

# *Staging aesthetic disruption through design methods for service innovation*

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*Within the discourse connecting design and innovation, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of cognitive processes in relation to design methods. However, the over-emphasis on cognition fails to clearly identify the triggers of change necessary for service innovation. In response, this article draws on classic American pragmatism and service-dominant logic to highlight the underappreciated role of actors' bodily experiences when using design methods for service innovation. The authors of this paper posit that design methods stage aesthetic disruption, a sensory experience that challenges actors' existing assumptions. In doing so, the use of design methods can lead to destabilizing the habitual action of participating actors, helping them to break free of existing institutions and contribute to service innovation.*

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There is growing interest in the idea that design methods can help to drive service innovation (Miettinen & Koivisto, 2009; Ostrom, Parasuraman, Bowen, Patrício, & Voss, 2015; Ostrom et al., 2010; Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2015). However, design researchers increasingly argue that the popularized versions of design thinking are often superficial, reducing the value of the design practices in which they were originally developed (Buchanan, 2015; Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla & Çetinkaya, 2013; Kimbell, 2011a). More specifically, much of the extant research and popular discourse linking design and innovation emphasizes a cognitivist perspective on design methods (Brown, 2009; Cross, 2006; Dorst, 2011; Kolko, 2010; Martin, 2009), inadvertently downplaying the role of the body.

This overly-cognitive perspective advances a view of design that is often understood as ideation with post-it notes around a boardroom table. Such a

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hollowing out of design methods risks the erosion of their value for catalyzing service innovation as they are implemented at scale. As such, this article sets out to highlight how design methods spark the change necessary for service innovation, a core aspect that is often omitted within the existing discourse on service design. By adopting a pragmatist stance, we emphasize the creative, embodied nature of all action and recognize its inherent interactional and aesthetic dimensions (Johnson, 2015; Shusterman, 2012). Through this perspective, we highlight the importance of aesthetic disruption, a sensory experience that challenges actors' existing assumptions about a situation, as a central catalyst for changing habitual action.

We argue that aesthetic disruption helps to spark the divergent action required for service innovation by adopting a service-dominant logic (S-D logic) view of service innovation as a process of changing institutions (Koskela-Huotari, Edvardsson, Jonas, Sörhammar, & Witell, 2016; Vargo, Wieland, & Akaka, 2015). While S-D logic is gaining traction within design research (Kimbell, 2011b; Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2015; Wetter-Edman, 2009; Wetter-Edman et al., 2014), there has not yet been an adequate understanding of how design connects with service innovation from an S-D logic perspective. Accordingly, this article delineates how aesthetic disruption on the micro-level is a critical part of service innovation on a macro-level by catalyzing institutional change. Thus, this article contributes to service design research by demonstrating the role of participatory, embodied ways of working, which often get overlooked in cognitive narratives of using design methods for service innovation.

This paper begins with a brief review of the existing literature on design methods and service innovation, demonstrating the need for an alternative perspective. To establish the theoretical framing of the paper, we delineate our pragmatist position on the role of experience in catalyzing change among individual actors, connecting it with an S-D logic view of service innovation. This provides the foundation for the conceptualization of aesthetic disruption staged through design methods as a driver of service innovation. We then contextualize this theoretical development through the use of an empirical illustration. The paper concludes with a summary of the ways in which this alternative theorization challenges and advances service design research and practice.

## *1 Design methods for service innovation*

Design methods, which include a variety of approaches for changing situations in the direction of an ideal, have played a prominent role in the design field since the late 1950s (Bayazit, 2004). Over the last decade, interest in design methods has expanded beyond the field of design due to the popularization of design thinking (Kimbell, 2011a). With the rise of the service economy, design methods have increasingly been positioned as a valuable means of achieving service innovation (Andreassen et al., 2016; Holmlid & Evenson,

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