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SERVICES-DOMINANT LOGIC, SERVICE SCIENCE,  
AND NETWORK THEORY  
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**DOCTORAL RESEARCH PLAN**

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**Title of Research Project**

“Emerging Value Creation Models: contributes deriving from Service Science, Service Dominant Logic and Viable System Approach”

**Keywords**

Service Science, Service Dominant Logic, Viable System Approach, Value Co-Creation, Service Systems.

**1. Introduction - State of Art**

The services emerging importance compared to goods, traditionally understood, and their role in all business transactions in the global economy encourage scholars, actors and business experts, to engage in models search, paradigms and theoretical constructs that can describe new value creation processes, representing a significant change of perspective in international scientific literature. Today, many new logics attempt to reverse the relationship between goods and services (referred to conventional paradigms), in order to review the considerations related to their exchange and their use, to revisit the concepts of value and its creation, to reinterpret the meanings of interaction, relationship and loyalty. Starting from the studies and the considerations brought forward by different both public and

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private research sectors, indeed we can detect a common effort trying to sensitize the international literature opinion about the usefulness, the relevance, the role and the applications of the “services” in all production areas e their relevant influence in value generation. Some of these new understandings, considered dominant, result from a long historical process of interpretation and are known as Service Dominant Logic (S-D logic, Vargo, Lusch, 2004a, 2006), and Service Science (SSME, Maglio, Spohrer, 2008a), both good for service-centred studies of economists, sociologists, engineers and mathematicians, and focused on a new service concept.

The Service Idea is not new (Borgonovi, 1996, Rullani, 1997; Baccarani, 1997), but in line with the changes in global markets ever more interconnected, dynamic and characterized by strong turbulence, now we can see an increasing presence of services in all productions of nowadays so called Service Economy (Levitt, 1981), and the classical dichotomy between goods and services tends gradually to shade and loose significance (Kotler, 1977; Normann, 1991; Rispoli, Tamma, 1992; Cercola 1996). Today firms, including industrial companies, always consider the possibility of enriching its whole supply with the services addition, looking for interaction opportunities, respect and loyalty, not traditionally involved in the physical asset itself, reviewing business role and its relation to the market (Grönroos, 2000; 2006). The classical logic, based on the clear separation between producers and consumers and on the simple distinction between goods and services, are now called the “logic of the past” (Drucker, 1993), in contrast with recent interpretations based on networked relationships, continuing interactions, value co-creation (Ravald, Grönroos, 1996; Grönroos, 2008), all considered more confident with the modern economy (Rust, 2004).

According to this, goods can be considered as an appliance for services provision (real contributions for effective value in products) and service is defined as the application of specialized

competences (operand resources, knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself; the Service, represents the general case, the common denominator of the exchange process, Service is what is always exchanged (Vargo, Lusch, 2004a; Vargo, Lusch, 2004b; Vargo, Morgan, 2005). The service is also considered as a system of interacting and interdependent parts, involving people, technologies and business activities (Maglio, Srinivasan, Kreulen, Spohrer, 2006), constantly related to the outside, in order to implement its own distinctive characteristics and to achieve and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. Finally, services are viewed as acts performer for others, including the provision of resources that others will use (Alter, 2008).

There is a strict link between new considerations of service and modern value creation interpretations. Value creation processes, seen in the Service Logic view, follow a defined interpretation way: a) leaving from classic value supply chain (Porter, 1980); b) going to a value constellation (Normann, Ramirez, 1995), as the cornerstone of the creative process value, in which customers are no longer viewed as “destroyers” of value proposed by companies, but as central element (Moeller, 2008), also present in the stages before consumption. So, under service logics, customers really provide a significant “plus” for production (and then for co-creation) and therefore are able to be fundamental for competitive and sustainable advantage achievement (Woodruff, 1997).

