be promoted through effective marketing that attracts new (or repeat) visitors. It needs to be considered that visitors and their behaviours can have positive and negative impacts on the destination and the tourism actors. All processes and activities need to be monitored and their outcomes should be evaluated (Faulkner, 1997, p. 23; Ritchie/Crouch, 2003, p. 26). In particular, destinations need to ensure that the success of tourism does not destroy the natural resources on which they depend.

4. Service-dominant-logic-driven insights for tourism management

The tourism phenomenon model (Goeldner/Ritchie, 2009, p. 13) represents an approach which highlights the fact that the customer and the experience he or she seeks should be the focus of attention. It is a model that gives a very comprehensive overview of the actors involved in co-creation in a particular field as well as the contextual factors in which co-creation processes in this sector are embedded. However, it remains grounded in G-D logic, because it does not fully appreciate the role of the customer in the value-creation process.

The idea of the tourism phenomenon model is that an understanding of the tourists, their motivations and travel needs build the ground for the success of a destination: when managers fully understand tourists, firms and organizations can develop their outputs in order to provide a memorable experience to the tourist.

This perspective neglects the S-D logic idea of collaborative value creation, in which the customer – the tourist – plays an indispensable role. The S-D logic perspective suggests that tourism managers must understand that value cannot be produced and delivered to tourists. Value is always determined by the beneficiary (Vargo/Lusch, 2008, p. 7), therefore tourism service providers can only produce offerings which represent a value proposition to the tourist. These value propositions are a potential input for value creation, but the tourist must integrate them with other public, private or market-facing resources in order to create value (Vargo/Lusch, 2011, p. 184). For example, a visitor who decides to take part in a guided mountain biking tour through the Alps cannot simply get provided with the experience of an unforgettable mountain biking tour. The tourist must integrate the value proposition of the tour provider with his or her private (e.g. mountain biking skills, fellow participants), public (public mountain biking trails, roads), and other market-facing (e.g. mountain bike, helmet) resources in order to create a memorable experience or value (see figure 2). It must be noted, however, that this is only the simplest case, in which the tour operator would take care of every aspect of the tour (e.g. food, accommodation, etc.). If these services are not offered as a package, the tourist would choose other tourism service providers (e.g. restaurants, hotels, supermarkets, etc.) and integrate their value propositions with his/her own and other resources in order to create value.

The central concept in S-D logic is that service is exchanged for service. For the example of a guided mountain biking tour this view implies that the tour provider applies its skills (e.g. mountain biking skills, social skills) and knowledge (e.g. about the route, adventurous trails) for the benefit
of the tour participant, which enables the operator to make a value proposition. The customer (participant) usually provides his or her service indirectly in the form of money (rights to future service), but also in various direct ways. The most obvious way of direct service provision by the customer to the service provider is the social interaction which takes place between them. In the mountain bike tour example both actors – tour guide and participant – spend a lot of time together and many tour guides have even chosen their job because of the opportunity to interact with other people and have a good time with them. Customers also provide service by contributing to the reputation of the service provider, e.g. through the provision of positive word-of-mouth or through engaging in customer communities (van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 254).

The processes by which the customer obtains the other public, private and market-facing resources that are combined in order to create value can also be interpreted as service-for-service exchanges. Market-facing resources are typically acquired in barter or economic exchange. For example, the mountain bike manufacturer applies its resources in order to be able to offer a mountain bike as a value proposition to the athlete who in turn provides his or her service in the form of economic currency. Private resources are typically exchanged against service in the form of social currency (e.g. friendship, support, friendliness) whereas the acquisition of public resources can be interpreted as an exchange against public currency (e.g. tax payment).

As a consequence, each process of value creation requires the combination of multiple resources which are acquired through mutual service provision with diverse actors in spatial, loosely coupled service ecosystems (Lusch/Vargo/Tanniru, 2010, p. 20). Therefore, Vargo and Lusch (2008, p. 8) suggest in their foundational premise (FP) 8: »A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational«. That is, value can only be created through the combination of resources obtained through relational exchanges.

Whereas most of the actors from which tourists can acquire their resources for value creation are included in the tourism phenomenon model (Goeldner/Ritchie, 2009, p. 13), the relationships between the actors are missing. While it might still be pretty obvious that interaction between the tourists and the operating sectors of tourism must take place in order to create value for the tourist, the relationships between the tourist and other actors (e.g. equipment providers for sporting activities, local supermarkets, etc.) are not quite as visible. Furthermore, interaction and relationships between other actors without the involvement of the tourist are taking place, because all actors create resources...
that can serve as value propositions to others through the integration of exchangeable resources.

In tourism, this is even more evident, as often several service providers (e.g. tour bus operators and attractions) cooperate and offer their service as a package (e.g. a day trip to a theme park). However, in most cases tourism service providers do not actively cooperate, nevertheless they are jointly involved in co-creation of the tourism experience as the tourist activates his/her own individual network of actors (service ecosystem). As a consequence, tourism service providers need to be aware of the fact that they are actors in a network which, as a whole, is involved in co-creation of the holiday experience (Löbler, 2011, p. 68). Co-creation in tourism takes place in a network-with-network context, even though the single actors might not know who the other actors are (Vargo et al., 2010, p. 134). For example, restaurants do not only co-create the guests’ restaurant experience, but are also involved in co-creation of the whole tourism experience. So, if restaurants are aware of this (and very often they know if their guests are tourists or live in the community or they can ask them), they can make better value propositions to their customers.

