

Latent Theoretical Constructs of Service Dominant Logic

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. The paper explores latent theoretical constructs of Service Dominant Logic (SDL). As pointed out by Leroy *et al.* (2013), there is a risk of premature black-boxization to consider closed the debate on SDL perspective (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Vargo and Morgan, 2005, Vargo *et al.*, 2006) in marketing and management theory. SDL is acquiring an iconic status thereby precluding any further controversy. This theoretical paper on the debate of SDL in management theory (Vargo and Lusch, 2011; Lusch and Vargo, 2011; Achrol and Kotler, 2006) aims to assess its distinctive contribution, also latent one, and eventual pitfalls. This assessment is carried out identifying, selecting and analyzing the main literature on the topic (conference papers, working papers and management reviews articles).

Design/Approach/Methodology. The research design is innovative because it adopts a methodology of text mining on SDL literature base to zooming in its latent theoretical constructs, and authors' speculative reflections, to zooming out for SDL theory advancement.

The literature on SDL - 78 among papers, working papers and management reviews articles - has been examined through a text mining software in order to classify and analyze the literature corpus as unique text corpus by the means of k-means cluster analysis on a multidimensional scaling (MDS) chart.

Findings/Originality. Originality is in the research design. Very few are the literature reviews based on statistical text mining techniques. The expected finding is to assess the real scientific contribution at the date of SDL, identifying its latent theoretical constructs.

Research Limitations. The research has a descriptive and explorative nature. It hasn't been explored, at this stage of research study, any empirical validation.

Implications. To identify further literature research directions for SDL definitive consolidation. The paper is mainly a theoretical one. Managerial implications might be only incidental.

Keywords: Service Dominant Logic, S-D Logic, Marketing Theory, Service Marketing, Service Science.

INTRODUCTION

During the last ten years S-D Logic has nurtured a long debate in marketing on dominant paradigm shifting. Even through the S-D Logic paradigm has been settled in the marketing theory, this paper will demonstrate that it has transcended its literature original domain. At the date the debate hasn't produced yet a clear response. The paper aims to contribute to this debate zooming in explicit literature on the S-D Logic in order to identify its latent theoretical constructs. The (intermediate) purpose is to make clear, at the date, the dimensions and evolutionary patterns in recent years of S-D Logic literature. Speculative reflections by the authors on latent theoretical constructs will be useful for a better understanding of differential contribution of S-D Logic to the marketing and, more in general, management theory.

Several Authors have assessed the impact of Vargo and Lusch's early paper (2004) in marketing and service marketing literature. Leroy *et al.* (2013) have pointed out that the aforementioned paper received the Harold H. Maynard Award¹ and is the most-cited² article in the Journal of Marketing over the 2000-2009 decade. Kunz & Hogueve (2011), on the basis of a quantitative research on service marketing articles citations, quotes the paper among the most influential (ranking=12th) service-related publications over the period 1992–2009. The Authors also measure the “prospect factor”, namely the potential expected influence of the article over the next period in service marketing discipline. Lush *et al.*' paper, published in 2007, is third ranked (2.00) in respect to “Multichannel Customer Management” (4,98) and “Analysis of customer retention and churn rates” (3,19).

The relevance of Lusch and Vargo's contributions (Lusch and Vargo, 2006, 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2012; Vargo, 2009, 2011; Vargo et al. 2010a, 2010b; Lusch and Nambisan, 2012; Lusch et al. 2007, 2008) has been also the consequence of a successful positioning in literature based on contraposition to G-D Logic traditional paradigm (GDL). During the last decade we have assisted to a continuous process of thinking refinement, clarification by the same Authors. It has been aimed not only to assess the evolution of the paradigm, but to maintain high the interest for the topic, too. Several call for collaborations in scientific community and forums³ have been launched or participated by the same Authors in order to further deepen and discuss the potentialities of this new dominant “open paradigm”. That wave of participation has produced inevitably strong interest towards the topic and increased citation performances.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The S-D Logic paradigm.

In 2004 Lusch and Vargo “believe that the new perspectives is converging to form a new dominant logic for marketing, one in which service provision rather than goods is fundamental to economic exchange”. That in opposition to the marketing management school founded in 1950 (Drucker, 1954; McCarthy, 1960; Levitt, 1960; McKitterick, 1957). The latter, identified as Goods-Dominant Logic (G-D Logic), traditionally leverages on the marketing mix process, or the “4 P's” (Kotler, 1967, 1972) as implementation framework.

According to G-D Logic (Plé and Cáceres, 2010), value can be seen as a two-stage sequence (Gronroos, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). First, value is created by the firm during the production process, namely, in terms of added

¹ Harold H. Maynard Award recognizes the author(s) of the article that has made the greatest contribution to the advancement of marketing theory and thought.

² With over 3,370 citations in a nine-year period (2004–2013), this article ranks third among all scientific articles on marketing of all time.

³ In 2005, the University of Otago in New Zealand; in 2007, the Academy of Marketing Science World Conference in Verona, Italy; in 2008, The Forum on Markets and Marketing sponsored by the University of New South Wales in Sydney; in 2009, The Naples Forum on Service held on Capri, Italy. The second FMM (2010) was sponsored by Cambridge University. The Forum on Markets and Marketing held at the University of New South Wales, Australia, in 2008 and at Cambridge University, UK, in 2010, were organized by Robert Lusch and Stephen Vargo to extend the central ideas of S-D Logic.

