

Value Co-creation as a Strategic Tool of Social Marketing: Analysis of a Social Service Branding Process in Developing Economy

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Abstract: Many social services exist to address the prevalent social issues being faced by their stakeholders, yet the processes which social services employ need to be crystallized. If the process of social services becomes specifiable, it may help social services become a social brand. In this regard, social marketing is inherently considered as a strategic tool which ensures the sustainability of business only not for profit based organizations but also for nonprofit organizations. Marketing scholars thus urge to refine the application of social marketing particularly with reference to the process in order for social problems to be addressed cogently. This study posits that the process which social marketing entails should be contextualized as value co-creation.

An empirical research was conducted using grounded theory as a research approach to explore the phenomenon of value co-creation. Grounded theory has been employed with a view to provide theoretical underpinning to the concept of social branding. A social service was considered to be a research unit of analysis. Focus group discussions were conducted followed by comparative contrast analysis. The findings reveal that collective participation, mutual interaction, and reciprocal engagement of the stakeholders of social services are the baseline of social marketing. The thematic analysis of focus group discussion resulted in eight key factors to be considered as constituents of the social marketing process. Thus, these factors are considered as part of value co-creation and instrumental for social services' branding.

Keywords: Social marketing, Social branding, Social service, Value co-creation, Grounded theory

Introduction and Research Rationale

Social marketing has emerged to be an indispensable phenomenon in today's business domain. The scope of social marketing has widened due to its inherent capacity of dealing with the social causes that are encountered by its stakeholders. While seeing the process of social marketing, this study postulates that value co-creation has evolved as a significant construct in the context of services to describe the patterns of interactions and relationships among the stakeholders of ser-

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vices (Chapleo, 2015). Cova, Pace and Skalen (2015) have described the value co-creation process as a reciprocal effort of service stakeholders that tend to help social services attain the status of social brand. Thus, the construct value co-creation is thought to be a breakthrough in marketing for encompassing social pioneering initiatives particularly in the service sector (Bryant et al., 2014). The study tends to see value co-creation as a strategic tool that may be a strong transformational actor focusing on meaningful advances in the relationship and interactions of business stakeholders embodying their respective experiences. But still the extant literature recommends the concept to be explored further on a social construction basis.

The orientation of marketing has subtly inclined towards service orientation that implies the concept of value creation embedded in service based transactions (Anderson, Nasr & Rayburn, 2017). The basis for such orientation can be found in the dominant logic which explains the shift of stakeholders' concentration from tangible resources towards intangible resources coupled with their value based activities (Vargo et al., 2017). The concept of value co-creation embarks upon those activities which are accomplished by the stakeholders of services representing the stated facets of the service. The present study has attempted to investigate the phenomenon of social marketing using the construct of value co-creation on behalf of social services in order for them to be regarded as social brand. Thus it is noteworthy that the construct of value co-creation is being explored as a social marketing strategy which is likely to establish social services as brand. Research in branding already advocates a consumer centric view that represents consumer values and socio-cultural contexts in which brands are socially constructed (Keller, 2019; Pappu, Quester, and Cookse, 2006). The study seeks to unfold the social service branding construct from the ground up, using group discussion method.

The social services around the world have considerable potential to effectively promote the causes underway with nourished behavior that aims at larger benefits for the society (Hastings, 2007). This view conceived under the domain of social marketing may see social services as brands in the context of social pioneering initiatives being undertaken by the stakeholders (Gordon, Zainuddin & Magee, 2016). As a process of social marketing services, this study posits such social pioneering initiatives to be a value co-creation notion.

Previous literature on social service branding has primarily focused on the existence of various branded entities within the marketer's viewpoint when exploring, articulating and conceptualizing the social service brand phenomenon (Chapleo, 2015; Stride & Lee, 2007; Underwood, Bond, & Baer, 2001). Berry (2000) implies

branding to be the cornerstone of marketing services in the twenty-first century, because considering the intrinsic issues of distinguishing services that lack tangible characteristics along with strong competition that exists in many service markets (Berry, 1999); the brand development becomes crucial for social services. By this we mean - it has to stand out, leaving a lasting impression and develop a brand identity of its own. To be precise, it is about how and why social services actually transform into social brands. On which grounds beneficiaries of social services distinguish on the basis of experience and interaction and how service platforms facilitate the stakeholders in creating value on reciprocal basis (Anderson, Nasr & Rayburn, 2017). Moreover, what factors help social marketers make social brands? These are some of the questions which need to be concisely answered and which might help the construct of value co-creation conceptualize.