Importantly, co-creation in tourism is considerably influenced by interaction with people. There are not only the people who work as frontline employees in the various operating sectors of tourism, but, during a trip or vacation a lot of interaction with fellow travellers (e.g. family, friends) and new acquaintances (other tourists, residents) occurs and has a great impact on the overall travel experience. Although »people (industry, residents, visitors)« are mentioned in the tourism phenomenon model, their central role in co-creation of value is not visible. In fact, »people« are viewed as a component of the »natural resources and environment« suggesting that they play only a passive role for value creation. But, in reality, the opposite is true. Consequently, people, both as providers of private and of market-facing resources should be placed more centrally in the model.

Further, the nature of the service-for-service exchanges that are taking place is not captured in the tourism phenomenon model. What are the value provisions of the various actors? While some are pretty clear, e.g. in the accommodation sector which offers guest room facilities, other value propositions cannot be easily defined. For example, local visitor bureaus make a lot of diverse offerings, not only to tourists, but also to other stakeholders (e.g. local tourism service providers, industry, government, media). At the same time, no
information can be derived from the model regarding the service the tourist provides in these reciprocal processes. Tourists might provide service (knowledge and skills) directly (e.g. by offering to help fellow tourists to improve their skiing skills) or indirectly through economic (money), social (friendliness) or public (taxes) currency.

However, the model provides one interesting piece of information about the nature of the service that should be provided to tourists: the «spirit of hospitality». It does not describe the content of the value propositions, but the way in which they should be offered to the tourists. While the spirit of hospitality is certainly an important success factor in tourism, it should be separated from the actors and used as a description of the nature of the relationships between tourists and service providers.

Due to the very complex nature of the tourism phenomenon model, it is a very challenging task to transform it in a way that it fully reflects the nature of value co-creation in the tourism industry. The tourism phenomenon model primarily provides a very comprehensive overview of the actors and elements that may contribute to the tourist’s experience. This model can serve as a basis from which to start a transformation that looks at resource integration from the perspective of each actor in order to better understand the scope of their resource integration and value creation processes. For example, figure 3 illustrates resource integration from the perspective of the tourist, the single most focal actor in tourism (Bornhorst/Ritchie/Sheehan, 2010, p. 572).

5. Tourism-management-driven insights for service-dominant logic

In the previous section it has been shown that a transition from a goods-dominant perspective to a service-centred view as proposed by S-D logic offers various insights that lead to a new understanding of the roles of all stakeholders in the tourism industry. However, it has also been said before that the tourism phenomenon model (Goeldner/Ritchie, 2009, p. 13) is a very comprehensive model that provides an excellent synopsis of the actors involved in value co-creation in tourism as well as a lot of factors which have an influence on these value creation processes. It therefore appears to be worthwhile to have a closer look at this model in order to determine if it includes components, the role of which has not yet been fully appreciated in the discussion about value creation from the perspective of S-D logic.

Due to its fundamental importance for much tourism, a lot of attention in the tourism phenomenon model is given to the natural resources and the environment. The physiography and the climate primarily and unchangeably characterize any given destination and therefore are the very basis of its attractiveness to tourists (Gunn, 2002, p. 43–47).

Elements of the nature can be regarded as sources of natural resources, i.e. they can become resources through the integration in value co-creation processes by any actor. The nature of these resources is two-fold. First, they have not been created and can only (if at all) to a limited extent be changed by human beings. Second, they exist independently of social and economic actors and very often are not (and cannot be) in the possession of any of these actors (e.g. air). As a consequence, they can be used in resource integration without reciprocal service-for-service exchange processes between actors taking place, although they also do not belong to the resource integrator who is using them.

Natural resources are used very often in resource integration, not only in the tourism industry. They therefore add a new facet to the general understanding of resource integration and value co-creation. Besides those integrable resources that can be obtained through mutual service provision with private, market-facing and other sources and those already owned by the resource integrator, discretionary resources exist and can be used for value creation. Elements of the nature are different from any other resource that can be integrated in value creation because they are available and can be used (i.e. become resources) without mutual service provision. Their unique role is illustrated in figure 4. Natural sources of resources are available to any actor in the value configuration space and can be combined and integrated with their other resources.

It is important to note that natural resources are not the same as public resources (Samuelson, 1954). Roads, for example, are usually built by and are under the control of a local, regional or other government. Although they can often be used free of charge, they have been built by tax money and hence, indirect service provision through tax payment by the user of the resource has been taking place.
However, in some cases natural resources have been changed into quasi-market-facing or quasi-public resources, for example national parks. These resources have not been created by the government, but they are now under their control and can usually only be integrated in the value creation process in exchange for money (indirect service provision) and or under certain regulations (e.g. opening hours). The reason for the transformation of natural resources into quasi-market-facing or quasi-public resources is very often the intention to protect them in their current state or to re-improve them to an earlier level. This is necessary because the integration of such resources in value creation can have negative impacts on the resources themselves. For example, in tourism, negative impacts can occur from hikers who cross nest areas of birds leading to problems for the breed. Such negative impacts on natural resources can be found in many industries. The discussion about air pollution and CO2 emissions and their consequences for the climate is probably one of the best examples of global relevance. A very dramatic case is the radioactive contamination of sea, air, and soil due to the nuclear crisis in the Fukushima power plant after the earthquake and tsunami in March 2011 in Japan.

As a consequence, resource integrators who use natural resources in value creation should be aware of the consequences which will or might occur from usage and integrate them «intelligently», i.e. causing as less negative impact as possible.

