

## **Transformative Service Research: History and Venues of Research**

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### **Introduction**

Humanity lives in an embedded market system (Layton, 2008) which has a service component (Fisk et al, 2016). The service sector is perceived as less important than agriculture and industry sectors (Fisk, 2009) even though the sector that accounts for most employments on the world is the service sector which increased from 38.49% of the world economy on 1999 to 48.78% on 2018. The service sector surpassed the agriculture sector on the beginning of the 2000s and at the end of this decade will account for virtually half of the worlds employments, the other half being agriculture and industry sectors (World Bank, 2019).

With the inception of the transformative consumption research (TCR) movement (Mick, Pettigrew, Pechmann & Ozanne, 2012) the transformative service research (TSR) movement was also created (Anderson et al., 2013). Central to the proposition of TSR (Anderson et al., 2013) is the search for improving the comprehension of value creation to stigmatized and minority groups, and vulnerable consumers (Rosenbaum, Seger-Guttman & Giraldo 2017) generating well being in the co-creation process (Anderson et al., 2013; Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016).

As changes are happening on the global economy there is need for consumer research to focus on well-being (Mick et al., 2012). TSR advocates the well-being of consumers as the central issue in service research, more traditional research interests as profits, market share and consumer satisfaction loose importance (Anderson et al., 2013). Blocker et al. (2013) advocate for a explicit well-being agenda.

Among TSR goals, an argument can be made of reducing inequality and inequity in service settings as the most important ones. Service systems should provide equal and equitable access to service (Patricio, Gustafsson & Fisk, 2018), as most of consumers daily life involves co-creation of service offerings and these interactions influence their well-being (Vargo & Lusch, 2011; Anderson et al., 2013).

### **Research Problem and Objectives**

The purpose of this theoretical article is to present the context, history and research venues for transformative service research, reviewing its main articles and concepts and presenting research already publish and one that it is currently being made by the members of the 2019 TSR group.

### **Theoretical Background**

As Fisk et al. (2016) assert, the time to reduce poverty and inequality is now and in this process service research should also learn for experiences at subsistence markets. As this challenge is highly complex, interdisciplinary groups are required with service researchers who come from different disciplines and use different methodologies.

The context of the development of the Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) Movement is within the Association for Consumer Research (ACR). ACR was founded on 1969 on an informal meeting at the University of Oregon and has grown on an international organization with more than 1,700 members worldwide with its main conference now at its 50<sup>th</sup> edition and international conferences being held at Europe, Asia, Latin America and Oceania (ACR, n.d.; Mick, 2006; Mick et al., 2012). On its website it is stated that “The mission of the Association for Consumer Research is to advance consumer research and facilitate the exchange of scholarly information among members of academia, industry, and government worldwide” (ACR, n.d.).

With the advent of the economy crisis at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a revisionist movement within ACR called for the rebirth of research on well-being and ethics of consumption. On 2004 a group of four members of ACR, being these Connie Pechmann, Linda Price, Rick Netemeyer, and Lisa Penalzoza; was tasked to organize a conference about consumer welfare. In the fall of 2005 the board of directors of ACR approved the formation of a 12 advisory committee to oversee the development of the Transformative Consumer Research Movement. The Kellogg foundation provided an initial grant of US\$ 30,000 and the Journal of Consumer Research contributed

with a special edition focused on consumer welfare. At this point David Glenn Mick was the president of the association and on 2006 his address transformed this aspiration of well-being and ethics on the TCR movement opening announcement (ACR, 2007; Mick, 2006; Mick et al., 2012).

As Mick et al. (2012) state “TCR strives to encourage, support, and publicize research that benefits quality of life for all beings engaged in or affected by consumption trends and practices across the world (p. 6). It involves aspects on the miso, meso and macro level of consumer research (Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016).

Core values of TCR involve improving well-being and encouraging paradigm diversity while highlighting socio-cultural and situational contexts employing rigorous theory and methods whence partnering with consumers entities disseminating valuable findings to stakeholders (Mick et al., 2012).

In this context the first TCR conference was held on Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College on 2007 and organized by professors Punam Anand Keller and David Glenn Mick from Dartmouth. One essential characteristic of the first conference is that it was on a traditional format with submission of papers or working papers to be presented. At the second conference, which was held at Villanova University on 2009, the conference changed to a dialogical format, which means it is more of a research group conference than a competitive paper presentation one (ACR, 2009). The conference call stated “Each track will consist of 12 people who must commit to working on the social problem throughout the entire time of the conference. Rather than the traditional conference in which the expertise of a few people is explored, we seek to explore the distributed intelligence across a dozen people who possess a shared interest in the social problem” (p. 1). At this point it was determined that conferences would be bi-annual.

