

Prototyping Social Design in Finland and Namibia

Service Design as a Method for Designing Services for Well-being

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Abstract: This paper focuses on service design methods and the process of innovating user-oriented service concepts for well-being. The ideology of social inclusion is present in this discussion based on development work prototyped with Namibian communities. The paper represents the Namibian social design case as well as a Finnish service development case of a product that supports children's self-esteem. The development process of this service product included using participatory design methods with the users in their experiences both in the creation phase of a product and in the prototyping phase of a service. *Prototyping social design* is discussed as part of the development process.

Key words: *social design, service design, well-being, participatory design*

1. Introduction

Service design is establishing itself as a method for developing services and service businesses. Service needs, new ideas and ways to utilise technology are encountered when the customer and the end-users participate in the design process. A designer can use a variety of tools for including a user in the product development process and acquiring user knowledge. For example, users' self-documentation in probes methods generates many novel insights about the user experience [1]. Visualizing the service experience and different methods for experience prototyping are important aspects of product development process. These methods offer a fast and competitive way to realize new customer-oriented service products.

The process of service design and the tools designers need therein place emphasis on strong social skills, empathy for the users, creativity, and visual thinking. Design thinking has the ability to create concepts, solutions and future service experiences for users. This article discusses the author's co-creation methods in relation to two projects: the Namibian social design case as well as a Finnish service development case of a product that supports children's self-esteem as well as enhancing participants' experiences. Designers work as coordinators in service development projects between all of the stakeholders during the process. Service design connects the areas of cultural, social and human interaction. Use of design methods--research, thinking and visualisation--also acts as a link between the different perspectives in the service design process [8].

During the past two years I have been able to participate in service design projects, developing a research plan and testing service design methods and processes. The research project *Experiencing Well-being - New Service*

Platforms and Mobile User Interfaces for Leisure is concerned with developing service products that support well-being. The research project was funded by the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation. The Finnish service development case in support of children's self-esteem was funded by this project. Hands-on experiences with design research methods, users, co-creation, prototyping and service product development have given me insight into the overlap between service design and design research methods. The service design process uses generative, formative and predictive methods. It implicitly contains the idea of innovation, and can use several methods to concretise a new offering or innovation even in the same development process [6].

The service design process is starting to find its form; yet there are and will continue to be variations. One can identify important factors to consider when developing and applying service design processes. It is important to understand the service design challenge: the users, business environment and applicable technologies. And it is important to observe, profile, create empathy for the users, participate with the users and be visible during the whole process. It is fundamental to include clients and users in design phases of creation of ideas, prototyping, evaluation and iteration for improvement. Additional phases include implementing, maintaining and developing the services. Service design is about operating with business realities [6].

2. Prototyping Service Design in Namibia

The *creative tourism experience* is discussed from multiple perspectives. Namibian craftswomen and their communities represent the host, as is characteristic to the creative tourism experience. The process of co-creation [1] lies in the mutuality between the host--the Namibia craftswomen--and the guests--Finnish artists and designers. This process is actively corporeal and multi-sensing, not only visual. I sought to understand the creative tourism experience especially from the designer's point of view. I propose that a thorough understanding of the context and the tourist experience can benefit both the tourism product and the tourism service design processes as well as the designers who are working with product development, service design and research in the creative tourism context. The workshops were a means to use the co-creation tools and develop the service design concept.

Saffer [10] notes that services do not come alive before people are using the service and walking through the process. Services are usually prototyped through scenario-building and role-playing. I took this process one step further and placed it in the real life context where we walked the process through with Namibian craftspeople. Creative tourism experiences with the local community can broaden the understanding of the local context and offer the opportunity for co-experiencing and a new kind of interaction. Attention shifts from the product to the process of creative crafts production. During the research process I was able to identify several aspects of the creative tourism experience [10].

2.1. The Workshops

The Helsinki-Opuwo-Helsinki and Nawa nawa! Exhibitions and Workshops were long work processes where the workshop participants worked together in Namibia during the workshop and subsequently worked together with the exhibition in Finland. Travel and workshop experiences in Namibia had already included setting up an exhibition about the workshop processes and results at the National Art Gallery of Namibia. For most of the

participants, staging the exhibition was also an opportunity to reflect their travel and workshop experiences by talking about them and processing them. The two exhibitions were not the only means to represent the tourism experience but they were important in the research process. The travel experiences and the pictures were under debate and much time was consumed in categorizing and going through the pictures. The exhibition process gave me fresh insights into the travel experiences and participants' memories. This is by far a unique opportunity for any design researcher.

The Helsinki-Opuwo-Helsinki and Nawa nawa! Exhibitions visualize similar themes. Both exhibitions represent images of creative activities and portray craftspeople engaged in crafts production. Both exhibitions focused on hand production of craft objects and showed technical details of craft production techniques. The exhibitions highlighted crafts production as the main goal of the travel experiences in Namibia. The local craftswomen are represented as masters of the crafts. The exhibitions also wanted to represent their backgrounds and contextualize their crafts skills with broader imagery of their homes and everyday living environments [10].

