

The 5 W's and 1 H of TSR: A Literature Review of Transformative Service Research

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The 5 W's and 1 H of TSR:

A Literature Review of Transformative Service Research

Abstract:

This article is the first to present an overview of transformative service research studies published since its conceptualization. We searched six online databases and performed a content analysis of 123 TSR papers. We categorized the journals according to the ABS list to investigate *who* publishes TSR papers. We classified the type of paper, unit of analysis and the industry sector according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to determine *what* has been researched and *how* TSR researches have been undertaken. We cataloged the year and country of data collection to understand *where* and *when* they have been published. We generated a word cloud to verify *why* scholars have been researching TSR. We concluded that there is a high number of studies on the health care industry, the preferred unit of analysis is consumer entities, and the countries which had more data collected are US and Australia. There is a need to diversify TSR studies.

Keywords: transformative service research, well-being, literature review

Track: Services Marketing

1. Introduction

The service sector represents 63% of the world's GDP composition (The World Factbook, 2017). In 1992 services accounted for 34% of total world employment and in 2017 this rate achieved up to 51% (The World Bank, 2018). Participation of the service sector on GDP has been increasing as the country's per capita income rises, whilst agriculture and industry sectors have been reducing by automation (The World Bank, 2018). The enhancement of the service sector is crucial to strengthen economic growth (OECD, 2005).

Ostrom, Parasuraman, Bowen, Patrício, and Voss (2015) identified research priorities in an attempt to advance the scholarly field of services with the basis on input from a global scale. The most important research priority identified was the assessment of the relationship between service and well-being, a new area labeled transformative service research (TSR). TSR is defined as “service research that centers on creating uplifting changes and improvements in the well-being of individuals (consumers and employees), families, social networks, communities, cities, nations, collectives, and ecosystems” (Anderson, Ostrom, and Bitner, 2011). Inspired by transformative consumer research, TSR seeks to “solve real problems” (Mick, 2006, p. 1).

Cronin (2016) mentions that TSR might be the next trend to dominate the marketing literature. Various academic studies based on TSR theoretical lens have been published since the TSR conceptualization in 2011 (Anderson et al., 2011; Rosenbaum et al., 2011). The purpose of this article is to present a thorough picture of published TSR studies. Herein we analyze *who* publishes TSR studies, *how* and *where* TSR researches have been undertaken, *when* they have been published, *what* has been researched, and *why* scholars have been investigating TSR. Who, when, where, how, what, and why compose the five *W*s and one *H*, as proposed by Whetten (1989) to describe the elements necessary to theory development. Whetten (1989) claims that *what* and *how* describe the phenomena, *why* explains, and *who*, *where* and *when* establish limitations and set boundaries of the theory. This paper is the first study to provide an overview of all TSR literature published since its conceptualization.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection

We started searching for TSR papers in large online library research databases relevant to Business and Management. TSR papers were selected on July, 2018, from six main online databases: Ebsco Host, Jstor, Emerald Insight, ScienceDirect, ProQuest Database, and SpringerLink. All searches were conducted using the keyword between quotation marks

“transformative service research”, to be found anywhere on the paper (e.g., abstract, title, keywords, content). We confined the search to English only, as it is the most used language in science. Quotation marks were used to limit the results to papers that mentioned the expression “transformative service research” and eliminate the papers which used these three words separately on different locations of the text. Since each database uses different search criteria, some specific filters were applied. On Ebsco Host, Business Source Complete, we applied the filter “Academic papers (peer reviewed)”, which resulted in 52 papers. We applied the filter “narrowed by articles” and “return results for business and marketing & advertising” in JStor and found no results. On Emerald Insight the search by “articles and chapters” led to 69 documents. On ScienceDirect, the search filtered by “research articles” led to 18 papers. On ProQuest Database, the filter by “peer reviewed papers” led to four papers. And on SpringerLink, filtered by “English” and “Articles” resulted in two papers. This initial selection led to a total of 145 results, and eliminating the replicates, our final sample was composed of 123 papers.

2.2. Content analysis

We performed a content analysis – an observational technique that systematically evaluates all forms of recorded communications (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991) – of the 123 TSR papers selected. The selected papers were coded according to the journal of publication (*who*), year of publication (*when*), the purpose of the study (*why*), and whether the paper present empirical data (i.e., empirical qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research paper) or not (i.e., editorial or conceptual paper) (*how*). The empirical papers were also coded regarding the country of data collection (*where*), service industry and unit of analysis (*what*).