6. Conclusions

The tourism phenomenon model provides a very comprehensive collection of the actors and factors that influence the process of value creation in the tourism industry. The basic assumption of the model is that tourism managers need to understand the tourists, their motivations and the experiences they seek as best as they can in order to be able to deliver high-quality, memorable experiences. While this model acknowledges that various stakeholders are included in the creation of value for the customer, it remains grounded in G-D logic, because it does not take the value co-creation process into account. Consequently, the tourism phenomenon model needs to be extended in order to focus on the collaborative process of value creation between various actors, including the customer.

In particular the following modifications are suggested:
- The model should demonstrate that tourism service providers can only offer value propositions which are a potential input for value creation.

![Diagram](image-url)
The tourist must integrate this value proposition with other market-facing, public and his/her private resources in order to create value.

Resources are obtained in service-for-service exchanges, which are relational in nature.

The relationships between the actors involved in value co-creation need to be added.

The central role of people as actors who provide both, private and market-facing resources, for value creation should be pointed out.

The nature of the service-for-service exchanges taking place should be captured in the model.

The «spirit of hospitality» should be separated from the level of the actors as it is mainly a characteristic of the relationships between them.

Tourism managers can benefit from changing their perspective from the traditional G-D logic view to S-D logic. This change of perspectives newly defines the roles of all actors. Vargo and Lusch (2010, p. 184) argue that the «complimentary, reciprocal, generic roles of resource integration and service provision transcend the ›producer-consumer‹ divide». It changes the role of the tourist from a customer for whom an experience must be produced to a partner who should be provided with the best resources possible to support him/her in his/her own resource integration process. This also changes the perspective on the nature of competition in tourism: the most competitive actors are those who offer the most suitable and valuable resources for their customers and who best support them in the process of value co-creation.

As a consequence, the roles of all actors involved in tourism change, not only those of the tourists (customers). A new perspective on the tourism market should therefore be characterized by a «balanced centricity, which takes into account the role of and impact on all stakeholders» (Gummesson/Lusch/Vargo, 2010, p. 20).

In this article it has also been shown that insights for a general theory or concept can be gained from the analysis of models that have been developed for a specific industry. The advantage of such analyses is that the attention of the researcher will be drawn to aspects which are of particular importance in this specific industry. Research which is concerned with the development of general concepts or approaches, like S-D logic, always has to be balanced. It must take many very different applications into account and try to find generalizations which hold for all these cases. While this is necessary, it also increases the probability that some aspects are neglected or become blurred because they do not seem equally important for all applications.

In this article tourism was the specific case under investigation. Natural resources and the environment were identified as an important aspect in this field. It has been revealed that natural resources have characteristics which differentiate them from other resources that are discussed in the context of resource integration and value co-creation in the S-D logic. One might argue that this might be an idiosyncrasy of this particular case. However, it has been illustrated in this article that natural sources of resources are very frequently used in resource integration and are very important in other industries, too. Only at first glance they seem to be less relevant in some industries. This is why natural sources of resources are also relevant for a general theory.

From the analysis of the specific case of tourism the following new insights for S-D logic can be gained:

- Three types of resources can be identified that can be used and combined by actors in value creation processes:
  1. Resources that can be obtained through mutual service provisions: market-facing, public, and private resources;
  2. Resources which already belong to the actor: skills and knowledge, personal belongings, etc.;
  3. Discretionary resources which can be used without the need for service-for-service exchanges: natural resources.

- Natural sources of resources should be integrated in models of resource integration and value co-creation in order to account for their distinctive character.

The role of natural resources in value creation processes still needs to be discussed in more detail in the future. Based on a general model of value co-creation which takes natural resources into account, implications for specific industries can be derived. In particular, potential negative impacts from their integration in value co-creation processes and the advantages and disadvantages of a transformation of natural resources into public or market-facing resources are issues for further research.
Further research dedicated to the analysis of specific resource integration and value co-creation processes in other industries could provide more insights that enrich S-D logic and provide us with a better understanding of the processes in which resources are combined through integration and their application in order to create value. The more insights we have on the factors that initiate, influence and terminate value creation processes, the better we will be able to understand economic exchange and the structures that we call markets.

References


Jan Drengner/Steffen Jahn/Hansjörg Gaus

Der Beitrag der Service-Dominant Logic zur Weiterentwicklung der Markenführung

The Service-Dominant Logic’s Contribution to Further Develop Brand Management

Schlüsselbegriffe

Brand Meaning; Consumer Culture Theory; Marke; Markenführung; Service-Dominant Logic; soziokulturelle Markenforschung

Keywords

Brand; brand management; brand meaning, consumer culture theory; service-dominant logic; sociocultural branding

Zusammenfassung

Unter Rückgriff auf ausgewählte Prämisse der Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) werden die Erkenntnisse der etablierten modernen und der soziokulturellen Markenforschung strukturiert. Da die SDL eine Integration dieser Ansätze ermöglicht, entsteht eine neue, holistische Perspektive auf das Markenphänomen. Auf dieser Basis werden Ansatzpunkte für eine soziokulturell integrierte Markenführung entwickelt, die neben den Interaktionen von Unternehmen und Konsumenten explizit deren soziales und kulturelles Umfeld berücksichtigt.

Abstract

Drawing on selected premises of service-dominant logic (S-D logic), this article structures the findings of established modern and sociocultural branding research. Since S-D logic allows for the integration of these two approaches, a new holistic perspective on the brand phenomenon emerges. From this basis we derive starting points to developing a concept of socioculturally integrated brand management. Such a concept explicitly considers the social and cultural environment accompanying company-consumer interactions.

