The first case experience of designing for service

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Abstract

In order to build a strong foundation for design for service there is a need to develop good courses, modules, and perhaps programs in service design. Regardless of the scope of such teaching, somewhere the students start learning about service design and start learning to do design for service. The first case experience sets the scene for how students view service design, and the opportunities they see in applying design to services. For a long time we used a simple example, to introduce design for service, the tire-changing service. When we turned this example into the first case for the students to work with themselves, it did not work very well. Based on this experience and research in service design, we defined a set of criteria that would help us judge whether a case would be a good first case or not.

In this paper we present the criteria used, a short review of three possible cases, and the case we have chose to use as the first case experience. We also analyze shortcomings of the case, and possible future developments.

KEYWORDS: teaching, service design, case, learning, flower shop, flower delivery, tire-changing, judgment criteria

Introduction

One challenge teaching service design is to find a good first case for the students to work with. Finding any case is not hard, but it might not be beneficial for the students. A good first case needs to be simple to approach, but give several opportunities to work with different aspects and challenges of service design. As service design spans from social innovations over human intensive services to after-market services, the selection is wide, but nonetheless difficult to make. The three perspectives defined by Sangiorgi (2009), interactions, complexity and transformation, would be beneficial if they could be observed and worked with in a case, but as such they don't help in finding a case. At its core service design can be seen as being concerned with designing opportunities to co-create value (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Holmlid, 2010), but finding a case based only on this assumption is a paramount task.

The first case experience for students is important in several ways, e.g. when giving a service design course. Together with initial reading and introductory seminars or lectures, it works as an advance organizer (see e.g. Ausubel, Novak & Hanesian; 1978). An advance organizer often summarizes several of the important aspects of the learning that will come. The first case also works as scaffolding, whether the teacher wants it or not. That is, it gives the students an experience of working with something that they believe they do not master yet, stretching their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). That is, if the first case is too simple, or matches competences students already believe they have, the students will think that the course is easier than it might be, or believe they already know how to do design for service. Moreover, in education systems where students switch courses in the beginning of semesters, it also works as an interest keeper or eye opener, and as the experience the students will talk about among themselves.

This paper reports on the considerations made in rejecting, selecting and creating such a first case.

The starting point

For a long time the first example we presented when talking about what service design is, and the value of working with design of services, was the tire-changing company. In its straightforwardness and simplicity it was similar to the classical shoe-shine shop example (Shostack, 1984), and therefore easy to explain, and quick to grasp.

In most parts of Scandinavia as a car owner you need to change tires depending on season, and this is a huge seasonal business opportunity. It is a well known service, and there are several variations, but most of them are really only about changing tires and selling new tires. As an example this worked nicely. Most people can relate to the service, and some might have tried to change tires themselves.

But, as a first case to work with we experienced some frictions. The main problem seemed to be that the service was not complex enough, and that variations of the service seemed to be too few, until they became strange. The base line often was a service where the car owner books an appointment for changing tires, and makes on the spot decisions whether there is a need for new tires or not. Quickly a set of variations emerge, among those

» the tire changing shop reminds car owners, that signed up for a mailing list, that it is time to change tires,
» the shop owner picks up the car at the owners working place, or
» the tire changing shop is placed in a popular parking space

Other variations then emerge, among those

» the shop is turned into a tire hotel, where the car owners stores their tires
» the shop issues a guarantee that the car owner always will have tires with enough depth

After that, variations seem to take a wild turn, among those

» the tires are stored in automatic storage rooms, turned every 15 minutes
» in the tire hotel each car owner can access a live footage of their tires to see how they are

As variations around the tire changing service these are interesting, but they don't lead development of knowledge and understanding on design for service.

Developing criteria for the future case

Based on the experience of turning the example into a working case we listed a set of criteria to use in order to judge new ideas for cases. The criteria were generated based on our own experience from the learning situations, and from research in design for service. Apart from research literature reviewed in Blomkvist, Holmlid & Segelström (2010), including literature until 2009, we used earlier and later research sources, as well as other sources (such as Parker & Heapy, 2006; Sangiorgi & Clark, 2004; Sparagen & Chan, 2008; Diana et al, 2009; Jung et al, 2009; Junginger & Sangiorgi, 2009; Kimbell, 2009; Blomkvist, 2009; Segelström &

Holmlid, 2009; Pacenti & Sangiorgi, 2010;). The criteria were of two kinds; criteria to avoid and criteria to look for. These criteria were later used to judge other suggested cases.