<https://openaccess.cms-conferences.org/#/publications/book/978-1-4951-2091-6>

Human Side of Service Engineering (2019)

value. This value is subsequently destroyed by the consumer at the moment of consumption. G-D Logic posits that value creation and value destruction are separate and unilateral, that is, they are not interactive. Instead S-D Logic does imply that value is always co-produced and service provision is relational. Briefly (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), marketing has moved from a goods-dominant view - in which tangible and discrete output and transactions were central - to a service-dominant view, in which intangibility, exchange processes, and relationships are central. Vargo and Lusch (2004), in accordance with both Gummesson (1998) and Gronroos (2000), extend the Logic that the enterprise can only offer value propositions; the consumer must determine the value and co-create it participating to the co-production process.

Vargo and Lusch (2004) clarify the different contribution of operant and operand resources to marketing activities, recalling Constantin and Lusch's (1994) definition. Operand resources are resources on which an operation or act is performed to produce an effect. Operant resources, instead, are employed to act on operand resources (and other operant resources). Under a goods-centered dominant logic, customers, like resources, became something to be captured or acted on ("segment" the market, "penetrate" the market, and "promote to" the market), in hope of attracting customers. Share of operand resources and share of (an operand) market was the key to success. The relative role of operand resources began to shift in the late twentieth century thanks to Zimmermann (1951), Penrose (1959), Hunt (2002).

Lusch *et al.* (2008) develop further ten (initially eight) foundational premises of S-D Logic, even thanks to the contribution of scientific community in terms of suggestions for further evolution.

The recent evolutionary steps of S-D Logic paradigm

During the last years S-D Logic had experienced several evolutionary steps proposed by the same SDL scholars. In 2006, Lusch and Vargo pointed out:

- service is the best term to qualify the emergent theory of marketing as *"the application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills), through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself"*;
- all economic entities, as customers and firms, are resource integrators;
- co-creation of value and 'o-production make the consumer endogenous, and are also nested concepts with the former superordinate to the latter in the same way, and with similar implications, as the relationship between service and goods in S-D Logic;
- value creation is a process of integrating and transforming resources, which requires interaction and implies networks. Since service-for-service implies all parties are both value-creators and value beneficiaries, the implication is that the offerer-customer and supply-demand distinction vanishes;
- there is a prevailing G-D Logic lexicon that implies: (1) the connotations of the SDL words are oblique, if not orthogonal, to the ideas it is espousing; and/or (2) what it is trying to explain is often misunderstood.

Lusch and Vargo (2006) advocate a collaboration between the firm (and relevant partners) and the customer allowing for a strategic orientation that informs the more tactical "Four P's." "Products" are viewed in terms of service flows, in which the service is provided directly or indirectly through an object; "Promotion" is reoriented toward conversation and dialog with the customer; "Price" is replaced with a value proposition created by both sides of the exchange; and "Place" is supplanted with value networks and processes.

Lusch *et al.* (2007) extend S-D Logic rationale to firm competitive advantage, addressing nine propositions developed on the basis of the nine foundational premises (at the time) of S-D Logic:

Vargo and Lusch (2008) reaffirm a lexicon confusion deriving from G-D Logic scholars elaboration of S-D Logic paradigm. The Authors mainly clarify that "S-D Logic of marketing," as presented, appropriately, propose an experiential/phenomenological understanding of value. They also argued that the S-D Logic is naturally coherent with social marketing and issues of ethics, and more in general societal issues and non-profit marketing. But evolutionary is the consideration that S-D Logic is not a theory—law-like generalizations, ability to both explain and predict. (e.g., Hunt, 2000). They recognize S-D Logic as *"mindset, a lens through which to look at social and economic exchange phenomena so they can potentially be seen more clearly."*

Vargo (2009) proposes and elaborates a new S-D Logic conceptualization of relationship that transcends traditional ones. Co-creation and service exchange imply a value-creating relationship or, more precisely, a complex web of value-creating relationships, rather than making relationship an option. In particular contexts, optimal (for the firm), normative relationships might include repeat patronage (i.e. multiple, relatively discreet transactions).

Merz *et al.* (2009) demonstrated that brand scholars have shifted their focus over the past several decades from viewing a brand as an identifier to viewing it as a dynamic and social resource. Brand value under a S-D Logic perspective (Ballantyne and Aitken, 2007; Fyrberg and Jürjado, 2009) is co-created with all stakeholders and, at the same time, determined by the value collectively perceived by the stakeholders their own lives. Furthermore, it shifted from viewing internal and external customers as exogenous to the brand value creation process to viewing them as endogenous. Finally, the branding literature shifted from viewing brands as operand resources, and directly connected to the market offering, to viewing brands as operant resources that exist independently from the market offering.

In 2010 there were some contributions inspired to S-D Logic in supply chain field. Performance-based logistics (PBL) has been defined by Randall *et al.* (2010) as a strategy for improving the performance and lowering the cost to sustain complex systems (e.g., passenger aircraft, defense systems, and high-speed rail) during the post production phase of their life-cycle. PBL is a reshaping of business model by MRO (maintenance, repair, operation). This mode of contracting is starting to re-shape how MRO service contracts are being formed. In essence, PBL is about contracting on performance, rather than tasks or inputs by the service provider⁴.