Autoren

Prof. Dr. habil. Jan Drengner, Fachhochschule Worms, Professur für Dienstleistungsmanagement und -marketing, 67549 Worms, Tel.: 06241/509 114, Fax: 06241/509 220, E-Mail: drengner@fh-worms.de; Dr. Steffen Jahn, Technische Universität Chemnitz, Professur für Marketing und Handelsbetriebslehre, 09107 Chemnitz, Tel.: 0371/531 982207, Fax: 0371/531-26139, E-Mail: jan.drengner@wirtschaft.tu-chemnitz.de; Dr. Hansjörg Gaus, Universität des Saarlandes, Centrum für Evaluation, Postfach 151159, 66041 Saarbrücken.
1. Einleitung


Im Folgenden wird zunächst aufbauend auf die Diskussion ausgewählter Prämisse der SDL der Stand der verhaltenswissenschaftlich orientierten Markenforschung aus der Perspektive der SDL reflektiert. Aus den daraus resultierenden Erkenntnissen werden anschließend Ansatzpunkte für das
Konzept einer soziokulturell integrierten Marenkführung (SKIM) abgeleitet. Indem einerseits die Marke aus der Perspektive der SDL als Wertangebot eines Unternehmens betrachtet wird sowie andererseits das soziokulturelle Umfeld, in dem Konsumenten und Marken interagieren, als Determinante der Bedeutung einer Marke (Brand Meaning) Berücksichtigung findet, entsteht eine neue, holistische Perspektive für das Markenmanagement. Damit leistet der vorliegende Artikel einen Beitrag zur Markentheorie, indem er die Komplexität und wechselseitige Verknüpfung von Konsumenten, Unternehmen und Marken sowohl in die Analyse des Markenphänomens als auch in das Management dieses Phänomens mit einbezieht.

2. Diskussion der relevanten Prämissen der SDL


Eine weitere zentrale Prämissen der SDL besteht darin, dass die am Austausch beteiligten Partner stets gemeinsam den Wert (Value) einer Leistung determinieren. Der Konsument gilt als Co-Creator of Value, indem er aus dem Angebot eines Unternehmens mittels seiner operanten Ressourcen einen Wert für sich extrahiert (P6). So nutzt beispielsweise ein Automobilhersteller seine operande Ressourcen, um aus verschiedenen operanden Ressourcen (z. B. Fertigteilen) einen PKW zu produzieren. Laut SDL besitzt dieser PKW keinen immateriellen Wert. Dieser entsteht vielmehr erst dann, wenn der Konsument seine Fähigkeit zum Führen eines Fahrzeugs (operante Ressource) nutzt, um den PKW (operante Ressource) zu fahren. Möchte eine Person weiterhin mit dem Besitz einer bestimmten Automarke ihren Status innerhalb einer gesellschaftlichen Gruppe stärken, so kann sie auch diesen symbolischen Wert nur für sich selbst schöpfen. In diesem Fall benötigt sie Wissen darüber, welche Marken andere Konsumenten über-
haupt als »Statussymbol« anerkennen (operante Ressource).


Im Folgenden werden die hier vorgestellten Prämisse und die damit verbundene Terminologie genutzt, um die bisherigen Erkenntnisse der verhaltenswissenschaftlich orientierten Markenforschung aus der Perspektive der SDL zu reflektieren.

3. Der Stand der verhaltenswissenschaftlich orientierten Markenforschung aus der Perspektive der SDL

3.1. Die Marke als Service zur Vereinfachung der Informationsverarbeitung


3.2. Die Marke als Service zur Beeinflussung des Selbstkonzeptes

Weiterhin kann das Image einer Marke symbolische Assoziationen umfassen (z. B. mit sozialen...


3.3. Markenwissen als Ergebnis der Identifizierungs-, Informations- und Symbolfunktion der Marke

### 3.4. Die Marke als Service für ein aktives Identitätsmanagement des Konsumenten


---

1 Siehe z.B. Internetseiten wie »I hate Starbucks« (www.ihatestarbucks.com).
Jan Drengner/Steffen Jahn/Hansjörg Gaus

(opernante Ressource) assoziiert diese Konsumenten mit der Marke beispielsweise globale Marktdominanz, die Vereinheitlichung des Geschmacks oder die Nivellierung kultureller Besonderheiten, was in oppositionellem Verhalten (z.B. kreative Veränderung des Markenlogos zum Nachteil der Marke, Geringschätzung von Markennutzern) resultieren kann (Holt, 2002; Thompson/Arsel, 2004; Thompson/Rindfleisch/Arsel, 2006). Auf derartige moralische Konfrontationen reagieren wiederum die Anhänger einer Marke mit zusätzlichen, positiven Assoziationen, um ihre Identität zu schützen (Luedicke/Thompson/Giesler, 2010, S. 1028).