In terms of value creation, a key contribution certainly comes also from the Viable System Approach (VSA - Golinelli, 2005), which postulates that the company looks like a system, characterized by a changing and dynamic structure (set of individual elements with assigned roles, activities and tasks performing in compliance with rules and constraints), that must enforce long-run relationships with external systems (Golinelli, Pastore, Gatti, Massaroni, Vagnani, 2002). Value generation process is generally managed

inside operating systems through internal components and resources activation and integration, in order to increase their competitiveness and therefore to enhance their survival chances (Golinelli, 2005; Mella, 2005; Golinelli, 2008; Barile, 2008). These “relational” systems, following service logics, now are also considered as dynamic configuration of resources (people, technology, organisations and shared information) that creates and delivers value between the provider and the customer through service (Spohrer, Maglio, Bailey, Gruhl, 2007). Systems are always linked and interested to their context valorising well-known environmental relations (Zappa, 1956; Saraceno, 1972; Fazzi, 1982); inside them, available resources are set up by specialized skills and knowledge (generally understood), that can really become important factors for business success and value creation (Grandinetti, 1994; Rullani, 2004), with the aim to create also the basis for systematic service innovation (IfM, IBM, 2008).

## **2. Methodological Approach and first Literature Review**

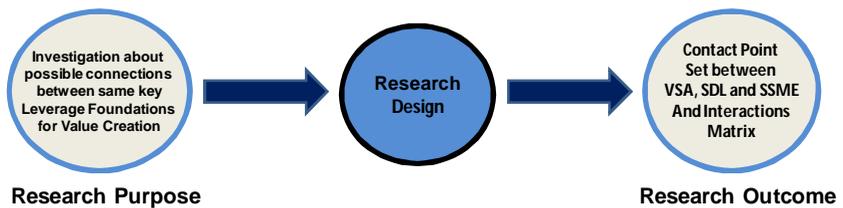
Life nowadays is complex, dense, articulated, interconnected.

All what we are observing, or researching on, always it deals with a complex mainframe in which individuals, communities, organizations, businesses, public and private entities daily interact with each other. These interactions seem to show that modern society, as well a modern business arena, constantly demonstrating how knowledge, know how, relations and interconnections may contribute to a powerful value proposition in growing service needs.

Among the different focus areas identified for value concept and the mechanisms for its creation (observed in the new international perspective of US Science Service and Service Dominant Logic and in the Italian Viable System Approach), we believe that the growth of the interacting value elements is particularly important and an interesting object of study, and therefore it deserves to be further investigated.

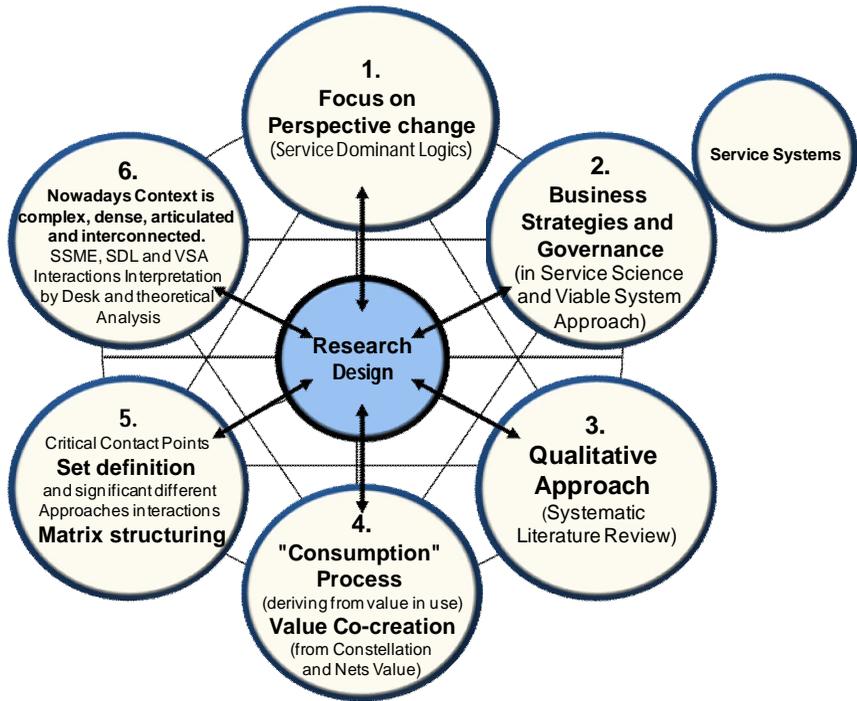
Then the Research purpose focuses on investigation about possible connections between same nowadays key leverage foundations for value creation processes (as showed in fig. 1). With the development of a specific research design, expected research outcomes can be finally represented as a contact point set of different approaches (Service Science, Service Dominant Logic, Viable System Approach) and a significant interactions matrix definition, about different interpretations on value creation.