There are myriad of activities performed by the stakeholders of social services in the backdrop of value co-creation. Charity Aid Foundation (2013) provides an optimistic picture for growth of charitable donations, predicting a likely increase in worldwide charitable donations of approximately \$233bn by 2030. This is quite encouraging given most of the charity income is generated by the general public (23%), investments (21%) and membership fees (17%) (Charity Commission, 2013). Yet, to attract charitable donations, social services face complications in terms of their potential donors' time, effort, and money. Therefore, the organizations seek to develop new ways to make a difference in competition which might help them brand their causes (Stride & Lee, 2007).

Problem Statement

It has been observed that the initiatives of social services addressing the social good are somewhat gloomy despite the marketing strategies being employed by them. This posits a research question over the development of social services as social brands. It may be assessed in terms of the gross behavior of people in communities which is not encouraging (Dann, 2010). However, employing social marketing in this regard may be an instrumental approach that could even develop a voluntary behavior and bring positive change in society. Exploring the process of social marketing by social services stakeholders may improve the canvass of social issues. This further requires all the stakeholders to mutually engage and interact on the part of social services. Therefore, there is a need to look for a framework which could possibly address and align the efforts of social services and their stakeholders alike. Social marketing has the potential to address social issues in a more succinct way (Andreasen, 1995).

Thus the study aims to explore value co-creation as a process underpinning the conceptualization for social marketing. Besides, it also aims to assess the status of social services in terms of their activities and experiences to become social brand.

Literature Review

Existing literature on social service branding that acknowledges social services as brands or how social services might be conceptualized as such is limited. (Spotswood, 2011). This is perhaps because of brand ownership and authority being unclear due to multiple stakeholders – although this evaluation of brand identity coherence is evident with e.g., cities, nations, places, corporation, etc. existing ideas for branding or service-branding theories cannot simply be transposed onto the area of social service branding.

On the contrary, we believe that social service brands should be investigated as one, collective entity – because consumers experience social services as a ‘complete package’ and therefore, require a more holistic analytical approach (Kotler & Lee, 2009). Our grounded theory approach enables us to explore this ‘complete package’, because studying the phenomenon from a ‘macro-level’ perspective in a unified manner, will help identify more unconventional attributes to determine how, when and why consumers actually perceive a social service to be a brand. In the realm of social marketing, when consumers are likely to exhibit typical behavior and it is difficult to predict their perceptions towards the social good, grounded theory seems to be a more beneficial research approach since it has the ability to unveil the phenomenon (Gill-Simmen, 2019). Identifying traits and characteristics that are synonymous with a social service brand will guide social service industry stakeholders within and around the social service industry to tactically tailor and equip their experiential services in a manner that supplements the lucrative social service brand process (Naidoo & Abratt, 2018).

According to Spotswood (2011), the effectiveness of branding in social marketing depends on how well the brand fits within the culture, there must be a focus on deep understanding of consumers and placing the consumer at the heart of all marketing activities (Andreasen, 2002). Schroeder (2009, p. 124) highlights the need to incorporate the typical branding concepts when exploring cultural brands: “...if brands exist as cultural, ideological, and sociological objects, then understanding brands requires tools developed to understand culture, ideology, and society, in conjunction with more typical branding concepts, such as brand equity, strategy, and value”.

It is argued that social service brands need an effective conceptualization that should arise from the ground up, developed on the basis of understanding the ways consumers experience in an organization. Grounded theory has proved to be an instrumental approach in this regard where deep seated prejudices of the subject occur. Thus, with the aim of building customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993) this exploratory research postulates to differentiate itself within this largely uncharted literature domain on the basis of contemplating social service branding theory that is grounded and rooted with recipients of social services. Such an approach is particularly relevant for marketing scholars who are often accused of adopting a “*purely managerial perspective on international branding issues*” (Cayla & Arnould, 2008, p. 87). Since the direction of the brand and identity is made by a two-way process, both in marketing and consumption. We believe that the participation of stakeholders will enable us to yield a more organic and rich account of how social services are actually perceived as brands by the public, and the process they undergo whilst attaching fervent emotions, meanings and feelings.