3.5. Die Marke als Service zum Aufbau und zur Pflege sozialer Beziehungen


3.6. Die Beziehung zwischen Brand Meaning und der Identifizierungs-, Informations-, Identitätsmanagement- sowie der Interaktionsfunktion der Marke

Zusammenfassend lassen sich stark vereinfacht zwei Richtungen in der verhaltenswissenschaftlich orientierten Markenforschung identifizieren (Allen/Fournier/Miller, 2008), die allerdings in der Literatur nicht immer trennscharf auftreten. Gemesen am Umfang der Veröffentlichungen in Wissenschaft und Praxis sowie ihrer vergleichsweise langen Historie (Merz/He/Vargo, 2009) soll die erste Richtung als etablierte moderne Markenforschung bezeichnet werden. Die Marke übernimmt demnach verschiedene Funktionen, die die Konsumenten in Abhängigkeit von ihren operanten Ressourcen auf kognitiver (Identifizierungs- und Informationsfunktion) oder emotionaler Ebene (Symbolfunktion) für sich in Wert umwandeln können.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Creation-Prozess</th>
<th>Beschreibung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ablehnung konkurrierender Marken</td>
<td>Die Wertschätzung einer Marke in einer Community kann so weit gehen, dass konkurrierende Marken bewusst und aktiv abgelehnt werden (Cromie/Ewing, 2009).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 1: Beispiele für Co-Creation-Prozesse in Consumption Communities


Die soziokulturelle Markenforschung als zweite Richtung der verhaltenswissenschaftlich orientierten Markenforschung setzt sich unter Rückgriff auf die Erkenntnisse und Methoden der CCT seit Mitte der 1990er Jahre intensiver mit den Wirkungen des sozialen und kulturellen Umfelds auseinander (Diamond et al., 2009). Dieser Forschungsstrang verdeutlicht, dass der Konsument eine aktive Rolle einnimmt, indem er unter Rückgriff auf seine eigenen Erfahrungen, sozialen Kontakte sowie sein kulturelles Kapital die Marke entsprechend seiner persönlichen Ziele verändert. Durch diese Prozesse erlangt die Marke für den Konsumenten eine individuelle Bedeutung, die in der angloamerikanischen Literatur mit dem Begriff des Brand Meaning umschrieben wird (Brown/Kozinets/Sherry, 2003; Diamond et al., 2009; Sherry, 2005).


Der Beitrag der SDL zur Weiterentwicklung der Markenführung

Etablierte moderne Markenforschung | Erweiterungspotenzial
---|---

**Zentrale Metapher** | Marke als Träger von Informationen (Markenwissen) | Marke als Träger bestehender und potenzieller Bedeutungen (Brand Meaning) | Marke als Wertangebot für Co-Creation-Prozesse

**Rolle des Konsumenten** | Der Konsument empfängt passiv die vom markenführenden Unternehmen intendierten Informationen. | Der Konsument gestaltet aktiv das Brand Meaning. | Der Konsument ist ein aktiver Co-Creator of Value.


**Rolle des Unternehmens** | Das Unternehmen kontrolliert mittels strategischer und operativer Markenführung die markenbezogenen Informationen und damit das Markenwissen. | Das Unternehmen ist einer von vielen das Brand Meaning bestimmenden Akteuren. | Das Unternehmen ist ein Co-Creator der Marke.

Tab. 2: Erweiterungspotenziale der soziokulturellen Markenforschung und der SDL für eine integrierte Markenführung (in Anlehnung an Allen/Fournier/Miller, 2008, S. 788)

4. Entwicklung eines soziokulturell integrierten Markenführungsconzeptes auf Basis der SDL

4.1. Verständnis des Markenbegriffs auf Basis der SDL

Fasst man die Erkenntnisse der etablierten modernen sowie der soziokulturellen Markenforschung zusammen und restrukturiert diese mit Hilfe der SDL, so können Marken aufgrund ihrer unterschiedlichen Funktionen (Identifizierung, Information, Identitätsmanagement, Interaktion) den Konsumenten verschiedene Typen von Service bieten (Prämisse 1 der SDL). Dies bedeutet, dass nicht nur unmarkierte Sach- und Dienstleistungen, sondern auch die Marke selbst als Wertangebot zu verstehen sind. Um diesen Sachverhalt zu würdigen, erfolgt im Weiteren eine Unterscheidung in zwei Arten von Service, die mit Wertangeboten verbunden sind: Der Begriff des *primären Service* beschreibt...
jedweden Service, den Unternehmen mit Hilfe ei-
ner unmarkierten Leistung (Sach- oder Dienstleis-
tung, die durch die Nutzung unternehmensbezoge-
ner operanter Ressourcen entstanden ist) ihren
Anspruchsgruppen anbieten. Aus der Perspektive
der Markenzielgruppen manifestieren sich solche
Kernleistungen in Form des primären Wertangebo-
tes. Als sekundärer Service wird hingegen der Ser-
viced bezeichnet, der mit der Markierung dieser
Leistung einhergeht, womit die Markierung für die
Konsumenten ein sekundäres Wertangebot bildet.

Offerieren Unternehmen markierte Sach- oder
Dienstleistungen, so bilden diese immer eine Ver-
knüpfung des primären und des sekundären Ser-
viced. Diese Kombination resultiert in einem mar-
kierten Wertangebot, das sich von jenem konkur-
rrenderen Unternehmen unterscheidet. Aus der
Perspektive der SDL kann der Begriff der Marke
somit definiert werden als ein durch eine Markie-
rung gekennzeichneter Service eines Unterneh-
mens, den die Konsumenten als primäres und se-
kundäres Wertangebot wahrnehmen, wobei sie mit
diesen Wertangeboten aktiv symbolische, kulturell
eingebettete Bedeutungen (Brand Meaning) ver-
knüpfen, die den Service von dem Service anderer
Unternehmen abgrenzen.