S-D Logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Lusch *et al.*, 2008; Vargo *et al.*, 2010a) has been recognized as a potential philosophical foundation for “service science” from Maglio and Spohrer (2008). Service science is an interdisciplinary field that “combines organization and human understanding with business and technological understanding to categorize and explain the many types of service systems that exist as well as how service systems interact and evolve to co-create value” (Maglio and Spohrer, 2008, p. 18). Service systems are “*value co-creation configurations of people, technology, value propositions connecting internal and external service systems and shared information*” (p. 18).

Chandler and Vargo (2011) elaborate the concept of value-in-context: the interaction among various actors contributes to value co-creation. The Authors propose a multilevel approach for conceptualizing context, which is composed of micro, meso, and macro levels, as well as a meta layer that allows for oscillation among the other three levels of context. This view on value-in-context emphasizes the recursive nature of value co-creation in service ecosystems. In this view, as actors interact to co-create value for themselves and for others, they not only contribute to individual level of experiences, but also contribute to the formation, or contextualization, of the social context through which value is being derived. This social context is composed of several interconnected relationships (Chandler & Vargo, 2011) and the social norms or “institutions” that guide the interaction as well (Edvardsson *et al.*, 2011; Lusch and Vargo, 2011). Akaka *et al.* (2012) extend this concept. “*Value-in-context suggests that value is not only always co-created, it is also contingent on the availability and integration of other resources and thus is contextually specific* (Vargo *et al.*, 2010b)”. But they evolve further the concept affirming that “*the success of a firm can be recast from a logic that focuses on making better products to increase market share in existing markets to one of designing new markets and redefining existing markets and thus dominating them*”.

Lüftenegger *et al.* (2012), propose a canvas model to adapt S-D Logic to business strategy design. The model is based on three variables: market relationships, business competences and business resources. Firstly, the market relationships answer the question: “*how do we relate with our business environment in a service dominant business?*”. Secondly, the business competences, answer the question: “*how do we enact our business relations in a service dominant business?*”. Finally, the business resources answer the question : “*what ingredients do we need to enact our service dominant strategy?*”.

Lusch and Nambisan (2012) give a broadened definition of service innovation: it can be considered the re-bundling of diverse resources that create novel resources that are beneficial (i.e., value experiencing) to some actors in a given context; this almost always involves a network of actors, including the beneficiary (e.g., the customer). They offer a

⁴ For example, in the case of Rolls Royce, the service provided to maintain engines is being remunerated on the basis of how many hours the engine is “in the air”, a concept known as “power by the hour”.

meta-theoretical foundations of S-D Logic service innovation: service ecosystem, service platforms, and value co-creation.

Specifically, actor-to-actor networks imply the significance of service ecosystems. Resource density and resource liquification imply the relevance of service platforms. Finally, resource integration implies the significance of the roles and processes underlying value co-creation and brings the focus on the mechanisms that can enhance such activities.

Major criticism towards the S-D Logic paradigm

Achrol and Kotler (2006), argue that *“the distinction between operand and operant resources is not important ontologically. In theory no resource is inherently operand or operant; it is only a function of the level of explanation and the role (explananda or explanandum) that the variable (resource) plays in the theoretical scheme. Labor and capital are both operand and operant resources. So are knowledge and information. When resources are created or acquired, they are operands. When they are applied to a problem, they are operants”*.

On the same side of criticism even Campbell *et al.* (2013) *“We thus come to a critical realization; the operant (knowledge, skills, mental life, information) is only available within and through the operand (material life), and the type and quality of operant is dependent on the type and quality of operand resource in which it is embedded. The operand therefore sets the possibilities and the limits of the operant. Thus, any theory of service must theorize the bodies that perform service work, the material objects used to deliver it, and the material that it generates, three areas on which we elaborate”*. They propose to see operant and operand resources co-evolving interdependent, so organizations will re-visit operand resources in a new light, not merely as static stuff, but as intelligent entities whose properties are not always “worked on”, but rather followed by, humans.

As summarized by Lusch and Vargo (2011), O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy (2009) consider, *“S-D Logic a backward step for the marketing discipline”*. More specifically, they suggest that S-D Logic: *[. . .] is neither logically sound nor a perspective to displace others in marketing (p. 784); it does reflect an “[. . .] indifference to theoretical considerations” (p. 784); it has had a “considerable impact among marketing scholars, particularly in the USA” (p. 785); it is promoted “as the single best perspective for marketing is regressive” (p. 785); it represents a “wrong-headed advocacy of technology at the expense of explanatory theory” (p. 791).*

Leroy *et al.* (2013) affirm that exists a risk of premature black-boxization of the concept; however, believing the controversy on the subject to be far from over. There is a *“current inability of the concept S-D Logic to account for the heterogeneity of the reality of exchanges and, in particular, BtoB exchanges. The concept indeed functions more as a metaphor than as a genuine scientific construct”*. In order to forestall the value co-creation black box, they propose a scale for observing reality that allows any researcher to zoom in to better determine the level of granularity that suits the inquiry at hand.

METHODOLOGY

Some Authors (Van Mele, 2006; Nicolini, 2009; Leroy *et al.*, 2013) have emphasized the benefits of continuously switching theoretical lenses in literature topic repositioning. This approach has been named (Van Mele, 2006) ZiZo (Zooming in and Zooming out) approach. The research design is innovative because it adopts a methodology of text mining on S-D Logic literature base to zooming in its latent theoretical constructs, and authors speculative reflections on theoretical repertoires, to zooming out for S-D Logic theory advancement.