Social Services as a Brand

The concept of branding in marketing is pivotal as it encompasses deep reflections of consumers’ emotions and feelings associated with products and services. Thus from a social marketing perspective, branding has a strategic importance and effectiveness for social services and products due to benefits which may be reaped through an interactive process (Lefebvre, 2013). In services marketing, different sources of tangible and intangible assets together draw customers’ interests and trust (Berry, 2000). As a matter of fact, the concept of branding in the social sector has barely been witnessed (Samad, 2010), therefore, branding in the social sector tends to develop an identity not only for an individual but for the collective cause or entity too (Wymer, 2011). Although branding has implicit association in the realm of social services which has helped the social services attain certain signs and recognition. The extant researchers have posited that there is a need to identify the reasons and factors which help social services be viewed as a brand. Moreover, extant researchers are placing a considerable amount of emphasis on campaigns and messages which highlight prosocial attributes helping services to become a brand (Hanson et al. 2018).

Marketing is a multidisciplinary field which has acquired scholarship from various domains of knowledge. The nature of marketing is very interactive and requires academicians, researchers and professionals to undertake issues which are humanistic in nature; in order for humanistic issues to be dealt effectively

an interpretive research approach is required which has an interactive and communal genre. Therefore, grounded theory was discovered by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The very underlying idea of these two scholars was that human actions and their perceptions are quite dynamic and interpretative which pursue a process to develop, therefore, collecting data and analyzing under grounded theory requires an interactive and experiential process (Strubing, 2019).

Research Propositions

P1: Social services brands get reinforced due to participatory and interactive orientation (Beneficiaries' experience, engagement and interaction) of the stakeholders

P2: The orientation of social marketing is reinforced as a result of value co-creation activities

Methodology, Strengths and Limitations

Given the relatively scarce literature on social service branding, we adopted an exploratory, grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Mahrer, 1988). To discover and empirically validate research questions in the business of social services, the research design includes initial literature review coupled with identifying services that embody participative and experiential approaches to promote social good. This may help the study in generating more vigorous, generalizable, and testable theory (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) for value co-creation.

It is appropriate to state that in the given context, the purpose of data collection is to compare the phenomenon in a logical way, to explore the various dimensions of the research issue (Ghauri, 2004). On the same note, Stake (2006) explain that important reason to select some case is to observe how the phenomenon under investigation is performed in different settings. It will increase the likelihood of getting interesting findings, understanding and robust research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009).

The present study involves units of analysis that are beneficiaries of a social services who have helped to get possible difference of observations representing different dimensions of the same investigation, although the main focus has been on the analysis of social service branding. This has been intended to keep the tight design while allowing for "loose ends". These units can improve the insights into the single case as long as it is consistent with its orientation (Gentles et al., 2015).

Theoretical sampling was considered important for the present research as the data collected and analyzed aimed to contextualize the ideas and actions of beneficiaries (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Therefore, the study had to consider also the purposive sampling as it is a non-statistical sampling technique more suitable in qualitative researches (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Pauwels and Matthyssens (2004) mention that in theoretical sampling the investigator deliberately selects the case. Therefore, in qualitative sampling the relevance is the main criterion for case selection not the random selection of a case (Stake, 2006). When the aim is developing a theory, the focus needs to be on the theoretical rich cases that can further extend the theory by filling conceptual categories. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), the logic of employing and choosing purposeful sampling is selecting information rich cases for in-depth study, meaning that the case selection choice is based on their likeness to replicate or to extend the emergent theory (Patton, 2015). Information rich cases enable researchers to learn about the important issues relevant to the purpose of the research (Gentles et al., 2015).

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest strategies of "Purposive sampling" which can be used for case selection. However, researchers are likely to choose and adopt a combination of strategies rather than focusing on a single strategy. Specific study's research question, case design and framework will be influential in the selection of a set of strategies. Patton (1990) suggests that the common point to all strategies is to select the information rich cases for in-depth investigation, and comprehensive knowledge for understanding a specific phenomenon (Shah & Corley, 2006).

The primary source of information was a semi-structured in-depth focus group discussion with recipients of a social service. A total of three groups comprising seven participants in each group as beneficiaries of the service were engaged in an inductive style conversation in the organization. It was ensured that the data set would consist of equal numbers of beneficiaries i.e. two managers, two beneficiaries and one donor representing the organizations, in order to accommodate any potential variation of interest. It was also ensured that all participants had a significant amount of understanding of social services to ensure that they are valid as key informants of the process (Charmaz, 2014). The discussion with each group lasted for about 90 minutes and was recorded and transcribed verbatim and evaluated in line with criteria relevant to the rigor of field research. The data analysis strategies included constant comparative method. The participants of the focus group discussion had been deliberating activities representing day to day tasks of the social service (Blaikie, 2007). These data collection and analysis methods unve-

iled the factors of value co-creation which are instrumental for social services to be known as social brand (Mackey & Gass, 2011).