**Figure 1:** Research STRUCTURE



Methodological approach used for this research design consider a circular structure, involving several interrelated steps, following research philosophy proposed recently by Huff (2009), and it is built, as follow (fig. 2).

**Figure 2: Research DESIGN**



Research design provides 6 main steps. Starting from our first attempts of epistemology definition and scientific Research framework identification (focused on new dominant logics in international literature), we wanted to stress significant perspective change in nowadays service logics (step 1). Then we tried to deepen different Approaches of VSA, SDL and SSME Paradigms in terms of Value Creation, Relationships, Systems and Service Systems, inside Business Strategies and Governance interpretation (step 2). After a systematic literature review (as taught by Huff, 2009), most important references in international literature were grouped (as shown as follow using 2009 Huff’s Model, fig. 3), considering different content clusters about value

creation, service centred, service systems, co-creation, networks relations, all analyzed under three macro perspectives of Management, Strategies and Organizations (step 3). Now, we want to define a specific “Research idea to verify”, based on main consideration about value creation processes deriving from previous phases (focusing on *consumption* process of value *co-creation*) (step 4), in order to: list a set of contact point, to plan a parametrical qualitative evaluation for the table of these relevant elements for each Paradigm, to define and structure a conceptual matrix for linked interpretations (step 5). Finally it will be planned a Desk theoretical analysis (step 6), finalized to interpret different points of view, inside studied conceptual contexts and verify the opportunity to enlarge application fields of service logics.

Main acknowledgements about investigated approaches are today referred to several references: by texts of Maglio and Spohrer, almost referred to all survey elements of our research (considering also multidisciplinary scientific pillars of SSME); by works of Vargo and Lusch, especially bounded at business strategies about value co-creation processes and service-centred guidance (because of marketing direct implications of SDL); by manuals of Golinelli and Barile, instead focused on business management perspective both for systems and value co-creation; finally by proposals of Gummesson, more closed to organizational and strategic aspects of networked entities relations (linked to its many to many relational approach).

**Figure 3: Research LITERATURE REVIEW**

Articles	Concepts														
	Value Creation			Service Centred			Nets Relations			Service Systems			Co-creation		
	S	M	O	S	M	O	S	M	O	S	M	O	S	M	O
1			■	■				■		■	■	■	■		
2	■			■					■				■		
3		■									■			■	
4									■		■			■	
5		■				■	■						■		
<i>Units of Analysis Legend: S (Strategies), M (Management), O (Organizations).</i>															
1.	Maglio, P.P., Spohrer, J. eds (2008), "Special issue on Service Science, Management, and Engineering", in <i>IBM Systems Journal</i> , vol.47, n.1.														
2.	Vargo, S.L., Lusch, R.F. eds. (2006), <i>The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions</i> . Armonk, ME Sharpe.														
3.	Golinelli, G.M. (2009), <i>Business Management. A Viable System Approach</i> , forthcoming.														
4.	Barile, S. (2008), <i>L'impresa come sistema. Contributi sull'approccio sistemico vitale</i> , Giappichelli, Torino.														
5.	Gummesson, E. (2008), <i>Total Relationship Marketing</i> , 3rd Ed., Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington.														