Gemäß der sechsten Prämisse der SDL besitzen weder der primäre noch der sekundäre Service per-
se einen Wert, vielmehr entsteht dieser erst durch
die Co-Creation-Prozesse des jeweiligen Individuums. In Abhängigkeit von der konkreten Aus-
gestaltung des primären Service können die Kon-
sumenten daraus verschiedene Arten von Wert
generieren (z. B. funktionalen, symbolischen, emo-
tionalen, relationalen Wert; vgl. Cova, 1997;
Sweeney/Soutar, 2001). Der sekundäre Service
(Markierung) kann hingegen auf zwei Ebenen in
Wert umgewandelt werden. Mit ihrer Identifizie-
rungs- und Informationsfunktion verweist die
Markierung einerseits direkt auf den primären Ser-
viced. Indem sie die Informationsverarbeitung und
Kaufentscheidung der Konsumenten vereinfacht,
offeriert die Markierung auf dieser Ebene haupt-
sächlich funktionalen Wert. Andererseits bietet der
sekundäre Service aufgrund seiner Identitätsma-
agement- und Interaktionsfunktion einen poten-
ziellen Wert, der zwar von dem primären Wert-
angebot »transportiert« wird, jedoch nicht zwangs-
läufig an dessen eigentliche Funktionserfüllung
gebunden ist. Wie die Ergebnisse der soziokulturel-
len Markenforschung zeigen, können die Konsu-
menten in Co-Creation-Prozessen auf dieser Ebene insb. symbolischen, emotionalen und relationalen
Wert für sich generieren.

4.2. Das SKIM-Konzept

Wie Abbildung 1 verdeutlicht, bildet die Markeni-
dentität auch im Rahmen einer soziokulturell inte-
grierten Markenführung den Ausgangspunkt für
eine erfolgreiche Steuerung der Marke. Im Gegens-
satz zu den etablierten Ansätzen der identitätsba-
sierten Markenführung fungieren jedoch nicht das
Markenwissen oder das Markenimage als Ziel-
größe, sondern das umfassendere Konzept des
Brand Meaning. Gemäß der siebten Prämisse der
SDL ist die Umwandlung des primären und des
sekundären Wertangebotes in Wert (Value-in-Con-
text) an die Co-Creation-Prozesse und damit an das
Wissen und die Fähigkeiten der Konsumenten ge-
bunden. Wie die vorhergehenden Abschnitte ver-
deutlichten, beruhen diese operanten Ressourcen
im Wesentlichen auf drei eng miteinander ver-
knüpften, sich überschneidenden Quellen (Ar-
ould/Price/Malshe, 2006; Edvardsson/Tronvoll/
Gruber, 2011; Holt, 2004). So basieren die Kompe-
tenzen der Konsumenten erstens auf ihren Kontak-
ten zur sozialen Umwelt (z. B. Gespräche mit ande-
ren Konsumenten) sowie zweitens auf ihrer Einbin-
dung in ein größeres kulturelles Umfeld (z. B.
westliche Werte, Bezug zur Popkultur). Die Wir-
kung der dadurch bedingten Co-Creation-Prozesse
lässt sich anhand der in Abbildung 1 dargestellten
großen konkaven Linse versinnbildlichen. Das Un-
ternehmen offeriert in Form der Marke ein Wertan-
gebot, welchem seine Anspruchsgruppen aufgrund
ihrer sozial und kulturell bedingten operanten Res-
sourcen individuelle Bedeutung (Brand Meaning)
verleihen. Diese Bedeutungen können einerseits
aufgrund unterschiedlicher soziokultureller Res-
sourcen und die dadurch bedingten unterschiedli-
chen Co-Creation-Prozesse zwischen den Konsu-
menten differieren (z. B. Person 1 vs. 5 in Abb. 1).
Andererseits nutzen Konsumenten aus einem ähn-
lichen soziokulturellen Umfeld auch ähnliche ope-
rante Ressourcen, um die markierten Wertangebote
für sich in Wert umzuwandeln. Somit kann es in-
nerhalb solcher Interpretationsgemeinschaften (Ar-
nould/Price/Zinkhan, 2004, S. 123) zu gleicharti-
gen Co-Creation-Prozessen und damit zu Überein-
stimmungen hinsichtlich des Brand Meaning

DBW 73 (2013) 2

153
kommen (Edvardsson/Tronvoll/Gruber, 2011; Holt, 2004; Sherry, 2005) (Person 2, 3 und 4 in Abb. 1).
Darüber hinaus prägen drittens die unterschiedlichen persönlichen Erfahrungen – als weitere Quellen operanter Ressourcen der Konsumenten (kleine konkave Linsen) – die Co-Creation-Prozesse, so dass es auch innerhalb von Interpretationsgemeinschaften zu individuellen Unterschieden hinsichtlich des Brand Meaning kommen kann (z. B. zwischen Person 2 und 3 in Abb. 1).

Aufgrund dieser individuell ablaufenden Co-Creation-Prozesse sollten markenführende Unternehmen berücksichtigen, dass der Wert von Marken immer individuell bestimmt wird (P10) und sie somit die aus dem primären und sekundären Service resultierende Wertschöpfung auf Kundenseite nicht vollständig kontrollieren können. Hinzu kommt, dass das soziale sowie das kulturelle Umfeld – als Quellen operanter Ressourcen – wiederum vom Handeln einer Vielzahl anderer Akteure (z.B. Consumption Communities, Medien, Prominente, Behörden) geprägt werden. Da Unternehmen die Aktivitäten dieser Bedeutungsmakler ebenfalls nur zu einem geringen Maße beeinflussen können, wächst damit die Unsicherheit bei der Markenführung.