To be accepted each researcher should present a bold statement of research from 300 to 500 words addressing on of the conference tracks. Researchers would be chosen by their proposed statement of research (ACR, 2009). The conference format was established to be dialogical, on which small group of researchers come together to engage on a discussion that usually results on the co-creation of an article. For a dialogical conference to happen there is a pre-conference preparation on which the selected track members engage on discussion through virtual methods, the conference work meeting on which track members engage on discussion and production of a theoretical or theoretical empirical framework and post conference involved with paper production and submission (Ozanne, 2011).

The dialogical conference format made so much success that it would go on to become the default format for all subsequent TCR conferences, being these at 2011 at Baylor University; 2013 at SKEMA in Lille, France; 2015 back at Villanova University; 2017 at Cornell University and 2019 at Florida State University (ACR, 2011; ACR, 2015; ACR, 2017; ACR, 2019). The table 1 shows the different tracks present over the six editions of the TCR Conference:

**Table 1**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Conference</b>	<b>Tracks</b>
2007	Dartmount	Traditional submission format, however papers were evaluated by “rigorous research that can truly lead to changes in consumer behaviors for common and personal well-being” (ACR, 2007).
2009	Villanova	Poverty; materialism; developing markets; sustainability; health; food; vulnerability; social justice; and immigration
2011	Baylor	Poverty and subsistence marketplaces; materialism; innovative research methods; sustainable products; adolescent risk; multicultural marketplaces; addiction; food and health; and <b>transformative services research</b>
2013	SKEMA	Developing markets; ethnicity; family, health and nutrition; innovative research methods; materialism; poverty and vulnerability; and sustainability.
2015	Villanova	Wastefulness; Alternative Food Systems; Intersectional Poverty; Moral Self-Regulation; Narratives in Nonprofits; <b>Transformative Services and Justice</b> ; Mindfulness; Crimes of Omission and Commission; Life Satisfaction; Social Conflict; Environmental Sustainability and

		Justice; Social Relationships, Religion, Stigma, Children and Materialism; Teaching; Maladaptive Behavior; Health Multimorbidity, and Gender
2017	Cornell	Financial well-being; sustainable consumption; artistic expression; consuming space; ending hunger; consumer financial vulnerability; religion, spirituality, and financial decision-making; subsistence and sustainability; modern slavery; experiential pleasure of food; refugee humanitarian crisis; patient experience; role of culture industries; women and health; food policy and consumer decision making; financial service organizations and financial well-being of vulnerable consumers; narratives and stigmatization process; healing multiculturalism; gender & intersectionalities; overcoming barriers to transformation and maximizing impact; poverty alleviation ; virtuous path; vaccination policy; and violence against women
2019	Florida State	Design thinking, innovative food experiences and well-being; rhizomatic mapping of TCR spaces; understanding the impact of human-animal companion relationship; political polarization; macro consumer behavioral issues in the 4th industrial revolution; how embodiment ownership affects well-being, resource accumulation and marginalization; signage and communities; teens as changemakers: empowering social entrepreneurs; consumer wisdom; <b>refugee crisis and the role of transformative services</b> ; exploring E-TCR; a critical perspective on life and work in the robot age; climate change and sustainability education; transforming contemporary gender and intersectional politics and policies; an intersectionality perspective of climate change, global value chains and vulnerable consumers; theory of territoriality through tactical urbanism; dignity and dependency in the acquisition and consumption of social program resources; institutionalizing intercultural engagement in multicultural marketplaces; examining consumer responses to planned obsolescence; poverty-related interventions; exploring the innovation and influence of youth on family technology use through reverse socialization; Operationalizing critical race theory in a marketplace context; differentiating consumer power to understand vaccination and opioid epidemic responses; preventing youth's online violent radicalization; savings automation; service equity and consumer well-being; the healthcare sector; the intersectional antecedents of a scarcity mindset; improving individual's financial well-being; poverty alleviation through transformative relationships; and developing empathy through design thinking.

Source: Elaborated from (ACR, 2011; ACR, 2015; ACR, 2017; ACR, 2019).