Criteria to avoid

Too shallow degree of complexity; the tire changing service is a low-complexity service. It is fairly similar to the classical shoe-shine-shop example used in early writings on blueprinting. It may of course be designed with a high degree of complexity, which could be an interesting design exercise.

Too simple layered relationships; the tire changing service carries few relationships and these are structured fairly simple across the layers of the service. The case thus gives few opportunities to deal with issues of relationships in a service.

New solutions quickly become strange; when trying to come up with redesigns for a tire-changing company the space for meaningful redesigns is fairly small. It is fairly easy to suggest tire-hotels, and adding services such as that the tire changing company keeps track of the health of the tires and suggests when new ones need to be bought, etc. But after these, ideas such as web-video of your tires when they are at the tire-hotel, just are plain strange.

Criteria to look for

When it comes to the criteria to look for, these were generated from attributes that we believed were good with the tire changing example, and attributes we lacked in that example.

Need; the service should be one with a clear need, that is solved through the service. It should also be a service that some might choose to carry out themselves, and that many people have a need for.

Complexity; the service should carry some degree of complexity, on the surface as well as in its deeper structure

Systemic; the service should have a systemic nature, with relationships in layers, with people, places, resources, transports, etc. The service should possibly stretch over the Product-Service System scale.

Easy to engage with; it should be a service that people have had a personal experience with, and where the service concept is easy to understand. On the surface the service should look trivial, and emotional values should be directly accessible.

Accessible for studies; it should be a service many people have experienced, and it should be easy to find a service for possible field-studies.

The inclusiveness, size and credibility of the design space; new and interesting solutions should be easy to come up with, and should not only include IT-solutions, but also alternative ways of interacting, new ways of distributing work and resources, etc.

Understandable support tools and processes; there should not be required too much expertise knowledge and organizational knowledge to think about support tools, nor too advanced technological tool or too much complexity in infrastructures behind the service.

Usage of service design tools; the traditional service design tools should be easy to use on the case, but it should not be tailored to these only but allow for introduction and usage of new tools.

And, as a final criterion, we wanted the case to be **scalable** and **modular** in terms of teaching. That is, it should be possible to develop different exercises around the case, in order to scaffold learning of traditional as well as emerging concepts, models, techniques and methods in design for service.

Developing the case

While searching for the new case a set of ideas were reviewed. To get a large overview we looked at cases from earlier research (e.g. Pacenti et al, 2010; Vanstone & Winhall, 2006). We used a structured divergence technique over service situations, starting from a selection of the design contexts used as studio themes for our earlier design master program. The contexts from the design master program were, children, health, strategy, service, interactivity. In the divergence work we chose to work with the three first.

Quite a few service situations were generated, among those day-care center, emergency ward, home healthcare, lunch service for homeless, clothes exchange service, build your own toy, museum, networks for training, the flower shop, parking service, library, health hotel, farmers market, etc.

Some of these will be reviewed in more detail here, bear in mind that they are judged based on the idea that they will be used as the first case students are going to work with. Several of these are really interesting as teaching cases, but maybe not as the first case.

A health-care situation

A lot of us have some experience of a health care situation. And most of us have experience from both good and less good situations. There are several examples in the service design area to look at (Murray, Burns, Vanstone & Winhall, 2006; Janae-Leoniak, 2009; Blomkvist & Holmlid, 2011, Kolterjahn, Adolfsson, Holmlid 2009a, 2009b; Szebeko, 2011). Moreover, these situations don't show any of the criteria to avoid; there is complexity, new ideas don't get silly at once, and there are several layers. But, on the other hand, the complexity might be too large for beginners, in terms of understanding nuances between different organizations collaborating and possible power-structures within organizations. There is also quite a lot that students need to assume, regarding processes, tools, and what kind of resource and knowledge that is needed in certain stages of a health-care service. Roles and knowledge usage within health-care organisations are bounded by layers, rules and regulation.

The library

In a course called "design and research" we gave 2004 a library was used as the venue for using design as a method for research. This worked well, the students came up with ideas ranging from fully automatised libraries to libraries as a place to meet. Based on this experience, we judge the library to consist of too thick and rich infrastructure, and new solutions often get overwhelmed by IT-based solutions.