2.2. Co-producing a Service

The Namibian and Finnish participants worked together with ceramics production during the Nawa nawa! Workshop. Participants prepared the clay with guidance by the Namibian craftswomen. They taught each other different working methods. Engagement in creative crafts processes helped the participants connect and learn from each other's lifestyles. *Co-production of the service* characterizes the creative tourism experience. Working with the local artisans simultaneously empowers both the local crafts people and the visitors. *Co-experiencing* in turn characterizes the creative tourism experience. This feature was constructed through an inter-personal experience of authenticity, which also included the local artisans, not only the visitors [11]. A bonding process took place through sharing personal histories and the embodied crafts process.

A variety of experiences were constructed through the creative crafts process. The creative experience of watching the Himba smiths and the craftswomen working at the Kunene Crafts Centre was seen as highly motivating and generated narratives of the experience [6]. The creative craft process itself was the connecting factor during the workshop experiences. Other experiences stemmed from learning from the local culture and the way of living [7]; for example, the experiential mode of travelling was also an important part of the experience, travelling by bus and car through the landscape.

Experience is constructed through all the senses. The feeling of the materials, smells, sceneries and sounds construct the landscape of experience. The crafts production process is an embodied experience where the participant's own body is used to process materials and sometimes techniques are taught by showing, by hand. Through learning about the traditional way of processing materials and practising skills, contact with local craftspeople is strengthened. Creative tourism as such is very much a community-based tourism effort. These two workshops provided some understanding and experience to the local community members who were involved in these processes. It is important to remember that this tourism form is by far a niche area of tourism; yet, different applications can also be deliberately produced and used in any local tourism market.

Creative tourism has effects on both the host (service provider) and the guest (user). For the host, it gives the means to resist the predominant modes and power structures of tourism. Local community members can re-define their roles and represent themselves as members of a modern, dynamic society. This has an empowering effect on the identity construction and self-esteem of the local community. It also has economic effects. Through the creative tourism workshops the local community can benefit economically in two ways: they receive payment from teaching and they also sell the crafts objects. Crafts production as such therefore is and will continue to be an important source of income for the local communities [10].

2.3. Empowerment

Tourism is and will be an important industry for Namibian craftspeople. Many local economies depend on this trade. Crafts production related to tourism is not only about souvenir production of the replicas of traditional objects. Crafts processes are much more complex and have deep meanings to craftspeople. Obviously economic empowerment is one of the most important effects for local communities. Income generation is a way for women especially to take control of their own lives and claim more decision-making power. As Martha Muulyau from Penduka, a women's co-operative, said: "Women should wake up and become aware!" Craftswomen of the Penduka project told me about their daily lives and the effects of the Penduka project on them. A sense of empowerment is also gained through learning a new skill and a profession that reconstructs women's identities as professionals who can earn a living for their families. The women in Opuwo at the Kunene Crafts Centre, another women's co-operative, also tell this story. Sewing skills that they have learnt have enabled them to earn a living in an extremely peripheral context. Another layer in the relationship between the tourism market and crafts production is the form of self-expression that the crafts production process enables for local craftswomen. Women have used the elements of their cultural context to produce crafts for the tourism market.

Craftswomen who earn their livelihood through the tourism market can be empowered when they learn new skills and become financially more secure. Creative tourism can generate empowerment opportunities for both local communities and visiting tourists. When a local craftsperson can see herself in a new role in a tourism context, this positive and empowering situation helps her to reconstruct a new identity. For example, Hilya Tolu, from the Kunene Crafts Centre, had the opportunity to take part in the Tulipamwe International Artists' Workshop. This helped her to reconstruct her identity as an artist and strengthened her self-esteem. Martha Muulyau from Penduka has struggled her way from a remote Owambo village to become Training Manager of the Penduka community. These kinds of experiences help local women to reconstruct their identities and become role models for other women [10].

2.4. Lessons learnt

Curiosity to see if a designer could find a way to understand 'the tourist' and find an entry point to design products and services in the tourism context motivated the Namibian research case. My research focused on the creative tourism experience, the use of design tools and methods to reveal this experience, in order thereby to contribute something new to design as well as to tourism research. Traditional and innovative research methods were employed to analyze the creative tourism experience and helped me to produce new knowledge on the process of service design. I used the two creative tourism workshops as means to analyze the user experience and

various aspects of the creative tourism experience. My intention was to discover how Namibian craftspeople could most fully benefit from the tourism trade and creative tourism activities while still maintaining their cultural values and self-expression. The use of the workshop as a research method enabled the participatory approach, by including the Namibian craftspeople in the research discovery. Using the workshop as a research method and as a testing ground was also a designerly way to learn from the tourism experience. Being at the centre of workshop preparations and co-ordinating them enabled me to analyze and define the various processes and actors related with it.

In the workshops I applied the experience prototyping method that Buchenau and Fulton Suri [2] introduced. This gave space for new innovations during the process. Design research methods are not widely applied in tourism product and service development. One of my major findings during the research process was that I could apply these design research methods to discover more about the tourism context. The workshops gave me a deep understanding of the tourist experience. Understanding the users' emotions further helped me to find development opportunities for the service. Ultimately, the workshops helped me to prototype a creative tourism service [9].