The research approach is qualitative (Sawhney, 2004; Gummesson, 2005; Spanjaard and Freeman, 2006; Cantone and Testa, 2010, 2011). However, it is both based on qualitative data (literature text corpus sentences) and statistical because it recurs to a statistical text mining technique to reduce the researcher interpretive subjectivity.

The research questions are the following ones: 1. which are latent theoretical constructs of S-D Logic and their evolutionary patterns (zooming in)? 2. What is the differential contribution of S-D Logic in marketing discipline evolution (zooming out)? The literature on S-D Logic has been acquired through a text mining software in order to classify and analyze the literature corpus as unique text corpus by the means of k-means cluster analysis on a

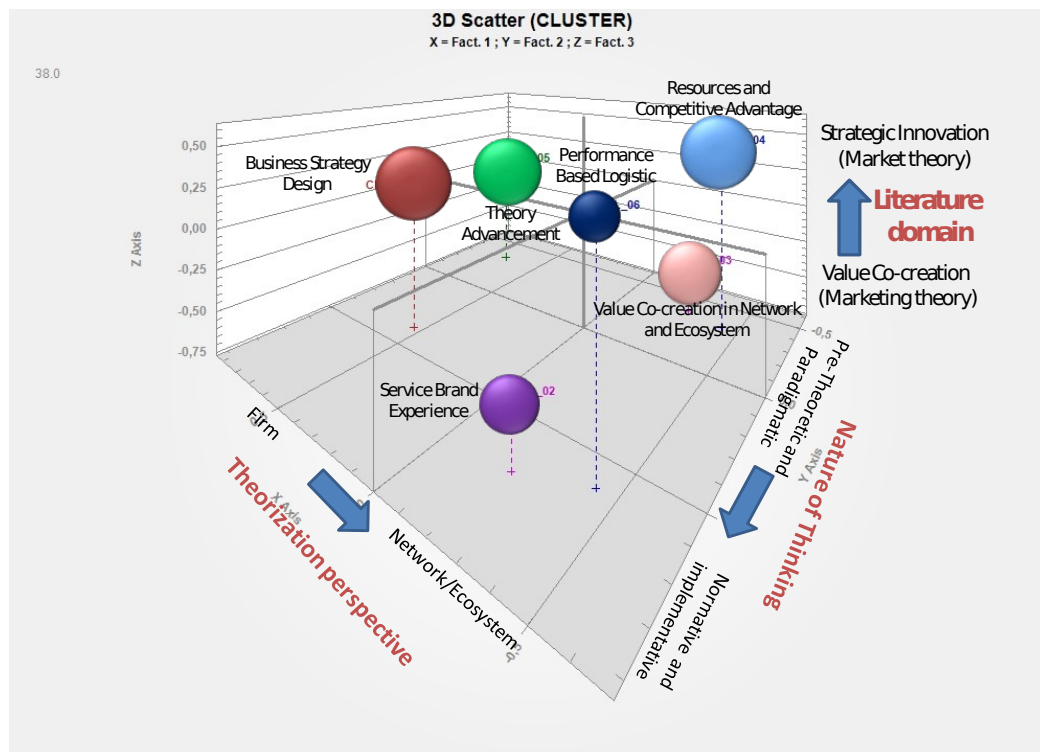
multidimensional scaling (MDS) chart. They have been collected 78 among papers, working papers and reviews articles on S-D Logic starting since 2004 (when has been written the first article of Vargo and Lusch). Among 78 articles, 12 are contributions of the same Lusch and Vargo, founders of the S-D Logic paradigm.

Literature corpus text was analyzed by using a text-mining technique and software, an established social science research methodology. The objective was to identify interesting patterns and relationships in textual data (Feldman and Sanger, 2007; Lancia, 2004), by completing a thematic clustering analysis. Cluster analysis is a powerful procedure that is used to represent the contents of the text corpus through a few significant thematic clusters. They are also identified on latent semantic axes, described by lexical units that characterize the literature's sentences submitted to the analysis.

FINDINGS

As stated above, the cluster analysis identifies the macro (semantic axes) and micro (clusters) latent concepts, namely, the “latent (macro and micro) theoretical constructs of service dominant”. In giving interpretation to the clusters the researcher is aided by several sentences that the software identifies as very inherent with the meaning of the specific thematic cluster and keywords or lemmas (groups of keywords with the same semantic root) much more related to the specific cluster. The following sections report the main findings of the theoretical investigation. The procedure of cluster analysis, conducted by the text-mining software, has allowed to identify six theoretical repertoires (latent S-D Logic theoretical constructs), also defined “thematic clusters”, distributed within a three-dimensional graph, as described in Figure 1.

Figure 1: the macro and micro latent theoretical constructs of S-D Logic.



The first observation that can be made is that clusters 5, 4 and 6 are correlated, positively or negatively, to x axes; clusters 2 and 5 are correlated, positively or negatively, to y-axes; clusters 2 and 1 are correlated, positively or negatively, to z-axes; no clusters are located in a barycentric position in respect to the three axes. It was decided to start with what is called the second axis (x-axis), trying to analyze the meanings of each cluster, considering the keywords that co-determine each theoretical repertoire in order to interpret and name each latent dimension.