The parking space

The parking space is an interesting venue for service. It is a service motivated by the usage of cars, the access to other services such as shopping, and structured partly by the planning of cities. A lot is known about the different ways a parking lot can be designed, down to the efficiency of the angles in which cars are parked. In a project run together with a car park operator and a service design consultancy the design of parking experiences were explored (Wreiner et al, 2009). The experiences from this project was that the actual user experience of the parking service is very short, 10-15 minutes, and unless one wants to work with add-on services the service is too simple. Moreover, the parking service is mainly a support service, and it is difficult to argue that parking should be the main service, so the design space is quite limited. Despite this it has an interesting business model that is fairly complex, with a network of actors co-creating the parking value for the customers.

So, even though several of the generated case ideas are good and interesting cases, with a lot of interesting design aspects, we judge them to be less good for a first case experience of designing for service.

The flower shop case

After reviewing the cases we settled for the flower shop case. And narrowed it down to one of services that a typical flower shop mediates for their customers; delivering flowers to someone's door. The short-hand for the case is "you have a flower shop that helps customers to deliver flowers to the door of someone".

The service exposes a clear *need*, that many people seem to have, and you could choose to perform it yourself, from picking flowers to standing outside the door. It is a service of *moderate complexity*, in the interactions there is a set of decisions to be made and a range of information that needs to be transferred. IN the deeper structures there is some complexity, with some organizations co-creating the service, with branding issues, and with the fact that there are two different customers; the buyer and the receiver. The service is *systemic*, that is, there are relationships across layers of the service, that should be viewed from a systemic perspective rather than from the singular points of view. It also uses products, services as well as systems in order to work well. A lot of people have *engaged with* a flower shop delivering flowers at some point in time, and the service can be viewed as one where emotional values are at the core of the existence of the service. It is a service that is *easy to access*. There are flower shops all over the place for direct field studies, and because most people have used it, it is easy to find people to talk to, co-design with and observe. The *design space is fairly large and varied*, new business models can be designed as well as the details of interactions, there is room for increased human dependency as well as more IT-based solutions. And it takes several stages of frame-shifting design to induce silly design ideas. Even though several of the support processes are highly seasonal and heavy on logistics and synchronization, the *support tools and processes seem to be understandable enough*, without becoming overly simplified. The traditional *service design tools* are easily used on the case, and it seems as if allows for new methods to be tried out.

Context for and exercises on the case

The students have been given an introduction to what service and service design is, and some techniques have been described in order to prepare them to work with the case. The traditional techniques described have been service blueprint, customer journey and actor maps. Together with these techniques basic concepts such as touchpoints, evidence, onstage and backstage has been introduced.

The first exercise, for the students, has been to describe an existing flower delivery service based on a flower shop using a blueprint as the main aid to do that (see Figure 1). Following that their task has been to reframe the blueprint as a customer journey, and an actor map.

As a second exercise the students are supposed to develop a new service offer represented as a service concept, potentially new actor maps, service blueprints and customer journeys.