3. Service development process at the rehabilitation centre

The Kunnonpaikka, Finnish Rehabilitation Centre, has been working with marginalised children for many years. A multidisciplinary design team has worked with the Rehabilitation Centre on a service product development project for activating marginalised children. This initiative was part of the aforementioned *Experiencing Well-being Project* funded by the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation. The service design process in this case progressed in a very similar way to the Namibian creative tourism case. In both cases, the new service and customer journeys were embedded into the existing service landscape: rehabilitation services, leisure service, and so on. The design team in this case study was similar to the previous case: a researcher, design students and teachers [6].

3.1. Background research with traditional and innovative methods

The initial phase entailed determining the central elements for the user experience at the Rehabilitation Centre: identifying existing touchpoints and the customer journey; increasing understanding of the context of rehabilitation; and benchmarking children's amusement parks with child participants. This involved much fieldwork and many interviews at the Rehabilitation Centre and including the staff in the service development process. Front-line staff and management thus participated in a context-mapping session where they produced a vision of future rehabilitation services. According to Jones and Samalionis [3], many executives rarely know what front-line staff think and how they would leverage their services. It is beneficial to develop insights about customers, the business, and the technology in parallel. Context mapping revealed that the future scenario for the Rehabilitation Centre differed significantly, depending on the point of view in the organisation [6].

3.2. Involving the users in a participatory design process

The participatory design phase intended to discover conscious and subconscious information regarding children's experiences, hopes and expectations for the playground of their dreams. Children participated in a context-mapping workshop where they were working in two teams with a physical scale model of a large indoor and outdoor space. They had visual materials such as images and stickers, drawing and painting materials, building materials and small objects that they could use to construct their spaces. After working with the scale model, the team members explained the concepts with which they were working. This type of active workshop method worked well especially with children aged eight to twelve. There were eight children working with two scale models. An expert from the Rehabilitation Centre also participated in the context-mapping workshop [6].

3.3. Scenario-based design

The scenarios were based on data analysed from the background research and from the results of the generative research methods. An expert from the Rehabilitation Centre participated in analysing the results. The design students produced several scenarios based on these results. The Rehabilitation Centre chose one scenario for experience prototyping. The choice was based on feasibility, functionality and potential profitability, as well as the new value proposition that the service product offered [6].

3.4. Experience prototyping

The aim of this phase was to test the service product quickly and inexpensively in order to discover any problems. The Rehabilitation Centre carried out service prototyping with a customer group. The prototyping challenged existing operational realities; this revealed several problems that needed solving before proceeding to product launch. Here experience prototyping as a method served well. We were able to analyse the situation from both the users' and the service providers' points of view and revise the product before the launch.

3.5. Lessons learnt

Jones and Samalionis [3] discuss the pathway to radical innovation and how difficult it is to introduce new services. Focusing too much on current reality makes it problematic to envision a world that is different. This case taught us how challenging it is to find tools to constitute common ground inside the organisation. Even if there is need for new business opportunities, it is difficult to see a common future. Communicating the future with scenario tools helps the various stakeholders to discuss the service opportunities, but for implementing the new service process, new tools such as training, consulting, or new service channels, may be needed. This is especially true if there is need to change the service channels and interaction processes, for example, to alter person-to-person communication, or the ways the staff communicates with customers [6].

Manzini [4] discusses how the next economy re-orientes its activities in new directions. Its products are complex artefacts such as: distributed power generation systems, new food, intelligent mobility, programmes of urban and regional development and collaborative services for prevention and health care. Considered as a whole, these solutions are to be considered to comprise a new kind of service: complex localised systems where different

actors interact in order to produce a commonly recognized value. The result is that, being based on context-related, service-oriented solutions, the next economy calls for a deep change in traditional ideas about production and consumption, and consequently on design.

4. Conclusions

Experiences from the service development with the Namibian craftspeople and the prototyping process in the workshops helped me to develop and test methods to include the participants in the service development process. The process also included the different stakeholders responsible for maintaining and developing the service product. In the Namibian case, the craftspeople were empowered because they were learning new skills, they were receiving income and they found new means for self-expressing their identities. In the Finnish Rehabilitation Centre case, the development case is still in progress at the time of writing. The examples from the Namibian case have taught me how to include stakeholders in the development process through scenario-based design work. In the Finnish case, service design process employing participatory design methods has given me a tool to innovate a new service product that can help in empowering children. One of the important outcomes of the Namibian project is also the increased self-esteem of the Namibian craftswomen as a result of their increased skills and capacities and professional identities. The main difference between the Finnish and Namibian cases is that the Namibian communities are involved in creative tourism contexts wherein the women are seeking business opportunities themselves and developing means for self-expression. In contrast, the Finnish case is very much top-to-bottom driven by management seeking new business opportunities; as a result, the staff are not so much included in the development process.

Finally, I can say that the service development and prototyping process in Namibia has taught me a great deal about community development processes and, of course, about service design process. Comparing these two cases has also taught me that for designing successful service products, it is essential to include the stakeholders in the development process. All the partners, including the hired staff, need to find a role and understand the service that they are trying to deliver and how they will benefit from it.

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