### 3. Findings - Research Goals

To date, the Science Service and especially the Service Dominant Logic (now almost exclusively referred to marketing policies and strategies) are still a work in progress, a paradigm continuously supplemented by studies and considerations arising from an new emerging scenarios, analyzed, interpreted and discussed in a Open Source Culture. For instance, Service Science is recently evolving in SSMED considering also the “Design” (Spohrer, Anderson, Pass, Ager, 2008) and same Foundational Premises of SDL soon were reviewed and updated, above all by their original Authors (Vargo, Lusch, 2008).

Despite the arising of a real Service Science, favouring and stimulating a true “frontier research”, in Italy literature few

studies are now following and deepening new service concepts. So this Research purpose allow to study, understand, learn and try to interpret the emerging new logic of the value creation processes, attempting to verify the possible applicability of the Service logics foundations for several important aspects of the Business Management, in order: i) to find critical contact points with the Viable System Approach, ii) to establish the similarity between VSA Structure and SDL Products, between the VSA System emerging from the structure and SDL Service, iii) to deepen the study on the processes of value creation and Business relationships arising from these innovative interpretations, iv) to define significant interactions between three different Approaches, about value creation processes.

Main objectives of the this Project Research are then summarized as follow:

- to contribute to identify the range of applications of Service Science and the S-D logic;
- to connect and relate Science Service and S-D logic foundations to VSA Paradigm; setting a parametrical table to group significant and most relevant contact point;
- to list an useful set of critical contact points between three Paradigms, defining eventually similar elements;
- to structure a theoretical and conceptual matrix to define three different Approaches interaction on value creation theme.

#### **4. Preliminary Considerations**

According to Viable System Approach, value creation depends on the degree of consonance (connection compatibility between business systems and their sub- and over-systems) and resonance (harmony and effectiveness across systems - ideal consonance development) between the Business System and all of their stakeholder with which it continually interacts (Golinelli, 2008; Barile, 2008); the only match between business capacities and

customers needs is therefore guided by on-going relations, able to generate durable loyalty and competitive advantage (Cantone, 1996; Lusch, Vargo, O'Brien, 2007).

Moreover, the focus of value creation and value co-creation has to be both internal (through services and products quality improvement strategies, efficacy and efficiency improvements) and external (function of collaborative relationships with other actors looking for a virtual structural growth in terms of capacities, knowledge, technical opportunities and so on). With reference to an ample set of actors interested in value created by firms (going from shareholders, through stakeholders, to other interested parties), in line with the VSA and Service Science proposals, enterprises today have to consider value in an extended way, multidimensional, dynamic, vectorial, analyzing it in function of the informative and value variety on business internal components possessed by other systemic actors, and related to processes of consonance among participating actors (Barile, Gatti, 2007).

According to Relational optic (Gummesson, 1993; Prahalad, Ramanswamy, 2000), the S-D Logic suggests that all actors in the process of value creation are considered as dynamic, operant and active resources, enabling reticular/networked interactions (Lovelock, Gummesson, 2004; Achrol, Kotler, 2006); therefore, activities and entities are not associate to dyadic relations, but always close to many to many relationships (Gummesson, 2008) that seldom can be limited to relationships among business actors, and have to be considered within a wider set of actors which include many more involved parts, thus starting from B2B relation and comprising B2C, C2B and C2C (Gummesson, Polese, 2009). These relations are then consciously determined and finalized to a necessary mutual satisfaction (Womack, Jones, 2007; Lusch, Vargo, O'Brien, 2007) in function of a systemic consonance and competitiveness (Golinelli, 2009). Consumer is no longer target customer (like value destroyer) to whom companies can simply

allocate and promote its supply, but it is considered as an available and competitive resource (Vargo, Lusch, 2004b), an effective *participant* (Alter, 2008) in production processes, definable then a *prosumer* (Vargo, Lusch, 2006) of value co-creation, and therefore a real value co-creator.