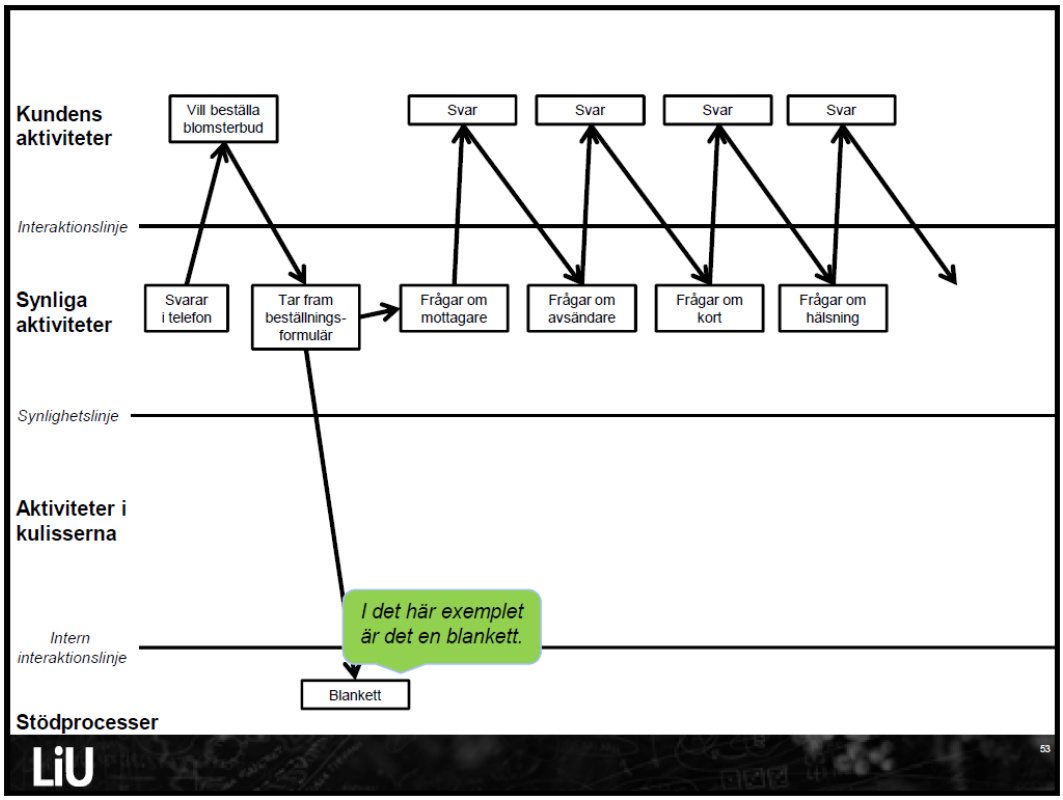

Figure 1Part of a blueprint from the flower shop case

In some occasions we have required that the students work with newer or advanced techniques such as structuring and sequencing their service with service ellipsis (Holmlid, 2011), touchpoint cards (Clatworthy 2009), enactments (Holmlid & Evenson, 2007) or emotional mapping.

Scope of usage

We have used the flower shop case in several different teaching situations (Aalto university, AHO in Oslo, Konstfack in Stockholm, Linköpings universitet, and HDK in Gothenburg); with design students, with economy students, with engineering students, with cognitive science students, as well as with SME entrepreneurs in the service business. It has been used with smaller and larger groups, as well as in groups with students with disparate backgrounds. We have used it And we have not yet experienced that the difficulties come from the case itself, but from the fact that students start to discuss what is actually meant by a service, or from discussing exactly how they should structure, e.g. the blueprint.

The experience is that the case allows for working with traditional service design methods, as well as introducing newer and advanced techniques. We are currently looking at developing exercises specifically to highlight servicescape (Bitner, 1992), conflict resolution (Akiyama et al, 2009), role-playing ()

Advancing the case portfolio

There are of course limitations with the flower shop case. First of all, the degree of complexity in interaction is only moderate, especially in the front-stage and service interface, so it gives little room for simplification from the interaction perspective. It is important that students that go further than the first case, learn to deal with complexity at the interaction level. Secondly, the systemic complexity is low. Even though this makes the case fairly open

for first time students, the challenge for redesign is not very high. Using, e.g., the parking case or a health care case, where the design space related to complexity is high, the need for thorough research and understanding of organizational issues are much higher. The flower shop case makes it possible for students to use their established research skills and analytical skills to understand what is happening and why. But in later cases in service design education, students need to refine and develop their skills regarding researching, understanding and redefining issues of complexity.

One aspect that is almost lacking totally in the flower shop case, is the transformation aspect. Only very few of the new design concepts that the students generated, show signs of transformational aspects. The two driving forces here deals with sustainability issues or branding issues, and the transformation aspects were not dealt with consciously, but were indirect effects of suggested design concepts. Finding a case that also gives the students the possibility to work with service design as transformation, is of uttermost importance. To get there we expect to end up with a renewed set of criteria, a new structured divergence process, and a new round of judgments.

We aim at developing an on-line repository of cases, with attached exercises, that can be shared by teachers. Possibly such a repository will contribute to helping service design education to build on the experience of many teachers in an open climate, and in the long run to give students similar basic understanding of what it means to design for service.

All in all, the flower shop case have been a successful first case experience with designing for service, and we continue to develop this and other cases in order to end up with a portfolio of cases that can be used for different purposes.

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