Cluster 1⁵. The most important keywords explaining this cluster are *SDL, dominant, paper, study, research, framework, empirical, strategy, concept, strategic business definition, conceptual, model, theoretical, analysis, orientation, implication, question, project, canvas, experiment, industry, Harry Potter, qualitative, design, ontology, explore, DT, step, GDL, observation, subject, propose, sustainability, identify, questionnaire, management, phenomenon, imp, idea, statement, analytic, examine*. These words highlight the attention of literature on S-D Logic, counter running to Goods-Dominant Logic as a conceptual exploratory research framework (canvas) to design a business idea. The following statements are the ones that most clearly express the meaning assigned to the cluster:

- *Because service design is concerned with the design of services, in practice and in research, it makes sense to compare the design discipline with SDL. In this paper, however, I have chosen to explore SDL and design thinking (DT) rather than SDL and service design. The main argument for this is that SDL includes both services and goods in the notion of service (Edman, 2009).*
- *In Section 5, we identify the elements of a Service Dominant strategy. In this section, we use the identified elements to construct a service dominant strategy model: the service dominant strategy canvas (Lüftenegger et al., 2012).*
- *This view implies that strategy is concerned with developing elective resources and capabilities that “correspond to key success factors in the target market” (Day, 2004, p. 19). The SDL draws on a number of ideas that have been in the literature for some time (Day, 2004); scholars have integrated the theoretical aspects of the SDL. Drawing on the literature, the paper integrates the SDL's managerial implications. Specifically, the paper examines the SDL's impact on a) firm personnel and b) the market's competitive dynamics (Finney et al., 2011).*

In accordance with all the statements analyzed, it is clear that the literature references expressed the concept “business strategy design” under a S-D Logic. In fact, they have been associated in the sentences references to Service Dominant Logic, Business Canvas, Strategic Orientation, Design Thinking, mainly under firms and businesses perspective. Therefore, the label assigned to the cluster is “Business Strategy Design”.

Cluster 2⁶ is described by the following keywords: *experience, company, brand, customer, art, complaint, negative, Hotel, complain, disclosure, co-creation, incident, behavior, perception, IC, response, co-production, guest, University, unfavourable, communication, Item, artist, participant, perceive, word-of-mouth, image, student, professor, stakeholder, provider, recipient*. This cluster refers to the brand experience and the key concept in S-D Logic of value co-production and value co-creation. It also refers to some studies carried out under the S-D Logic paradigm on art and artist and university students co-creating brand experiences. To support this interpretation we report in the following main statements that best represent the cluster:

- *These experiences certainly are invaluable and more attractive to customers. Clearly, the “shared experience” satisfies customers more than just “information sharing”. It enhances value co-creation by connecting people to share great experiences around cooking. With Cookpad, customers reduce the time they need to learn about preparing food and learn from others' experiences (Doan et al., 2013).*
- *Etgar (2007) noted that the primary motive for co-production is the desire on the part of individuals to customise experiences to suit to their needs. Within art experiences this is very pertinent. An exchange between two focus group participants demonstrated how individuals customise art experiences to heighten the positive impact of those experiences (White et al., 2009).*
- *For example, Prahalad (2004) focused on co-created brand experiences. This Author proposed that “experience is the brand”. Brodie et al. (2006) defined the service brand in other way: “service brands facilitate and mediate the marketing processes used to realize the experiences that drive co-creation of value (Nguyen et al., 2012).*

These aspects consistent with the S-D Logic considerations. The brand experience is co-created by consumers

⁵ For cluster 1, which expresses 17.69% of the total cultural space, the keywords have been subject to analysis; χ^2 , which is the indicator of the relationship between words and clusters, has a value between 1527,376 and 106,956.

⁶ The weight of cluster 2 is equal to 12.46% of the total cultural space, even in this case we proceeded to analyze all the elementary context units and keywords with χ^2 between 2715,136 and 110,898.

through individual experiences, such happen in the art world or Cookpad service. In contraposition to customer-based brand equity model (Keller, 2002), the brand knowledge isn't a response to firm identity building but it is a "Service Brand Experience", the label assigned to cluster 2.

The thematic cluster⁷ 3 is characterized by the presence of the keywords: *actor, network, interaction, relationship, integration, social, value, exchange, ecosystem, integrate, integrator, co-creation, resource, relational, beneficiary, creation, counterpart, particular, access, transaction, rule, structure, phenomenologically, system, individual, activity.*

In accordance with all the statements analyzed, it is clear that the literature cluster expresses the latent driver of social system value that is phenomenologically created in the ecosystem and or in the network by several actors, even institutions, participating them. To support this interpretation we report in the following main sentences that best represent the cluster:

- *"In this service-ecosystems view, the exchange of service is mediated by networks of interconnected relationships in three ways: (1) networks enable actors to access resources through the development of exchange relationships, (2) networks provide a variety of resources for actors to adapt a particular resources with their unique assortments, and (3) networks enable actors to integrate resources within a broader social context to derive unique experiences while developing new norms and meanings (i.e., shared institutions) and contributing back to the social context through which value is derived (Akaka et al., 2012).*
- *Three central terms in networks are actors, resources and activities. Network actors control resources that add value for other network members, allowing each of them to concentrate on their core competences in an integrated systems perspective (Overby and Min, 2001). The network actors perform activities that combine various resources (Fyrberg and Jürriado , 2009).*
- *Thus, value co-creation is influenced by the shape of the network and norms and meanings that guide interaction among participating social and economic actors. Because social contexts differ, the value determined through use and context is heterogeneous in nature, and value co-creation relies highly on the quality of an actor's surrounding network (Akaka et al., 2012).*

In accordance with these descriptions it was decided to refer to this cluster 3 as "Value Co-creation in Network and Ecosystem".

