

Three perspectives on the material of Service

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This presentation discusses the materials of service to give new insights into the nature of service itself. The basis for the discussion is that of Design, which at its core, is about transforming materials. If design is about a “conversation with materials”, what then are the materials of service? By examining service as a material, design has to transcend the tangible, and enter into a discussion of materials in a more abstract sense. This discussion gives new insights into service, since *something* has to be combined, formed, customized and produced to provide service. We believe that these somethings have not yet been fully identified and that a discussion about them will give new insights into service.

We therefore discuss the materials of Service:
When explored through definitions of the term material,
As seen through the theoretical perspectives of Service, and
As described by design representations.

Dictionary definitions of the term material give new insights into service. Material is defined not only as matter but also as the constituents of something; qualities which give individuality; something that may be worked into a more finished form; a performer's repertoire. Each of these aspects asks interesting questions about service (for example, what are the constituents of service, what gives service its individuality, how is service prototyped, and who is the performer of service, and what is their repertoire). These questions will be raised, and answered from a theoretical and practical perspective, and they both challenge our view of service and help structure it.

In service logic, service is described as value-creation in three spheres; the customer sphere, the joint sphere and the provider sphere. And it is claimed that value is only created by the customer, or, in SDL, at least phenomenologically determined by a beneficiary. This may lead to the idea that the materials of service are the things that are phenomenologically experienced by the customer, such as touchpoints, service moments, and customer journey's. However, when trying to understand services another perspective on the material of service arises, that of service ellipsis. These extend across all spheres of value-creation, and highlight an interdependence – from a material perspective – between them. Here we will show how all three are part of the material that constitutes service, and phenomenologically related to value creation.

During the service development (NSD) process, it is common to use representations of a service and therefore service itself. These can be *dynamic* techniques that represent services as interactive flows, such as walkthroughs, role-plays/enactments. These focus on their potential to communicate and explore how a service is experienced. *Definite* techniques on the other hand, represent services as final visualizations that are persistent points of reference and that specify certain aspects of services. Definite techniques visualize processes, actions, physical evidence and their relationships. Other design techniques are *explorative* and are specialized at exploring by describing aspects such as customer context, stakeholder potential, business models, and time. This presentation will look at the different representations, and identify the materials that are represented, and how they contribute to our understanding of service.

These three perspectives all contribute to an interesting and challenging view on service, which has implications on a number of levels. For instance: what is perceived as the material is what you can influence and manage: the main goals of service design and management respectively. Further, it can inform research to identify variables for further empirical work, the composition of NSD teams, or the competences a service organization should have. Each informs and contributes to a discussion about how to develop, implement and manage innovation in service.