Für die Markenführung folgt daraus, dass die vom Unternehmen intendierte Bedeutung (Markenidentität) nicht zwangsläufig mit dem individuellen Brand Meaning auf Konsumentenseite übereinstimmen muss (vgl. Abb. 1). Gelingt es jedoch, die Interpretationsgemeinschaften in Form von Marktsegmenten (z. B. anhand ähnlicher Lebensstile oder Mitgliedschaften in Consumption Communities) zusammenzufassen, so verfügt das Unternehmen trotz der o.g. eingeschränkten Kontrolle über Ansatzpunkte, die Marke entsprechend seiner Ziele zu führen. Dabei gilt es zu berücksichtigen, dass Interpretationsgemeinschaften – häufig in Form von Consumption Communities – auch der Ausgangspunkt sog. Community Brands (Füller/Luedicke/Jawecki, 2008) sein können. Der Begriff der Community Brand beschreibt einen primären Service, den Konsumenten (z. B. von einer Marke enttäuschte Mitglieder einer Brand Community; Cova/White, 2010) ohne kommerzielle Hilfe gemeinsam für sich sowie andere Nachfrager kreieren und der sich im Laufe der Zeit zu einer eigenständigen Marke entwickelt³ (Cova/White, 2010; Füller/Luedicke/Jawecki, 2008; Pitt et al., 2006). Bezogen auf

---

das Modell in Abbildung 1 erfolgt in diesem Fall die Kreation der Marke ohne steuernden Einfluss eines Unternehmens, womit die Grenzen zwischen Produzent und Konsument immer mehr verschwimmen.


4.3. Ansatzpunkte zur strategischen und operativen Umsetzung eines SDL-basierten Konzepts der Markenführung


Um eine zu starke Heterogenität der Co-Creation-Prozesse und damit des Brand Meaning innerhalb der Markenzielgruppe zu vermeiden, sollten


5. Zusammenfassung und Ausblick

Der vorliegende Artikel beschäftigt sich mit dem Beitrag der Service-Dominant Logic für die Markenforschung. Unter Rückgriff auf ausgewählte Prämissen (P1, P4, P6, P7, P10) wurden die Erkenntnisse zweier Strömungen der verhaltenswissenschaftlich orientierten Markenforschung strukturiert. Während die etablierte moderne Markenforschung überwiegend auf den Service der Marke durch die Identifizierungs-, Informations- und Symbolfunktion fokussiert, betont die soziokulturelle Perspektive die Identitätsmanagement- und Interaktionsfunktion. Die SDL ermöglicht eine Integration beider Bereiche, woraus eine neue, holistische Perspektive entsteht. Diese Perspektive – vermittelt im Konzept der soziokulturell integrierten Markenführung (SKIM) – verbindet identitätsbasierte Managementkonzepte mit der Analyse komplexer Lebenswelten im kulturellen und sozialen Umfeld.

Es wurde verdeutlicht, dass es beim erfolgreichen Markenmanagement nicht nur um die Vermittlung eines Markenimages geht. Unternehmen müssen darüber hinaus willens und in der Lage sein, die aktive Rolle ihrer Anspruchsgruppen bei der Herausbildung des Brand Meaning in ihr Markenführungskonzept zu integrieren. Schließlich verdeutlicht das »Brigitte«-Beispiel, dass nicht nur abstrakte Assoziationen das Wesen der Marke prägen, sondern auch Ereignisse und Geschichten, die das Individuum in Zusammenhang mit der Marke erlebt hat (Holt, 2002, 2004). Für eine erfolgreiche Integration benötigen Unternehmen vielfältige operante Ressourcen, die es ihnen erlauben, den Anspruchsgruppen ein erfolgversprechendes Wert-
angebot zu unterbreiten. Unternehmen sollten
demnach ihre Anspruchsgruppen ermutigen (z.B.
mittels Customer Experience Management), aktiv
an der Gestaltung des Brand Meaning mitzuwirken.

Der vorliegende Beitrag stellt einen ersten
Schritt zu einer integrierten Betrachtung der Ser-
vice-Angebote von Marken, der Co-Creation-Pro-
zesse zwischen den Anspruchsgruppen der Marke
unter Beachtung ihres sozialen und kulturellen
Umfelds und einer darauf aufbauenden Marken-
führung dar. Um SKIM zu einem ausgereiften Mar-
kenmanagementkonzept weiterzuentwickeln, sind
jedoch weitere Forschungen notwendig.

So besteht beispielsweise Forschungsbedarf hin-
sichtlich der Frage, anhand welcher Konstrukte die
mit dem primären und sekundären Service verbun-
denen Co-Creation-Prozesse konzeptualisiert wer-
den können. Mögliche Antworten auf diese Frage
bieten beispielsweise Konstrukte wie das Flow-Er-
leben, Gemeinschaftserleben oder kollektive emoti-
onale Erfahrungen (Drengner/Gaus/Jahn, 2008;
Drengner/Jahn, 2012; Drengner/Jahn/Gaus, 2010,
2012; McGinnis/Gentry/Gao, 2008; Schlesinger,
2010), die bisher hauptsächlich zur Analyse des Er-
lebens außergewöhnlicher Konsumsituationen ge-
nutzt wurden. Weiterhin gilt es in diesem Zusam-
menhang, die operanten Ressourcen der Konsu-
menten zu systematisieren, auf die sie bei der
Herausbildung des individuellen Brand Meaning
zurückgreifen. Einen Ausgangspunkt dafür liefern
die Arbeiten von Sherry (2005) sowie Arnould,
Price und Malshe (2006). Darauf aufbauend sollte
untersucht werden, ob es operative Ressourcen gibt,
die mit bestimmten Arten von Wert (z.B. funktio-
nal, symbolisch, emotional, relational) einherge-
hen.