Analysis

Akhuwat Foundation: The study selected a total of three groups comprising twenty one people in each group who participated in focus group discussion sessions. The participants of these groups were the beneficiaries of Akhuwat Foundation. These beneficiaries were the managers, donors, and beneficiaries and borrowers. At different time periods and dates the focus group discussion took place with these participants. These focus group participants were selected considering the imperatives of purposive sampling (Birks & Mills, 2011). The focus group discussion lasted for about one and a half hours with each group and it was recorded through audio followed by verbatim transcription. These sessions unveiled potential ideas and insights about the key activities that were considered substantial by the beneficiaries of social service. The data produced from the focus group discussion was assessed to draw codes which elicited a detailed analysis of responses of the participants and which were aligned with the propositions of the study (Silverman, 2011). When categorization of the data was done, it was always ensured at each stage that the process had a clear relationship with the propositions of the study.

Akhuwat Foundation (AF)

Group Participant Description	No of Participants	Total no of Participants
Managers	2	7
Donors	1	7
Beneficiary& Borrower	2, 2	7
Total	7	21

Determinants of Value Co-creation in Akhuwat Foundation

The Akhuwat Foundation works in the social sector with a view to generate social good in communities. The organization provides interest free loans to disadvantaged segments of the society. Primarily to explore value co-creation in the organization, interactive, participatory and relational approaches of marketing have been discussed in the literature of marketing.

Some Excerpts of Focus Group Discussion

“Although the service has an effective interface, there is still more concentration requi-

red to improve the procedures related to beneficiaries' acquisition process. Though overall dealing with the service is free from all kinds of exploitations, a little bit more clarity is required to make the execution of lending speedy. This may also involve the contribution of beneficiaries at the same time. A lady took out a loan from the Akhuwat Foundation. Having started a business she used to mobilize the funds for creating employment in communities. "The owner will not deposit it in his account rather mobilize the money in the community to promote self-employment"

"It is our moral and religious duty to get people to stand on their own two feet because many people are poor and can't get jobs for themselves. For this, the resources available at this platform should be accessible for all the stakeholders".

"I am returning you the loan with this hope and request that you will not deposit in your account rather further mobilize it in the community to deliver the benefits of it to beneficiaries". The Lady said.

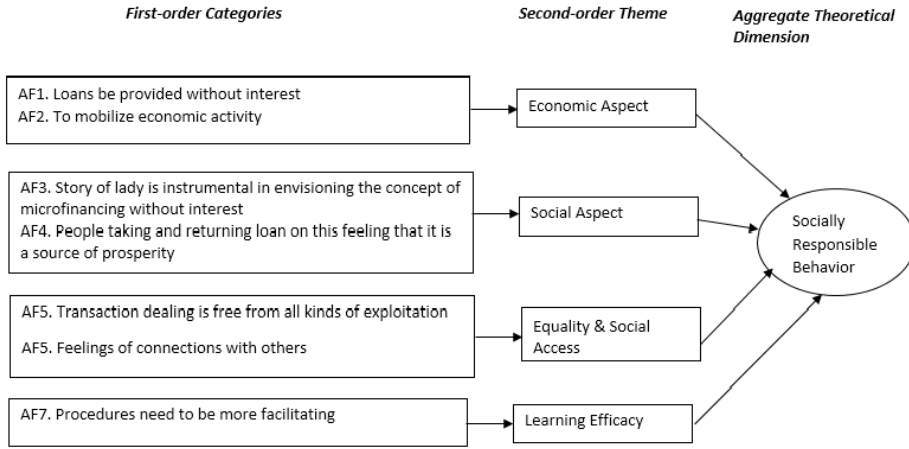
"Sharing of resources promotes the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood which is the core essence of our religion".

"In fact volunteerism can eliminate poverty from society because the time you give others, the passion you show and the sympathies you lend have no substitute".