3. Results

3.1. Who

Services are a multidisciplinary field, and this is reflected by the diversity of journals that publish TSR studies. Our results indicated that 33 different journals published 123 TSR papers. We classified these journals according to the Academic Journal Guide 2018 from the Chartered Association of Business Schools, the ABS list, which is a guide to the relative quality of business and management journals. Journals are rated 1, 2, 3, 4 or 4*. Rate 1 means that the journal publishes recognized but modest standard research, and the ratings increase to 4*, indicating journals of distinction (AJG, 2018). We found that 115 out of 123 papers were published in ABS-list journals.

As Table 1 shows, a full inspection on the ABS list determined that TSR papers have been published on fields beyond Marketing (n= 47), including Sector Studies (n= 49), Operation and Technology Management (n= 10), General Management, Ethics, Gender and Social Responsibility (n= 7), Public Sector and Health Care (n= 1), and Psychology (General) (n= 1). The journal with the greatest number of TSR publications is Journal of Services Marketing (n= 30). The Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS) is the only ABS 4* to publish a TSR research so far.

ABS field - list 2018	Total
Sector Studies Journal of Service Management (n= 18; ABS 2), Service Industries Journal (n= 15; ABS 2), Journal of Service Research (n= 10; ABS 4), International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (n= 2; ABS 3), Journal of Cleaner Production (n= 1; ABS 2), Tourism Management (n= 1; ABS 4), Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (n= 1; ABS 1), Technological Forecasting and Social Change (n= 1; ABS 3).	49
Marketing Journal of Services Marketing (n= 30; ABS 3), Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (n= 5; ABS 2), Journal of Social Marketing (n= 2; ABS 1), Marketing Intelligence and Planning (n= 2; ABS 1), Australasian Marketing Journal (n= 1; ABS 1), European Journal of Marketing (n= 1; ABS 3), International Journal of Bank Marketing (n= 1; ABS 1), International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management (n= 1; ABS 2), Journal of Marketing Management (n= 1; ABS 2), Journal of Product and Brand Management (n= 1; ABS 1), Journal of Public Policy and Marketing (n= 1; ABS 3), Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (n= 1; ABS 4*).	47
Operations and Technology Management Journal of Service Theory and Practice (n= 9; ABS 1), International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences (n= 1; ABS 1).	10
General Management, Ethics, Gender and Social Responsibility Journal of Business Research (n= 6, ABS 3), International Journal of Management Reviews (n= 1; ABS 3).	7
Psychology (General) Journal of Happiness Studies (n= 1, ABS 1)	1
Public Sector and Health Care Journal of Health, Organization and Management (n= 1, ABS 1)	1

Note: the following journals are part of our sample, but are not included in the 2018 ABS-list: Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences (n= 2), Buildings (n= 1), International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing (n= 1), Journal of Research for Consumers (n= 1), Procedia CIRP (n= 1), Service Business (n= 1), Systems (n= 1).

Table 1: Number of papers by journal and field according to the ABS list

3.2. *How and What*

From our sample of 123, 19 were editorial and 32 were conceptual papers. The other 72 were empirical papers, and their methodology is detailed in Table 2. TSR papers seem to have no preferred methodology, as the distribution amongst the empirical methods is even. The

number of conceptual papers is the same as qualitative ones (n= 32), and almost the same as quantitative papers (n= 30). Some papers used both methods (n= 10).

The preferred strategy for quantitative papers is the survey (n= 21). Seven papers conducted an experimental or quasi-experimental design, and two used secondary data, or archival research. The qualitative papers used mostly (20 of them) more than one qualitative research methodology, for example participant observations and interview (n=1), interview and focus group (n= 1), document analysis and interviews (n= 5), direct observation, interview and document analysis (n= 2). Six papers conducted interviews and four applied netnography. The remaining two papers applied textual analysis and a focus group. The majority of mixed methods papers combined interview and survey (n= 7). One of them used focus group and survey, the other adopted interview and experiment, and the last one netnography and survey.

We classified the empirical papers according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Sector. This system was adopted in 1997 to classify business establishments and was developed to provide a framework “for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of industrial statistics used by government policy analysts, by academics and researchers, by the business community, and by the public” (Office of Management and Budget, 2017, p.1). It stands out that 29 TSR studies collected data on the field health care and social assistance industry and that 17 of them are qualitative, representing 24% of TSR empirical papers (Table 2). Retail trade (n= 8) and studies with multiple industries (n= 8) come on second place.