The thematic cluster⁸ 4 is characterized by the presence of the keywords: *resource, operant, firm, operand, competitive advantage, skill, knowledge, competence, capability, proposition, specialize, source, source, benefit, human, employee, intangible, customer, learn, procurement, tangible, application.* These words highlight the attention that literature on S-D Logic pay to operant and operand resources as source of competitive advantage of the network. The customer is considered an operant rather than an operand resource. Operant resources are intangible ones and related to skills, knowledge and competencies: they are human side and always the result of learning pattern by the actors in network and ecosystem.

The following statements are the ones that most clearly express the meaning assigned to the cluster:

- *S-D Logic recognizes technology as bundled, operant resources. New technologies are created by developing new operant resources, finding novel ways to embed operant resources in operand resources and/or finding ways to "liquefy" (Normann 2001) operant resources (i. e., unembed them from operand resources so that they can be employed separately) (Lusch et al., 2007).*
- *Operand resources are passive resources that require action to make them valuable, whereas operant resources are active resources that are capable of creating value. Competences are embodied in operant resources and the acting of operant resources upon other resources is what constitutes service (Poels, 2010).*

⁷ The cluster 3 shows the 17.85% of the total cultural space. We have considered only lemmas with value between 2410,245 and 100,205.

⁸ The cluster 4 shows the 21.78% of the total cultural space. We have considered only lemmas with value between 2940,494 and 102,912.

- Therefore, if operand resources act as distribution mechanisms for operant resources, and the acquisition of these operand resources by the customer may act as a means of satisfying higher-order needs (i. e. enhancing the customers' own operant resources), then how are operant resources integrated? Allee (2008) proposes that intangibles (i.e. operant resources) get to market in two ways, either through conversion to monetary value or rough conversion to a negotiable form of value that can be used more informally as a type of barter (Peters, 2012).

In accordance with all the statements analyzed, it is clear that the literature on S-D Logic posts expressed the concept of “*operant and operand resources and competitive advantage*”. The concept is broader of that considered traditionally under firm theories, in that resources and competencies (operant and operand resources), interacting and integrating each other differently, produce competitive advantage at firm, network and/or ecosystem level, determining the advantage on other firm, network or ecosystem. Therefore, the label assigned to cluster is “Resources and Competitive Advantage”.

The thematic cluster⁹ 5 is located within the quadrant at the top on the right quadrant, highly correlated to the x-axis, but negatively respect to z-axis. It is characterized by the presence of the keywords: *S-D Logic, theory, science, market, G-D, discipline, issue, Vargo, think, foundational, literature, ethical, foundation, Lusch, paradigm, article, premise, special, Journal, economics, scholar, Shaughnessy, FPs, ethic, lexicon, concept, Service-Dominant, discuss, academic, general, evolution, CCT, Spohrer, mainstream, central, perspective, shift, claim, ground, term.*

It is related to a cluster characterized by S-D Logic literature related to the paradigm setting, in particular due to Vargo and Lusch’s paper (2004), “Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing” published on Journal of Marketing, proposed a general evolution of marketing discipline and ten foundational premises to bring the marketing far from G-D Logic, traditional approach to overcome.

In the following some sentences that better represent the cluster profile:

- *Marketing theory, almost by any definition, implies normative theory. A theory of the market, on the other hand, suggests a positive theory of exchange. “As Hunt (2002) has stressed, normative theory normatively rests on a positive foundation: “ good normative theory is based on good positive theory” (Vargo et al., 2010b).*
- *However, S-D Logic does operate as a framework for developing theory, at a paradigm level or way of thinking about how the world works (although we have consistently disclaimed paradigm status). Although S-D Logic is not a theory per se, we do believe that building theory from an S-D Logic foundation is the ultimate goal (Vargo, 2011).*
- *We believe that S-D Logic provides a framework for theorizing, confirming, and refining the theoretical foundation of service science. To have evolutionary potential, however, both S-D Logic and service science must be co-created. We therefore invite others to create the appropriate conceptual foundation for this new science (Lusch et al., 2008).*

These aspects, which are consistent with the paradigm foundation of S-D Logic, have allowed this cluster to be labeled as “Theory Advancement”.

The thematic cluster¹⁰ 6 is located within the quadrant at the bottom on the left quadrant, highly (and negatively) correlated to the x-axis. It is characterized by the presence of the keywords: *cost, consumer, user, decision, PBL (Performance Based Logistic), price, supplier, buy, lower, performance, improve, buyer, repair, site, information, reduce, equipment, investment, purchase, program, reliability, high, decrease, risk, inventory, internet, increase, maintenances, Cookpad, production, broker return, sustainment, plan, contract, forecasting, order, on-line, content, avoidance, bus, transport, TWX-21, forecast, OEM, CT, product.*

We highlighted a series of issues related to some specialist content related to buyer-seller relationship and Performance-Based Logistic. The sentences that describe this cluster are the following:

⁹ The cluster 5 shows the 20.62% of the total cultural space. We have considered only lemmas with value between 3533,191 and 102,937.

¹⁰ The cluster 6 shows the 9.59% of the total cultural space. We have considered only lemmas with value between 1471,718 and 102,841.