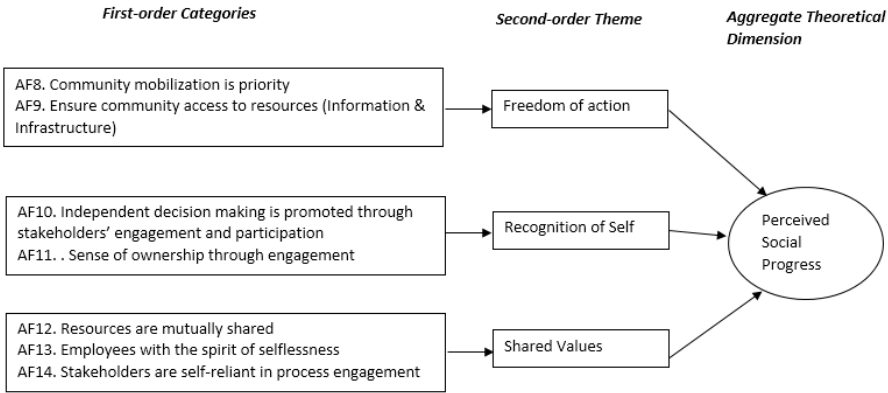
"Interest free loans generate the idea of self-employment thus reducing our dependence on job seeking".

Thematic Analysis

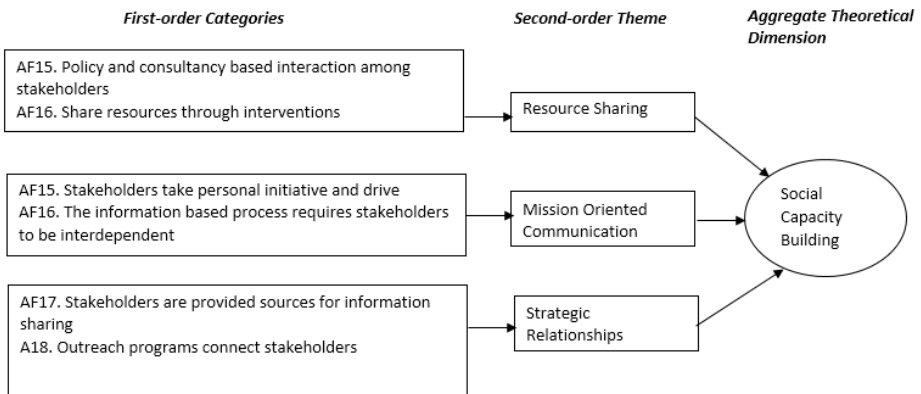
The thematic analysis in this study has been performed using a constant comparison method which assesses and develops themes based on focus group discussion. In this section, the data has been analyzed in terms of data categorization, identification of themes followed by concise analysis that make up aggregate theoretical dimensions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).



For Akhuwat Foundation, the important aspects interpreted by the participants are social, functional and emotional aspects respectively which are the potential dimensions of value co-creation in a social service. The participants expressed these dimensions as significant in generating a responsible behavior. The participants of focus groups defined the role of interactions and their participation and engagement as key activities through which social, functional and emotional aspects emerge. By synthesizing participants' responses, some insights shared by the participants helped in proposing the factor of responsible behavior. Akhuwat Foundation perceived value among its beneficiaries is relatively high that is reinforced as a result of the interactive process. Converging three aspects at a given platform of social service has led to the interpretation of a socially responsible behavior. Valor and Carrero (2014) have posited those activities as socially consumed acts which determine socially responsible behavior. Thus, the study proposes socially responsible behavior as part of value co-creation. The actions and activities of beneficiaries reflect such behavioral characteristics and occur due to shared values, and a shared sense of responsibility further constructing socially responsible behavior. (Han & Stoel, 2016).