A first glance evidences the evolution on the number of tracks, which is also an indicator of the increasingly growing attendance to this event and indicates the growth of importance of the TCR movement within ACR. Even tough themes related to TSR have been appearing since 2011 only on the 2011, 2015 and 2019 conferences the name TSR have been in the name of the track, which is important because of it is also a statement of intention. Other themes related to service had appeared on 2013 and 2017, specially within the financial services and health thematic.

The table 2 depicts the evolution of the Transformative Consumer Research Movement and the first paper about Transformative Service:

**Table 2**

Year	Event	Description
2004	Organization of the first “Consumer Welfare Conference”	Four ACR members organize the conference and name the topic as TCR
2005	Formation of a twelve members advisory committee	Oversee the development of the TCR Movement
2006	Presidential address at ACR Conference	D. G. Mick presents the topic of TCR
2007	First TCR Conference	First Conference, still paper presentation model
2008	Special issue of the Journal of Consumer Research	Issue about TCR edited by D. G. Mick
2009	Second TCR Conference	First dialogical conference
2011	Special issue of the Journal of Public Policy and Marketing	Issue based on papers developed at the 2009 conference
2011	First Track of TSR	Track organized by Anderson

2013	Special issue of the Journal of Business Research	Issue based on papers developed at the 2011 conference
2013	Transformative service research: An agenda for the future	Paper published on the JBR special edition
2015	Special issue of the Journal of Marketing Management	Issue based on papers developed at the 2013 conference
2015	Special issue of the Journal of Service Research	Special issue on Transformative Service Research
2016	Special issue of the Journal of Public Policy and Marketing	Issue based on papers developed at the 2015 conference
2017	Sixth TCR Conference at Cornell	Track about financial service organizations
2018	Special issue of the The Service Industries Journal	Special issue on Transformative Service Research
2019	Latest TCR Conference	TSR track focused on refugees

Source: Based on ACR information, Mick (2006); Mick et al. (2012)

Each TCR conference which is biannual was accompanied by a special edition, up to 2019. The 2017 edition of the conference was accompanied by a call for papers from the Journal of Business Research and so was the 2019 version, accompanied from a special edition from the Journal of Public Policy & Marketing (ACR, 2017; ACR, 2019). Following the 2011 conference the TSR concept was defined and published on the JBR 2013 special edition (Anderson et al., 2013), however only on 2019 a track with Transformative Service Research appeared on the conference.

As services are based on interactions and relationships, they compose the foundation of civilization. Over the years, service to customers evolved from a condition of “benign neglect” to “active engagement” (Fisk, 2009) and customer co-creation of value (Vargo & Lusch, 2011) is a focal point on the path to liberate customer and create more equitable services, with focus on well-being (Fisk, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2011; Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016), hence Transformative Services (Anderson et al., 2013).

In scenario where markets are becoming more diverse (Fisk, 2009); Blocker et al. (2013) assert that transformative research aims can generate novel services by recognizing the creativity, adaptability and resilience of vulnerable consumers, furthering the goal of poverty alleviation.

Gebauer and Reynoso (2013) affirm that the services in the low-income segment of developing countries have been neglected by the academy. As Venugopal and Viswanathan (2017) conceptualize the best term to refer to people that compose the market below the poverty line is subsistence marketplaces. However poverty and subsistence markets are not a condition unique to under development countries. About 40,6 million Americans lived in poverty on 2016, marking a decline of 2,5 million compared to 2015 (Semega, Fontenot & Kollar, 2016).

As marketplaces compose complex systems (Layton, 2008) and are central at the life of poor consumers across the planet (Venugopal & Viswanathan, 2017) there is also need for subsistence markets service research (Fisk et al., 2016). For Gebauer and Reynoso (2013) service research could contribute to alleviating poverty.

Such concept is suggested as an approach that must encompass the consumer at the micro level, but also the interactions and co-creations between communities and organizations at the meso level generating pressure at governments and international organizations at the macro level (Fisk et al., 2016) in what Kuppelwieser and Finsterwalder (2016) characterize as a mostly customer centric perspective that focuses on consumer entities: individual consumers; organizations and the ecosystem. The most important aspects of the macro environment that can affect TSR are public policy, cultural, technological and economic environments (Anderson et al., 2013). The social matrix in which the marketing system is embedded influences its structure, dynamics, efficiency, effectiveness, adaptation, evolution, resilience and collapse (Layton, 2011).