Neben diesen beiden Themenfeldern, denen sich
zukünftige Forschungsarbeiten verstärkt widmen
sollten, ist die dynamische Entfaltung der Co-Crea-
tion-Prozesse ein fruchtbares Forschungsgebiet. So
wirkt die zunehmende Verbreitung verschiedener
Interaktionsplattformen innerhalb des Internets
(z.B. soziale Netzwerke, Blogs) als Katalysator der
skizzierten Entwicklungen (Hennig-Thurau et al.,
die Nachfrager auf diesen Weg auch wissenshafter über
die Marke austauschen, verfügen sie über weitere
Möglichkeiten des Identitätsmanagements oder des
Aufbaus und der Pflege sozialer Kontakte (z.B.
Online-Communities) (Drengner/Jahn/Furchheim,
2013; Mathwick/Wiertz/DeRuyter, 2008; Schau/
Muñiz/Arnould, 2009). Darüber hinaus machen es
die neuen Medien den Konsumenten einfacher, pri-
mären und sekundären Service für sich selbst zu
erstellen, womit sowohl Chancen (z.B. neue Wert-
angebote für eine Non-Brand Focused Community)
as auch Risiken (z.B. Verlust von Markanteilen,
Verlust der Kontrolle über die Marke) für marken-
führende Unternehmen einhergehen. Hennig-Thu-
rau et al. (2010) demonstrieren mit ihrer For-
schungsagenda zu den Wirkungen neuer Medien
auf das Konsumentenverhalten, dass in diesem Be-
reich erheblicher Forschungsbedarf hinsichtlich der
Co-Creation-Prozesse besteht, die zwischen dem
Unternehmen, seinen Zielgruppen und weiteren
Bedeutungsmaklern stattfinden.

Praxisrelevanter Forschungsbedarf besteht
überdies dahingehend, welche Strategien und In-
strumente Unternehmen nutzen können, um mit dem
Kontrollverlust hinsichtlich des Brand Meaning
adäquat umzugehen. Insbesondere scheinen Hand-
lungsoptionen Erfolg versprechend, die auf Koope-
ration, Integration und Kommunikation setzen
(Drengner/Jahn/Furchheim, 2013). Konkrete Hand-
lungsempfehlungen wurden jedoch bislang nicht
t entwickelt.

Zusammenfassend ist zu konstatieren, dass die
SDL die bisherige Markentheorie nicht revolutio-
niert. Sie hilft aber, bisher vernachlässigte Bereiche
ins Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit zu rücken. Dies
betrifft z.B. die folgenden Erkenntnisse:
– Marken sind lediglich Wertangebote;
– die Bedeutung einer Marke ist mehr als das
Markenimage;
– alle Anspruchsgruppen sind aktiv am Aufbau
der Bedeutung der Marke (Brand Meaning) be-
teiligt sowie
– das soziale und kulturelle Umfeld spielen eine
entscheidende Rolle für die Entstehung des
Brand Meaning sowohl unmittelbar als auch als
soziokulturelle operative Ressourcen.

Generell verdeutlicht dieser Beitrag am Beispiel der
Markenforschung die Eignung der SDL als Rah-
men, verschiedene Ansätze des Marketing mitein-
ander zu vereinen und dabei die jeweiligen Pers-
pektiven neu auszurichten. Die hier vorgestellte
Neuausrichtung und Integration zweier For-
schungsstränge innerhalb der Markentheorie eröff-
net neue Wege zum Verständnis von Marken, deren
Rolle im Leben der Konsumenten und der damit
verbundenen Herausforderungen für die Marken-
führung. Dies hat Konsequenzen sowohl für die

**Verzeichnis der zitierten Literatur**


Bewährte Lehrbücher für Personal und Ethik

Hans-Gerd Ridder

**Personalwirtschaftslehre**

4. aktualisierte und überarbeitete Auflage 2013
380 Seiten, 84 Abbildungen. Kart. € 29,90
ISBN 978-3-17-023021-7


Bernd Noll

**Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensethik in der Marktwirtschaft**

2., aktualisierte und überarbeitete Auflage 2013
336 Seiten, 17 Abbildungen. Kart. € 29,90
ISBN 978-3-17-021839-0

Ich abonniere die Fachzeitschrift

**Die Betriebswirtschaft**

ab Heft ______/20_____

☐ Normalabonnement: € 89,–

☐ Vorzugsabonnement für Studenten/Assistenten (Bescheinigung liegt bei): € 67,–

Hiermit bestelle ich

☐ Einzelheft (Heft Nr. _____Jg._______) € 26,–

☐ Einbanddecke Jahrgang 20____ € 15,–

☐ Probeexemplar (kostenlos)

Jeweils zzgl. Versandkosten (Deutschland € 7,–; europäisches Ausland € 11,–)

**Garantie:** Mein Abonnement kann ich ohne Begründung innerhalb von 14 Tagen schriftlich bei der HGV - Servicecenter Fachverlage widerrufen. Rechtzeitige Absendung genügt zur Fristwahrung.

Name, Vorname

Firma, Funktion

Straße, Hausnummer

PLZ, Ort

Telefon, E-Mail

Datum, Unterschrift