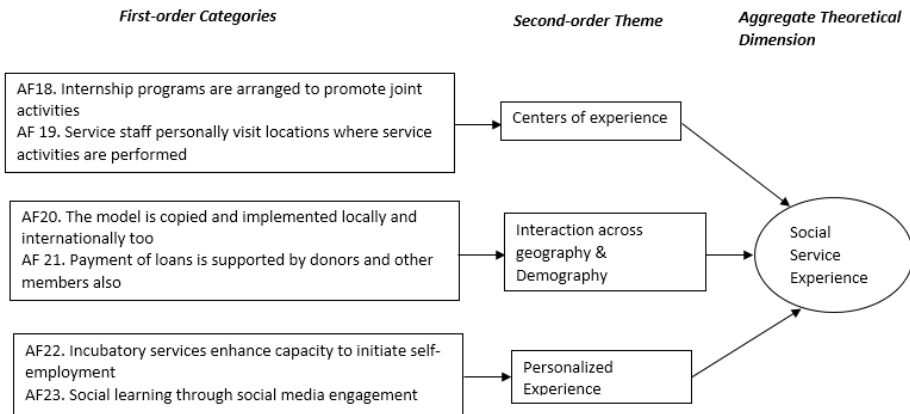


Focus group discussions further generated key outcomes as the freedom of a beneficiaries' action on the platform of the social service, recognizing self, shared values as second order theme. Freedom of actions suggest beneficiaries' capacity to interact. In this regard the establishment of vocational schools by the social service facilitate actions of community members. This enhances their potential for independent and better decision making. Participants describe their experience as increased self-reliance and selflessness adding to shared values for the social progress. Social progress in marketing literature refers to the shared contribution by all the stakeholders of a service that further add to social wellbeing (Lefebvre, 2012). It is thus, known as a social marketing strategy which is largely aimed at improving gross behavior of communities. The study postulates in line with literature Perceived Social Progress as key determinant of value co-creation in the context of social service for (Heinonen et al. 2013).



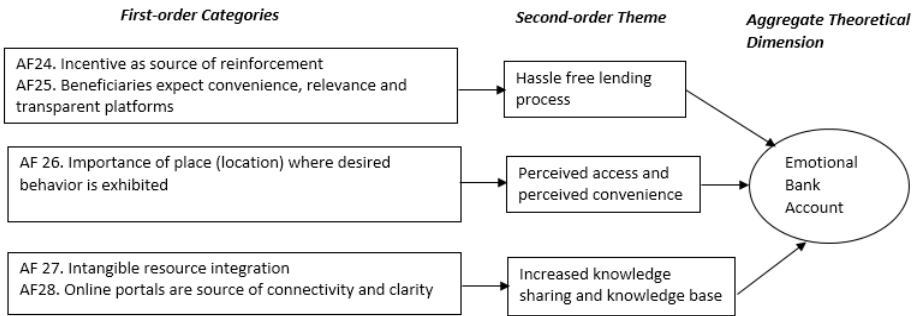
The participants expressed that they collaborated with the social service to make meaningful exchanges. From their discussion some important ideas appeared as second order themes such as, Resource Sharing, Mission Oriented Communication, and Strategic Relationships through Outreach Programs. The themes produced here are much analogous with the research question of the study. The stated themes in the literature are more commonly related to Social capacity building. Social capacity building reinforces as a result of resourcefulness that social service's beneficiaries' experience. Social capacity building is articulated by the participants occurring due to shared information, and interventions that ensure the participation of beneficiaries which in turn increase the likelihood of knowledge and learning capacities.

While shared resources increase the potential of capacity building of service beneficiaries and attach them more to the cause (Merino et al. 2012). Thus activities attributed to shared activities further strengthen chances of employment generation which is the basic objective of the Akhuwat Foundation. De Vita and Fleming (2001) proposed a capacity building framework to address issues encountered by social services.



The responses drew from the personal experiences of the participants which in the literature of marketing have been referred to as *Customer Experience*. This construct has been explained by marketing scholars in relation to service and product contexts (Homburg et al. 2015). Customer experience is more experiential, interactive and relativist in nature (Holbrook, 2006). This construct has not been succinctly defined in relation to social marketing. Homburg, Jozic, & Kuehnl (2015)

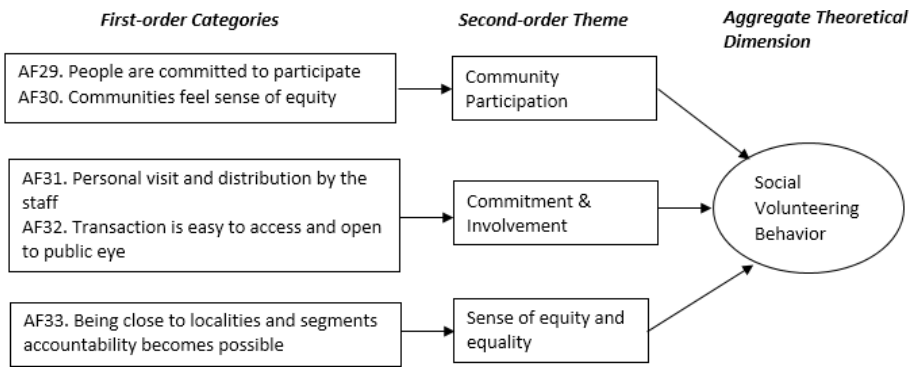
stated that people through joint actions and engagements experience and develop subjective meanings to construct their respective experiences about products or services. This construct has been operationalized due to consumption of service (Padgett & Allen, 1997) which result in development of social recognition, replication, social referrals, and social learning. The participants have expressed learning through various sources of social services as Social service experience.