As systems that respond to a dynamic environment, societies are also affected by their interactions with marketing (Dixon, 1984). Alderson saw the behavior of a market as a reflection of the behavior of organized groups that compose it, even in the case of individual behavior as an individual is acting in the benefit of a group it is a member

(Wooliscroft, Tamila & Shapiro, 2006). According to Layton (2006, 2011) marketing systems are formed by networks of groups, individuals, entities embedded in a social matrix. They are linked directly or indirectly by participation in economic exchange that thorough production processes make available products, services, experiences and ideas in response to demand.

Since a significant portion of a consumer daily life involves co-creating services and interacting with service employees, business should expand their obligations to broader measures of performance, such as consumer well-being (Anderson et al., 2013).

However, in the space between the formation and co-creation of value by services improving wellbeing has also to be considered, because the value created can be positive or negative and also intended consequences can have unintended outcomes (Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016), such as when a service operation increases the quality of it's services, but in the process exclude a segment of its market share because of pricing changes. In this sense, changes in a service system may not always be for the best as Alderson himself stated that marketing systems might be imperfect (Wooliscroft, Tamila & Shapiro, 2006).

As Iff, Alluri and Hellmuller (2012) add at a meso level "Companies in fragile contexts are exposed to a complexity of challenges which often go beyond their area of work and their core business, for example: injustice, inequality and discrimination, local or regional power imbalances and group competition for power and resources" (p. 5). As Layton (2008, p. 225) describes at a meso level "While firm and customer will always be central, equal importance may attach to other roles, including those of information intermediaries, suppliers, etc". Rosenbaum, Seger-Guttman and Giraldo (2017) accrescent that a at a micro level "(...) considerably less is known regarding the effect of consumers entering contexts with differing vulnerability conditions" (p. 310). Investigating consumer vulnerabilities in consumer encounters may enable a deeper understand of how to improve service outcomes in service settings.

Vulnerability is a multidimensional state that influences consumers in the form of multiple disadvantages (Saaticioglu & Corus, 2014). As Shultz and Shapiro (2012) assert, consumer research needs to tackle challenges that impede consumer well-being, a feature of development countries and for Blocker and Barrios (2015) a worthy challenge.

One way to tackle the challenge of promoting consumer well-being through better services is to utilize service design (Anderson, Nasr & Rayburn, 2018). Service design is a holistic process that involves service co-creation in a service system context (Patricio & Fisk, 2011). The evolution of service systems and its increasing importance on the world economy raise a significant challenge to service design (Patricio, Fisk, Cunha & Constantine, 2011).

Patricio et al. (2011) propose multilevel service design (MSD) as solution this ever evolving servicescape. To deal with its complexity MSD is an interdisciplinary approach that blends concepts of service theory such as the service concept, value constellations, service interactions and service blueprinting with interaction design, software developing and service design. In this way, MSD offers a flexible framework that adapts to current challenges on service design.

Service design is an approach that Anderson, Nasr and Rayburn (2018) utilized to study the healthcare industry, highlighting the interface of TSR and service design techniques in a way to achieve practical results (Mick et al., 2012). Blocker and Barrios (2015) propose a transformative value co creation concept, focused on the eudaimonic outcomes of services. Eudaimonia is related with the happiness and well-being of an individual (Audi, 2004) by realizing its potential on life. It is co-created and inter-relational (Vargo & Lusch, 2011).

## **Discussion**

Very few publications can be related to Transformative Service Research as this is a new field. A table below is presented with the classical articles, the articles related to the topic from the two special editions and articles that have TSR on the title:

**Table 3**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Journal</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Description</b>
Transformative service research: An agenda for the future	Journal of Business Research	2013	Conceptualizes and presents a research agenda for the emerging area of transformative service research
Transformative Service Research: Advancing Our Knowledge About Service and Well-Being	Journal of Service Research	2015	Editorial presenting the special edition
Cocreating the Arab Spring: Understanding Transformation of Service Systems in Contention	Journal of Service Research	2015	Examines the transformation of service systems through actors' resource integration and value cocreation in contention
The Transformative Value of a Service Experience	Journal of Service Research	2015	Conceptualizes transformative value
Co-Production of Prolonged, Complex, and Negative Services: An Examination of Medication Adherence in Chronically Ill Individuals	Journal of Service Research	2015	Examines customer coproduction in a prolonged, complex, and negative service context— medication adherence in chronically ill individuals
The Nature and Implications of Consumers' Experiential Framings of Failure in High-Risk Service Contexts	Journal of Service Research	2015	Analyzing data from informants engaged with various types of infertility services, develop a typology of four consumer experiential framings of failure that explore their experiences across three dimensions
Customer Effort in Value Cocreation Activities: Improving Quality of Life and Behavioral Intentions of Health Care Customers	Journal of Service Research	2015	Explores customer value cocreation in health care, identifying a hierarchy of activities representing varying levels of customer effort from complying with basic requirements
You Say You Want a Revolution? Drawing on Social Movement Theory to Motivate Transformative Change	Journal of Service Research	2015	Understand how employers engage employees in personal wellness
Coproduction of Transformative Services as a Pathway to Improved Consumer Well-Being: Findings From a Longitudinal Study on Financial Counseling	Journal of Service Research	2015	Demonstrates that consumers' coproduction of financial counseling services is pivotal for increasing their credit scores and for decreasing their financial stress
The Impact of Online Social Support on Patients' Quality of Life and the Moderating Role of Social Exclusion	Journal of Service Research	2015	Verifies emotional support, informational support, companionship, and relatedness as four categories of online social support pertinent in health care communities.
Save Like the Joneses: How Service Firms Can Utilize Deliberation and Informational Influence to Enhance Consumer Well-Being	Journal of Service Research	2015	Demonstrates how service firms can encourage decisions that enhance consumers' well-being through informational social influence.
Saving and Well-Being at the Base of the Pyramid: Implications for Transformative Financial Services Delivery	Journal of Service Research	2015	Consider how societal poverty, individual saving ability, and satisfaction with one's household financial situation influence well-being.
Billions of impoverished people deserve to be better served	Journal of Service Management	2016	Create a movement within the service research community that aspires to help the billions of impoverished people across the world achieve better service

Transformative service research and service dominant logic: Quo Vaditis?	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2016	Compares transformative service research (TSR) with the more established concept of the service-dominant logic (SDL)
Refugee influx: Repercussions and research agenda for service scholars	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2017	Aims to identify the demands on countries' "service ecosystems" after an influx of migrants arrives in a country, and suggests research avenues for scholars
Transformative service research: research that matters	The Service Industries Journal	2018	Editorial presenting the special edition
Consumers' captive service experiences: it's YOU and ME	The Service Industries Journal	2018	A qualitative exploration of consumers' lived captive service experiences
Transformative service networks: cocreated value as well-being	The Service Industries Journal	2018	Develops research propositions assessing co-created value in a health service network.
Understanding consumers' decisions to adopt technology-enabled transformative services	The Service Industries Journal	2018	Extends understanding of consumers' decisions to adopt transformative services delivered via technology
Consumer transformation through volunteer service experiences	The Service Industries Journal	2018	Introduce a phenomenon called transformative charity experiences (TCEs)
Services for the underserved: unintended well-being	The Service Industries Journal	2018	Understanding stigmatized service consumption practices and their effect on the well-being of these consumers
Heritage site management: from dark tourism to transformative service experience?	The Service Industries Journal	2018	Investigates the managerial perspectives of dark heritage sites and considers how visitors can benefit from and ideally be transformed by the overall experience.
Transformative service research and service design: synergistic effects in healthcare	The Service Industries Journal	2018	Answers the question: How do we design service experiences in whole to increase the well-being of all participants in the healthcare system—patients, families, and caregivers?

Source: Elaborated by the author.

The table above is a heterogenic picture of a concept still in it's infancy. While articles such as Anderson et al. (2013) and Blocker and Barrios (2015) aim to define TSR, Kuppelwieser and Finsterwalder (2016) make a valiant effort to differentiate TSR from SDL logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2011) and articles such as Rayburn (2018) and Anderson, Nasr and Rayburn (2018) aim to investigate empirically.

## Conclusion

This article purpose was to present the Transformative Service Research concept, history and current developments. The TSR concept is a development of the Transformative Consumer Research movement and aims to improve the well-being of consumers in the service system at a micro, meso and macro level.

By explaining its history this article contributes to the knowledge of the topic presenting its definition, most important articles, special editions and venues of research, constituting a basis for subsequent literature reviews and empirical studies that further develop this nascent area of research.

The author hopes that, by this article it can generate a transformative effect on those who read it and they, in turn, can improve well being for others by means of their investigations.

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