- *PBL uses supplier knowledge and investment to improve the reliability of the system, decrease cost, and then share in that cost avoidance. Suppliers typically have the greatest knowledge of where opportunities exist to improve products and reliability. Typically, upstream suppliers have lower costs and greater cost avoidance potential (Randall et al., 2010).*
- *PBL converts these pools of cost avoidance into a performance-based incentive. The supplier network harvests any cost savings for a predetermined period to recoup and reward their investment and risk. Periodically, new baselines are established for supplier performance and costs. The new baselines pass cost savings on to the customer (Randall et al., 2010).*
- *System reliability: PBL provides greater reward potential for investment driven improvement than sales-driven repair. Improved reliability reduces the volume of repair transactions, decreases sustainment costs, and improves system performance (Randall et al., 2010).*

Coherently with its profiling content, it was decided to label cluster 6 as “Performance Based Logistic”.

Starting from the evidence arising from the cluster analysis, it was possible to give an interpretation to the meaning of the three factors (axes x, y, z) in the cluster’s map as well as described in Figure 1. The x-axis is explained positively by the clusters 2 (Service Brand Experience), 6 (Performance Based Logistics) and 1 (Business Strategy Design), and, negatively, by the clusters 4 (Resources and Competitive Advantage), 5 (Theory Advancement), and 3 (Value Co-creation in Networks and Ecosystem). Therefore, we decided to assign meaning of “Nature of scientific thinking” to the x-axis. In fact, S-D Logic was founded as a pre-theoretic paradigm in order to advance marketing theory respect to G-D Logic. During the time the reflections of the same Authors have been deepened on the role of the resources (operant and operand) for competitive advantage and, subsequently, on the new meaning of network and ecosystem in value co-creation and S-D Logic perspective. Recent years, due to the calls for papers of the same S-D Logic Authors, new scientific contributions have been presented in order to make the perspective more normative and theoretic. There have been new researches on important topics like brand experience and engagement under value co-creation perspective, and Business Strategy Design exploring the topic of Business Model Innovation under the arising Markets Theory perspective. Performance Based-Logistic, instead, is related on the modalities under which seller and buyer may evolve towards a new configurations of service relationship, that permits traditional suppliers reconfigure value system in order to internalize some buyer (maintaining, repairing, monitoring) activities, increase profitability and create more value for the buyer.

The y-axis is explained positively by the clusters 1 (Business Strategy Design), 5 (Theory Advancement), and negatively by clusters 3 (Value Co-creation in Network and Ecosystem), 6 (Performance Based Logistics), 2 (Service Brand Experience), 4 (Resources and Competitive Advantage). Therefore, we decided to assign the meaning “Perspective of theoretic investigation” (firm vs. network and ecosystem one) to the y-axis. In fact, the S-D Logic, as the positioning of cluster 5 in the matrix underlines, has been created in order to review G-D Logic which, as is well known, considered the marketing management model and marketing mix leverages under the firm perspective. Even though during its evolutionary pattern it considered some other topic under the firm perspective, such as Business Strategy Design, recent years it has widened its perspective in order to assess the contribution of value co-creation under business network view and in the overall service ecosystem. Resources and competencies (operant and operand resources) are interaction and integration of tangible and intangible resources in business network or wide ecosystem. The Performance Based Logistics has been developed under S-D Logic and Service Science perspective. In fact, the buyer-seller relationship is evolving under the new perspective in a network relationship. S-D Logic overcome the traditional demand-offer and/or buyer-seller distinction. Brand is the value co-creation that arises in the context when several actors experience the firm value offering in a social and/or business context.

Finally, the z-axis is positively explained by the clusters 6 (Performance Based Logistics), 4 (Resources and Competitive Advantage) and 1 (Business Strategy Design), negatively by the clusters 2 (Service Brand Experience), 3 (Value Co-creation in Network and Ecosystem), and 5 (Theory Advancement). Therefore, the meaning of “Literature domain” is assigned to z-axis. In fact, as showed by the positioning of cluster 5, S-D Logic started as a value co-creation marketing theory. Recent years the Authors have tried to exploit the topic in a different direction towards strategic innovation focus and new markets theory. In fact, Performance Based Logistic is mainly related to Service Model Design in industrial relationship in order to gain competitive advantage and win to win performance in network among those traditionally named buyer-seller relationships in G-D Logic. The topic is much more related to Business Model Design than network relationship. Alike Business Strategy Design is related to the definition of

business equation in new venture initiatives. Resources and competencies are the enabling resources that permit in the business network and/or the overall ecosystem to gain strategic innovation. Recently, in fact, S-D Logic Authors have published some contributions and launched calls in order to achieve a new “market theory” definition. The same recent contribution on Service Innovation can be considered coherent under this perspective. Concluding recent years S-D Logic had an evolutionary pattern contradistinguished by: a. shifting the nature of thinking from pre-theoretic to normative one; b. shifting the perspective from firm to network and ecosystem one; c. shifting the literature domain from value co-creation to strategic innovation and market theory definition.

DISCUSSIONS

S-D Logic is a paradigm presented in 2004 by Vargo and Lusch in counter run to traditional G-D Logic paradigm. The latter is a definition given by the same Authors to traditional marketing theory, identified with marketing management and marketing mix. Over the last decade there have been several calls in literature by the same Authors for scientific contributions in order to permit S-D Logic to overcome the pre-theoretic step and enter the subsequent step of normative dominant theory in marketing. At the date, S-D Logic remains pre-theoretic and, in our opinion, auto-centered. Meanwhile the several calls resulted in an over citation of S-D Logic in scientific community and its affirmation as mainstream general paradigm. We think S-D Logic gives a valuable contribution to: co-creation literature evolution; “contextualization of value” conceptualization; the rejuvenating of the general marketing theory. However S-D Logic can’t be considered at the date an alternative to marketing and strategic management traditional theories.