The participants of focus group discussion credited some factors important for service progression. These factors have been identified as hassle free lending, perceived access and perceived convenience that enhance the level of engagement of beneficiaries, and integration of intangible resources. These factors as elicited by the participants of focus groups are reasonably associated with emotions for products or services (Spinelli et al., 2014). From the perspective of social service these outcomes emerge as a result of the interaction process (Meiselman, 2013).

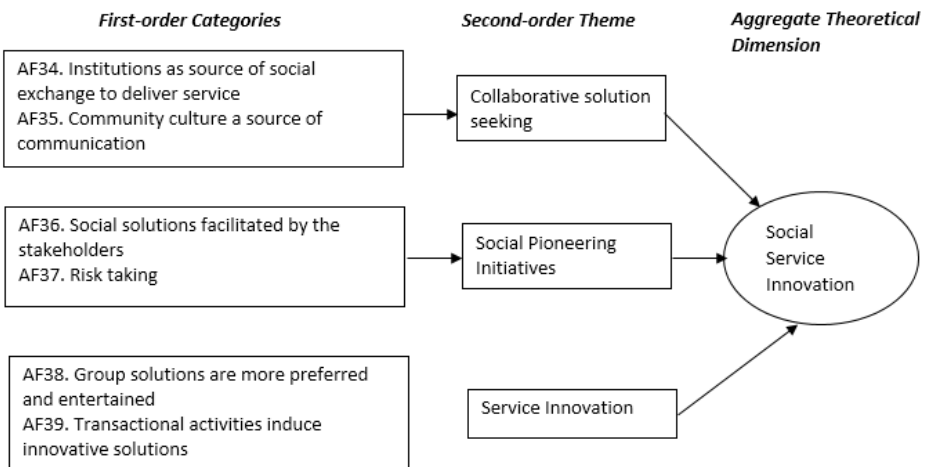
Brand Love in marketing literature is a well-known construct that has symbolic meanings for customers and is valued by extant scholars (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). The basis for brand love is found in the experience of products that customers develop after associating the utility with their perceived expectations. Some intangible resources such as knowledge, skill, motivation and confidence building enhance their liking and feelings for the service (Ranjan & Read, 2016). There are precedents available which reveal such attributes as instrumental and positive to decrease people dissatisfaction about the service (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012).

In their entirety, these factors as identified by the participants of social service have proved to accumulate people sentiments and emotions for the service. In relation to social marketing, it may be regarded as an Emotional bank account for the beneficiaries.



Social services' primary objective is to develop and promote behavior that is pro-social and ready to work on a voluntary basis. The participants of focus group discussion indicated that they have abiding commitment in executing service deliverables. Their participation encouraged by the social service further determines voluntary participation (Lestari, Kakina, & Kakinaka, 2015).

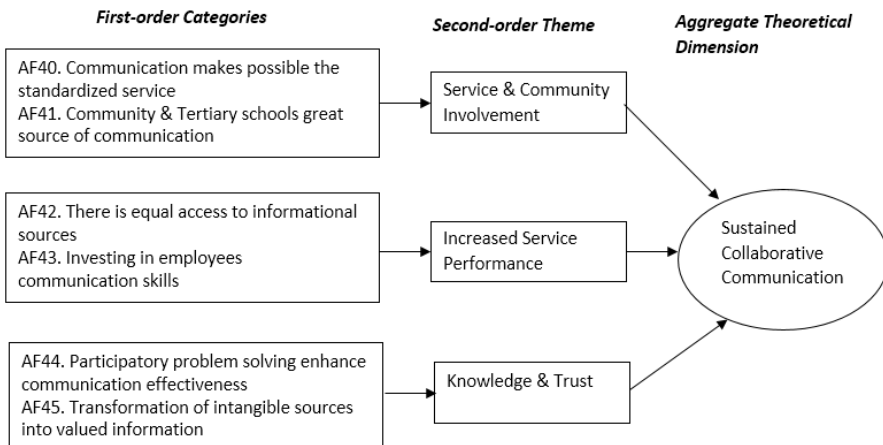
The reasons laid down by the participants are quite synonymous with the marketing concept that suggests value to be created by identifying needs in the form of a market segmentation strategy. Such needs might be explored by the individuals who are working for the service and by those who are related to the service in some way. The participants have viewed nearness of social service to localities of disadvantaged segments as vital for the service. The Akhuwat Foundation, while disbursing loans prefer places which are accessible and open to public for accountability. This enhances participation, engagement and interaction of stakeholders as a function of voluntary participation across the society.