INDUSTRY - NAICS	Mixed methods	Qualitative	Quantitative	Total
Accommodation and Food Service	1	1	2	4
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1	1	2	4
Educational Services		1		1
Finance and Insurance		1	6	7
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	17	7	29
Information	1	1	1	3
Manufacturing			1	1
Retail Trade		2	6	8
Transportation and Warehousing		1		1
Multiple industries	2	4	2	8
Other services (except Public Administration)		3	3	6
TOTAL	10	32	30	72

Table 2: Methodology and industry of data collection

We classified the unities of analysis of TSR papers according to Anderson’s et al. (2013) framework, which explores the relationship among consumer well-being and service entities. This framework presents the interactions among service entities, consumer entities and the macroenvironment, which will result on well-being outcomes. Service entities are

aspects of services that interact with costumers, i.e., service employee, service process, service offering, organization and sector (Anderson et al., 2013). Consumer entities are different levels of consumers that interact with services, i.e., individuals, collectives such as families or communities, and ecosystems. Macroenvironment also impacts well-being. Due to its potential influence on service and consumers, public policy, cultural, technological and economic environment can be considered the most important aspect of the macroenvironment to TSR (Anderson et al., 2013). Finally, TSR focus on well-being outcomes of consumer and employees. Our results show that most of empirical papers had the consumer entities as unity of analysis (Table 3). Consumer entities were represented by patients, users of financial services, immigrants, and others. Eighteen papers had service entities as unit of analysis, eight of them analyzing the individual (such as front-line employees and caregivers) and ten analyzing the organization (such as clinics or foundations). There were no papers in which macroenvironment was the unit of analysis.

Industry - NAICS	Consumer entities	Service entities - individual	Service entities - organization	Multiple unit of analysis	Other*	Total
Accommodation and food service	2			2		4
Arts, entertainment and recreation	3			1		4
Educational services			1			1
Finance and insurance	7					7
Health care and social assistance	20	1	3	4	1	29
Information	2	1				3
Manufacturing		1				1
Retail trade	7				1	8
Transportation and warehousing			1			1
Multiple industries	1	4	2	1		8
Other services (except Public Administration)	1	1	3		1	6
Total	43	8	10	8	3	72

Note: * Other refers to respondents from a consumer panel, donors and subject pool of a large private university.

Table 3: Unit of analysis and industry of data collection

3.3. *Where and When*

From 2009 to 2013 TSR papers were mostly conceptual or editorial papers (Table 4). We analyzed the country of data collection from all empirical papers. Two countries stood out in terms of number of publications: United States of America with 15 and Australia with 14 TSR papers published.

Country of data collection	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	July 2018	Total
Australia					1	5	1	5	2	14
Belgium					2			1		3
Brazil							1			1
China						1	1			2
Colombia						1	1		1	3
Egypt								1		1
France						2		1		3
Germany							1			1
Greece						1				1
India									1	1
Indonesia							1			1
Italy								1		1
Netherlands							1			1
New Zealand								3	1	4
Norway									1	1
Scandinavia								1		1
South Africa								1		1
Spain						2				2
Sweden						1			1	2
Syria						1				1
The Netherlands								1		1
Turkey							1			1
UK					1	1				2
US	1	1			1	1	5	3	3	15
Non-identifiable							2	1	1	4
Cross-cultural			1				1	1	1	4
Editorial			1	1	1	6	5	3	2	19
Conceptual		2		3	1	4	5	12	5	32
Total	1	3	2	4	7	26	26	35	19	123

Table 4: TSR papers by year of publication and country of data collection

The first study to introduce the conceptual basis of TSR was published in 2009, in which Rosenbaum (2009, p.184) mentions that market and public health scholars should “explore the transformative potential of third places on consumer welfare”. But TSR itself was conceptualized years later, in 2011, by Rosenbaum et al. (2011), who cite the definition proposed by Anderson et al., (2011). In 2012 two TSR papers were published, one year later than the date in which TSR was conceptualized. In 2013 there were four papers, one of them conceptualized TSR again, but also proposed a research agenda for the area (Anderson et al., 2013). Following this agenda, seven papers were published in 2014. In 2015 and 2016 there were 26 papers each year and the publications went up to 35 in 2017. Until July 2018, 19 TSR papers have been published in 2018.

3.4. *Why*

To understand *why* scholars have been investigating TSR we analyzed the aim of all conceptual and empirical papers (n= 104). We used IBM Cognos Analytics to generate a word cloud. The data was the research purpose exactly as stated on the papers. We eliminated

onwards and using both qualitative and quantitative methods. TSR scholars are doing an important job undertaking research that aim to unravel real problems and improve well-being and there is plenty of room for intensifying this work beyond the description of the phenomenon (*how*). Furthermore, there is a need to diversify the TSR studies and expand them to sectors and countries that have not yet been contemplated so far. To date the main effort of TSR scholars has been put on the health care and social assistance industry and in US and Australia. Some untrodden NAICS industries could also be considered in TSR research, such as construction; real estate and rental and leasing; professional, scientific, and technical services; administrative and support and waste management and remediation services. Educational service, being transformative by its own nature, could also be better explored. There is a lack of research from third world countries, where most vulnerable consumers are located. There is also a need to study the macroenvironment since most TSR studies has focused on consumer entities.

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