Furthermore, among the first signs observed in the study of the value creation dynamics in service-centred perspective, it seems possible to show (and after verify) that customers are not interested in products and services as such, but attracted by their representation as needs solutions, or clients benefits (Zeithaml, 1988; Maglio, Spohrer, 2008b). The customer does not draw directly the value from the product itself, but by the use, transformation and consumption of it (*value in use*, Lusch, Vargo, 2006a) and from reticular interactions (Hakansson, Snehota, 1995); then the product value derive from its benefit of the related service (Venkatesh, Penaloza, Firat, 2006). Firms have only the opportunity to make their own proposition for market value (*value proposition*) (Vargo, Lusch, 2006; Lusch, Vargo, 2006b; Lusch, Vargo, Malter, 2006) and then the value is not created inside a mere production process reflected in the market sale price (*value in exchange*), but follows a co-creation process (Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2000; Ballantyne, Varey, 2006; Mele, 2007) considering two main value components, made inside two distinct phases:

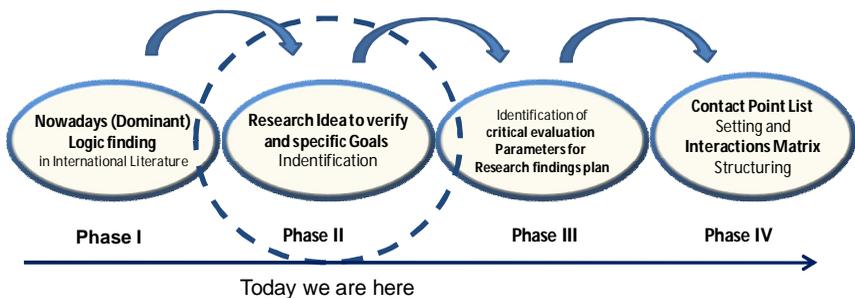
- a) The value derives from a process of co-production, integrating contributions from multiple entities (including consumers) (Vargo, Maglio, Akaka, 2008) in order to share needs, knowledge, available information (Möller, 2006), according to network theories and relational and system approaches (Gummesson, 2007; Golinelli, 2005, 2008, 2009; Barile, Mastroberardino, 2003; Barile, 2008).
- b) The value is determined by the customer purchase of products (*value in use*), through a personal “consumption” process, allowing constant interconnections between the

parties of a service system (Alter, 2008; Spohrer, Vargo, Maglio, Caswell, 2008) in order to integrate and share mutual resources and benefits.

So, for a good Research, we must understand what are individual roles, technology, much useful tools, sharing information, considered really relevant for value creation and value co-creation processes; then we must investigate what is customer role (as demand side) inside production processes (as supply side), and first of all what are necessary competences and expertise related to service systems, to work and obtain competitive advantage in the long run, under this integrated logic of social network (Polese, 2009; Polese, Mele, 2009).

Considering research chronological timing, several steps discussed above can be aggregate in four sequential macro phases (during 3 years). Starting from the individuation of new dominant logics in international literature, we now are trying at first to identify e synthesize our solid research idea and confirm our proposal research design, in order to continue in project development, defining the most appropriate evaluation methods (allowing to set right critical variables and useful parameters) and finally reaching our final goals (research outcomes) (see fig. 4).

**Figure 4:** Research PLAN



## 5. Problems and needed suggestions

According to SDL, customers become irreplaceable co-creators of value and companies become resources integrators contributing to the generation of value. Today in a global economy, companies play an active and participant role along with many other key entities (including clients) inside structured and *multipart* processes of value creation.

Now, we must define a set of contact point between three identified Paradigms and structure an usable matrix for related interpretations about specific studied themes. Therefore, I wish to discuss and receive suggestions upon these arguments:

1. How can we define critical variables by which extract significant contact point?
2. What kind of parameters we can use for table of those contact point definition for each Paradigm?
3. How many dimension we must consider for the matrix of related interpretations?
4. If we finally want to verify how many cases present those characteristic interpretations, what are most useful analysis methods? Field Study, Social Networks analysis, or others?

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