Risks are the intrinsic characteristics of businesses. Even in nonprofit organizations there are potential risks which enhance or decrease the performance of such organizations. The risk factor increases stakeholders involvement and interest in the service process. Social services are considered as being risk reducers when they participate in community programs to promote social wellbeing (Rexhepi et al. 2013). Increased amount of engagement of beneficiaries may be considered as a kick-start for social brands to innovate (Jeremy, 2016).

The views extracted in group discussion were cognizable that the platform of the service is aligned with the problems of community members and at the same time aware of the solutions. This strategy could be instrumental in bringing social change by preparing behavior towards self-employment initiatives which is vital for a social service to be regarded as a brand. A solution identified and proposed by service beneficiaries' works as a tool of social change and is known as social innovation. The collaborative engagement of stakeholders in the process of social services becomes a source of innovation. During the application of methods in collaborative networks, the probability of ideas that aim to elevate social good certainly increases. Thus the discussion has helped elicit an aggregate theoretical dimension of social service innovation which is well versed in literature.

The notion of Social service innovation is supported by Institution theory which states that the actions of individuals and groups are based on their own norms and values. The theory further explains the process of social pioneering initiatives (social innovation) in the backdrop of social change that is aligned with the culture of communities (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). Social Service Innovation as a construct has been unveiled in focus group discussion.



Communication is one of the most important aspects that contributes to the framework of value co-creation in social services that takes place as a result of collaborative, and relational activities. The participants of group discussion describe the shared nature of communication as extremely useful which support maintaining of quality relationships with the stakeholders (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006). Marketing literature has defined communication in the backdrop of collaborations, relations and engagements which has been referred to as Collaborative Communication (Meek et al. 2011). Marketing literature substantially shows that collaborative communication in firms is a base for knowledge sharing and promotes organizational learning process in groups (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudellko, 2017). The most acknowledged product of collaborative communication is the increased amount of trust and commitment shown by beneficiaries in their behavior.

Collaborative communication is considered to be occurring as the tendency of information sharing is high (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006). This becomes possible because of steady interactions between all the stakeholders. When people feel freedom to freely and fairly interact without some social prejudice and due to equality and equity, this tends to create sustained collaborative communication.

Conclusion

The study was conducted to explore the process of social marketing which social services undertake in order to strengthen their social brand status. According to AMA (2013), the entire activity of marketing is undertaken with a view to create, communicate and deliver value for stakeholders. Thus, this definition implies that value is largely co-created. In the present study the process of social marketing has been explored from the perspective of value co-creation which is quite pervasive in the contemporary business epoch. Research propositions were proposed which provided the direction for research. The research sample was a social service organization which does microfinancing and provides interest free loans to impoverished segments of society. The study produced some theoretical and practical findings. The findings of the study show that value co-creation is fundamentally practiced having practical and theoretical implications for social marketing. Furthermore, in order to study a social brand or the concept of social branding, social marketing process is embedded in value co-creation. Value co-creation has gratifying implications that organizations undergo while developing a framework that may further enhance their social and organizational credibility which is imperative for social branding.

The study further suggests that collective participation and engagement of the

stakeholders of social services help to develop a sense of association, ownership and social identity while deriving solutions for social causes prevailing in a society. People enhance social credibility and resourcefulness by integrating their intangible assets. This tends to resolve and address social problems. Social marketing is considered to be evolving using a value co-creation construct.

Practical Contribution

Practical contributions of the study are quite significant for the field of marketing and the society as well. On the basis of this study, we may suggest some viable solutions for the stakeholders of social services. The performance of social services in the wake of social marketing strategy can be improved which may lead to credibility and trust for social brands. The study is significant in terms of adding value to the body of knowledge for marketing scholarship, as well as ensuring community engagement instrumental in promoting the social ethos of organizations.

Limitations

While the study holds potential for social marketers in terms of practically engaging the stakeholders of a social service, the domain of the study could have been expanded to multiple cities in order to obtain a vast understanding of social services' beneficiaries. Though the study has used a comparative contrast method for qualitative analysis, there are a number of softwares available such as Nvivo and Atlas for analysis. Grounded theory implies a longitudinal study for better results, but due to the time constraint this study relied on a cross sectional method. The process of social branding may be further explored using other methods such as case study.

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