During this period (2004-2014) there has been a shortage of empirical investigation on S-D Logic and still remains a lack of execution processes or normative implications for S-D Logic practitioners. The S-D Logic school hasn’t been able to propose an alternative to marketing management and marketing mix processes. However, the Authors merit to have made explicit and integrated the relationship among some important emergent topics in marketing theory and thinking. *“New logic is considered dominant and bases its roots in various strands “historic” and that is the result of a long interpretative trail, the Service Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2006), in which all common aspects of old theories can be integrated with a new dominant logic, that can represent the convergence of contemporary marketing thought”* (Barile and Polese, 2009).

In our opinion doesn’t exist at the date a G-D Logic and a S-D Logic but still does exist a whole marketing theory that recent years was already evolving thanks to some important constraints: a growing impact of globalization in economy; a growing relevance of consumer voice in conditioning firm decision on marketing management and firm leverages of marketing mix; a growing importance of digital technologies in giving the consumers and society a relevant role in business environment; a growing awareness of value and co-creation as intermediate goals of marketing decisions and actions.

The marketing management process during last decades has been adapted to such aims. Not good nor service but value proposition is the ultimate goal of marketing action if considered under firm, and, in particular, customer perspective. In laddering techniques, for example, the role of value (terminal and instrumental) in offering had been already explored (a means-end chain model, Gutman, 1982). Fishbein’s and Customer Satisfaction models have long time used to determine the “value in use” of value proposition for target customer. The benefit segmentation has solved the matter of segmentation of the potential benefits for customers deriving from firm value offering. The value co-creation isn’t a novelty in marketing studies.

The debate on S-D Logic has proven that at the date doesn’t exist an alternative to marketing management and marketing mix approach. The same Lusch and Vargo have affirmed *“this reorientation would not necessitate abandonment of most of the traditional core concepts, such as the marketing mix, target marketing, and market segmentation, but rather it would complement these with a framework based on the eight (subsequently ten) FPs we have discussed”*. But complement doesn’t mean to substitute nor it can be considered a new marketing theory without a normative and implementation rules and processes. In S-D Logic, collaboration between the firm (and relevant partners) and the customer allows for a strategic orientation that informs the more tactical “Four P’s.” “Products” are viewed in terms of service flows, in which the service is provided directly or indirectly through an object; “Promotion” is reoriented toward conversation and dialog with the customer; “Price” is replaced with a value proposition created by both sides of the exchange; and “Place” is supplanted with value networks and processes

(Lusch and Vargo, 2006).

S-D Logic theory is nearest rather than far from the assumption of the traditional marketing theory that in the long run has proved to overcome. The latter has proved to be flexible in adapting to some evolutionary emergent topics such as: value creation, value proposition, relationship marketing, value co-creation, consumer brand experience. It has proven to be evolutionary in its nature remaining open to research stream adaptation rather than becoming incoherent with them.

Moreover, S-D Logic has proven in the long run to be too ambitious in its evolutionary pattern. The same S-D Logic Authors have explored strategic management field through disseminating their contribution and implication on service science, resources and competitive advantage, strategic orientation, relationship marketing, network and ecosystem. S-D Logic Authors have leveraged on widening the scope of their thinking rather than deepening the implementation process of the same. It's quite difficult to imagine a paradigm that is urgent and effective in service marketing, marketing theory, supply chain management, service science, strategic management, and so on. It is an arguable signal for the theory appreciation that Strategic Management Society doesn't seem to pay strong attention to S-D Logic thinking, at the date.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This paper present some limitations. It hasn't been considered all the literature on S-D Logic but only the explicit one or all the contributions (papers and articles) presented in the period investigated (2004-2013) and explicitly focused on the emergent topic. They are missing contributions that have cited S-D Logic but aren't explicitly focalized on the topic. The research approach is qualitative and descriptive, based on text mining methodology and speculative reflections by the Authors. The findings of the paper are going to be re-elaborated on the basis of the future discussions in the scientific community.

CONCLUSION

This paper is a theoretical contribution on S-D Logic impact in marketing and more in general management theory. It has been proposed a fine zooming in the literature on S-D Logic explicitly focused on this topic. The text mining analysis, in explaining the latent theoretical constructs of S-D Logic and its evolutionary patterns, has evidenced that during the last decade S-D Logic paradigm has transcended its literature original domain (marketing theory). During the last decade the questioning under a service and co-creation perspective on "Resources and Competitive Advantage", "Service Science", "Business Strategy Design", "Service Innovation" and "Network and Ecosystem" has moved the Authors towards the exploration of a new market creation theory. This evolution is much more related to the strategic innovation discipline rather than marketing one.

Proper this shifting of focus demonstrates that the paradigm hasn't been able in the last decade to produce a normative theory for marketing choices and a valid alternative to traditional marketing management and marketing mix processes. Nevertheless, S-D Logic has produced a relevant impact in literature in terms of citations, paper, article and forums and nowadays is doubtless a theoretical umbrella brand under which they are considered several topics not always near and coherent each other. An important merit of S-D Logic is to have rejuvenating marketing theory reviewing it, has contributed to improve co-creation value theory and "contextualization of value" conceptualization. The contribution to strategic innovation theory has to be evaluated in the long run. One of the proposal for the future is to monitor the scientific production of S-D Logic on markets theory creation, in order to eventually assess the differential contribution.

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